

Series: **Proud of Marriage**  
Today's Title: **"A Satisfying Marathon"**

June 23, 2024 – *Selected passages*

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**Objective:** To help people know marriage is a life-long covenant and how to think about growing old together.

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**Announcement (11:00 service) for next Sunday – 6/30**

Next Sunday, the sermon will touch on various topics, which includes homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

We wanted to let those of you who are parents of young children know so they can plan according for next Sunday. The utmost care will be taken, and words chosen carefully, but we wanted to let you know some of the content that will be addressed.

***Opening prayer***

Today, I want to cover 2 things about marriage.

2 things which are challenges to marriage in our culture.

1. The paradox of the marriage relationship.
2. The life-long blessing and challenge of 'till death do us part'.

**We live in a self-obsessed culture.**

One of the values of our culture is 'self' – looking out for #1 – taking care of yourself – 'self-care'.

The Bible is not against taking care of yourself.

The golden rule is: 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31).

But the Bible most often directs us to love and serve others – not just ourselves.

We live in a self-focused culture – and we grow up hearing these messages and this cultural life-philosophy – without ever seeking it out.

*It's just there – everywhere we turn.*

And it seeps into our thoughts – into our habits and patterns.

One of the problems with this is when we get married, this self-focus perspective and value system runs counter to the way marriage is designed to work.

If a husband and wife are self-focused or even worse – self-obsessed – marriage will be a very difficult path – and likely a very unfulfilling path.

The paradox of marriage. *1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 5:22-33*

The paradox is that marriage is about the other person – it's about your spouse.

It's not about you.

If you make it about you – you will run into trouble.

This is counter our entire culture – which believes everything a person does – including marriage – is to benefit them.

The immediate thought you might have when I say, 'it's not about you – it's about your spouse' – is, '*Who will take care of and protect me and my needs, interests and desires?*'

That is a question rooted in fear – or uncertainty. It's a question that fears the answer: '*Nobody will.*' But the Biblical answer is: '*Your spouse will.*'

2 passages give us the answer to this question / issue of self vs. others.

**1 Corinthians 13** (p. 959) – often referred to as 'the love chapter'.

In this chapter, Paul paints a beautiful picture of love – which applies to romantic love in marriage, and love between friends and family.

*He describes what love is – what it does – what it doesn't do.*

I want to look at **vs. 4-8a** – which give us a very helpful description of love.

As we look at this – think if this works if we're self-focused – if we're intent on making sure our wants and needs are met or satisfied.

**13:4-8a**

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

Paul gives us a vivid – sharply focused picture of love.

Notice the following:

1. Every positive action of love is other-focused.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

Those are all other-focused actions.

2. Every negative (“it is not”) is in relation to the self.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

Love – as Paul defines and describes it here – is about how we view – and act toward the other person.

This means love – as defined by God – who is love – is for the benefit of others, not for ourselves.

***Before you push against that – think of this.***

If God is love – which the Bible clearly states He is (1 John 4:8b) – then what does this say about God and His love for us?

Think about God – the Creator and Sustainer of all things – He loves each one of us – which means He acts in perfection in regard to our good – our benefit!!!

*He doesn't love us to get something for Himself.*

He loves us to help us and give something good to us!

**Ephesians 5:22-33** (p. 978)

This passage in **Ephesians** is the most extensive passage in the N.T. about marriage and the role of the husband and wife.

Once again – it gives the paradoxical message about marriage.

In our culture, marriage is believed to be the way you can attain pleasure and happiness.

- You get married to be happy.
- You get married to be satisfied and to improve your life.

But that's not the intent of marriage in the Biblical message.

- Marriage is about serving another.
- Marriage is about helping your spouse become a better, more satisfied and complete person.

Once again, let me pull out just a few verses here.

**5:22, 25, 28**

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord...

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her...

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

Just like **1 Corinthians 13**, we see love – the actions of love – in the interest and honor of the other person – your spouse.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord...”

This is not what our culture teaches or believes.

**Our cultural view of this:** *‘This is heresy – it’s an outrage and betrayal of women’s rights!’*

But notice: the focus in **vs. 22** is not for the wife to think and act for herself – in her own interests.

Once again – the concern or objection to this is one from a position of fear. (‘What if he isn’t nice or considerate of me and my needs or wants? What if he takes advantage of me?’)

God instructs the wife to love her husband by submitting to his leadership.

*If he abuses this honor of leading – then God will judge him.*

But the bulk of this passage is addressed to the husband – and it runs counter to our fallen nature (just like vs. 22).

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her...

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

Pride is one of the biggest struggles for us men.

Men are often driven by the flesh – by our appetites and fleshly desires – especially when it comes to women.

But God gives a command to husbands that runs head-on against our desire to make sure we’re satisfied.

- Sacrifice for your wife.
- Serve her needs.
- Give everything up for her.
- Take care of her – just like you want to be taken care of.

I’m not saying that marriage offers no joy or pleasure for you.

The Bible actually has a great deal to say about the physical intimacy in the marriage relationship.

We don’t have time to look at those passages this morning – I’ve looked at those in past sermons.

Specifically, in the O.T. books: **Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon**, we see the wonderful and satisfying intimacy in marriage through the sexual expression

between a husband and wife and the oneness and companionship that we are to cultivate with one another.

**The Great Paradox of Christian Marriage:** You will reach maximum satisfaction, both relationally and sexually, when you serve and sacrifice to please your spouse. The paradox of marriage is to be loved, love your spouse.

The paradox is to have the most satisfaction and pleasure, focus on how you can satisfy and bring pleasure to your spouse.

When you act in the interest of your spouse, and they are called to act in the same way toward you, the richness and depth of your marriage will be so much greater than if you were acting in your own interests – to satisfy your own appetites.

***Let's look at another challenge to marriage in our culture.***

There are few major fears people have about getting married.

- The unknown is a big one.
- Divorce is a huge fear.

One of the reasons for this is we believe what we hear over and over again in the media – that 50% of marriages end in divorce.

When you hear this repeated over many years – hear it all the time – it sticks in your mind.

The perfectly normal thought is: *‘Marriage is pretty risky – 50% of them end in divorce – those are pretty high odds that I’ll be one of the 50%!!!’*

**But the truth is this statistic is a lie.**

The 50% number is not true.

The divorce rate is not 50%.

Here are some more accurate #'s according to an article written by our very own Dr. Steven Ingino.

(<https://thecripplegate.com/the-50-lie/>)

1. The divorce rate has never even come close to 50%. It is actually closer to 20-25% or lower.
2. The vast majority of marriages are very happy.
3. The rate of divorce in the church is not the same as the world. It is much lower (anywhere from 25-50% lower according to various studies). That means divorce in the church may be closer to 10-15% and not 50%...”

See also this article / stats on world divorce rates - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce\\_demography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_demography)

**Marriage is a marathon.**

Marriage is a life-long covenantal relationship.

When you get married, you are committing to loving and serving your spouse – through all the difficulties and challenges of life – until death comes to one of you.

That presents a challenge to many in our culture on 2 fronts.

- 1) Who can make a commitment for that long?

2) How can you stay with 1 person – and only 1 person for the rest of your life?

Let's talk about the commitment of marriage

The marriage covenant is a daunting one – for the rest of your life!!

Why is marriage for life?

This is not only best for the health, growth, and care of the family, but marriage is for life primarily because marriage is a picture of God – a picture of Christ and the Church.

The eternal promise and secure place we (the Church) have in Christ is pictured by the life-long covenant of the marriage relationship.

When Christ says we're His – we're His forever!

He will not change His mind.

He will not go back on His promise!

How can we stay with just 1 person?

By the power of God in us.

By the example of Christ and His unending love and commitment to us.

By enjoying the blessings of being with 1 person as opposed to being with many people.

This is one of the lies the world takes as fact:

'Poly-amorous living is better than monogamous living.'

'Many lovers are better than just one.'

**But this is not true.**

There are more blessings and greater pleasures found in a life-long covenantal marriage relationship between 1 man and 1 woman - than in multiple partners throughout life.

Why?

*Because* God designed it this way.

*Because the depth of intimacy* you discover in a life-long marriage is greater and deeper.

*Because of the vast history* of experiences and memories you create, enjoy, and remember as the years go by.

*Because of the blessing* of multiple generations you enjoy as they follow in your example.

**Another challenge we have in our culture is getting older.**

Being married “for life” presents some challenges.

We don’t like the thought of being ‘elderly’.

*Consider this...* In more ‘primitive’ cultures, the greatest honor is held by those who are the oldest.

The elders of the village or clan have more experience than those who are younger.

Hopefully they have gained wisdom through the years.

But in our supposedly ‘enlightened’ culture, we do everything possible to disregard and defy age.

Our culture has a negative view of the aged and views the elderly as *'out of touch'* and *'past their prime'*.

This is why the cosmetic industry – and the body sculpting industry is growing so rapidly.

According to an article by ThinkGlobalHealth.org – there has been a “...33% rise in aesthetic surgery over the last 4 years.”

(<https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/aesthetic-procedures-are-all-time-high-people-are-getting-left-behind>)

I even came across a new phrase on this topic – which describes those who are in denial of getting older and of dying: *'Bio-Hacking'*.

Bryan Johnson – a multi-millionaire who is spending huge sums of money to bio-hack his way to perpetual life – wrote a book “Don't Die”.

Our culture is at war with getting older – with aging.

Part of this is our cultural phobia of death.

We don't mind death in our entertainment – lots of violence in movies and video games – but we don't want anything to do with the reality of death in our own life or those we know.

In a godless society – a secular society like ours, I believe each person has an inherent understanding that this life is not all there is.

General Revelation is a clue to every soul that there is a God who created this world.

But when you repress and reject the message of General Revelation, you can't afford to think about death – or the next life – so you don't.

We just had 3 funerals over the past week.

One of the things I always address in a funeral message is this dislike – or fear – of death – even thinking about our own mortality.

Nothing reminds us of our own mortality like a funeral – or getting older.

I have been active in sports my entire life.

I'm not so active in sports now – but I'm active in working out – running – lifting, etc.

So, I have a lifetime of recovering from injuries.

- I realized the power of age – when I had to recover – not from injury – but from activity.

- I realized the power of age – when I wake up and I got hurt while sleeping!!!

We shouldn't fear getting older.

We shouldn't deny the realities of getting older.

We should embrace our age – even when it comes with increasing difficulties.

I say this because the Bible's testimony about getting older is straight-forward and honest.

It speaks of the limitations we encounter as we become elderly.

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

But it also speaks of the blessings of age.

**Job 12:12**

“Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.”

But wisdom and age are not a guaranteed duo.

Age doesn't automatically bring wisdom.

There are some old fools walking around.

**Job 32:7, 9**

“...Those who are older should speak, for wisdom comes with age.

Sometimes the elders are not wise. Sometimes the aged do not understand justice.”

But a wise person embraces each birthday they're blessed with, and they grow in godly wisdom, which will manifest in wisdom about life.

**Psalm 90:12**

“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

So, our culture is in denial of getting older – but the Bible has a vastly different perspective.

And the other part is we believe life is no longer fun or exciting as we get older.

*After all, how do you* keep a relationship fresh and exciting as the years go by?

*How do you* keep from falling into such predictable patterns that might make the marriage feel stale or lifeless – passionless?

*Some people* like predictable patterns.

*Some people* simply accept predictable patterns or ‘ruts’ because they don’t know how to get out of it!

I know – and realize that age brings with it some serious challenges and difficulties.

Physical and mental decline are not fun.

They are a reminder of the limitations of our life and the heavy cost demanded by a sin-cursed-world.

But how can you keep a marriage from becoming stale or passionless as the years go by?

I believe the key to this is the same as we have already discussed.

We can’t look at our marriage – we can’t evaluate or judge our marriage according to the world’s standards. Saying, ‘*My marriage is stale – passionless.*’ is looking at your marriage from a selfish point of view.

It’s saying that you’re not happy with how your spouse is treating you.

Instead – ask yourself this question:

*What can you do for your spouse that will bring excitement and/or passion to them?*

Marriage is not a *“What have you done for me lately.”* proposal.

Marriage is: *“What can I do to love and serve my spouse in a way that will be meaningful to them?”*

An amazing man in the O.T. that I have always admired is Caleb.

He is a great example of how to live with zeal – with passion – as the years go by.

We first meet him in **Numbers 13**. He is 40 yrs. old in this passage, and he is 1 of the 12 spies that go on a reconnaissance mission into the Promised Land – to scout it out.

He and Joshua were the only 2 who came back with a positive report about God’s power to conquer the land.

(See Numbers 13:1-6, 25-30)

The next time we see Caleb he is 80 yrs. old.

After the 40 years of wandering, he and Joshua – because of their faith in God – were the only 2 of their generation who survived the wilderness years.

Now, at 80, Caleb will lead the battle to take his portion of the Promised Land. (See Joshua 14:6-14; 15:13-17)

Caleb never lost his passion for life – because he never lost his passion for God.

He never lost his passion for what God has promised – it kept him looking forward.

In a similar way, as we get older, we have more opportunity to influence the next generations.

This takes work on our part.

We must listen to them – not just preach to them or direct them with stories from the past.

We often think of **Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:2** as a passage for parents – but it has application to grandparents as well! Teaching our grandkids about the Lord is one of the great honors and blessings of getting older.

Because of age, here at CDOBC we have an amazing legacy in our church of marriages that have lasted 5, 6, or 7 decades!!

**And your attitude about your age important.**

I heard this from a recent sermon by Chuck Swindoll – who is 89 years old.

Harmful attitudes about aging: 1) Uselessness 2) Self-pity 3) Fear 4) Guilt & regret.

Helpful attitudes / thoughts about aging: 1) Purpose beyond this life 2) Assured & confident in your purpose 3) Joy beyond circumstances 4) Grace & forgiveness.

He says...

- Stretch your mind – less TV – more books and talking with people!
- Memorize Scripture – 1 verse/week
- Enjoy your life...as long as you're alive!
- Never lose your sense of humor!!!

Realize the mission God has given you and called you to fulfill does not expire at 65, 75, or 85.

Live up to the honor you deserve for the years you've been blessed with and the wisdom of God that you've learned throughout life.

Quote from Swindoll:

**'You can retire from work, but don't retire from life.'**

(See Swindoll's sermon: <https://www.insightforliving.ca/broadcast/marriage/MSTD08>)

### ***Apply it...***

1. To be loved, love others.
2. Lifelong, monogamous marriage has multiple blessings.
3. Embrace the blessings of being older.

### ***Close in prayer***