

Marriage, Dating, and Relationships...oh my!

Marriage. "What Matters Most"

Ephesians 4:1-6

October 14, 2018

Welcome and Intro to the series... (do something to get the room involved like having married couples stand up and then call off the years of marriage until you have the longest married couple as the last ones standing)

We're kicking off a series of messages on relationships and while that might make some of us interested it make others cringe a bit, we all need to hear from God about our relationships from time to time. The relationships we make on earth are the only thing that is going to last into eternity so, we should be placing our relationships above everything else. We are told in the Bible that we leave the earth the same way we came in...with nothing. The only thing that will be in heaven when we get there is our God and all those who made it there before us, everything else will not matter. That means the relationships I have are eternally focused and not meant for just this side of heaven. So, we need to do this relationship thing well so that when we get to heaven there are a bunch of people up there wondering how we got there based on how we treated them, right.

So, we are going to start at with one of the most important relationships we can ever have and one that is messed up constantly...marriage. The relationship we have in **marriage is unlike every other relationship** you will or should have. There is a uniqueness to a marriage relationship that does not exist in any other relationship we have. You might be close to someone but, not as close are you are to your husband or wife. You might have a life long friendship with someone but, it's not the same as your marriage relationship. You might know a lot about another person

but, there is no relationship where you know more about a person than marriage.

But, let me say this...there is no other relationship that is more volatile, more emotionally crazy, more complex, and more intense than marriage. There is no other relationship where someone knows just how to get your goat. There is no relationship where another person can excite you and totally frustrate you like marriage. There is no other person who will, at times, give you more and, at other times, take more from you than your wife or husband. There no other place in your life where there are days when you don't want to leave that other person and days when you just need time apart like marriage. There is no other relationship like marriage...amen?

And let me say this one last thing, there is no other relationship, other than your relationship with Jesus, that has more riding on its success. The wonder that marriage can bring to our lives is something that God wants for us. The Bible talks about marriage over and over again in many wonderful ways. And marriage is the only metaphor that is used by God to talk about the depth of the intimate relationship between us and God. And we believe that **marriage is the most important relationship, outside of our relationship with Jesus** because of its ability to lift us up beyond what we thought we could be or crush us deeper than we ever imagined. It is in marriage that we can be who God wants us to be and it is in marriage where we can be damaged and broken for the rest of our time on this side of heaven. Because of the unique things that happen only in marriage, we have the ability to help another person shine or feel defeated, rally or never get up again, sing their heart out or be ruined to a place where they have no voice.

“Marriage should not be entered in lightly or without sound counsel.”

Those are the ancient words that have been used in the order of worship

for the marriage ceremony for hundreds and hundreds of years. The problem is...we think we've got this, that love will rule the day, and that our love isn't like all those others who had their marriage bashed on the rocks and destroyed. We enter into marriage too lightly and we take it too casually once we're in it. So, today we're hoping that everyone here can gain a fresh perspective on marriage – whether you're single, or you've been married for umpteen hundred years. Sound good. Okay, let's dive into a short passage in Ephesians 4 and look at how God wants us to treat each other and how this passage can guide us as husbands and wives.

[READ Ephesians 4:1-6] *Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

We want to look at this passage with you for a moment and call out some things that can guide everyone of our relationships but, especially our marriage relationship. This Word comes to us from God, through a guy named Paul, to a church in a town in Asia Minor who is struggling with the very same issues that we face: communication break downs, financial worries, the difference between how men think, and women think, infidelity, insecurity, inconsistencies, and all the stuff we deal with today. Paul is writing down these words while thinking about all those people he met when he visited Ephesus. And, in effect, he goes about telling them what Godly, Jesus honoring relationships look like.

In verse two of this section he says that if we want to be the best husbands and wives that we can be we will need to be humble and gentle. Now you might be thinking that's not so bad...I do that already – unless... you go back to that time when you wanted something your way and you dug in your heels and you said something like; you always get what you want, I never get what I want. By default, we tend not to be humble and gentle or God wouldn't need to remind us to be those things. **God calls us to be humble and gentle with each other in marriage.** Most us get married thinking we're going to get what we want, when we want it and if we don't we can stomp around and be a bit ugly until the other person gives in. And while that might sound extreme...we all wrestle with being humble and being gentle but if we're going to be godly in our marriage relationships...we've got to be brutally honest with ourselves and how we act and how we treat our spouse.

Okay, while that was difficult, the next part of verse two is worse. Listen to what it says: *Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.* Aw man...we stink at patience. We want what we want, and we want it now...it's our human nature. And she should know that I hate to wait, he knows by now how long things take, he never realistic about how long something will take, she's always... As **God is patient with us, God calls us to be patient with each other in marriage.** Intimacy requires patience. Love requires patience. Without it we will be nagging at best and at our worst, finger nails on a chalk board. We are called by God to give to others what we ourselves have received...and I don't know about your life but, God has been patient with me beyond what seem reasonable.

He has also forgiven me of my faults and **God calls us to forgive each other in marriage.** As God has forgiven us when we have made the same mistake time and again, we are to do the same with our spouse. Love is generous with forgiveness like God is generous. And this passage says we

have been called by God to live more like Him every day. Our marriages should be refuges filled with forgiveness for each other.

Okay, so far, we are: humble, gentle, patient, and forgiving. Let's add one more...in verse three we are called to: ³ *Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.* God's plan for our marriage relationship is one that is bound together by God's presence...a covenant where these two lives are intertwined and cannot be separated because God is holding them together as a third strand in the twist. **God calls us to have unity in our marriages.** Look at how God says that we are not in our marriages alone: ⁹ *Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed.* ¹⁰ *If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.* ¹¹ *Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone?* ¹² *A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.* (Eccl 4:9-12) Our unity comes from God's tight bond that is deep in our marriages. I cannot do unity on my own. I can try but, I am human and so is she. If we're going to have a marriage that honors each other and honors God, we need God to be fully involved in every aspect of our marriage.

God is invested in marriage, so much so that he weaves himself into the relationship to bind it together. To not involve God in our marriages is to do a disservice to the One who created marriage. God intended marriage to be a covenant relationship in the world back when this book was written and, in a world, today that sees marriage as a convenience or a consumer relationship. When God is invited into our marriages, the strong bond of the Lord is activated that helps us navigate the difficulties and troubling waters that can cause a marriage to fall apart.

God's desire is that we enter into a covenant marriage that has God at its center. That means that one of the major tasks of husbands and wives is to help the other person develop their relationship with God. Marriage becomes less about us and more about how we can make sure the person God has joined us together with is in the best relationship with God that they can have. To get in the way of that is to corrupt what God has created as the marriage covenant. But, if we're connected to the source of life and we are helping our spouse connect to that life source we become a part of a covenant that is life giving – not life draining. That means our marriage becomes a source of life for each of us and in turn, for others who witness our marriage. If we truly recognize God's presence in our lives, each of us, and if we want the best relationship with God that this other person can have...God is not only honored but, we believe God uses that to influence our children, our friends, and our church.

Okay, God's guiding principles for marriage are: humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and living in unity and the last piece says we are: *binding yourselves together with peace*. When peace is missing from our marriages there is a sense that the foundation is shaky. A chaotic home give everyone an uneasiness that makes communication difficult, it makes decision making difficult, it makes child raising difficult...and we all know that's challenging enough. Without peace there is a constant undertow of disruption and discord. **God calls our marriages are to be places of peace** in our lives. Taking a moment to breath before making a comment, seeing things from the other persons point of view, not hitting the other persons buttons but, listening and loving the other person first can create a place of peace in our homes and in our marriages.

Okay, that was a lot to take in this morning...you doing okay?
Alright...here's the last thing we want you to hear; keep at it, every day.
Don't give up, your marriage is worth it, the other person is worth it,

you're worth it...not because we say so but, because God says so. God has promised to be in the middle of two people who come before him in Christian marriage. You are not alone...trust in the God who says I will be with you always and who is love.