

Intro –

***How does a parent's marriage affect the children in the family?***

I heard once that one of the best gifts you can give your children is a strong marriage.

It provides a sense of security, especially as they see or hear about other families divorcing.

It provides a better atmosphere in the home than conflict and tension, even if the conflict or tension is not with them.

***What are some things about parenting that can challenge a marriage?***

1. Marriage is a life-long **covenant** of companionship between a man and a woman that results in **unity**.
  - a. Lifelong covenant of companionship
    - i. **Malachi 2:14, 16** "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant . . . <sup>16</sup> "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."
      1. ***What does covenant communicate? What about companion?***
      2. Put time into being a good companion and the romantic feelings will come. Romance won't get you through the hard times.
      3. "covenant" and "companion" are both critical
        - a. Feelings ebb and flow, stress comes, communication breaks down, you might go through periods where you don't feel close – don't abandon your covenant.
        - b. But if you just view it as "staying" – if I just stay I'm faithful but distance continues to grow – you need to remember she/he is your companion.
  - b. Unity
    - i. **Genesis 2:23-24** The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
      1. Kevin Carson – This does not mean the obliteration of any and all distinctions between the husband and wife. It does mean a cooperative, coordinated tandem.
      2. **Ephesians 4:1-3** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, <sup>3</sup> being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
    - ii. Your children are not "one-flesh" with you
    - iii. Your stewardship of your children is temporary.
      1. There are other familial relationships that ebb and flow.

2. You may become a caregiver for parents.
  3. You never cease being a parent and carrying a burden for them, but, Lord willing, one day they will move out and you'll be alone with your spouse again.
  4. But your spousal relationship is designed to be steady, consistent, and permanent in this life.
- iv. Just read a great article from John Piper from many years ago where he talks about the sweetness of being able to say when you're 70, 80 years old and wrinkles have replaced smooth skin and you can look at each other and say, "we made it."
2. Cultivate Biblical **communication** even with a young family at home.

Adapted from *Four Rules of Communication* by Steve Viars

***Why does communication become increasingly important during the parenting years?***

The need for good communication is intensified as you work through parenting and marriage together. Take principles that are always important for every believer and they are magnified in importance during the parenting years because there is so much to talk about, stress over, disagree on.

a. Be **honest**.

- i. **Ephesians 4:25** Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.
- ii. How much more are we "members of one another" with our spouse
- iii. Be honest about fear, worries, future, plans, sin

***iv. In what ways are we tempted to not be honest in communicating with our spouses?***

1. "I'm fine"
2. Hiding major struggles in your heart
3. Concealing concerns about kids, parenting, marriage

- a. However, we also don't want to be hasty in our words and sometimes it's not "concealing" but rather taking time to process and consider how to talk about it.

b. Keep **current**.

- i. **Ephesians 4:26-27** BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil an opportunity.
  1. Use anger to solve today's problems today – anger can have a good, God-given function. Often though we get angry for wrong reasons and express our anger in wrong ways.
  2. **Proverbs 29:20** Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

ii. Find time to talk that works for your stage of life.

1. ***When do you and your husband/wife have the best opportunities to talk?***
2. Morning or evening
3. Right after work

- a. Sometimes we go in the room for 10 minutes and lock the door right after work just to get some time to talk. Unless someone is bleeding, don't knock!
  - 4. Date nights – perhaps alternating with other families
  - 5. Phone calls at times that work well
    - a. Young kids, mid morning worked great.
    - b. Now, that would be the worst time for me to try to call Sarah to catch up!
- c. Attack the ***problem***, not the person.
  - i. **Ephesians 4:29** Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
  - ii. Unwholesome words – attack a person's character
    - 1. **Matthew 5:21-22** "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER ' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' <sup>22</sup> "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.
  - iii. Words that tear down, rip apart, or hinder growth.
  - iv. Words that confuse the discussion or by-pass the conflict
  - v. Words should be situation oriented and accompanied with the right tone and body language.
  - vi. ***Why do stressful parenting seasons (rebellious child, prolonged sickness or injury, complicated parenting) feel like they can drive a wedge in a marriage even though it doesn't have anything to do with the marriage?***
    - 1. Minor disagreements about process can feel major.
    - 2. Stress spills over onto each other creating a new problem in addition to the existing parenting problem.
    - 3. It's time consuming to manage so might have less time together.
    - 4. If it's medical, there might be other financial stresses that add a new layer.
    - 5. Commit in those moment to move toward each other.
- d. Act; don't ***react***.
  - i. **Ephesians 4:31-32** <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
    - 1. V. 31 are reactions, v 32 are actions
  - ii. Thermostat rather than a thermometer
  - iii. Guard against sinful reactions in our hearts and actions
    - 1. Bitterness

2. Wrath - thumos
3. Anger – orge
4. Clamor – loud screaming and shouting

3. Prioritize physical ***intimacy***.

- a. **1 Corinthians 7:3-5** The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. <sup>5</sup> Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.
  - i. I know this is sensitive and we want to handle it tactfully, but sex and money are the two most common things married couples fight about and desire counsel regarding. Communication is in there as well but usually they are failing to communicate about sex and money.
  - ii. In this passage – the duty and “authority” go both ways, not male dominated; recognizes the reality of temptation that comes from neglecting this. Doesn’t justify sin but recognizes that it makes it harder.
  - iii. ~~Richard Steele – puritan from late 17<sup>th</sup> century – on the duties of husbands and wives – “Every man should have (sexually) his own wife, and every wife her own husband, and only their own. Imitate the first Adam, who had but one wife, and the second Adam, Who has but one Church. The marriage covenant binds you to your own spouse as the dearest, sweetest, and best in the world. The slightest infidelity, *even in the heart*, may lead to full-blown adultery . . . Be careful to avoid temptations to this sin. The man who is not satisfied with one woman will never be satisfied with many because this sin has no boundaries.”~~
- b. So many things make this challenging while raising kids:
  - i. Exhaustion – long days, interrupted nights, kids get sick
  - ii. Pregnancy and childbirth – can affect intimacy for months at a time
  - iii. Little ones who won’t stay in bed or teenagers who stay up late
  - iv. Conflicts that spill over into the bedroom – what happens in the rest of the home affects the bedroom.
- c. **Proverbs 5:18-19** Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. <sup>19</sup> As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.
  - i. There is one God exalting avenue for the expression of sexuality – marriage.
  - ii. Husbands and wives – if you are consistently turning your spouse down, there is nowhere else for them to go!
  - iii. It is a God designed protection against temptation.
    1. Doesn’t mean one spouse is to blame if the other cheats
    2. Doesn’t mean one spouse should use this as a club to have sex whenever he or she wants.
    3. Both of those would be misuses of this passage.

- d. If needed, consider setting aside certain days to plan ahead, initiate early in the day, plan a weekend away together

4. Resources:

- a. *What Did You Expect?* By Paul Tripp
- b. *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller
- c. *Rocking the Roles* by Lewis and Hendricks
- d. *Intended for Pleasure* by Dr. Ed and Gayle Wheat