

Marriage Checkup

Foundation of Marriage

Genesis 1:26-30 Genesis 2:18-25 Matthew 19:4-6

Thank you for your participation in your worship this morning. You just don't know what a blessing it is to be a pastor and walk through the congregation and interrupt you worshipping. Wow, I think you took worship to another level this morning. Thank you so much for giving of yourself to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Some of you remember a couple of weeks ago I told you about going to Kroger, going by the magazine rack and picking up that men's magazine that promised me, guaranteed me, that this year I will not have any belly fat at all. Just so you know, I took that magazine home and read it from cover to cover. There is one thing that kept jumping out at me. Every time there was a major advertisement for a workout program to help me lose my belly fat, it would say I needed to consult my doctor before I begin to exercise. That is kind of offensive to have a magazine tell you that you need to go to the doctor. I just kept seeing that kind of thing all through the magazine. Evidently, they want me to lose my body fat, but they are afraid I might lose my life before I lose my body fat if I practice their regiment of exercise! I kept seeing this phrase "vigorous exercise." We know what they are trying to say, right, because we have all heard examples of those people who started exercising, and the next thing you know they have a heart attack. It may me decide! I was going to do it, but if it's going to cause a heart attack, I'll just stay the way I am!

Take it to the Gym

In 2017, we are asking you to take your marriage to the gym. I know that in our Grace Marriage class, there were sixty-five couples to take their marriage to the gym instead of the hospital, but I know that is not even

close to the representation of our church. I believe every married couple that was here last week and heard Brad (from Grace Marriage) talk was convicted from the Holy Spirit of God, and you realized you weren't going to wait until there is a crisis in your marriage; you decided to start exercising in your marriage. You might be like me, physically; I just wouldn't go to a public place with my fat belly and skinny arms and work out in front of those people who have those massive biceps, that big chest, and that six pack. I just wouldn't do that. When you have a washtub set of abs, you just don't do that! But occasionally, I do go up in the loft of my barn and exercise. Sometimes I run down the road, but I really don't want anyone seeing me do what I do when I exercise. Now I hope that my wife sees the transformation, but I wear so much clothing that no one else will see that. That is how some of you are. Right now, either the timing, or you just aren't comfortable getting in a group of ten people. But I believe last week that every married couple who heard Brad talk about how his marriage was and what it was doing to his wife got convicted by the Holy Spirit. Even if you have a great marriage, you decided you didn't want to settle for a great marriage, you want to have a better marriage than great, whatever that would be. You decided you didn't want to mess around with this thing called marriage.

We don't want to wait for a crisis to realize our marriage isn't healthy. We are going to take it to the gym. Well, Hardin is concerned about you. Did you know that sometimes when people start working on their marriage; it actually makes it worse at first? Yeah...so, over the next several weeks, we are going to do a marital checkup. We want to examine the Word of God, so the Word of God can examine us and really understand what the picture of marriage looks like from a biblical perspective.

When you go to the doctor, he always asks you to open your mouth, but you think, "My mouth doesn't hurt." There is something about looking into the mouth that is the key to the health of the rest of the body I guess, because every doctor does it. Jesus talked about being able to tell the heart of a marriage by what is coming out of people's mouths. I think that by the same token, we can really see what marriage is all about if we look into the Word of God and listen to what He says. Be willing to take your

marriage to the divine physician, and let's work on our marriages in our gyms, whether it is here at Hardin, or whether you're at home, every three months. Let's exercise according to the Word of God. Let's let His guidance be our guide, so that when 2017 is over, we don't look back with any regret about the relationship we have with the most important person (under God) in our lives, and that is our spouse. I pray that if you are a single person and you hear this, you will look forward to the day you marry, or remarry. If you are one of those special people, you have been given that gift of singleness, I hope you listen and understand that while married couples are different from you in some ways, we both have the same purpose, and that is to glorify God. But in your singleness, you don't have to be attentive to a spouse, so anytime the Lord needs you to spring into action, you don't have to say, "I can't go tonight, I'm on a date with my wife," or "I'm at my kid's ballgame." No, you don't have to do that because of this special gift God has given you of singleness. We will address this later; you are 24/7 into God and serving Him. What a blessing that is! We want this series to bless, not just our marriages, but our singleness as well, whether you are single by choice or by circumstance.

We will begin our series this morning in Matthew 19:4-6. We are calling this message, "The Foundation of Marriage."

"He answered, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

(Prayer)

Father, thank you again. I just love this people, I love this place, I love this day. There is just something awesome when we are in tune with you by coming together on the first day of a brand new week. But Father, we are asking...I can't tell you how many times we have preached on the family and marriage and people just not get it. People just struggle to make the correlation to their own marriage, though they can amen and agree with

everything we say. So Father, we are trying to design this one a little different. That is why we are offering Grace Marriage, because we want our folks to know that this is something we have to do regularly, something we ought to be practicing daily. Most of us never look at the foundation of our house unless it is time to check for termites, but Father, there are times the foundation gets cracked, times the foundation begins to erode away. We saw that big sinkhole that almost engulfed a neighborhood in a major city in the US. Father, we know that if we build our on the truth of Your Word, the Word will never crumble beneath us. But Father, we just want to make sure in this world in which we live, as cold as it is out there in the world, that we check our foundation this morning. Maybe for that younger single person, that older single person, that person who is going to think about marrying again, they will check out the foundation and remember what marriage is truly built on and what purpose it serves. Open our eyes now Father to see the truth of Your Word, help us open our mouth and let you examine us. It is in Your Son's name we pray, amen.

The Foundation

We were going to use Genesis 1 and 2 as the foundation of this sermon because I believe it teaches the foundation of the marriage. Then while studying about that and trying to see exactly what that is teaching, I remembered this passage in Matthew, where the Pharisees come to Jesus and ask Him if they can get out of the relationship with their wife for just any reason. You have to understand they are asking this question to test Him. But I am kind of amazed that they would test Jesus in this area, because these men are Pharisees. These are men who have set themselves apart to keep all 613 laws of God. These are men who know the very Word of God; they know God's teaching. All of a sudden, they see Jesus and they want Him to give His opinion about whether or not it is ok for divorce to take place in a marriage based on nothingness, for just anything. Here is what I love about Jesus...can I suggest this? When people ask us questions about marriage, or even their marriage and what they should do, sometimes before we give them our thoughts, maybe we should do what Jesus did, and that is take them back to the Word of God. That is what

Jesus does. When He takes them back to the Word of God, He bases His answer on two Scriptures, the very two I was going to use, Genesis 1:26-30 and Genesis 2:16-25. In a nutshell, He summarized the teachings of those two passages that give us the foundation of marriage.

Please don't turn me off this morning. Most of you who have been under my ministry will not hear anything new this morning. But hopefully, with a fresh anointing of God, and where you are now, maybe God will speak to you in a way that He hasn't spoken to you in the past. Or just maybe, you are going to listen for the first time this morning, and you will not be that man who doesn't get it. You don't know how many times I hear that, "I just didn't get it...I didn't see it coming." I think...*how, after what has just been told to me about the years of your marriage, how could you not get it?* You know there is a good chance that if you aren't listening to God, you probably aren't listening to her (or vice versa). If you yawn through this and don't pay attention, you are probably yawning at home too and you are missing what your spouse is trying to say and what God is trying to say.

What is the foundation of marriage? I think in those three verse, Jesus tells us three truths. God's intention for marriage was:

- 1. To be between a male and a female**
- 2. God joined together as one flesh**
- 3. Not to separate what God has put together**

Jesus takes us back to the Scriptures, and He says, "From the beginning, God made them male and female." That is a reference to genesis 1:26-30, which is on the sixth day of creation week. After quoting that, He immediately jumps to Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." From that in Genesis 2, Jesus makes this statement, "God hath joined together."

So the foundation of marriage is between a man and a female who God joins together as one flesh. You need to see your marriage as being between a male and a female, you and your spouse, and you are in a one-flesh life, a one-flesh relationship. Then Jesus says this, "What

therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” The picture is God joins a male and a female together in marriage, and that is His responsibility. Man’s responsibility is not to tear down what God has put together.

If you don’t mind, could we go back to Genesis 1 for a little more detail? There isn’t a person in here asking if they can divorce their spouse for just any reason. We aren’t asking that question, but we are wanting to take our marriage to the gym. And as we get ready to lift the heavy weights, be able to run the marathon, so to speak; we need to know what the foundational truth, the foundational message, the foundational purpose of our relationship with our spouse. If you are single but don’t think you have the gift of singleness and think you will marry one day, I think you will be years ahead of a lot of married couples if you will grab hold of this truth this morning and understand what the foundation of the new relationship looks like.

Please hear what Scripture says in Genesis. Things were really good in creation week, but they became very good when God created the first man and the first woman and joined them together as husband and wife. After the sixth day was over and God looked back and saw His creation of Adam and Eve, He said it’s very good! What is very good? God has now created a man and a woman and He has brought them together and given them a mandate. Here is the mandate...the purpose of them coming together to start this new life of marriage, not singleness anymore, is to be fruitful, to multiply, fill the earth as well as subdue it and have dominion over it.

Gender and Sexual Boundaries

Now this is important...God either makes us a male or a female. You don’t choose your gender. You don’t choose your sexuality. You are born male, or you are born female. In other words, we are sexual beings. Does that make sense? Now, it would be bad for God to create us to be sexual beings and then say that you can't engage in sex, you can't exercise your identity. So guess what God did? He knows how beautiful sex is because He created it, so He put a boundary around us

where we can exercise our sexuality. The exercise of our sexuality is in the husband-wife relationship. That relationship is a safe relationship because it is between a man and a woman; we perfectly fit together. Our sexuality is a beautiful expression of that, of how perfectly we fit together. It is a beautiful picture of this new relationship that we have together of oneness. So God says to be sexual! But remember the purpose of being sexual; it is not about recreation, it is about procreation, multiplying, making more of you. He wants others just like you, in your maleness and your femaleness. Wow! Now listen, there is pleasure in being sexual. And the Song of Solomon expresses the height of sexuality between a male and a female in the boundary of marriage, and how loving, protecting, and awesome it is. But please note this; it wasn't designed for your pleasure. It was designed to help you fulfill God's purpose in marriage, which is to be sexual, multiply, and fill the earth.

Knowing what I know about the whole Bible and the time God spends talking about parenting and the points of parenting, I don't believe "fill the earth" means just to keep having children. It is about God understanding that the very foundation of society is not the church, or the government, or the school system; it is the home. Where your children learn to be like you, because you are learning to be like God, is at home. I want us to start thinking about parenting the way parenting was designed, which is to make disciples of our children. If you will do this, then when they get married you won't have to try and influence them after they get married. You don't have to interfere, so to speak, and be a bad in-law because you gave them all the tools they needed when they were with you at home. To be totally honest, some of us need to quit trying to make basketball, and football, soccer ball players, and band members or straight A students out of our children. Those are all important, but you better understand what God intends for you and your one flesh union with your wife. After you sexuality blesses you with that child, you have a responsibility of discipling that child so that the earth can be filled with image bearers of God!

The church just supplements what you are doing at home. When you come to church, you get to join with others who are trying to do the same thing you are doing, which is to be the husband-wife God made you to be and make others like you. It is ultimately other couples because we have discipled our children, they join and disciple their children, and the next thing you know, we are subduing and ruling and reigning over the planet. Get this picture...as God rules and reigns over us as a husband and a wife in a one-flesh relationship, God lets us rule and reign over the planet! That is cool!

Don't mess with gender. Don't wish you were somebody else. Do not believe you were an accident. God has a purpose and a plan for you.

Bone of My Bone

When we turn to Genesis 2, God gives us more details. I love God! You have to love God too...if we stopped at Genesis 1, you would think God created Adam and Eve at the same time on day six. But in Genesis 2, we have a creation order. We can't spend a lot of time on this because we only have a few minutes left, but hear me. God created Adam first. God was just out playing in the dirt one day, and wow, He made a man. He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life. The next thing you know, that man became a living being, a three part being, a body, soul, and spirit being. He gave him what, today, would be every man's dream. He didn't start out in a 14x70 mobile home, no; he started out in the Garden of Eden. He had the home of homes. He had the best job a man could ever want to have, and that was being a farmer. Then God gave him dominion. When he went down to the river and threw his net in, every fish played "the last one in is a rotten eel." Amen! He never had a day when he didn't catch fish. He had total dominion over the planet.

While God is examining His creation of Adam and his work in the garden, God said it isn't good. I mean, it's been good, good, good, good, good, good, and then not good. But it will very good again! God is going to deal with what's not good, man being alone. Please hear me...this is not a picture of Adam being lonely. There is a difference in being alone and being lonely. You can be alone and not be lonely, and you can be

lonely and not be alone. But here is a man who is a sexual being, who has a mandate from God to be sexual, multiply, disciple, rule, and reign.

So God wants to get him prepared for his new life, so he gives him another assignment. This assignment is to name all the animals. Now please don't get this picture of Adams just coming out with ant, aardvark, zebra, crocodile, hippopotamus, giraffe...no, Adam studied. He saw how God had designed the animal world. He saw how they were so alike, yet so different. Adam began to notice that every one of them had a corresponding mate. There were males and females, but he was a male with no female. He realizes he is alone and can't fulfill the mandate of God for himself. So God puts Adam to sleep, and He took a rib from him and made a woman. Every time I quote that passage, I think of Tony Evans. I heard him say one time, "Can God do ribs, or can God do ribs?" Amen, God can do ribs! He takes this rib, makes a woman, and brings her to Adam. You need to see this, because we overlook it in the English...Adam says, *At last! Finally! Yes! Wow!* This guy had studied the animal kingdom and realized they could multiply and fill the earth with animals. But he was alone, yet he was sexual, and now he has Mrs. Universe standing in front of him! He had just seen the hippo, the crocodile, all of those animals that passed before him, and now he sees a female him. That is why he says, "This at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh."

Now, he has been given authority over the animals to name them and that he has ultimate authority as the head of this new relationship, so he names her woman because she was taken from man. Now that doesn't sound good in English.

It took my wife a long time when we first got married to get used to how my granny introduced her. There were eight kids on my mamma's side, and my mom was the youngest. By the time I got married, my granny was really old. So she never knew my wife's name, and she just always introduced her as 'Ricky's woman.' Now Celisa never got offended by that because she knew that in Granny's eyes she was Ricky's woman.

When Adam said I am going to call you woman, what he really says is I am going to call you *Ishah*, because you were taken from *Ish*. Now Moses adds, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Do you get it? God joined them together.

Now listen, it's not a self-made man, and not a self-made woman. It is a God-made man and a God-made woman that He put together. Do you really want to get ready to take your marriage to the gym? Why don't you decide to be the God-made man that God wants you to be? Quit being a jerk, and quit being a coward. If I were a politician I couldn't say this, but I'm a preacher so I can say to quit being a sissy! Be a man, a God-made man! If by His grace, God can take Brad, a lawyer, into a God-made man, He can turn you and me into God-made men. Amen! Ladies, why don't you be a lady of the Word and be a God-made woman. Let that thick guard down and be the woman God wants you to be. Yes, you've been hurt, you've been sinned against; it may have started with a father or a sibling, or authority figure in your life and it has carried on to your husband. Listen to me, God's grace can heal you of the hurts, the pains, and the scars.

Leave Father and Mother

God's plan for marriage is to take that God-made man and that God-made woman and be one flesh. But in order for them to be one flesh, something has to happen. The man has to leave his father and his mother. Now if you have this western concept of a man being raised by his parents, and he leaves them and moves from their house to his new house with his wife in a 14x70 trailer, you need to know that is not what this means. I struggled with this for years because I didn't know where we got this thought of a man leaving his mother and father. In the biblical world, men didn't leave their mother and fathers. As a matter of fact, when a man took his wife, he still lived on the same property as his parents and sometimes even in the same house as his parents. When you look this up in the Hebrew, it doesn't say, "leave," it says, "abandon, forsake." Did you catch that? When you get ready to start a new life of marriage, you are supposed to forsake, abandon, your

mother and father. This doesn't mean you disrespect them or never have anything to do with them. It is trying to say that when it comes to the priority of the relationship and you compare your relationship with your wife and the one with your parents, it will look like you forsook, or abandoned, your mom and your dad. In the biblical world, they learned to remain with their parents, but living separate from them while remaining with them. Today, we want to live separate from them, yet remain with them. Some of you caught that; that was pretty good! There should never be an in-law problem. In our day and age, it would be better to say... *Therefore shall a man leave his buddies*. Some of you have cut the apron string from mamma, but your buddies are the problem now. You have hunted, fished, worked, and had so much fun together, and now you are just going to add a wife to your life. Are you kidding me? You spend more time on the golf course with your buddies than you do with your wife! He influences you more than you are being influenced by her...are you kidding me? We wonder why the foundations of our homes are crumbling! The last thing I do in sermon preparation is the cruise the internet for sermons. I was reading one last night that said the divorce rate in the US was 34%, and in the church it was only 1% lower at 33%. I thought wow, for the first time the divorce rate has come down. Then I realized I was reading a twenty-year-old sermon! In twenty years, we have gone from a 34% divorce rate to over 50% divorce rate, and that is just first marriages. Second marriages go to 64%, and third marriages go to 78%. Please, after number three, quit trying! I will get criticized for that...I repent of that statement.

Do you get the point? The primary relationship in a marriage is husband-wife. God forbid if you find yourself in a single again situation by death or divorce and you have children and choose to start again. I know you've had many years with your children, but when you choose to become one with your spouse, that is the primary relationship. The parent-child relationship will always be secondary.

Hold Fast to Wife

Hold fast to your wife...that literally means 'to adhere to, or to attach to' your wife. It is the picture of being glued together with someone, not

Elmer's, Gorilla glue! Liquid Nail glue! I will never forget preaching my first sermon, telling this church that you are stuck if you are married. Then the next time Celisa and I would have a discussion and she would say, "Just know you are stuck!" I would hug her and say, "I am so glad to be stuck with you!" Honestly, if we bury Celisa's ton on the farm, and we are stuck, she is who I want to be stuck with. I don't want to be stuck with my dad, Kory, or Randy. I want to be stuck with her. Do you realize how your marriage would change if you understood the primary relationship in your life is your husband-wife relationship and it has got glue all over it? No matter how you turn or twist, the more stuck you get, because God joins you together as one new flesh.

In the church, we teach oneness, not sameness, but the Bible doesn't say oneness; it says one flesh. So many times, we make human beings be body and flesh, flesh being the outer part and body being the inner part. Adam even said this is now flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones. But do you remember when God wiped out the planet and killed all the people with the flood? The Bible says, "...and there was an end to all flesh." Please hear me! When you got married, God made a new unit, a new life.

Marriage isn't two people sharing life together; marriage is one new life in those two people who are male and female. That one new life starts another bloodline! That new bloodline is now more important for you than any other bloodline in your life! You are one! You say, "I don't feel one..." That is because when you got married you were a body, soul, spirit being, and she was a body, soul, spirit being. God took a physical being, a spiritual being, and a psychological being, and brought you together to be one. You are one, and if it doesn't fit together exactly right, that is called sin. You are trying to change her, and you don't need to; you need to change you. You don't need to keep trying to change him; you need to change you. You need to recognize the only way you can change you is to cultivate your relationship with God.

Naked and Unashamed

I want to close with this because it wouldn't be me if I didn't say this afresh. The picture of Adam of Eve in the garden is verse 25, "...they were both naked and not ashamed." I know we struggle with that in our culture because we are so far removed from the Garden of Eden.

It is the picture of my grand boys. Don't tell them I told this on them, but they are really young and when it's bath time at our house, whenever they are at, they shuck it. They don't think a thing about running through the house with no clothes. They get their bath and we have to hunt them down. Part of their pj's go on in the living room, part in the kitchen, and we are still trying to get the arm in when we get upstairs. Not me...I go to the closet and shut the door after making sure the bedroom door is closed. Not kids...in their innocence, they aren't ashamed so they don't hide anything.

That is the beautiful picture of marriage in your one new relationship; you can be you, physically, spiritually, and psychologically. You can be known by your wife or husband and let them know you. This is the one place where there is no judgment and not criticism, because you realize God gave you a helper. I don't know what you think of me and it really doesn't matter, but I want to tell you that I wouldn't be at the level you think I am if it was not for my wife! I couldn't do what God called me to do without her. I wasn't give that gift of singleness to serve the Lord 24/7, I need her, not because I'm lonely, but because I'm alone and I don't want to be alone.

How do you feel? It is one thing to stand before the church and say what I just said, but I have told it to her a million times. How many times have you told that to your wife, to your husband? It would have been real easy for God to look at Adam as a farmer and say I need to give you another you, and then made him another him. But honestly, I don't want another dad or another sibling; I want a wife. I want to be a God-made man. I'm not going to wait for the heart attack or the high blood pressure. I am going to take my marriage to the gym this year. Will you take yours to the gym? Will you examine the foundation this

week? It is your responsibility to not let this thing fall apart. Quit blaming God. You are the gardener in a marriage, not the preacher, not the church, you. God said not let this thing He has put together be torn apart!