

Applying the Covenant: Marriage (4)
Sermon Prepared for WellSpring Church
October 2, 2011
Primary Scriptures: I Peter 3:1-7 (Malachi 2; Eph. 5:21-33)

1. Introduction
 - a. Engage
 - b. Review
 - i. Husband as Christ
 - ii. Husband as federal head—responsible for himself, his wife, his family.
 - iii. Wife a Church—Church seeks the honor and glory of the Husband Christ.
 - c. Preview
 - d. Big Idea: The Marriage is the best place on earth to show the power of the Gospel.
2. For Both Persons together: I see six quickly
 - a. **The First Covenant Stipulation is: To see marriage as a covenantal relationship.** (Proverbs Malachi with the husband as the head and the wife as the covenant partner. Both with duties and responsibilities. We have gone over these in the past two weeks and I am not going to take time here to do it again. The sermons are available on line and we will have CDs within the next two weeks.
 - i. Know these stipulations and seek to understand them and to fulfill them.
 1. Go through the list on a regular basis.
 2. Read a book on covenant marriage,
 3. Ask God to point out the areas where you need to improve (there will areas to improve)
 4. Ask your own covenant partner for help seeing your blind spots.
 5. Admit your own fault(s).
 - ii. The most dangerous person in the life of the church in terms of unity and peace is the wife of a man who is not fulfilling his husbandly duties.
 - iii. The second most dangerous person in the church is the husband of a wife whose husband isn't fulfilling his husbandly responsibilities and is being bullied at home and so becomes a bully at church—where he can have some clout (even though he is now acting in submission to his wife.)
 - iv. The two are one; they are together as a corporate individual. The Bible calls this one flesh—oneness, intimacy, partnership. Genesis 2:24 "They shall become one flesh." Both of you need to learn to grow in your knowledge and appreciation for one another, your care for one another, our concern and tenderness for one another.

- b. **Stipulation #2 Pursue Oneness in the Physical part of your marriage.** Oneness includes the intimacy of your physical relationship. You cannot ignore this and have a proper Biblical marriage. **Read** I Cor. 7:1-5.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

(1 Corinthians 7:1-7 ESV)

What this is not saying:

That Sexual relations are wrong in a marriage. What Paul is saying is that sexual relations outside marriage is wrong.

What this is saying:

You are required in marriage to seek to give one another Sexual Pleasure in marriage. This is not an optional part of the marriage Covenant. Have a proper view and exercise of your physical relationship—the enjoyment of one another’s bodies in the physical relationship is a command.

- i. Husbands: Seek to meet her physical and sexual needs. Wives: seek to meet your husband’s physical and sexual needs.
- ii. Seek first to give one another pleasure. This is about giving not taking. There is an ocean of difference between making love and having sex. Our culture has blurred the distinction horribly and grossly.
- iii. Make this a priority in your relationship. Talk about it, plan it, make an appointment and keep it. Plan special get-a-ways. Practice spontaneity. Keep a record just for fun. (Red Dots)
- iv. Know that the physical fuels the emotional and the emotional fuels the physical. Life is not all about sex, neither is marriage... but
 1. Sex is a part of the communication of marriage
 2. Sex is the fuel of closeness and intimacy
 3. Men Honor your in this relationship-she is not an object or a toy.
 4. Show each other that this is important, that you want to give...
 - a. There is a soothing

- b. She needs to know she is desirable
 - v. Sex is never a reward or to be used as manipulation.
 - 1. Look at I Cor. 7:1-5 again
 - 2. I know of wives are too tired, too angry, to hurt, too busy, too tired to fulfill this requirement.
 - 3. I know husbands who are too busy, distracted, using substitutions to fulfill this requirement. Pornography, over-eating, over drinking, drugs, self-pleasure, lack of exercise, stress, fatigue.
 - 4. I don't know what normal is (three times a month?) but I know it's more than once a year. It is certainly more than once in five years. Sure age changes things but generally speaking there is not an upper age limit to this covenant requirement. You remember that I told you that I have made my wife right now the standard of beauty for me. Well I also am making her the standard of sexiness as well. She is exactly what I need. I think she is doing the same thing. She told me I'm sexy this week. I liked that. A lot.
 - 5. I'm thinking that it's even more than once a week.
 - 6. Self-control and self-giving are the contrasting issues here. I am to show self-control and I am to make certain that I am giving properly to my wife.
 - vi. A protection against sexual temptation
 - vii. An important glue for true emotional intimacy
- c. The third stipulation of the marriage Covenant is: **Fill the earth-have children**, have more than one, have more than two. I'm not suggesting a number but I am excited to think what might happen to you as individuals, to you as a couple when you learn to sacrifice for a child. I am excited to think what might happen in our culture if Christians had more children than non-Christians and brought those children up in the nurture of the Scripture and according to a full-orbed Biblical worldview.
 - i. Husbands Give her the opportunity to bear children—Wives honor your husbands desire to have children. Sex is not just recreation, it is re-creative.
 - ii. Wives do not manipulate this one way or the other.
 - iii. Both of you make certain that your decision to have or not to have children is based on a biblical view point. Parents: Stay out of your children's bedroom. Make certain that your advice to your married children is biblical, God-centered and God-honoring.

Feminine beauty takes many forms but in modern times the most overlooked form of this blessed beauty is that of pregnancy. Because we do not pay attention to our Bibles, we have now come to the point where we dismiss this

blessing contemptuously, or make fun of it, or we make rude comments to those who have received this blessing. The result is that too often modern Christian women abhor pregnancy because it “ruins the figure.” Others lament what happens to them because of the inconveniences involved in getting around or in sleeping. Others associate pregnancy with morning sickness and insist that they never want to be pregnant again. The central problem with such opinions is not that women have them but rather the context we have created, in which such opinions are formed.

We have consequently fallen down in between two positions. We have rejected the contempt the world shows for the results of pregnancy, but we have not yet learned to honor pregnancy ourselves. If the pregnant woman enters a modern gathering of Christians in the condition that Luke describes concerning our Lord’s mother (i.e. great with child), the chances are good that she will hear three rude comments before the evening is out. Two people will want to rub her stomach, as though being pregnant makes one’s body public property, and one person will set up shop as a wit, “Does the doctor know what causes this?” A few more serious individuals will express concern for her, the kind of concern that baits the snare for discontent. “Is Joe taking care of you? You look tired.”

Douglas Wilson, Federal Husband, page 83, 84

- iv. Investigate and know what is entailed in artificial birth control methods.
- d. **The Fourth Stipulation** is to **Make you marriage and home a Sanctuary** (Genesis 2:25), Make your home a place where you both may come and experience acceptance, forgiveness, encouragement, teamwork, worship and have freedom from shame, embarrassment, fear and the lies of the Devil. It is a sanctuary if the Gospel reigns. Let it be a place where the Gospel is proclaimed to one another all the time.
 - i. In terms of
 - 1. Peace
 - 2. Order
 - 3. Gospel
 - 4. Purity
 - 5. Honesty
 - ii. Understand that as much as we want intimacy and love and acceptance we also want privacy and are afraid of vulnerability, transparency, and being known. Sin has brought shame. We all want to hide behind our fig-leaves. We all want to protect ourselves and keep hidden our secret faults, weaknesses, and failures. Fight against the hiddenness that is really deception because deception murders intimacy.
- e. **The Fifth Condition of our Covenant is to Fight for permanence—** Do not ever let go. You have entered a covenant. A marriage that can

be broken is not a reflection of the idea of covenant. You fight for permanence because God is your helper. You fight for permanence because a broken marriage significantly and forever hurts others. You fight for permanence because your marriage is meant to reflect the permanent, faithful, loyal, eternal, unbreakable, lasting, steadfast and dependable love of God. Fight for permanence because we are told everywhere that we should just give up, be happy.

- i. The fight for permanence
 - ii. The next time someone says “God wants me to be happy” ask them “Who says?”
 - iii. Before you consider divorce:
 1. Wives are you willing to be the one who tears asunder what God has put together?
 2. Husbands are you willing to take responsibility for tearing asunder what God has put together?
 3. Both of you: Am I =willing to take responsibility for the generational damage that I am initiating here?
 - iv. Two additional considerations
 1. Hardness of heart (Matthew 19)
 2. The Gospel of Forgiveness (it’s not fair that I should suffer in forgiveness—then reconsider your acceptance of the gospel. If you are a Christian you are rejecting the basis of the Gospel.)
 - v. If you are divorced: The gospel is still for you. Your acceptance before God is still on the basis of Christ. Not the success of your marriage.
- f. **Sixthly, Apply the gospel to every aspect of your marriage.**
- i. You must forgive
 - ii. You must seek God’s glory
 - iii. You are not in this for happiness—You show me one place in Scripture where it says that God wants you to be happy. God wants you to honor him. God wants you reflect him, God wants you to seek him and his kingdom, God wants to be your portion, God wants you to say One thing have a desired...
 - iv. Vengeance is mine says the Lord

The only way to make monogamy work is to “value love above pleasure; pursue holiness and humility rather than power and personal fulfillment; find grace to repent rather than condemn; learn sacrifice and patience in place of indulgence and gratification “ (The Book that Made Your World, Vishal Mangalwadi)

May I tell you again what the Gospel is?....

3. Blessings
 - a. To the Husband

- i. Prayers not hindered
 - ii. Rejoicing in the wife of your youth
 - iii. A willing helper
 - iv. A Fruitful vine Psalm 128
 - b. To the Wife
 - i. Husband won without a word
 - ii. Precious in God's Sight
 - iii. Living without fear
 - iv. A buffer of protection between you and God....
 - c. For Both
 - i. No Shame
 - ii. Helpful Companionship
 - iii. Godly Offspring—Godly offspring cannot be produced without both a man and a woman. Children do not give purpose to marriage, they are the purpose of marriage.
 - iv. Sexual Protection
 - v. Pleasure of God
 - d. For Others
 - i. Showing the beauty of the Gospel
 - ii. Showing the attributes of God in action
- 4. Curses
 - a. At the very least—joylessness
 - b. At the worst—brokenness, and divorce.
 - c. Future generations will suffer—six of the eight marriages I am doing this year have at least one divorce among the parents. At least Nine divorces in six couples' lives. In the two marriages that do not have divorce there are unbelieving parents.
 - d. God is not mocked... you will reap what you sow.
- 5. Conclusion:
 - a. You cannot do any of this in your own strength. Left to yourself you will make a mess of your marriage and muck up a beautiful and wonderful thing.
 - b. You married a sinner, a sinner whom you cannot change. But you knew this when you got married.

Baxter: "Remember still that you are both diseased persons, full of infirmities; and therefore expect the fruit of those infirmities in each other; and make not a strange matter of it as if you had never known of it before. If you had married one that is lame, would you be angry with her for halting? Or if you had married one with a putrid ulcer, would you fall out with her because it stinketh? Did you know beforehand, that you married a person with a weakness, as would yield you some matter of daily trial and offense? If you could not bear this, you should not have married her; if you resolved that you could bear it then, you are obliged to bear it now. Resolve therefore to bear with one another as remembering that you took one

another as sinful frail, imperfect persons and not as angels, or as blameless and perfect.”

- c. Your partner married a sinner whom they cannot change—in fact if we are honest we need to say, as I need to say, “I am a worse, far worse sinner than my wife with whom I am often impatient, angry, feel superior to, want to change, disrespect, do not love, deceive, try to manipulate, exploit, ignore, diminish, marginalize and worse.”
 - i. Some great Book Titles:
 - 1. “When Sinners Say I Do” and
 - 2. What did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage” ,
 - 3. John Piper, Momentary Marriage,
 - 4. Douglas Wilson, Reforming Marriage, Federal Husband.
 - 5. Be very careful of the marriage books that you buy and read—make certain that they are truly biblically based. We always have helpful books on marriage and family on our book table.
- d. But thanks be to God, he can and will change those who humbly submit to him and his ways. This is what the gospel of Jesus tells us...
 - i. Men, Jesus Christ the perfect husband died for you, lives in you, strengthens you. He who has commanded you and called you to the task of Covenant Head is your example, your source, your encourager, your rewarder—Seek Him and his help.
 - ii. Women, Jesus Christ who lives to make his bride holy, cleansed, washed “So that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she should be holy and without blemish” will do this same kind of work in you his child and daughter, the wife of your husband. You are not called to do this alone—but with the Christ who lives in you! You are the bride of a husband and a part of the bride of Christ. You too have the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide, encourage, help, strengthen, and protect you.
 - 1. Are you willing to suffer for Christ? Then some of us will need to start in our marriages.
 - 2. Are you desirous of bearing witness to Christ? Then some of us are going to need to start in our marriages and homes.
 - iii. Husbands and wives see the beauty and glory of the gospel as it is applied to the life of your partner. Christ has died for him, Christ has died for her, Christ has brought forgiveness, he has blotted out sins, he has cleansed, he has not kept a record of wrongs. If you are a recipient of that grace from God—Can you not apply that same grace that is meant to overflow through you to your imperfect, faulty, failing, forgetful, hurtful, slow-learning, selfish spouse? Remember this:

Everything that your spouse has done to hurt you, you have also done—or more importantly to remember, you have the same potential to do. You are capable of every sin that is perpetrated against you. And you are either forgiven by God or kept safe from sinning by God. How do you look down your nose in unforgiveness to your spouse?

- iv. Husbands and wives if you are a recipient of the grace of God and have been forgiven and accepted as his own beloved child, known in all of your failures. So why not repent, confess your wrongs to your God or your failures as the covenant head of your wife? Why don't you go to your wife and, humble yourself and ask for forgiveness? Wife is it time for you to repent before God that you have resisted his call on your life as a covenant partner? Is it time to ask your husband's forgiveness for the way that you have dishonored him and disrespected his God-given role in your life—Even if he is not a Christian. Why do you pretend that you do not need the same kind of humility and sorrow for sin in front of your spouse that is required of you before your God? In the same way that we need to stop trying to prove that we are worthy or God's acceptance by our accomplishments we need to stop posturing and pretending that we are worthy of our partner's acceptance and defending our failings and attacking theirs. What if you agreed with your spouse when the criticisms come and add and I am even worse than that... But thanks be to God he is helping me to see my failings and bringing me a better place as his child and as your partner.
- v. Husbands and wives, since the very purpose of marriage is to show the goodness and love and faithfulness, and loyalty and purity and grace of God—You can believe that if you join with him in pursuing his purpose for your marriage he will—and he will complete that purpose in you.
- e. If you do not know the forgiving grace of God in your life and it is not a part of your marriage. Here is how to receive it.....
 - i. Believe this truth: You are a rebel against God, which means you are sinner living as his enemy
 - ii. Believe this truth: You need forgiveness and reconciliation
 - iii. Believe this truth: You cannot earn acceptance from God or make your own way back to him
 - iv. Believe this truth: You need a helper, a savior, a redeemer, a reconciler
 - v. Believe this truth: there is only One and his name is Jesus
 - vi. Call out to him admitting these truths and ask him to change your mind, your heart, your will and bring you to himself.

To the Lord's Supper...