



SERMON SERIES DISCUSSION & STUDY GUIDE

Sermon Schedule

Date	Series	Key Event	Scripture
7/26/2009	Marriage reBranded	God's Expectation for Marriage	Matthew 7:24
8/2/2009	Marriage reBranded	Expect Reconciliation	Matthew 6:33
8/9/2009	Marriage reBranded	Healthy Expectations	Isaiah 32:17-18

Marriage Rebranded

Week 1: Expectations In Marriage

Luke 7:24

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

To keep your marriage brimming, With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong admit it; Whenever you're right, shut up.
-- Ogden Nash

Marriage, as an institution, does not suffer from any lack of writings, sayings, quotes and observations – some true and helpful, others not so much, but all of it posing as wisdom. However, since we believe that God is the creator of marriage, let's look to his Word to see what wisdom we can glean regarding his expectations for marriage and why he created marriage in the first place.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Re-read the poem above, and then read the quotations below (all are from anonymous sources):

- "Marriage is the only war in which you sleep with the enemy."
- "Marriage is like a violin; after the music is over, you still have the strings."
- "Marriage is like a hot bath; once you get used to it, it's not so hot."

Is there any truth to these sayings? Do you know couples whose marriages epitomize these sayings? Does your marriage feel like one or more of these concepts? Has it ever?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

As we look to the Scriptures, let's consider GOD'S PURPOSE for marriage, and then consider GOD'S EXPECTATIONS for marriage.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MARRIAGE

Read Genesis 2:18-24. One of God's primary purposes for marriage is for a man and a woman to "become one" or "become one flesh."

- Why do you think God created the woman using a different method from all the other creatures?
- In cooking, in manufacturing, and in other areas of life, very often two separate substances are combined to make a third product that is better or more useful. What are some examples? Are these good illustrations of how a man and woman are to "become one" in marriage?
- In v. 25, we see that, although Adam and Eve were naked, neither of them felt any shame. Then, in Chapter 3, after the Fall, Adam and Eve felt great shame and tried to hide. How do the Fall and our sinfulness get in the way of husband and wife striving to "become one"?

GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FOR MARRIAGE

- **Read Mark 10:5-9.** What does Jesus say about the permanency of marriage?
- **Read Ephesians 5:31-33.** Why should marriage be strictly between a man and woman?
- **Read Ephesians 5:21-30.** Marriage should be a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church. How does marriage best represent the union and unity of Christ and His church?

MAKING APPLICATION:

One wag has said, "God must really have a sense of humor, creating men and women as differently as they are, then telling them, 'OK, now go be as one!'" Sometimes, we can only respond by saying, "God, you've GOT to be kidding!" As husbands and wives work out for themselves what it means to live in a marriage designed by God, Scripture provides some practical advice.

- Newlyweds need a strong start. **Read Deuteronomy 24:5.**
- Faithfulness in marriage need not be boring. **Read Proverbs 5:15-20.**
- Don't look for a way out of your marriage; instead, look for creative ways to keep the romance alive. **Read Song of Solomon 4:1-7 and 5:2-8.**

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Marriages are under attack in America today like never before, primarily because we have made personal choice our highest value. That translates into this ungrammatical thought: "I'll do what's good for me and not what's good for we." **Read Matthew 7:24 .**

- Pray that God will show each of us, as individuals and as married couples, areas where we should put the needs of our spouses and our families first, thinking of ourselves last.
- Ask God to help marriages be built on the foundation of and our obedience to His word.



Marriage re-Branded

Week 2: Expect Reconciliation

Matthew 6:33

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At first reading, Matthew 6:33 doesn't seem to reference, let alone mention, marriage. But then again, it may just be one of the best little nuggets of marriage advice. When you put God first, seeking his kingdom, righteousness, and will, He takes care of the rest. When God is put first in a marriage, you can expect peace. And since we do live in a fallen world and all marriages are subject to stormy weather, you can also expect reconciliation when God is the head of a marriage.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Marriage is an active relationship that requires continual interaction.

- Do you ever find yourself a little snippy or short with your spouse and then within minutes find yourself engaged in a kind, polite conversation with someone else?
- Has there ever been a time when you felt in your heart that you wanted to apologize to your spouse but something in your attitude kept you from it? What was that something?
- If only 7% of communication is verbal, what messages do you think you could be sending, or receiving that are unspoken? What nonverbal messages do you interpret from your spouse?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

God designed marriage as an illustration of his relationship with the church. In our marriage we are to imitate the forgiveness, reconciliation, and love that He afforded to us when we were undeserving. What does the Bible have to say about the things that stand in the way of peace and harmony in marriage?

Read Ephesians 4:26-32 (NIV)

In verse 31 we are told to "get rid" of all bitterness. Bitterness has been described as a frozen form of anger...growing out of refusal to let go...being constantly hurt by a memory of a wrong.

- Why do you think God tells us to get rid of such thinking?
- What damage could bitterness bring to a marriage?

Read 1 Peter 3:8-12 (NIV)

In verse 8 we are told to "live in harmony" and to "be sympathetic." One definition of sympathetic is to deeply understand and appreciate the feelings of another person.

- Do you often feel that your feelings are understood and appreciated by your spouse? How do they express this?
- Why is this an important connection to maintain in a marriage?

In verse 9 we are told to repay an insult with a blessing. This doesn't have to always be applied to the big issues and can absolutely be applied to smaller everyday issues, like how long it's been since the toilet paper roll was changed.

Read Romans 8:5-6 (NIV)

Our attitudes and actions are directly related to the thoughts we deposit into our memory bank and we can only draw on what we deposit.

- How might your attitude toward your spouse differ when your mind is set on what the Spirit desires versus when your mind is set on what the sinful nature desires?
- How can God bless and reconcile a marriage that is not set on what the Spirit desires?

MAKING APPLICATION:

When the going gets tough, it's hard to get back on track. Seeking God first is the best place to start in keeping peace, as well as in restoring peace in a marriage.

- Is there any area of bitterness in your marriage that could be addressed and forgiveness offered? What is keeping you from seeking reconciliation?
- What can you do to assure your spouse that you are sympathetic to their emotions and feelings?
- What thoughts do you need to change in order to better your attitude toward your spouse and marriage?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Thank God for reconciling with us through the sacrifice of Jesus so that we could have a loving relationship with Him.

- Ask God to open our eyes to any bitterness or areas that need reconciling in our relationships. Ask Him to bless our marriages with understanding and love so that we can live in harmony. Pray for sympathy and grace when misunderstandings and frustrations happen to arise.
- Praise Him for your spouse and the protection of your marriage. Let Him know that as you strive to live according to His will, you'll be expecting reconciliation.



Marriage Rebranded

Week 3: Healthy Expectations

Isaiah 32:17-18

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Marriage was intended to be a context where fulfillment was experienced. After creating man, God looked down at creation and observed that something was missing. He exclaimed, "It's not good for man to be alone." (boy is God wise or what?) So God created woman and blessed their union for enjoyment and fulfillment. Then God declared that His creation was, "Very good."

Why then are there so many unhappy, unfulfilled men and women who are married? We've lost sight of the purpose and power of the marriage bond. God truly created us to live in union with each other as marriage partners and be provide for each others need through this holy relationship. If we don't fulfill our God ordained roles and responsibilities we will not experience the true fulfillment God intended within marriage.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Being alone is not a feeling most people enjoy. God has wired us to live in community and marriage is 1 expression of this intentional state.

- Describe a time when you've felt alone and been uncomfortable or fearful. How would companionship have changed your emotions in that situation?
- When have you brought comfort or companionship to someone who was experiencing isolation or exclusion? How did that help the situation or the person?
- How is marriage a God-designed solution to isolation and loneliness? Are those good motivations to get married?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

God's word is crystal clear on the roles and responsibilities each partner has in the marriage relationship. Let's look at some passages that speak to the healthy expectations God has given to husbands and wives.

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

- What role/responsibility does a wife have? What role/responsibility does a husband have? Who has the harder job?
- How does mutual submission to Christ and each other lead to fulfillment in marriage?
- Why is the woman's need for love so high? Why is the man's need for respect so high?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-6

- How is sexual intimacy related to fulfillment for both the husband and the wife in marriage?
- Why is it so important the sexual intimacy needs be met within marriage?

Read 1 Peter 3:1-8

- What are other intimacy needs other than sex that should be met in marriage?
- What are some consequences to not meeting these needs in marriage?

MAKING APPLICATION:

Neither partner is off the hook when it comes to fulfilling God's ordained roles for marriage. There work to be done on all of our parts to better fulfill God's design of marriage and bring intimacy and fulfillment to the relationship within marriage.

- What is 1 action step you need to take as a husband/wife to better fulfill your partner's needs?
- What is 1 way you can better communicate your need(s) to your partner within your marriage relationship?
- If you could rewind the time back to the first year of your marriage, what do you wish you knew then that you know now about how to have a fulfilling marriage?
- What Godly advice would you give to a newly married couple about how to have a fulfilling marriage?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Marriage is God's creation, not man's idea. Therefore, not only does God know best how marriage works but is also the only source of power that can truly make marriage be all it is intended. So, let's close our time together committing ourselves and our marriages to God in prayer.

- Thank God for the institution of marriage and all He designed it to be.
- Ask God for wisdom and courage to as a husband/wife fulfill the responsibilities He has prescribed for marriage.
- Thank God for your spouse and ask God to use you to be a conduit through which He can bring love, peace, and fulfillment.





For more information and resources visit
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