

Marriage Matters

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[0 : 00] His sins, they are many, our sins, they are many, his mercy is more. Please take your Bibles out to Ephesians 5, Ephesians 5.

Just a couple of things that I want to say. We're talking about marriage, we're going to be talking about family in the next several weeks. We're not just going to be pointed just in Ephesians, but I'm going to take you to other parts of Scripture.

I want to have a very well-rounded view of, I guess, some of the questions that society brings in, some of the attitudes. And at different times, I'm going to be pulling certain truths from different parts.

But this is the primary text that we will be working from for this series. As you notice to my left and the right, not only do we have a new stage set up, but there's these words that are here.

These are the words of Scripture that have been echoing to us through our study of Ephesians. And especially when we come into some of the commands that are given to us.

[1 : 21] These are the characteristics that we are to embody as believers that Paul has been calling us to. These are words that affect our witness.

They affect our, for lack of a better word of saying it, our Christian credibility. If we were the opposite of patience, kind, gentleness, forgiving.

At some point, whether we say we are a Christian, people would protest. So I want us to keep those things at the forefront of our mind when we get into some of the tough teachings that's sometimes great against us.

We have questions. What God is calling us to. I want these words to be at the forefront. That all the things that we're talking about happen as God has developed these characteristics in our lives.

So looking at verse 18. I'm going to start at verse 18. And we're going to work our way through to verse 4 of chapter 6 in our Bible. So just please read along with me.

[2 : 42] Beginning in verse 18. And do not get drunk with wine. For that is debauchery. But be filled with the Spirit. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church.

His body is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. That he might sanctify her.

[3 : 46] Having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word. So that he might present the church to himself in splendor. Without spot or wrinkle.

Or any such thing. That she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife, loved himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh. But nourishes and cherishes it. Just as Christ does the church because we are members of his body.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. And the two shall become one flesh.

This mystery is profound. And I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself.

[4 : 46] And let the wife see that she respects her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right.

Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise. That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. But bring them up in the discipline and in instruction of the Lord. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, I pray that you would anoint my words.

May they be heard with the intention that they are spoken through. Father, it is so easy for us to read between the lines given.

Our own culture. Our own life situations. Sometimes it's because of our past. We see words.

[5 : 51] We see verses that have been taken out of context. And we somehow tend to twist some of the other parts of Scripture in order to fit our view.

Which usually comes with the motive of seeing you as a just, loving, and great God. So Father, as we move through this series, I pray.

Again, that the words that I say are heard with the intent that they are said. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Remove our own background, our color.

And may we see them as you spoke them. And may we see the heart of the Father in all these things. Please give us these things, Lord.

In your name. Amen. Marriage and family. I think if we are honest about it, our culture has a pretty strange relationship with both marriage and family.

[7 : 06] If we used Hollywood or movies or caricatures that we see in society, they seem to portray either a love it or hate it view of marriage.

Almost a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde approach. On one hand, our culture is enamored with the idea of love.

Of finding one's soulmate so that one could live happily ever after and live a long and productive life. In fact, we have entire TV channels designed to promote this view of life, right?

The Hallmark channel is built around the premise of perfect boy meets perfect girl, has perfect kids, has a perfect family, and they live happily ever after.

However, given today's climate change, it's now more divorced, perfect man meets divorced, perfect woman from high school who we seem to know 20 years ago.

[8 : 18] And now they blend both families together and live happily ever after. Or it sells the idea that marriage, kids, family is great if only you can find the right one.

Or we have movies that show mom and dad are married, but they are unhappily married. They wink-wink at each other's unfaithfulness.

Or we see the undermining of fathers in TV series where mom and even the children are the geniuses and the voices of wisdom where the father, it's lucky enough that he even knows how to breathe.

Or there's the movies that forget family, let's just move on to promiscuity and embracing other alternate forms of sexual preferences in behavior.

Whether it's intentional or not, Hollywood has certainly given up on the idea of what marriage means for our society.

[9 : 31] In fact, one well-known magazine made this comment. It said, Maybe that's how you feel.

Maybe it's not how you feel. Maybe it's not how you feel. But I'm hoping over these next couple of weeks, we can come to truly understand not only what God feels, but what God teaches and how God holds marriage and family.

Before I go any further into the text on this, I want to get a little bit personal with you. And I think there's a point to be made here.

It's interesting. If you go to a Christian bookstore, you look online, you are looking for marriage books, there is a plethora of marriage books to help you. Some are good.

Some are helpful. Some are really good. But I've kind of noted that there's three types of books that speak to marriage and affect our views that are represented in our culture.

[11 : 04] So I wanted to talk about a couple of these books. The first type of book is the book that I call the psychological type book. It's not necessarily Christian, but there's some really good, helpful advice that exists.

Certain books would teach on how to communicate, how to improve intimacy and honesty with one another, how to build trust.

Some of these books would include, I know that we haven't heard about it much lately, but Men Are From Mars and Women Are From Venus, I believe was the title, or Men Are From Venus and

Women Are From Mars, either way.

It was a very well book went around, and it was very helpful, not particularly Christian, but it offered some helpful insights into men and women understanding one another.

Another one is the five love languages, written from a Christian perspective. Yeah, it's got some psychological views, but some very helpful words for us that I know has helped a lot of people understand.

[12:19] These books have useful insight, and they can be very helpful in the right context. Where I want to drill down a little bit is the second type of book.

This is kind of the first type of book, but it is written from a biblical point of view, biblical wisdom.

These are the type of books that we often see with focus on the family, and some of those ministries that offer biblical wisdom as opposed to earthly wisdom.

And many of them are characterized by how to have successful marriages, how to be successful parents. It seems to divide foolish behavior from wise behavior.

But a lot of these books tend to be program-oriented. And what I mean is they teach you how to do family devotions, and they lay out certain rules and ideas that you can follow that will help you in the discipleship of your kids, teach you how to read your Bible with your spouse or your children.

[13:31] It'll even give you good Christian ideas, family outings, family dates, those type of things. And they tend to be written a few years ago, but they are very helpful.

But they're only hopeful for the right kind of family. What's interesting is that many of these books feature very wonderful pictures of the author in there.

And they'll often say, this is Jim and his wife, Lara, and these are their four children. And when we read these books, we seem to feel that it's almost an instruction manual that tells us you can have a family like me and Lara if you follow these steps.

If you put these teachings into place, you can have the perfect family. And they always, of course, like I said, they have a picture of mom, dad, the eight kids.

They're all quite attractive. They're all wearing nice matching clothes. You know what I'm talking about. The white shorts, the khaki pants, and it's usually in an idyllic place, either in the mountains or near the ocean.

[14:45] And if the writer tends to be a little bit older, it will feature his kids all grown up and all their grandchildren. And there's a sentimental touch to it. You look at that book and you're like, wow, there's a warmth that connects with us.

It's beautiful. But it communicates. It says this is what the perfect God-honoring family looks like.

And you look at that book and some of you will say, I want that.

I want that perfect God-honoring family that looks like this, that does these things. And that's okay. But then there's other people that look at it and say it's too late for me now.

And the truth of the matter is, for you to even have a family that could even remotely look like that, you would have needed your parents to have read that book, or better yet, your grandparents to have read that book and put those life habits into action.

[16:05] I am 52 years young. I was married at 46.

I am my wife's second husband. My wife and I are both the product of broken homes, non-Christian homes. Not only do we have our own sins to deal with, but we've inherited the sins against us from our parents.

And I'm not talking about generational curses kind of things, but we've been given baggage. Most of us who didn't have parents or grandparents that raised us in these things, we never had a clue what role models were, or what marriage was ultimately for, or even where to begin looking to these things.

I often say it's like reading one of those financial books. You know, you read those financial books, and it gives you these financial advice. And when you're finally at that age where you're smart enough to read a good financial book, and it's telling you, if you were 18 years old and you took \$25 from your paycheck every week and put it into savings, by the time you're 46, you're a millionaire, that type of thing.

But A, that takes into position, or it takes into account that, did you have a job? Did you have a family that supported you?

[17:51] Not everybody has their way through college paid for. Many people needed that \$25 in order to pay for food.

What I'm saying is, some of those books are really right and good. But there's two things that I want to speak to about them. One, they're not for everyone.

And two, the purpose of Paul's teaching that we are going to learn in Ephesians, and what the Bible says about marriage, is not having a perfect marriage.

The instructions that Paul is giving us is how to be made perfectly into the likeness of Christ.

Do you understand that? That's the whole punchline of this whole sermon series. The Bible's teaching on family is not so that you could have a perfect family.

[18 : 58] But it's so you could be made into the likeness of Christ. So it doesn't matter what background you come from.

It doesn't matter what your family history is. These instructions can be taken to heart. Our part of God using this to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

There's this old joke that Steve Martin says. He says, I can teach you three ways to be a billionaire. Step one, get a million dollars.

Often, that's what many of those books offer. You have to have the million dollars in your pocket before you even move in to any further instruction.

Sometimes, some of you are now old enough to know and realize when you look back at how you grew up that your parents were actually pretty clueless about marriage.

[20 : 10] They were pretty clueless about love. Some of you are even wise enough now and you've gotten to a point of even though you grew up in a Christian family, you now know enough about the Bible that you might actually question whether they're saved.

And you are now praying for their salvation. Even though they demonstrated perfect attendance, perfect pictures, and had perfect family meals. And I've had too many friends grow up in Christian homes and once they finally left the home, their parents divorced.

And the only reason they stayed together was because of the child. So I'm repeating my point here. You see, God didn't give us this book of the Bible to teach us how to have a perfect family.

God does not make any of those promises. God does provide us wisdom and tell us how to avoid foolishness. But the Lord never promises these things.

If he did, it would be a version of the prosperity gospel. He must want me happy. And the only way I'm happy is if I'm rich. So that must be what God wants. If there's one idol that I have seen in the evangelical Christian community that we live in, is the idol of the perfect family.

[21 : 35] But what's interesting, that book tells us what it means to be humble, to be gentle, ultimately to be saved and have an eternal relationship with the Father.

For some of us, that will be the only Father that we know. And the rest of the story is God teaching us to be more like Christ.

Some of you know this too well. In fact, some of the deepest Christians I know come from homes that rejected them, that have been through the great valleys of life, broken homes, broken marriages, broken children, but they have developed an unwavering love for Jesus Christ.

I just need to look at you. Here at the church at Squamish Baptist Church, every family has an entirely different story. Some of you were saved young.

Some of you were saved old. Some of you have good marriages. Some of you have tough marriages. Some of you have hard marriages. Some of you, this is your second marriage.

[22 : 50] Some of you have wonderful children. Some of you have tough children. Some of you have special needs children. Some of you are bad parents.

Some of you had bad parents. Some of you have had children that have left the faith. Some of your children have left you.

Some of you are raising your grandchildren. Some of you are raising your grandchildren. Some of you have a relationship with your parents. Some of you are raising your children.

I would like to say, see you as I will. That's never been the goal. So please, my point is, don't buy into the lie that that is what God's goal is for you.

Because every single one of us, no matter who we are in what I just read, has an incredible opportunity to grow in Christ no matter where we find ourselves.

[23 : 54] That is the ultimate command, to be more like Christ. It's not to use any of those life situations as excuses to not be more like Christ.

But in fact, Christ often shines brighter in that adversity of life. But I can tell you, God does promise a life that is blessed by God to those who obey him and follow his word.

Our lives are to glorify God. God does promise us that if we follow in his footsteps, we will be more like Jesus.

My question to you is, no matter what family background you have or where your family's at now or how hard you've worked for the perfect family and it's not happening, is it not worth desiring God's blessing and glorifying him in his life?

Is this something not worth pursuing? Is this not something ultimately will be soul satisfying?

[25 : 24] I don't want you to hear me that people from broken homes and broken families can't grow into good, perfect families.

Perfect. They can. Many people can overcome certain obstacles, situations in life and God can bless them as they pursue that path.

But ultimately, that's not God's goal for you. The third type of book are the ones that I truly recommend when it comes to marriage are the ones that place marriage, parenting, and eternal perspective.

Some of these books are entitled When Sinners Say I Do or What Did You Expect by Paul Tripp.

And the primary point of these books, it's not how to better relate to your spouse.

The problem that they try to do with that trouble is actually found in your heart and how do you submit your heart ultimately to Jesus Christ because that's where the sin resides.

[26 : 42] The greatest way to change a marriage is to change our own hearts. Believe it or not, it's not our spouse. Let me tell you, do not trust any book that says that marriage is easy.

These are five steps to make it work. And if you do exactly these things, you will get this family. Like I said, God cares more about you looking like Jesus than he cares about how good you look in a white shirt, khaki pants, lined up by a river with a picture of you and your 20 kids.

Think of the examples in Scripture of family. Adam and Eve, the first family. What could go wrong? Well, one son will kill the other son.

Abraham and Sarah. What could go wrong in that marriage? Well, he could sleep with his handmaiden who will end up fostering a generation upon generation to people that will ultimately make war upon your son.

You have Jacob and Esau. The example is one brother stealing the birthright from another. Then we know how Jacob's sin went into his marriage.

[27 : 56] Multiple wives creating friction in the kids. Twelve brothers. Ten of them hated the one. Moses, is he an example of a godly father?

He was never home. David, Solomon, the man whose own heart reflected God's love.

And the other one, the wisest man in the world. Disasters. The only marriage I could really think of is when I worked through a picture that Scripture uses is the book of Ruth.

And that's an entirely different sort of marriage. It's a marriage based on the promises of God and how he keeps those promises to us despite life situations.

So I want to ask, so there's two questions that I want to answer. The first one is, obviously what makes for what marriage or what's God's instructions for us.

[28 : 58] And the second one I want to answer this morning is, what does God think of marriage? What does God think of marriage? We can look at some of these Old Testament examples. I wonder what God uniquely thinks of marriage.

What, what, is it good? Is it bad? Maybe it's not that important to him. Look at all these other people that went before us. They had pretty much imperfect marriages.

Well, take a look at Genesis 1 with me. Turn back into your Bibles to Genesis 1. There's an incredible point that I want to drive home.

that if there's anything that you can take away, is the understanding of what God thinks about marriage.

Take a look at verse 3. Genesis 1, 3. And I want you to pay attention to certain words. 1, 3.

[30 : 06] It says, And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Notice that word, was good. Skip back down to verse 10 of Genesis 1.

In the creation account, God called the dry land earth, and the waters were gathered together. He called seas, and God saw that it was good. Again, it was good.

Genesis 1, 12. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit, in which is their seed, each according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. God is liking his creation. He's declaring that it's good. Verse 17. And he's speaking of the moon and the stars.

And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. Verse 21. [31 : 06] So God created the great sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

It was good, right? And then we go to verse 25. And God made the beasts of the earth, according to their kinds, and livestock according to the kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground, according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. It was good. So we're seeing this theme. It's not like God created something. Ah, that's not so good. I've got to go in and fix it.

He's creating it. It is good. Then finally we get to verse 27. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him male and female.

He created them. And what did God say? Genesis 1, 31. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

[32 : 09] Have you ever wondered if God had regrets or wondered about if there was something he did that maybe wasn't so good?

And I know we've just read this account. We read good, good, good, good, good. There's actually one thing in God's creation that he declared that was not good or the situation was not good.

Take a look at Genesis chapter 2. Look at verse 15. Now these are the events that are happening in day seven of creation.

These events are happening, and he just had created Adam. Verse 15. The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Next couple verses describe what he does. Now look at verse 18. Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.

[33 : 16] So God had created. It almost takes a step back. Adam's been working. He's been doing God's bidding, what he's been programmed to do, what he's created to do, representing God, naming the animals.

But God's looking at something. He's saying, It's not good. It can be better. He says, I will make him a helper fit for him.

Verse 19. Now out of the ground, the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called, every living creature was his name. And the man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens, to every beast in the field. And for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him.

It's not good. It's not good. Verse 21. So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man.

[34 : 24] While he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman.

And brought her to the man. Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife. and they shall become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. The last thing that we see God making for man, providing for man is a family, a wife.

In fact, every aspect of the entire universe was created and it was called good. One author comments, he says, every aspect of the entire universe was finished.

[35 : 43] Every galaxy, every star, every planet, every rock, every grain of sand, and every time molecule was in place. God created all the species of every living thing.

And even after having Adam named every animal and bird that was found to be one part of creation, that wasn't so good.

Adam was alone. Adam was in need of someone. Therefore, God's final creation, the part that makes creation all perfect was the creation of Eve.

And in verse 22, God brought her to Adam. And by this very act, from the very beginning, we see God's creation of family.

Verse 24, this would be Moses writing this and teaching his people about Adam and Eve. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

[37 : 07] This isn't just a story, but Jesus Christ himself in Matthew 19 when he's questioned by the Pharisees and the law givers trying to trip them up, they're talking about divorce.

Jesus Christ replies to them, have you not read when he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. what therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

Notice the words that are used, what God brought together, one flesh, one family. family. We live in a world that tries to discount marriage as if it's just some patriarchal or some society construct that helped man many years ago survive when other tribes and people raided against them.

No, that's not true at all. in fact, not only was the first institution made by God, it was blessed by God and it is sacred to God.

[38 : 52] The marriage, the family to this very day is sacred to God. and I know some of you look around, there's disarray, there's brokenness, there's sin.

You're kind of hoping God doesn't care. You don't want to be held account for any of this. A couple things I can say. No matter how messed up your current situation is, our God is a redeeming God. Not only does he redeem souls, but he does redeem marriages. I know several marriages on the brink of absolute destruction.

God turned around and used those marriages for good to bring God glory. marriage was never a mistake.

Family is not a mistake. Family were not to have children to allow the state to raise. No, no, no.

[40 : 12] That is for a mother and a father, a family to come together and raise children under the admonition of the Lord. marriage was not a cure for boredom.

It wasn't for general order in society. It is the underlying institution that underlines every other institution in our world.

It underlines what happens in our church and it underlines what happens in our government. God was very purposeful in designing marriage.

So when I ask the question, how important is the subject of marriage and family to God, it is the utmost of importance. You see, family, unlike any other relationship, is the tool that ultimately God makes to make us more like Jesus.

It's true. and it's also the number one way we actually communicate about Jesus to the world around us.

[41 : 33] I know there was a habit. I'm just going to share a quick anecdote. Back in the day, it was very normal if you wanted to be a missionary, you leave your kids behind or put them in foster care or some special institutions and they would take care of your kids and you went to the missions.

What it ended up as people started to apply biblical precepts to the idea of missions, they found that the most successful missionaries were those that went out with their family and in a pagan heathen land, how they worked as a family was more of a witness than for them doing the work that they were there to do.

And for those of you who think it's too late, often and sometimes Christ shines brighter when people rely on him in the midst of brokenness in the valleys of life and it communicates to others the love and care that Jesus Christ has for you.

The reality is often our families might not look the best, but God uses them to do many miraculous things. So it is with these two thoughts that I want to leave you with as we prepare ourselves for Paul's teaching.

it's all about changing you and it's all about his glory. And however God, the means that God uses to both change you and to use you to bring glory to his name is all on God and not your perfect family.

[43 : 29] Let's pray. Dear Lord Heavenly Father, I pray you will bless this series. I pray that us who come from more brokenness than wholeness, you would encourage that there is a word to teach by those who cling to you.

For some, Jesus, you have been a father and husband to the fatherless and husbandless. For men, you've been the one who has held them tight when disaster hit home.

Father, there's no area of life that is untouched by your word that we are going to be learning on marriage, that we are going to be learning about family. We all fit a part of this most intimate relationships.

We're all in there together. together. So God, I just pray that you would set these things upon our heart, that we would come with open hands and open hearts to your word, not defensive, not trying to push our point of view, but to humbly come before your word and accept the teachings that you have for us.

bless the families that are here, not just the perfect ones, but the broken ones of God. There's many people here that are even married to unbelievers, people don't share the same love.

[45 : 07] May you give them an extra strength, extra encouragement. May the church lift them up where they're feeling weak.

protect them. Do not allow them to lose faith. Let them cling to the cross and let that be the most safest, most wonderful place in the world.

It's at the feet of you, Jesus. Thank you for this Sunday. Thank you for this word. Thank you for our families.

We ask these things in your most holy and perfect name. Amen.