



Marriage for the Long Haul

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Session 1: Rooting Your Marriage in the Gospel Identity, Forgiveness, and Transformation

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I. Introduction

- A. Our story
- B. What is the gospel?
- C. Christian marriages aren't immune from trials, conflicts, and struggles.

II. The gospel changes our understanding of IDENTITY.

- A. Our identity is who we believe we are, what makes me "Me," the person we think lies at the core of our being.

*"I have been crucified with Christ. **It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)*

*"For you have died, and **your life** is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is **your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:3-4)*

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

- B. Our identity is not our past.

We can be influenced and shaped by our family, background, experiences, personality, and culture. But our past is not our identity.

*“Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

- C. Our identity is not being a wife or a husband.

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is no male and female,** for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

It doesn't mean there are no differences. But as far as our acceptance before God goes, there is no difference.

- D. Rooting our identity in Christ frees us from think we are competing with our spouse.

*“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since **they are heirs with you of the grace of life,** so that your prayers may not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7)*

Many “communication” problems are “competition” problems. You're not looking for a solution, you're looking for a win.

“Fight the problem, not each other.”

III. The gospel changes our understanding of FORGIVENESS.

- A. When someone sins, an imbalance is created. A debt is created. Justice isn't being served.
- B. God tells us we are to forgive not because the other person is worthy of forgiveness, but because he has forgiven us.

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

“bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13)

“The doctrine of justification by grace through faith is at the very heart of what makes marriage work the way God designed it. Justification creates peace with God vertically, in spite of our sin. And when experienced horizontally, it creates shame-free peace between an imperfect man and an imperfect woman.” (John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, p. 34)

C. Four ways the Lord has forgiven us through Christ.

Completely.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,”
(Colossians 2:13)

Finally.

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,” (Hebrews 10:12)

Wholeheartedly.

“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

Undeservedly.

“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,”
(Titus 3:5)

“He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.” (Psalm 103:10)

D. Forgiveness from the heart doesn't excuse situations that involve abuse, injustice, or unrepentant ongoing sin that would necessitate consequences.

E. Forgiveness is not always the same as restored trust or a complete reconciliation.

F. Four elements of a helpful confession.

1. Name your sins.
2. Own your sins.
3. Express sorrow for your sins.
4. Ask forgiveness for your sins

IV. The gospel changes our understanding of TRANSFORMATION.

- A. The gospel gives us the proper motivation for change, which is to please God.

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him...He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:9–14)

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

- B. The gospel provides sufficient grace to change.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love... For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” (2 Peter 1:5–7, 9)

- C. **The gospel provides strength to endure.**

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Romans 8:29–30)

“Long-term relationships give us a laboratory where we get to see how forgiveness, perseverance, and change work. This makes marriage a great place to glorify God.” (Chad and Emily Van Dixhoorn)

The blood of the Lamb is like a great river of infinite grace with never any diminishing of its fullness, as thirsty ones without number drink of it. (*Valley of Vision*, “Calvary’s Anthem”)