

When Sinners Say “I Do”

Lesson 4

1. Here we go – the series to this point:

- Sin in all its manifestations is your #1 enemy against a God-glorifying and satisfying marriage.

What do the struggles against sin look like in a spiritually blended marriage?

- In humility, suspect yourself – our heart has the permanent tendency to oppose God. (Jer. 17:9)

Based on what you’ve learned to this point, what’s wrong with the expression, “God knows my heart in this situation”?

- In integrity, inspect yourself – the issue is not “who is right/wrong” but “what is right/wrong” (See Mt. 7:3-5)

How does the pursuit of who’s “more at fault” hurt our marriages?

- In honesty, blame yourself – God will create opportunities to reveal and then deal with personal sin.

How does the “heat” of marriage reveal the heart of a husband or wife?

- In practicality, focus on undeserved grace – where the Bible gives liberty, desires have no morality, only appropriateness.

2. Luke 6:27-36 – “Mercy makes marriage sweet.” (pg. 79)

- **Rhetorical:** Martin Luther called marriage “the school of character” (the instilling of virtues) – what kind of character does marriage produce? How does marriage produce character in our lives?

- Mercy is “loving kindness” or a compassionate willingness to forebear; mercy is a **communicable** attribute of God (an attribute that can be imitated).

- Mercy is God’s response to His enemies – you and me, you and your spouse – a response of love.

If the standard for our mercy toward our spouse is God’s mercy toward us, what does God’s mercy look like? (Ex. 34:6, 2 Sam. 24:14, Ps. 86:15, Ps. 145:8-9, Joel 2:13, 2 Cor. 1:3, Jms. 5:11 – have class members read aloud)

“But deep, profound differences are the reality of every marriage. It’s not the presence of differences but the absence of mercy that makes them irreconcilable.” (pg. 81) Agree or disagree? Why?

Does extending mercy change the need to speak the truth to our spouse?

Does extending mercy mean we overlook abuse in a relationship?

3. The practical side of a mercy-saturated marriage:

- Mercy before the fact: practice kindness

Do you see Lk. 6:27-36 as a call to discreet, isolated acts of mercy or something much broader?

How can a spouse be kind knowing there may be another sin against him/her right around the corner? ANSWER: Kindness is not a personality trait, but a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and an expression of biblical love (1 Cor. 13:4).

Name some practical expressions of kindness to be shown in marriage?

- Mercy under attack: do unto others

When is using your own desires as the standard for your behavior beneficial to your marriage relationship? How can it be abused?

- Mercy after the fact: cover sin

CASE STUDY: Bart and Jasmine are headed to church one fine Sunday morning when the conversation in the vehicle turns to Bart's inconsiderate behavior when he comes home from work. Jasmine is a stay-at-home mom who takes care of a 4 year old and a 2 year old, but Bart seems to have no understanding of why supper is not on the table at 5:30 every weekday. Both insult the other during their "discussion", but nothing is resolved before they walk into the lobby of the church. Jasmine heads to Jr. Church and Bart to the back of the auditorium. What do you do?

Forbearance is an expression of mercy that can cover both the big sins of marital strife and the small sins of marital tension – it is the choice to overlook another's sin by extending forgiveness to the offender even when forgiveness is not sought.

Prov. 19:11 & 1 Pt. 4:8 – the glory of overlooking another's sin.

Its the little, petty things that swell into tidal waves of bitterness – the toilet paper being pulled from underneath instead of over the top, the good towels being used for garage rags, the basket of clothes that never gets folded, the sudden change of plans, the forgotten birthday, etc.

Is there a limit to our forbearance? When do we say "Enough is enough!"

4. Mercy and our battle with self-righteousness

- Mercy is most necessary when we think we've been sinned against – how we respond can reveal the absence or presence of self-righteousness.
- *How many have heard statements like: "I can't believe you did that!" or "I don't deserve this!" or "I've got a right to be angry!"?*
- Self-righteousness is a sense of moral superiority that appoints us as prosecutors of other people's sinfulness – we relate to others as if we are incapable of the sins they commit.

- Self-righteousness begins by mentally assigning an evil motive to the crime of our defendant-spouse, and then convicting them internally without any cross examination or defense testimony.
- Some good questions to ask when struggling with self-righteousness:

Am I self-confident that I see the supposed “facts” clearly?

Am I quick to assign motives when I feel I’ve been wronged?

Do I find it easy to build a case against someone that makes me seem right and my spouse seem wrong?

Do I ask questions with built-in assumptions I believe will be proven right?

Am I overly concerned about who is to blame for something?

Am I able to dismiss questions like these as irrelevant?

- Weaknesses in our spouse will tempt us to be self-righteous – those areas of vulnerability or susceptibility in our spouses that frustrate and annoy us.

5. Jesus says that mercy has a promise of reward NOT results (Lk. 6:35) – there is no promise that our enemies will be changed, but we will be changed in extending mercy!