

**Matters of Life Series**  
**MARRIAGE MATTERS FOR EVERYONE**  
**Part 2**  
**By Steve Chupp**  
**February 28, 2010**

**A family is built around a marriage, not around children.**

- Get your marriage right, and your children will do better. (Jimmy Evans)

**The Big Idea**

Matters of life matter to God. The Bible gives us great teaching on how we can be good at marriage, parenting, money, and time. Many people struggle with marriage because they haven't developed some basic skills. Not surprisingly, the same matters that make life work for everyone also make marriage work for husbands and wives.

**2 Peter 1:3** *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. NIV*

**Last Sunday's teaching – addressed wrong concepts of marriage:**

- Marriage is not the end of loneliness.
- Marriage is not the answer to brokenness.
- Marriage is not for everyone.

(Last Sunday – needs; this Sunday – maturity)

**“Marriage doesn't create any problems. It only exposes the ones we bring into it.”**

**1. Marriage is for the independent.**

- Not the fiercely independent who won't accept help from others.
  - But those who take responsibility for their own lives.
  - Obviously, we must be dependent on God.
- **Healthy independence is a sign of maturity.**
  - **Maturity is not how old you are but how responsible you are.**
  - Maturity is the ability to take responsibility for your own life.
  - Immaturity means your life is someone else's responsibility.
  - **Hebrews 5:12** *You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food. NLT*
  - **1 Corinthians 13:11** *It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. NLT*
- Mature independence means you can care for others.
  - **Philippians 2:20-21** *I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. All the others care only for themselves. NLT*
- **Independent people have the ability to form partnerships.**

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  - **Dependent → Independent → Interdependent**
  - Dependent people can't handle the responsibilities partnerships bring.
  - Dependent people form dependencies.
- If you don't become independent before marriage, you will become dependent on your spouse.
  - Or codependent
- Healthy independence in marriage (Jimmy Evans)
  - "I am better with you, but I can live without you."
  - Vs. "I can't live without you."
  - Cp. Valentine's cards
  - People who are needy marry people who need to be needed.
- The goal of childrearing is independent, responsible adults.
- Three stages of "childrearing": (Why do you think they call it "childrearing"?)
  - First you diaper it.
  - Then you spank it.
  - Then you pat it and send it out of the house.
  - ("Low view" of childrearing)
- The goal of childrearing is independent, responsible adults.
  - "Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be dependent."
- If you let them go, they can leave for their spouse in a healthy manner.
  - **Genesis 2:24** *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.* NIV
  - Sometimes you have to break unhealthy parental ties *after* marriage.
- Parents who do too much for their children don't do them or their spouses any favors.
  - Growing independence in kids means giving them increasing responsibilities over time.
- Sometimes becoming independent needs to happen after marriage.
  - It can happen but is harder.
- **1 Corinthians 14:20**
- *Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults [mature].* NIV
- *To be perfectly frank, I'm getting exasperated with your infantile thinking. How long before you grow up and use your head — your adult head? It's all right to have a childlike unfamiliarity with evil; a simple no is all that's needed there. But there's far more to saying yes to something. Only mature and well-exercised intelligence can save you from falling into gullibility.* Msg

## 2. Marriage is for the **committed**.

- **Matthew 19:4-6** *"...From the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together."* NLT
- There is no **"one and only"** marriage partner. (Until after you're married!)
  - If there was, then you might end up with the wrong one.
  - And try to ditch the wrong one to find the right one.
  - God can and will guide you, but don't assume it means there is only one.
- God gives broad parameters for marriage.
  - One man, one woman, for life.
  - Don't marry anyone not committed to Christ.
  - After that, it is your choice.
- Ill., A young adult recently asked me if their decision to make a major move by giving up their job and relocating was "right".
  - I responded, "Don't make it a matter of right and wrong. Is it *wise*? Make your best decision – then live with the consequences. Don't look back."
- Most people at some point in their marriage question whether they married the right one.
  - That is the wrong question.
  - The right question is, "How do I improve my marriage?"
- **Two approaches to marriage problems:** (Jimmy Evans, "Building an Emotionally Healthy Marriage")
  - **Gardener mentality** – if something has gone wrong with the plant I bought, I take responsibility and see what I can do to help it grow.
  - **Consumer mentality** – if something has gone wrong with the plant I bought, I must have bought the wrong plant. I'll take it back and get a better one.
- God forbids returning your spouse.
  - **1 Corinthians 7:10, 12** *A wife must not separate from her husband....If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.* NIV
  - **Ecclesiastes 5:4-6** *When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest..."My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?* NIV
  - Once you marry, there are no "do-overs".
- Develop a gardener's mentality.
  - God calls this "the fruit of the Spirit".
  - **Galatians 5:22-23** *But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard — things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.* Msg

### 3. Marriage is for **communicators**.

- **Ephesians 4:14-15** *Then we shall no longer be children... Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.* TEV
- People often stuff or explode.
  - If you stuff, you suffer silently.
  - If you explode, you hurt others.
- **Assertiveness is communicating our needs or bringing correction without manipulating or demanding.**
  - Assertiveness is a good thing.
  - Assertively communicate needs, hurts, and disappointments.
  - When hurts turn to explosive anger or harsh demands, communication becomes destructive.
- **2 Timothy 4:2** *Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.* NLT
- Assertiveness can be learned.
  - Confront, appeal, learn, pray, read, ask.
  - Learn how to make “I feel” rather than “You always” statements.
- If your communication isn’t working, meet with a couple whose is.
  - Or go together for counseling.
  - Or go alone.

### Marriage matters for everyone involve developing key life skills.

- Grow into mature independence.
  - Take responsibility for your own life and needs.
- Make your best choice and commit to it.
- Develop your communication and assertiveness skills.

### Great tools for improving your marriage – and life.

- *Love and Respect*, Eggerich
- *Building an Emotionally Healthy Marriage*, Jimmy Evans
- *Secrets to a Great Marriage*, Gary Smalley
- *40 Day Love Dare*, Fireproof
- *The Marriage Builder*, Crabb
- *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, Wheat
- Parenting Resources by Kevin Leman

### God’s will

- God’s determined will (e.g. Jesus died on the cross)
- God’s desired will (e.g. everyone to be saved)
- God’s wisdom (e.g. purchase of a car)
- Marriage falls in the “use God’s wisdom” category.

## **Lance Armstrong Realizes Marriage Is Hard Work**

As a five-time Tour de France winner, Lance Armstrong knows more than most people about the importance of hard work. In his book, *Every Second Counts*, he describes his regret that he did not put the same hard work into his marriage that he put into his bike racing:

All I knew was that in trying to do everything, we'd forgotten to do the most important thing. We forgot to be married. People warn you that marriage is hard work, but you don't listen. You talk about the pretty bridesmaids' dresses, but you don't talk about what happens next; about how difficult it will be to stay or to rebuild. What nobody tells you is that there will be more than just some hard days. There will be some hard weeks and perhaps even some hard years.

Lance Armstrong with Sally Jenkins, *Every Second Counts* (Doubleday, 2003), p. 221; submitted by Kevin Reid, East Hills, NSW, Australia

## **The Laboratory of Marriage**

God made us all individuals. Then he made half of us male and the other half female. Then he created marriage. Unless you think this was a cosmic practical joke, he must have had a reason. One explanation is that God wanted to challenge us to change and grow to our fullest potential as human beings. And there's no better laboratory than marriage to help each other do that.

*Jay Kesler, Marriage Partnership, Vol. 7, no. 3.*

## **Priority on Marriage**

Flight attendants give these instructions to airline passengers: "For those of you traveling with small children, in the event of an oxygen failure, first place the mask on your own face and then place the mask on your child's face."

In family life, parents often spend most of their time placing oxygen masks on their children's faces while the marriage relationship suffocates. The only way to have a strong family is to make sure that husband and wife keep the oxygen supply of love flowing strong between them.

*Merle Mees, Topeka, Kansas*

## **Garrison Keillor on Marriage**

In *Wobegon Boy*, Garrison Keillor tells the fanciful tale of John Tollefson. John leaves Minnesota, moves to New York, and makes a life for himself far from Lake Wobegon. Although the story is spun from Keillor's marvelous imagination, it contains gems of insight. For example, John calls home and tells his parents about something his girlfriend had said: "There's no such thing as a successful marriage. There are marriages that give up, and marriages that keep on trying; that's the only difference."

*Garrison Keillor, Wobegon Boy (Penguin USA, 1998), p.142; submitted by Rubel Shelly, Nashville, Tennessee*