

Building on the Solid Foundation of God's Word

Genesis 2:23-25

What makes a solid foundation for marriage? Well, a group of children were asked the following questions about marriage:

1. HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHOM TO MARRY?

You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming. -- Alan, age 10

-No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with. -- Kristen, age 10

2 WHAT IS THE RIGHT AGE TO GET MARRIED?

Twenty-three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then. -- Camille, 10

3. HOW CAN A STRANGER TELL IF TWO PEOPLE ARE MARRIED?

You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids. -Derrick 8

4. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR MOM AND DAD HAVE IN COMMON?

Both don't want any more kids. -- Lori, age 8

5 WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE?

-Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough. -- Lynnette, age 8

-On the first date, they just tell each other lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date. -- Martin, age 10

6 WHEN IS IT OKAY TO KISS SOMEONE?

-When they're rich. -- Pam, age 7

-The law says you have to be eighteen, so I wouldn't want to mess with that. - - Curt, age 7

-The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them. It's the right thing to do. - - Howard, age 8

7 IS IT BETTER TO BE SINGLE OR MARRIED?

It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them. -- Anita, age 9

8 HOW WOULD YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE WORK?

Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a dump truck. -- Ricky, age 10

So what is it that makes a good foundation for a lifelong love? We are in the 2nd week of a series we're calling *Love for a Lifetime*. A couple of weeks ago we looked at several marriage myths— false foundations for marriage, foundations that won't last a lifetime. If you missed that one, I encourage you to go online to our website and check it out. It can save you from several false detours that can take your marriage far off course.

This morning we're going to see that when we build our marriages on the solid foundation of God's Word, we can have a lifelong love. Now I know some of you have been married 20, 30, 40 years, and more, but in marriage, you never quit building on the foundation. It's not something you do once and then it is done. For however long you're married, you keep building on that foundation. If you've started your marriage on the wrong foundation, though, don't panic. Whether your marriage is in shambles, or you've already been through a couple divorces, it's never too late to start building on the foundation of God's word. You can't change your past, but God can forgive it. He can heal it. And God's grace can enter even the worst of situations and rewrite your future.

It is possible to be married to one person for your entire life and be happy, and stay in love, and be thoroughly fulfilled in the relationship. It's not a myth.

Now when it comes to the biblical foundation for marriage, there is one passage of Scripture that leaps to mind. It is the account of where it all started. The first marriage. The first family. It is the passage where the pattern for marriage was set. When we read this, we need to understand, that Adam may be the one speaking, but he's speaking as a man inspired with the truth of God. This isn't just Adam's opinion. It is God's design. Jesus himself quoted these verses and established their authority for our marriages. This is God's design and God's intention for your marriage and your home.

²⁴ *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.* ²⁵ *Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

What? That's it? That's just too short. How could that make any difference? Wouldn't the beginning of marriage and family require a greater foundation than this? Contained within this one simple statement are some principles that form the foundation stones of lifelong marriage. As we walk through this passage, I am indebted to Jimmy Evans and his book *Marriage On The Rock*, for his understanding of these principles.

A. Foundation Stone #1 – The Law of Priority

The first foundation stone for a lifelong marriage is the law of priority. *“That is why a man leaves his father and mother.”* Why would he say that? There weren't even any fathers and mothers yet. It was just Adam and Eve, so why does he start with leaving your mother and father? Why does God say that a man should leave his mother and father? It is because until now, this has been the closest, most intimate, and significant relationship in his life.

When God created marriage, He designed it so that the commitment between a husband and wife would be more important than every other human relationship. He wants marriage to be a

relationship that is over and above every other relationship. We a couple gets married that relationship becomes more important than even their relationships with their mother and father.

The only thing that is to be more important than the marriage relationship is our relationship with God Himself. Marriage at any other priority will lead to unhappiness.

Leaving doesn't mean abandoning or neglecting, but it means that is no longer the relationship with the greatest priority. The Hebrew word used here means to loosen or relinquish. God meant that a man was to relinquish the highest position of commitment and devotion previously given to his parents in order to give that position to his wife. The same holds true for the wife.

The lesson here isn't just for the husbands and wives, though. It's also for the parents. You moms and dads with older kids who are married or soon to be married, you need to realize that you are no longer supposed to be the most important relationship in their lives. That priority goes to their spouse. Your children need to leave, to relinquish, to loosen that hold you have on their heart. You need to cut some strings. Let them go. Let them grow and make mistakes in their marriage without you always interfering and propping them up. You can't always demand their time and attention. Let them chart their own course, make their own memories, establish some traditions of their own. And remember, you have to share them with another set of parents. Don't be upset when they want to do their own thing. It's okay. That's how God intended it to be.

This principle doesn't just apply to parents. If even parents are to be put beneath the marriage in priority, then it holds true that every other human relationship should be put there as well. This is where this foundation stone applies to many of you. Your marriage is more important than your work relationships, than your friends, your Facebook and social media relationships, sports teams, than clubs or civic organizations.

Many problems that marriages face are because the husband or wife has relationships in their life that have a higher priority than their marriage. Every other human relationship in your life needs to be put behind your husband or wife. Your friends and old school buddies? They come after your marriage. You're boss, co-workers, your employees? They need to come after your marriage? Many of us grew up with workaholic dads who believed that bringing home a paycheck was enough. It's not.

Now here's the controversial one, but it's true. Your relationship with your children needs to come after your husband or wife. There is a very popular lie in our culture that says children need to take priority over the marriage. Many people are guilty of loving their kids more than their husbands or wives. It's easy to do. Kids can love us back so unconditionally. But when you start giving all of your love to your children, and neglect your spouse, it does great damage to the marriage. It erodes the

foundation right from beneath your home. What good does giving most of your time, energy, and love to your children do, when you've wrecked the home? Parents, the most important thing you can give your children is to love each other the way God has called you to. You need to model a healthy marriage for them. They will learn how it works from you. You need to have mom and dad time. It's good to get a sitter, to leaven the ankle biters with grandma and grandpa for a couple of nights and invest in your marriage. I am heartbroken every time I hear someone tell me they haven't been on a date with just them and their spouse for months at a time. That's not healthy. You didn't begin your family when that first baby was born. You began your family when you stood before God and vowed "I do." That's the foundation of the home right there, and you better keep it that way.

Now I realize that there are crisis and seasons in life where another relationship will have to take priority for a time. You have a parent or child that very sick or something like that. But that should never be permanent. Your husband and wife should consistently be the priority relationship.

Give priority to each other. Give energy and effort and time, first to your husband or wife. If your spouse only gets your tired out leftovers, it will slowly kill the relationship.

We must take steps to make sure that marriage remains a priority.

We can't ignore our spouse's needs and take them for granted. Your spouse will know that you love them, when you make them a priority- when you give them the time and energy they deserve. Your husband or wife must be the priority human relationship in your life.

B. Foundation Stone #2 – The Law of Pursuit

As the verse continues, we see a second foundation stone. It is the law of pursuit. *"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife."* Another translation says that he *"bonds with his wife."* The older translations say that he *"shall cleave to his wife."* What does that mean? I hear the word cleave and I think of a meat cleaver chopping something in two. And that is certainly not what God has in mind for marriage, even if it feels like that sometimes. Actually, the word that's used here means just the opposite. It means *"to pursue with great energy and to cling to something zealously."*

Once the proper priority is set for the relationship, you must pursue the relationship. A husband being united to his wife isn't just a one-time act. It requires an ongoing, vigorous pursuit. It takes work. Lifelong love isn't just something that happens to you. You don't just fall in love. You're not star-crossed lovers who live happily ever after. No, it takes work and effort. Husbands, God is calling you to pursue your wife with great energy and to hold onto her tenaciously. Ladies, God is calling you to zealously pursue your man, and to cling to him and never let go.

Too many people think that if they meet the right person, they'll just be zapped and they will just be able to coast along in love. The romantic notion of two people falling in love and just staying in love is a myth. It takes work and effort. Sometimes, it takes hard work and effort.

To understand the law of pursuit, think back to your first dates with your spouse. How hard did you work at impressing your date? What steps did you go through to make sure that you put your best foot forward? How much time did you spend preparing yourself physically? How many times did you rehearse the words you spoke? How much energy did you exert trying to please your date? You all know that we all did everything we could trying to impress each other.

That shows that it was not just chemistry that caused your relationship to be so satisfying at the start. Sure, we were motivated to do all the work. We wanted to do it, but the fact is that it took a lot of work. We work really hard at a relationship until we feel secure in the love of the other person. Once we feel secure, we gradually reduce the level of effort and we begin to take the other for granted. But what happens is that while we are reducing our own level of effort, so is the other person. Neither one of you is working as hard at it as you used to, and guess what happens. You begin to resent each other, because they are not doing their part.

Jimmy Evans tells the story of a woman that he and his wife ran into at the shopping mall that they had not seen in years. They were both impressed by how good she looked. She appeared to have lost 50 pounds and had gotten a total makeover. They both complimented her.

She said, "I guess you know Kenny and I got a divorce? Well, when we did, I knew right away that I had better get to work, lose some weight, and do something to better myself, or I'd never catch another man."

Why was she willing to do all that hard work to impress a total stranger, but she wasn't willing to do anything please the one she had vowed her life to?

No matter how out of love you may feel, if you will obey God's word and pursue your spouse, if you put the work and effort into reaching out for them and holding onto them, you will find that those old feelings will return. They can, and will come back. No matter how dead and long gone you thought those feelings were, you can bring back that desire, if you put work into the pursuit. You can't help but have feelings for something that you invest time, energy and money in. That's the law of pursuit.

C. Foundation Stone #3 – The Law of Possession – And they shall become one flesh

As we move on to the end of the verse, we see a third foundation stone, the law of Possession. Listen to how verse 24 ends. *"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife,*

and they become one flesh.” On the surface, this passage is an obvious reference to sexual intimacy. According to 1 Cor. 6:16 when we have sex with someone, we become one with that person.

The idea of becoming one flesh is more than just sex. The husband and wife are to become one. He becomes hers. She becomes his. This is the law of possession. Paul spells this out in Romans 7 where he writes, *“The wife’s body does not belong to her alone, but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone, but also to his wife.”*

Marriage is meant to be a complete union in which all things previously owned and managed separately, are now owned jointly. Becoming one flesh is more than just sex. It is the merging of everything separate into one new whole. There are no exceptions. Anything in marriage that is not willfully submitted to the ownership of the other can be destructive. People who get married and try to maintain separate his and her anything, inevitably run into problems.

I don’t want to offend anyone who’s done this, but this is why I don’t like the Unity sand ceremonies that are becoming so popular at weddings. In this ceremony, the bride and groom each take a jar of colored sand that represents their individual lives before they are married, and they pour them into a single jar where the colors twist and turn upon one another to make a beautiful collage of colors, but they still remain distinct and different colors. It is said this illustrates how as a couple they are now one, yet still separate and distinct individuals. It is entirely the wrong symbolism for a marriage. You don’t become one to remain separate and distinct. The older tradition of the unity candle is much closer to the biblical picture where two separate candles unite their flames to light a new candle in the middle. The former, separate candles are extinguished. You no longer have lives apart. You are now one.

This is not license for any kind of abuse or manipulation. What God has in mind is this--When we willingly surrender each and every area of our lives to the ownership of the other, we build a spirit of trust and intimacy. The law of possession creates a mutual dependency on each other.

Anything that a spouse holds back, and does not willingly surrender to a relationship of oneness leads to division and distrust. It applies to every area: money, family, careers, sport, education, children, future plans, everything. Anything that we try to keep separate, held back, this is mine, that is yours, is going to lead to division and distrust in a marriage.

A lot of couples make this mistake with money. They try to have his and hers money. They maintain separate checking accounts, credit cards, and even bills. Husbands and wives will start sneaking and hiding purchases from each other, and say it’s okay, cause I bought that with my money. That tears at the oneness of marriage. We can do the same thing with hobbies, and friends and outside

interests. I'm not saying that spouses have to do everything together, but those things need to be given as a gift, not claimed and defended as a right. It's now hers too. It's his too.

Consider this: one of God's purposes in marriage is that our marriage is an example or an illustration of our relationship with him. And here is what Jesus said about having a relationship with him, "any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33)."

Are you completely surrendered to your mate? What are you holding back?

Conclusion

If you will build on these three foundation stones, you will have a solid basis for a lifelong marriage. Look at verse 25, and see the results of all this, "*Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*"

God intended marriage to be a place of total nakedness. Now don't worry. I'm not advocating nudism. Adam and Eve weren't just naked physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as well. They were completely exposed before God and each other. They were in a position of total intimacy and vulnerability. There was nothing held back, nothing hidden, and yet they were not ashamed. They had no embarrassment. No fear. No resentment.

In far too many marriages, spouses are hidden behind masks, agendas, false pretense, and layers of different motives. To be completely open, exposed, vulnerable and laid bare before someone else, and yet you are safe, they accept you and receive you, and completely open themselves and make themselves vulnerable to you. That is love.

Adam and Eve wouldn't have this for long. Soon sin would enter the picture. Soon, they would feel embarrassed and ashamed, not just because they had no clothes. They would hide from God. They would start blaming each other, and making excuses. They tried to cover and cover up. They would never again enjoy this complete nakedness. It was lost.

But what Adam and Eve lost in sin, what we've lost in sin, we can begin to regain in Christ. With the Holy Spirit in our lives, and building on the foundation of God's word, we can once again take a hold of what was lost in the garden.

I want to invite all married or engaged couples to join me in responding to this sermon. Only do this if you want this kind of marriage. Now doing this doesn't mean that you're already there, or that you do all this perfectly. I don't. But it means that's the direction you want to go. You want to build on this foundation. Only do this if you really mean it, and you're ready and committed to taking that next step. We won't judge you or think any less of you, if you sit this one out.

(Have them repeat after you.)

_____, *You are the most important person in my life.*

I promise to put you before everyone else.

I promise to pursue you and to hold on to you with all of my heart.

I give myself to you completely.

I hold nothing back. I am yours.