



A Sunday to Strengthen Marriage_Four Sets of Top Tens!

Practical Overload...With Blanks!

February 11, 2024

Holy Text: Gen 1:26-28; 31

Over the years, we have, by God's grace, shared much concerning marriage. You might recall a few message titles:

- Apostolic Marriage Principles¹
- A Model for a Glorious Church!²
- Divorce Proofing Your Marriage 3.0 Parts 1 & 2^{3,4}
- God's Word Concerning Men, Women, and Marriage⁵
- Divorce and Remarriage Revisited⁶
- The five-part Biblically Healthy Household Series⁷

The reason we pay so much attention to marriage is because of the *normative* and *necessary nature* of the household unit in the redemptive plan of God. Such a focus IS NEVER meant to slight unmarrieds or promote "family idolatry," an accusation often hurled at those of us seeking Household Reformation. Rather, this emphasis is in place because of the obvious primacy God Himself placed upon the right and righteous building of godly families, houses built upon the Rock:

***Matthew 7:24-27 (KJV)** Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: **25** And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. **26** And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: **27** And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

Quick Observations/Review from Genesis 1:26-28; 31

1. God made Mankind for a reason; we are created with divine **purpose!** (v.26)
2. God made male and female in His own **image!** (vv.26-27)
3. Mankind is meant to take dominion—bear fruit, cultivate beauty, rule over creation unto the glory of God, and extend Christ's rule— **together!** (v.28)
4. Marriage is a blessing! (v.28)
5. Children are a blessing! (v.28)
6. Maleness (masculinity) and Femaleness (femininity) is good! (v.31)
7. Marriage is **good!** (v.31)

¹ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2014/5/8/apostolic-marriage-principles-pt-1-111713>

² <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2017/5/reading-ephesians-together-pt-6-a-model-for-a-glorious-church>

³ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2017/11/exploring-the-kingdom-of-god-in-matthew-divorce-proofing-your-marriage-30>

⁴ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2017/12/exploring-the-kingdom-of-god-in-matthew-divorce-proofing-your-marriage-30-pt-2>

⁵ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/2/revived-relationships-pt-2-gods-word-concerning-men-women-and-marriage>

⁶ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2022/2/jesus-on-family-relationships-and-possession-pt-6-divorce-and-remarriage-revisited>

⁷ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/5/the-biblically-healthy-household-pt-1-built-upon-the-rock-of-christ>

10 Things I've Learned in nearly 32 Years of Marriage:

1. Keep **Christ** Central!
2. Godly wives are a divine **gift**!
3. "Hard" often implies areas of Hardness (**disobedience**)!
4. **Headship** and **Submission** make life sweet!
5. Letting things go is a **learned** skill. Not everything needs a long discussion.
6. Familiarity can also breed **Contentment**!
7. Cultivating **joy** pays huge relational dividends. Focus on the blessings!
8. The local **Church** is CRITICAL to a healthy marriage.
9. **Repenting** and **forgiving** quickly prevent bitterness and insecurity.
10. Establishing **boundaries** around the home is more important than you might think!

Donna's Top Ten Lessons Learned in our almost 32 years of Marriage (as she wrote them):

1. We fall or rise **together**.
2. Talking bad about you is talking bad about **me**.
3. We each have our role, so don't let **outside** forces try to make me upset about mine.
4. **People** come and go, you are my ride or die!
5. Beauty **fades** (I don't look like I did 20 years ago).
6. I do not value stuff above my own life, so if I am not hiding from you I don't need to hide **money** from you.
7. I don't always have to **prove** my point.
8. A man who is disrespected by his wife is not respected by **others**.
9. My husband is my best **friend**.
10. Withholding is a **sin**.

Top Ten Marriage Problems⁸

1. Infidelity; inappropriate relationships with the opposite sex

- **Matthew 5:27-28 (KJV)** *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*
- **Hebrews 13:4 (KJV)** *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*
- Counsel:
 1. Be humble here. **Pride** goeth before destruction. (Pr 16:18)
 2. Avoid tempting situations (eyes, speech, bad company, etc.) Also know that temptations tend to come when you are **weak** or aren't paying attention!
 3. Build biblical boundaries around your home:
 - No intimate times with the opposite sex; avoid being alone. Beware of work situations.
 - Do not email, text, IM, IG, Meta, Tweet/post with the opposite sex without your spouse's consent.
 - The close opposite sex "friend" is an oxyMORON.
 4. Be determined to protect your marriage **bed** at all costs!
 5. In the case of actual infidelity, seek pastoral and other godly counsel. You WILL need it.

⁸ Given to us by wonderful counseling organization: <https://marriagecenterva.com/>

2. Difficulty resolving and recovering from conflict. (How to confront conflict without wiping each other out in the process; and/or conflict avoidance – refusing to talk about issues)

- **Ephesians 4:26-27 (KJV)** *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil.*

- Counsel:

1. Do a biblical study on **forgiveness**; really understand what it means to forgive as we have been forgiven. (Eph 4:32)
2. Learn how to talk to one another. We strongly recommend “When Talking Get’s Tough” by Scott Brown.
3. Work with your spouse’s natural **personality**. Some are quiet, some are talkative. Some don’t need as many words; some feel unloved without a great deal of sharing!

3. Destructive communication patterns (Criticism, harshness)

- **James 1:26 (KJV)** *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

- **Ephesians 4:29 (KJV)** *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

- Counsel:

1. See #2 above!
2. Move **towards** each other; don’t shut down!
3. Accept that you, as a Christian, can not and must not **vent** your feelings and words “any old kind of way!”
4. Realize that other than God, there is no one on the planet more worthy of your **gracious** use of language, tone, and facial expression than your spouse...and there no one more sensitive to those things!
5. Ask **questions**, especially during hard conversations. “Do you understand?” “What did you hear me say?” “Is my tone ok?”
6. End with **affirming** statements, even if you did not come to agreement. “I love you.” “I respect you.” “It will be ok.” “We’ll figure this out.” “I’m with you.”

4. Distrust (Past hurts and/or betrayals – difficulty recovering, forgiving)

- **Psalms 91:2 (KJV)** *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

- **Psalms 118:8 (KJV)** *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*

- **Psalms 147:2-3 (KJV)** *The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*

- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/1/restored-through-repentance-the-power-to-heal-people-families-and-nations>

- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/1/restoration-through-forgiveness-freedom-through-releasing-others>

- Counsel:

1. Betrayal and/or the **fear** of being hurt again are real. So are the consequences. Among other things, they can keep you from the blessings of true intimacy and oneness with you spouse.
2. Again, explore biblical **repentance** and forgiveness. These two areas are absolutely critical to maintain a strong and vibrant marriage.
3. **Trusting** again after being hurt will require faith in God. This sort of faith can open your heart again.

5. Division of labor conflict (when the wife is expected to contribute financially and is working outside the home)

- **1 Timothy 5:8 (KJV)** *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*
- **Titus 2:3-5 (KJV)** *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*
- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/5/the-biblically-healthy-household-pt-3-joyfully-accepting-god-defined-roles>
- Counsel:
 1. Embrace the Scriptural teaching, even if your life is **contrary**. This produces the right perspective and causes household decisions and conflict resolution to come from “the right place” unto the glory of God.
 2. Talk through how to make the home flow with more joy and unity. Focus on your individual **strengths** to shore up weaknesses.
 3. If the **choice** is made to have the wife work outside the home (and especially if it is “expected,”) fairness suggests that daily household labor should probably be pretty evenly split.

6. Disrespect (disregarding)

- **Ephesians 5:22-29 (KJV)** *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*
- **Ephesians 5:33 (KJV)** *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*
- **1 Peter 3:7 (KJV)** *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*
- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2019/5/honoring-our-parents-pt-1-esteeming-women-and-mothers>
- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2019/6/honoring-our-parents-pt-2-respecting-men-and-fathers>
- Counsel:
 1. Know this: Respect and **honor** are the glue that hold things together when times get tough. With them, the household can face challenges and overcome them. Without them, there is chaos.
 2. **Repent** of disrespecting! Repent of disregarding!
 3. Sometimes, **disagreement** is confused with disrespect. Know the difference.

4. There is typically MUCH **pride** around “disrespect.” Remember what you truly deserve!
5. Being disrespected does not free one to walk in **disobedience** to Scripture. Follow God’s Word and order: loving, gently, but certainly.

7. Lack of spiritual connection/leadership (no praying, bible reading, etc. together)

- **Ephesians 5:25-27 (KJV)** *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*
- **Ephesians 6:4 (KJV)** *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*
- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2020/5/the-biblically-healthy-household-pt-4-practices-spiritual-disciplines>
- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/family-discipleship>
- Counsel:
 1. This is typically a compliant towards husbands, as he is the leader of the home.
 2. Wives:
 - Ask, “**Why** isn’t he leading?” In other words, is there something going on in him spiritually, emotionally or from the past?
 - Very lovingly, tell him how **wonderful** you feel when he leads well, and how you feel when he doesn’t.
 - **Pray** for him.
 - Still be faithful in your personal devotions and discipling of the children.
 - Speak to a pastor/elder.
 - Try not to be **critical** if he steps up and leads, but not the way you want him to! :)

8. Disconnected physically and emotionally (don’t talk, don’t enjoy the same activities/leisure time, feel like only roommates – no physical affection, etc.)

- **1 Corinthians 7:1-5 (KJV)** *Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*
- Counsel:
 1. The way to defeat disconnection is by connection! When the feelings aren’t there, **faith** must be.
 2. Make **time** for love! Spend time together! This might seem extraordinarily difficult depending on the state of your marriage. But you must move towards one another by faith. Do something you both enjoy. Find something you both enjoy!
 3. Read together. Pray together. Worship together.
 4. Kiss each other. Hold hands. Hug each other. Be intimate with each other.
 5. Physical intimacy is a spousal “**duty**.” Withholding (short of medical issues and real trauma) is sinful.
 6. “Duty” (v.3, NASB, LSB) isn’t a bad word; it implies a responsibility that is to be offered freely and with **goodwill** (benevolence).

7. In an age saturated with so much “feelings idolatry,” most believe that feelings lead to intimacy. Suggestion: intimacy can also **change** feelings.

9. Unmet needs (Love languages, lack of romance and quality time for the couple without the children)

- **1 Peter 3:7 (KJV)** *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*
- Counsel:
 1. Brothers, do you know what your wife likes? Sisters, do you know what your husband likes?
 2. Understand that in good marriages spouses actually **want** to please one another! Marriage is not a **competition** on who can get on each other's nerves the most! Marriage is about laying your life down for your husband or wife.
 3. Know their favorite foods, activities, touches, words, days, times, etc. Then actively and presently **engage** in them! Ready, set, **GO!**

10. Financial insecurity

- **Luke 12:42 (KJV)** *And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?*
- Counsel:
 1. Build together. Lay out a spending plan. Develop goals. Be a team.
 2. Work to rebuild trust as needed. Seek counsel.
 3. No good comes from hiding money, reckless spending, and excessive **debt**.

Concluding Thoughts:

Many marriages struggle because they aren't continually being reformed according to the Scriptures. Determine to plant a Christ's Cross in the center of the marriage, draw closer to the LORD, and subsequently to one another. To essentially recap the above, here are the points from another video Donna and I did together...

Top Ten “Do’s for a Happy Marriage”⁹

1. Repent and Believe the Gospel! Remember that marriage speaks of **Christ** and the **Church!**
2. Follow God's Word concerning men/women and husbands/wives! Trust the **Scriptures!**
3. Pray for each other! **Daily!** Passionately! Prayer will help unite your hearts!
4. **Worship** together corporately AND as a family!
5. Enjoy physical intimacy **regularly** and passionately! One of the great blessings of marriage!
6. Manage your money together! No more “his” and “hers.” Cultivate “**ours!**”
7. Encourage one another with **words!** Be intentional. It matters! (Lk 6:45)
8. Make parenting decisions as a **team!** Order is still present, but this is the optimal way.
9. **Enjoy** God's blessings together (healthy food, fun times, vacations, walks, etc)!
10. Take care of your **health.** Exercise often and even together!

Amen!

⁹ Donna and I did a video discussing these! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT-XGD7NHxw>