

# Marriage Support in Preaching

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Today, we're going to talk about marriage support in preaching. In a lot of ways, I could tell you this. Supporting communication within your whole church for marriage. It's one of those topics where in some ways you can do a series on preaching for instance and we can talk about that. Or we can talk about doing a seminar. But in your local church, marriage support in communication, marriage support in preaching is important in everything you do.

In a lot of ways, that support of marriage is caught as much as it is taught. You have a great opportunity in honoring the bonds of marriage in a church. In Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure. God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." In our society like never before, we need to support marriage. Over 90 percent of the scenes of sexuality in most movies—they've studied this—90 percent or more are happening outside of the bonds of marriage. Whether you go popular literature and television or newspapers or magazines or popular psychology, in general, marriage support is at an all time low.

At the church, we have an opportunity to draw the line in the sand in our teaching, our attitudes, our thoughts about marriage, and we have a great opportunity to honor God in marriage. In your very church, you're going to have people who have experienced divorce and this is your opportunity to point them to the biblical message of marriage, the long-term message that they can wherever their situation is right now, they can shoot for the stars. But in your church, you can make those stars not way out there. You can make it supported in real life right here, right now.

Let's talk about preaching itself and how can you support marriage and even at a time almost support marriage on a weekly basis. It's interesting about marriage, almost any topic that you preach on on Sunday could have a marriage application. Why? Because marriage itself in a lot of ways is a relationship laboratory, I should say. Marriage is a relationship laboratory. If you're put together with

someone else, that closeness will bring all sorts of interesting relational opportunities—opportunities to love when you don't feel like it, opportunities of accountability because you're with someone really close. And when you're with someone really close, they see you for who you are or who you are is seen by someone else.

It doesn't matter what topic that you're talking about. You can have sort of a marriage discussion, and I call it commercials. In good preaching especially in this sort of day and age, whatever topic that you do, you'll have your outline, here's your scriptural premise, here is the application. But when you get to application, you can very specifically go into like a marriage discussion. My wife and I were talking about this the other day. We confronted a disagreement about being on time and being late. My first inclination was to get mad and to break out because how many times she's been doing her makeup and everything.

And then what you do is you take the congregation through that. Let's say the topic was anger or something the application is anger. So then you'll go further in that. But in the context, the story, the narrative is in something about marriage. So you bring that all the way through and give some resolve. Here, I go pointing out my wife's flaws and being late and basically I'm throwing stones in a glass house because I have my struggle with anger. You can do various things.

But then in the end—this is a very important point—you could then make the statement, "Marriage is really hard" or you could say, "Marriage is so cool because you have an opportunity with someone that you love and accountable to actually figure out how to grow in Christ and how to grow in character." Marriage is great for that. Notice the difference here. You're sort of doing a little commercial for marriage. You're sort of lifting marriage up in a sermon, in application and that laboratory of marriage is a place where discipleship happens. But you can be positive about that.

Now, in your discussion about marriage too, there's a tie-in to reading the Bible in home discipleship. Good marriage support in proclamation, preaching, communication is always talking about

that. When somebody comes to talk to me about their marriage or whatever and whether it's positive or whether it's struggling or a challenge, I'll always encourage them to look at their own marriage walk. Are they opening the Word together? Just a little bit every day. Are they praying together? In some ways, when they open the Word of God and when they pray together in the marriage relationship, there's proclamation, preaching that supports marriage that's going to happen in that home.

It is not necessarily the preaching that you will do on Sunday or your church programs or your encouragements or anything like that will do. This will come directly from the Word of God. So part of that preaching would be to create the cultural support for husbands and wives opening the Word of God, for husbands and wives praying together, for husbands and wives to grow in their walk with God together as a married couple. I call this marriage support in preaching because there is a proclamation that is occurring in the home from the Word of God to a married couple.

So in your preaching, you do a lot of commercials and what applications, you can talk about marriage, and even on that last point, it doesn't all have to be about your life. It can be a great marriage story. I'm going to say always remember that marriage has this great opportunity. In this point, discipleship, having marriages to actually open the Word of God together.

I brought this up a little bit about encouragement. I will tell you that right now, the culture of marriage in the English-speaking world and throughout the world in general is one of naysaying. It's like marriage is hard, marriages won't work. You have an opportunity to talk about how God intended marriage to be done, how even in the Book of Genesis, "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife and they will become one flesh."

As a pastor, a leader, a Christian leader, it's like you have the opportunity to create encouragement about the institution of marriage and when you hear about... I've seen pastors giving messages in a ceremony about marriage, and the whole message is sort of like "Marriage is really hard. The divorce

rate is one half. Every marriage struggles.” This is at someone’s wedding. “And you’re going to be no different.” I understand that the psychology is trying to get them the proper expectations.

But you know what it does to me as I hear it and I see it over twenty-eight years of being a pastor is in some ways, any time there is a wedding ceremony, this is an opportunity to create more encouragement culture, to talk about the benefits of being married, the opportunities for discipleship. But you can set the tone in your local church or your local area.

When there is a wedding, talk about it as a calling and a blessing. “He who finds a wife finds what is good and will receive his favor from the Lord.” In general, have that sparkle in your eye about marriage in your preaching, in your teaching, in your interpersonal communications. When a new couple is engaged, talk about it in the church service. “So and so is engaged.” If someone’s engagement breaks off, talk about it as the Lord is at work and He has got better things for you.

I’m going to end this by saying a lot of times pastors don’t get that possible marriage because so many times people are single or maybe as a leader you’re single and you really want to hurt the singles. Please always be sensitive to the fact that marriage may not be everyone’s calling. The apostle Paul talks about it. He wishes people they could be single and Christ is their sort of passion and marriage is not something that everyone needs to do to be whole. The reality is we’re whole in Christ. We’re whole life people alone. But in this day and age, we have to both affirm singleness but affirm marriage and be positive and be positive on singleness.

Let’s be positive about being creatures of Christ, His children, God’s children, co-heirs with Christ, that whatever our status, let us be of those who look to Christ, who are positive with great attitude. As we think about marriage, we think about marriage preaching in our church, just think of it as an opportunity. Learn and grow in how you can create these commercials in such a way that are sensitive to those who are single. Create those encouragements and positive statements that are sensitive to those who have gone through divorce. Even when someone’s gone through divorce, they need hope

that if they are married, that this is going to be a different experience in Christ. Marriage is a program of your church. It's an integral part of all your communications.