



Marriage

Text: Acts 18: 24-28

Bible Teacher Ben Stuart

1. Ben talked about how reading from The Chronicles of Narnia helped shaped his idea of his future and his future spouse? What has helped shaped yours? A good book or movie? Or the example of someone in your life?
2. When was a time that you experienced strong community as a result of being a part of a group of people pursuing a common cause? A sports team? The military? A mission trip? Describe that experience.
3. Whenever you prepared for marriage or have pursued the growth of your marriage (through discussions with your spouse, conferences, Bible studies, etc.) have you tended to focus on values or vision? Or if you are single, when you think about what a good marriage would look like, do you tend to focus on values or vision?
 - a. Last week, Ben spoke about leveraging one's singleness to be fully devoted to the mission of God. Have you ever thought of marriage as being something that—rather than distracting from the mission as can so easily happen—could help you grow in your discipleship and enhance your ability to live on mission? What would a marriage on mission look like?
 - b. Businesses, churches, and all manners of organizations and institutions spend a lot of time thinking about and developing a vision statement. Why not your marriage? Have you ever thought of creating a vision statement for your marriage?
 - c. If yes, what is that vision statement? Are there any updates to it you would like to make after hearing Ben's message? Or if you have never done so before, create a vision statement for a "marriage on mission".
4. Read 1 Peter 4:9-11.
 - a. What gifts have you been given that could be used to show the sort of hospitality that Priscilla and Aquila demonstrated? How could you use these gifts and abilities, either in the areas of speaking gifts or serving gifts, to bless others?
 - b. How could you use your house, your yard, your car, your vacation home, or any other material possession that the Lord has given you to bless others and serve to further the mission of God like Priscilla and Aquila opening their home to Paul?
 - c. What hobbies, interests, even random talents could you leverage to show and share the love of Jesus with others?
 - d. If you are married, also work through the questions above with your spouse, maybe even kids. How can you not only pursue the mission together as a family?

Challenge: Whether single or married, there are benefits to each season we are in, with unique gifts and resources to each. How will you leverage this for the purposes of God?

Prayer: Prayers for Married Couples in our Church

- Pray for troubled marriages within our church. Pray that God would heal, restore, redeem, and bring new life to the marriages.
- Pray for the strengthening of marriages throughout our congregation. That God would grant unity of heart and pursuit of Him to married couples at Faithbridge.
- Pray that married couples would live in submission to God and each other, through the love of Jesus Christ. That husbands would love and serve their wives as Christ loved and served the church, and the wives would respond in Godly submission, as they pursue God together.
- Pray that God would give vision to each couple, bringing clarity, and unity around purpose. That God would grant married couples the ability to discern how to use their gifts and resources for the kingdom of God.
- Pray that married couples would embrace singles in their life, living on mission together, learning from each other, as they pursue God together.

STUDY DEEPER

Marriage on the Edge of Eternity

Article by Francis Chan

How long do you think your marriage will last? Will you make it another five years? Ten? Fifty?

I think we can all agree that it's not going to last very long – not in light of eternity.

Eternity changes how we enjoy marriage and everything else in this life. Eternity changes how we love. It would be unloving to get my wife and kids so focused on this life that they are unprepared for the next. Some Christians emphasize marriage so much that it might lead some to believe the goal of Christianity is to have a happy marriage, and God becomes a means to that end. I hear many Christians thank God for their families more than they thank him for the cross. Obviously God wants us to love our families, but let's be careful.

Which Passage Would Jesus Quote?

Don't get me wrong, I love being married. After twenty years, I love my wife Lisa more than ever. One of the keys to our marriage, however, has been to keep marriage in its proper place. While God commands us to value marriage, he also is clear that we must not over-value it. After all, we are on a mission during our brief time on earth. That's why Paul says,

“The Bible is not a book about marriage, it is a book about God.” Tweet Share on Facebook

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none. (1 Corinthians 7:27–29)

Paul, who wrote Ephesians 5, also wrote 1 Corinthians 7. The one who said “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25) also wrote “let those who have wives live as though they had none” (1 Corinthians 7:29). We need to find the healthy tension of obeying both passages. And let's not forget the words of Jesus: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

Our tendency, when teaching on marriage, is to dismiss some of these passages with a sentence or two, and then quickly return to Ephesians 5. But is that okay? Or could it be that God wants us to emphasize all of these passages equally? Give them equal “air time”? Which passages would Jesus quote if he performed a wedding ceremony this weekend?

It's understandable that we spend a lot of time teaching through Ephesians 5. After all, families are falling apart. Divorces are happening at an alarming rate. There is a crisis in the church. Husbands are neglecting

their wives and vice versa. At first thought, it may even seem dangerous to teach certain passages. Human wisdom tells us to skip passages that warn us that our families can distract us from kingdom work. But preaching the “whole counsel of God’s word” means we value, trust, and teach the whole Bible.

Don’t Get It Backwards

Because divorce runs so rampant even in the church, it makes sense that we tend to overcompensate by emphasizing marriage more than Scripture does. But by doing so, we may be hurting marriages rather than mending them. Couples become self-centered, rather than mission-focused. Singles who once radically served Jesus now spend their days merely improving and enjoying their marriage. Either that, or they quarrel incessantly and spend their days in counseling and despair. Either way, they become virtually worthless for kingdom purposes.

Can you think of any couples that serve Jesus more faithfully now that they’re married? It doesn’t have to be this way. This is why Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 7. “I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35).

“Because divorce runs rampant, even in the church, we tend to emphasize marriage more than Scripture does.” Tweet Share on Facebook

The goal is “undivided devotion to the Lord.” Meditate on those words. Remember that the Bible is not a book about marriage; it is a book about God. The best thing we can do with our brief lives is to devote ourselves to him and his mission. This is the goal. And marriage can actually help us achieve this goal. That’s why Paul encourages marriage for those who are tempted sexually. A healthy marriage helps to prevent temptations that would destroy our effectiveness. But remember that the goal is to be completely devoted to God. Marriage can be used as a means of improving our devotion to Jesus. Let’s not get it backwards and think of him as the means of improving our marriages.

Lisa once described our marriage as a long episode of “The Amazing Race.” If you’ve never seen the show, it’s a competition where a person chooses a partner and then races around the world against other couples. Her point was that she and I view our lives much like the contestants on that show. Like Paul, we see our lives on earth like a race (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). We don’t have time to fight, nor to settle down. We are in pursuit of a prize. We are trying to make as many disciples as possible (Matthew 28:18–20), at as much depth as possible. There will be plenty of time to celebrate after we cross the finish line. For now, we just keep running.

Enter the Battlefield Together

The Bible teaches that we are in a real war with a real enemy (2 Corinthians 10:3–4; Ephesians 6:10–20). God has given us a mission, so we cannot allow ourselves to get “entangled in civilian pursuits” (2 Timothy 2:3–4).

Picture a nice house with a white picket fence and your happy family lounging inside. Now imagine a full-scale war unfolding just a few blocks away. Your friends and neighbors are fighting for their lives while

you are remodeling your kitchen and hanging your new big screen TV. You have contractors installing better windows so you can tune out all of the noise.

It is a pretty pathetic picture, but it's an appropriate comparison for the lives that are offered to so many Christian couples. They are ignoring Jesus's mission in hopes of enjoying this life. But don't fall for it. Real life is found in the battle. Right now, we have many brothers and sisters being tortured overseas because of their faith. Let's pray for them and be encouraged by their example to enter the fight.

Being in war together may be what keeps us from being at war with each other. Rather than neglecting the battle to work on your marriage, maybe the best thing for your marriage is to enter the battlefield together.

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/marriage-on-the-edge-of-eternity>