

MARRIAGE TUNE UP

Making Your Marriage a Priority

Lesson #2

Last lesson we learned that the foundation of a great marriage is knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, to be consistent in walking in the Spirit, and to be continually forgiving your spouse. Another very important step in having a great marriage is making your marriage a priority. The society and culture we live in puts a great deal of effort into the preparations for the wedding day celebration, but gives very little attention to maintaining a good marriage. The outcome of this is often divorce or marriages where two people exist in a pitiful state of woeful co-existence. Many couples seem blinded to the fact that good marriages are by-products of hard work. Why don't people take time to work on their marriages? Because for most, the quality and health of their marriage isn't a priority.

The same thing is true of physical fitness. Most people would agree that it is good to be in shape, to not be overweight, to eat sensibly, but most make little or no effort to do these things. Why? Most will agree that eating sensibly and getting proper exercise is important, but the fact is, it's just not a very high priority for them. The point I am driving at is that before we begin to discuss ways to work on your marriage, you must first be convinced that working on your marriage is a priority in your life. If you don't believe it is a priority, a high priority, chances are you will never get around to having a marriage that is healthy and fit.

I. WHAT IS A PRIORITY?

- A. Webster defines priority as: *"The quality or state of being prior, taking precedence in date or position; superiority in rank, position, or privilege; having a preferential rating; especially one that allocates rights to goods and services usually in limited supply; something meriting prior attention."*¹
- B. A question we might ask ourselves is, **"Have I made my marriage a priority?"** The definition above says that something that is made a priority has allocated to it certain "rights and goods" that are usually in limited supply. What kinds of **"rights and goods"** are available to us, that we can use, in order to make our marriages a priority?
- C. If you had a package that you wanted to ship across the United States what would be the difference between shipping it so that it arrives in 5 to 7 days and shipping it overnight? How does "priority mail" compare to a "priority marriage?"

¹Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1973, pg. 908.

- D. Turn in your Bibles to **Genesis 1:26**. When God said, "*let us make man*" in **vs. 26**, what did he mean by the term "*man*?" (**see vss. 27-28**)
- E. In **Genesis 1:31** God said, at the end of the sixth day of creation, that everything He had made was "*very good*." **Genesis chapter 2** then focuses on the details of the sixth day. Only once, during the six days of creation, did God say that something was not good. According to **Gen. 2:18** what was not good?
- F. After God mentioned what was "*not good*," what did God have Adam do in **Gen. 2:19-20**? Why?
- G. How did God fix what was "*not good*" according to **vs. 18**?
- H. Was Eve an addition to the finished product of creation or the crowning touch of creation? Was she an after-thought or a perfect complement for Adam by God's design?
- I. Look at the definition and the word "*helper*" in the box to the right. What does this tell us about the relationship between a husband and wife?
- According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, the word **helper** appears over 80 times in the Old Testament. It is primarily used in two different ways. First, it is used of military assistance. Second, it is often used of God who assists or comes to the aid of those in need. It can be translated **supporter, helper, assistant, or one that comes to the aid of another.**
- J. Look at **Gen. 2:24**. What three phrases describe the marriage relationship and what do they mean? If these parameters for marriage are not followed, what problems will that cause?
- 1.

2.

3.

K. We often talk about getting married and then later on “having a family.” Why didn't God create children on the sixth day of creation?

1. What does this tell us about what constitutes a family and the role children are to play in the makeup of a family?

2. It is easy to become lopsided in our parenting and become “child centered.” Everything we do can revolve around our children. Our children can become a priority over our marriage. Why is it important to keep the marriage relationship a higher priority than our relationship with our children?

II. GOD WANTS YOUR MARRIAGE TO ILLUSTRATE SOMETHING IMPORTANT

A. In the last 3 chapters of the book of Ephesians Paul addresses how Christians should live their life. **Read Eph. 5:22-33 below.**

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. **24** But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, **26** so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. **28** So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; **29** for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, **30** because we are members of His body. **31** For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. **32** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. **33** Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

B. What does Paul compare marriage to in **vs. 32**? Why?

- C. The husband is compared with what in **vss. 23, 25, 28?**

- D. The wife is compared with what in **vs. 24?**

- E. What does **Eph. 5:22-33** tell us about why we should make our marriages a priority?

- F. What are some things couples can do to make sure their marriage continues to be a priority?

III. **THE MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE TO SPEND ON YOUR MARRIAGE**

In order to have a solid relationship with your spouse you have to spend time together. Researchers have discovered that couples should spend about 10 hours a week talking and being with each other. A marriage that is struggling may need 15 to 20 hours a week of attention to repair its broken bridges. A good marriage may be able to survive on 5 hours or less, but not for prolonged periods of time.

- A. Think back to when you first met your spouse. Did you spend very much time together communicating when you were first getting to know each other? Why? What was the outcome?

- B. How important do you think communication is to the strength of one's marriage? Why?

- C. What kinds of things do we often let get in the way which interrupt or make communication hard or impossible? What are some ways that these things can be dealt with?

IV. HOME WORK

- A. Go on a date with your spouse before the next class meets again.
 - 1. Maybe go to dinner, maybe go for a walk in a botanical garden, maybe go for a drive in a scenic location, maybe go to a museum, maybe go for a walk along the beach.
 - 2. It is best to go on dates when you are rested. The problem is that often we go in the evening after working all day and we are tired. This is kind of like giving crumbs to our marriage. One of the ways to deal with that is to come home from work, take a short nap or rest, then have a cup of coffee, and head out rested and ready to give attention to each other.

- B. Spend some time talking about ways to make your marriage a priority.
 - 1. A priority before your children.
 - 2. A priority before your job.
 - 3. A priority before your hobbies.
 - 4. A priority before your ministry.

- C. Think of habits you can develop which will give you time to talk and communicate on a regular basis.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

D. Cut off the chart here and tape it to your bathroom mirror. Every night before you go to bed write down how many hours and minutes you spent talking to each other that day. If for some reason this week is not a normal week, then save this project for an average week. If you find you are not spending enough time together, decide as a couple what you are going to do to make your marriage a priority.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Total number of hours spent for the entire week = _____.

Total number of hours spent divided by 7 = _____. This is your average time spent together each day.

If you aren't spending enough time together, what are you going to stop doing so you can keep your marriage healthy?