**Family Matters—Marriage** Sun. 5/27/18

**Bumper Video**

**Intro**

This is week 2 in our Family Matters series. I think it is fitting that we introduce this series with a reference to an old family sitcom. Do you remember those shows? They were great! They had it all—relatable characters, zany situations, hilarious punchlines, moving drama, and they could always bring about a resolution and tie up all the loose ends in less than an hour! By the end of every episode

* Wally and the Beav had figured things out,
* Andy had managed to get Opie through yet another crisis,
* The Brady kids figured out how to become a bunch,
* Arnold finally realized what Willis was talking about,
* The Tool-Man had wrecked the lawnmower but salvaged his relationship with his wife and kids,
* Mr. Feeny had said something so true and profound that we would be thinking about it non-stop until next week’s episode,
* And the Waltons could all happily say “Good night” to each other.

But in real life our families didn’t look anything like this! In real life things are messier and tougher and there are no guarantees that things will all work out just because we have come out of the last commercial break. As we look around the world that we live in, we have to ask ourselves “Is it true? Does family still matter?”

We think it does! We think family still matters and we are convinced that God wants our families to be stronger and healthier and full of Healing, Hope, Laughter and Peace!

My assignment this morning is to talk to you a little bit about the marriage part of family. I brought a picture to prove to you that I am in fact married: (Picture)

This is what I believe:

* I believe marriage matters!
  + I believe marriage matters for everyone…married, single, whatever box you check on the form.
* If you are married, I believe your marriage matters!
* I believe you can do this (with a little help).

1. **Marriage matters!**
   1. In a time when it seems like marriage is in trouble we have to start by asking “Does marriage really still matter?”
      1. The divorce rate has nearly doubled since 1960.
      2. Fewer people are getting married—in 1960, 72% of adults were married, in 2008 only 50% were.
      3. According to a recent report by the University of Virginia’s National Marriage Project, less than a third of High School Senior girls and only slightly more than a third of the boys seem to believe that marriage is more beneficial to individuals than the alternatives.
      4. People are waiting longer to marry, more Americans are living together outside of marriage, and more and more people are deciding to forgo the idea of marriage all together.
      5. So…if so many marriages don’t last and there seem to be alternatives that give all the benefits of marriage without the cost and commitment…is it time for us to all just admit that marriage is an idea whose time has come to an end and we can all just move on now?
      6. NO! I am convinced that marriage still matters!
   2. Marriage matters for some very pragmatic reasons:
      1. A 1992 study found that (continuously) married people had 75% more retirement wealth than those who never married or who divorced and never remarried.
      2. Men who marry earn 10-40% more than single men with similar educations and jobs!
      3. Married people have greater physical health.
      4. Children who grow up in married, two parent homes have two to three times more positive life outcomes than those who do not.
      5. While there is a popular idea that all married people must be miserable, surveys tell us that the number of married people who say that they are “very happy” in their marriages is around 62%.
      6. Most shockingly, longitudinal studies demonstrate that 2/3 of those unhappy marriages out there will become happy within five years if people stay together and don’t divorce.
      7. If you just look at the numbers you have to conclude that marriage matters and that marriage is a good thing!
   3. Marriage matters for some spiritual reasons too!
      1. At this point it might be wise for us to take a step back and define exactly what we are talking about when we talk about marriage.
         1. One of the things that I get to do is talk to couples who are want to get married in the church. I tell them upfront that we are not going to just talk about marriage—we are also going to talk about matrimony.
            1. In the last few decades the word “Christmas” has come to be as much about Santa Clause and Frosty and eggnog as it is about Jesus being born in a manger, so in the church we are re-discovering the ancient concept of “Advent” as sacred space where we can celebrate the coming of Jesus without all of the secular baggage.
            2. In the same way, the concept of “marriage” has been taken over by the secular and civil ideas of a domestic partnership between people, and so in the church we talk about “matrimony” too.

In the church we facilitate marriages—the civil union of 2 people as registered in the county courthouse which provides some legal and tax benefits.

But in the church we do something more. We join people in Holy Matrimony.

Marriage happens in a courthouse—matrimony happens in a church.

Marriage is presided over by a civil servant—Matrimony is presided over by God.

Marriage is the forming of a partnership between 2 people—matrimony is creation of a man and wife in the covenant of Biblical marriage.

So for the sake of clarity today, when I say “Marriage” what I am talking about is the very specific kind of marriage that is Holy Matrimony—when a man and a woman stand before God and promise Him that they will join their lives together in the covenant relationship that He established way back in the Garden of Eden with the very first man and woman!

The rest of what I am going to say today won’t really make any sense outside of this context.

* + 1. Marriage—Matrimony—matters because God invented it, He celebrated it, He blessed it and He gave it to us for out welfare and happiness.
       1. As I just mentioned, God established marriage way back in the Garden of Eden with the very first man and woman!

*18Then 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.” 19So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. 20He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.*

*21So 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. 22Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.*

*23“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.’”*

*24This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.*

*25Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.* –**Genesis 2:18-25**

* + - 1. Marriage did not evolve in the late Bronze Age as a way to determine property rights. It was God’s idea from the very beginning!
      2. We find this very striking picture in the first 2 chapters of Genesis. When God looks at all He created in chapter 1 there is a repeated refrain; God looked at what He had made and: God saw that it was good… God saw that it was good … God saw that it was good...etc. But when we get to chapter 2, God looks at the man he had created and His verdict is shocking. It is *not* good.
         1. Before the Fall—before sin entered the world—there was something that was not good!
         2. This is either evidence that God made a colossal mistake—“Oops, I didn’t think about the fact that I left Adam living in perpetual solitary confinement.” Or it is a way that God draws our attention to something very important.
         3. Humans were never meant to live alone!

We were created in the image of God—God who eternally dwells in intimate and loving fellowship with Himself—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We were designed to live in intimate and loving relationship with both God and each other.

Marriage helps us in both of these areas!

* + 1. It is obvious that Marriage can help you understand an intimate and loving relationship with another person—more about that in a bit.
    2. But marriage has a lot to teach us about an intimate and loving relationship with God too.
       1. In his book *The Meaning of Marriage*, Timothy Keller says two of the most basic teachings of the Bible about marriage are this: “It (marriage) has been instituted by God and that marriage was designed to be a reflection of the saving love of God for us in Jesus Christ. That is why the gospel helps us to understand marriage and marriage helps us to understand the gospel.” -Timothy Keller
       2. Throughout scripture the relationship with Jesus and the church is described as a marriage—Jesus is the groom and the church is His bride.
          1. Not only does the Bible open with a wedding in the Garden of Eden, but it also closes with a wedding between Jesus and the church.
       3. I believe the marriage covenant is a picture of the covenant that God wants to live in with us.
          1. In the best moments of every marriage we can see how much God loves us. We see what it can cost Him to love us. We realize the great joy it can be for Him to love us. Marriages show us what it looks like for God to give Himself for us.
          2. Marriage matters because it is a real and tangible picture of the covenant that God enters into with us.

When you see a wife putting her husband’s needs before her own—you get a picture of the way Jesus cared about your needs more than His own.

When you see a husband choosing to faithfully love his wife through a difficult season in life—you get a picture of God’s firm commitment to never leave you or forsake you!

When you go to a wedding and watch a man and woman pledge their love to each other forever, you get a picture of God’s promise to always love you!

* + - * 1. In the best moments in every marriages we get a glimpse into who God is and what He is like. In the worst moments of marriage our hearts betray the fact that somewhere deep down we know it is not supposed to be like this—there is something better, something more true and more real that our marriages are supposed to live up to. That truer something is the love and covenant of God that marriage is designed to be a reflection of.
        2. Marriage helps all of us—married or single—to understand God better by seeing either a reflection of what God is like when a marriage is at its best, or feeling the hallow ache of our human covenants being less than they were created to be.

1. If you are married: **Your Marriage matters!**
   1. Not only does marriage matter—in the sense that the state of marriage in our world and society at large make a difference in the way that we all live and understand God, but—if you are married—your individual and specific marriage matters!
      1. It matters to you because a strong and healthy marriage will yield countless benefits to you every day!
      2. It matters to your spouse because he or she can only have as healthy marriage as you are willing to allow it to be!
      3. It matters to your family (especially if you have children) because it models for them what they can expect a marriage to be like.
      4. It matters to God because He loves you and He wants the best for you.
   2. The way you treat your marriage matters because you are either making your marriage better or worse every day—I’m here to remind you to make it better!
      1. It is worth the work to make your marriage better! (But a better marriage will take some work.)
         1. Your marriage is (at least it can be) a gift from God to you that is an immeasurable blessing in your life! It is worth the work to make your marriage as accurate a reflection of God’s love and covenant as possible!
         2. What are you doing to move your marriage in the right direction?
      2. In my home we own 2 cars. We want our cars to last so there are a few things that we do:
         1. We do basic care and maintenance—we wipe up any spills, we put gas in then regularly, we do our best to keep them from getting bumped or scratched—basic everyday stuff.
         2. We do preventative maintenance—we change the oil every so many thousand miles, we vacuum the carpet, we change some filters—the every so many months stuff.
         3. Occasionally we do a major overhaul—if the check engine light comes on, we take it to a professional to diagnose and address the problems that are bigger than what we can handle on our own.
         4. I recommend that you treat your marriage with at least as much care as I treat my car.
      3. Do basic care and maintenance—the everyday stuff.
         1. Communication
            1. If your marriage is going to be a loving and intimate relationship, you have to know your partner! The way that we get to know people is by communicating with them.
            2. Talk to your spouse every day!

It is so easy to get into the rut of “How was your day?”…

What would it look like if you made it your goal to have at least meaningful conversation with your spouse every day? Not like a “Solve the world’s problems” kind of thing, but just an “I really feel like made a connection with my partner today” kind of thing.

* + - 1. Conflict
         1. There will be conflict in your marriage! Whether you have been married for 5 days or 50 years, there will be conflict. The key is how you handle the conflict.

Let me offer you a few suggestions about handling conflict in marriage:

* + - * 1. Fight fair

**What are the rules for conflict in your marriage?** Have you talked about them? Have you agreed on them?

**Give your partner your full attention**—You are not going to find a solution of Pinterest or ESPN

**Listen for understanding**—really hear what your partner is saying, don’t just listen for your next opening to launch an attack.

Spealking of attacks, **Avoid personal attacks**—Remember, the goal of a marital conflict is never to win! If you win, your marriage losses!

**Stay on topic**—don’t bring past arguments back up.

**Keep it in house**—Your momma isn’t going to solve this one—don’t bring it to her!

* + - 1. Invite God into your marriage
         1. Pray with your spouse, pray for your spouse
         2. Make church a priority for your family!
    1. Preventative maintenance—do the once in a while stuff
       1. If you have the opportunity I recommend that you prepare and preach a sermon on the importance of marriage—because that will remind you of all the things that you should be already doing but you have just been so busy…
       2. Read a marriage book (preferably together)—there are a lot of good books and resources out there…find one and work through it with your spouse.
       3. Marriage Retreat (**Info Graphic**)
       4. Go on a date
    2. Major overhaul—if the Check Engine light comes on, do whatever it takes to diagnose and fix the problem!
       1. If you have given serious consideration to ending your marriage, that is not going to get better on its own!
       2. If there are warning bells going off and red lights flashing, get help!
       3. Remember what I said at the beginning?
          1. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that 2/3 of those unhappy marriages out there will become happy within five years if people stay together and don’t divorce.
       4. Go see a professional councilor! If you can’t find a professional, go talk to someone who you trust.
       5. The sooner you go the better!
          1. Let me just be transparent with you for a second. It is exceedingly frustrating when a couple comes to see me and sit down on my couch and one spouse says “It’s over—I’ve tried and tried and I’m just done!”
          2. Well, why are we even here?
          3. If you need help, go get help for your marriage before it gets to that point!
    3. Your marriage matters and you are making it better or worse every day—consistently choose to make it better!
  1. Your marriage matters because it is one of the main ways God will help you become who you were always meant to be!
     1. Remember the story we read from Genesis earlier? When Adam needed a helper—someone to be in an intimate and loving relationship with God sent him out to search for that helper among the animals.
        1. I’m pretty sure that God didn’t really expect that Adam would come back and say “God, I found it! I found the helper I was looking for! It is the three toed sloth! It is furry and sleepy and I can really keep up with it!
        2. And I’m pretty sure that God didn’t make boy and girl salmon, and boy and girl horses and boy and girl snails and all the other boy and girl animals and then after making a boy Adam He completely forget to make a girl Eve. I'm pretty sure this is another place where God is drawing our attention to something very important.
        3. And the thing that I think God was trying to get us to pay attention to was the response of Adam when he woke up:
        4. “*At last!” the man exclaimed “This one is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh*”
        5. “Finally! After all that lonely searching I have found someone who is like me, someone who understands me, someone who I can enter an intimate and loving relationship with! Here is the helper and friend that I have deeply needed for so long!”
     2. A spouse is supposed to be a very special kind of person in your life—your spouse is your partner—your helper—your best friend in a very special way.
        1. No one will know you better than your spouse.
        2. Because of this, no one will have the power to hurt or betray you like your spouse, but at the same time, no one will have the power to help and protect you like your spouse!
        3. I really like the way Timothy Keller illustrates this in his book *The Meaning of Marriage*:
           1. Have you ever been to a mountain on a rainy and cloudy day? When the clouds cover the mountain, you can’t see anything but the ground. But when the clouds break you catch a glimpse of the majestic peak towering above you. That is what it is like to be a Christian. You have an old self and a new self. The old self is still crippled by sin and fear and anxiety. The new self is still you, but liberated from all the brokenness of sin—the you that God always intended. The new self is always a work in progress, sometimes almost completely obscured by the clouds of the old self—but sometimes the clouds break and you catch a glimpse of who God is transforming you into.
           2. “Within the Christian vision for marriage, here’s what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating, and you say ‘I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be a part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to His throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say ’I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!’” -Timothy Keller
  2. Your marriage matters because your spouse can help transform you into the person God has always wanted you to be!

1. **You can do this (with a little help)!**
   1. I believe that Marriage matters!
      1. It matters because it is a blessing form God!
      2. It matters because it is a picture of God’s grace and mercy and covenant!
      3. It matters because God invented it, He celebrated it, He blessed it and He gave it to us for out welfare and happiness.
   2. I believe that your marriage matters!
      1. It matters because the way that you live out your marriage will have a significant effect on the people around you.
      2. It matters because a strong and healthy marriage will yield countless benefits to you every day!
      3. It matters to your spouse because he or she can only have as healthy marriage as you are willing to allow it to be!
      4. It matters because your spouse is an invaluable helper in your transformation into the person God always intended you to be!
   3. I believe that you can do this! You can have a strong and healthy marriage!
      1. If your marriage is already strong and healthy, I believe that you can continue to do the things necessary to see it continue to grow and flourish!
      2. If you have a good marriage but you have been on auto-polite for a while, I believe a little attention can make your marriage stronger than it has ever been.
      3. If your marriage is in danger, I believe God can help you to find the healing and forgiveness that you need to bring new life into your marriage.
      4. If your marriage is over, I believe that God can heal your heart and mend your soul and lead you into all that He has for you next!
   4. God wants to help you make your marriage work—for you, for your family, and for everyone around you who will have a chance to see who God really is reflected in the way that you love your husband or the way that you love your wife!

**Pray**