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SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY

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Title: Family Done God's Way: Myths About Marriage

Good day, friends. Well, here we are again talking about marriage? Why? Because marriage matters. That's the theme of this month here at Back to the Bible. As I prepared for today's message, I asked Google, "Why should I get married?" I was curious about what the reasons are people get married. Here are some of the answers people gave:

- 1) It's cheaper when you're married. In other words, you have two incomes, and you split the financial burden. Plus, there are tax benefits.
- 2) Insurance. I'm serious. Some people suggest marriage is about the benefits package that comes with it, namely health insurance.
- 3) Third, and it's a good reason, it is for your kids. Kids feel more secure when they're in a married household.
- 4) This one kind of surprised me, but some said if they wait too long, they'll never commit. So people recognize there is something binding about marriage.
- 5) This one sounds ridiculous, but I've heard it many times: Marriage will fix our relationship problems.
- 6) How about this one: it was convenient. I don't even know what that means. Is this the "Hey we were in Vegas" and "hey, it was convenient"?
- 7) And the majority of people wanted to get married because of love.

These reasons are fascinating, aren't they? People's reasons are all over the place. But as I read these, I saw something that I call the myths of marriage. People have these false beliefs or myths about marriage. They don't know what marriage is for, or what it will do. So today, I want to talk about the myths of marriage.

So far in our series Family Done God's Way, we've looked at *Why marriage?* - in other words, the reasons why God has established marriage. Marriage was designed and instituted by God. Yesterday we looked at the dangers of marriage. There are some major landmines in the life of marriage, so we talked about those. Today it's the myths of marriage. Tomorrow, is how to do marriage God's way. And on Friday, we'll have Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, author of *Love & Respect*, in the studio with me.

So, let's start to look at the myths of marriage.

Myth number one: Marriage is meant to make you happy.

I think this is loosely tied to the main reason that people get married: Love. It's all tied to emotions. It's tied to how your spouse makes you feel. So if a marriage is a success, it's based on how happy you feel. Here's the problem. The feelings of love change. That ooey, gooey feeling of being in love fades. It's supposed to.

Song of Solomon has some incredibly romantic, and at times steamy, comments from two young lovers. For example, Song of Solomon 1:2 says, “*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth – for your love is more delightful than wine.*” There it is, that deep sense of *in love*.

So what happens when that fades? Because it’s supposed to.

I’ve been married for 17 years. Tiffany and I had those same head in the clouds, love letters, and feelings. But they go away. When I see my wife today, I don’t feel like I’m going to pass out, because I’m so *in love* with her. But what I do feel is a deep sense of *love for* her. I love her so much more, because she loves me for who I am: a sinner in need of a Savior, who’s totally dependent upon God. And I love her for the same reasons. I love her despite her flaws.

But here’s the reality. I love my wife, but there are some days, she makes me very unhappy. Let me break my pride for a moment. Tiffany loves me, but there are some days she really, really dislikes me. But what does she know? That she made a commitment to me “‘til death do us part” and a commitment to God. Remember what Jesus said, “*Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.*” (Mark 10:9, NIV)

So as I tell couples who are looking to marry, look, marriage is not meant to make you happy. Marriage by God’s design is to make you holy. It’s to refine you.

Why? Because it’s not about you.

And that’s the second myth of marriage: People think marriage is all about you—the individual.

Selfishness is a killer in all relationships, but it’s a death sentence for a marriage.

Philippians 2:3 says, “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.*” That’s a beautiful description of what marriage is all about: selflessness.

But that’s not what people today want to hear. Today, they think marriage is meant to make you happy. Therefore it’s all about me.

The whole movement of “what about me?” is everywhere. Burger King had the slogan of “have it your way.” In other words, it’s all about you.

This explains the influx of tablets, smartphones, individual DVD devices in headrests. I did a little research on the impact of smartphones on marriages. This is what I read, “Smartphones have a negative effect on any relationship, but for romance, they have a definite dampening effect. Not only are your conversations suffering when you and your spouse are both constantly checking your phones; your sex life may be suffering too. Smartphones in the bedroom are a rising problem for couples trying to maintain at least a little sizzle in their lives. The distraction can prove deadly to any passion that might arise. And this is only one of many problems on being focused on yourself, your interests, and your world.”¹

If this wasn’t enough, listen to this, and this is no joke. Honeymoons are no longer fashionable. Do you know what is fashionable? Solomoons. What is a solomoon? Well according to Insidehook.com, “Many married couples are forgoing the honeymoon for their own personal travel, reports *The New York Times*. Some couples prefer to take longer vacations, with breaks

¹ <https://infidelityhealing.com/are-smartphones-killing-the-romance-in-your-marriage/>

from each other in the middle. Others need to travel for work, so they cannot travel together. Some couples see individual freedom as the key to a relationship, and even more just don't want to give up on their idea of a perfect vacation spot, even if it means their partner isn't there." That's right. Solomoons. It's all about you.

Now I'm not condemning a girls' weekend or a guys' weekend. I'm all for it. I take it. But holy smokes, if you think a successful marriage is all about getting your desires and wants met, you'll fail. Because God intended the two to become one. We are to think of our spouse more than ourselves.

This is why Paul encourages husbands and wives to mutually submit to each other. Did you realize submission isn't just about a wife submitting to her husband? Nope. Ephesians 5:21 says, "*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" We'll talk more about this passage in the weeks to come.

But a myth to marriage is thinking marriage is all about you. What are some of the other myths of marriage? I'll let you know in just a moment!

The myths of marriage – we've covered the myth that marriage is supposed to make you happy. The next myth is that marriage is all about you! Here's a 3rd myth:

Myth #3 is that marriage is easy. This goes along with the comment that getting married will fix my relationship problems.

Marriage is like a magnifying glass. It simply magnifies or brings to light the issues you had before. But people don't buy it. I once heard a person tell me that she thought her boyfriend would finally be faithful if they would get married. That would fix the problem because he'd understand the commitment of marriage. Well, to no surprise, they got a divorce about 5 years into marriage, after his infidelity continued. Marriage didn't fix the problem. It only perpetuated it.

Marriage again is not meant to make you happy, because it's not about you. So marriage won't fix your relationship problems. As we discovered in an earlier study, that marriage is there to display God's image. It's there to perpetuate godly legacies. And it's meant to refine you.

What marriage does, is let you see how selfish and broken you are. I believe that it, by God's grace, makes you keenly aware of how much you need the Gospel daily.

Remember what Ephesians 2 says, "*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved*" (Eph. 2:1-5, ESV).

Marriage is going to be hard. That's why God's grace is so needed. James said, *you will face trials of many kinds.* Jesus said, *in this life, you will have tribulation.*

Life is going to throw you curveballs you never desired or saw coming, but God will be there, and if you're married, you can face them together. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, *"And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."*

So myth #3 is that marriage will be easy.

Myth #4 is that marriage is disposable. This one makes me so frustrated. 25% of all marriages end in divorce. That breaks my heart as a husband and as a father. But the culture is against marriage. The culture today says, if you're unhappy in marriage, move on. That's why people throw divorce parties. That's right. People actually celebrate the end of a marriage.

But movies, TV, magazines, and plenty of posts on social media, suggest if you're unhappy in marriage, maybe look for someone else. If you're unfulfilled in marriage, it's okay. Throw it away and try again, or not. Just do whatever you want, because in the end, it's all about you.

God's view of marriage and divorce is made clear in Scripture. Now I'll talk more about this passage this month, but just look at Malachi 3:16 (NLT), *"For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife."*

What is God's reaction to marriage being disposable? Look at verse 16. He says that "He hates divorce." This is not at odds with what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 24. Jesus dealt with this. In fact, in Matthew 19, Jesus says, *"Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended"* (19:8, NLT). So Jesus affirms what Malachi spoke. The marriage covenant was not made to be broken, though it is permitted under certain conditions, not at the radical rate or frivolous reasons we encounter today. So myth #4 is that marriage is disposable.

The last myth I want to look at briefly is that marriage can be successful without God.

The first part of Isaiah 53:6 (ESV) says, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way."* You see, that's the problem we face. We, apart from God, are selfish and bent on self-destruction. When God created Adam and Eve, they were good. They had God at the centerpiece of their marriage. But doubt crept in. Pride took over. Sin went from a possibility to a reality. And the result was hardship in life and in marriage.

You see, marriage apart from God is like building a house. CS Lewis once said, "There are lots of things you can do with sand, but do not try building a house on it." That is for sure. Building a house on sand will not stand. Building a sandcastle too will crumble. That's what marriage is without God. Sure, that house or castle may stand for a time, but once exposed to the trials of life and the selfishness of oneself, it will crumble.

Friends, *marriage is a gift from God.* There are myths every couple faces before and during the marriage. We've looked at some today. Now that we've exposed the myths, we can begin to see God's way of doing marriage.

N: All right. Now let's go to Cara Whitney and Arnie Cole for some discussion. Now, did either of you ever think that marriage would be easy, and if not, "Hey, no big deal; if it doesn't work, it doesn't work"? I mean, what was your philosophy?

A: Yeah, I mean, that was exactly my philosophy, before became a believer. If it didn't work, it didn't work. You'd just move on and nothing lasts forever anyway.

C: Yeah, no, I knew it wouldn't be easy. I went into marriage very seriously. I wasn't a believer. I just knew I didn't want my marriage to look like my parents' marriage. So I, right away, was big about communicating and all those things. Now I wasn't a Christ follower yet, but I will say I was dabbling in it, like I was interested in it. But I did not go into it willy-nilly. It was something I took very seriously. So I just figured, I'll just do the opposite of whatever my parents did.

N: Well, and that was going to be my follow up question for you both was, you know, the reality is we get an idea of marriage from our parents. It could be the lack of marriage, or it could be just the example we saw. So were there any myths of marriage that you brought in from your family of origin?

C: I would say no. I mean, I just knew I wanted kids at some point. My husband wanted kids. And then if for some reason medically, or something happened, we couldn't have kids, we were okay with that too. So that was discussed. Everything was discussed. I knew that if my marriage failed, I didn't want my kids to experience what I experienced and still experience. It's painful. So if you think that a divorce doesn't affect people, it affects everything.

N: It does and it can perpetuate as well. Arnie, how would you describe the difference between marriage with God, and marriage without God?

A: One makes total sense. The other, without God, makes absolutely no sense, other than to have legal protection from each other when you fall out of love.

N: Okay, talk about that a little bit more.

A: So without God, without a commitment to Jesus Christ, marriage is a legal commitment, so that when it ends, there is a fair separation of property, pets, kids, all of that horrible stuff. It makes it halfway humane from worldly standards. And without Christ, how can you expect to have a full life, because you don't have a full life with yourself? How can you have a full life with someone else without Jesus?

N: The reality is there's almost, there's such a stark difference between a marriage with God and without God. Cara, what should we tell our kids about what marriage is, but also what it isn't?

C: Well, it's isn't about selfishness, I mean, or being selfish. You want to realize you're going into it, it's a partnership. And there's a lot of forgiveness that needs to go on in a marriage. One thing I do myself is I'm an observer. I think that's why I write, because I observe things. So recently, I find my kids disrespecting my husband more so than myself. And I have to ask myself, if there's something that I'm doing to give them the idea that that's okay, you know. And I don't like seeing my husband treated like he's less than, because he's awesome. And so I like to show my kids that my husband, to me, he's my best friend. He's awesome. He's before them. So I just, I like to observe how other people are, you know, treating my spouse. I would say just,

yeah, your kids aren't as important as your spouse.

N: Yup. And I think that's an important lesson. The husband and wife relationship, earthly speaking, is the number one priority for those of us who are married. And also that we as parents, we display to our kids what we really believe about marriage, in what we say to our spouse, about our spouse, but also, how we treat our spouse. And that is a key thing to remember: how we live in the marriage makes an impact on our children. Arnie, I mentioned that marriage by God's design makes you holy. Can you give the listeners an idea of how marriage makes you holy?

A: Wow, that is a great question. How does your marriage make you holy? I think it makes you holy in how you think, how you respond to things, your whole life purpose, everything. I don't know if, holy is a pretty strong word, and I don't know if my wife would agree with that, but it does. Striving to honor your spouse, like Christ honors the church. I mean, wow, He gave his life for the church. And maybe you don't have to give your life for your spouse, but just that kind of commitment, that kind of love, there is a holiness to it for sure.

N: Yeah. We talked about that idea of sacrifice, and thinking of the other spouse more than yourself. And that's an element of that Christ like example, that's an element of the holiness. I think the other part of holiness that I've thought about, is Christ had standards, right? He was clearly defined in what truth was, and He stood by it with grace, with mercy, with love and respect. But He had standards. And I think that's one more way than marriage can make us holy.