

Commitment

Lesson 02 of the series, "Love & Commitment"

I. Jesus held a very high view of marriage.

Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?" "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together." "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?" they asked. Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended. And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful." Jesus' disciples then said to him, "If this is the case, it is better not to marry!" "Not everyone can accept this statement," Jesus said. "Only those whom God helps. Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can." Matthew 19:3-12 (NLT)

Life Application: We should embrace God's original intentions for marriage.

"This is what the LORD says: 'Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls.' But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!'" Jeremiah 6:16 (NLT)

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ...So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'" This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."

Genesis 2:18-24 (NLT)

Note: God created us male and female so we can experience oneness by completing each other.

"...each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:33 (NLT)

Life Application: We must guard our hearts so they do not become hard against our spouses.

"Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife." Malachi 2:15-16 (NLT)

Life Application: We must work at our marriages.

"...you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.... In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:1-7 (NLT)

Note: We make vows about actions NOT feelings.

Life Application: We must help each other with our marriages.

"Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2 (NLT)

II. God will help us and change us if we surrender our hearts and our marriages to Him.

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

"I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions.

To prepare for this week's meeting, take some time to focus on the following questions and write out a few brief answers. Be prepared to share them with your group.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's message on "Commitment" was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. Who has the best marriage you know? What is their secret?
3. Read Genesis 2:18-25. Why did God make men and women so different from each other? Some husbands and wives view their differences as the spice of life while others allow their differences to drive them crazy. How can this be? If you are married which camp are you in?
4. What was your parents' marriage like? How did their marriage impact/shape your understanding of marriage? How did you witness their commitment to each other and to their marriage?
5. Read Matthew 19:3-12. How did Jesus' views on marriage contrast with those of who were questioning him? ...with the views of his disciples? Why?
6. Discuss the following vows taken from a wedding ceremony:

"I John, take you Debbie, to be my wedded wife; to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death separates us. This is my solemn vow."

Is it important to take such vows? Why? Why not? Read Malachi 2:14-16. What did God say to the people of Jerusalem in 430BC about not honoring their wedding vows? What would he say to the people of Alabama today?
7. Read Matthew 11:28-29 & Ezekiel 36:26-27. Then spend some time as a group praying for the Centerpoint Marriage conference coming up on March 13 & 14 at Cloverdale Baptist Church. Ask God to encourage strong marriages and give real help to struggling marriages. Ask God to change stony hearts and bring hope to those who need it most. Ask God to convict people who need to be there so they can get help.
8. Discuss the following quotations:

"Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!'" The LORD in Jeremiah 6:16.

"In marriage do thou be wise: prefer the person before money, virtue before beauty, the mind before the body; then thou hast a wife, a friend, a companion, a second self." William Penn

"Love as distinct from "being in love" is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by the grace which both partners ask, and receive from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself." C.S. Lewis

"Men, you'll never be a good groom to your wife unless you're first a good bride to Jesus." Tim Keller

Resources

Love & Respect by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004

The Five Love Languages by Dr. Gary Chapman, Northfield Publishing, 1995