

Selfless Marriage - July 28th, 2024 - Part 1: Marriage, who's Way?

Corporate Prayer: Announce first, song, pray after song for offering.

1. Pastor Stefan, Louise & Family on Holidays!

Pray for Rest, Safety and a fun time to grow closer to God and each other as a family!

2. Life on Mission - "each one, reach one"

- For 1000 ppl to engage their life on mission through actively reaching ONE PERSON

3. Middle School Camp 3

- For camp staff, volunteers, campers - belonging, safety, fun, to know & love Jesus!

4. PRAISE God for answering prayer for campers, and for us, and those in our region!

Good Morning and Welcome here this morning, if you are visiting here we are happy that you can join us here this morning and also welcome for those joining us online and the families that are in the RTC! My name is Martin Gunter and I am one of the Pastors here Southland Church and today we are going to start a small 3 part mini-series on Marriage!

The title for this message series is Selfless Marriage and I think that will give you a hint of what we will be working towards in this series and clearly 3 messages on Marriage is not nearly enough to cover everything we need to go through and discuss marriage, because the topic of marriage is one if not the most complicated, wonderful, frustrating & rewarding relationships you will ever be in. I have the privilege to see and work with many married couples here in our church and I have learned a lot in the past 7 years, but if I can pull one common thing from all these marriages is that none of them are the same. **If we would line up 100 couples on stage here and ask each couple to divine what love is in their marriage, I think we will get a 100 different answers.** WHY? Because each one of us are uniquely and wonderfully created by God and now you are putting 2 uniquely created people together, you will get a unique union and relationship out of it. Not to mention the wonderful combination of male and female and how God just made us so different but yet, in some mysterious way as Paul puts it, we have unity and become one in marriage. I mean here we have women, with such a wide range of emotions and they feel and love with every fiber of there being through all 27 categories of emotions and on the other hand we have man, with 4 emotions trying to keep up, and yet in some mysterious way it works! BTW, do you know the 4 emotions men have, happy, mad, sad, nothing! Nothing is an emotion, I am sure of it... Just waiting for some smart person to write a paper on it...

Marriage is a much debated topic with so much deception and lies planted in our culture that we see on social media, movies and many books are filled with empty promises and worldly views instead of a biblical perspective. And this is in part why I wanted to do a series on marriage and we also offer a marriage seminar here at church that me and my wife Andrea runs a couple of times a year with many wonderful marriage

mentors to help equip you and help you through some tough spots, so if you do not catch everything in here, do not worry, there are more opportunities to come in the future.

Before we jump into marriage, **I do want to address all the singles in our church first.** I understand that there are many here who are single and many who are married. I also understand that many who are single have no desire to get married, and that is OK! Yet while others are looking to get married and for one reason or another it has not worked out yet. For these next 3 weeks I am not trying to elevate Marriage above Singleness or make it sound more important. Both Marriage and Singleness have their place and it's a matter of what you are called to by God or in the other case waiting for an answer from the Lord. Take a look at **1 Corinthians 7:32-35 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. 33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— 34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.** We can see here that Paul shows us that both Married and Single people have a calling from the Lord, they are different in the way of where our priorities and responsibilities lie, but both are important and pleasing to the Lord! I also want to encourage those who are younger here this morning, those of you who are thinking about marriage and what are you going to get yourself into? **My prayer is that this will illuminate God's plan for marriage for you and how you can enter into it well.** When I was single, I remember at every Small Group event I went to, for myself and all my single friends we had but one prayer request, GOD please give us wives!! We prayed with much passion and very little wisdom into the matter, and one day someone shared a piece of wisdom with me I want to share with you this morning. When I was single and desperate, I mean looking for a wife he told me to RUN after Jesus, run with everything you have, serve Him, obey Him, get to know Him better, and as you are running after Jesus, look to your left and look to your right, and see who is running beside you, that is the one that you want to pursue! That is how I met my wife Andrea. I finally came to a place where I had many failed attempts and saying OK Lord, I'll just take you on dates and serve You. And that is exactly what I did, I would get myself ready, wash my car, clean it, go to McDonalds and buy myself and God a meal, go to the magnificent Hill of Abe here in town and meet God there with my Big Mac and Strawberry Milkshake. As I was running after God and serving in the church I started serving with a young lady named Andrea on an Usher team and quickly realized that she was not just serving there, but she was a Small Group leader and serving in Middle School. She was running after God as well and now it's been 18 years since we met and married for 16 of them! **Don't settle, pick the one that is also running after God!**

NOW, let's shift and talk about Marriage. MEME- Wife: sometimes I like to mess with my husband and hide his stuff where he can't find it... Like I put his shoes in the shoe closet, his jacket on the hanger and his keys on the key hook! Let me say that if you are curious if the reason I am up here is because we have marriage figured out and that we are walking in perfect harmony, let me just say, it has not been perfect, it's not been happily ever after... We do not complete each other's sentences, but we aim to walk in step with God in His way, we run and we stumble, and get back up and run after God together despite our struggles and shortcomings and yes, our marriage is stronger today than it was yesterday and stronger than it was a year ago or even 10 years ago. Now I think as we get into this topic of marriage its very important that we start with a foundation on what we believe here at Southland about marriage. You can find this on our website as well...

A. What we believe here at Southland

- Marriage is not a human creation, or invention, but a God -given, God initiated, and God-ordained institution.
 - Genesis 2:18; Genesis 2:24
- God intended marriage to be a monogamous, life-long union between one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others.
 - Genesis 2:24; Exodus 20:14; Genesis 2:18, 20-25; Mark 10:7-9
- Furthermore, God also intended that those who marry not be close blood relatives.
 - Leviticus 18:6-18
- Marriage is constituted in mutual covenant and is a solemn, binding agreement entered into before God and others.
 - 2 Samuel 12; Malachi 2:16
- Marriage includes love and companionship but its primary function is to promote the biological unity of sexual opposites as the basis for family formation. It is the God-ordained institution charged with providing stability, love, and nurture necessary for raising children and propagating the human race. All human beings are born of a mother and begotten by a father. This is a universal genetic reality and the common experience of all people – all human beings require someone of the opposite sex to create life.
 - Genesis 2:18; Malachi 2:15
- We affirm the Nashville Statement regarding human sexuality
 - 14 Different articles that they have written out and affirm and some of the people you might know that also support it are: Christopher Yuan, James Dobson, Francis Chan, Rosario Butterfield, J.I. Packer, and many more!

Now there is a lot to unpack here and we will be covering parts of it as we go through this series and we cover some of them at the Pre-Marriage and Marriage Seminars. Marriage defined like it is on our website here is indeed very simple actually, **so why is marriage so complicated?** Let me explain this in another way.... Have any of you here today try and do a

simple project at home, whether it's a simple reno, or building something? Last year Andrea said that **we should build some garden boxes** because we love fresh veggies. Nothing quite like picking a carrot out of the dirt and eating it right! And as a man I said, SURE, how hard can it be, its just wood, cut it, and then screws... Seems simple enough, like the our statement of believes here I had all the right ingredients. So then I started googling it, and talking to people about it, and the more I did it, the more complex it got, not just with what I found online, but also with Andrea expectations grew with time, so I was on the clock! It got to the point where I need to buy specialty tools and learn new skills that I did not know was required to build a simple box! The reason for this is because everyone seem to have a different WAY of building a garden box. Some good, and some not so good and some, are just not right for our climate... Now in the end, I used a bit of African materials and know how, combined it with Canadian wisdom and built my boxes, but I had to sift through many examples and peoples "great ideas" for how to do it. Now, this example frails in comparison to marriage, but the basic idea behind is the same. We look for answers everywhere and there are so many ways of doing marriage that we catch ourselves buying tools we never will use or we make it worse. Instead, we as Christians have the upper hand already!! **We possess the good news, we already know the way and we can go to the one who designed marriage and follow His way!** Instead of discussing all the different ways we can do marriage, I want to simplify it and ask this question, **Who's way are you following in your marriage?** Are you following the culture around us and simply doing it your way, or are you follow God's way? We will start and look at our culture a little bit and see how they say we should do it, and then we will look at God's way.

B. Cultures Way – When we talk about culture, does it mean that everything culture says about marriage is bad? Actually no, its not all bad, one example is wedding rings. Wedding rings are not a biblical example, one of the closest examples we do see is in Genesis 24 when Abraham's servant found Rebekah, he gave her a nose ring to claim her as Isaac's bride. The Egyptians and Romans used wedding rings and we adopted the custom. And its one I actually like, and I do wear one as many of you do! So this is an example of a good cultural influence for God's plan of marriage. Unfortunately, there are many bad ones out there that is saturating our culture that its hard to know and discern many false ideas of marriage, and I don't know if it just me, but there are always new trends coming out and I honestly can't keep up with them. We will look at only a few here that see often in my office....

1. Marriage is the ultimate fulfillment in my life. Marriage will fix all my issues! I feel alone now, but when I am married, that will go away... Or lust is my issue, and when I am married, that will stop.... I wish it was that simple, the truth unfortunately is very different. Let me give you an example. If you are feeling lonely, I am sorry, that is very hard, but feeling lonely now will only get worse when you are married. Reason being that in the beginning, it will be great, because there is another person you can talk with and be with, but that starts to go away or simply

you or your spouse starts to change, and when that happens, when they don't fulfill that the emptiness inside of you, you will feel more lonely than before, because now the person that is supposed to fulfill you, cannot... In the end, **only God can fulfill us and He is the only Hope for all our issues**, Psalm 107:9 says "How he satisfies the souls of thirsty ones and fills the hungry with all that is good!" Marriage does not have some magic power to fill a God sized hole in us, on God can fill that by submitting to His way...

2. **Happily Ever After!** So many books and stories end with that slogan! There is so much of this we can take apart, first off, we are not in heaven yet where its truly happily ever after, how about, Happily EVEN After.. How about we work through our issues and we come to place where we forgive our spouse, not forgive and forget (another lie), forgive despite what happened and scripture shows us in **Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you**. I heard this quote before that **marriage is 2 forgivers living together!**
3. **Living together first before marriage or I will live life on my terms** Living together first before marriage is a great way to see if we are compatible is what culture says. People living in common-law in Canada was vastly increased over the years. The official Canadian Stats website lists what they consider living in common-law is a couple living in a conjugal relationship that is not your married spouse for at least 12 months. In a 2021 census it shows that Canada has the highest common-law partnership with 23% of couples living together, it's the highest percentage of any of the G7 countries and its also growing the fastest. Its easy in our culture today to say let's try it out first by living together before we get married to see how it goes, that's just logical right!?? That is not what the research shows, the University of Denver under 2 psychology professors Stanley and Rhoades took an extended look between 2010 and 2019 and found shockingly that couples who lived together first before getting married had a 48% more likely to get divorced than couples who did not live together before hand. Unfortunately, even Christians are now falling more to this cultural lie because **Pew Research found that 58% of evangelicals believe that cohabitation is "morally acceptable" if a couple plans to marry**. Our way is not good enough when it comes to marriage, we do call ourselves Christians right? That means we have Jesus inside of us and we do it HIS way like it shows us in **Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me**. So many people have tried doing "their way" and they refuse to go back to the way God intended it to work, so let me ask you, how is it going for you trying it your way? Are you ready to try something else and do it the way it was intended to be used?

- C. God's Way** –Church, a quick question... **Do we think that God is Good? Is He a loving God?? If He is, then His plan for marriage is good because Marriage is His idea!** Marriage from the days of Adam and Eve, and Isaac and Rebekka till today with Martin and Andrea is built on the same moral ground and when we enter into marriage God's

Word in the standard for truth, **cultural norms will come and go and they will change, but God's word is eternal! God's Word is a guide and blueprint for us on how to have a successful and fulfilling marriage!**

So what does scripture say about marriage? LOTS! Now, if you go google, what does the bible say about marriage, you will probably call me a liar, because there is not much that comes up... But let me ask you a question... When a person gets married, does that excuse him or her from the moral laws in scripture or what we need to apply to our lives to live for Christ?? Of coarse NOT, so even if we are married, we are still to follow all of scripture right!!? Silly I know, but we dismiss so much of scripture that does not seem to be written specifically for my marriage issue that we ignore it. Let me give you an example. When me and Andrea where going through a rough patch in our marriage, there was a time where I really did not like my wife very much. She was no longer my favorite person and I was angry at God, lamenting, and then came across this passage one morning in my devotional time as I was reading through the gospel of **Luke 6:27-28 But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.** What does that have to do with your marriage? EVERYTHING!! God arrested my heart, and asked me to put Andrea's name in there.... I read it like this... But to you who are listening I say: **Love Andrea, do good to Andrea when she hates you, bless Andrea when she curses you, pray for Andrea when she mistreats you.** This broke my heart because Andrea was not even cursing me, or hating me, or even mistreating me, so Christ convicted my heart to repentance so that I can get my attitude in check that if I am suppose to do this to my enemies, how much more to the one that I love the most!!

But scripture does indeed talk about marriage and my favorite passage of scripture to go to for marriage is in Ephesians 5 because I find it lays out marriage and expectations out so well for us, but before we can look at it, we have to look at the context of Ephesians because what comes before chapter 5 is very important. In Ephesians chapters 1-3 we see Paul mainly talking about the doctrine of salvation, what we are saved by, **forgiveness and that we are one in Christ.** This lays the foundation for Ephesians 4-6 that is more concerned on how we will respond to what God has done. **Chapter 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** Can you imagine how different our marriages would be if we applied even just these few verses? Being worthy of the calling we are all in, bearing with one another in love, and eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit! And there is so much more, but lets move on...We will start in verse 15 **Ephesians 5:15-33 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19**

addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Let’s dive into this chunk of scripture and there are 3 parts I would like to highlight that will help us bring unity to our marriages and demonstrate **God’s way is only possible if we are filled with the Spirit like it says in verse 18. Part 1** in verse 21 **submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.** Verse 21 connects verses 15-20 to the next part of Chapter 5 in accordance to family relations to marriage and family the problem is, we do not like the word that first word in the verse... submitting. **Submission is not a word we typically use in our culture today because as a culture we have become allergic to it.** Back in Paul’s day with the Greeks and Romans this idea of husbands and wives submitting to one another was radical, since women did not have a voice and it was not about mutual submission, but about ruler vs the ones being ruled. **Submission then today can be compared to selflessness, because the opposite of submission is selfishness!** Paul is saying, be selfless, regard the other one as more important as you, which is the same message we get from Jesus and the other apostles. In submitting to one another we are to put the other one ahead of ourselves! **If I can summarize it, Submission is the ACT of selflessness! Selflessness is the heart of Submission!** Now in marriage, Paul shows us examples for both wives and husbands what this submission should look like so that we can have a selfless marriage...

Part 2 in verse 22, **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Let me first say, I recognize that this verse has been twisted and used out of context many times.** I have played witness where men have used this in my office to show their authority over

women, and if **any of you here this morning have been a victim to this misuse, I AM SORRY!** It is not how the bible should be used, and we are trying to live and obey what scripture says and I want to ask you, would you give me a couple of minutes this morning, and I hope that I can in **some small way redeem a part of this piece of scripture**, so that it can bring life to marriages instead of dividing them even more... Again, verse 22, **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** Like verse 21 the word used here is submit, and let me just say, submit does not mean be oppressed, or be ruled by or even forced obedience. Paul is connecting the actions shown earlier in Ephesians with a life filled in the Spirit among the community of believers to more specific instruction of a marriage relationship. **Like the trinity, where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal in the sense they are all God, we see that there is a hierarchy in their unity. For example, Jesus clearly spoke of Himself as being equal with God (John 5:18) — and then He said, “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).** This is not a contradiction, but just like marriage, **men and women are created equal and it’s a mysterious and wonderful unity. Its then not a relationship of ruler vs the ruled, but a relationship between a lover and the beloved.** One more example of this I want to point out is **Jesus and how he treated women.** We can see the many examples in the gospels and if we take a moment and put ourselves in those women shoes, we can see why its easy to submit under Jesus because of the great love that he showed them right. **Now wives, if your hubby is next to you, look at him, I think you will agree with me that upon a quick inspection, he is not Jesus!** But we will talk to them in just a minute... Jesus came and lifted the curse from Genesis 3:16 **Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you** to a place now where this act has been redeemed to act of willful, conscience choice to place someone else ahead of you, or as Paul calls it, submission. But this is only one piece of the equation, now we get to the fun one, husbands, you are not off the hook!

Part 3 in verse 25 **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,** first off, we have a major difference here already in the verse from the previous ones. **Paul switched and added love in addition to submission for us.** But he does not just say, go and love your wives, he gives us an example just like with the wives in how we are to love. **The example is to love as Christ loved the church, AND gave himself up for her!** This last part is one we either forget or just skim over, and we should pay more attention to it. We are supposed to love our wives in the same manner in which Jesus gave himself up for the church. **Can anyone here think of how did Jesus give himself up for the church??** Let me show you another amazing passage that is not about marriage, but totally can be applied: **Philippians 2:1-8 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not**

only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus loved the church by giving himself up for her by emptying himself, by allowing himself to be betrayed, by being beaten, stripped naked, flogged, ridiculed, mocked, and he willfully carried His cross the device of His death and torture and then allowed himself to die a sinners death for us his church... **Husbands, do you love your wife in this manner? Don't worry, I am still working on that too,** and let's say you have been, Jesus was innocent and perfect through it all, where you? I am not trying to condemn you or make you feel less than, I am trying to tell you how we are suppose to love our wives so that through biblical submission it allows our wives to confidently follow your lead! **Servant leadership as Christ modeled here on earth does not rob our wives of being unique individuals or allow us to misuse our leadership, but to die to self and point the way for our families to Jesus** who I pray that this is the way that you are following!

D. In conclusion, Moving toward God's Way, one step at a time... which way are you following in your marriage? Are you doing what culture says, or are you trying to do it God's way in the way He intended marriage to be? **Its hard!! It will take time, but we can take a step towards Him! It's hard to willingly submit for wives and to be servant leaders for husbands, but this is God's way and God's way gives life and unity if we are willing to lay it down at his feet in a selfless marriage.** This might seem like a impassible barrier and how is it even possible to achieve this? I can tell you how... One step at a time... My encouragement to you this morning is a couple of steps here that you can take depending where you are at in your marriage...

Step 1: Which way are you currently following? What steps do you need to take to get onto God's way?

Step 2: Do you have an intimate relationship with Jesus? Are you in the word and prayer? Or is this an area you need to willfully surrender and submit to Jesus.

Step 3: Wives, where is one area where God is asking you to submit to? Husbands, where is one area where God is asking you to lay your life down?

Next week we will talk about what to do when things go wrong in our marriage and we will unpack this some more, but for now. I want to pray for you and if you want to join me you can. I have many times confessed that I have not followed God's way, but tried mine, and failed, and then realign to follow is Way in marriage. **Let's Pray!**