

Cultivate: The Biblical Vision of Marriage.

Pastor Ricky Jenkins

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Digging Deeper: Genesis 2:18-25

Sermon Review + Discussion

Ricky reminded us at the start of his sermon that a marriage is remarkably similar to a car. They both need attention to run smoothly. Even if you have been married for many years and think you have this wired. You are wrong, Ricky used his minivan as an example. His minivan is hitting 70K miles and he is figuring out all the kinds of service it needs. Okay she needs an alignment. She needs an oil change. She's probably ready for a brake job. We just need to get some things tuned up.

Granted your marriage does not need an oil change, but **we** may need a heart change. We may need an alignment, because we all know our relationships get out of line every now and then, how do we correct a relationship that is out of whack? We go to God and get a change of heart. Enter into a new series of study entitled, "*Cultivate: The Marriage Series EVERYONE Needs to HEAR!*"

We call it "CULTIVATE" because relationships and marriages require you to do something in order to get something out of them. So, your average farmer knows that if I want a harvest, I have to plow the dirt. I have to fertilize the dirt. I have to drop seeds in the dirt. I have to water the dirt. And it is dirty! But if I get into the dirt—I can reap a Harvest. The farmer knows he has to WORK. The farmer knows if he does all this, he will have a harvest to cultivate!

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Observations—What Do We See? In verse 18 we see God say I will make him a helper who is just right for him. Verse 20 says there was not found a helper fit for him. Many of us struggle with that word. But that is because we were not taught the Word correctly. Helper is the Hebrew word "*ezer*." It appears 21 times in the OT. Twice it refers to "*Eve*." Three times it refers to powerful nations Israel called on. The remaining 16 cases God uses "*ezer*." To speak of Himself. *Ezer* is the transliterated form of the Hebrew word usually translated as "help" or "helper" in the Bible. You might have heard it more recently used in reference to women. However, the most important *ezer* in the Bible is God. It is only in understanding how it refers to God that we can glean its beautiful meaning for women.

What a Marriage Is- Over the next eight weeks we will examine what the bible has to say about marriage. When we say married what does that mean to God? Let us break that down. It is LIFELONG. Matthew 19:6. Jesus says, "*What therefore God has joined together let no one separate.*" It is COVENANTAL. Meaning it is not a contract. When you have a contract, someone messes up. No problem. We are out of the contract. No real sweat off our backs. We go on our merry way. Marriage is a covenant. Meaning it is a spiritual commitment. The word here for "*hold fast*" in verse 24 was used to speak of glue that was so strong that if you broke it that meant it would never be the same. And notice we say between one, biological male. And one biological female. I can only imagine how many of you here for whom this definition may cause angst, and

maybe some pain. And at Southwest we invite you into a conversation with us. Talk with us, meet with us. And let us try to reason together what it means to believe God's word.

What Marriage Does- Ricky told us that God created marriage to be like a little mirror to show the world what God is like. The #1 reason God led you to marry someone was not because of "your love for that person." But more so His love for the world would be reflected in us, His believers. God knew there would be tough times, but through those times God's love will show through. God plan was that His love would be shown in marriage to the co-workers, our next-door neighbors, and our family.

Ricky shared with us some of the struggles within their marriage. Ricky said they have been married 11 years next week. He shared how blessed he is. But they have their junk as well. Ricky messes up. April messes up. She has to challenge me to get it together. Ricky has to challenge her to do the same. Often, Ricky has to say, "Will you forgive me?" She has to do the same. They have had to get professional, Christian counseling, twice. But as the years go by, what they have learned is that, as long as we keep on keeping on, we remind those around us that when we mess up, and stay together, we show the world that when they mess up, God will stay with them. When they ask for forgiveness. And grant it. They show the world when they ask for forgiveness. God will grant it. Their marriage is not perfect, but God has given them grace and they are showing the world what marriage should look like.

How We Should Respond-

Unconditional Love - Ricky talked about three points If it is about God it is has to look and ACT like God. We need to pray for our marriages and relationships, DAILY. And over your marriage is that God would help you plant the seed of UNCONDITIONAL love.

Ricky illustrated how to love using movies. When God called us to love one another, He was not talking about Sleepless in Seattle love. He was not talking about Jerry Maguire love. He was talking about Godly love. Here is the point—**STOP LETTING CULTURE TELL YOU WHAT LOVE IS. Culture should not determine how we love.** What is love? It is by design and definition unconditional! Ricky told us of the husband he met with that was having marriage issues. He explained to Ricky that he had told his wife she needed to be under 140 pounds, and he told her how to do that. That is not unconditional love.

You see marriage reminds us how we can be with God—we can enjoy Him. Love Him. Find no greater joy than Him. Or we can run from Him because we despise Him and have disdain for how He wants to lead our lives. Marriage was sent to remind us of how God wants to intervene and make all the difference in the world.

Discussion Questions:

1. What have you done this quarter to Cultivate your marriage. Have you fertilized your marriage?
2. Do you feel your friends and family are seeing God in your marriage?
3. When was the last time you went to your partner and asked for forgiveness?
4. What does unconditional love mean to you?
5. When you look at your marriage, explain how God has worked in your life to strengthen your marriage?