



## Marriage Series, Lesson 2

### Prioritizing God within our Marriage

September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

#### I. Christian Marriage

"A Christian marriage is a *lifelong* commitment between one Christian man and one Christian woman whose intent is to display the *covenant-keeping love and relationship* that exists *between Christ and His church.*"<sup>1</sup>

#### II. Scripture Verses

##### Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

<sup>33</sup>*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

- Jesus is confronting the idea of people finding their value in their possessions, people, marriage or worldly priorities. He is urging His followers to find their ultimate security in God, who will meet their needs.

##### Matthew 10:34–39 (ESV)

<sup>34</sup>*Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.* <sup>35</sup>*For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.* <sup>36</sup>*And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.* <sup>37</sup>*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* <sup>38</sup>*And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* <sup>39</sup>*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

- Jesus is promoting to His disciples that their mission is not one of peace with worldliness, but one of promoting the restorative relationship between ungodliness and Jesus. And a result of this may even be a family's rejection.

#### **Keeping Our Focus on God**

From irritating habits to weighty issues that seem impossible to resolve, loving one's spouse through the tough times isn't easy. But the same struggles that drive us apart also shed light on what we value in marriage.

"If happiness is our primary goal, we will separate, grow apart or divorce as soon as happiness seems to wane"

"If receiving love is our primary goal, we'll dump our spouse as soon as they seem to be less attentive"

"If you really love someone, you shouldn't have to work at it."

#### **Build your Marriage on the "Rock of Commitment", not a "Sand of Feelings"**

"A successful marriage has little to do with circumstances and a lot to do with determination — taking anything negative out of your vocabulary and replacing it with commitment."

#### **What is Commitment?**

Commitment is a decision to have the abundant marriage God desires, regardless of circumstances or

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whether you think your spouse is doing his or her part. This includes:

- **Realizing that marriage is an unbreakable covenant before God.**
- **Choosing to "do it until you feel it."** We often let our feelings guide our actions, but we are actually built for the opposite. Our Creator has designed us so that when we love another person with our actions, our feelings inevitably follow.
- **Focusing on the good in our spouse and the sin in ourselves — instead of the other way around.** Find something you appreciate about your spouse, and verbalize it. This marital application of Philippians 4:8 (which instructs us to focus on whatever is praiseworthy) has the power to transform a marriage. When we examine and work to change ourselves, we often bring out the best in our spouse as well.
- **Engaging in Christian community, prayer and discipleship — especially when you don't want to.** These three aspects of the Christian life help sustain every believer, but they are particularly essential for those going through a difficult season.
- **Relying on God to help you act selflessly toward your spouse.** Jesus says, 'Apart from Me you can do nothing' and calls us to engage with the Spirit of God being lived out through us."

Ways to strengthen our commitment and relationship:

- Focus on your spouse's strengths rather than their weaknesses.
- Encourage rather than criticize.
- Pray for your spouse instead of gossiping about them or complaining.
- Model what Christ teaches us about relating to and loving others.

### **III. Men/Women Small Group Discussion:**

- 1) When considering our definition of a "Christian Marriage", why must God come first within our marriages to make this work?
- 2) Discuss whether it is God, ourselves or a mix that "enables" us to be a godly husband or wife? What is our part? What part is God's?
- 3) What are the practical results in our marriage if we do not focus on God first? Can the "state of our relationship" with our spouse be an "indicator" of our relationship with God?
- 4) Within your marriage, how are "our" priorities usually set? Given they may not always be unselfish, how do we reflect the right relationship in marriage to mirror Christ and His church?
- 5) Why is it our tendency in marriage to focus on the 10% that we do not like, but seem to quickly pass over the 90% that is good? How do we learn to focus on the positive and learn to let things slide that are not important?

### **IV. Direct Application for Each of Us to "Prioritize God within our Marriage":**

1. *Commit yourself to fully accepting the sovereignty of God*
2. *Actively know and discuss your spiritual condition with your spouse*
3. *Concentrate on your devotional life*
4. *Pray during the day and with your spouse*
5. *Confess/Repent of sin quickly and fully*
6. *Ask God for strength*
7. *Obey what God says*
8. *Build your family life around God; not job, activities, hobbies*