IMPROVING OUR MARRIAGES

FALL, 2015

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Introduction

Marriage as an arrangement that God has designed, for a people that he designed.

It should not surprise us that God should bring this into into human history

It was designed to be a good and perfect gift.

* Permanent and lifelong

But in fact, only God knows how to make it what it’s intended to be. If our marriage is to be what God wants it to be, we are going to have to accept His direction.

He created the creature and arrangement of marriage - Not in man - Jer 10:23,24

* Tragedy comes when when we think we have a better way.

It is God’s Intention that all who marry would find joy and peace in this relationship. That it should touch the partners spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

Broken marriages and broken lives is our story in this culture.

* Partners
* Children
* Families
* Subsequent generations
* The Lord’s church

**Class Objectives**

* Understand the Biblical roles God gives in marriage
* Improve our ability to communicate effectively with our spouses
* Discuss practical ideas to address real challenges
* Enjoy a more loving marriage

**Discussion points**

* Marriage, the most intimate of human relationships
* The problem of married Christians who would not divorce one another but who nevertheless have grown apart emotionally. What suffers?
* A joint, wholehearted commitment to Christ is necessary.
  + It goes without saying that there is no longer a firm conviction in our society at large that marriage is for life.
  + But even among Christians, unreserved commitment in marriage -- the kind that can stand up under stress and overcome difficulties -- is more and more rare

Lesson 1

**Improving your commitment (faithfulness) to God**

Wednesday - October 7, 2015

Introduction

It should not surprise us that God would bring this into human history - Radical

* Permanent
* Lifelong
* *Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth* - Pr 5:8
* *An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.* Pr 31:10

Broken marriages and broken lives are the story in this culture

We see others and their challenges with marriage - We need to think and ask “what about us?” What is the distinguishing characteristic in marriage?

Being fully and absolutely committed to God is the key to our marriages being what we really need them to be.

Our lives and our marital challenges are complicated. Years of unresolved issues and unmet expectations will damage our relationships.

Sunday October 11, 2015

We can boil this down into some basic principles:

Honor

* Honor our commitment to God - God is to be first in our lives
* By honoring our commitment to our spouse, we honor our commitment to God
  + Class discussion...
    - When does commitment to God really have meaning? When there is a conflict between what I want and what God wants.
* Mt 6:33 - Putting God truly first in our lives
* Mt 22:37 - Deut 6:5

I have never seen a marriage fall apart between two committed Christians.

Choosing

What kind of effort are we putting into our marriage

* Some say “I don’t feel like loving you”
  + Feelings come after the choice
  + I have chosen to love you
  + I have made a commitment to God

Review Ephesians 5 and note how interwoven our commitment to our spouse is with our commitment to the Lord. Note the connection -

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Wife** | **Husband** |
| Submit | Love |
| Respect | Cherish |
|  | Honor |

This is not a complicated text. What is expressed here is the basis of marital contentment.

We can’t really separate marital problems from our relationship with God - the two things are intertwined.

Difficulties? Focus on our relationship toward God.

Gen. 29:32, 33, 35 - Dialog with Leah - So desirous to please her husband - Finally, praising God. “Now I will praise the Lord”

Text

“*All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way*” (Psalm 44:17,18)

*“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” I Peter 4:19*

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.  
 Dt. 6:4-5*

Biblical Characters that characterize faithfulness

* *Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. Genesis 6:22*
* Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.” Nehemiah 2:20
* “In *all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.” Job 1:22*
* *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Genesis 50:20*
* *“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14*
* *“He went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done.” Daniel 6:10*

The opposite of faithfulness is betrayal

For it is not an enemy who taunts me—  
 then I could bear it;  
 it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—  
 then I could hide from him.  
 But it is you, a man, my equal,  
 my companion, my familiar friend. Ps 55:11-13

Class discussion

* Discuss areas in our lives where we might experience commitment.
* What is the product of this commitment?
* Is there any doubt that God desires our full and complete commitment?
* What are the results when we are less than fully committed to anything

Additional Texts

*But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.* *Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.*  Mal. 2:14, 15

Lesson 2

**Improving our sense of Humility**

Humility - A working definition - Acting with others best interest in mind.

Biblical references of humility

* Acts 20:19
* Pr. 15:33
* Pr 18:12
* Pr 22:4
* Job 40:11
* Ps 94:2

**Lesson 3**

Becoming More selfless

adjective

1.

having little or no concern for oneself, especially with regard to fame,position, money, etc.; unselfish.

The characteristic of being selfless is one of the most important traits any Christian can have. It’s so significant that Jesus said it is the second most important of all God’s commandments: “You shall [love your neighbor](http://www.gotquestions.org/love-neighbor-yourself.html) as yourself” ([Mark 12:31](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2012.31)

“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Galatians 5:14 ESV)”

Jesus wasn’t creating a new law here; He was merely agreeing with and expounding on an Old Testament law ([Leviticus 19:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev%2019.18)).

James calls this the “royal” law to emphasize its supreme value to God ([James 2:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%202.8)).

Impediments to living selflessly:

* Mainly, us.

**Lesson 4**

Forgiveness

Introduction

There are many things that each of us might do in our marriages. Lying or deception, addictions, destructive financial decisions, chronic indifference to our spouse’s needs, and even unfaithfulness.

God and forgiveness

* For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15
* Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:11-12

So what is real forgiveness

Biblically - APHIEMI - v. Forgive, to send forth, send away (apo, from, hiemi, to send) - To remit or forgive.

Mt 6:12, 18:27, 32 - These are completely cancelled.

Firstly, signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct - Christ

Secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offence.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” Matthew 18:21-22

Understanding what forgiveness really is and is not

We often equate forgiveness with something warm and fuzzy. Truthfully, forgiveness is quite the opposite. Forgiveness can be quite painful when it involves someone you love. In marriage, forgiveness is not "Don't worry about what you did, I'm fine with it and we all make mistakes." Unresolved, things can turn into pain, anger, bitterness, and resentment.

* Forgiveness is not lip service.
* Forgiveness is not being so numb to pain that we are oblivious to reality.
* Forgiveness is not choosing to inflict the price for the offense.
* **Forgiveness is not letting the offender off the hook**. We can and should still hold others accountable for their actions or lack of actions.
* **Forgiveness is not letting the offense recur again and again**. **Forgiveness is not based on others' actions but on our attitude**.
* **Forgiveness is returning to God the right to take care of justice**. By refusing to transfer the right to exact punishment or revenge, we are telling God we don't trust him to take care of matters.

Thoughts

* The reason we battle unforgiveness is because we can only see the problems in the souls of others, but we often times ignore the beams in our own eyes
* After all I have done against God, how can I turn to another human being and say - “i refuse to forgive you!”
* Often times our ability to genuinely forgive is possible when we see and fully understand God’s forgiveness extended toward us
  + We should take care not to confuse victims of the enemy with the enemy himself. Even when controversy is necessary, it helps to remember that our human opponent is, at worst, a victim of the enemy (2 Timothy 2:24-26). The real enemy is the devil, and that’s where our fury needs to be focused.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” Matthew 18:21-22

* Forgiveness means excusing the penalty for an offense, offering pardon.
  + ... then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Hebrews 10:17-18
  + “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25
  + Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, [*forgiving*](http://www.esvbible.org/2Co2.7%3B2Co2.10%3BMt6.14/) one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Eph 4:32

**Lesson 6**

**Becoming More Submissive**

Introduction

Submission is a choice that we all make everyday.

Defining Submission

Oxford Dictionary - Accept or [yield](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/yield#yield__11) to a [superior](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/superior#superior__2) force or to the authority or [will](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/will#will-2__3) of another:

(**submit oneself**) [Consent](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/consent#consent__6) to undergo a certain treatment:

*she submitted under duress*

**give in/way**, [yield](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/yield#yield__11), back down, [cave in](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/cave#cave__15), [capitulate](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/capitulate#capitulate__2); [surrender](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/surrender#surrender__2), knuckle under

Vines <1,,5226, hupeiko>

"to retire, withdraw" (hupo, under, eiko, "to yield"), hence, "to yield, submit," is used metaphorically in Heb. 13:17, of "submitting" to spiritual guides in the churches.

Adj. - inclined or ready to [submit](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/submit) or yield to the authority of another; unresistingly or humbly obedient:

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Romans 8:7

Why in the world would you ever submit to anything?

“I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Corinthians 12:15)

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! . . .” (Matthew 23:37,38).

In humility consider other better than yourselves. Each should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. [Philippians 2:3b-4](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Philippians%202.3b-4)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. [Romans 12:10](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%2012.10)

Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. [1 Corinthians 10:24](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Corinthians%2010.24)

Be kind and tender-hearted to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave you. [Ephesians 4:32](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ephesians%204.32)

As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [Colossians 3:12](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Colossians%203.12)

Not just for our wives - It’s a strong and frequent admonition from God in the NT.

* To one another - Eph 5:20,21, I Pet 5:5
* Civil Authorities - Rom 7:1-7; I Pet 2:13-17
* Domestic Authorities - Eph 6:5-9
* Those God places over them in the church II Thes 3:14, Shepherds - I Thes 5:12,13;

There is also another sense in which we should submit our will

* Christ
* Our children

Talking Points

* “... heirs together of the grace of life” - I Pet 3:7
* The wife’s submission to God should become her ultimate motive to be in submission to her husband - Eph 5:22 ... as unto the Lord