

TEACHING NOTES (underlined words indicate answers for the handout)

Strengthening Your Marriage for Life

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:21-33; I Peter 3:8, 9

INTRODUCTION

1. This is our last session and I want to share a special thanks to you for coming and allowing me the privilege of sharing these sessions with you. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING. FOOD, BED, AND YOUR INTEREST IN MARRIAGE.

2. In your defense, I realize that you will not be able to remember everything we have shared with you. As a matter of fact, right now I am sure you are experiencing information overload.

But I do trust you will look back on your notes and do your best to implement the things you have learned so that your marriage will be enriched and your relationships with each other will Grow. NEVER LET YOUR MARRIAGE PLATEAU.

3. Let's look quickly at two different passages of Scripture: Ephesians 5:21-33; I Peter 3:8, 9. Read.

4. In this passage of Scripture we find Paul's thesis for us concerning the relationship between husband and wife.

5. From Peter's letter, we know that we should never render evil for evil, or insult for insult, especially to our companions. As Christians, we should always take the high road.

6. In this last session I want to share with you an overview. I want to quickly look at some typical reasons why marriages are falling apart AND what we can do to strengthen our marriage for life.

7. To be very frank with you, I am bothered by how many homes are on the verge of falling apart. Remember, it does not happen overnight. It takes time. But after it has gone to a certain point, it is sometimes too hard to turn back around.

Let me share with you:

I. TEN REASONS WHY MARRIAGES ARE FALLING APART.

1. WE ARE OVER COMMITTED OR PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTED.

A. Too often we are simply just worn out.

1. The pace of life is getting faster.
2. The squeeze of life is getting much tighter.
3. The pressure of life is rapidly reaching the blowout stage.

B. Most homes now have both spouses working.

1. Paul understood what life would do to us as Christians even back in his day when he wrote “Don’t let the world squeeze you into it’s mold.”

2. This is certainly true in our day in south Florida and I am sure in [your town] as well.

C. Too many of us are operating out of what we have left over: time, energy, or emotion.

You know a preacher is over worked & spending too much time in the study when THOU SPEAKETH TO THY CHILDREN AND HELPMEEET THUSLY.

WHEN YOU START SEEING THE EVENING PAPER LAID OUT IN CHAPTERS AND VERSES.

WHEN A LIST OF GENEALOGIES MOVES YOU TO TEARS.

1. All of us face that serious time crunch.
2. Yet, I have never heard anyone say on their death bed, “Boy, I wish I had spent more time at the office.”
3. Many of us, as we are getting closer to the end, realize we need to spend more time at home with our families.
4. There was a survey that says, “Even though we are pressured in society, 43% of us are trying to spend more time with our spouse than we ever had before.”

[] Dr. Richard Swenson has written a book entitled, “Margin, Restoring emotional, physical, financial, and time reserve to overloaded lives.”

2. THE SECOND REASON IS CONFLICTS OVER MONEY.

A. Too many marriage fall apart because the finances get tight.

1. The problem is we have TOO MUCH MONTH AT THE END OF OUR MONEY.
2. To fix this problem we have to either spend less or make more.

3. But at the bottom of it all is a serious spiritual problem.

Earl Wilson said one time there are three classes of people:

1. The Haves
2. The Have-nots
3. The Have not paid for what they have

Heard a cute story about a couple named Herman and Mary. Mary's family had a lot of money and Herman's family didn't have any.

They got married and Mary had a tendency to kind of goad Herman on the fact that she was the one that had the money.

They were out driving the car one day. Mary said, "Herman, you know, if it wouldn't be for me, we wouldn't have this nice car.

Herman didn't say anything.

They pulled into the garage and got out of the car and looked at the house and she said, "Herman, if it wasn't for me, we wouldn't have this house."

Herman didn't say anything.

They walked into the kitchen and they saw the new furniture they had just purchased and she said, "You know, Herman, if it wasn't for me we wouldn't have this furniture."

Herman didn't say anything.

They walked into the family room and sat down by their big beautiful entertainment center and she said, "Herman, if it wasn't for me, we wouldn't have this entertainment center."

Herman didn't say anything for a few moments. Finally, he couldn't handle it anymore and he said, "Sweetheart, if it wasn't for you AND YOUR MONEY, I WOULDN'T BE HERE!!

B. Remember who owns what.

1. It is not your money or her money, it is both of yours.
2. Bring your spending in line with your income.

3. THE THIRD REASON IS BECAUSE OF SELFISHNESS.

A. Some people change after marriage from what they were before they married.

1. In dating, most people have a giving mindset.

2. And in marriage, too many change and start having a receiving mindset.

B. In a good marriage there are two characteristics of maturity.

1. The first is we are generous – we are giving to our companion.

2. The second one is we are forgiving – we have the ability to quickly forgive our children and spouse.

Dr. Karl Menninger says that the number one characteristic of a mature person is that they find more satisfaction in giving than they do in receiving.

3. Why do some people before marriage keep on giving and then as soon as they marry they change to a receiving mindset? They become selfish.

4. THE FOURTH REASON IS IMMATURITY.

A. Sometimes it is just a lack of maturity why marriages fail.

Someone has said, “People are only young once but they can be immature for a lifetime.”

It should not be like the one husband I heard about who was talking to a counselor.

He said, “Basically, my wife was immature. I would be at home in the bath and she would come in and sink my boats.”

Abigail Van Buren one time said, “Maturity is the ability to stick with a job until it is finished. To do a job without being supervised. To be able to carry dollars without spending them. And to bear an injustice without trying to get even.”

B. Too often marriages fall apart because the husband and wife lack maturity.

1. They each demand their rights.

2. They constantly are wanting to be served.

3. And they find no room to be giving.

4. Remember marriage is not a 50% - 50% proposition – it is a 100% – 100% proposition.

5. Both partners must be willing to each give it their best shot.

5. THE FIFTH REASON IS PRIDE.

A. Pride, that great sin God hates, causes too many marriages to fall apart.

Peter Marshal, who used to be the chaplain of the Senate, prayed this wonderful prayer one day: "Lord, when we are wrong make us willing to change, when we are right make us easy to live with."

B. How often do couples get into arguments over certain things that are issues of pride?

1. Like admitting the fact you know you were wrong. Isn't it hard to admit it?

2. It happened way back in the Garden of Eden.

a. Eve blamed the serpent.

b. Adam blamed Eve – "Lord, it's the wife you gave me, that's the problem."

How many husbands have been out driving and before you know it you are lost. The car is where pride rears its ugly head more than any place else.

Your wife knows you are lost.

She tells you that you are lost.

That upsets you real bad.

You know you are lost.

She knows you are lost.

God knows you are lost.

The people in the front yard that you have passed by three times knows that you are lost.

But too often we simply just dig in rather than admit it.

Mark Twain said one time, "Temper is what gets us in trouble. Pride is what keeps us there."

6. THE SIXTH REASON IS PETTINESS.

A. Pettiness has been the reason why wars have broke out in past history.

B. It is like a leaking faucet that goes drip, drip, drip.

I love the story of a grandmother and grandfather that had been married for 50 years.

Several friends had come together to celebrate that wedding anniversary. They asked the grandmother, "Tell us what was the secret of your 50 years of successful marriage."

She said, "I really do have an answer. Before I married the man I have been married to 50 years, I sat down and saw that both of us had some weaknesses.

So, I decided that I would overlook his top ten faults."

Someone in the group said, "What were they?"

She said, "You know, I never wrote them down. But I went into the marriage saying I will overlook his top ten faults. And whenever he did something that looked a little ridiculous, I WOULD SAY TO MYSELF, LUCKY FOR HIM THAT IS ON MY LIST."

What a wonderful mindset of a person to overlook the faults of a companion.

7. THE SEVENTH REASON IS BECAUSE OF SPIRITUAL DISOBEDIENCE.

A. I believe whenever we disobey God our marriage is going to be in trouble.

B. Out of all the reasons this is probably the number one as far as what I think is important.

1. As Christians, our marriage should be different from those of the world.

2. They ought to be better marriages than unbelievers.

a. We have Jesus Christ to forgive us our sins.

b. We have the Holy Spirit to fill and empower us.

c. We have God's Word for guidance.

3. What is so bad in some circles, Christian marriages aren't much or any better than secular marriages.

4. This should not be but is because of SPIRITUAL DISOBEDIENCE.

C. God's Biblical Principles for holy living are there for us as safety belts.

1. One safety net is putting our marriage under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

- a. He must be at the head of our marriage.
- b. Seek Him first.
- c. When Christian marriages begin to fall apart it is because they have started to disobey God.
- d. Partial disobedience is still disobedience.

8. THE EIGHTH REASON IS THE INABILITY TO ENJOY LIFE.

A. Some marriages fall apart simply because they are just boring.

1. I am not saying this is right but it does happen.

B. How many can remember how exciting dating was?

1. Why now is marriage boring?

a. In dating you planned everything.

b. You got excited about everything.

c. I know you did not have all the other things happening in your life, so when you went out, you went out to have a good time.

2. There have been too many husbands who have been married so many years but have quit courting and dating your wives a long time ago.

3. To be flat honest tonight, some of us men are just plain boring to live with.

4. Remember how you used to plan a date? Now, we come home and just lay around on the sofa and just kind of hope it will happen.

5. Someone has said, "Don't take a trip, make a trip."

a. Marriage takes real effort for it not to become boring.

A wife shared with me how her husband wrote I love you on the bathroom mirror with x's and o's underneath it with a bar of soap.

One of her children saw it and wondered who was playing tic-tac-toe on the mirror. How creative.

b. Marriage really takes an effort on our part, ESPECIALLY FOR SOME BECAUSE YOU HAVE A GIFT IN BEING BORING. (A NATURAL TALENT.)

6. Let's work hard at spicing up our marriage and making it exciting.

- a. We should work just as hard on our marriage as we do on our job.
- b. We should be planning fun things for our marriage.
- c. If you have a portfolio for your financial part of life, you should have a portfolio for the marriage part of your life.

9. THE NINTH REASON IS UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

A. Remember nobody is perfect.

1. Don't allow your expectations to be too high.

Heard a cute story about the two newlyweds. They got married and on their honeymoon the groom looks at his new bride and says, "Sweetheart, now that we are married I hope you won't be offended if I point out some defects in your life."

She said, "Not at all sweetheart. It was those defects that kept me from getting a better husband."

B. Ask any successful married couple and they will tell you they do not expect perfection in their mate.

1. The more you love your companion the less you expect them to be perfect.
2. If we accept the things that may not be quite perfect, the payoff in the other areas is far greater.

10. THE TENTH REASON IS A LACK OF INTIMACY.

A. There are certain things a marriage must have.

1. A marriage does not have the finest home, car, furniture, clothes, etc.
2. But if a marriage does not have warmth, closeness, transparency, vulnerability, and accountability it will fall apart.
3. Living together does not mean you are intimate.

B. Intimacy does not just happen – it has to be worked on.

1. Our job is to give each other a blessing.

2. I Peter 3:9 - read

3. I believe it is the husband's job to give the blessing first.

4. This comes from the fact that we are to love our wife like Christ loves the church.

a. God was the initiator of the relationship.

b. When Adam and Eve turned their back on God, what did He do?

c. He came to the garden looking for them.

C. There are at least five things you can do to develop the area of intimacy in your relationship.

1. You can be intimate with your companion if you are willing to put your mate before yourself.

2. You must be approachable.

a. This includes being warm, tender, and having a spirit about you that your mate can easily come and talk to you.

b. The Bible talks about us being easily entreated.

3. There must be trust.

a. Trust is the foundation of any intimate relationship.

b. The problem of being unfaithful or to ignore or disregard your vows, the problem is you undermine and destroy the trust your companion needs for the foundation of your marriage.

c. Trust is the glue that keeps a marriage together.

d. When trust is gone everything else seems to fall apart.

4. There must be desire.

5. There must be time.

Now, let's look at how we can REMEMBER OUR MARITAL COMMITMENT.

How can I strengthen my marriage for life?

II. BY REMEMBERING MY MARITAL COMMITMENT

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5

1. In our present day society, this is a very old fashioned word but it still has great meaning for us today.

2. We're living in a throw-away society. A disposable generation.

Dr. Robert Taylor – The Art Of Staying Together, “We are now living in an age of disposability. Use it once and throw it away.”

Over the past decade there has developed a feeling that relationships are equally disposable.

We basically have the idea that if something breaks basically discard it. Throw it away and get something new. It has happened not only in everything we own, but it has also happened in this area of marriages and relationships.

4. Hollywood and the media has caused people who are getting married to think their marriage must be the ideal one.

5. My wife wanted the perfect ideal marriage but then she married me – but your wife married you too.

Just what is the golden rule for any marriage? It is this, WHAT YOU WANT IN YOUR OWN SPOUSE BEGIN TO PRODUCE FIRST IN YOUR OWN LIFE.

There are four things I must do to remember my marital commitment.

I. REMEMBER THE DAY YOU MADE A COMMITMENT TO YOUR SPOUSE.

A. Just what is COMMITMENT?

1. It is love for your companion whether you have feelings or no feelings.

2. It is love based on your vows, your word, and your promise.

3. We all know feelings come and go, they rise and fall, they are frequent and infrequent but COMMITMENT always stays the same.

B. Look at what Scripture has to say:

1. Read Ecc. 5:4,5

2. There are times when you are attending a wedding when you would like to stop the ceremony and make sure they understand the wedding vows they are about to make.

3. There he is in his tux and there she is beautiful in her white gown.

4. And you hear them say on this their best day as they are using the words to have and to hold from this day forward.

5. These are Biblical foundations which is basically saying when they get married two become one.

a. Each partner no longer has control over their own body.

b. My body is hers and her body is mine.

c. Instead of living for self now we begin to live for each other putting their needs first.

d. I am now giving my self away.

6. From this day forward there is the picture of permanence.

a. This is not based upon if things go OK, or good finances, or if we keep our jobs, or if we keep these same feelings.

b. This is to be from this day forward just as the vows say to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my troth.

7. The very vows themselves tells you there is going to be some touch sledding up ahead.

a. DON'T LET THIS VERY GOOD DAY DECEIVE YOU.

b. Everything is planned for you. Cake, etc.

c. If this does not give you a tingle your tingler is broken.

8. Don't be naive to think it is going to always be like this.

a. Some say, I don't feel the same.

b. Who would?

- c. That was your day.
- d. Life is not going to be that way forever – WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE.

9. Marriage is for tough people who understand commitment.

- a. It is not easy.
- b. And wimps simply should not get married.
- c. If you are a quitter, don't get married.
- d. Don't mess up someone else's life too.

Secondly, not only do I want you to REMEMBER THE DAY YOU MADE A COMMITMENT TO YOUR SPOUSE, I want you to:

II. REMINISCE YOUR MARITAL JOURNEY.

A. What Kind Of Committed Person Have You Been?

- 1. There are basically two kinds of people in life.
- 2. There are the CONVENIENCE PEOPLE and the COMMITTED PEOPLE.
- 3. Look at the two columns I have on your handout.
- 4. If you will understand the principles I am about to give you it will change your commitment in life.

CONVENIENCE PEOPLE

COMMITTED PEOPLE

1.

Emotional based. These people are ruled and controlled by emotions

Character based. Make decisions out of character.

2.

What is easiest?

What is right?

3.

When I feel good then I will do it.

When I do it then I will feel good.

4.

Controlled by moods. Do I want to do it?

Controlled by priority. Doing things right.

5.

Selfish mindset.

Servanthood mindset

6.

Life & lips disagree.

Life & lips agree.

7.

Look for excuses.

Look for solutions.

This is the difference between those marriages that last and those that break-up.

Please understand this: The break-ups are not because their marriages have more severe problems. Marriages break-up because the couple is looking for a way out instead of a way to keep it together. There will always be some kind of excuses.

8.

Outwardly influenced.

Inwardly influenced.

9.

Quit during the tough times.

Continue during the tough times.

10.

This person whines.

This persons wins.

B. Look At The Kind Of Person You Can Become.

1. You cannot go back and make a brand new start.
2. But all of us can start now and make a brand new end.
3. Don't focus on where you have been.
4. Look at where you are right now.
5. Begin to focus on the right column.
6. This will bring about a great marriage and great relationships.

7. But if you live on the left side, life will be a roller coaster.

C. Be A Person of Character.

1. Character is the ability to carry out a good resolution long after the mood in which it was made is past.

2. Follow through on your decisions.

3. Don't wait until you feel like doing it but do it and then you will start feeling better about doing it.

4. Quit waiting for that incredible feeling.

5. If you will get on the right side of the list and start loving him or her, then you will start feeling something.

6. Two types of people – feelers and doers.

a. I've got to feel it before I do it. They are losers.

b. I have to do it before I feel good. These are the people who do the right things and make the right decisions even when they don't feel good.

7. You don't quit because you are committed. Feelings follow commitment.

So, you must REMEMBER THE DAY YOU MADE A COMMITMENT TO YOUR SPOUSE. You need to REMINISCE YOUR MARITAL JOURNEY and thirdly, you need to:

III. RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR COMPANION.

A. If Your Relationship Is Going Sour, Then Your Commitment is Weak.

[] Be honest enough to recognize and acknowledge this fact. Be willing to do something about it.

B. How Do I Renew Or Create Commitment To My Companion?

1. You must make a Character Commitment.

a. Go back to the list and review the list often on the right side.

b. Make sure you are not living in the left column.

2. You must focus on what is right in your marriage.

a. If you are always focusing on what is wrong then you will never be able to build on the strong points.

b. Marriages who only focus on what is wrong usually fall apart.

3. You must begin now doing things together.

a. People who do things together will grow close together.

b. People who do not will not grow close together.

c. You will only do things together as you set apart time for each other.

4. You become other person focused.

a. You must constantly and consistently try to please your spouse.

b. Pleasing your mate must be your main goal in life outside of serving God.

5. You must become patient and tolerant.

a. Don't forget to remember what God has done in forgiving you.

6. You must continue to verbalize your commitment to one another.

a. Let your spouse hear you say how committed you are to them.

b. Say with love and meaning, not with a mechanical format that has no meaning.

You have REMEMBERED THE DAY YOU MADE A COMMITMENT TO YOUR SPOUSE, YOU HAVE REMINISCED YOUR MARITAL JOURNEY AND YOU HAVE RENEWED YOUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR COMPANION:

In closing I want you to:

IV. REMEMBER YOUR COVENANT BEFORE GOD.

A. We Believe In Christian Marriages.

1. Christian marriages are different than others because we make a genuine covenant with God.

2. We do this because we belong to God.

3. A Christian marriage covenant is an agreement which includes God.

4. It is not temporary or conditional.

5. It is a permanent agreement.

B. A Christian Marriage Covenant Is A Three-party Commitment Or Agreement.

1. It is between you, your spouse, and God.

2. There are three parts.

a. God's part.

1) It began in Genesis 2:18, where God said, "It is not good that a man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

2) God made a perfect match by taking the rib from Adam to make Eve.

3) In verse 24 He says they shall be one flesh – this does not mean just from the physical aspect but also in a special relationship called a COVENANT.

4) When Eve messed up, God did not say He was going to give him another mate.

5) God never intended for anything to separate anything He put together as a covenant.

b. Woman's part.

1) Her primary part is found in Eph. 5:22, 23.

2) Her part is to submit to her husband, as to the Lord.

3) Read verses.

4) This often hard for some women and when you see their husband you can understand why.

5) But you are still to submit.

6) This does not mean he is to be domineering to the wife.

7) One of the worst things a husband can do is to not take care of his wife.

8) Mark the man who does not take care of his wife.

MEN - OUR JOB IS TO SPOIL OUR WIVES!! WE ARE TO GIVE OUR VERY BEST OF OURSELVES TO HER.

c. Man's part.

1) Our part is to love our wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

2) While the wife is called upon to love her husband enough to live for him, the husband is called upon to love his wife enough to die for her.

3) Husband, are you willing to die for your wife?

4) Don't say Yes if you are not willing to spend time with her.

5) Don't be a JERK – that's Greek for lousy husband.

6) As Christ is interceding for the church, so should we be interceding and continually building up our wives.

7) We should be loving them and believing in them.

8) We are to take the role of Christ. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

9) Man's greatest problem is not understanding God's but in obeying it.

10) Men are responsible to see their marriage goes forward.

CONCLUSION

1. Remember your commitment to your spouse.
2. Remember your covenant is before God.

Vows

No one is going to be embarrassed because you are going to stand right where you are and block out everything and everyone in the room.

I want you to turn toward your companion, holding both hands, and look into their eyes as you recommit yourself to each other and to God. This is for married couples only. This is not a wedding.

Repeat after me, but fill in the name of your companion.

We will start with the man:

I, _____, continue to take you, _____,
as the love of my life.
I will remain committed to you for the rest of my life,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
'til death do us part,
according to God's holy covenant for marriage,
and thereto I pledge to you my solemn vow.

Now for the wife:

I, _____, continue to take you, _____,
as the love of my life.
I will remain committed to you for the rest of my life,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
'til death do us part,
according to God's holy covenant for marriage,
and thereto I pledge to you my solemn vow.

Listen to what God says in Matthew 19:6: "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

May God add His richest blessings upon you.

You may now kiss the bride!

[Close with prayer.]