

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

Series Big Idea: All of us who have been married, at some point, wonder if we married the wrong person. Or we put off marriage because we fear we might choose the wrong mate. Or we consider divorce convinced we got it wrong. Fact is, there are a lot of reasons for these concerns. Nobody will ever be the perfect mate or find the perfect mate. We all have our hurts, hang-ups, bad habits and issues. And compatibility is a fallacy that if relied upon will set up for failure. And trying to change our partner to become the "right" person is also a recipe for disaster. God intended marriage to be mysterious. That mystery is that two people become one and stay as one. In this series, we are going to put together a "mixtape" of biblical ideas that can provide a "soundtrack" of songs to help us live the mystery of having a thriving marriage as we learn to stay in love and stay as one.

Message Big Idea:

Our culture embraces many illusions in relationships. One of the biggest is called Compatibility. It is viewed as the THE way to ensure a successful marriage. In contrast, God seems to have a different opinion. To build and maintain a fulfilling marriage requires us (individually) to become more and more like Jesus, by allowing the Holy Spirit to rule our lives. The mystery revealed of a beautiful marriage is found in the overflow of 2 hearts fully surrendered (united with) to Christ. Our compatibility doesn't exist in our personality profile, but rather in our individual/personal connection to the Creator.

Main Idea: HE > WE > ME

Main Text:

Philippians 2:5

Supporting texts:

Philippians 2:3-4

Genesis (overview of the creation of Man/Woman)

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define a "Successful" marriage?
2. What comes to mind first when thinking about Compatibility? How does our culture view it?
3. What is one unique difference (personality or character trait) you and your spouse have?
4. Philippians 2:5 tells us to have the same mindset of Christ as in our relationships. How would that impact your marriage/relationships/friendships?
5. Read Philippians 2:3-4. What is a specific example of how you are currently or could choose to live out this challenge?

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

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Message:

(R) Good morning (afternoon) everybody. My name is Rebecca, and we are so excited to be here with you! I even brought this guy with me today. This is my husband... you may not know him... he plays in the band! (C)Thanks for that intro babe! On that note, as the Worship Pastor, I am blessed every week to worship with such an amazing church (YOU!). I also wanted to take time to say thanks to all of our Tech and Band volunteers who lead us in worship so well every week. These guys and gals put in a lot of hours to make our services happen. Let's show them some love!

(C)Rebecca and I were asked to co-teach today and wrap up our final week of the series Mixtape. Rebecca is a therapist and has a private practice here in town, and me being a pastor, not only have we had the opportunity to work on our own marriage, but we also have the pleasure of coming alongside many people to help them in their relationships.

We are really excited to share what God has put on our hearts, but before we jump into the topic, both of us felt like we needed to do something. We realize that there are so many people with us today, or watching online that are flat-out struggling. Struggling in marriages that seem utterly hopeless. Marriages that are falling apart or have already fallen apart. For you, this series has probably not been easy to listen to. We want to acknowledge your situations. But more importantly, we wanted to start with praying for you. Rebecca and I believe there is power in prayer, and while God may not always fix our situations the way we think or expect, God will absolutely work in us and through us. So Rebecca, could you lead us in prayer to kick us off?

(R) Pray for failed, struggling, non-believers, addiction, etc.) Amen.

(C) In this series we have been looking at Ephesians 5:31...exploring the mystery of marriage where two become one.

We have been married for 16 years now, which means our relationship is like a teenager that can finally drive on its own! Which for any of you who have sat in the passenger seat with a 16 yr old at the wheel, you know is equal parts exhilaration, and terrifying. Honestly, marriage can be extremely tough, and it does take a tremendous amount of work to be successful.

Marriage can be the most amazing, beautiful and Holy experience we have on this earth! *Proverbs 18 says he who finds a wife, finds a good thing.*

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

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Right?!?. God's design for marriage is possible. Successful marriages are attainable. Because of God's grace, many of us are living those out today, but it doesn't just happen by accident. One does not merely fall into a healthy and thriving relationship. It takes intentionality and some laser focus on the right things.

(C)When it comes to marriages and relationships, the term 'successful' could have so many definitions. So perhaps we should start today by exploring what success looks like according to the scripture. Before we read, Here's the deal, for all of you who are single and loving it, in the hunt for a spouse or newly single, what we are looking at today is broader than marriages alone. It is applicable for any human connection we have. So let's get our bibles out, or open your app on your phone. For all of you tuning in online, we have a link for the bible on their as well. Turn to Philippians in the second chapter. It's on page 802 for the bibles in the seatbacks.

Phil 2:1-5

This whole chapter is on the theme of imitating Christ' humility and serving one another. Verse 1 in that same passage Paul describes it as being United with Christ. To be united with Christ we have to surrender our lives fully and will to Him. Our hearts fully surrendered. Before we ever talk about the mystery of marriage, we have to acknowledge that our marriage is merely a byproduct of a heart turned toward Christ. We have to decide that Jesus is greater than us! He is greater than Me!. You see, for each of us, trying to navigate life on this planet were meant to put God first and to put others above ourselves; especially our spouse. When we think this way, feel this way, and act this way our life takes on so much more meaning and purpose. That is what it means to have "the same mindset of Christ."

When we fully surrender our hearts to Jesus, we are saying that He is greater than anything or anyone in our lives.

That's the main idea or soundtrack for today: **He > We > Me.**

We believe this is God's design for our lives in general, and absolutely the best way to have a fantastic marriage.

(R)The problem is we are bombarded by a different idea that is prevalent in our world. There is a significant contrast between the world's view of

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

marriage and God's design for marriage. This shows up in many ways, but we want to look at a just a couple of those differences today. The first is this:

1. The world says we must be compatible; God says you were created different, by design.

One of our culture's biggest myths is found in the illusion of compatibility. Glen shared earlier in the series that no one marries the right or perfect person. That sounds harsh when you first hear it; however there is truth in it. Marriage is made up of two flawed, broken, and sinful people and compatibility is not the fool-proof way to find a soulmate that, dating sites might suggest.

Here's is the problem. Many times when we refer to compatibility, what we are really saying is he/she needs to be more like me:

He needs to think like me

He needs to act like me

She needs to make decisions like me

She needs to feel like me

In my work with clients, I hear these complaints all of the time and even as a relationship ends this idea of 'irreconcilable differences.' The view of the world is that marriage is based on self-fulfillment or making me happy. The world flips this equation, and my needs and my happiness becomes most important, or at the least the central focus.

The idea of compatibility is flawed because our differences are part of God's creative design and purpose for our lives. That is the mystery of marriage as we have been exploring in this series - God brings two individuals together as one.

We>Me

I know that tweaked some of you grammar sticklers, but it's catchy...try to go with it! Because together we are greater than I am individually. As Chris

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

mentioned earlier, we are designed by God to put others ahead of ourselves; that is His call to us.

So how do we walk out this idea of We > Me? What does it look like practically?

We don't always get this right but here are some things we've learned along the way. We celebrate each other's differences, we allow each other to influence us, specifically in our differences, and most importantly we approach our marriage with humility.

Instead of wishing we were more alike, we can choose to honor and celebrate the God created differences. The assumption is that in the areas we differ, one of us is right and one is wrong, and that just isn't true.

PERSONAL EXAMPLE (Chris' calm demeanor and Rebecca's reaction to it early in our marriage.)

These creative differences are part of this beautiful opportunity for spiritual formation - an opportunity to learn from each other and grow as God makes us more and more into the person he created us to be. This is the mystery and the beauty of togetherness. God is using Chris and our marriage to make me more like Him.

Another way that we can choose we over me is to share power and to allow my spouse to influence me in those differences.

(C)PERSONAL EXAMPLE – GUT versus LOGIC

This shows up for us in how we make decisions. {Rebecca-logic / Chris-Feeling} // big decisions / moving across the country...
small decisions / putting a teaching together...

Until we can make a decision together, we won't move forward.

Differences don't have to divide they can strengthen us. The personality of God is not found through my perspective alone. Let me repeat that! The personality and character of God will never be found in my perspective

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

alone. I can experience God more fully through my spouse. The beauty and mystery of God's design for marriage is that in our togetherness we are stronger than we ever could be individually – two become one as Paul states in Ephesians we are called to be, we begin to live into this part of the equation, **We > Me.**

So again, we don't always get this right, but still try to celebrate each other's differences, we allow each other to influence the other, specifically in our differences, and we approach each other with humility.

(R)If you look back to **Philippians, Paul is speaking to the church in Philippi. After he encourages them to be united in Christ, he makes this statement in verse 3 do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.** This is the highest expression of God's love. So here we see again, this contrast between what the world says: marriage is about self-fulfillment and making me happy and God says marriage is about self-denial – serving our partner in humility – their interests or their needs become more important than mine.

We put ourselves first naturally. Marriage is putting "us" ahead of "me," and we see this equation modeled in scripture... We > Me. Loving our partner as we love ourselves as Glen spoke about last week. My needs and my happiness become secondary to our marriage.

Wherever you are in your marriage, God's purpose and plan can be accomplished in this relationship. It's a real tangible way that we can allow the Spirit to move in us – to change us to be more like God but this requires humility and the willingness to set aside our desire to be right. Isn't that so often where a marriage can go off the rails? I want him to see my perspective. I want to win. I want my way. But marriage, according to God's design is that We > Me. This is not easy. I can be stubborn, strong-willed, prideful and very opinionated. Most of the time I am confident I am right. Choosing "we" over "me" is a conscious choice and an intentional decision to say that I care more about this relationship than me in this moment. That requires humility. It also requires perspective about what is more important

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

than anything else...having the mindset of Christ Jesus in our relationships, as Philippians 2 states.

(C)Many times marriage can feel like two different beings from two different planets, speaking two different languages, coming together and trying to fulfill all of each other's needs. Crazy right. That leads to the 2nd myth in the world's view.

2. **The world says we find our identity in each other; God says we must find our identity in Him**

He>We>Me

This is the second part of this equation, and God gives us a cool picture in Genesis for His intent and design to live in relationship with Him before ever living in relationship with another human. **Our connection with our spouse should always be an overflow or a byproduct of our relationship with God as individuals.**

We won't turn there, but most of us probably are familiar with the beginning of our story in Genesis. God created Adam, the first man. He developed this fantastic relationship with the first human, walked daily in the garden, gave him life and got to know him genuinely. It's so interesting because, during creation, God said the same thing about everything He created and put in place. He looked at everything He had created and said: "it is Good." Except for one thing; in chapter 2 He said: "it is NOT good for man to be alone." So he put Adam to sleep and took one of his ribs, with the care and creativity that only God could, He crafted a woman, Eve, which changed mankind and our relationship status forever. Everything changed at that moment. For instance, Adam might still be in the Garden otherwise! Haha, Just kidding! We don't know how long Adam slept, but we know God has time with Eve alone; first, just as He did with Adam. After the Creator connected with Eve on a personal/individual level, while Adam slept, He then brings the bride to Adam. And that is still God's design for us as humans. Our connection with Him must be first, always!

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

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(R) We talk a lot about how hard marriage is, and it can be. But what we don't talk about enough is how good marriage can be. When Jesus is at the center...when our hearts are wholly surrendered to Him, when we are united with Christ as Paul says in Philippians 2, when we find our identity, our hope, our purpose in Him, when we learn to love God and to be loved by God we are free then, to love another person. The more you and I understand God's love for us individually the more capacity we have to love each other well.

(C) Earlier we read Philippians 2:1-5, Paul says if you love Christ, then be like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and of one. It all starts with that question... If you love Christ! This is how we put Christ at the center of our marriage.

CHAIR

It takes us remembering to make space for Him right smack in the middle of our lives. Of our marriages. THE CHAIR - you have probably been wondering why this empty chair is here. I think it paints a clear picture of many of our lives. It represents the space Jesus should have. He won't force Himself in. He won't demand it. It is our choice. To say, Jesus, you have a spot reserved for you.

It is so easy to let other things creep in and take the place of God. The world's view would have you put your needs in the chair or the identity of another person. Only Jesus can truly fill that spot. There have been many times over the last 16 year where we let the stuff of life crowd God out and realize Jesus was becoming an afterthought. I wish I could tell you that we have always continually put Christ at the center, but that is not the case. At times we have let our desire or pride get in the way of what God could have done in us or through us. And it never started out in some massive, in your face way. It was always something small. A disagreement, a hurt, a disappointment. We are still in this process of learning how to keep Jesus at the center. It's a continual journey

Keeping Jesus at the center takes tenacity!! Thankfully God has grace and patience for us on our journey. He doesn't give up on us nearly as quickly as we sometimes give up on ourselves. **This has been the single most**

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

significant lesson of our marriage; we need Jesus to be between us!

But He can't be first in our marriage until He is first in our lives.

(R) We are designed to have Christ at the center of our lives. For all of us who are Christ-followers, at one point we invited Jesus to be the center. The catch is this...it's not a one-time thing!! It takes a daily lifestyle of inviting Christ in and making sure there is room for Him...surrendering wholly to Him.

When you stop long enough even to check and see what's at the center of your life, what do you find? Have you been living with an emptiness in your life? The space that Jesus could be/ SHOULD BE occupying and filling is it empty? Maybe you have been living for yourself, on your terms. All the ways you have tried to find fulfillment has probably left you wanting. Here is the good news. It's never too late to 'turn toward Jesus' and surrender your heart fully; to put Christ at the Center. To say "God, You can have all of me" and to let the overwhelming, reckless love of God crash over you.

It's time. Today right now is the time to make that decision. For your life individually, for your marriage, for your relationships. To surrender again, and say "Jesus, Here is your seat!" Please take control of my life; take control of my marriage. Chris and I have to do this continually. To remind ourselves and each other that God must come first in our hearts and our lives.

(C) In a moment, the band is going to come out and lead us in a song of surrender. During that song, as married couples, you have a chance to surrender fully to Jesus; to ask Him to be the center of our lives AND our relationships, not just an afterthought. Ask God to make us like-minded and in unity with Jesus. For Him to make us one again.

If you're married and your spouse does not know Jesus, take a few moments to surrender your marriage to God, and make sure Christ is at the center of YOUR life. That is the best way for your spouse to experience God; through you!

If you're single and at one point you made God the center of your life, but

Mixtape: The Soundtrack for Marriage - Beyond Compatibility

Chris and Rebecca Hamlin - August 19

for whatever reason, that seat is empty now. Take a few moments to invite Him back in.

Lastly, if you are here and you have never before surrendered to God. You have been living on your terms, trying to find fulfillment in everything except a relationship with Jesus. It doesn't matter what age you are. You can make that decision today. The decision to surrender and follow Jesus with your whole life. We decide that internally, but we make it public through baptism. Baptism is when we go down into the water are raised back out, representing that our old self is over, we are made new IN CHRIST. There is no better way to show that You are putting Jesus at the center of your life!

We have a team of people waiting to help you in that process and answer your questions. They also have everything you need, like towels and clothes for baptism. This could be the day your life changes forever. Your marriage changes forever.

Let's spend the next few moments worshipping and doing some business with God. If you want to be baptized, step out of the seat you are in and come right over here to the door on your left. We will meet you there.

He > We > Me