

The Ministry Of Marriage

Titus 2:1-8

Introduction

Last week we discussed conflict resolution and I'm sure we can all agree that conflict is something we would rather avoid or not have to face. And it is true that in the heat of conflict, the discomfort we feel is not something to enjoy, but if done well, the results are something we can rejoice in.

One last exhortation I wanted to bring up on this subject is to not let an opportunity go by to learn. Often, because of our discomfort in conflict, or our inability to resolve it properly, we will let issues come and go without ever stopping to consider why they came up in the first place. But there is much wisdom in doing a joint analysis with your spouse over a conflict that has come and gone, perhaps it was resolved, but not understood.

Take the time to go back and discuss it, but without letting it resurface as a fresh conflict. In better understanding the nature of the conflict and what the contributing factors were in how it started and what fed into it, you will gain insights to yourself, your spouse, and slowly learn to navigate these things better in the future.

Remember, communication is key. Use the tools that we discussed last week, and commit to growing in them, even if it is one at a time.

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There is one more passage that shines a helpful light on marriage that we are going to look at today. This comes from Titus 2. In Paul's letter to Titus about how to "set things order" in Crete, where Titus was ministering, Paul gave some exhortations for the men and women of the church.

Now it is helpful to know that the background of Crete was akin to our view of Las Vegas today (i.e. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas). The culture of that society was rampant with sin so much so that our word "hypocrite" comes from the name of this island (Crete).

So, one might ask, what is the best way to influence and overcome the cultural debauchery so prevalent in that society? It was through healthy marriages, healthy men, and healthy women living out their example to follow Christ.

READ: Titus 2:1-2, 6-8 – “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ² that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ⁶Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.”

Now each of the words in the list are important and significant, however, due to time, we’re going to focus in on just a few.

For the men, a theme of being stable, solid, faithful and dependable comes through. One of these words is “temperate”. (Share example of tempered metal or glass). Later in addressing the young men, Paul highlights the need for integrity and being beyond the reach of things that could corrupt you. We as men are called to live a pattern of good works that others should be able to see and follow.

ASK: Why might it be important for a man to be temperate?
(avoiding the extremes)

READ: Titus 2:3-5 – “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— ⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

In this passage we see the call to be discreet and chaste, as we did in 1 Peter 3 in our discussion on roles, but we also learn here that a wife is also to love her husband. Interestingly, this word is *phileo* and not *agape*, putting the emphasis on friendship. Remember that as believers we are all called to “agape” one another, but I bring this up to recognize how important it is for a wife to be her husband’s friend. If this is a foreign concept for you, consider looking for ways to be your husband’s friend. This may simply begin by asking him how you can do this.

ASK: Why might it be important for a wife to “befriend” her husband?

In both lists given to the men and to the women there is a strong emphasis put on passing along these truths both in teaching and in modeling them to the next generation. In this, we see the ministry of the marriage is to be an example. In a

sense, we are called to make disciples (i.e. other healthy marriages, as well as singles) through the model of our own healthy marriage. Follow me as I follow Christ!

Consider for a moment how many broken marriages you know of or have witnessed around you? Now consider how many healthy marriages you have seen and experienced... Our sad and unfortunate reality is that we have too many of the former and not enough of the later. So we must go about changing that by doing all that we can to have a healthy marriage. Living out the example of a healthy Christ-honoring marriage will do more wonders and work than you can imagine. Your neighbors, your friends, and your community will all benefit by your investment into making your marriage what Christ calls you to be.

Checkups and Strengthening

Our marriages don't get healthy, or stay healthy by doing nothing. We must work, and work hard, and continue to work. As a friend of mine so wise said, "As long as you are breathing, school is in session."

This work requires times and seasons of learning and times of applying what you've learned and then times of reflection to see if how you are applying what you've learned is working. In other words, it takes intentionality. It won't "just happen". Our marriages do not get an exemption clause from the laws of entropy.

I strongly encourage you to take time with your spouse to review what we've discussed in the class. And then to periodically return to these same truths and reexamine how you are doing. Don't wait for a problem to crop up to begin aiming for health. My wife and I have often taken a part of our Anniversary celebration as time to consider the state and health of our marriage. We look for any areas of weakness to be aware of and we look for areas we are doing well in. We take time to thank God for the blessings, and we pray for the areas of weakness.

Some of us may already be experiencing the broken state of marriage and now that you've gone through this class you may be trying to figure out what the 'next step' might be.

Before we transition into our panel discussion, let me take a moment to talk about what some of those "next steps" might look like. (Review "Do you need counseling?" card)

1. Are you actively pursuing time with Jesus in a meaningful way each day?
2. Are you engaged in a small group, a community of believers where you can learn how to apply biblical truths to your life in real time scenarios?

If both of these are true, and you still find yourself in a place where you are stuck...

3. We offer biblical counseling at our church through our pastoral staff and a team of lay counselors who are willing to meet with and help you gain biblical insight to the challenges you are facing.
4. Or, if it seems that you need a professional Christian counselor we will do our best to help you find one.

Q & A with Panel

1. I've seen a recurring theme of the generally divergent needs, priorities, and make-ups of husbands and wives in marriage. How have you been able to realize the strengths of your differences? How have you experienced and overcome the challenges?
2. We had several questions asking about how to prioritize and invest in your marriage while still serving others and doing good things (i.e. caring for your children or being available for ministry.) (summarize theme of 1 Cor 7:32-35) **How do you prioritize and invest in your marriage while still giving time to good things outside your marriage?**
3. Did you ever feel like you weren't going to make it or that your marriage wasn't going to make it?
4. What aspects of marriage are the most important to model for children (both your own and their friends)?
5. When owning a house, how do you choose design choices? (i.e. colors, furnishings, prices, etc.)
6. Should spouses know everything about their partners past?
7. For the singles/dating – When do I know I'm ready for marriage?
8. How do you balance being humble while not being overly apologetic?
9. What if my partner and I (spouse) need counseling? What can we do from here? What does that look like here at TCGC?

On Your Own:

- How does your marriage or relationship testify of God?
- Are there ways that you have seen God use the ministry of your marriage in other's lives?
- Discuss any areas where you might need to grow in the areas of temperance and friendship.
- Discuss areas for each of you where an outside, corrupting influence has access to you. (i.e. phone, internet, forms of entertainment, unhealthy friendship, etc.)
- Ask one another what the next steps are in pursuing a healthy marriage.