

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, March 30, 2014

Love, Sex + Godly Relationships

Message: Seasons of Relationships

Scripture: Proverbs 2:6-22

- I. In this series, we have examined the questions: (1) **What is real love?** (2) **How do we accept and live in God’s perfect and real love?** (3) **How do we reflect God’s love in our actions towards others?** (4) **How are intimacy and relationships built on the foundation of Godly love?** and (5) **“What do healthy friendships look like in the kingdom of God?”** This week we describe **the seasons of relationships that build up toward marriage.**
- II. Author Winston T. Smith reminds us that “Marriage and relationships weren’t created as substitutes for God.”
- III. In order to understand God’s plans for relationships, we have to know God’s character. God always wants the best for us. The challenge is that what we consider best is not always what God considers to be the best. Especially when it comes to intimate relationships with the opposite sex.
 - a. **JOHN 10:10** *The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*
(New Living Translation)
- IV. The pathway to a rich and satisfying life is not stumbled upon but carefully directed according to Godly wisdom. Proverbs 14:8 - *The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.*
- V. Giving thoughts to our steps includes taking time to understand the obstacles that we are likely to face along the journey.
 - a. In Genesis 2:25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. After both Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree, they realized that they were naked and tried to cover-up their nakedness.
 - b. Pre-fall relationships were perfect and easy. Post-fall relationships are complicated by 3 things. The effects of sin; our awareness of those effects; and the way that we deal with those effects. For example, after the fall, jealousy is a part of relationships. Relationships can get complicated based upon our level of awareness of our jealousy. Even more complicated, is our ways that we deal with our jealousy? We can either turn that jealousy over to God or find ways to cover it up.
- VI. We all are created with the need for friendships but marriage requires an additional level of responsibility and maturity.
 - a. The purpose of friendships is to build us up so that we reflect God’s image of who we were created to be
 - b. The purpose of marriage is to reflect the image of God in the earth through the most intimate of relationships
 - i. **Proverbs 18:22** *“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.”*
 - ii. **Hebrews 13:4** *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure,*
 - iii. God intended that marriage would be a tangible image in the earth of the beautiful relationship of Christ and the Church.
 1. **Ephesians 5:24** *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*
 - iv. When we make God’s idea for marriage solely about dealing with our loneliness or satisfying our desire for companionship, acceptance, comfort, or safety, then we neglect a key aspect of marriage - to sacrificially love our spouse as Christ loved the church.
 - c. It should follow, then, that the process of dating/courtship is to help us enter into healthy marriages between two imperfect people. God, not marriage, is the only thing that can truly heal our loneliness.
 - i. A lot of what passes as dating/courtship is really trying to get the benefits of marriage without the responsibility and commitment of marriage.
 - ii. If we are not mature enough to handle the responsibility of marriage, then dating/courting will arouse love before its time and generally cause us to make unwise and unhealthy decisions. (Song of Songs 3:5)

- VII. Approaching marriage as the solution to all of our relationship issues, causes us to demand from God: “Give me what I want.” However, a thoughtful picture of marriage asks, “Am I ready?”
- VIII. What does it mean when we say: “God, give me what I want. (insert relationship)”
- a. This line of thinking approaches God as someone who is unfairly withholding what we want. Our heart easily drifts into thinking that God doesn’t really desire for us to have a rich and satisfying life.
 - b. Often, in this mindset, we would rather follow our hearts, rather than what God wants for us.
 - i. In Matthew 7, Jesus says, “If your son asks for bread, will [you] give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will [you] give him a snake?”
 - ii. God doesn’t want to give us the responsibility of marriage, if it would shipwreck our faith. A season of singleness could be because of timing, maturity, our season of life, or our eternal purpose. Just because we FEEL a certain way through a relationship doesn’t mean that it is what is best for us.
 - iii. While physical exercise doesn’t always feel good, it benefits us in the long run. Likewise, giving thought to our present relationship season doesn’t always feel the best, but it always yields fruit.
- IX. Giving thought to God’s purpose for marriage recalibrates our thinking and allows us to honestly ask, “Are we ready for the additional responsibility of sacrificially loving someone else and modeling Christ’s love through marriage?”
- X. **What are some areas of relationship development that we should give thought to?**
- XI. **1. Give thought to the necessary stages of friendship and love before marriage**
- a. Ecclesiastes 3:1 - *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heaven*
 - b. Jesus repeatedly said that his time and hour had not yet come because he understood the importance of seasons. Proverbs 2:6-8 reminds us that God gives wisdom so that we don’t prematurely or unwisely share intimacy in a way that will keep us from achieving God’s best in relationships.
 - i. *He gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He is a shield ... he guards ... and protects the way of his faithful ones.*
 - ii. *Wisdom will enter your heart ... and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.*
 - c. How does the Lord utilize seasons of singleness?
 - i. *1 Corinthians 7:32b-34 An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord.33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— 34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband.*
 - d. In Singleness, we have the ability to
 - Learn devotion to God in mind, body and spirit
 - Become independent and stable: mentally, physically, socially, emotionally, financially, and educationally
 - Have extended time to prepare practical life skills
 - Discover unique gifts, abilities, and heart desires
 - Understand what our interests and passions are in life
 - e. How does the Lord utilize our season of dating/courtship?
 - To examine and test our actual levels of maturity: mentally, physically, socially, emotionally, financially, and educationally
 - Provide opportunities to cultivate a friendship and engage in commitment-appropriate levels of intimacy
 - Determine our willingness to exercise godly love while dealing with the reality of the brokenness in each other’s life.
 - Determine if our interests and personality are well-suited for each other.

- f. Some questions that we can ask during seasons of dating/courting:
- Does this relationship have potential to lead towards a healthy, God-fearing marriage?
 - What does God say about this relationship?
 - What do my friends, mentors, and pastors think about this person?
 - Would entering into a relationship with this person glorify God and allow me to continue growing or would it be a distraction?
 - Is this the right time to be in a relationship with anyone?
 - Have I recovered from a previous relationship? How? If the person from your previous relationship were to ask you to marry them today would you say yes?
 - Does the other person honor me as their brother/sister in the Lord?

XII. 2. Prepare oneself with the end in mind

- a. Determine to make the most of every season while keeping the end in mind. Experts have noted that most people focus their attention on examining the qualities of their potential mate, while neglecting to use the same diligence in preparing themselves to be the mate that God promised someone else. Are we the person that our spouse would need?
- b. Love is intoxicating. If we haven't prepared ourselves to love someone else, then we can easily be swept off of our feet in the moment of dating/courting but never achieve the end goal of a Godly, healthy marriage. In God's context, the intoxication of love is beautiful. Yet, in the wrong context, the intoxication will lead us down the road of bad choices and ungodly compromise. (Proverbs 5:15-20)

XIII. 3. Guard your heart, mind, soul and emotions from things that will rob you from victory

- a. In Proverbs 2, the writer assures us that walking in Godly wisdom will save us from "the ways of wicked men and from the adulteress." These relationships masquerade as fountains of Godly love, but, in reality, they are toxic relationships that rob us from the abundant life.
- b. To avoid being deceived by relationship robbers, we have to put guardrails on our heart.
 - i. Premature picture: Making a relationship seem more than it truly is *at that time*. Rather than enjoying the growth of the relationship, the individuals prematurely accelerate to the more intimate stages of relationships.
 - ii. Inaccurate picture: Making a relationship more or less that it really is. For example, engaging in the shared intimacy of courtship without the commitment of calling it a courtship.
 - iii. Wrongly Interpreted picture: Determining the health and growth of the relationship based upon implicit actions rather than honest communication about feelings.
 - iv. Ever-changing picture: Using the relationship status as a way of manipulating the other individual.

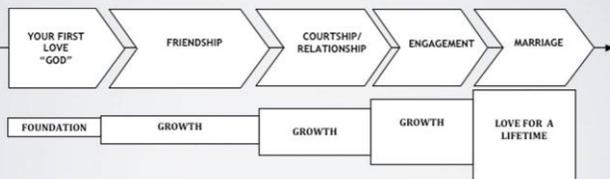
FRIENDSHIPS

The purpose of friendships is to build us up so that we reflect **God's image** of who we were created to be

MARRIAGE

The purpose of marriage is to reflect the relational **image of God in the earth**

GROWING IN RELATIONSHIPS



Group Resource

Let's Talk Notes – Sunday, March 30, 2014

Love, Sex + Godly Relationships

Message: Seasons of Relationships

Scripture: Proverbs 2:6-22

- 1) Did this week's message challenge or affirm any assumptions that you have had about relationships and marriage?
- 2) Marriage means a lot of things to different people. At the center of God's idea for marriage is a covenant relationship that models sacrificial love. What does marriage mean to you? Have you had examples of good marriages in your life? How can our picture of marriage (good or bad) shape our desire/preparation for marriage?
- 3) Some popular reasons that people get married include:
 - a. Sexual attraction
 - b. Stop feeling guilty about having sex
 - c. Escaping the family
 - d. Companionship
 - e. Lust or infatuation
 - f. Financial Security
 - g. Wanting to have someone to love
 - h. We have love like a fairy tale
 - i. My peers are getting married
 - j. Want children

Read Ephesians 5:25-27? How do these verses inform our idea of God's purpose for marriage? How do these reasons above line up with God's will for marriage?

- 4) A classic piece of advice about relationships is to "Just follow your heart!" How wise is this advice? What advantages does it bring? What challenges does it create? Do the Scripture instruct us on this aspect of relationships? **Read Jeremiah 17:9**. What does the Scripture teach us our heart? What might be a more biblical advice about approaching relationships?
- 5) Pastor Joseph noted that giving thought to God's purpose for marriage recalibrates our thinking and allows us to honestly ask, "Are we ready for the additional responsibility of sacrificially loving someone else and modeling Christ's love through marriage?" How would you advise a friend that is trying to answer this question?
- 6) In relationships, we must deal with the reality of brokenness in each other's life. While moving from Godly singleness to becoming vested in God-honoring relationships, what are some good practices to handle the additional responsibilities of a relationship? What boundaries can be put into place to guard your heart, mind, soul and emotions from things that will rob you of victory in these relationships?
- 7) Do you have any prayer requests about the season of relationships that you are in? If you are comfortable, share with the group how they can pray for you to walk in healthy Godly seasons of relationships for your life.