

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: 1 Corinthians

Rethink Marriage Pt 1

Rethink Commitment

1 Corinthians 7; Philippians 2:2-4

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 10.30-31.10

(Everyone Loves Raymond Clip)

Teaching: There's no shortage of people to give advice or advice in general on marriage. You could turn the television on almost any given hour of the day and you're going to find some talk show host or some specialist giving you advice about marriage. Or, you could go to any bookstore and you could find a whole rack full of books that specialize in the marriage relationship. Stand in line at a grocery store and the magazines beside you are filled with columns about marriage. But the question that we need to be asking is are these the most reliable sources that we can go to to get advice about our marriage relationships?

Today and the several weeks following we're going to be looking at what I believe is the most reliable source, credible source on marriage relationships. We're going to be looking at God's Word. We've been looking at 1 Corinthians and by now you probably understand that Corinthians is a book filled with issues. It just goes from one issue to the next. We were in chapter 6. We're turning the page into chapter 7 and what does chapter 7 deal with? The issue of marriage. And so we're going to spend time working through chapter 7 but not today.

Actually, we're going to be looking at the book of Philippians and if you have your bibles that's where I'd like you to turn with me – another book that the Apostle Paul wrote. Philippians chapter 2. Why are we doing this? Why are we taking a break from 1 Corinthians? Because I want you to understand the biblical baseline for relationships; a biblical base; a foundation for your marriage. This is where we're going to start and move forward from these concepts into our series over the next several weeks. Now, we're going to start in Philippians chapter 2. Now as you're turning there you probably already know that the statistics are not good. There's one out of every 2 – 2 ½ marriages end in divorce in our country today. The divorce rate has risen some 240% since the 1940's and that's not just one people group or segment group. That's all of us in America. So, regardless if you're a follower of Christ or if you're not, if you're a believer or an unbeliever you share the same statistic. It's the same in the church as it is out of the church. About one out of every two marriages ends in divorce so we as followers of Christ, those of us who are married especially need to take critical care of what we look at and what we listen to as advice for our marriages.

Now, what we're going to do in Philippians is we're going to look at God's ideal for every relationship, not just marriage relationship but for every relationship. You'll apply this across the board. But, especially for those of us who are married this is the foundation. Paul is writing the Philippian church and he says something in verse 2 that intrigues me. He says, complete my joy. Now, he's speaking as a pastor. So what is he saying here? He's saying as your spiritual leader you can make me happy. You can give me inner joy, how? By being,

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like this, of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Have this as your foundation in your relationships.

Now, I'm going to take this and I'm going to apply this to our marriages and what we're going to learn are three critical components of a strong marriage out of this passage. We're going to look at this first and then we're going to do some evaluation. You can not change something you do not acknowledge. You can't change something that you don't evaluate. And so we're going to evaluate our relationships.

Let's look closely at this passage. I want you to notice a few things that stand out in my mind. First, look at the repetitive use of words. He uses the word same, for example twice – of the same mind and the same love. He uses the word mind twice – one mind, same mind. Look at the participles. He says being of the or having the or again, being in full accord. What does this all point to? What does all of this move us towards, our idea of this passage? It moves us to an understanding that what he's talking about, what he's saying is the foundation for relationships is unity. Look at this. All of this has to do with unity. Same mind. Same love. Full Accord. One mind. This has to do with unity and so what we're going to look at are the things we need to be united in, in our relationships.

There are three of them. Notice the first one. Three components of a strong marriage, number one. We need to be united in our thinking. What does he mean here? You can look at this and say I know what it means. This is pretty much standard. When you go to counseling they'll say you need to learn how your partner thinks. And there is some credibility to that. Although I found that very difficult. I've been married twenty years. I still don't understand how or what Michelle thinks and I would imagine if she was here this morning, she was here last night, if she was here this morning that she would say the same thing about me. She would say I don't know what goes through his head. I don't know why he does what he does. It's because we're completely different people and really, honestly, for me to fully understand how she thinks is beyond my ability and vice versa. I don't think that's what this passage is talking about. I don't think this passage is saying to be united you must understand how each other thinks. I think what this passage is saying is you must adopt the same mindset.

Now, look at verses 5 through 7. We get an understanding of what Paul was saying. He says this, have this mind among yourselves. There it is. He's going to tell us what mindset we ought to have. Have this mindset among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus. So, what mindset should we have? We should have that that resembles Christ Jesus. What did he do? Look at verse 6. who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Even though he was the Messiah, second person of the Trinity, God in all attributes and aspects, he did not consider that something to be held on to, verse 7, but made himself nothing. Why? Taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of

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death, even death on a cross. Why? So that he might do what? Serve us. Notice the word servant? You might want to circle that or underline that. That's what's called the micro-center of the passage. If you really want to understand all of chapter 2 you come out to the word servant and spread it out from there. This passage is speaking about being Christ-like and how was Christ? A servant. So, what is the mindset that we ought to take into every relationship, especially our marriage relationship? That we get in it so that we might serve.

Now, that's counter-cultural. Do you understand that? It's completely different from what we would grow up understanding in our culture. Our culture tells us that we really in relationships so that we might receive something. Not give something. Now we give in our relationships but primarily in our relationships we involve ourselves because of what it does for us. You see, the bible puts everything upside down and says, look. When you get into a marriage relationship you're going into it as a servant. You are there to serve your spouse. And likewise your spouse then reciprocates and serves you. That's the mindset. That's the biblical mindset.

An interesting study was done by Harvard University. Working through this whole issue of marriage and divorce; understanding the divorce rate basically. One to One, fifty percent. They did this study and found that those who were married in a church ceremony, in other words, those who said we're going to put God in our center. We're going to make a covenant before God, through our vows and to one another. They said actually the divorce rate drops to one out of fifty. So, you have a higher likelihood of staying married if you're married in a church. Now, this is where it became interesting to me. The study went on to say that couples active in a church, in other words, active in a lifestyle of following their belief system is the way the Harvard Review put it. Those of us who are committed to following Christ and the Word of God that the divorce rate drops to one out of one-thousand, one-hundred and five. Now, that doesn't mean that we're not going to have problems. It doesn't mean that we're not going to have difficulties in our marriage. What it means is that we have a different mindset as we approach it. We have a mindset and many times that gets skewed and has to be put back on track. We have a mindset that we're going to follow after Christ, the teaching of Christ, the model of Christ and what was he modeling? He was modeling servant-hood. You have to understand that thinking determines how we act. So, how you think determines how you act in your marriage and many times we have to change our mindset from the culture, which is very self driven to other driven to change the actions that go on in our marriage.

So, where does Paul start? He says, listen, do you want to build a foundation of unity in your relationship? Start by being united in thinking. And then what else does he say? Look at verse 2. He says, we ought to be united in our love. I always say be united in heart. We ought to be as couples united in heart. Love's a dangerous word to use. Do you know why? Because when I say love, what do you think? You might think romantic love. You might think feeling love. And that's certainly an aspect of love but that's not the biblical

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understanding, at least in this concept of love. There are five Greek words for the word love. *Eros, Philia, Storge, Thelema* and *Agape*. There are Greek words that could be used to mean feelings. That's not what was used in this text.

Agape was used and do you know what the biblical word agape means? It means that you choose to love. You make a choice to be in a relationship where you will love them. Listen to this: regardless of the consequences, outcome or feedback. Do you realize that's how God loves us? He's a covenant keeping God. He loves us, keeps a covenant, commits to us regardless of our actions or reactions to Him. What does Paul say? He's saying you ought to be like that. You ought to love not based on feelings but based on choice.

Now, I happen to be in a position where I often hear of the excuses that people give me of why they're no longer in love with their spouse. They'll say things like well, I've fallen out of love or I just don't feel like I'm in love or words of not compatible – we're incompatible. Which, by the way, is the number one reason on divorce documents today – incompatibility.

I found it interesting reading a Swiss psychiatrist by the name of Paul Tournier and he says incompatibility is a myth. Misunderstandings and mistakes can be corrected if there's a willingness to do so. Any two people are compatible if they try to be. In other words, any two people are compatible if they choose to be.

How are we united in our relationships? We are united in our thinking and we're united in our heart where we choose to love one another.

The third thing – look at the end of verse 2. He says we are to be in full accord. I would say we are to be united in purpose. That would be a good understanding of full accord. Literally it means to aim in one direction. That's what I'm always telling Jack when he's in the bathroom. Aim in one direction son. That's the sense of the meaning – one direction. We're heading in one direction. Much of marriage is really about heading in one direction. Paul not only tells us why but he tells us how. Look at verses 3 to 4. He says this is how you do it. Do nothing from rivalry, by the way, that's jealousy; conceit, selfishness; but in humility count others more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interest of others. Can you imagine how radical your relationship would change if you adopt this methodology? If you said I'm going to stop being the center of my own life and I'm going to serve my spouse. I'm going to look to their interest ahead of my interest. That would be one purpose. If you're both doing that for one another you're heading together for one purpose. You're being united in what brought you together in marriage in the first place. This is the biblical foundation for all relationships but it's the biblical foundation for your marriage relationship. Be united in thinking, heart, purpose.

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Now, let's do some evaluation. If you read any good Christian biblical marriage counseling they're going to tell you that you need to evaluate your relationship. In fact, most of them say there are five critical components of any marriage relationship that you should be in the process of evaluating. Now, that's something that's not always easily done but I'm going to invite you to do it today. In fact, I tried to make it easier for you I gave you your own worksheet – a HIS and a HER worksheet. I want you to pull those out if you haven't done so. I want you to evaluate five critical components of a marriage. They all begin with C so it's really simple.

Now, let me just say it from the beginning. There are three kinds of people who are here this morning. The first kind, probably been married less than five years. And you're going to fill out that little form and then you're going to show it to your spouse. Now, whether that's a good idea or not I'll let you figure out in your own relationship. Then there's the second kind – you're probably been married ten, maybe fifteen years. You're not going to show your piece of paper to your spouse. You're going to keep that to yourself but you're going to fill it out nonetheless. Then there are those of us who have been married twenty years or longer and you're thinking I'm not about to put what I think down on paper. I am not going to have a paper trail follow me anywhere. You know what? That's ok. I don't care what group you're in this morning I just want you to be in the mindset of evaluating what we're going to talk about. Evaluate yourself. This is about yourself. This is not about your spouse. Why? What did I say in the beginning? You can not change that which you do not acknowledge. You can not change that which you do not evaluate. So, we really need to have a realistic picture of what our marriage is like.

Now, like I said most of the marriage counselors will tell you the five critical components we ought to be confidently evaluating are the first, number one – communication. We ought to be evaluating how we communicate with one another. If we want to be united in thinking, heart and purpose we have to have good communication skills.

Interestingly, 85% of all marriage conflicts really have a communication breakdown behind them. We often don't have communication skills. How much do you think you spend in meaningful conversation with your spouse? In fact, let's just make this a quiz, just kind of broaden it and make it less personal. How much time does the average couple would you say spends in meaningful communication per day with their spouse. Now, meaningful communication. I'm not talking about quick as you're going out the door or texting. I'm talking about serious conversation, face to face. How much time would you say 98 minutes a day? 44 minutes a day? 18 minutes a day? 4 minutes? What would you say out of that list? Which one? 4 minutes is right. We spend, on average about 4 minutes in meaningful conversation with our spouse per day. Now, that's about 30 minutes a week. That's compared to 46 hours that we'll set in front of our television. Think about that. We spend less than 30 minutes a week in meaningful conversation. No wonder we have issues with unity

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when it comes to our thinking and to our heart and to our purpose. It's because communication is the key.

Proverbs says you can not a sense of progress without communication. You have to be talking. Now, part of the issue often is is that we have communication barriers that arise in our relationships. Sometimes they take us by surprise. We don't even realize they exist but that's part of evaluation. Paul talks about some of these communication barriers in Ephesians. You might want to turn over there. Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 29 he gives us some practical advice but then he gets really down to it in verse 31.

Let me start in verse 29. He says first, very practical, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. Be careful how you talk to one another. You have to be careful of the words you use. You ought to be careful how you address one another. And corrupting is really the word for rotten so you ought to be careful of foul language basically is what he is saying. He says let not foul language come out of your mouth, only that which is good or that which is fertile for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Keep that in mind. We're going to come back to it. Verse 31 is where I'm directing you. He says there are six barriers to effective communication. He says let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Six barriers that can stop our communication cold. Notice this – he says bitterness.

Bitterness is like holding a grudge. When you hold a grudge against your spouse you're breaking down the path of communication. You're creating a wall. When you're holding on to bitterness you're holding on to something that's stopping effective communication. That's what Paul is saying here. Wrath. Wrath is explosive anger. This is someone yelling. Now you notice usually when someone is yelling in the house someone else is not. So what happens? Communication stops. The other person isn't going to talk because the other person is doing all of the talking. Anger. This is that seething type of boiling anger. This is anger within you. Then what happens then? You won't talk then because it's an obstruction to clear communication. Now, he goes on and gives some other – clamor – that's like the idea of someone always talking, kind of nipping, picking at you. That will break down communication. Slander-obviously. Malice. These are all barriers.

Now the thing that you can look at has this impacted my communication with my spouse. Rate yourself. 1 to 10. How are you doing in the area of communication?

The second critical component is consideration. Consideration. Now, I want you to work through this with me. Consideration might not be at the top of your list but think how important it is just to be considerate of one another. My mother used to have a saying. I never really understood it as a child but she would say why be nice to anyone if you're not going to

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be nice to those who are in your own home? I didn't get that at first then as you grow up and mature you realize that we have a tendency when there are people who are closest in our own home we can sometimes be very inconsiderate to them and be very considerate to perfect strangers.

I'll give you an example. Have you ever had an argument with your spouse and this is a full blown argument and you're full on. I mean, the voice levels are raised, you're enraged. The phone rings, you pick up the phone and hello, how are you. Good to hear you. That's what we're talking about. You've got to think about the issue of consideration.

We touched on this back in 1 Corinthians 1 at the very beginning. Paul says, in verse 10, he says I appeal to you, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree and that there be no division among you.

I like Eugene Peterson's version called The Message. He translates it this way. You must learn to be considerate of one another, cultivating a life in common. The two key words here would be learn and cultivate. Why is this something we need to cultivate? Why is this something we need to learn? Because by nature we're selfish. We're really about ourself and so we have to learn to be considerate of others.

Now, I had a great view of this this last week. I was coming out of the mall. There was a man parked and he was obviously disturbed that he had to wait for his wife. His wife was just a few steps of me. She was walking kind of briskly. She gets to the car. Gets to the car door and slips in. I swear her foot was still on the pavement, door is still open and he takes off. Now, I'm thinking that's not very considerate. That's a very clear example. It can be something that is as simple as that.

We have to be careful of how we treat our spouse. Is it in a considerate manner or is it in an inconsiderate manner.

Now, there are negative dividends to be paid if you live an inconsiderate life with your spouse. Paul talks about grieving the Holy Spirit. Peter comes right out and tells us this in 1 Peter. He says there is definitely an impact. 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 7. He gives advice to husbands. He says, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way. Now, how would you translate an understanding way? A considerate way would be appropriate. Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel since they are heirs with you of the grace of life. Now don't get hung up on the words weaker vessel. Simply means strength. He says, you do this so that, that's the purpose clause, so that your prayers may not be hindered. Do you realize that the way you treat your spouse directly impacts your spiritual life? You do not want to hinder your spiritual life. So,

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what do we do? We treat each other with consideration. How are you doing in this area? Rate yourself. 1 to 10 – consideration.

Number 3 – a third critical component is compromise. Now, I have to tell you as I was doing research and I was reading through this, this was one I questioned the most. What is the issue of compromise and then I started to unpack what does it mean to be a person who compromises? Do you realize that compromise is actually a by-product of love? It's actually a by-product of biblical love.

You don't necessarily need to turn there. You've probably heard this millions of time. 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, called the love chapter. We haven't gotten there to study it in detail so I'm not going to give you a lot of depth but let me just give you a definition for love. Listen carefully. Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It's not arrogant or rude. Now listen, and it does not insist on its own way. Are you a person who always has to be right? Do you insist on it being your way? Do you refuse to compromise for the sake of the relationship? Do you realize that compromise is really a by-product of biblical love? It's something we're called to do. We are to compromise. That's showing what? Selflessness. We're saying I'm willing to meet you so that we can resolve and move forward in unity, in one purpose, one heart, one mind. Foundation of every relationship. So, rate yourself. How do you do in this area of compromise?

And then fourth – the fourth critical component. Courtship. Now men, before I lose you I'm not talking about spending a weekend in a bed and breakfast shopping in Amish Country. I know that's what you're thinking that's what I have to do to court my spouse. No. I'm talking about doing the things you did to win your spouses' love; to continue that. Why is it that we stop that? Ecclesiastes, 9:9 enjoy with your wife whom you love. Enjoy your wife. This is why you got married. You used to want to spend this time together. What has happened? Why did you stop the things you did to win your spouses love? Now, this is where compromise comes in. This isn't always about her. It's not always about him. It's about coming together and saying what is it that we can do together where we can enjoy each other together? We can continue the courtship.

Men – have to pick on you for a moment. Some of you used to bring your wives flowers and candy. Now all she gets from you is burps and gas. You really need to branch out. You used to head the whole issue of courtship in your relationship. You need to be the leader in this area again. There's nothing wrong with just spending time. When you cultivate this you will tend to see relationship grow towards unity. When you let this go life has a way of getting so busy that it just doesn't drive you apart – you drift apart. Courtship is a great way to maintain unity in thinking, heart and purpose. How are you doing in the area of courtship? Evaluate yourself honestly. Evaluate yourself.

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The fifth critical component commitment. Commitment. Communication, consideration, compromise, courtship and commitment. Key word for marriage. Not love. Commitment. Are you committed? Commitment in relationships are under appreciated today. You know you are most like are heavenly Father when you demonstrate commitment? The scriptures talk about God about a covenant keeping, a commitment keeping God. He keeps his covenant to us. He calls on us as we put our vows before others to be people who commit to the words that we say. It's difficult and I don't know where you're at in your journey. There might have been some breaking of commitment or wherever you are today, whatever relationship you're in today this is where we start new. You say I'm going to keep my commitments from this day forward. Commitment is important. Do you realize that commitment means that along the way you might be unhappy? They never tell us that when we're in pre-marriage counseling, do they? That somewhere that is you're going to stay committed to you spouse there's likely going to be a period of your relationship where one or both of you are unhappy.

I remember when Michelle and I, we were in pre-marriage counseling and we were being counseled by a professor/friend of ours and he said as you move through your life you're going to find your marriage becomes difficult and the word divorce is going to slip into your minds. He said just let it slip right back out the other side. He said don't dwell on it. Let it go. He's right. You know, when you have a hard time in your relationship divorce has an ugly way of slipping into your mind. You have to let it slip right back out. You have to say I am committed. I am not going to even think about divorce. Murder, maybe. Divorce, never.

One of the things that Michelle and I love to do on just about any given evening we put our kids to bed and we like to sit around in the living room and the likelihood of there's an old re-run of Everybody Loves Raymond will be on our television. We love that show and we watch it on a regular basis and we were watching it last week and Marie, the patriarch of the family was giving some great marriage advice. I want to share it with you. Watch this.

(Everyone Loves Raymond clip)

She's right. Marriage is real. It's real world. It's reality. Commitment is real and when you put these two together you're building a strong foundation of unity in your thinking, in your heart and in purpose.

Let's stand together. Let's pray for our marriages this morning.