

Building Relationships in Your Marriage

Philippians 2:13

“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

The Bible has a lot to say about relationships and everything we talk about today can be applied to you in your context with significant relationships. For those of us who are married, we used dating to build a relationship. Dating is *explosive*. It is passionate. It is *exciting*. Then you *marry*.

And of course there is a honeymoon period and the weeks become months. And the *months* become *years* and the years group themselves together and they become *decades*. The new has worn off and what once *sizzled* now has to work to maintain a *fizzle*.

I submit to you today – marriage is the most important earthly relationship that we can have. Even good *marriages* are in need of an occasional *tug* and *nudge* – a *challenge*. We all need to be challenged to take our marriage relationship to the next level.

As the world seeks to find ways to solve marital conflict, the latest technique is to “take a leave of absence.” This humanistic experiment advises wives and/or husbands, to take up to a year off from your marriage and parental responsibilities and go on an extended vacation, or live with a friend and learn to enjoy life again. This technique is just one of many solutions to the *rising marriage problems in America*.

You can follow the world’s way. But with the world’s way we have been left with some *cynicism*, *discouragement*, *damaged relationships*, and *confused family members*. In the world’s way, marriage is a negotiable relationship. In today’s humanistic philosophy marriage does not have to include the idea of a family unit or even

the idea of the *opposite sex*. The idea is simply, “Whatever starts your engine. Whatever meets your emotional and sexual desires.” Therefore, if it works out that is fine, but if it doesn’t – no big deal. We spend very little time and effort on *priority* and a lot of time and effort dealing with *failure*.

But in God’s love letter to us – His word, the Bible – we see His way with a lot of hope, a lot of instruction, and real practical application. The Bible describes *relationships*, especially the *marriage*, that it would *thrive* not just *survive*. I have been in the ministry for 50 years. I have seen many young people grow up into adulthood, and when they marry, they want me to marry them. And the result is that I have done a ton of weddings. When the *Bride* and the *Groom* come walking down that aisle they have no doubt in their minds that their marriage will be *successful* and *thrive*. *Survival is not the goal.* There is no such thinking such as, “I am going to gut this thing out for about five years and maybe I will be able walk away with a couch.” Oh no, people are not thinking that way on their Wedding Day. It is a day of *excitement* and a day of *expectancy*!

Let’s stop right here long enough to do a little evaluation on ourselves, on our own marriage. Where is your marriage today? What kind of *relationship have you built with your spouse*? Would you say that your relationship with your mate is one of *romance*? Would you say it is a relationship that can best be described as *routine*? Or would you have to say that your relationship with your mate could be best described as simply *roommates*?

I want you to realize that when I am talking about *romance*, I am not talking some childhood fantasy level. But I am talking about having such a passion for your mate that you take intentional steps to develop your relationship to a higher level of intimacy. It means there is a *sparkle in your eyes* and in your *words* when you talk about your spouse. It means there is *connectedness in your sexuality*. It means there is some *heat in your lovemaking* (not just routine or

duty). It means there are some times of intimacy in your relationship. That is what I mean when I talk about a *relationship of romance*.

Or is your marriage relationship best described as *routine*?

When I talk about a marriage relationship that can be described as routine, it means the *sizzle* has turned into somewhat of a *fizzle*. It means that your marriage may be stable but there is *no spark*. It means that you life together has lost the emotional excitement as well as the sexual excitement. It means that you have drawn this conclusion, “It’s ok, not really great, but it could be worse.” If that you is attitude toward your marriage, you are already in the *survival mode*.

Or is your marriage relationship best described as *roommates*?

When I talk about a marriage relationship that can be described as *roommates*, it means that marriage is headed for “Hospice.” It is dying *sexually* and *emotionally*. It is a marriage that has gone flat. It is a marriage where the two of you basically *live two separate lives, doing your own thing, going your own ways*, two ships passing in the night. Your attitude is simply this - “Sure I love him/her, but.... We have tried everything but nothing seems to work anymore.”

So, where are you in your marriage relationship? Which one of these three would you have to say best describes your marriage? I can tell you today, one of these situations describes your marriage!

So what I want you to do in today’s message is an audit on your entire marriage. Where is the *health* of your *marriage relationship*? If this is going to work we must be honest about it. If we are going to be honest, we have to realize that some of the very best marriages still hurt some of the time. But *bad* marriages hurt *all of the time*. If you have a lot of pain that you bring to the table in your marriage, I realize that one sermon is not going to change everything, you may need major surgery that includes *marriage counseling*. But I really do believe that today’s message could the first step toward healing and recovery. You see, I have no doubt that God wants to heal your marriage just as much as He wants to heal your body from some dreaded disease.

So today we are going to take the first step toward helping you put your marriage back in a right relationship. Therefore, we are going to talk about some areas of commitment that will improve every area of your life, but especially in your marriage!

Linda and I have been married for 55 years, and every year I try to set aside at least one month to preach a series on Marriage & Family. Why? Because it reminds me the importance of my own marriage, as well as reminding you of the importance of your marriage. Let me ask you a question – What kind of marriage do you want when you are married for 55 or 60 years? When you come to the end of your life and people sit down to reflect on *Marriage & Family*, what do we want your marriage to look like? Let me give you some of the things I want to see in my “memory book.”

1. Make a commitment to enjoy life together. In love with life and in love with God. I want my life and marriage to count for something in the kingdom of God. I want my life and marriage to be something that God can get some glory from because others can look at our life and marriage and see what God has done there.

I want us to still be emotionally intimate, physically intimate, spiritually intimate, and intellectually intimate with each other. I want to be that old couple that is holding hands and still being touchy-feely in public. I want to be make sure that we still feel a closeness in our relationship, a oneness, a connectedness, an indescribable depth. I want us to still be sharing hits off the same oxygen tank!

I want us to still be having fun and enjoying each other as we share life and the fun places and things that we can do together. I want our Christian marriage to be what God intended the Christian life to be, “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

You see, God designed marriage to be the most important relationship we would ever have on earth. Jesus summarizes from the

Old Testament, “From the beginning, God made them male and female. And He said, ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother is joined to his wife.’ [notice the word “joined” – this is the **Oneness Factor**. The two are united into one.] ... and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them for God has joined them together.” Jesus was going back to what is recorded in Genesis 2 after Adam and Eve were created, Adam sees Eve, he says, “This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” **When we translate the Hebrew into English, we lose a little bit of the passion.** He looked at Eve and saw this beautiful naked woman and said, “Wow!” Here is a man who had spent most of his life naming things like **cows, tigers, and goats.** **And when he saw Eve – “Wow!”** That is the Oneness Factor. **Two became one.** **In God’s equation of marriage one plus one always equals one.**

God’s design for our marriage is that our spouse would complete us. And not only **complete** us but **make us better.** Marriage should always enhance our lives. Some of you are thinking, “Now about this Oneness Element...I think I must have married the wrong person.” **No, you didn’t.** You don’t need a new spouse. You need a new **attitude.**

I am convinced that some of you don’t need a new spouse. You don’t even need more **books** and **sermons** to figure out how to make it work. I am convinced that you already know how to make it work. But some of you have this attitude: **I don’t want to.**

You don’t need a new spouse; you need a new attitude. That’s all a part of this **commitment.** Not only will it be **long term** but that it will be **growing.**

When was the last time you thanked God for your marriage (not your mate but your marriage)? 1 Timothy 4:4 says, “Since everything God created is good [this includes your marriage] we should not reject any of it. We should receive it gladly with thankful hearts.” God designed marriage to be **good** and it **can be good** but it takes

commitment. If you and I make the right steps, the right commitments, marriage can be fun for a lifetime.

Let me ask you this question - if nothing changes in your marriage, is your marriage going to decline, maintain or grow? Is this an area you need to make a commitment to?

2. The second commitment is making a commitment to serve your spouse. Romans 12:10 says, “Love each other with genuine affection. Take delight in honoring each other.” Another translation says, “Outdo one another in showing honor.” One of the ways we honor our spouse is to **serve**. Philippians 2:2,4 says, “Live together in love as though you had only one mind and spirit between you. Look to each other’s interest, not merely your own.” **The bottom line is this - selfishness kills - serving wins.** This truth applies to all relationships, not just marriages. Jesus gives a new form of relating to one another.

You say, “How long do I have to serve my spouse?” Romans 13:8 says, “Pay all your debts except the debt of love to others. You can never finish paying that.” **When can I stop serving?** The Bible uses the word “never.” You are to serve your spouse for the rest of your life. The stronger your love, the greater your desire to serve. 1 Corinthians 13 give us this biblical description of love, “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable. It keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It’s never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always helpful and endures through every circumstance.”

Last of all, make a commitment to shatter the routine. One of the great problems with marriage is that we get in a **rut** and **routine**. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:9, “Enjoy life with your wife.” **Men, did you know that God has instructed us to “enjoy” life with our “wife”?** 1 Timothy 6:17 tells us that “God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” The Bible tells us in Matthew 11:19, “Jesus came enjoying life.” Somehow we have misplaced this Adam

and Eve “Wow!” with “oh well” and that becomes routine. **One of the major reasons reported for failures in marriage is boredom.** Let me ask you a very, very serious question - **Are you fun to live with?** When was the last time you did something just for fun to break the monotony, something crazy for your spouse? **I am convinced God wants marriage to be an adventure!**

If you are not saved, why not today?

Stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Help me to understand – my love for my spouse is an extension of Your love for me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.