



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

You Are a Kingdom Citizen, an Ambassador of Our King

You are Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

When the dignity of all humanity is disregarded, relegated or unintentionally overlooked by those in the body of Christ, the name of our God is disparaged. Believers are to mirror God: He loves all human beings; He values their existence and seeks to recognize their value as His image-bearers. God honors all human beings and has a vested interest in who they are as His creatures. He grants humans dignity and honors each one with responsible freedom. His protection of all humanity is reflected in His providential care (i.e., His common grace); in His love for them; and in His provision for their redemption through Jesus Christ.

As God's image-bearers redeemed through Jesus Christ, we will value what He values; honor what He honors; and walk in loving obedience with Him in this world of darkness and rebellion. We will be His salt and His light (Matthew 5:13-16). We will, therefore, love, honor and value all human beings, regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. We will invite all human beings to be involved in God's great rescue program, called the Gospel. We will both represent Him and proclaim Him through our lives and through our words. In a word, as ambassadors of our King, we will champion grace. We will be His salt and His light. With neither pride nor fear, we vow to not be defensive, to not be vindictive and to not retaliate. We will build a counterculture that represents the values, virtues and standards of our King. This kingdom counterculture, among other things, is pro-life and posits a healthy, redemptive sexuality.

Jesus declared in John 17:13-18 that we are to be "in the world but not of the world." Understanding and applying Jesus' words produces profound tension. How do we do this? What does this look like? Robert Webber suggests that we adopt the "incarnational model" in resolving this tension; we model how Jesus lived: We identify with the culture in which Christ has placed us, separate from the evils of that culture, all the while seeking to be the agents of God's transforming grace. We follow two mandates:

- The Creation Mandate—As His image-bearers, we have dominion authority over His Creation (Genesis 1:26ff). We commit to stewarding well everything God has given us (e.g., our time, our bodies, our material possessions, etc.).
- The Missionary Mandate—As His image-bearers, we will be involved in promoting the Gospel to every human being. As we go, baptize and teach all that Jesus has taught us, we vow “to make disciples” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Kingdom Counterculture

A Sanctity of Life Ethic

- Human beings are created in God’s image
- Human life is sacred (Genesis 9:1-6)
- No person should be demeaned or cursed (James 3:9,10)
- Human life has intrinsic value regardless of its stage or condition; Life is a continuum.

What does this look like? Psalm 82:3-4 states, “Give justice to the weak and fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them for the hand of the wicked.” The Sanctity of Life Ethic means that we see all humans as God sees them. The sins of racism, discrimination and prejudice should not characterize Christ’s church. To be pro-life is to value all human beings. It also means we emphasize the infinite value of pre-natal life. We have the ability to help women choose life. As Michelle Fritz argues, “We have the ability to not only teach about the sanctity of life, but to live out those teachings by supporting women who find themselves in unplanned or crisis pregnancies. In order to help others respect life, we must first respect life. Not just the life of the baby, but the life of the mother, the father, and the entire family.”

- We must teach our children at an early age that all life is sacred from the moment of conception across all developmental stages of life. Children innately know and understand the sacredness of life and are horrified at the thought of someone killing another person, especially a baby. We must encourage and foster their love for all people.
- When we encounter someone who is experiencing a crisis or unplanned pregnancy, “we should meet them with love and hope, not judgment and condemnation.” In Omaha, Nebraska, the Assure Women’s Center is one of the most effective ministries serving women and their families. Thus, the church should volunteer and/or financially support ministries such as Assure that help women and families.
- The church must be vocal in its support of life—through its preaching and teaching and modeling of a consistent pro-life stance in all areas of life. And, the church must pray: Pray for the mothers, pray for the fathers, pray for the babies, and pray for the extended families.

A Healthy Sexual and Marriage Culture Ethic

- God created the human body and gender as a dimension of being in His image (Gen. 1:26-27)—“male and female He created them.” Gender is a specific, intentional feature of God’s creation. Two complementary sexes (male and female) is the first mentioned fact in connection with the “image of God” concept. The Creation Ordinance (Genesis 1 and 2) strongly implies sexual intercourse as a bond between a man and a woman brought together in a “one-flesh” union.
- God created woman as a complement to man in the marriage bond, Genesis 2:18-24. The result is a complementary union of two different human beings (“male and female He created them”), each with unique physical, emotional, and psychological characteristics. The result is a marriage bond in which both are stronger and more capable of serving God together in their integrity.
- The One-Flesh Principle, Genesis 2:24. Genesis 2:22-24 connects the creation of Eve from a part of Adam’s body with the one-flesh sexual union between a man and a woman in marriage. Note the important term “therefore” in v. 24. It is the union of two constituent parts—male and female—into a sexual whole. Jesus stresses this connection between the two different sexes—“male and female”—when He addresses marriage in Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-8.
- God performed the first marriage: The result is Genesis 2:25—there is no shame, no self-centeredness or selfishness; only total innocence and other-centeredness. This is God’s ideal and His goal.

The Marriage Culture Ethic

- Marriage is the fundamental institution God created for organized civilization. It is tied to His creation and His purpose for the human race as His image-bearers who have dominion authority over His world.
- Marriage is monogamous and heterosexual, and, from Jesus’ perspective, permanent—“what God has joined together, let no man separate”, Matthew 19:6.
- Marriage is a commitment before God, regarded in Malachi 2:14 as a “covenant” commitment over which God stands as a “witness.” Indeed, Jesus states in Matthew 19:6 that “God has joined together” this union. The man and the woman have a new status before the Lord—they are husband and wife together.
- It is therefore logical to assume that some kind of public commitment is a necessary part of marriage. Society must regard the man and the woman as a couple, now bound together; they are no longer single. Therefore, sexual intercourse alone does not constitute a marriage. Cohabitation alone does not constitute a marriage. There must be some kind of public commitment recognized by God and by the community.

- Marriage is a metaphor, an archetype of the covenantal relationship between Jesus Christ and His church—see Ephesians 5:32.

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