

Marriage on the Rock

Title: Part 1 – Make Love a Verb

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Transition: Video - Pillow Talk

Well today we are beginning a brand-new collection of messages called “Marriage on the Rock” and really we have just one goal over the next 5-weeks. 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! Are you with me? We are going learn how to build a marriage on the rock, the firm foundation of Scripture because the Bible is the most relevant relationship text ever written! It contains the timeless wisdom of God and the life-giving words our Lord Jesus Christ! AND if you build your relationship on it you will be able to weather the storms.

You could say this, the Bible is:

The essential guide for anyone who is married.

The cheat sheet for anyone who hopes to be.

...you could even add (again) to that. SO, if you have a Bible with you today or the Bible App on your phone, head to [John 13](#). If you don’t have a Bible, no worries, we will put all these verses on the side screens along with some other stuff to write down on service guide. We also have some easy-to-read Bibles out in the lobby at Next Steps for free and we would love to give that to you if you are curious or interested.

One of the greatest challenges when I get up in front of you guys each week is that I realize we have people in a lot of different places in life. So, when I am preparing a message I am thinking about the people who might be here that are still exploring faith in Jesus, our church has always been a safe place to do that, to belong before you believe. Then I am also thinking about the brand-new follower of Jesus who is excited about their faith but still needs a lot of the blanks filled in. And at the same time, I am trying to give someone who has been following Jesus for decades something that challenges and inspires them. I am thinking about all those spiritual needs, but then on top of that, we have students with us today, we have people who are adults but single, we have people who are divorced and single again, we have newly married couples and couples who have been married for over 20 years... That’s a big target to hit with a topic like love and marriage.

So, here’s what I want to say up front. If you are a student or a single person or find yourself single again, the temptation is going to be to check out on this. BUT please hear me, there are going to be parts of the next few weeks that will apply to you regardless of what season of life you are in. There are going to be plenty of all skate times that apply to all relationships. AND even if we are in a part that doesn’t tie directly into your situation we are all still a part of a family. The church isn’t an organization, or an institution, it is a family. Those of us that are married should care deeply about those of you who are single. And those of you who are single should care deeply about our marriages and how healthy they are. So, whether this applies 100% to you or not we all should be supportive of truth, right? In a world full of lies and deception we should just be for truth no matter what our season of life!

I also know that a topic like this carries a lot of emotion with it for some of us. Some of you who are single want to be married more than anything else, and the fact that you are not married by now is a source of a lot of anxiety for you. Some of you are happily married and every day when you wake up and look at that other person it is just another reason for joy in your life... and you make the rest of us sick. Others of us have been married for a while, and no one is calling a divorce lawyer, you are not at each other’s throats every day, but in the quiet moments you wonder sometimes if there is something more than this. And I also know there are some of you here today that are hanging by a thread, things have gotten really rocky! On the outside you may look fine, but in reality you are months away from throwing in the towel and walking away because you

can't take the frustration any longer. Some of you just went through that and you are recently divorced, and you still carry the scars with you to this day.

So, I want you to know on the front end that I get how emotionally charged this topic is. I also want you to know that I get how elusive love can be as well. Love brings us the greatest joys in life, but it also can create some of the greatest pain. So, since we are a family, let's all be as sensitive as we can be during this AND let's be praying for each other no matter what the season of life. Amen?

I thought it would be fun to give you a little bit of my history with love. Back in 2000 I was a Junior at Palm Beach Atlantic University, but I was also a transfer student. I got two different associate degrees out of high school, but in 2000 moved to West Palm Beach for ministry school. I arrived on Memorial Day weekend, so I had a few months before school started to get acclimated and ready for the fall. And I was also coming off a failed engagement about 8-months before this. So, I arrived in West Palm and began to meet some people, I actually met three girls that summer. The first girl I met scared me to death. After a few weeks of hanging out she corners me and says, "Are we dating or what?" Excuse me... ahh, I only know like 5 people down here and you happen to be one of them, but no... we are not dating. Can someone say "awkward!" The second girl I met I actually dated for a brief period at the end of that summer. She actually had a boyfriend and dumped him to date me, (I was a stud right?) then she dumped me to date him (stud to spud). But the third girl I met that summer was named Cheryl. And, over the course of the next year through e-mails, late night phone calls, weekend trips to go see her in Orlando, I fell in love and eventually married the love of my life. I think we have a picture from when we were first dating:

[PICTURE]

Man, I was skinny back then. But I look back on my dating years—and I would be willing to bet this was true for you too—but falling in love was easy. Right? I think we are kind of wired by nature to fall in love. In fact, just out of curiosity... how many of you (not saying it worked out, not saying you ever even dated the person) but how many of you would say you have fallen in love at some point in your life? Raise your hands.

See I think we are all wired to fall in love, but most of us are dangerously ill equipped to stay in love. Falling in love is easy. Some of you are in love with people on your phone and you have never even met them. Falling in love is easy; all it takes is a pulse. I read online this week that it is estimated that there are over 8,000 online dating sites and platforms worldwide. Some of my favorites I googled were: **Gothic Match**, **Singles with Food Allergies**, and **Stache Passions**. 8,000 sites though designed to help people fall in love! That's crazy! Our culture is obsessed with falling in love, but come on, we know very little about what it means to stay in love! Recent data shows around 35-50% of first marriages still end in divorce.

And yet, most of us believe it is still possible to meet the person of our dreams, fall in love with them, get married, and live happily ever after. Most of us still believe it is possible to meet someone, fall in love, get married and live happily ever after despite the statistics that would tell us otherwise, despite what you saw happen to your parents, or you experienced in your first marriage. Despite all that, we still believe it is possible to meet somebody, fall in love, and stay happily married for the rest of your life. We still believe in that even with all the things that would lead us to say, "It's possible, but it really not probable."

So, if falling in love is easy, and we think it is possible to stay in love, but so many people don't... then wouldn't you have to conclude we are missing something? Wouldn't you have to say something is broken in the way most of us do our relationships? If it is easy to fall in love, and we think a forever love is still possible, but it rarely happens then where are we going wrong? That's what we are going to talk about today as we lay the first rock of this new foundation and move our relationship from being on the rocks to on the rock.

If you have John 13 in it we find some of Jesus most famous words on love. And if you are still skeptical of Jesus, or you are skeptical of the Bible, do me a favor. Keep an open mind about this and try it, because I

believe this works whether you believe it or not. Truth is truth even if you are not totally sure yet of the person that said it. In other words, you don't have to believe it because Jesus said it. I think you can practice this, see that it works, and then that might lead you to consider more of the claims of Christ. But in John Chapter 13, verse 34 Jesus says this:

³⁴ **“A new command** [Stop there because our English translations have a hard time capturing the full meaning of what Jesus is saying by a “NEW” command. Jesus isn't so much saying this is new information as He is saying this is a remarkable command, an extraordinary command, or a game changing command, that] **I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**

Some of you are like, “That's all you have for us... you had all week and that is the best you could come up with to save my marriage?”

BUT this is a bigger statement than you think. Jesus says, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” What Jesus is doing right here is He is taking the word “love” that we commonly use as a noun, and He is using it as a VERB! He uses love as a verb. In other words, love isn't something that you find or fall into, love is something that you do, love is a choice that you make.

This is where we get things so backwards in our culture. We say I want to feel my way into an action. I want to feel it first. I want to feel in love and then when I feel in love I will act in a loving way. What Jesus is saying here is we have that backwards. Don't feel your way into an action. You act your way into a feeling! Jesus doesn't deny the feelings of love, He gave them to us, He just says we are putting the chicken before the egg. You make love a verb first, something that you do, then you feel it on the inside second. That's a huge shift isn't it? Jesus says this is the difference between falling in love and staying in love.

If you want to write this down in your notes you could say it like this: {BUILD THIS}

The foundation for staying in love is to make love

{PAUSE} **a verb.**

You will remember that now won't you? Today, in the time we have left, I want to wade into this. How do you make love... a verb? If you know someone who is single and desperately wanting to be married, if you know some friends who are going through some rocky times, if you want to bring the passion back to your marriage then what this looks like to make love a verb?

Three things to write down today:

1. Persistently Pursue.

What does it look like to make love a verb? It looks like persistent pursuit; you persistently pursue the other person you want to stay in love with. The author of the Book of Genesis talks about the genesis of how this works in human relationships, look at this from Chapter 2, verse 24:

²⁴ **That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united** [this word literally means to cling to, to pursue hard with devotion, a man leaves his father and mother and clings to, pursues with devotion] **to his wife, and they become one flesh.**

So, in this verse we see God's plan when it comes to marriage, when it comes to sexual intimacy, one man and one woman who pursue each other hard with devotion. That was God's original design for love.

to see any improvement. You would never expect that. You know that if you neglect your body that over time there are going to be consequences for that. Taking it back to the car, if you neglect your car and basic maintenance, you know it is going to cause a breakdown. You can't neglect your car and expect there to be any improvement. We know that. But for some crazy reason we act like the opposite of that is true when it comes to our relationships don't we? You can't put your marriage on autopilot and expect it to become the life-giving relationship God wants you to have.

So, to just put all my cards on the table, I want you to know this is going to require some effort! It is going to take some intentional effort to persistently pursue your spouse.

The second thing you can jot down in your notes when it comes to making love a verb is this:

2. Elevate Evaluation.

You have to elevate evaluation. "Well, evaluate what? What do I need to evaluate?"

The answer is not what you think. I would be willing to bet you evaluate your spouse plenty. I don't think any of us need to evaluate our spouses any more than we do. AND this might surprise you; I don't think we need to evaluate our marriages any more than we do. I don't think you need to take a bunch of tests in some magazine or marriage book to rate your marriage. "So, what am I supposed to evaluate then?" The thing we need to elevate our evaluation of is... OURSELVES!

The Apostle Paul writes this to a church in the city of Galatia in the first century, it is so simple, but so profound. Look at this: (Gal 6:4)

4 Each person should judge their OWN ACTIONS and not compare themselves with others.

When I sit down and talk to someone who is in a relationship crisis one of the things I see right off the bat in 80% of the conversations is they always see the other person as the enemy. And for some of you, that might be what you are doing right now in your relationship, you are not fighting FOR your marriage you are fighting IN your marriage because you see the other person as the enemy.

If you want to fight *for* your marriage then you have to begin by asking: What is wrong with me? I don't expect many ams there, but come on, it starts by asking, what is wrong with me? AND for those of you who are students, or single, and especially for those of you who find yourself single again, if I could give you just one piece of dating advice, this is what it would be:

Worry more about becoming the right person instead of finding the right person.

Everyone focuses on finding the right person, finding the right person... the reason it didn't work out last time was because they just weren't the right person, so this time I have to find the right person. But I am telling you, if you will focus on *BECOMING* the right person first and foremost instead of trying to find the right person it will totally revolutionize your dating. Start asking yourself am I the right person instead of are *they* the right person.

This applies to those of us that are married as well. Because here is the reality. Cheryl and I got married when I was 23 and she was just 20. That's 21 years ago now, 23 years since we first met! We are different people today then we were then. 21 years ago, I was honestly, a very different person than I am today. I had a lot of growing up to do; I had a lot of things I had not experienced yet... Today, we are just different people than we were when we first got married, that's just life. The same thing is true for you!

The reason I bring that up is because when we have gone through the normal ups and downs of marriage it would have been very easy for her to say, "You know, I just feel like I married the wrong person, you are not who I thought you were, so I am going to go out and try to find the right person for me, it's over." She could have done that. But one of the reasons I admire Cheryl so much is because she went through a couple years where instead of doing that, she decided to go to work on herself first and ask: **Am I the right person?**

We have this tendency to always think the grass is greener on the other side. If we could just find the right person everything would be better, and it would be! For about 2-3 years and then you will be right back to where you are now because everywhere you go, there you are! You are the common denominator in all of your failed relationships. We need to do a lot of self-evaluation if we want to make love a verb.

One more and we will unpack a lot more next week, if you want to make love a verb then:

3. Regularly Receive.

John, who wrote one of the Gospels, towards the end of his life writes a letter reflecting back on his life, his time with Jesus, and what that means for life today and this is what he writes, he says: (1 John 4)

¹⁹ We love because GOD FIRST loved us.

We will get into this in the third week, but the only way I think you can make love a verb in the way God intended for you to love the other person in your life, is to regularly receive God's love for you. By allowing God's love for you to be at your core it allows you to love in the way you need to in that relationship. That's the only way I know how a person can do this. You have to regularly receive love from God so that you can extend love in your marriage. AND until you get to the place where you open your life up to God's love I think you are always going to struggle to love your spouse.

Romance is easy, love is hard, love requires being full of God's love first. Romance can be manufactured, love can't. Romance can just happen spontaneously, love can't.

So, to kind of wrap this up today I want to share a story from the Bible that I think paints a beautiful picture of this because most of us, if we are honest, are on a search for love. Some of you right now are lonely because you are single, and some of you right now are lonely because you are married. Love can be a very illusive thing.

In John chapter 4 there is an incredible story of Jesus interaction with a woman who has discovered just how illusive love can be. Let me read this to you really quick and we will be done. John 4, verse 4:

⁴Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. ⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

Stop there, a little perspective on this. Women had to go and get the daily water each morning and evening, they did this at those times because by the middle of the day it would be so hot you would pass out from trying to carry it all back home, BUT notice that is when this woman appears, interesting.

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered

her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?” ¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

So, the woman by this point realizes Jesus is talking about something more than just water. Maybe life has left her thirsty and she hears Jesus talking about that, so she is all ears. But then Jesus does something interesting with the conversation, look at this:

¹⁶ He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” ¹⁷ “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

This was this woman’s greatest fear; that somehow she would be outed like this! This is why she is there in the middle of the day. She is hurt, she is ashamed, she is avoiding people, she realizes her life is not where she wants it to be in her quest for this illusive love. This was her worst nightmare, someone finding her out.

We don’t know much more about this woman, but you can imagine from the text that when she was 12 or 13 years old she didn’t sit around and dream her life would be like this, married and divorced 5 times and living with some guy that’s not her husband in an attempt to find love. She spent her whole life hoping from one relationship to another just trying to find love. She never imagined then when it was all over she would settle for an empty illusion of love like sleeping with a guy that had made no other commitment to her.

Now, please listen to me very carefully here. I know for me to stand up here and say that sex is designed to be shared between a married couple makes me sound very out of touch with culture, and I probably am. But I also think you might be out of touch with your soul. Because I don’t think a loving God would ever design us to give ourselves away so easily.

And, I say that in a very humble, loving, non-judgmental way. No one is here to judge you! That’s not why I say this. I say this because I know some of you feel like this woman in the story. Your quest for love has left you thirsty and I want you to know that you don’t have to resort to doing desperate things in order to find true love.

God has already demonstrated how much He loves you exactly the way that you are when He sent His son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the price for your sins and mine. It was like God knew we would be on the quest for love and that it had the potential to leave us hurting and broken. So, He breaks through human history by becoming a man and demonstrating what His love for us was willing to go through to bring us back. He did this so that we would never have to doubt that we were truly loved so that, that could then be the foundation, the “living water,” for the rest of our relationships.

It is not until you receive the love of Jesus inside of you that you can give true love to those around you.

