

Preserving Marriage

Intro:

1. Some of the biggest ethical lapses happen within our own families - See Mt 15:3-6. More and more Christian marriages are unraveling, many merely enduring a miserable, unfulfilling existence.
2. Marriage is meant to be a life-long relationship of companionship, support, encouragement - a haven of love and security in a life of threat, challenge and unkindness. It is also intended to be the stable foundation of raising children.
3. How can we maintain the joy and purpose of marriage?

1. The Foundations of Ethics in Marriage

A. Two **Christians** working from the same standard.

1. God doesn't *forbid* marriage with non-Christian but it does convey general principles which require wise application.
2. When two Christians marry: God is first; the Bible is final authority; worship is fundamentally important; heaven is mutual goal; Jesus is character model.
3. Christian husbands/wives are first **brother/sister** - 1 Pet 3:7 ("*heirs together*").

B. The daily maintenance of love.

1. Daily life is a grind, mundane; it is not misty-eyed romance. Effort must be made to maintain love, communication and enthusiasm. This can be done in different ways but *talking* to each other about *meaningful* things is crucial.
2. Love will "season," mature over the years. Shared experiences - childbirth, job failure, moving house, illness, etc. - will affect relationship. Let it **grow**.
3. Each must give the other reasons to cherish, appreciate, respect and honor.

C. Keep your commitment.

1. It is disturbing to see people abandon commitment without guilt or remorse.
2. We must treat our mates in a godly way *because we said we would before God!*
3. A valuable lesson from the OT: God expects vows to be kept (Ecc 5:4-5).

2. Challenges to Proper Treatment

A. Stereotypical faults - a nagging wife, a husband who would rather read the newspaper or hunt/fish for days on end, an abusive husband/father, a wife who cannot control her spending - can be traced to common spiritual roots:

1. Anxiety over materialism.

- a. In a rich country envy over the possessions of others generates discontent. Greed, lack of patience, frivolousness lead to nagging, crushing debt. Wives must understand that this strikes at the heart of a man's sense of self-worth.
- b. "*where your treasure is ...*"; "*No one can serve two masters*" (Mt 6:19-21, 24). Some leave their mates because their treasure is in **things**.
- c. "Newer, bigger, better" seems to hold the promise of true happiness, but when we look back we cherish doing the best we could with what we had.

2. Parental philosophy.

- a. There **must** be unity in dealing with children: discipline, encouragement, hands-on involvement, teaching (esp. Bible), and honesty/reality. **Truth: Your child** is sometimes at fault!
- b. Two extremes: *Neglect* of children because of self-absorption vs. *Overindulgence* in children's wants/activities. The philosophy of the day seems to be give them everything they want, take them everywhere they want to go, get them on every ball team, in every club, etc. In my opinion, more people will miss heaven on the latter fault than the former.
- c. Your children *do not come first!* Your spouse is first and if you don't recognize that you will likely lose both spouse and children over time. You cannot neglect a marriage for 25 years - until children grown - and expect it to survive.

3. Spiritual immaturity.

- a. Do you discuss with mate the Bible - concepts, ideas, passages - or just the brethren, church politics, scandals? Thorough Bible knowledge is pitiful.
- b. Do you *contribute* to the fruitfulness of the local church or are you a "taker?"
- c. Do you have **any** spiritual goals, ambitions? Are you working to achieve any objective? Saving others? Teaching? Elder? Preach as needed? Better singer? Organize class materials? Bulletin? Directory? **Heaven?**

B. Marriages are failing, not because the institution is faulty, but because we are fail-

ing on a spiritual level. Strong marriages grow out of strong spiritual lives.

- C. The world is tearing marriages, families apart. **Illus:** Distributing meeting fliers, dog coming after me; rope reached street. *Get out of range! Flee! Don't keep standing there fighting the dog!*

3. Some Bible Reading

- A. Pointing out faults, suggesting corrections is not hard. Just keep eyes open. *The hard part is persuading people to repent and make the necessary changes!*
- B. A selection of passages: **Mt** 5:28; 6:31-34; 10:37; 12:25; 19:6, 9; **Mal** 2:13-16; **Eph** 4:25-32; 5:22-33; **1 Pet** 3:1-6.
- C. May we work to treat our wives/husbands as God would have us. There is no more important duty in this life.