

Marriage: The Tie That Frees • Part 6

Challenges To Intimacy • Part 2

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Olga & Sven*

1. Every marriage, now matter *how* good it is, is going to know periods of difficulty as a man and woman try to blend their lives
2. Some marriages seem to be plagued by *constant* trouble
3. Take for instance, Olga & Sven
4. They had been fighting all their married life until one day Olga said, "Sven, we been fightin' and fightin' these many years and I think we should pray about this together."
5. When they knelt down to pray, Olga interrupted Sven before he had spoken three words
6. "Dear Got," she said, "Sven and I have been fightin' and fightin' these many years. It's time that one of us should go to Heaven. Then I can go live with my mother."

B. *Challenges To Intimacy*

1. We conclude our series on marriage today
2. And as we do, we'll consider two more challenges to intimacy
3. Last week we looked at the challenges of *conflict* and *money*
4. This morning, we look at *family* and *sex*

II. FAMILY

A. *Genesis 2:24*

{Gen 2:24} Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

1. Clearly this verse is meant to find wider application than just that first marriage - after all, Adam and Eve didn't have a mother and father
 - a. this statement is laid down at the recording of the first marriage to communicate God's *intent* for marriage
 - b. it's an what it tells us is that marriage is an exclusive relationship that is *so intimate*, even the relationship with one's own parents is dramatically effected by it
2. In order for a husband and wife to become one, they must "leave" their father and mother
3. I like the language of the Old King James - *Leave & Cleave*
4. Marital intimacy is *exclusive* intimacy
 - a. it demands a *solidarity of commitment* that's unique
 - b. no loyalty or affection may compete with it
 - c. if there is tension and a struggle of loyalties, marriage must always win
5. This principle is so important to marriage, this verse is repeated by both Jesus and Paul! [Matt 19:5 Eph 5:30]

6. So let's look at it again . . .

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh

7. Historically it's been the case that until marriage, a person found their primary sense of identity and security in their relationship with their parents
 - a. their role in life and place in society was drawn from their upbringing
 - b. they tended to define their lives and their sense of person from their relationship with mom and dad
 - c. and typically, throughout history, people have lived at home, under their parent's roof until they got married
 - d. in our modern age, as marriage has become less and less important and more of an alternative, we've seen a departure from that
 - e. but that is only a very late development for a certain segment of society
 - f. even today, the typical pattern is that a person lives at home until they get married
 - g. and even if they don't live at home, they still spend a large amount of their time with family
8. But marriage marks a significant change in life
 - a. when a man or woman marries, there is a dramatic change in the nature of the relationship with mom and dad
 - b. the loyalty and sense of solidarity that used to go to them is moved to the mate
 - c. the wording of this verse says it best -
 - d. we *leave* father and mother and *join to* our spouse
9. The challenge to intimacy comes in this area when there's a *failure* to leave mom and dad
 - a. when the apron strings aren't cut
 - b. and either the child tries to hold on to mom and dad
 - c. or mom and dad try to hold on to the child
10. Some parents just won't let go
 - a. even after the wedding, they want to keep their influence and control of their child's life
 - b. so they call every other day or drop by to say "Hi"
 - c. but they aren't there just to say "Hi" - they want to know what's going on
 - d. and they are forever giving their opinion about this and that decision that the new couple has made
 - e. mom doesn't really like the way her daughter in law keeps house - so she comes by twice a week to "help-out"
 - f. dad doesn't like the way his little girl is being treated, so he reminds her that if things are bad, she can always come home
 - g. it reminds me of the story of the young man who wanted desperately to get married
 - 1) he brought home a young lady but his mother didn't like her.
 - 2) so he proceeded to bring home a second girl but his mother didn't like her either
 - 3) this happened 2 more times.
 - 4) finally, he found a girl who looked like his mother, dressed like her, talked like her and acted like her.
 - 5) when he brought her home to meet his parents, his father didn't like her
11. Leaving mother and father means just that - once you've married, there is no going

- home!
12. You have a NEW home and that is where you belong
 13. The loyalty you once bore to your parents now properly belongs to your spouse, and to him or her alone
 14. A man or woman needs to make sure that their parents do not interfere in their marriage
 15. And they need to make sure they are not allowing lingering attachments to their parents to sap the strength of intimacy with their mate

B. Practical Application

1. Let's take a look at how this is applied in some very practical ways
2. In pre-marital counseling, we cover this issue of leaving and cleaving -
 - a. and I ask couples, "How is your relationship with your parents? Are they going to be a problem?"
 - b. most say there's no problem!
 - c. then I ask this question; "Where will you guys spend your first Christmas."
 - d. most answer without thinking - at the same time they look at me and say, "At my folks house."
 - e. then they look at each other and it hits them . . .
 - f. here is an issue of intimacy and blending that they never thought of before
 - g. all of their lives they spent Christmas at *home* - meaning their *parent's* home
 - h. but being married means having YOUR OWN HOME!
 - i. and since the holidays are a profound time of building memories and being family, why not honor the principle of leaving and cleaving by celebrating the holidays IN YOUR OWN HOME, building your own, unique memories
 - j. sure, visit the parents during the holidays, but invest in your marriage by making it a special time for you as a couple and as a new family
3. Here's another way this principle is applied:
 - a. mom and dad need to recognize the boundaries that define your marriage and honor them
 - b. they aren't free to give their opinion to you about how you are living your married life unless you ask for it
 - 1) mom shouldn't call her darling Johnny and tell him that she really doesn't like his wife Mary
 - 2) dad doesn't have the right to call his little girl Mary and tell her that John is a poor excuse for a husband
 - 3) now, in fact, he might be, but dad doesn't have the freedom to say such a thing
4. A husband or wife shouldn't make plans with their parents and then inform their mate
5. And a mother and father should honor the sanctity of their married children's homes by not just walking in without knocking
6. Time and again, I have seen the damage that is done to a marriage because either a parent or a married child will not let go
7. God's word is clear on the process of intimacy

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and [THEN] be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh

8. Marital intimacy is hindered when loyalties are confused

C. Children - Ephesians 5:31-6:4

1. The exclusivity of marriage which is so clearly revealed in Genesis 2:24 applies in the other direction as well
2. In other words, just as a husband and wife need to secure and maintain their independence from their parents, they also need to protect their solidarity and loyalty to one another from the weakening effect of children

{31} “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

{32} This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

{33} Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

{1} Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

{2} “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:

{3} “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

{4} And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

3. It's not our purpose this morning to digest what Paul is saying in these verses regarding the duties of children and parents
4. Rather, notice the progression or relationships Paul identifies
 - a. it *starts* with marriage
 - b. *then* goes to children and parents
5. Under God's plan, children come from a committed relationship between a husband and wife
6. They are the fruit of a marriage - But the marriage comes first
7. Just as marital intimacy can be hindered by nosy parents it can be hindered by children who become the sole focus of the parents attention
8. I realize this is dangerous ground to tread because - woe to the fool who tries to interfere with a parent and his or her child
9. Understand something, I am not trying to interfere, but to bring the right balance
10. One of the best thing that a mother and father can do for the safety and security of their children is to make sure their marriage bond is exclusive, solid, and secure
11. Children draw more security out of seeing their parents in a healthy, loving, exclusive relationship than anything else
12. Mothers especially have a challenge in this area
 - a. the bond between a mother and her children is profound
 - b. giving birth produces a special relationship that is proverbial
 - c. so moms need to be especially careful to make sure that they are not draining themselves of their emotional and physical energy in the care of their children so they have nothing left for their husbands
 - d. and fathers need to make sure they are helping their wives with the care of the children so that their wives have that energy to invest in their marriage
13. One of the best things parents can do is to spend time together just talking and sharing their lives together
 - a. when the kids come and want to interrupt, they need to be told that this is mom and dad's time
 - b. their concerns will be addressed later - but now it's a special time that is not to be interfered with
 - c. children should be able to see dad and mom reading the bible and praying

together

14. If children grow up with this kind of model for marriage, it's going to help them get a lot better grasp on how their marriage is to be a leaving and cleaving

D. Friends

1. Of course, if marriage is so exclusive in its loyalty to one another that it draws the line at these places between parents on one hand and children on the other -
2. Then what does that say to our relationships with our friends or the interests and hobbies that occupied us before marriage?
3. It means that we need to make sure there is no competition in our affection and loyalty to our mates!
 - a. if hanging out with the guys or gals after work keeps you out late - go home!
 - b. if bowling or line dancing 3 nights a week keeps you away from your mate - drop it!
4. Marital intimacy requires an investment of both time and energy
5. The rewards are spectacular, but the work is real

III. SEX

A. Difficult!

1. Last week I mentioned that as we look at the challenges to intimacy we will deal with topics that aren't normal Sunday morning fare
2. And that some of these are difficult to talk about and deal with
3. Such is the case with our last challenge to intimacy - Sex
4. What's interesting about this is that for many people, when you say the word "intimacy" the first thing they think of is sex
5. But really, as God intended it, sexual intercourse is just *one* aspect of intimacy
6. It's the *physical* expression of intimacy
7. Now, I need to be careful and discreet as we deal with this for obvious reasons
8. But as always, I want to cut straight in God's word and not deviate from the path we find in scripture
9. Because of the Church's past reluctance to deal with this subject and declare God's counsel regarding this part of our lives, we've left a vacuum that the world has rushed in to fill
10. And "fill" is exactly what the world has done
 - a. it seems no matter where you turn today sex is thrust in your face
 - b. billboards, ads, TV, radio, & fashions all push sex
 - c. our eyes and ears are constantly barraged by an onslaught of sexual images and provocative sounds
 - d. sex is a powerful marketing tool that's used to sell everything from toothpaste to trucks
11. Now, one would think that with all this attention to and preoccupation with sex, people would be satisfied - but they aren't
12. In fact, the very opposite is the case
13. But that is no surprise to those of us who believe in God and His word
14. We know that the reason why people *aren't* satisfied is because they've rejected God and His word which tells us the *real* purpose for sex
15. We find it right here in Genesis 2:24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- a. sex is the *physical consummation* of *marital intimacy*
- b. to take sex out of the context of marriage is to wrest it from its proper context and domain
- c. just as a fish belongs in water - sex belongs in marriage
 - 1) if you take the fish out of water, it will flop around for a while, but it will die
 - 2) you can engage in sex outside of marriage, but you're just flopping around
 - 3) and eventually, you will find something inside you dying!

B. Hebrews 13:4

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

1. This verse is powerful and makes a bold declaration to our modern world with its so called liberated ideas
2. Marriage is honorable - it is not an outdated, old fashioned idea whose day has past
3. And the marriage bed is undefiled
 - a. this word "bed" is Greek word "coite" from which we get the word *coitus*
 - b. sexual intercourse
 - c. the King James translators found the word a bit too sharp so they blunted it
4. What the writer is saying is that marriage is an honorable thing and that sexual intercourse between a husband and wife is clean before God!
5. This is the proper domain of sex - marriage
6. Sex outside of marriage comes in for God's judgment as the last part of the verse says
7. I am sick and tired of the constant message we hear from the media that marital sex is boring while extra-marital sex is where all the fun is
8. This is nothing less than a bald-face demonic LIE and a flat contradiction of Hebrew 13:4
9. It's my conviction that the Church needs to combat the world's lie with a healthy dose of the truth - and that truth is powerfully presented here
10. God's favor rests on marital sex! It is clean and undefiled before His eyes!
11. Friends, let's never forget that sex was and is God's idea
 - a. it's He who created us with these bodies and with our unique sexual identities
 - b. we are more than humans - we are *men* and *women*
 - c. and so important is sex to what it means to be human that God made it one of the drives that defines us
 - d. in order of intensity is the drive for air, then water, then food, and next, for sex
 - e. the first ensure our individual survival, but the sex drive ensures the survival of the race
 - f. just as there is a right and holy way to fulfill the drive for air and water and food, there is a right and holy way to fulfill the sex drive
12. But Satan, who ever makes it his aim to distort God's good gifts and those things the Lord means to bless us with has sought to corrupt the drives
 - a. so he pollutes the air
 - b. and turns thirst into the means of enslaving people to alcohol and drugs
 - c. hunger he uses to enslave people to their bellies
 - d. and sex he distorts and seeks to enslave people to their passions
13. God desires sex to be a fun, pleasurable, and satisfying part of a marriage

14. So of course, it comes in for the special attention of the devil
 - a. he does this by pressuring a guy or gal to yield to the sex drive before or outside marriage
 - b. he wants to put memories and images into their minds that by their very nature are just about impossible to erase
 - c. that way, when they are later married, he can beat them over the head with them
 - 1) either by creating feelings of shame and guilt
 - 2) or by making the person compare their mate with some other experience
 - d. how like Satan; he seduces us to sin, and once we do, he condemns us with it!
15. God intends sex to be one of the main elements of intimacy, but unfortunately, the enemy has been very effective at using sex to hinder intimacy!
16. What are we to do?
17. First of all - remember this
 - a. according to the verses we've just looked at, sex is God's gift to marriage, and as such, it's clean and good
 - b. if you're married and sex seems unholy or dirty to you - you need to go before the Lord and get to the root of that and ask Him to give you HIS perspective on this part of your marriage
 - c. your heart needs to be healed and your mind renewed by God's Word & Spirit
18. Listen, I understand that you may have a dark and ugly past
 - a. we live in a perverse age
 - b. some of us in this room have been sexually molested as children
 - c. before some of us came to Christ we were depraved sexual addicts
 - d. but I also know that God's salvation is for the *whole* person - to make us whole men and women
 - e. we ought not let the devil keep this part of who & what we are locked in his grip
 - f. our sexual identity rightfully belongs to God and we need to make sure He is Lord over it
 - g. As the bible 1 John tells us, Jesus came to destroy, to unravel and nullify the works of the devil
 - h. in Christ, God can restore the years the locust has eaten
 - i. but that means we must yield this to His control!

C. 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

1. Let's conclude this issue with a brief look at 1 Corinthians 7
 - {1} Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.**
 2. By touch, Paul meant to engage in intimate relations with her
 - {2} Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.**
 - {3} Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.**
 - {4} The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.**
3. Once again we see that Paul's instructions to husbands and wives were revolutionary to his times

4. To suggest that men owed a duty of affection to their wives and that a wife had authority over her husband's body was completely outside the conventional wisdom of the day
5. It's important that we see just what Paul is saying here
6. It's this: Both husbands and wives owe sexual satisfaction to one another!!!!!!
 - a. God gives a man to a woman in marriage that she might know sexual satisfaction
 - b. and vice versa
 - c. husband, your body belongs to your wife
 - d. and ma'am, your body belongs to your husband
 - e. therefore, we should be good stewards of our bodies so that they can be pleasurable to our mates
7. And this implies that we are talking to each other about this part of our lives together
 - a. do you communicate about sex?
 - b. do you share with each other what is satisfying and pleasurable
 - c. or is your love-making marked by silence and embarrassment?
8. Notice how Paul ends this in v. 5

{5} Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

9. Sexual relations in marriage ought to be consistent and regular
 - a. now, inevitably, when that's said, people ask, "What's regular? How often?"
 - b. and the answer is -----
 - c. there is no answer to that!
 - d. what's regular for some couples would wear out others
 - e. while what's consistent for one couple might drive another batty with anxiety
 - f. regular is determined by the two of you as you talk about this part of your relationship and blend your lives
 - g. if John is happy with once a week and Mary desires every other night, then love demands they find a happy compromise - maybe every other week!
10. And notice what else this verse says - **Do not deprive one another**
11. Sex must never be used as a weapon or form of manipulation

IV. CONCLUSION

A. *Marriage's Potential*

1. Over the last 6 weeks we've looked at God's plan and purpose for marriage
2. Marriage has an incredible potential to be instrumental in conforming us to the image of Christ
3. Our marriages can be living pictures of the love God has for us and the kind of relationship we can share with Him
4. Because of marriage's potential, the enemy will do his best to resist, hinder, and destroy
5. Therefore, husbands and wives need to be diligent above all to be united in their devotion to God
6. Read and pray together - serve together - worship together
7. Husbands, take that position of spiritual leadership and lead your family in communion
 - a. set the pace for spiritual growth

b. be an example of godliness

B. Where it All Begins

1. If you've sat here for the last few weeks and realized your marriage has strayed very far from God's plan
2. Know that there is forgiveness and healing in Christ
3. A good marriage begins at the foot of the cross
4. Have you given your life to Christ?