



# The Marriage That Goes the Distance

Today we're going to begin a series on Family and Marriage.

[Ephesians 5:25-28](#); - for husbands the most difficult and important passage for husbands to fulfill

When I talk about the Biblical Patterns for Marriage and Family, I know that I have the ability to create a lot of guilt and uncomfortableness out there. "Pastor, you don't know where I've been?" I don't, but this is what you need to hear from me right at the start:

- Maybe you've already had maybe one, maybe two bad marriages. I'm not talking about the past. This message is to take you from where your life is NOW and move on.
- Though you cannot go back and make a brand new start you can start from now and make a brand new end - and I'm going for the brand new end.
- I'm not focusing on where we've been. We've all got parts of our lives where we wish we hadn't, couldn't or shouldn't have gone. We all have those areas, but I want to get you to focus on where you are today and where you're going today and in your future.

[Philippians 2:1-5](#) - Talks about Christ and how he models for us relationships that we will talk about today. The CEV renders [v. 5a](#) "Think the same way that Christ Jesus thought . . ."

Paul's teaching (HS) [Verses 3-5](#) tell us two things concerning principles that are going to make our marriages last:

1. We are to ACTIVELY put our mate first.
2. Jesus sets the EXAMPLE. If you don't know how to do this, just look at life of Jesus and he will model it for you.

## STATISTICS

- America's divorce rate is now more than double the rate of 1960. ( see map)
- More than 50 percent of the children in America's public schools live in single-parent homes.
- Among evangelicals, Internet pornography is now a major factor in the dissolution of families and departure from ministry.
- The majority of children in America have fewer than 10 minutes of significant and meaningful conversation with their parents each week.

Source: Facts & Trends, November 2003

(Recognize couples who have been together 10, 15, 25 years or more.)

**Today we are going to do a little "baking." SEVEN INGREDIENTS TO KEEP A MARRIAGE TOGETHER.** Like a cake, one or two ingredients, like baking flour and water, do not make a cake - it takes ALL the ingredients.

## I. A HIGH COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE MARRIAGE WORK

**Mark 10:9** ***Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*** (NIV)

Marriages that make it are not problem-free, they are marriages where both spouses have a high commitment to make the marriage work.

Even marriages made in heaven need down to earth maintenance work!

- Dr. Kinsey, well-know in these issues studied 6000 marriages, 3000 divorces said "There may be nothing more important than this - the determination that the marriage will persist. This determination forces those who make it to adjust, to accept situations which would seem to be sufficient grounds for a breakup if continuation of the marriage were not the primary objective."

So this is number one.

**AT the end of your notes is a TABLE:** "How am I doing" table . . don't do it now. Go home, turn TV off, sit down together, talk to one another going over seven ingredients -- be loving with each other, be patient, turn other cheek, smile, lighten up, **AS SOON AS IT GETS HEAVY, STOP.** Some of you are going to have fun afternoons.

Marriages that last also:

## II. HAVE EFFECTIVE, MUTUALLY SATISFYING COMMUNICATION

**Genesis 2:24** *<sup>24</sup>For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.* (NIV)

When communication breaks down, so do marriages. - that is a fact.

When marriages begin to fail, so does communication.

One wife telling another "My husband doesn't listen to me anymore." She said, "What do you mean?" "the other morning at breakfast he was as usual engrossed in his paper and I said, 'I going to go and get cremated.'" He said, "OK honey, get your coat and let's go." (Maybe he was listening)

### FIVE LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

#### 1. CLICHÉ COMMUNICATION (LOWEST)

"Hi, how are you? How you feeling? Did you have a nice day?" That's it.

#### 2. REPORTING THE FACTS

Where husbands and wives talk about the things they have to talk about. It's just the facts.

#### 3. DISCUSSING IDEAS AND OPINIONS

Here's where we talk about our likes/ dislikes, thoughts.

#### 4. FEELING AND EMOTION LEVEL

How we feel about things. What makes us happy, sad, fearful. This is "soul-mate" communication. Not just learning, but sharing in something together.

NOTE: Circle this one. Why? Because it's unlikely that anybody MARRIES if they haven't gotten to this level. So anything less is a regression . . .something is wrong.

#### 5. COMPLETE TRUST AND TRUTH LEVEL

Don't have to hold anything back, can be completely honest, truthful, can really open up you very soul to you mate. This is the goal of every marriage. **THIS IS INTIMACY!** No fear of rejection, there's freedom to be naked not just

physically, but emotionally, spiritually, psychologically! This is IT!

What I've found is women generally like to share themselves -- their thoughts, problems, joys, feelings, dreams. But men in communication want not to share themselves, but their world -- where they are in their job, want to give advice and they want to go "bottom line".

I've been married 32 years now. And I am still really learning to do what I'm am going to talk to you about here.

You see I'm still learning that if I am going to have Level 5 communication with Nina I have to learn to stop trying to always "bottom line" everything in every conversation. I want to "fix" every thing . . . . I might as well just give Nina a three point outline, a poem and an invitation, when I do that!

- what she doesn't need is answers/solutions but **what she needs most is an listening ear!**
- needs someone to take the journey with her. Not say yes or no, just to listen. (taken me 32 years - shows you what a stupid pastor you've got)

So communication is a continual process you have to keep working at it.

## III. SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Families that have a strong spiritual vitality stay together. The Lord really is the center of the marriage. **Ps. 127:1** *Unless the LORD builds the (marriage/family) house, its builders labor in vain.*

Now, I did not say that professing to be a Christian keeps a marriage together. It doesn't. In fact, divorce rates among professing Christians is equal to or higher than the divorce rate of all people in America. That's amazing. That's a travesty!

**A Pastor's Prayer:** Dear Lord another marriage is shattered and the divorce will be final next week.

- He said that it was the breakdown of communication and the subtle infiltration of boredom. She said it was an accumulation of things.
- He said it was her preoccupation with the home and children's activities. She said he stifled her dreams and ignored her achievements.
- He said he felt in prison and restricted as night after night she pushed him away. She said he was harsh and brutal and often embarrassed her in public.
- He said her critical attitude contributed to a sense of inadequacy. She said she felt lonely and unappreciated and felt no claim to a personal identity.
- He said she wallowed in self pity and she said he was shiftless and irresponsible. And he said she didn't care and she said he didn't care. **Lord how tragic that through all the wasted years neither one of them asked WHAT YOU SAID. Amen"**

I'm always amazed , I've been pastoring now for a little while (24 yrs) - I'm still amazed that Christians have such an attitude in their marriages.

- I'm not amazed that we have problems - we all have problems, this is not Disneyland. We all have problems, in fact people that get divorced -- they don't have bigger problems than people who don't get divorced - they just don't know how to handle problems)
- But I'm always amazed that Christians with marriage problems sit there and do the "HE SAID" "SHE SAID" THING. And they go at each other until it makes you want to throw up. And if you say "What does God say?" and they think "What does God have to do with this?" It's like we look at marriage like "I can do what I want to do in it" Would you grow up!

Christian grow up! You can't do that -- You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Jesus Christ bought you by paying an incredible price for you and me to make some things work in your life and if you do so, it is at your own peril!

- And if your not letting him work in the most intimate, personal, important relationship in your life, can you really say that He's really important in your life at all!!!

Many times marriage problems are nothing more than a lack of spiritual vitality!

Marriages that last have another ingredient: They...

**IV. HAVE LEARNED EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

**Ephesians 4:26** <sup>26</sup>“*In your anger do not sin*”: *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,* (NIV) Lasting marriages have conflict, disagreements, arguments. So learn a practical way to settle those issues.

"My wife and I have an agreement, I don't try to run her life, and I don't try to run mine either" (that's not what I'm talking about)

Principle: Whenever two or more people are in a relationship with each other there will eventually be conflict.

- Are you married? There will be conflict.
- Are you single and living home with your parents? There will be conflict.
- Are you the parent of a single son or daughter living alone? There will be conflict.
- Are you single and have a close friend? There will be conflict.

Whenever there is conflict there can ONLY be one of two outcomes: either we hurt and destroy each other or we build up each other and benefit from that experience.

***Solving Problems Successfully***

**1. Don't underestimate your problems.**

Don't stick your head in the sand. Don't ignore it - they rarely go away when you do nothing. All of us have them so let's decide to just face it.

Problems are like pregnancy - they keep on growing until somebody, then everybody else will notice it.

**2. Don't underestimate the potential to fix the problem**

Good news is whatever problem you have in your marriage, millions of other people have had the same problem in their marriage, and millions have solved it. It's not that you have the only problem and nobody else know what your going through, believe me, people have been there and done that. You're not alone.

**3. Don't Exaggerate Your Problems**

Sometimes first instance is to blow it up, exaggerate it, make it bigger than life, get so negative that you are overwhelmed and immobilized.

**4. List Possible Solutions Together (seek help if needed)**

Sometimes you do need to go to someone a little older, wiser, or mostly more objective who can see things from a different light.

**V. CULTIVATE SEXUAL INTIMACY**

Marriages that last our couples who have a fulfilling, satisfying sex life.

Yes you heard me right. Some of you Christians are going crazy right now (especially my wife). What is he going to say now?

In fact, there is an entire book of the Bible that describes the beauty and importance of sexual intimacy between a husband and wife. If you want to know which one, ask pastor Russell. Seriously, it's the **Song of Solomon**.

If you really want your marriage to last you need to talk to each other, let each other know what you

enjoy, what makes your sexual relationship really meaningful and intimate. And then you need to work at making your sexual life as fulfilling FOR YOUR SPOUSE as you can possibly make it! Forget about yourself.

Enjoying sex together is the one of the greatest prohibitors of keeping someone from going somewhere else.

### GREAT SEX

You know, Hollywood portrays great sex as something between two people who meet and “hookup”. But that’s not true. Listen, we know that God created sex, and therefore it is good. But God says he created sexual intimacy exclusively for marriage. That’s God’s way, period. That’s because outside of real human intimacy and commitment, sexual intimacy is far less than it was meant to be.

You see the best sex is not between two people who hook up, but the best sex occurs in a marriage where two people really love each other. Between two people who have a lifetime of practice! Practice fulfilling each other on every level, including sexual intimacy.

Story: a man went to see his doctor. They were both friends and occasionally played golf together. His wife accompanied her husband to the doctor's office. After the checkup the doctor asked to speak to the wife privately. He said "If you don't do the following your husband will surely die.

Each morning fix him a healthy breakfast and send him off in the morning in a good mood.

At lunchtime make him a warm, nutritious meal and put him in a good frame of mind before he goes back to work.

For dinner fix an especially nice meals with candlelight and don't burden him with household chores

Have sex with him several times a week and satisfy his every whim.

After the appointment was over the husband anxiously asked his wife what the doctor had told her.

She said, "the doctor told me You're Gonna Die."

There is a sixth ingredient you need for your marriage to go the distance:

## VI. A SERVANT'S HEART FOR EACH OTHER

**Ephesians 5:21.** The Bible does tell wives to respect or submit to their husbands doesn't it. Every once in awhile some husband comes up to me and says, "Pastor isn't it about time you preach on wife's

submitting to their husbands?" Now it's a very biblical passage. But you've got to realize that it's given in the context that says, "*Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.*"

Reason I don't do too much preaching on "*Wives submit to your husbands*" is that I'm still working on trying to take seriously my part of "loving Nina the same way that Christ loved the church" and when I get feeling like I'm doing that, then watch out!

Because I happen to believe that the Bible teaches that husbands have the primary responsibility to first love our wives (as Jesus first loved us), and that when we do that, then wives will have no problem wanting to show respect for their husbands.

That is my part in having a servant's heart in marriage.

Parent's, do you want to help your children get ready for marriage? Then love each other openly, especially shown in serving one another.

“But that’s not my job” who said that? Grow up out there! It's not “your job, my job” in marriage.

Before we get married there's not enough we can do for each other, and then after marriage we start drawing lines. It's a fact. What happens? We lose that servant's heart. You can't make a marriage last without a servant's heart. It's not 50/50. It's 100/100.

Single people if you say, "I don't think I can do that." Then do yourself and everyone a favor - don't get married. You're not ready. Maybe you'll never be ready. But do the world a favor and don't get married if you are going to be selfish. Selfish, immature people cannot make a good marriage. Because a great marriage is a very giving relationship.

## VII. BOTH MATES CONTINUALLY GROW AND DEVELOP

I can guarantee that many marriages fall by the wayside because one spouse does not have a desire to continue to grow or a mind-set to allow for growth in the marriage.

Marriage is not a Snapshot (like wedding pictures), marriage is more like a Movie - a moving picture. But if a wife grows and husband doesn't or

husband grows and wife doesn't then there's problems. Soon there a gap and communication goes backwards and finally the marriage breaks down.

### ***How to Grow Together***

(or tips on How to Pick a Marriage Partner)

#### **1. HAVE A PERSONAL DESIRE TO GROW**

This is something you can best do before you marry. Do you like to grow? Do you want to be a different, better person 5 years from now. Are you committed to growing personally?

#### **2. THEN MAKE SURE YOU CHOOSE A MATE WHO ALSO HAS THE SAME DESIRES!**

And if you don't desire to grow, then go find someone else that doesn't desire to grow too and marry them - (and you can watch TV together for rest of your life)

Realize that the person you marry will NOT be the same person in five or ten years. I can tell you Nina is not the same person that I married 34 years ago. . .neither am I.

#### **3. BECOME BEST FRIENDS**

If you're going to grow together, you've got to like each other.

#### **4. DISCOVER WHAT YOU ENJOY TOGETHER**

Very quickly decide on what you like to do together. Doesn't have to be everything (bowling). But it's amazing how in some marriages the whole thing is spent doing things alone.

#### **DEVELOP WHAT YOU ENJOY TOGETHER**

Do it together often.

One of ways we grow together is our mutual love for books and serving the Lord in ministry.

(Also, we like to talk about people . . . ha ha)

#### **CONCLUSION**

You could get 100 manuals on marriage, but the difference is what you do with the principles that you read and hear. What will you do with these?

Will you go home and kill out the chart and together talk about doing some down to earth maintenance work on your marriage?

And remember, something else. Surely there are husbands here who need to be better husbands. And there are wives who need to be better wives.

Have you been trying to do that without submitting yourself totally and completely to Christ?

Maybe you think that you have stopped loving your wife. Maybe you think that you have stopped loving your husband. A happy marriage doesn't mean being hilarious all the time. Every couple has differences. Love is a commitment. Marriage is a commitment, a commitment that you have made.

If Christ isn't first in your life, if he isn't Lord of your life, you will have RELATIONSHIPS that are built on a shaky foundation.

Make a commitment before you leave today that you will put Christ first in your marriage. That you will take seriously what God says about marriage. If you do, you can have A Marriage Goes the Distance. You can have a Great Marriage.

One other thing. God loves married people, that's why He gives us help for our marriages.

**AND GOD LOVES YOU.** Every one of you.

Come to Christ. Let him be first in your life, not second or third or fourth. Let him be first! Let Christ come in and forgive your mistakes and your sins. He died on the cross to forgive you.

He will give you eternal life. He will give you peace and joy and serenity. And he will give you love. And he can help give your relationships a new start.

Repent of your sins and receive Christ into your heart. Commit to Christ, and he will commit himself to you.

You ask, "What do I have to do?"

First, say, "O God, I have sinned, and I am sorry."

Then by faith turn to Christ. You cannot come by your intellect alone. You must come in simple, childlike faith. Commit yourself to Christ, and say, "Lord Jesus, help me with my entire life, including my home."