

Sunday, January 22, 2017

"The Secret of Marriage" (Part 1)

THE MEANING
OF MARRIAGE

What would you like Pastor Mark and Leah to know about your experience and understanding of marriage? Write your present definition of marriage and your thoughts about marriage on the separate notecard and place it in the basket at the front.

You're free to write or not write your name on the card. Our sincere desire is to teach in a way that best connects God's truth with your life. We won't share any of these comments with the class.

Personal Reflection/Journaling: No one sees marriage the same way. Our experiences shape how we view marriage. As we begin our study together we would like you to reflect on your perception of marriage. Who or what experiences have shaped how you approach marriage?

Introduction

"A man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound **mystery** — I am talking about Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:31-32)

How is marriage mysterious to you?



God Created Marriage

"Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

(Genesis 2:22-25)

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Talk and Reflect:

1. How can this passage teach you about relationships with:
The opposite gender?

Your parents?

2. What significant event happened soon after these verses? _____
How has that changed things?

3. Notice how God understands Adam! How well does God understand your needs and desires?



Decline of Marriage

“One quarter of all unmarried women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-nine are currently living with a partner, and by their late thirties over 60 percent will have done so. Driving this practice are several widespread beliefs. One is the assumption that most marriages are unhappy. After all, the reasoning goes, 50 percent must be miserable. Living together before marriage, many argue, improves your chances of making a good marriage choice. It helps you discover whether you are compatible before you take the plunge. It’s a way to discover if the other person can really keep your interest, if the “chemistry” is strong enough. “Everyone I know who’s gotten married quickly—and failed to live together [first]—has gotten divorced,” said one man in a Gallup survey for the National Marriage Project. The problem with these beliefs and assumptions, however, is that every one of them is almost completely wrong.” (Keller, 15)

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The Surprising Goodness of Marriage

1. “Married people experience greater physical and mental health. Also, marriage provides a profound ‘shock absorber’ that helps you navigate disappointments, illnesses, and other difficulties.” (Keller, 17)
2. “Studies show that spouses hold one another to greater levels of personal responsibility and self-discipline than friends or other family members can.” (Keller, 17)
3. “All surveys tell us that the number of married people who say they are ‘very happy’ in their marriages is high—about 61-62 percent—and there has been little decrease in this figure during the last decade. Most striking of all, longitudinal studies demonstrate that two-thirds of those unhappy marriages out there will become happy within five years if people stay married and do not get divorced.” (Keller, 19)

Talk and Reflect:

1. When it comes to marriage, society says one thing but God says another. Where do your ideas and opinions about marriage come from?

2. Where do you typically see examples of marriage? Where do you most often hear about marriage? In what situations are you most likely to hear about marriage?



The History of Marriage

"Instead of finding meaning through self-denial, through giving up one's freedoms, and binding oneself to the duties of marriage and family, marriage was redefined as finding emotional and sexual fulfillment and self-actualization." (Keller, 21)

"Marriage used to be a public institution for the common good, and now it is a private arrangement for the satisfaction of the individuals. . . . But ironically, this newer view of marriage actually puts a crushing burden of expectation on marriage and on spouses in a way that more traditional understandings never did. And it leaves us desperately trapped between both unrealistic longings for and terrible fears about marriage." (Keller, 23)

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The Search for a Compatible Soul Mate

"However, sexual attractiveness was not the number one factor that men named when surveyed by the National Marriage Project. They said that "compatibility" above all meant someone who showed a "willingness to take them as they are and not change them." (Keller, 24)

Making Men Truly Masculine

"This is a significant break with the past. Traditionally, men married knowing it would mean a great deal of personal alteration. Part of the traditional understanding of marriage was that it "civilized: men." (Keller, 25)

"But Lipton argued that marriage was traditionally a place where males became truly masculine: "For most of Western history, the primary and most valued characteristic of manhood was self-mastery... A man who indulged in excessive eating, drinking, sleeping or sex—who failed to 'rule himself'—was considered unfit to rule his household, much less a polity." (Keller, 26)

Talk and Reflect:

1. How is it meaningful to you that God created marriage?

2. What is something new you have learned about marriage today? How has your view of marriage been impacted or changed?

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3. What is one way today's lesson/discussion can help you be a better spouse, friend, or family member?
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