

## Be Different (Part III) – Be Faithful

1/24/2010

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. In this study we consider the integrity of marriage. What does the passage Matt 5:27-32 have to say about being faithful and about the marriage relationship and why such graphic language?

The language (especially v. 29-30) is pretty graphic. It would seem this is for effect, rather than a commandment to pluck out eyes and chop off hands. Other religions, such as Islam, take these kinds of comments literally, but it is unlikely that is what was intended.

Sinful thoughts can lead to sinful actions, so it is important not to go down that path. Verses 31 -32 make it clear that divorce is not an option unless one of the parties has been clearly unfaithful to the marriage vows.

2. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 for the Old Testament background, and then read Matt. 19:1-9 to see how the Pharisees try to trap Jesus. How is their interpretation of the Law of Moses different from the way Jesus sees it?

The Pharisees used the words from Deuteronomy to give permission for a man to divorce his wife by simply handing her a piece of paper with the right words on it. They seem to expect that divorce will be common. Jesus says that divorce should be rare, and that Moses provided a mechanism because God knew their sinful ways would lead to such a situation. Thus, it was allowed, but not encouraged.

Phrases such as in v. 6 (“the two shall become one flesh” and “what God has joined together, let no man separate”) make it crystal clear that the marriage relationship is viewed by God as a lifetime commitment.

3. Almost identical words can be found in Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18 as we see in Matt 19. Why would the Holy Spirit inspire three different writers to say the same thing about marriage over and over?

It is a big deal. This is more than just about two people setting up housekeeping together. The marriage relationship is used by God to describe His relationship with the church. Thus, good marriages model the relationship between God and us. (Eph. 5:22-33).

4. Pastor Steve described how marriage has the power to make us holy people. How does that work?

We learn how to love unconditionally. We learn how to love someone who is imperfect, just as God loves each of us. We have to work at it, and it takes a lot of our time, but the end result is that it makes us different (holy) and causes us to love as God loves.

5. He then suggested that we need to commit to our spouses on the following three levels. Describe each and explain how they are connected.

a) Intimacy - build and protect love; avoid lust; reject self-interest or self-love. Our initial motivation tends to be self interest – “I love me; whenever I’m with you I’m happy”, so I guess I love you. As Pastor Steve said, we have trouble moving beyond that. [Note: if your group is made up of a wide range of marriage durations, this is fertile territory for talking about how our relationship changes as marriages mature.]

We need to learn how to love, which includes getting rid of lust (every time we lust, it becomes easier to do it the next time). We build intimacy by taking control of the triggers of lust – our eyes and hands. If we don’t, we never move beyond loving ourselves.

b) Loyalty - honor your vows; keep your word. While Moses allowed one to give a certificate of divorce, it was never in God’s plan that this is what should happen. Divorce has victims. Love changes with the seasons of life, so we need to grow it. Never drop the word “divorce” into an argument. It is more than just “sticking it out”. Rather, it is investing in the other person, so that they see the potential that Jesus sees in them. It is growing old gracefully together.

c) Witness – we should make our marriages something special, so that others will see the love of God and desire it for themselves. This takes us back to Matt. 5:13-16, where we are encouraged to be salt and light. Thus, it is not “our marriage” or “our private love affair”, but it is a witness of how Christians love each other, which in turn is a reflection of how God loves each of us. Everyone who comes in contact with a strong marriage is affected by it.

6. How would you define the love that exists in a strong Christian marriage?

It is the desire to act in the other person’s best interest at all times. It is the willingness to give up “self” for the good of the marriage. Love is a choice, not a feeling. It is a commitment, a covenant, and a treaty that inspires loyalty.