



“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:21-24).

*Westwood Church of Christ
Wednesday Nights in February
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Marriage Enrichment Series, #1

Good Marriages Don't Just Happen

Introduction:

- A. **Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 2:2**
- B. Good marriages don't just happen. They are intentional. They take time, commitment, and most of all they take effort.
- C. The six secrets of a satisfying marriage. I want you to evaluate yourself on these six areas - - six keys - - to a satisfying marriage.
 - 1. Communication
 - 2. Consideration
 - 3. Compromise
 - 4. Courtship
 - 5. Commitment
 - 6. Christ

I. COMMUNICATION

- A. **Proverbs 13:17** – It takes communication to have a successful, satisfying marriage. *“Reliable communication permits progress.”*
- B. If you want to make progress in your marriage, you've got to talk. Eighty five percent of all marriage problems stem from poor communication.
- C. Newsweek released a statistic that said, “The average couple talks to each other about four minutes a day.”
- D. Communication is a skill you've got to learn through practice.
- E. Evaluate yourself in communication – one to ten. If communication in your marriage is at a minimum level, give yourself a 1. If you say, sometimes we're on the same wavelength, give yourself a 4. If you plan to talk together, schedule times to talk, give yourself a 10.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

II. CONSIDERATION

- A. **Ephesians 4:2**, *“forbearing one another in love”*. “Show your love by being helpful to each other.”
- B. Consideration simply means paying attention to what they say, showing common courtesy, treating people with respect.
- C. We lose consideration for each other. **James 3:17** *“Consideration is a mark of wisdom”*. Therefore, the wise thing to do is be considerate to your wife or husband. If you're considerate when you're in a good mood, give yourself a 1. If you help your mate out when they ask you, give yourself a 5. If you look for ways to lighten your mate's load, give yourself a 10.

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III. COMPROMISE

- A. This is a real mark of love. **1 Corinthians 13:5**, "*Love does not demand its own way.*"
- B. The unloving thing to do is try to change your mate. The loving thing is to not demand your own way.
- C. Love does not demand its own way. There are three facts of life:
 - 1. You will have conflict in marriage. Every marriage has conflict.
 - 2. There are some issues you're never going to agree on. Because you're different.
 - 3. Compromise is the evidence of real love. You meet in the middle. You're flexible.
 - 4. You yield your rights. Give and take
- D. You have to compromise on many things.
 - ✓ the way your kids are raised.
 - ✓ how often you have a physical relationship
 - ✓ the way your money is spent
 - ✓ how often you see the in-laws
 - ✓ how you spend your day off
- E. If you are stubborn until you get your way, give yourself a 0. If you don't talk about issues you don't agree on, give yourself a -1. If you stay with an issue until you work it out, give yourself an 8. If both of you go the second mile with each other, give in, do more than your share, give yourself a 10.

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IV. COURTSHIP (Dating)

- A. **Proverbs 5:19** "*Let your mate's affection fill you at all times with delight.*"
- B. Physical affection is vital - absolutely vital - to a satisfying marriage.
- C. The real problem with many marriages is that what you did to win your mate's love you have not continued to do to keep your mate's love. You've stopped dating.
- D. **Ecclesiastes 9:9** "*Enjoy life with your wife whom you love.*" Date your mate. The things you did before she/he was your spouse, do those same things with him/her now that you're married. Make your relationship a priority, become best friends, have fun.
- E. **Remember:** Good marriages don't just happen. Marriages are built on shared relationships.
- F. If your dating is nonexistent, too busy to have fun, give yourself a 1. If you noticed that the longer you're married, the more you share the chores but the less you share the joys? Give yourself a 1. If you don't have fun anymore, if your marriage has become a burden and not a blessing, give yourself a 1. If you schedule at least one weekly date, give yourself a 10.

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V. COMMITMENT

- A. It takes commitment for a satisfying marriage. Make sure you do not take your promise to be faithful to your mate lightly. **Malachi 2:16**
- B. You'll never build a great marriage if divorce is always an option for you.
- C. If it's always back there, lurking in the back as a potential option, you will never build a great marriage.
- D. Most people do not understand the meaning of commitment. Definition: **Commitment means being willing to be unhappy for a while until you can work things out.**
- E. Evaluate yourself on the commitment level. If you say, I'm toying with the idea of leaving, give yourself a 1. If you say you use divorce as a threat when you're mad, give yourself a 2. If you say, divorce is not an option, give yourself a 10.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

VI. CHRIST

- A. Christ gives you the power and the desire to do the other five. He gives you love when you run out of love.
- B. **Philippians 2:5**, *"Your attitude toward each other should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."*
- C. Get Him in your life. Ask Him to help you think the way He thinks, to treat your husband the way Jesus would treat him, to treat your wife the way Jesus would treat her.
- D. The greatest thing you can do for your husband/wife is become a godly person, become like Christ and treat that person like Jesus Christ would.
- E. Then you commit your marriage to Christ, commit your family to Christ. Say, "God I dedicate my marriage to You." Begin praying together. Get into the Bible – begin reading it.
- F. What is the secret? Christ is the center of the relationship. When both of you love Christ, even more than you love each other. When the husband focuses on growing toward Christ and the wife focuses on growing toward Christ, it automatically brings them together.
- G. Evaluate the place Christ has in your marriage. If He has no place in your marriage, give yourself a 0. If you attend church together and discuss the messages, give yourself a 5. If you pray and read the Bible together regularly, give yourself a 10.

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CONCLUSION:

- A. These are the six secrets of a satisfying marriage.
- B. If you're single, these exact things refer to any personal relationship. If you ever have any hope or thought that you might marry someday, you need to be committed to these things.
- C. Good marriages do not just happen. It takes communication and consideration and compromise and courtship and commitment and Christ.

Marriage Enrichment Series, #2

Surviving Marital Storms

Introduction:

- A. **Matthew 7:24-25** and **1 Corinthians 3:10**
- B. **Matthew 7:24-25** – Jesus says the key to a strong home is to have it built on the right foundation. The foundation is to do what God says regarding your marriage.
- C. Notice what Jesus says about the three external forces that can damage a home/family - - rains, they erode the roof; floods, they wash away the foundation and winds, they shake the structure.

I. YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR THE RAIN (The Culture You Live In)

- A. There are three forces in today's culture that are eroding marriages and families.
 - 1. **Alternative Life Styles** – There is mass confusion about roles and goals. How many happy, normal families do you see on TV?
 - 2. **Materialism** – The pressure to have more. Families are so busy trying to make a living - they are never at home together.
 - 3. **The Sexual Revolution** – People magazine did a survey that said, "Over half of all spouses nationwide admitted to adultery." Think about the media's portrayal of every sexual relationship on TV, how many of them are in marriage?
- B. There are three ideas in our culture that can erode your marriage. They will sap the strength from your relationship.
 - 1. **Humanism** - "me first" mentality.
 - 2. **Materialism** – "greedy for more \$\$ or things"
 - 3. **Hedonism** – "If it feels good, do it!"
- C. How should Christians respond to a culture that says, "Me first, money first, pleasure first and forget everything else." **Romans 12:2** "*Don't copy the behavior and the customs of this world but be a new and different person.*"
- D. So in order to deal with the first storm - - the rains of culture which erode relationships - - you've got to **counteract the culture!**

II. YOU'VE GOT TO PREPARE FOR THE FLOODS (The Crises You're Going to Live Through)

- A. A study listed the top twelve most stressful crises that a marriage can experience:
 - 1. Death of a child
 - 2. Jail sentence

3. An unfaithful spouse
 4. Major financial difficulty or bankruptcy
 5. Business failure
 6. Being fired
 7. Miscarriage or stillbirth
 8. Court appearance
 9. Unwanted pregnancy
 10. Major illness in the family
 11. Unemployment
 12. Death of a close friend
- B. These crises are inevitable and they will come into your life. They usually come suddenly, no warning in advance.
- D. What do you do when your marriage is in deep water? What do you do when you're in over your head and the floods of adversity are sweeping you off your feet?
- E. Do what Isaiah says (**Isaiah 43:1-3**).
1. **Relax in God's PLAN.** He says, "*Don't be afraid.*" Don't get uptight. Don't worry.
 - God has a plan for your life. God's plan for your life is always greater than the problems you're going through.
 2. **Recognize God's PRESENCE.** When you go through deep waters and great troubles, He says, "*I will be with you.*" You're never alone when you're going through a crisis. – **Psalm 23:4**
 3. **Rely on God's PROTECTION.** "*When you go through the rivers of difficulty, you will not drown.*"
- F. What is the key to coping with a crisis? The key is commitment. It is commitment that will carry you through the crisis.

III. YOU NEED TO PREPARE FOR THE WINDS OF CHANGE **(The Changes You're Going to Live With)**

- A. Change is a part of life. It is also inevitable. Everything changes with time, except God.
- B. **Ecclesiastes 3:1** - "*To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.*"
- C. A lot of famous books and passages are written about the predictable stages of adult life.
1. There's the honeymoon stage.
 2. The childless couple stage.
 3. Then the decision whether to have children or not.
 4. Raising young children, preschooler stage.
 5. Raising children through grade school years.
 6. Parenting teenagers.
 7. College Years.
 8. Empty nest years.
 9. Retirement years.
- D. Everything is changing. Life changes. If you don't learn how to adapt to change, your marriage will not be stable.

- E. Some changes aren't too pleasant. **Proverbs 20:30** *"Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."*
- G. When changes come into your marriage and into your life and family you have several options:
1. You can **REJECT** it and pretend it doesn't exist.
 2. You can **RESIST** it. Fight the change.
 3. You can **RESENT** it. Allow it to try and pull you apart.
 4. Or you can **RELISH** it. Make the most of it. You realize change is inevitable, so make the most of it.
- H. What is the secret of coping with the winds of change? **Philippians 4:11,13**
- I. Paul says there are three attitudes you need in order to cope with the changes that are going to happen in your life and marriage:
1. **CONTENTMENT** - *"I've learned to be content, whatever the circumstances. . ."*
 2. **FLEXIBILITY** - *"Whatever state I am" that is I am ready for anything. . ."*
 3. **FAITH** - *"I can do all things through"*

Conclusion:

- A. How can we make our marriages last when so many are falling apart? What is the key?
- B. The key is to have the right foundation. The right foundation is **"to practice"** what God has said.

Marriage Enrichment Series, #3

Defusing Anger in Your Marriage

Introduction:

- A. Conflict is inevitable, but combat is not. Every disagreement you have in your marriage will have either a breakdown or a breakthrough - - a breakdown in the relationship or a breakthrough into a new level of intimacy.
- B. The key to a breakthrough is how you handle your anger. The Bible says that misdirected anger can kill marriages. **Proverbs 11:29**, "*The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing left.*"
- C. When you have an argument there are really three phases.
 - 1. Phase One is **Recognition**
 - 2. Phase Two is **Reaction**
 - 3. Phase Three is **Resolution**
- D. You need to learn how to express anger appropriately.

1. ADMIT MY ANGER

- A. **Ephesians 4:25-26** "*Stop lying to each other; tell the truth. . .when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves. If you are angry, don't sin by nursing your grudge.*"
Anger is a God-given emotion. If you never get upset over anything, you're not in touch with reality. Anger just means you care deeply about some things. Sometimes the most appropriate thing in your marriage is to get angry.
- B. The Bible says if you're going to resolve your anger, you first need to admit your anger. Don't lie. Don't pretend it's not there. Say, "I am upset in this relationship." Once you admit it then you can resolve it."

2. UNDERSTAND MY ANGER

- A. This is the key. **Proverbs 19:11**, "*A man's wisdom gives him patience.*"
- B. The more I understand my anger, the more patient I'm going to be. We need to ask ourselves, "Why am I angry? Why am I ticked off? What is upsetting me so much?"
- C. Have you noticed that most arguments don't start with the real problem? They start with a surface irritation.
- D. A few root causes of anger:
 - 1. When I feel **Unaccepted**.
 - 2. When I feel **Unappreciated**.
 - 3. When I feel **Unsupported**.
 - 4. When I feel **Uncertain**.

3. DEAL IMMEDIATELY WITH MY ANGER

- A. I shouldn't procrastinate. The Bible teaches that when you get angry you don't procrastinate, don't put it off, don't prolong it, don't hide your head in the sand, don't delay it. You deal with your anger immediately.
- B. **Ephesians 4:26-27** *"Never let the sun set on your anger else you'll give the devil a foothold."*
- C. The longer you wait to share a feeling the more that feeling builds up. When you're angry and you don't share it immediately, it keeps building and building.
- D. Unresolved conflict just keeps growing. Push it under the table, under the carpet and you may think it's dead but it will rise again.
- E. Anger is not always wrong, but resentment and bitterness are always wrong.

4. I MUST CONTROL MY ANGER

- A. **Proverbs 29:11** *"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."*
- B. How do you do that? How do you keep yourself under control? You learn to communicate your feelings without attacking your mate. You fix the problem: you don't fix the blame.
- C. How do you learn to control your anger? The Bible gives some very practical suggestions.
 - 1. **James 1:19** - *"Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."*
 - 2. **Proverbs 15:1** - *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*
- D. What does it mean to share gentle words?
 - ✓ Be **Brief**
 - ✓ Be **Gentle**
 - ✓ Be **Specific**
 - ✓ Be **Humble**
- K. Seven rules for a fair fight and they all start with C's – *"The Battle of the Seven C's"*
 - 1. Never **COMPARE**
 - 2. Never **CONDEMN**
 - 3. Never **COMMAND**
 - 4. Never **CHALLENGE**
 - 5. Never **CONDESCEND**
 - 6. Never **CONTRADICT**
 - 7. Never **CONFUSE**

Conclusion:

- A. Even the healthiest marriages have disagreements. You can disagree without being disagreeable. You can argue without assassinating!
- B. Conflict is one of the keys to intimacy. The road to intimacy goes through the tunnel of conflict. If there is no conflict it means you're not dealing with some issues. It's inevitable.

- C. If you need to get a third party as a counselor, get a third party! **It's more rewarding to resolve a conflict than it is to dissolve a relationship.**
- D. How does Jesus Christ help us in our anger? When I commit my life to Christ and trust Him then I no longer feel:
- **Unaccepted** because He has **accepted** me.
 - **Unappreciated** because He **values** me.
 - **Unprotected** because He says, "*I am with you always*".
 - **Unsupported** because He says "*Come unto me all ye that labor. . .*"
- E. Give your life to Jesus Christ. Say Jesus Christ I want you in my life because I want to:
1. Replace my **Anger** with your **Love**
 2. Replace my **Bitterness** with your **Joy**.
 3. Replace my **Anxiety** with your **Peace**.

Marriage Enrichment Series, #4

How To Affair Proof Your Marriage

Introduction:

- A. We're going to look at preventative techniques: How to affair proof yourself and how to affair proof your spouse. We'll briefly cover the problem – what causes affairs, the process of how it happens. Then we're going to look at the pathway back.
- B. **Hebrews 13:4** – *“Marriage should be honored by all and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. God will judge those who are immoral and who commit adultery.”*

I. THE PROBLEM

- A. What causes affairs? The Bible says in Proverbs 22:14 – “Adultery is a trap.”
 1. **UNMET NEEDS.** When any basic need in your mate's life is not being met you're opening the door to temptation.
 2. **UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS.** Sometimes there is nothing really wrong with your life and marriage but it somehow turned out differently than you expected.
 3. **UNDERDEVELOPED SELF-ESTEEM.** Emotional immaturity. When your husband/wife is emotionally immature you may be the best spouse possible - - a “10” in every area - - but they will still go out and look for an “8” or a “2” because they have a desire, maybe it's poor self-esteem.
 4. **UNRESOLVED CONFLICT.** Unresolved conflict is a constant source of stress. You start avoiding your mate.
 5. **UNCONTROLLED THOUGHTS.** We are being fed a constant diet of immorality.
 6. **UNPROTECTED LIFESTYLE.** Living a life where you've got improper relationships with the opposite sex.
 7. **UNRELIABLE COMMITMENT.** Just not keeping your vows.

II. THE PROCESS OF IMMORALITY

- A. How does an affair happen? The process of immorality is explained in **James 1:14-15**.
- B. People don't lead moral lives one day and then the next day commit immorality. There is a process.
 1. **Accepting sinful thoughts in your mind.** The battle for sin always starts in your mind.
 2. **Emotional, nonphysical involvement.** Because a man and a woman aren't touching each other physically can be misleading.
 3. **Physical involvement.** This is where the line has been crossed. Touching, kissing, hugging which leads to a full-fledged physical relationship.
 4. **Rationalize the affair.** You hear and/or use the phrase, “I'm only human.”

III. THE PATHWAY BACK TO PURITY

- A. Once you're over the line, and the decision has to be made that you've got to turn around. Here are the steps:
1. **Acknowledge the sin.** Psalm 51:1-4. If you have a friend who has fallen in this area, this is the Psalm they need to read.
 2. **End the relationship immediately.** If you've got a friend that's having an affair and wants to get out of it, they've got to stop immediately.
 - a. **Hebrews 3:15** *"Now is the time. Today, if you hear God's voice speaking to you, do not harden your heart against Him."*
 3. **Do whatever it takes to avoid all contact with that person from now on.**

IV. THE PREVENTIVE STEPS

- A. 7 preventive steps on how to affair proof your marriage.
1. **Make a Commitment to God's Standard of Morality.** Psalm 119:9
 2. **Maintain your Marriage.** 1 Corinthians 7:5
 3. **Manage Your Mind.** If we were to project on a screen all the thoughts you had in the last week, you'd probably be uncomfortable.
 4. **Monitor Your Media Intake.** If you're serious about affair proofing your marriage, there are some things on TV, radio, movies you just can't watch anymore.
 5. **Minimize the Opportunity to be Tempted.** 1 Corinthians 10:12 *"So be careful if you're thinking, 'I'd never behave like that.' Let this be a warning to you or you too may fall into sin."*
 6. **Maintain the Proper Relationships with the Opposite Sex.** You need to be aware where most affairs start – between couples who get to know each other.
 1. **Don't participate in office games.**
 2. **Diffuse electric situations.**
 3. **Avoid Prolonged Stares.**
 4. **Avoid lingering touches.**
 5. **Don't listen to complaints about another person's spouse if you're the opposite sex.**
 6. **Be aware of immodest dress.**
 7. **Magnify the consequences. Minimize the benefits.**
- B. Want more reasons why we should stay as far away from affairs as possible?
- **Jesus Christ.**
 - **Our Spouse and Children.**
 - **Fear of God's Judgment.**

CONCLUSION:

- A. As we conclude this lesson on Affair=Proofing your marriage - I realize in this group there are two groups to address:
- One, those of you who have **fallen in the past**.
 - I want to say, you can be forgiven. God is a gracious God. He's the God of the second chance. You can start over.
 - The Bible says, "*Though your sins be as scarlet, they can be as white as snow.*"
 - If you've been in an affair and you confess it, God forgives you and you don't ever have to bring it up again. But you need to take these steps to prevent it in the future.
 - You can start over. If you're in an extramarital relationship right now, start now. Call them up today! Say "It's over".
 - The other group is those of you who are **singles**. I want to challenge you to save yourself for marriage.
 - Most of the sexual problems I've seen in counseling in marriage have come because of guilt in relationships prior to marriage with their husband or wife.
 - Sex outside of marriage causes all kinds of problems.
- B. So affair proof yourself, affair proof your spouse.
- C. As we conclude this entire series of lessons, I want to talk to three separate groups.
1. **First, I want to talk to those of you who are single.**
 - If you're a single adult here, I want to say to you, please be careful about who you marry. Do not jump into a relationship quickly.
 - This is the second most important decision you'll make in your life next to becoming a follower of Jesus. It's very important and it's always easier to get in that it is to get out.
 - Insist that you go through premarital counseling with a Christian counselor who can point out whether you're really suited for each other or not.
 2. **To those of you who are separated: I want to say that God understands your hurt.**
 - When an expensive piece of art is damaged, they don't replace it, they lovingly repair it, restore it.
 - If possible, give it another try. Get help, whatever it takes.
 3. **To those of you who are married couples: Do not become complacent.**
 - Do not take your mate for granted.
 - Work at your relationship. Cultivate it.
 - Put the investment into your marriage so when conflict comes you will have a foundation that is built solid on your relationship to Jesus Christ.
- D. We might not change the whole world, but by being faithful in our marriages we can go a long way to enhancing our little corner of it!