

# Marriage on the Rock

Title: Part 3 – Seek God Together

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Transition: Band Continues Softly

How many of you believe that today? God we believe but help our unbelief! We worship you through our pain, through our failure, through our doubts we declare these truths over our lives! Let's ask Him to speak to us as we open up His Word today, pray with me.

## [PRAYER TIME]

Hey, before you guys grab a seat why don't you take a few moments and say "Hi" to some people around you, thank them for being here today. While everyone here in the house is saying "Hi," as always, we say "Hi" to everyone joining us on our app or social channels. Let us know where you are watching from and if we can pray for you or serve you in some way.

Well, we are in the middle week of a collection of messages called "Marriage on the Rock." As we dive into God's Word together we are going to learn how to take our relationship from being on the rocks to being built on the rock! I know that sounds like preacher hype, and maybe it is a little cheesy, but I am convinced the Bible is the most relevant relationship text ever written! It contains the timeless wisdom of God and the life-giving words of Jesus AND if you build your relationship on it you will be able to weather the storms.

I also want you to hear me before we go any further into this. That is my conviction. Everything I just said. But I also want you to hear that I know a 30-minute message isn't going to fix everything that wrong in your marriage. My goal for these few weeks is to give some foundational rocks to build on. There is still a lot of work to be done beyond anything I could ever communicate from this stage no matter how much time we had. So, as I said in the opening week, let's continue to extend grace to each other and pray for each other whether you find yourself single, married or maybe even single again.

AND to get us back in the flow. In the opening week, we said in our culture we all know how to fall in love, all it takes is a pulse, the thing many of us have never learned or been taught is how to stay in love. So, we tried to answer how do we stay in love and the answer came from this idea Jesus came up with 2,000 years ago, which was basically you have to make love... a verb, right! Love is not a feeling, it is a choice, love is an action.

Then we came back last week and said what happens somewhere along the way in every marriage is we take all these desires, and wishes, and dreams for what our marriage will be like, and we hang them around the neck of our spouse as expectations. And whenever you take a desire and place it on your spouse as an expectation what you have actually done is limit the ability for love to be exchanged. No one gets credit for simply living up to expectations right? So, your spouse might live up to some of your expectations, but what have they done by doing that? All they have done is get back to zero! No one gets loved or appreciated for simply meeting expectations, so it kills intimacy.

If you missed any of this, I would highly recommend catching the first two parts on our app or website and maybe even share them with someone who needs this too.

To get us going today on this next "rock" to build on I've got a question that I want you to think about but don't answer this out loud because... well, just because, here you will see what I mean:

## **Why did you get married?**

If you are married, or you were married at some point, why did you get married? Honest question. If you are single, you could ask it this way:

## Why do you want to get married?

Another way you could ask this is, what is the purpose for marriage? If we were to go out to lunch after this and I just popped this question on you, what would you say? Why did you get married, why do you even want to get married, or get married again! "I don't know... because we loved each other?"

So, let's start today with some really terrible reasons to get married, some things marriage is *NOT*. Write these down, especially if you are a student or single or single again. Marriage is first all *NOT*:

## Marriage is *NOT* a plan for wholeness.

You don't go into marriage thinking this is going to complete you or fulfill you. I would be willing to bet a lot of us thought this on the front end though. Many of us went into marriage, or want to get married, because we think getting married will fulfill my needs or fill a whole that has been missing in my life.

Not only do we think marriage will fulfill or complete us a lot of the really great characters in the Bible thought this too. The moment sin entered the human experience it's like the purpose for marriage got twisted. Abraham in the Old Testament was married to Sarah but on two different occasions' lies about Sarah being his wife, says she is his sister, then since Sarah is unable to have kids he decides to get one of his servants named Hagar pregnant so that his family can carry on. You think your marriage is complicated.

Then you have Isaac and Rebecca who were constantly fighting because Isaac favored their son Esau and she favored their son Jacob.

Jacob worked for 14-years just to marry Rachel because he thought she would complete him, only to then have kids with her sister and two of their servants.

Moses and his wife Zipporah, we don't know a lot about Zipporah, but we do know her and Moses got into such a big fight over the circumcision of their son that she called him "The Bridegroom of Blood" because she was so angry. Cheryl and I have had our share of fights through our 21 years of marriage but she has never called me "The Bridegroom of Blood." I don't even know what that means... but it was not nice.

Then you had David, he was a disaster as a husband. And his son Solomon (with all of his wisdom) was even worse!

Job, when he went through all of this trials and heartbreak, Mrs. Job tells him he should just curse God and die! Who needs enemies with a wife like that and we could go on and on...

Since sin entered the human experience the purpose for marriage has been twisted because the reality is marriage is not about your fulfillment. If you go into marriage, like so many of these examples, thinking it is going to complete you, or fulfill you, or it going to solve all your problems you are going to be in for a rude awakening! Marriage is not about making you fulfilled, marriage is not about your wholeness, marriage is not about saving you. Only Jesus does that! Only Jesus can fulfill and make you whole.

Marriage is not a plan for wholeness. Here's another one:

## Marriage is *NOT* a cure for loneliness.

If you are a student or single today, hear me. Lonely single people become lonely married people. I'll say that again, lonely single people become lonely married people. Your loneliness has nothing to do with whether you are married or not. If you think getting into a relationship with this other person is going to

somehow complete all your emotional and relational needs, you are buying into a myth. Not only are you buying into a myth, but if you go into a relationship looking for them to meet all your emotional and relational needs what you are actually going to do is suck the life right out of that person. No one person can shoulder that kind of responsibility other than Jesus.

Third thing marriage is not:

## **Marriage is *NOT* an escape from boredom or a next step.**

I think this happens to a lot of us. We graduate, we enter the workforce, we do the dating scene for a while and then life kind of gets boring, so marriage seems like the next step. Marriage will be our cure for boredom. But what we miss is just getting married doesn't account for the true cause of boredom. Boredom isn't caused by an external lack of stimulus; it is caused by an internal one. So, getting married just because you are bored with your season of life or because you think that is just the next logical step in life is a horrible reason to get married. Because, once the marry-go-round stops, once the newness wears off, you immediately start looking for the next ride in life.

So, I go back to my original question. Why did you get married, or why do you want to get married? What is marriage all about, what's the purpose for it? It's certainly not because you always get along. It's not because it solves all of our problems, in fact it creates even more. So, why get married?

I want to give you a Biblical perspective on this, so if you have a Bible grab it and go to Genesis 2, we will put these verses on the screens if you don't so no worries. But in Genesis Chapter 2 we find God's purpose for creating marriage.

Again, if you are not a person of faith, you will have to decide if you think this is truth or not, but I will say this no matter what you believe today. What often happens when a relationship begins to go downhill or spiral out of control is we begin to assume we married the wrong person. But I want to offer today that maybe it's not so much that you married the wrong person as it is we just don't have a clear picture of what marriage is about in the first place. So, my goal over the next few minutes is just to make that a little clearer for all of us.

In Genesis 2, we get a picture of what God's intentions were for marriage, and I am going to give you three things to write down from what we read. First let's read the text. Genesis 2, beginning in verse 18:

**<sup>18</sup> The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."**

This is **NOT** saying God created a suitable helper to make Adam whole, Adam was already whole, he had perfect fellowship with God and was living in paradise free from sin. No, what God sees is Adam has a need for companionship. And we kind of get that. Those of you who are married, and those of you who want to be married one day get that part of marriage is this constant companionship. I tell Cheryl all the time that I married my best friend and God says that's a good thing.

If you go back a chapter to Genesis 1, verse 28 now you see another reason for marriage. God created marriage for companionship and look at this:

**<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."**

Here we see that marriage is intended to be the foundation for raising children, that's one of the purposes of marriage. Does that mean in every marriage you have to raise children? No. Does that mean you can't raise great kids as a single parent? No. Does it mean the only reason God gave us sex was to procreate? No!

You should read a book of the Bible called "Song of Solomon" if you think sex is only for having kids. He compares his wife to a palm tree and says her breasts are like clumps of fruit and he going to climb that tree and take hold of that fruit... that's not procreation, that's just fun. But one of the reasons God created this bond between a husband and wife called marriage was to be the foundation for the family.

And so far most of us would agree on those two purposes for marriage, no matter what you believe. Marriage is for companionship and for raising a family, which is the bedrock for society. But I want you to look at the second part of verse 28, this is a part we read right past so many times and miss the significance of what God is saying about marriage here. God says to Adam and Eve in the garden: (Gen 1:28)

**"Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."**

What God is saying to the first married couple is, "Hey I want you to take care of this, it's a big job and you are going to have to work as a team, but I want you to till this, harvest this, replant, create, grow, do good while you are on this earth." What God does is He plants hunger within a couple, not just for companionship or to raise a family, but to accomplish something significant together!

So, here's the first thing to write down today:

## **1. Seeking God together gives my marriage purpose.**

This is an aspect of marriage that rarely gets talked about within the church or outside the church. But when God created this thing called marriage He put within a couple the hunger to accomplish something significant together as a team. You and your spouse have been joined together to make a difference! You were married for a mission! There's your hash tag #marriedforamission

As you kind of think about that and let that sink in, if you are like me, then you begin to see just how much this is missing in dating relationships, in marriages, even in families as a whole today. We don't have these sense that God has called us to do something together that is greater than ourselves. SO, if this isn't true for you today, if this isn't true for your marriage or you're dating, then couldn't we safely say you are missing out on a third of what marriage is supposed to be? No wonder we tend to be so unsatisfied, and maybe it doesn't have as much to do with marrying the wrong person as much as we are just missing a huge chunk of what marriage is about in the first place!

I would argue that the times your marriage has been at its best is when you were doing this on accident. When you were giving away your love to help someone or a common good. That was when you felt the closest even. But then I would also be willing to bet the times your marriage has seemed the worst was when all you were doing was chasing after your own needs, your own agenda, or focused on your own little world.

The reality is you have not been made just for each other; you have not been created just for each other; we have been called to accomplish something significant for others together! That's a huge missing ingredient in most marriages.

Think about Jesus words within the context of your marriage, not just with each other, but think about them within the context of why you are married in the first place: (Matthew 15:25)

**<sup>25</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.**

And I know this is like new information for a lot of you, I can tell by your faces, because TV and the movies never told us this. Most of us never saw this modeled by our parents. The marriage counselor never mentioned this. But hidden within God's purpose for marriage in the very beginning was this hunger to serve together.

And I don't believe it is an accident He placed you in the family He placed you, in the neighborhood He placed you, in the school district He placed you, in the community He placed you, and definitely in the church He placed you. God says to each of you as a couple the same thing He told Adam and Eve, "All of this is yours, till it, harvest it, replenish it, create, and do good!" You are married for a mission!

And I know what some of you are thinking right now, "Well gosh, I have never felt like God wanted us to do anything like this together, does that mean I suck, or I am some kind of lesser, second-class Christian? We wouldn't even know where to start to explore this! Even if we wanted to feel like we were on mission together, where would we even start?"

Here's where you start because I want this to be accessible for all of us. If you are going to discover God's purpose for the two of you together, then wouldn't it make sense to **PRAY TOGETHER**? "You mean like out loud at the same time... in the same room?" Yep! If you want to find out what your mission is together then you are going to have to at least pray together. I read this week that less than 6% of Christian couples pray together on a regular basis.

And before you think I am up here preaching at you, let me tell you, I am the pastor... like I get paid to pray. I get paid to like pray with people in my office, pray with people at the hospital, pray with people at Starbucks because they needed to talk through something really big. I get paid to pray for our church, for our community, for people to find Jesus. People expect me to pray for them, it's what I do. But let me tell you, I am horrible at this when it comes to Cheryl. Isn't that weird? I can get up in front of hundreds of people and pray for them, I can pray for a guy going through a really tough time in my office and the words just flow, but get me alone with Cheryl to pray and it is the most awkward thing ever. I have failed at a lot of things as a husband, but this would be at the top of the list for me.

So here is my homework, not just for you, but first and foremost for me, right? Here is the homework. I want you to just try this. If you are seriously dating someone, or married, I want you to pray with each other every day for the next 7 days. From today until next Sunday, I want you guys to get alone for just a few minutes and pray together, out loud. And I am telling you it is going to be so awkward, I am right there with you, each day, it's awkward and it's not going to come natural but will you try this for the next 7 days?

Wouldn't that make sense? If you have been created to be on mission together, and you don't know what that is or even where to start, then wouldn't it make sense to start by praying together to the God that created us for this in the first place? I believe if you will do this for the next 7 days that God will begin to lead and guide you into what some first steps might look like. Or He might confirm some things you have been sensing independently and this gives you the chance to talk about them.

Alright, moving on, seeking God gives my marriage purpose and:

## **2. Seeking God together gives my marriage maturity.**

I'll give you a second to write that down... Seeking God together gives my marriage maturity. The Apostle Paul writes some things in Colossians 3:23 that don't directly deal with marriage, but I think you can still apply them to marriage. Look at what he says:

**<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.**



So, this week what are you going to do men? You are going to be the one that initiates this time of prayer each day. Whether you can even get some intelligible words out or not, you initiate the prayer time each day for a week.

For all of us, you have to decide, is God going to be in the mix of my life or is God going to be at the center of my life and my marriage. One of the coolest things about marriage is going on a journey of discovering Jesus together and the intimacy that comes from sharing that.

Last one and we are done:

### **3. Seeking God together gives my marriage grace.**

Next week we are going to be talking about forgiveness in marriage so you will not want to miss next week, this is a huge relationship killer. But here is why the grace that comes from seeking God together is so important.

In every relationship, it's just a result of being a sinful, selfish, self-centered human being; in every relationship we wound the other person. Whether you realize it or mean to or not, little things we do, little things we say cut, and scrape, and wound our spouse. So, what happens in a marriage over time is there is this buildup of hurt and bitterness and resentment that erodes the foundation of your love for each other, UNLESS something is done about it.

I bring this up today because one of the most beautiful things about seeking God together as a couple is this aspect of grace. In the Book of Lamentations, we get this glimpse into what God grace is like, look at chapter 3: (v.22-23)

**Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning;** [Say that with me, they are... one more time, they are...] **great is your faithfulness.**

We've been very honest about this throughout this series, marriage is not easy. It is a wonderful gift from God, but it is not easy. Marriage is not easy because of the exact same reason any relationship is difficult, it's because you have two sinners. And where marriages begin to get sideways, and tailspin is when one sinner begins to look at the other sinner as a bigger sinner than they are. Whenever you start looking at your spouse, or your boyfriend or girlfriend as a bigger sinner than you, a bigger problem than you, whenever you do that you take away God's grace that He wants to extend through you to your spouse. The same grace we just read about in Lamentations 3.

God's grace poured out through Jesus on the cross, and God's grace poured out through your spouse to you, and you to them, is the only thing that can keep two sinners together. AND the only way that happens is if you are both seeking Him, *together*. The only way your marriage stands a shot of lasting is if two flawed and imperfect people fall on and cling to the mercy and grace of God!

Seeking God together gives my marriage purpose. Seeking God together gives my marriage maturity. Seeking God together gives my marriage grace. AND seeking God together, making Jesus the center of my marriage, creates a sacred and unshakable foundation. This shared commitment becomes a cornerstone through the highs and lows of married life. And there are going to be highs and lows, amen? But when you seek God together it transcends the earthly realm, it brings a transcendent grace to the relationship where you find divine forgiveness, understanding, and love.

AND I know that is the ideal and some of us don't live in the ideal. Maybe one of you is pursuing Jesus and the other isn't. Why would God allow you to become a Christian while married to an unbeliever? Maybe

you've asked that? This question is actually specifically answered in Scripture. You are in this marriage to sanctify your spouse. This is what Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 7:14:

**For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.**

What does it mean to sanctify your spouse? Well, it does not mean that you will automatically bring salvation to your spouse or your children because you stay in the marriage. The word sanctify is the same root word that is translated "holy," or "set apart." This word was first used in the Old Testament for the utensils that were set apart for use in the temple. These utensils were holy and set apart for this service alone. SO, to sanctify means to set something apart or to set someone apart for God's purposes.

What that means is by you being in that home you are allowing your spouse to be set apart for the work of the Holy Spirit! You are a light in the darkness of your spouse's life that would not be there if you were not in that marriage.

AND most of all realize prayer is your greatest and most powerful weapon in the struggle to maintain your marriage. Hold your loved one up before the throne of God and ask the Father to convict as well as to remove the blindness from your spouse! Pray, and pray again! Pray without ceasing! Never give up!

Let's do that now, church, would you pray with me.

**[PRAYER TIME]**