

Marriage – God’s Way – A Marathon Marriage

Heaven Help the Home Series #1

October 24, 2021

Five-year-old Suzie told her mother the story of Snow White which she had heard in school. Prince Charming had kissed her back to life. Suzie concluded: "And do you know what happened then?"

"Yes," said the mother, "they lived happily ever after."

"No," said Suzie, with a frown, "...they got married."

Tim Timmons contends that there are basically three stages in marriage.

Stage #1 is the Ideal. That’s when everyone is excited, when love is grand!

Stage #2. The Ideal becomes an Ordeal. This is when we realize that our Prince Charming has warts, & Sleeping Beauty is not so lovely when she wakes up.

Then, far too often, along comes **Stage #3. And that’s when one of the spouses wishes for a New Deal.**

Have you noticed that trend in our culture?

There ARE many problems in marriage, but I don’t believe we should ditch the institution of marriage. I believe we ought to return to God’s original blueprint for marriage. You cannot make proper use of anything until you understand what it is made for. That’s true about anything.

If I try to use a pencil as a screwdriver— not only will it not accomplish that objective, but it will make the pencil useless for its intended purpose. So also, marriage. We've practically ruined the institution because we've tried to make marriage be something that marriage was never intended. So, let's read the Owner's Manual.

Genesis 2:24 NLT2 This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

In the next few weeks I want to encourage you at home. I want to help you make your home be what God designed it to be. God gave us a wonderful gift of home – a place of protection & significance. Home is a place where you can't pretend to be something you are not. You can't pretend because they know you.

The home is under attack. There is a war to destroy this refuge. Sometimes the battle is obvious. Other times it is nearly invisible. Sometimes it is simply a matter of apathy, neglect, and disrepair. Whichever the challenge, whatever the direction of attack, it's clear that this is not going to be easy. If we are going to make our homes a place of rest, encouragement, & safety we need God's help to do so.

I am disturbed at the attacks that our culture is bringing against the home, but the attacks are not new. But the state of the home in 2021 is weaker than I have seen.

Today we'll be looking at what it takes to build a strong foundation – Making a Marathon Marriage. And in the next few weeks we will continue this series on Heaven Help the Home. Credit Rick Stacy.

Kirsten, age 10, said, “No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all - way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with.”

In answering the age-old question about whether it is better to be single or married, Anita, age 9 said, “It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them.”

Making a Marathon Marriage, one that goes “till death do us part” – is a very real challenge.

Statistics show that almost ½ of those who marry in the US do **part before death**. Divorce is no longer considered a serious matter – even among Christians.

Kathleen Waldron, of human services at Arizona State University, said, “Many people in their 20's have what we now call starter marriages, find they aren't compatible, then marry someone else. A lot of them rebound and many times bring the same mistakes and issues into another marriage. It's not so uncommon for people to say they got wiser by the third marriage.”

All marriages experience highs & lows. Unfortunately, many are not prepared to survive the harsher times.

Let's look at Four Seasons of marriage.

1. The Season of Romance, Everything is IDEAL

Most relationships start here. During the romantic season of marriage, couples focus only on each other. Their feelings are strong, their passions are unbridled.

You have witnessed this many times. A young couple just can't seem to keep their lips apart. It's like they are magnetic. Remember the Newlywed Game. They kissed on every answer, at least every right answer.

In the romantic season the couple is a bit idealistic. The tendency is to put your partner on a pedestal. He or she can do no wrong. Listen to how a love-struck Solomon describes the love of his life in Song of Songs.

Song of Songs 4:1-4 NLT2 You are beautiful, my darling, beautiful beyond words. Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. Your hair falls in waves, like a flock of goats winding down the slopes of Gilead.

² Your teeth are as white as sheep, recently shorn and freshly washed. Your smile is flawless, each tooth matched with its twin. ³ Your lips are like scarlet ribbon; your mouth is inviting. Your cheeks are like rosy pomegranates behind your veil. ⁴ Your

neck is as beautiful as the tower of David, jeweled with the shields of a thousand heroes.

He continues to describe her physical attributes -- but I think I'll stop at the neckline! *Read it at home.*

If the Season of Romance is the Ideal, the 2nd season, **2. The Season of Reality, Everything is an ORDEAL**

Reality hits and the ideal turns into an ordeal. The very thing that attracted you to one another becomes the very thing that drives you crazy.

The one clue that you've left the Romance stage is when you roll your eyes at couples who haven't!

At this point dullness may set in. Things are no longer so exciting. Nothing's really new. Disagreements turn into the cold war.

Those in this season often feel cheated and trapped. That knight in shining armor has become a crusty guy with a dirty flannel shirt. That beautiful maiden with long flowing hair became a nag with a head full of curlers. What started out as puppy love has gone to the dogs.

The third Season is...

3. The Season of Regret, Looking for a NEW DEAL.

The Romance Stage is when we see marriage as the ideal; the Reality Stage is where the ideal turns into an ordeal; the Regret stage is when you want a new deal.

This season of regret is mixed with portions of remorse & bitterness. This is where many get stuck. At this point there is a moment of decision. You have three choices.

The Moment of Decision

Option 1: Bail

You can't take it anymore. You want out. You've been hurt too bad. You've gone too long with your needs unmet. You figure it's just not worth it.

The average length of marriages in the US is 8 years. Some don't make it two months. One mate can make the decision. Some of you didn't have a choice because your spouse made it. If this is your situation then know this: Our prayers are with you, and we will support you and your children in every way we can!

How many of you have been married for more than 8 years? Congrats! You're above average!

Option 2: Settle

Maybe you know that your marriage isn't that great, but you figure there's not much you can do about it.

Some of you have cooled off and are just living like roommates, as you pour your life into other things. Others of you hurt each other by launching verbal attacks, put downs, & unkind actions.

Option 3: Build

Build Your Marriage. Some of you are thinking -- *“You got to be kidding. Do you know how difficult it is to live with my spouse? There’s no way.”* While I don’t know about all your difficulties, I do know that it is possible to build your marriage.

I believe most of you want a great marriage, but you are stuck -- you just don’t know how to make it work.

But, there is a Fourth Season of Marriage, and that is...

4. A Season of Renewal – a time when there is a maturing of love and re-bonding of the souls in the marriage. This time is not ecstatic, nor is it filled with hang on each other lovey-doveyness.

This season is filled with a calm faith in one another and a deep trust that your partner really cares for you. How do you get unstuck and out of the season of regret into this wonderful season of renewal? It’s not easy, but it is simple. *You must build on the basics. You must go back to the foundations of marriage.*

What did the Creator say about marriage?

Leave your father and mother

God says that when we get married, we need to leave our parents. What this means is that we need to sever the emotional umbilical cord. We need to make a break with our parents so that we can build a Marriage with

our spouse. When you get married, your spouse is to become your *second* priority in life, second **after** your relationship with God.

The word “leave” is a very strong word that is translated “forsake” in other places. Husbands and wives, you are to disconnect yourself from loyalty to your parent’s priorities, traditions, rules and influence.

This doesn’t mean that you can never talk with them. But it means that your allegiance, your loyalty now belongs to your spouse. Your spouse should not have to compete with your parents – or anyone else. You leave your college buddies, your girlfriends, everything that can come between you & your new best friend.

When you establish your new home, you are to loosen your dependency on mom and dad. Whether it’s an emotional dependency, a financial dependency, or a physical dependency— you are to “leave” them.

Mom and dad, realize that your child was given to you— but only for a time for a limited period of training. By the time your child is 12 years old, 2/3 of your time is gone! And by the time your child is making decisions about whom she will date and with whom she will mate, your job is, for all practical purposes, essentially complete. If you have done your job right, you’ve been preparing your child for mate selection from infancy.

And when your child comes to you and says, “Mom, Dad, this is the person that God wants me to marry.....,” when that decision has been made, when your counsel has been given and the wedding march begins to play, that’s when you are to give your child back to the safe-keeping of God. And that’s when you let go!

A preacher said that on his wedding day, his dad came into his room and said, “Son, you’re on your own, now. I’m here for counsel when you need it. But you won’t hear it unless you ask. And if you don’t make it work with your wife, don’t come running to us. We’re moving on with our lives. And it’s time for you to do the same. You’re a man now. I love you but you are on your own.”

Be United with his wife.

The word “united” literally means to be glued together - - “to melt 2 separate entities together to form a permanent bond.” The word you may hear in some weddings is “cleave”. It has the idea of being bonded or welded together. The union is so strong that it takes something extremely violent to dissolve it.

There are 4 bonds that are to be nurtured in marriage:

The Four Bonds of Love

- ◆ Eros – Physical attraction - In marriage you belong to one another – physically. You need to treat them as if they are valuable *because they are!*

- ◆ Storge (storgay) – Nurturing care - This involves taking care of the other person when they are sick. It means encouraging them to grow or supporting them.
- ◆ Phileo – Friendship and common values - This involves sharing life experiences and enjoying one another's company.
- ◆ Agape – Sacrificial gift of self - The agape love is the love of God that says you are first – even when it costs me everything.

Two Will Be United into One

This is the greatest gift and greatest mystery. Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 19:6** NLT2 **“Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”**

Here's God's equation for the Marriage that He intended. **1 man + 1 woman + 1 God = 1 Formula for Long-Lasting Love**

Christian marriage is monogamous (two people) and heterosexual (a man and a woman).

Because of its permanence & importance, marriage preparation must be taken seriously. George Faull was the father of five, 3 boys & 2 girls. He was president of Summit Theological Seminary. He died early this year.

He said that from the time his children were 6 years old, he warned them, “If you ever marry a non-Christian, I will not pay for nor attend the wedding.” The kids knew that expectation.

One of his daughters decided to test him & determined to marry a non-Christian. The wedding day came, and George said that he stayed at home & cried the whole time. After the wedding, the newlyweds stopped by the house to say, “Hi” before going on the honeymoon. George said he greeted the couple with a hug, and said to his new son-in-law, “I fought hard to keep you apart. But I want you to know I’ll fight even harder to keep you together.”

Later that afternoon one of his sons came over, talked a bit about the wedding, & George said that he looked right at his newly engaged son & said, “I was serious, and I won’t be at your wedding either.” That statement stunned his son who had *found his fiancé at church*.

“What do you mean you’re not coming to my wedding. My girlfriend goes to church. She’s been baptized.”

George responded, “Yeah, but she’s not a Christian.” His son defended, “Who died and made you judge?” “I’m not being a judge; I’m being a fruit inspector.”

George turned to Galatians 5 & read his son the acts of the flesh (sinful nature), then read the fruit of the Spirit & asked, “Now, which list describes your fiancé?”

His son admitted that she did not display the spirit of Christ. He trusted his dad, broke off the relationship. George said two weeks later he met his wife who was perfect in every way. His son has thanked him 100's of times for keeping his convictions.

The benefit of oneness is enormous: According to engineers one 4x4 piece of angle iron can hold 2,200 lbs. When you double the pieces, it can hold 96,000 lbs. In other words, 2 can do *43 times* more what 1 can do.

As your marriage moves through the various seasons - the Ideal of Romance; the Ordeal of Reality; and the search for a New Deal in the Season of Regret -- you really can have a New Deal. But if you want a new deal, you need to cultivate a relationship with Jesus Christ. You need to start living according to His guidelines. And you need to base and build your marriage according to His specifications.

If you haven't surrendered yourself to Christ by asking Him to forgive you for your sins, this is your first step to having a Marathon Marriage. It's the most important thing you can do even if you're not married.

As we close this morning, I'd like everyone to stand and close your eyes. If you're married, and your spouse is here, I'd like you to hold hands.

- If you're married, take a moment to recommit yourself to a marriage characterized by leaving, cleaving, oneness, and intimacy.
- If your marriage is in trouble, pray for God's healing power to come into your relationship. Surrender yourself to Christ so that your spouse can see Jesus in you.
- If you're widowed, thank God for the good memories. Ask Him for the grace you need this week.
- If you're single by divorce, pray for healing and an intimate relationship w/ God to fill the void in your heart.
- If you're a single parent, ask God to be the missing parent for your children.
- If you're not married, & want to be, pray that God will bring the best to you *in His time*. Commit yourself to purity and tell the Lord that you won't settle for 2nd best.
- If you have the gift of singleness, ask God to help you make an eternal impact in His kingdom work.

Prayer: God, Heavenly Father, You love us and want the best for us. You designed marriage to be a good thing, and too often we have tried to mess with Your design. Forgive us. Help us to work to restore Your design in our marriages, in our churches, in our lives.

No Invitation:

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Genesis 2:24

Four Seasons of Marriage

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Song of Songs 4:1-4

2. The Season of R_____, Everything is an ____ DEAL

3. The Season of R_____, Looking for a _____ DEAL.

The Moment of Decision

Option 1: _____

Option 2: _____

Option 3: _____

4. A Season of R_____, a time when there is a maturing of love and re-bonding of the souls in the marriage.

What the Creator says about marriage in Genesis 2:24?

_____ **your father and mother.**

Be _____ with his wife.

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- ◆ Storge – _____ care
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Two Will Be United into _____. Matthew 19:6

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