

Groups.

Mates, Dates & Marriages: Keep Your Ox & Deal with Your Self

Strong marriages and families are the foundation of healthy churches, thriving cities, and transformed nations. But that strength begins at home - by inviting God's wisdom and presence into our everyday relationships.

Unrealistic expectations, cultural myths like "the one," and constant comparison often rob us of joy. Real growth happens when we embrace both the mess and the beauty of marriage and family life. Proverbs 14:4 reminds us that the mess is not failure but a sign of life and potential.

Marriage isn't about finding a perfect person - it's about two people choosing each other daily, walking in sacrificial love, and allowing God's grace to do the work of transformation. It's not 50-50, but 100-100, with seasons where one carries more, and love shines brighter through service and sacrifice.

No relationship is beyond repair when God is invited into the process. He is the "top button" that aligns everything else. When Jesus is first, our homes can become places of healing, strength, and hope that ripple outward to change the world.

REFLECTION

Share something that stood out from the Sunday message 'Keep Your Ox & Deal with Your Self.'

MESSAGE POINTS

One: Set Realistic Expectations in Marriage and Family

Marriage and family life are filled with both blessings and messiness, and it is important to recognise that unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment and frustration. When we expect perfection from our spouse or children, we set ourselves up for dissatisfaction, forgetting that the presence of challenges is often a sign of life and growth. Instead of longing for a spotless, trouble-free existence, we are called to embrace the reality that love and abundance come with their own share of difficulties. By adjusting our expectations and appreciating the gifts God has given us, we can experience greater joy and gratitude in our relationships.

Proverbs 14:4 (ESV)

"Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox."

Discussion

What do you think Proverbs 14:4 teaches us about the relationship between fruitfulness and messiness, and how might this apply to marriage and family today?

- *Fruitfulness and growth always bring some kind of "mess."*

- *A clean manger might look ideal, but it means no life, no progress, and no harvest.*
- *In family life, noise, conflict, laundry, and disagreements don't mean failure - they mean there's love, growth, and potential.*

In what ways do unrealistic expectations (of a spouse, children, or family life) create frustration or disappointment?

- *Expecting a spouse or kids to be perfect sets us up for constant frustration.*
- *Social media often makes us feel like our family or life should look picture perfect.*
- *Disappointment usually comes when expectations don't match reality - so lowering or reshaping expectations leads to more gratitude.*

What's one expectation you need to release this week in your marriage or family, and how can you celebrate the blessings - even in the mess - of your current season?

- *"I need to stop expecting my spouse to always meet my emotional needs perfectly."*
- *"I need to stop expecting my kids to behave like adults."*
- *"Instead of wishing my family looked like someone else's, I'll thank God for the joy and growth in my own home."*

Two: Reject the Myth of "The One" and Embrace Commitment

The idea that there is only one perfect person out there for each of us is a myth that can undermine both singleness and marriage. Instead, Scripture teaches that marriage is about two people choosing to become one through lifelong commitment, not about finding a flawless soulmate. When we stop searching for "the one" and instead invest in the person we have chosen, we open ourselves to God's work of unity and transformation in our relationship. This perspective frees us from endless comparison and empowers us to build a strong, lasting marriage with the spouse we have.

Genesis 2:24 (ESV) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Discussion

How does believing in the myth of "the one" shape the way people approach dating, singleness, or marriage?

- *It creates pressure to "find the perfect person," which doesn't exist.*
- *It can cause people to leave good relationships when challenges arise.*
- *It fosters comparison - thinking someone else's spouse or relationship must be better.*
- *It can leave singles feeling incomplete or "less than" if they haven't found "the one."*

According to Genesis 2:24, what does it mean to "become one flesh," and how is this different from the cultural idea of finding a flawless soulmate?

- *Becoming one is a process of commitment, sacrifice, and growth together.*
- *It's less about finding the right person and more about choosing to be the right person.*
- *Unity is built over time through God's grace, not discovered in perfection.*
- *Marriage is covenant, not a fairytale.*

What's one practical way you can reject comparison or unrealistic ideals, and instead invest in commitment to your spouse (or prepare your heart for future commitment if single)?

- *Married: "Stop comparing my marriage to social media and focus on what God is building in us."*
- *Married: "Choose to serve and forgive, instead of expecting my spouse to meet every need."*
- *Single: "Pray for God to shape my character now rather than obsess over finding the perfect match."*
- *Single: "Set healthy boundaries and pursue godly wisdom instead of chasing fairytale ideals."*

Three: No Marriage Is Beyond Repair

No matter how broken a marriage or family may seem, nothing is too hard for God to restore. When both partners are willing to do the work, seek help, and invite God into their situation, He can bring beauty from ashes, joy from mourning, and hope from despair. God's redemptive power is available to all who refuse to give up, choose forgiveness, and commit to the process of healing and growth.

Jeremiah 32:27 (ESV)

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"

Discussion

What does Jeremiah 32:27 reveal about God's power in restoring broken areas of our lives and relationships?

- Nothing is beyond His reach - He can restore even what feels impossible.
- Our hope isn't in our own strength but in God's ability to redeem.
- His power invites us to trust Him, even when we see no way forward.

What are some ways people can lose hope in their marriage or family, and how does faith in God shift that perspective?

- People lose hope when hurt feels too deep, or when past patterns seem unchangeable.
- Culture often says "just move on" rather than fight for restoration.
- Faith reminds us God specialises in bringing beauty from ashes.
- Trusting God allows us to see challenges as opportunities for growth and healing.

What practical steps can couples or families take to invite God's restoring power into their relationship?

- Choosing forgiveness daily, even when feelings lag behind.
- Seeking wise counsel or support instead of isolating.
- Praying together and intentionally surrendering struggles to God.
- Committing to growth, not perfection - taking small steps toward healing.

GROUPS PRAYER POINTS

Pray for each other's personal journey as a disciple and discipleship in our church

- Being in the presence of Jesus, becoming more like Jesus and continuing the work He did.

Pray for the Holy Spirit's presence

- That we would be led, filled and empowered to live surrendered, love God and serve others.

Pray for Decade of Destiny

- **Debt Free on Sims and Stage One** Believe that we could be debt free on the purchase of Sims St and the stage one fit-out costs.
- **Launch Two New LIFE Campuses** That we would pioneer two additional LIFE campuses across Melbourne and continue to make room for more people to discover the wonder of Jesus, find their family and step into all that God leads.
- **LIFE Homes** To have short-, medium- and long-term accommodation navigable to enable emergency support, crisis help and essential care to key areas of vulnerability.
- **Education Services Engaged** It is our vision that we will have multiple pathways that we will be able to bring lasting transformation to our communities through learning and education and reverse the cycle of poverty.
- **Sims Street Revival** God is entrusting us to first and foremost lift up the names of Jesus and see many thousands upon thousands discover His eternal life.

WATCH

<https://www.youtube.com/@LIFEMelbourne/videos>

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Our amazing Kids Team launched the *Bite Sized Bible* this week - and we're so excited to share it with you!

This resource is designed to help families explore God's Word together, one bite at a time. With simple, easy-to-read portions of Scripture, it's a fun and meaningful way to spark faith conversations and build lasting habits of engaging with the Bible as a family.

If you haven't picked one up yet, grab your copy from the Kids Connection desk or just outside the Base Camp room.

We believe this will be such a blessing to families, and we can't wait to hear the stories of how your child connects with God's big story - and how you grow together on the journey.

UPCOMING DATES

August – NEW Sunday Series 'Mates, Dates & Marriages'

25th August – Group Leaders Dinner

31st August – Baptisms at Life PM Service