

The Game of Life Series – Part 1: Succeeding in Marriage

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March 17, 2019

Tagline: Succeeding Through Life's Seasons

Intro

We're not trivializing life. Life isn't a game. But like a game, if you know the rules of the game and you know the strategy, you stand a better chance at succeeding. i.e. Rook.

That may be really cute when it comes to playing cards, but it's not when it comes to your family. God wants your family to succeed and thrive. God loves families. He loves your family. He wants your marriage to be a deep well of joy and connectedness. He wants your children to become whole hearted. He wants your singlehood and senior years to be filled with holy purpose.

Marriage

Marriage is the most profound mystery we have on earth. The Bible starts human history with a marriage between a man and a woman in Genesis 2 and ends human history with a marriage between Christ and his bride in Revelation 21. It's deeply human, but yet it's a symbol of higher heavenly truths. Marriage touches the core of our identity, gender and sexuality, family and connectedness, kingdom and civilization. God was absolutely at the center of designing it. And he absolutely has to be at the center of your marriage. He's the keystone that holds up the arch.

When a husband and wife live in radical union with each other there is nothing on earth that shouts louder, "this is what God looks like." "Let us make mankind in our image." So he made a marriage. Absolute love. Absolute tenderness, protection, and trust. Unreserved joy, connectedness, and wholehearted union. Tenacity, passion, and commitment.

If you're feeling like you're not living up to that perfect standard, join the club. Nobody is here to point fingers at you this morning. All of us have so much farther to grow, because the potential is limitless. I'm simply saying that marriage is holy ground. Keeping fighting for it.

3 postures that will continue to develop your marriage so that you keep getting better and not bitter. Growing and not groaning. Blessing and not stressing.

Genesis 2:21-25

Posture: Face to Face (to have a successful marriage)

Equal in Value

- Face to face is a posture of equal value
- God does not create second-class citizens, there should be no second-class citizens in your marriage.
- The woman is not an afterthought in creation. Order of creation speaks to completion and perfection.
- God wanted the man to find his identity and value in the Father first and then find completion in his wife.
- The first thing Adam woke up to was his Father. The first thing Eve woke up to...
- Your value doesn't come from pleasing your spouse. Your value comes from your Heavenly Father.
- Trying to find our value through someone else often leads to dysfunctional relationship, codependency. It happens when we try to find our value in the other.
- Emphasis is on how the man and the woman complete one another, compliment...
- "rib" – not a scientific word, it's a generic word--architecturally speaking ie. Like taking barn beam and building another barn with it.
- She is made of the same essence. We come to marriage with equal value.
- After mankind sinned completion turned to competition. Genesis 3:16
- If you have contempt, or domination, keeping score in your marriage...

Unity – [verses 24-25](#)

- Face to face is a posture of union and intimacy. God designed a husband and wife for romantic connectedness, emotional connectedness, and spiritual connectedness. That's a journey.
- [They were both naked and they felt no shame.](#)
- In a marriage there is no part of you that should be hidden. Beautiful, Bad, and the Ugly!
- Radical vulnerability only opens up when it's protected. That's why there's a lifetime commitment. Not to trap, but to protect the most vulnerable and intimate parts of us.
- It leads to union. Protection-Vulnerability-Union.
- In marriage, and our friendships, our relationship with God -- we get to union through commitment and face to face vulnerability.
- That sounds obvious and enjoyable to the person who is just married one year. Marriage is incredibly monotonous. But for those that have been together for twenty-five years you reach a point where you start to think what more do we have to see in each other? What more do we have to talk about?
- Small talk forces us to share life together.
- Ie. Brian in a car... (what we are talking about isn't important to me...she is important to me)
- We can't be so busy running our businesses, or running our children around, that we don't have quality time to relax in each other's presence and simply be and talk about things that aren't important.
- If your marriage is too busy to talk about things that aren't important, it's too busy.

- Not a time to complain or nag. Talk about life. Creative things. Fun things. What's going on in the people's lives around you. What is God been showing you...
- It takes effort, but men, keep pursuing your wives. Wives, keep chasing your husbands. Even in the mundane things. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you passion for one another.
- It's so much more fun to go through life with a whole-hearted lover than with cohabiting roommate.
- [2 Corinthians 3:18](#)
And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory...
- There's a union that takes place when we stand face to face.
- We need times in God's presence that are unhurried and relationally driven.

Genesis 1:27-28

Posture: Side by side, shoulder to shoulder

If you have intimacy but no purpose, your marriage will quickly stagnate.

ie. 16-year-olds intrigued by each other.

You're going to get three years into your marriage and you realize, "I don't find this person intriguing anymore." Because no human is infinitely intriguing. You need a purpose that straps you in together and leads you towards something bigger than yourselves.

Something we can build together or paddle in the same direction towards.

God gave mankind a two-fold Purpose: Nurturing & Reigning.

Both husband and wife carry the responsibility and joy of ruling over the earth and nurturing what they reproduce. (My wife and I nurture together. And reign together.)

Jesus has given each family a unique personality, calling, and contribution. It looks different for every family.

ie. In many ways, my wife is a stronger leader than I am.

Serving in Buffalo NY together. A season when she was traveling. I was mowing grass. But we were serving a purpose together.

For many years Christianity has confused headship and submission with marital turf warfare of who has control. Control is a subversion of God's design for rulership...

- Control always kills
- Turf warfare over \$\$, time, vacations, kids...

- Headship and submission (Ephesians 5) are equally responsible to pursue Jesus with all their heart and submit to his leadership, and to release one another to rule over the earth in all of the ways that God has designed them to (not to rule over each other—Genesis 3).

Lester's book: [Leading Together \(Mother's Day\)](#)

There's a mystery to this... It touches on our core identity as men and women, and our core value as being people of worth, having a voice. (I know there's a lot of hurt on this issue)

My heart is that we learn how to stand side by side and be passionately devoted to each other's unique and complimentary callings. Husband and Wife growing into their full potential.

Final posture every marriage needs to grow healthy. It's the posture Jesus took when he stooped down and served...and wash the crud off his disciples' feet.

Posture: [Face to Feet](#) (posture of humility and serving)

[Ephesians 5:25-27; 31-33](#)

In a marriage, face to feet is when all their unloveliness and unworthiness is right there in your face. You smell it. You don't like it. It's their personality. Their choices. They become offensive to you. Annoyances. The Friction. We blame our spouse. ---And you choose to cover it with love. Give them the benefit of the doubt. You step back and say, "at least he tried." That comment had nothing to do with me, "She's just having a really stressful day."

[Love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8](#)

Allow the compassion of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, to shape your relationship with your spouse. Sometimes familiarity can breed contempt. We need to allow the compassion of Jesus to well up in us towards our spouse.

Opposites attract. And then they attack. It's so easy to blame your spouse. They are the problem. Learn to have grace for each other. They have needs. They have dreams. They feel overloaded by life. Have compassion for your spouse. Treat them kindly.

Pack of wild dogs in Africa chased two wild beasts. Two beasts can protect each other's flank.

Closing

The bride of Christ won't succeed if the bride of man doesn't succeed. God's kingdom is built on the foundation of a husband and wife living out their faith with one another. There is something in the union of a man and woman together—that expresses the triunity of God like nothing else in creation. That's why the enemy is doing all he can to dismantle your family.