

Theme: When a man and a woman take covenant marriage vows God supernaturally joins them together, creating a new union that they must spend the rest of their earthly life nurturing through healthy practices so that their marriage flourishes to the glory of God and their joy.

I. Intro - Avoiding the Question?

- A. Politicians often don't answer the question asked!
- B. They "reframe" questions to dodge the tough issues
- C. Jesus reframed the question but for the right reason!
- D. What is marriage really about? Practical today!
- E. This also applies to all relationships - so singles don't check out; there is plenty here for you!
- F. Also look at the teachings in the discussion guide!

II. The Real Focus - True Marriage

A. Jesus shifts the focus

Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"... ⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Mark 10:2, 6-8

- 1. All of their focus was on divorce
- 2. Jesus shifts back to the positive focus on marriage
- 3. God's greatest concern is not on divorce but on marriage itself!

B. A deep biblical pattern - focus on the positive command!

- 1. The Sabbath controversies in Mark 2 and 3
 - a. Pharisees focused on what should not be done

- b. Jesus focused on why the Sabbath was given and what should be done!

2. The Ten Commandments

- a. The commands are negative but the purpose is positive!
 - b. Example: The 8th command - do not steal
"You shall not steal. Exodus 20:15
He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Ephesians 4:28
 - 1. The command is "Do not steal"
 - 2. Paul gives the intent - do not steal, work hard, share with others!
 - 3. We have not kept the command until we have done the positive command, for this is the reflection of God's nature - He gives freely!
 - c. The same thing could be done with every one of the Ten Commandments and all of God's Law - the real purpose is found not in the prohibition but in the positive command that is its opposite.
 - d. This is similar to what we are doing during Lent - the focus is not really on "FAST" but on "FEAST"! The fast is a means to allow us to fully feast!
 - e. See After Hours for more on this idea
3. Legalistic religion loves to focus on the prohibitions in God's Law but ignores the positive command that is the reason for the prohibition in the first place!

III. Marriage - Joined Together By God!

- A. The focus is that God joins us together in marriage
Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. Mark 10:9

1. We are not to separate what God has joined together - don't divorce
2. But it is much more than that - the real focus is that in marriage God has actually joined us together!
3. Marriage is centrally about true intimacy, knowing and being known by one another, being naked and unashamed.

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:25

- a. This is the same passage Jesus laid out as foundational for all marriage.
 - b. This is NOT about clothing - it is a description of the true intimacy between Adam and Eve,
 - c. From this deep intimacy all the other blessings and fruitfulness of marriage flow.
4. When a man and a woman take covenant marriage vows God supernaturally joins them together, creating a new union that they must spend the rest of their earthly life nurturing through healthy practices so that their marriage flourishes to the glory of God and their joy.

B. Practices to nurture marital intimacy

1. Remember the real enemy - Satan!
Therefore **what God has joined together**, let man not separate." Mark 10:9
 - a. God joins a man and woman together in marriage - and Satan wants to tear them apart!
 - b. This is especially apparent when we consider God's intention for marriage:
 1. Marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church - which Satan hates and wants to distort!

2. Marriage is God's gift for human fruitfulness and joy - which Satan wants to steal, kill, and destroy!

- c. The enemy in my marriage is NOT my spouse - it is Satan
 - d. When I act in ways that destroy intimacy and bring separation between me and my spouse, I am joining forces with Satan to destroy what God has joined together.
 - e. We must always remember that marriage is the ground for spiritual warfare - not against my spouse but against Satan and His Kingdom.
 - f. Pray for your spouse every day, beginning with specific gratitude for them, and asking for God's blessing to fill their life and your marriage.
2. I must use my words to nurture my spouse and our marriage
The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. ²² He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD. Proverbs 18:21-22
 - a. My words have the power of life & death, the power to strengthen what God has joined or to tear it apart!
 - b. Notice that the next Proverb is on marriage!
 - c. The marriage bond is created by God when we speak covenant oaths to one another - and it is sustained when we speak words of love, affirmation, and appreciation to each another.
 - d. Do my words to my spouse nurture our marriage, or are they full of criticism, bitterness, and anger that tear our union apart?
 3. I must use my actions to give and serve my spouse rather than manipulating them to fulfill my desires

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4

- a. Love has a focus on the needs of the other person rather than on my own interests and desires.
 - b. Selfish motives lead to manipulating my spouse to fulfill my desires, and this always destroys unity and creates division.
 - c. Paul goes on to show the ultimate model for this - Jesus!
 - d. This must be true for both the husband and the wife, but the man bears a special responsibility to love the wife as Christ loved the church, dying to self to love and serve the wife.
 - e. When a husband and wife focus on serving one another, the marriage bond is strengthened and the relationship flourishes!
 - f. Do my actions give evidence of a desire to love and serve my spouse, or do they show a desire to manipulate for my own selfish desires?
4. I must forgive my spouse as Christ has forgiven me
Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.
Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13
- a. Paul is speaking in general, but this certainly applies to marriage!
 - b. Two people married to one another will certainly have many opportunities to forgive one another!
 - c. Refusing to forgive drives a wedge in a relationship, making it impossible for the marriage union to remain strong and flourish.

- d. I am to actively, verbally, and consistently forgive my spouse - just like Christ forgives me daily for my sins against Him!
- e. My marriage is a visible picture of the union between Jesus and His Bride, the Church. Since forgiveness lies at the heart of the relationship between Jesus and the Church, it must also be a foundational practice in my marriage.
- f. Our marriages must be grounded in the Gospel, imitate the way of the Gospel, and give a visible representation of the Gospel to our hurting, lost world!
- g. Do I actively, verbally, and consistently forgive my spouse as Christ forgives my sins, or do I nurture them in my heart, undermining our marriage union?

IV. Applying the Word (Singles Too!)

- A. Do I see the goal is not avoiding divorce, but creating true intimacy and union?
 1. The biblical focus is the positive goal of unity and intimacy
 2. Our goal is not to limp across the finish line without having killed one another!
 3. God's design and desire for marriage (and other close relationships!) is that they flourish so that we experience the community for which we were designed in creation!
 4. Do I understand and embrace this reality or have I grown weary and chosen to settle for merely "not divorcing"?
 5. Take heart - even if you have lost hope, our God can raise the dead!

B. Is there one area God is calling me to work on to improve intimacy in my marriage?

1. The four key practices (and keywords)
 - a. I must remember that the enemy of my marriage is Satan, not my spouse, and **pray** for my spouse and our marriage.
 - b. I must use my **words** to nurture my spouse and our marriage.
 - c. I must use my actions to **serve** and give to my spouse to meet their needs rather than manipulating my spouse to fulfill my desires.
 - d. I must **forgive** my spouse as Christ has forgiven me.
2. Is there one area where the Spirit is speaking to me to positively work to improve this week by His power?
3. Receive grace and strength at the Table for this!

C. The Wedding Supper of the Lamb

1. Ultimately marriage is a visible picture of the Great Wedding to Come - Jesus and the Church!
2. This Table is a foretaste of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb!
3. Revelation 19:5-9 - responsive reading
4. Invitation to the Table

Psalm 115:14-15

Teaching keywords: Marriage and family; divorce and remarriage; Kingdom of God; discipleship; creation

May the LORD make you increase, both you and your children.
¹⁵ May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 115:14-15

“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶ “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Mark 10:5-9

Lessons for Disciples - Marriage (Part 3) - Joined Together By God

Mark 10:5-9
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Communion