

CCC UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

Part 1

April 30 2008

We're going to begin a new series today that I am really excited about and I'm calling it "The Marriage Mystery." And what we're going to do is look at "Unlocking the Marriage Mystery" and to do that we're going to need some keys. Why do we call it a mystery? Think about it; marriage is an intersection of two opposites coming together to become one in harmony. Marriage is the binding substance that keeps two things together." Listen to what God's word says "*A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife and the two are united into one. This is a great mystery. It is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.*" Ephesians 5:31-32

Today's culture thinks that marriage is an illusion that it's not possible for two people to so love each other that they would spend their entire lives together? Is it possible that two could be so bound together, so bonded together in a marriage that nothing can separate them except death? Is that possible? We'll be going to look at that for the next several weeks.

Now for those of you who are single... I know what some of you are saying: "It's time for me to go to another church for a month or so until this series is over." But, I beg you please don't do that for three reasons:

1. You know some married people who need this material in this message and you could counsel them.
2. You might get married someday in the future.
3. Even if you don't, you still need to learn this as an adult, these relational skills that are applied to every

relationship not just marriage. What we're going to talk about has application not just to marriage but to every single relationship in your life.

What I'm going to do today is; **first**, identify the six keys to unlocking the marriage mystery. This is kind of an index to where we're going in the days ahead. But in the days ahead we'll be looking at in more detail than today.

And **two**, I want you to do a little self-identification, self-evaluation. This morning I want us to look at the state of *your* union, your marriage. I want you to do a little marriage check up. On each of these keys I want you to honestly evaluate yourself, "How am I doing? Does this need work?" Write NW next to the point. "Is this OK?" Write an "OK."

God's ideal... for your marriage is harmony, unity and intimacy. But that's the ideal and most of us don't stay

there. We go from the ideal and pretty soon marriage is an ordeal and eventually we're looking for a new deal and it's let's make a deal. But that's not God's goal for you.

God's goal for you to become all that God wants your marriage to be and God has given you the keys to unlock the mystery; the potential of your marriage for your marriage to become all God wants it to be.

The first key God has given us is...

Key #1: Communication

That's a given. All of us know that communication is important to every relationship but we also know it's a big problem. Proverbs 13:17 says, "*Reliable communication permits progress.*" If you want to make progress in your relationship you have to learn how to talk with each other.

We know from studies that have been done 85% of all marriage problems include some kind of communication

breakdown. One of the things we have to work on if we're going to have a successful marriage is this whole issue of communication. We have to learn to put into practice good communication skills. Ephesians 4:29 *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but only that which is good and edifying that it may minister grace to the hearers."* That's a command to all Christians but it also certainly applies to our marriages as well. We have to learn the skill of good communication. You've seen couples and I've seen them who before they ever get married they talk to each other all the time. They spend hours on the phone. They spend lots of effort in communication skills. But as the years go by they talk less and less until you see them sitting in the restaurant eating their meals in complete silence without any meaningful conversation.

We all have different styles. We all have different needs when it comes to communication. Someone has said that the average man speaks about 20,000 words a day. the average woman 30,000 a day. One woman told me the reason that's so is because she has to repeat everything so her husband will hear her. You need to set aside time ideally every day – at least several times a week – where you just debrief, where you talk about what's going on in your world, where you keep the relational connection. That begins with honest, authentic conversation when you do that. Okay it is evaluation time. Take just a moment right there and write "NW - here's an area that needs some work," or OK "I feel like I'm pretty much on track with that." Go ahead and rate yourself on that

Just a little warning here to all in this communications:

Speak honestly and communicate the best you know how.

Because one of the things that causes problems in our relationships is when we begin to speak in riddles or send hidden messages. God word says, *“Just say yes and no. When you manipulate words to get your own way you go wrong.”* Matthew 5:37

The second key is

Key #2: Consideration

You must be considerate of your husband or your wife. 1 Corinthians 1:10 says, *“You must learn to be considerate of one another cultivating a life in common.”*

Consideration means not thinking only of yourself. You start thinking of “we” instead of “me” it means paying attention to what your spouse says. It means showing

common courtesy. It means respecting and treating them with respect and with care.

Husbands, we especially need to work on this consideration part. But all of us need to work on it together. Notice what I Corinthians said, *“You must learn to be considerate.”* Circle “learn”. You know why you must learn to be considerate? Because you and I are not by nature a considerate person. By nature we are all selfish. I think about my needs, my hurts, my wants. I’m not thinking about you. *“You must learn to be considerate.”*

What is God’s purpose of marriage? God’s purpose in your marriage is not to make you happy. That’s a benefit of it but it’s not the purpose of marriage. The purpose of marriage is not to make you happy but holy. Because when you get in a marriage you don’t get your way all the time any more. You have to learn to be

considerate. So marriage is the school of consideration.

Learning to be unselfish. You learn it there more than any other place.

Husbands, as I said, we especially have to work on this. 1

Peter 3:7 says, *“Husbands, show consideration for your wives in your life together so that nothing may hinder your prayers.”* Did you know, men, when you are inconsiderate

to your wife God doesn't hear your prayers? If you're out bossing the family around and being selfish and being

controlling and being manipulative or harsh and

inconsiderate God says, I'm not going to listen to the

prayers of a selfish man. You say, God, I need Your help

in my work and finances. He says, You're too selfish. One

of the primary goals of life is to teach us to be unselfish.

The primary school is marriage. God says I want you to

learn to be considerate.

How do you show sympathy? How do you show

compassion? How do you show consideration? The next three verses give us three practical ways.

1. By being helpful.

Ephesians 4:2 says *“Show your love by being helpful to each other.”*

2. Sympathize with their doubts and fears.

The Bible says in Romans 15:1-2 *“We must be considerate of the doubts and fears of others. If we do what helps them we will build them up in the Lord.”*

3. Forgiving their mistakes.

The Bible says in Colossians 3:13 *“You must make allowances for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember the Lord forgave you so you must forgive others.”*

Evaluate yourself on this one. Put an NW next to it that means Needs Work. Or put an OK if you're in denial and a liar.

The third key to unlock the marriage mystery ...

Key #3: Compromise

If you've been married longer than a day you know that every single marriage has conflict. There are just some things you're never going to see eye to eye about. You're never going to agree on everything. As you begin marriage you know there are thousands of things that over the years you learn to compromise on – to meet in the middle, to be flexible, to be willing to give up and yield your own rights. If you don't learn to compromise it will lead to destruction. Look at Mark 3 *“A home divided against itself is doomed.”* If your marriage is going to be successful you have to learn conflict resolution. How to negotiate.

Virtually all those conflicts can be traced back to one issue.

It's the issue of selfishness. In fact the Bible says this in Proverbs 18:1 *“People who do not get along with others are only interested in themselves.”* In fact, when you go to the New Testament we discover when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, he basically says that the mark of real love is compromise. Verse 5 *“Love does not demand its own way.”* Time and time again in every relationship you will have to yield your rights to having your own way and it comes in a thousand different forms in every relationship. See, it's really about learning to be unselfish and maturing. Romans 15:5 *“May God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us.”*

Evaluate yourself. How are you doing? Are you flexible? Do you compromise pretty well? If your spouse put “OK”

and you know they need to work on it, don't say, "Ha!"

Just make that a point of discussion later.

The fourth key to unlocking the marriage matrix.

Key # 4: Contact

It takes communication, consideration, compromise, and contact. I'm talking about physical touch, physical contact, affection. You can call it cuddling, caressing, whatever.

You must touch to keep in touch. As a human being God gave you skin for a reason. You're not just a spirit. You have a body and skin is meant to be touched. And all of us – everybody – married or unmarried – need human contact, physical contact. Hugs, pats on the back, handshakes.

Everybody needs physical affection. That's why in our church we hug each other and shake hands with each other.

At the beginning and at the end of every service we say,

Greet somebody, "Turn around and hug somebody... Turn around and shake hands with somebody." Physical affection is as vital to your marriage as communication and consideration and compromise and all these other keys.

They're all important.

Of course, in marriage that includes sex. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 7:3 "*The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy which is her right as a married woman. Nor should the wife deprive her husband.*" God doesn't intend for your marriage to be boring and lifeless and passionless and pleasureless and dull. But sex has profound implications for your marriage. In fact, God gave sex to cement marriages together. The primary purpose of sex is not to have children. That's not what the Bible says. The primary purpose of sex is to cement a husband and wife together in a spiritual union and a bonding that is

exclusive to them that involves nobody else in the world. That's why God says, Don't have sex out of marriage. It has profound spiritual implications. It is meant primarily for bonding a husband and a wife together.

1 Corinthians 6:16 says "*There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much a spiritual mystery as a physical fact. As it is written, the two shall become one.*"

There's a spiritual connection there.

If you are having problems with your sexual relationship in your marriage, please, please, *please* get help. It is available. There are counselors, doctors and a lot of good books that will help. It is not necessary for you to suffer in silence in this area.

Evaluation time Rate yourself on Contact. How do you rate yourself on daily physical affection? Are you too busy? Do you have at least a weekly date? A date night.

Do you need to touch more in order to stay in touch? Give yourself an NW – Needs work or OK. And welcome Terry and Susan to come share their story.

The fifth key we want to talk about this morning is...

Key #5: Commitment

If you're only going to take one word that would best summarize the whole marriage relationship it wouldn't be the word "love." It would be the word "commitment."

Any two people given the right circumstances, the right environment could develop romantic, loving feelings toward each other. But that's not really at the heart of marriage. In fact, the difference between marriage and just living together is commitment. In marriage God expects us to keep that commitment. In fact, look at the verse in Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament. They're very strong words, "*I hate divorce,' says the Lord, 'So make*

sure you don't break your promise to be faithful to your mate.'"

Divorce is a reality in our world and there are many, many people in our church who have been through the painful experience of divorce. Thank God for His grace and His forgiveness. But let's be honest. It's not God's ideal. God wants every man and every woman who stand together and make marriage vows to stay together for life no matter how hard it gets or what happens along the way. You will never build a strong, intimate marriage relationship when divorce is always an option. There are many people who carry around secretly this little escape hatch, called divorce. In their minds they think, "If it gets really hard or things don't go like I thought or if I get really unhappy I've got this little key to the escape hatch that will always allow me a way out." That's why in today society people are just

living together... The reality is that in our culture it's become far too easy to run away.

So let me encourage you. If you're married, if you're here this morning, throw away that option. Don't leave yourself that escape hatch. Don't leave yourself that option. When you said, "Till death do us part," that was a lifelong commitment. Don't leave it as an option.

Here's one of the things that people often don't realize and don't like about using this word in marriage. Let me be brutally honest with you. Commitment somewhere along the way will mean you being willing to be unhappy for a while. Somewhere in your journey in marriage your commitment will require you to be willing to be unsatisfied, unhappy for a season until things work out. There are some people who have this attitude, "If I could just get out... No matter where you are right now or what's

going on in your relationship, stay committed. I don't know nor can I begin to understand or relate to some of the pain some of you must be going through in your relationships right now. But stay committed.

10:30 service - I'd like to ask everybody in this building, if you have been married 25 years or longer would you stand up right now and stay standing. Before you sit down let me ask you a couple questions. How many of you would say, We've had some major conflicts in those 25 years or more? How many would say, Sometimes I felt like giving up? That's what I thought. I want to say to you. I honor you. I honor you for understanding the meaning of commitment in a world that knows nothing about commitment.

Here's the sixth key to unlocking the marriage mystery. It takes communication and consideration. It takes

compromise and contact and it takes commitment. But most of all...

Key #6: Christ.

It takes three to make a marriage stand. Not two – three. You, your spouse and Christ. God never meant for you to go through your marriage just with the two of you working on it. Marriage is a three-legged stool. It takes three legs for stability. You've never seen a two-legged stool. A two-legged stool will fall over. Why? It has no stability. And if all you've got in your marriage is each other, it isn't enough. You need you, your spouse and God. It takes a three-legged stool to stand up to stability. Jesus Christ is the key to all the other five keys in the marriage matrix. Colossians 2 says this *“God's secret is Christ Himself. He is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge.”*

Jesus Christ is the foundation. *“He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.”* What’s the fear of the Lord? It’s respecting God for who He is. God, You’re God, and You have a right to be number one in my life, in my spouse’s life and in our marriage and we’re going to build our marriage around You.

I want to end by telling you this:

The best thing you can do for your marriage is open your life to Jesus Christ. Do you want a strong marriage? Then become a godly man. Do you want a strong marriage? Become a godly woman. How do you do that? First you open up your life to Jesus Christ. Second, you commit your life and your marriage to Jesus. Third, you get involved in a small group where you’re going to get the

support you need to grow. Fourth, God promises you that if you will both love Him with all your heart, and if you will both do what He tells you to do in marriage – you can have an outstanding, incredible, great, strong, healthy marriage no matter what the past has been like. It’s your choice.

I challenge you to commit your life to Christ. Then commit yourself to these keys. Good marriages don’t just happen. They are intentional. These are the keys in the next few weeks we’re going to look at them in detail.

Prayer:

Today could be a fresh start for your marriage. Would you like that? Would you say, “Yes, I’d like some of the barriers to come down that have never fallen. I’d like to work through some of the hurt, the pain, some of the issues we’ve never talked about. I’d like to build our marriage.”

If you'd say, "I'd like to work on our relationship and make it better during the weeks ahead you might as a sign of intent just reach out for your husband or your wife's hand and squeeze it and hold it as we pray together. Pray this in your heart: "Dear God, help us to learn to communicate better. Help us to be more considerate of each other's feelings. Help us to compromise in areas of disagreement. Help us to forgive each other. Help us to make contact with each other every day in some way. Help us to deepen our commitment to each other and to You. Help us to show affection. Jesus Christ, we need You in our lives. In your name, we pray. Amen.