

The first thing I want to say is Happy Father's Day. I believe the teaching today will be helpful for fathers as most fathers are also husbands. The teaching comes from Matthew 19 and it is the beginning of a summer series on several chapters in the Book of Matthew that apply to the church. Matthew is the only Gospel writer that mentions the church. He emphasizes the church with these words, “And the gates of Hades will not overcome it (the church).” (Matthew 16:18) A very appropriate launch to this series would be on marriage. Marriage is the foundation of God's community from the very beginning. Please turn to **Matthew 19:3-12** as we study this important subject.

As an introduction, to highlight the context, you should know that the Pharisees were testing Jesus with their question. The religious leaders were against our Lord and they wanted to trap him in some way. They presented a volatile question that had been debated for centuries. They were hoping to either stir up the authorities or weaken his popularity. Either way their purpose would be accomplished. But Jesus presents his teaching on a completely different level than they would have expected. He gives us a timeless principle about marriage:

**First** — Creation: “(In) the beginning the Creator.” (verse 4) The first and top aspect of God's creation is seen in his plan for marriage. Genesis 1:31 says, “It was very good.” (The creation of a man and a woman.) Verse 8 says it in the opposite way, “But it was not this way from the beginning.” Marriage was God's first idea for human relationship. So it makes sense that in Jim Conway's book, Traits of a Lasting Marriage, he says that the key ingredient is putting marriage first.

What does this mean?

Marriage is the first relational priority.

**Second** — Cleave: In verse 5 the NIV uses the words “be united.” It is a very rich word and it means glued or cemented. Another word that points to the same idea — “one flesh.” (verse 5) The man and the woman were therefore meant to be indivisible and inseparable. In God's eyes they become the total possession of each other, one in mind and spirit, goals and direction, in emotion and will. When they have a child it becomes the perfect emblem and demonstration of their oneness because the child is a unique product of the fusion of two people into one flesh and carries the combined traits of both parents.

What does this mean?

Marriage is the closest connection.

**Third** — Carry: “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (verse 6) Another statement that gets our attention is in verse 10, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” The disciples response is clearly connected to the challenge of marriage. If they follow Jesus' prescribed approach to marriage it would be way too difficult. Nothing in their understanding would help them view marriage in this way. It is the same today.

What does this mean?

Marriage is a promise of commitment.

**Fourth** — Curse: In verse 8 it uses a phrase that is worth noting, “hardness of heart.” There is another very potent phrase found in verse 9 that goes along with it, “except for marital unfaithfulness.” You can see in the Greek word “Porneia” a very strong connect to an English word that we know. The idea that Jesus presented is that the curse of sin will confuse and erode the purpose that God had in mind for marriage. There are many ways that your heart can begin to be hardened in marriage causing the erosion of a permanent relationship: ✓ complacency; ✓ distance; ✓ selfishness; ✓ negative thoughts; ✓ unforgiveness; ✓ bitterness; ✓ affair; ✓ sexual sin.

What does this mean?

Marriage is vulnerable to sin.

**Finally** — Christ: “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22) “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (verse 25) Jesus Christ is the only one who really satisfies one's soul. People do not that for you; a spouse cannot do that for you. Sometimes it seems like they can, but it is an illusion. Only Christ can meet your deepest needs; only Christ can heal your heart. Marriage, in a fallen world, needs the presence of Christ. Christ is the source. Marriage will not go well without the uniting power of Christ. That is the Gospel and it deeply applies to the Christian marriage.

What does this mean?

Marriage is Christ at the center.

Conclusion: It is Father's Day and I want to be an encouragement to dads, but I also want to help motivate you and me to be loving husbands, which will translate into loving fathers. Do you believe this statement? “One of the best ways to be a loving father is to be a loving husband first.” I believe that statement. It is really the heartbeat of this message. As God gives you grace to improve your marriage, you will also become a stronger, deeper, more effective father. They go hand-in-hand. May the Lord bless you.

### **Reflective Questions:**

1. What are some of your positive memories of your father? Is Father's Day an encouraging day for you or a more challenging day? Why?
2. In Matthew 19:3-12 we read about marriage. What stands out to you? What message is the strongest?
3. What do you think is the most important thing of the five points of application shared? Why? Why are all of them important?
4. If I said that I thought the most important was #4, the curse, why do you think I would believe that? Why is it important to know who your enemy is?
5. If Christ was truly your deepest source and your closest companion, how would that help you? How would that help your marriage?

### **Reading Schedule for June 21<sup>st</sup> – June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

You will notice that we are going to skip around the four Gospels as we read about Jesus' life. It seems to me that the reading schedule is emphasizing the chronological order of what Jesus did. You will notice his personal encounters with people who need to know the truth. Jesus has a dynamic way about him as he points people heavenward. One of my favorite passages in the Bible is about Jesus' purpose. It says that he would preach the good news to the poor, bring recovery of sight to the blind and offer release to the oppressed. Jesus cared about the underdog. You will see that as he reaches out to a Samaritan woman in our first reading. You will notice how he cares about those that are sick and broken down. I want you to get a glimpse of the heart of Christ as you read these stories. The Scriptures tell us that those who receive Christ receive his Spirit as well. Who Jesus was is who he calls you to be. The Christian faith is a call to be Christ like. How are you doing with that?

June 21: **John 4:1-42** – “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’” (verse 39) The Samaritan woman's belief turned into action. She immediately shared her experience with others. Despite her reputation, people were drawn to learn about Christ. They could almost see the change in her life already. As people see the changes that Christ makes in us, they will become curious. May God use you in a similar way that he used this woman to tell friends about what Christ has done in your life. What is your testimony? When is the last time you shared your testimony with someone in your life? Why not today?!

June 22: **John 4:43-54** – “Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son will live.’ So he and all his household believed.” (verse 53) Do you notice the progression of the official's faith? First he believed enough to ask Jesus to help his son. Second, he believed Jesus' assurance that his son would live and he acted on it. Third, he and his whole household believed in Jesus. What do you think about those steps? Do you relate to those steps? Do you think others would be inclined to pursue Jesus in this way? Why or why not?

June 23: **Luke 4:16-30** – “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.” (verse 18) These words come from Isaiah 61:1 & 2. Everyone thought of them as verses about the Messiah. Jesus is affirming two things very strongly. He is the fulfillment of this scriptural prophecy, and this will be his purpose on earth. But there is a third that I have already mentioned to you. What Jesus did we are also called to do. Which phrase stands out to you the most? Why is this kind of ministry so challenging? How are you fulfilling a similar ministry that we see in Jesus?

June 24: **Mark 1:16-39** – “‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’” (verse 17) You are probably familiar with that verse. It is a verse that applies to his disciples then because they were fishermen, but we know what it means today. It is not easy to catch fish, but when we do it can be very thrilling. As we cast out the line with the bait of God's good news, some people will open up and receive. Jesus was pointing to this kind of mission from the very beginning of his earthly ministry. In so many words, this is your mission. How are you responding to it? What does it mean to you? How might it affect your day-to-day living?

June 25: **Luke 5:1-39** – “When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’” (verse 20) Most of this story is about the miraculous power of God present in the life of Christ. In one verse it says, “the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.” But the first thing that he says to the paralyzed man was about forgiveness for sins. It is very evident that Jesus showed the power of God because he came to liberate people spiritually. To have your sins forgiven and the hope of eternity, is far more important than having your body healed. Jesus demonstrates that. A healed body points to the fact that Jesus can heal the soul and has the power to take us to be with him in heaven forever. Why is the healing of your soul the biggest miracle God has ever done in your life? How would a strong sense of gratitude for your salvation affect how you live today?

June 26: **John 5:1-47** – “When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’” (verse 6) The Life Application Bible says an interesting note, “After 38 years, this man's problem had become a way of life. No one had ever helped him. He had no hope of ever being healed. The man's situation looked hopeless, but no matter how trapped you feel in your infirmities, God can minister to your deepest needs. Don't let a problem or hardship cause you to lose hope. God may have special work for you to do in spite of your condition or even because of it.” You may be called in a special way to be a wounded healer. What does this story teach you? What would you want Jesus to do in your life?

June 27: **Mark 2:23-3:19** – “Then he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’” (2:27 & 28) This statement from Jesus has given me a sense of direction and comfort. A Sabbath rest is a principle that is expressed throughout the Bible. If God shows us the importance of rest by resting on the seventh day of creation, so we would do well to follow this principle. But it wasn't meant to be a rigid rule, but rather a helpful aspect of the rhythm of life. Slow down one day out of seven, and let your mind and body be renewed. Pursue God, enjoy relationships and be at peace . . . these are the principles of the Sabbath. How are you living the Sabbath principle? What would need to change in your life to honor this timeless principle?

**Prayers:** **Pray for our Mexico team as they leave this Thursday for their mission. Pray for the families that they will be touching as they build three homes for families in need near Tijuana. Pray for the beginning of Summer, that God's rest and replenishing will take place in our lives as we focus on him. May the more relaxed schedule be used by God to draw us nearer to him.**