

CCC HOW TO GET A MARRIAGE MAKEOVER

The Marriage Mystery

Part 2

A little girl asked her mother, "Mommy, How did the human race appear?" The mother answered, "God made Adam and Eve and they had children and so was all mankind made."

Two days later the girl asked her father the same question.

The father answered, "Many years ago there were monkeys from which the human race evolved."

The confused girl returned to her mother and said, "Mommy, how is it possible that you told me the human race was created by God, and Dad said they developed from monkeys?"

The mother answered, "Well, dear, it is very simple. I told you about my side of the family and your father told you about his."

MESSAGE: We're going to continue today in our series

"The Marriage Mystery" and I want to start off by reading

a letter to you and I think some of you can relate to this

letter, When I first fell in love with my husband I was sure,

absolutely sure that he was the right person for me. But over the years as we've lived together through a lot of messy situations, I've seen many sides of my husband that I don't like. My feelings towards him have turned from respect and attraction to disappointment and sometimes even disgust. I now feel like maybe I married the wrong person. Why do I feel this way and what can I do about it? Something has to change."

We've all seen fairy tail weddings that end up as horror stories. We've all seen things that started off *so right* that ended up *so wrong*. But, how does that happen? Sadly many marriages deteriorate and I believe we can talk about that deterioration in three stages. Marriages start off in harmony... and then they move to hostility... and then eventually move to apathy, they move to the point where there is lack of concern and interest. They start off in

harmony. We're in love and everything is great and it's rhapsody and bliss. But then as time goes by we begin to have hostility and we start fighting all the time. We're picking at each other and we're angry all the time. If you don't get some resolution in that stage it moves to apathy – your thoughts are, “I just don't care any more.”

But, what causes that? What causes such a great beginning to have such a terrible ending? How does Mr. Right become Mr. Wrong, and when that happens is there anything you can do about it? Today we're going to look at some tough steps and they are the steps to a marriage makeover. You've all seen what a physical makeover is haven't you. Somebody loses a bunch of weight they get some new clothes. They get a new hairstyle, hairdo, new makeup. All of a sudden a very average looking person is stunning. They're incredibly beautiful. We go, “Wow!

What happened?” I like this... Answer: They had a makeover.

We'll today I want to talk to you about the same thing but in your marriage, a marriage makeover. A relational makeover where God says, “I want to change you and I want to change your spouse and I'm going to put together a marriage that you will find unbelievable, the marriage that you've always dreamed of...” And it is possible if you do it God's way.

Now, before you can work on your marriage, before you can improve it, you've got to understand what causes marriages to go wrong. What causes them to sink? What causes them to go stagnant? What causes them to go from harmony to hostility to apathy? We'll in the years that I have been a pastor there are four things that I discovered that cause a marriage to go bad. If there was ever a week

to take notes this is the week. There are four major causes in a marriage that causes a marriage to go sour and I am going to give them to you briefly.

The first thing that sinks a marriage is:

unrealistic expectations.

I don't know any area of life where we have higher expectations and more unrealistic expectations than we do in marriage. We think, I'm getting married; my life is going to be incredibly perfect from now on! During the courtship men and women act in ways that are not normal... in ways that they would never act normally.

Men will say things to a women like, "Would you like to go to the opera with me, darling?" Now let's be honest what man would ever suggest that except when he's dating?

Now listen since nothing has higher expectations in your entire life than your marriage, nothing sets you up for a bigger fall, for more disappointments, more let me downs, more "what happened, then marriage."

I want you to write down something if you're married. I want you to write down now something that was an unrealistic expectation that you had about your mate before you got married. What did you have as an expectation of your mate before you got married that was really unrealistic?

The second thing that sinks a marriage:

unaccepted differences.

We are different. We not only don't recognize it but we don't accept those differences either. In fact, we resent those differences.

You've all heard the cliché that opposites attract and it's true. But after marriage those opposites attack. What used to fascinate you now frustrates you. It irritates you. Okay would you write down one of the ways your spouse is different from you that you have a difficult time accepting.

The third thing that sinks a marriage is

unresolved issues.

Things that keep coming up over and over and over and you don't ever resolve them. Maybe you don't want to talk about them. Maybe it's too personal. Maybe it's too touchy. It could be finances, it could be sex, it could be in-laws, it could be kids, it could be communication. You don't want to talk about it so it's off limits and it becomes an unresolved issue. Unresolved issues move a marriage from harmony to hostility and maybe then even to apathy.

Can you write down one issue that's still unresolved in your marriage? It may be sex, finance, the way you raise your children. It may be something else from the past. But those things have to be dealt with if you're going to have a marriage makeover.

The fourth thing that sinks a marriage:

unforgiven hurts.

The mistakes that we make that aren't dealt with, that aren't forgiven and they caused barriers to build up and move us from hostility to apathy. The truth is because we're imperfect we hurt each other intentionally sometimes, unintentionally sometimes. We sin. We fail. We are selfish. The truth is you are going to be hurt in life and the person who has the greatest potential to hurt you is the person you love the most. That's why forgiveness must become a daily habit in marriage. Marriages need massive

doses of forgiveness because we are imperfect. If you hold on to your hurts in marriage, if you hold onto those mistakes and you don't let it go, you don't forgive, then those wounds fester and they get worse and worse and worse.

If I was to ask you what is the worse sin in a marriage what would you say? (PAUSE) I know what you think it probably is. But it's unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is the worst sin in marriage. Why? Because it's the one that holds every other sin captive, it's the one that won't let go. You have been forgiven by God and God expects you to forgive others. When you hold on to your hurt you perpetuate the pain, you don't make it better, you make it worse. And if you are holding on to a grudge and if you are using something that happened in the past as leverage and you're holding it over your spouse, you are destroying

your marriage and that will sink a marriage. Today I want to beg you! Forgive. Let it go. Nothing will and can destroy a marriage faster than unforgiveness.

Can you write down a hurt that you need to let go of? You can probably think of it almost instantly. Can you write down one? If you can't identify these things you can't work on them.

So what goes wrong in a marriage, unrealistic expectations, unaccepted differences, unresolved issues, and unforgiving mistakes? Some of you are saying right now, "Bill, you just described my marriage and are you telling that there is hope?" Yes, there is. Romans 4:17 "*God raises the dead to life and creates new things.*" (REPEAT) And if God can raise a dead person He can raise a dead marriage. God specializes in marriage makeovers. He specializes in bringing something dead to life again and bringing

something that's old and stagnant and stale and giving it new life.

In a normal makeover the secret is knowing what to do with what you've got. You have a certain facial type, certain hair, certain skin color. A makeover expert is somebody who doesn't try to make you totally different but enhances what you've got. In a marriage makeover God says, Let me take what you've got and make something new and fresh and exciting and attractive and relevant and fulfilling and wonderful out of it. God says, "Let me do that..." For the rest of this message we're now going to look at those steps. How do you make the most of what you've got? There are six steps to a marriage make over the A,B,C's

A – Accept responsibility for my part.

These are not easy steps that I going to give you. They are tough and they will work. Accept responsibility for my part. Galatians 6:5 says, "*Each person must be responsible for himself.*" You can't control your spouse's actions. You can't control your spouse's attitudes. You can't keep your spouse in love with you. You couldn't force them to fall in love with you. You can't force them to stay in love with you. You don't have control over that. But you do have control over your response. In other words what I am saying is you accept responsibility for your part. What I mean is you stop having a pity party about your marriage. You stop comparing your spouse to somebody else. That is so destructive. You should never do it. It never solves any problems. It only makes matters worse. You stop comparing your marriage. You stop complaining about your marriage. It's a big waste of

energy. You stop resenting your marriage. You stop blaming your spouse for your unhappiness. You are as happy as you choose to be. It's nobody else's fault. Nobody else can make you happy. Nobody else can keep you happy. Nobody else can make you unhappy. It's your choice how you respond to life.

It's like God. You are as close to God as you want to be. And you are as happy as you want to be. You want to be happier? Get closer to God. That's a choice. Nobody's keeping you away from God. The closer you get to God the happier you're going to be because that's where real happiness comes from. The next step is:

B – Believe God can change my marriage.

I don't know how you're feeling about your marriage right now. Some of you as you look at your marriage may be feeling a sense of deep hurt about your marriage, what's

been happening. Some of you may be feeling a sense of apathy. Some of you may be feeling a deep sense of disappointment about your marriage. There may be some of you who are honestly feeling, even with all this talk about marriage, that your marriage is hopeless right now. Regardless of how you feel about your marriage, let me tell you one truth. God has not given up on your marriage and God can do what we can't do. Matthew 19:26 *“Humanly speaking it is impossible but with God everything is possible.”* God can do what we can't do. Let's be brutally honest for a second. When I said a minute ago God has not given up on your marriage some of you were thinking, I wish He would. If God hasn't given up on my marriage that means I can't give up. If God would give up then I'd have the freedom to give up. Now I know also that some of you when I said that heard the prison doors shut and the

key locking it. But instead of being angry at God for not giving up, instead of being angry at God for saying He hates divorce, just for one second ask yourself this question... Why doesn't God give up on a marriage? It's not because He wants to trap you. It's not because He wants to make your life miserable. It is because He has your best interest at heart. He hates divorce because He knows how it hurts His children. He wants your marriage to work because He knows the joy that it can bring to your life fulfilling a new relationship. So that's why God doesn't give up that's why God continues to give us strength that we cannot find on our own. We need to look at our marriage from His perspective because He can do what we cannot do. God can resurrect a dead marriage. God can resurrect a dead love life. God can resurrect dead finances God can resurrect dead communication. So it

begins with you and I believing that He can do that, belief that God can change your marriage. Once you grasp that you're ready for "C"

C – Commit to doing whatever it takes

Galatians 6:9 says this *"Let us not get tired of doing what is right for after awhile [circle "after a while"] we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up."* Have you ever heard anybody say, "They have a great marriage. Aren't they lucky?" They're not lucky. If you ever see somebody who has a great marriage it didn't come out of luck. It came because they put a lot of effort into that relationship. Great marriages don't just happen. If your marriage is going to get better, if your marriage is going to begin to improve, it's going to take real effort. It takes humility. It takes honesty. It takes unselfishness. It takes the willingness to admit that you're wrong. It takes

the willingness to change. It takes persistence. It takes faith. More than anything it takes time. Great relationships come out of all these things being applied over time. If your relationship is in trouble, struggling right now, it didn't get there overnight. It took a lot of time. And it's going to take a lot of time for it to begin to improve. That's just the honest truth of human life.

Some of you maybe thinking now, I know you're your saying sounds like a great idea but where am I going to find the emotional energy to put that kind of effort into a relationships that I'm not sure I want to make it work?"

And my answer to you is there are two places you find the energy, **you pray and you obey.**

You pray. You say, "God, I don't have the energy on my own. I need strength from You that I can't find on my own." You make it a communication with God.

And then you obey. You say, "God, I know You have my best interest at heart. Help me to do what You've shown me to do. Just take one step at a time – one foot in front of the other. Obeying You in this relationship." You do the right thing anyway. That's what maturity is all about. When you pray and then you obey then the feelings begin to come. Don't wait for the feelings first. They'll begin to come as you pray and you obey.

There's a fourth step is D:

D – Deal with unresolved hurt.

You do that two ways. By asking for forgiveness and by offering forgiveness.

By asking forgiveness James 5:16 says this "*Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*" Admit to somebody that you're wrong. Ask forgiveness.

Let me give you a practical example of this. Let's suppose you have an unbelieving spouse. You may need to ask their forgiveness for being self-righteous or being pushy at times. You may be one of those people who you so want them to know God you have these little tricks. Like you put gospel tracks on the toilet. They're being pushed away from God and pushed away from you by your honest desire for them to know God. You may need to go to them and say, "I'm sorry. I admit out of this honest desire for you to know my God, I've been pushy and I ask for your forgiveness for that."

There's three little words we all have to learn to say in a relationship. In fact they are very difficult words for some of you: I was wrong. Some of you had an argument on the way to church today. You're sitting there thinking, Why are we talking about this today. When we say this again,

you might want to just sneak your hand over to your husband/wife and squeeze "I was wrong." There's something about those words that can heal a relationship in an incredible way.

You ask for forgiveness but then you also offer forgiveness. Colossians 3:13 says this "*Be gentle and ready to forgive. Never hold grudges. Remember the Lord forgave you so you must forgive others.*" Your marriage will not make it without forgiveness on a daily basis. There's an E in this process of a Marriage Makeover.

E – Enlist support from others.

Don't face it alone. Enlist support from others. This is important because there's a lot of places you can find a lack of support. The truth is our culture tends to work against a successful marriage. You can find plenty of

places, plenty of people who will say to you, Just get out. Take the easy road. Don't go through this. You need to be happy. You're entitled to be happy in your marriage. All these phrases and people that make you feel like getting out, you've got to find some other people to council with, that will support the strengthening of your relationship. It may be a wise friend. It may be a church counselor. It may be a marriage mentor, a couple you find that has a great marriage that you decide to spend time with so you can learn from them.

In 25 years of ministry I've found this to be true. Some of the worst people to go to when your marriage is in trouble are your parents. Here's why. You're their little boy. You're their little girl. If you're hurting and they just want you to get out of that hurt. I've seen some of the wisest parents who would give anybody else some of the greatest

advice in the world give their kids the worst advice when they're facing marriage problems. Go to your parents for comfort – that's fine. But if you need advice to make it through you're probably going to need to find some other people to give you the strength to make it through the tough times.

The Bible has a couple verses about the support and strength that we can find. Proverbs 24:3 says *“It takes wisdom to have a good family and it takes understanding to make it strong.”* Proverbs 19:20 says *“Get all the advice and instruction that you can.”*

I know today I have been a little tough on you today. I feel like I have been beating you up. But it's because I care about your marriage. I really do. It is my prayer that Calvary church to be full of healthy, strong, growing,

fulfilling marriages. And God wants that also. Sometimes the truth hurts.

Twenty- five years ago Edna-Wynne and I were not far away from a divorce. We were a hair's breadth away. We were in marital hell. I remember in the depth of my despair I cried out to God, "God, I cannot make this marriage work. Nothing's working. I cannot make this marriage work. But I believe You can. So I'm not going to give up." I look back now and I think, I am so glad that we didn't give up. I'm so glad that I didn't give up. I'm so glad that my wife Edna-Wynne didn't give up. I am so glad that God did not give upon us, I hope you won't either. I hope you'll say, I'm not going to give up. Some of you would say, "I'd love for my marriage to work but I'm just too tired of trying. I've hit the brick wall too many times. I'm out of steam. I'm out of energy. I don't have

anything left to give. I feel powerless to change my marriage."

Good. That's the first step to recovery. I admit my powerlessness. It's out of my control. God, I've got to give it to You. That's why the most important step in a marriage makeover is this next one.

F – Focus on trusting Jesus.

You've got to get Him at the center of your life, you've got to get Him in the center of your marriage. The easiest thing to do in life is to lose your focus. Hebrews 12:3 says, "*We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith.*"

I said it a few weeks ago and I'm going to say it again. Marriage is a three-legged stool it takes three to make a marriage work – you, your spouse and God. My advice to you whether you're in harmony or whether you're in

hostility or whether you're in apathy, give it God today.

The Bible says this *"God, who is at work within you will give you the will and the power to achieve His purpose."*

You may need some counseling. You may need to get in a small group together. You may need to read some Christian books on marriage. But what you really need is Christ at the center of your life. Because if Jesus is in you and Jesus is in your spouse, Jesus gets along with Jesus. There's no problem there.

You may say to me, "But I don't love him anymore." So what! That makes it sound like it's uncontrollable like I can't help myself. Friends, Love is a choice. Just like happiness is a choice. You choose to love the people that you love and you choose to not love the people you don't love. It's a choice. It's not like it's out of your control. If you choose to love, the feelings will return.

You say "I just don't have the heart for it." God says *"I'll give you new heart and I'll put a new spirit within you."* In two weeks on April 27th, during our 10:30 regular service we're going to have a time of renewing your vows. I hope you will seriously consider renewing your wedding vows at that service. You can dress in your wedding gown, tuxedo if you want to or you can not dress up and just be there.... By the way, it's a great way to invite relatives and friends to church: Ask them "Would you come see the renewal of my wedding vows." Or ask them if they want to join in and renew their vows.

I want you to understand something... It's not that you married the wrong person. It's just that you're doing marriage in the wrong way.

Prayer:

Father, there are many couples here today who are struggling. Would You please help them? There are those who are here today who are separated from each other. Would You help them? There are others here today who are considering divorce. Would You help them? There are those who stayed together but there's no spark anymore. Would You help them?

Now I want to encourage you to pray. Just whisper this to the Lord... Say, "Dear God, I want to accept responsibility for my part of the marriage. I'm going to quit blaming and fantasizing and wondering, "If only's." I'm going to stop criticizing and comparing. Instead I want to believe that You can change my marriage. Today, I commit to doing whatever it takes. If that means getting counseling and making radical changes then give me the

strength to do it. Help us to deal with unresolved hurt. Give me the courage to ask forgiveness for what I've done wrong and the grace to offer forgiveness for how I've been hurt. I don't want to grow into an old, bitter person. Help us to get in a small group, to get help and wise counsel. Most of all Jesus, we need You in the middle of our marriage. You are the glue that can hold us together and do the miracle makeover. So today Jesus, I ask You to save me and save my marriage. Make me a new person, give me a new marriage. Put us back together, not in the old way, but in a brand new way for the rest four lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.