

STRENGTHENING YOUR TEAM:

Developing a Strong Marriage

Introduction:

- I have not even begun to think about marriage.
 - Well then, my message to you this morning is going to blow you away, because concerning the topic of “Developing a Strong Marriage” I am going to challenge you to think about your great-grandchildren.
 - I want to challenge you to reevaluate the reason why you are going to get married one day.
- 1997 – Working for a landscaping company in OKC
 - Planting 36 trees for Mr. Shaefer (denominational preacher)
 - Three trees planted outside the back door
 - When he came home he was so frustrated with what we had done because he had pictured in his mind big, mature shade trees.
 - We explained that with the trees he had chosen, it would be 5-10 years before these trees would provide good shade for that part of his yard.
 - Point: “You must seek to become the kind of people who plant shade trees for others to sit under.”
 - It is time to stop thinking about our lives as to what we will get out of it, and start thinking about what we are going to leave for others.

Jeremiah 29

- v.4- – *“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for you sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there and do not decrease.”*
 - Wait a minute: That doesn’t make any sense.
 - They had just been conquered by one of their greatest enemies and taken out of their homeland and into a strange country and God wanted them to focus on growing their families?
 - Why?
 - Because of His promise
- The promise:
 - v.10-11 – *“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know*

the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

- God promised them that He would come back and return them to their homeland...
- But notice something; it would be 70 years later when God would do this.
 - Many of these families would not make the trip back home for 150 years when Nehemiah returns.
 - What does this mean?
 - They were not preparing for a fulfillment of a promise that they would see in their lifetime, but they were to begin preparing their children and grandchildren for what God was going to do for them.
- God was telling them, stop thinking about yourself, and start planting shade trees that others will be able to sit under.

We Are Exiles in a Foreign Land

- 1 Peter 2:11 – *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul."*
- Philippians 3:20 – *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."*
 - So, while we are here in this strange land, we cannot allow the world to get our focus away from our purpose.
 - Matt. 6:33 – *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."*
 - While we are exiled here away from our homeland (heaven), we have to have the bigger picture in our mind about our future.
 - Most never see the end of their grandchildren's lives, but while in exile, we must do everything we can to ensure the best chance of their success in making it to heaven.
- What does this have to do with "Developing a Strong Marriage"?
 - The world has tried to get us to view marriage for things other than what God designed it for.
 - God designed marriage for two people to work together to bring up a family that is faithful to God.
- This leads every young person to one of the most important questions you will ever ask in this life...

Who Should I Marry?

- Notice I asked, who “should” I marry, not who “will” I marry.
- Too many people approach marriage like going to a fortune teller where we close our eyes and hope the stars will align and the right man or woman will mysteriously walk into our life.
- You have to understand that God has spoken decisively and definitively as to whom it is that you SHOULD marry.
 - So, if God points me in the direction of who I should marry, then that means that there are definite people out there that I shouldn’t marry.
 - When it comes to who you choose to spend the rest of your life with, there are some non-negotiables.
- This may begin to sound one-sided, but it isn’t.
 - Obviously, God has called men and women to fulfill their God-given roles in the family.
 - But our discussion here today is “Developing a Strong Marriage” and I believe that in order for there to be success in a marriage, it begins with what kind of men husbands are.
 - There are some things that a man MUST be before he even begins to be qualified to even be considered as a candidate for a husband.
 - Guys, it is your responsibility to become this kind of a man.
 - Gils, it is your responsibility to never allow yourself to settle for something less than what I am about to describe.

A Man Must Be...

- **A Christian** (2 Corinthians 6:14 – *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”*)
 - In my pre-marital counseling sessions, the first time we meet we only talk about their faith.
 - I have had Christians engaged to non-Christians get very uncomfortable in this session, because they know deep down how important this is, but they are more focused on what feels right, and what they want, instead of what God’s purpose is for their marriage.
 - I have looked many Christian women in the eye and told them, with their non-Christian fiancé sitting right beside them, “If he will not be committed to Christ then he will not be committed to you the way you need him to be. How will he love you like Christ loved the church if he doesn’t first love Christ?”
- **Committed to Biblical Headship** (Ephesians 5:23ff – *“For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”*)

- Prepared to have and train children to be faithful (Psalm 127:3-5 – *“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!”*)
 - **Illust: Are you smarter than a 5th grader?**
 - Are you ready to have children?
 - Then don’t get married.
 - Well we are going to wait for a few years and then have kids. We can get ready during that time.
 - That’s what Jenni and I thought too and then, oops, here comes Ajay.
 - You do this by being...
 - The Priest for your family (Joshua 24:15 – *“Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*)
 - You have to be prepared to be the one who leads your family toward God, even when no one else around you is.
 - The Teacher for your family (Ephesians 6:4 – *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline of the Lord.”*)
 - It is your responsibility to make sure your children are being instructed and disciplined in the way that will help them build their relationship with God.
 - Protector for your family (Nehemiah 4:13-14 – *“So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your bothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.’”*)
 - Provider for your family (1 Timothy 5:8 – *“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*)

These are some of the non-negotiables.

- Is this an unreasonable standard?
 - I’m not saying he has to be 6’4”, have a professional athlete’s conditioning, a six-figure income, or even a college degree.
 - I’m saying that he has to be one of God’s men.
- It is a biblical standard.

- We want to have strong marriages, so why don't we begin by setting strong standards for person we should marry one day?
 - Guys – You strive every day of your life to become this kind of a man...
 - Girls – You refuse to compromise, and you demand that any man that has a chance to make you his bride is this kind of a man.
 - Then I will show you a marriage that is strong, because it is God built.