

The Christian Man

Marriage: Marriage for the Rest of Us

Rough Transcript

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Hey guys, great to be with you this morning. How are you doing? Good. Pat is today, I hope, hiking out of the Grand Canyon. I say I hope because I talked to him Wednesday and I haven't talked to him since, so he was hiking in yesterday and hiking out today. Yeah, no, I'm sure he had an adventure. We prayed at staff meeting that he did not meet a bear or a Cougar and... I meant the animal kind of cougar and... Ba-dum-bump. So... Woo. Hang on, let me have you say that in the mic so we can get that on the tape. No, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. Yeah...

So hey guys, great to be... We're going to talk about marriage, but before we do that, we got a couple of shout outs that we want to do. There's a great group of guys that meet at the community center or the recreation center in Rio Vista in Peoria, Arizona. They've been meeting for eight years at 6:30 on Wednesday mornings and Rob Laizure, your is the, is the head of that. His wife actually heads a very large women's Bible study as well. So, they're partners in ministry there and he describes his group as men who love the word of God and how it affects their lives.

So, these are the guys at the men's Bible study at Rio Vista. And then also we want to give a shout out to Ron Bea who lives just West of St. Louis. He's our area director in that area of Missouri serving pastors, training leaders and transforming men. Let's give a warm shout out to these guys.

All right. Also, on your tables, I want to note that we have next week is our Thanksgiving leadership prayer breakfast. Now I know how men work. I know how they sign up for stuff. All right? They sign up at the last minute. This is not one of those things. There's already a bunch of guys signed up for this and so I really want you to come, but it's going to be full. All right, so please go on MIMBiblestudy.com on the website. Click on the link there that you'll see to register for the Thanksgiving leadership prayer breakfast. Because we want to make sure that we have a seat for you and a breakfast for you. So if you don't register, we may not have either. and I will not have any sympathy for you because we've been like saying this over and over again.

I'll have a little bit of sympathy for you, but I will eat my breakfast in front of you. So all right, so go to MIMBiblestudy.com. Click on the link register. We really want you to bring someone. All right. So especially look around your office, look around your neighborhood. Who's a guy that seems a little disconnected, a guy that maybe is going through a rough time, a guy that you'd like to hang out with a little bit. And Darryl Carter is going to be here. Daryl is the president of Maury L. Carter and Associates, which is a huge real estate development firm in Orlando. Been around forever. If you drive around, you'll see Maury L. Carter signs everywhere. So, come on out next week. It's going to be great. Also, it starts at 6:30 okay. At 6:30 because of the breakfast.

All right, so we'll get in, we'll get breakfast, Darryl will speak and it'll be a blast. So, I'm really looking forward to seeing you guys there, but please, please, please go online and register. All right. All right, well we are in our fourth session on the Christian man going through *The Christian Man* book. And some

of you are in mentoring relationships. Some of you may be using the coaching guide around the country. And the video series is a great supplement for you if you're mentoring someone to go through the Bible study. It follows the chapters in the book. It follows the coaching guide, but there's extra content as well in what we're teaching here at the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. So today we're talking about marriage and I called this Marriage for the Rest of Us.

Now, I don't know... a lot of you have been in church for a long time and you've heard the marriage talk or marriage sermon in some way over and over again. And here's what I've noticed. There's two kinds of marriage talks. There's the marriage talk that talks about sort of like unattainable awesomeness. Like how awesome marriage is, and I was going to put a picture of a couple prancing down the beach, but you know, it's just fantastic. Or like unsurvivable despair. It's like marriage is either the best thing ever and you will... And here's how, and here's the three steps to having a great marriage. Or like I'm sorry, it sucks so bad, but we can get through this together. Now here's the deal. We all know anybody that's ever been married they're both true.

There are times in your marriage that it is just unimaginably fantastic and there are times in your marriage that it is unimaginably terrible and horrible. And sometimes we don't survive those times. Some marriages can't survive those times. And so what I wanted to do today is we're going to talk about marriage for the rest of us. I want to take a little bit more of what I would say is a kind of a normal look at marriage. So, marriage is hard right. Now, how do we know it's hard? Well, for the first time in history, we are approaching more adult men being unmarried than married. We're at about 47% 48% right now according to the 2018 census. If you chart a graph from 1990 until today, it's just this slow steady creep up. It was about 40% in 1990 then it's about 47% today.

There's almost no... There's maybe one or two years that it hasn't gone up. And so there's a lot of men out there who are not married. And so like every time we do a marriage talk, like half of the guys in the room probably are like, "This isn't for me." Today is for you. Okay, so where did, so let's talk about marriage. So I don't know for any of you that have been married, you probably had this experience sometime in the first year of marriage, I realized that I had married an alien.

And here's why. And you all had an experience like this, I'm pretty sure. Like we were having a conversation and we were both speaking a language that sounded like English, but the words that I said did not apparently mean what she thought they meant. And the words that she was saying apparently did not mean the words that I thought they meant. And so we hit this communication barrier. We had role barriers, like what was I supposed to do and what was she supposed to do? I fell into some of the, I would say sort of stereotype things that I was supposed to do. Some of those things were putting pressure on her. But some of those things were putting pressure on me to do things that frankly she was better at or for her to not be able to do some things that would have made our marriage better.

And it took us years to work that out, years to work that out. And so marriage is hard, but God gave us women for a reason. So, if you look at Genesis two I'm going to... Yeah, Genesis two. This is sort of the story of the creation of women. I've sort of just excerpted pieces out here from 2:18 to 24, 25. He says this, "And then the Lord God said it is not good that man should be alone." So, guys, it's not good for you to be alone. "And he said, I will make him a helper fit for him." And so, he tries the animals first, parades all the animals in front of him and none of them is good. I'm pretty sure the dog was close, like really close. "And so, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made in to a woman and brought her to the man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

So we were not made to be alone. Why? Because because we are in some ways incomplete according to the way that I read this scripture. And so when God made the woman, he made her to be a helper. Now helper here does not mean slave. It doesn't mean even servant. What it means is a compliment. A helper brings the pieces to the task that the other person is unable to do. It completes the person. And so when you as a young man, when I was a young man and I really, really wanted to find a woman, I really, really wanted to get married and I felt like it would bring some completeness to me.

Now the problem can also come though, when you realize that this is not a completeness in and of itself, it's a completeness in the two of you's relationship with God. Because this was in a time when man was in direct relationship with God, and so when the woman came in, she would have been in direct relationship with God. And so in the context of a solid relationship with God, there is a completeness that happens there. It's fantastic. It's a miracle. It's unattainable awesomeness because we live in a fallen world. So that's why many, men yearn to have that woman. And here's the thing, you're fallen so you're not a prize. But so is she. So is she. And so what was designed originally to bring completeness? That's what we're striving for.

We can never get there because, because we're all striving to have that relationship with God as well. And so that's where sometimes heartache comes from because we don't recognize that that person can't complete us. They're incapable of completing us in a fallen world. And so we need to make sure that God is part of that equation. The end result of this, the best part of this, of course for us, was that they were naked. Like God gave us... I mean, I'm pretty sure when Eve was created, like God created her, I'm pretty sure that she was perfect. Or as close to perfect as she could've gotten. And I'm, I'm pretty sure Adam was psyched when he saw her. I mean, like very excited. And here's the other part, they weren't ashamed. They weren't ashamed. And so here we have this pre-fall look at the way that men and women fit together in relationship with God.

And this is wired into us. And yet we can't really attain it. And so, frustration comes. This is sort of the dilemma of marriage. And so what we're going to talk about today is we're going to talk about **marriage for the married guys**. We're going to talk about **marriage for the divorced guys**. And we're going to talk about **marriage for the single guys**. Because all three of those groups are represented in this room. And I want to just sort of go through maybe five minutes on five or eight minutes at the most as we go through each of these and just give you some ideas and some action steps that may be you can take whatever role you find yourself in right now.

MARRIAGE FOR THE MARRIED GUYS

All right, so what does marriage look like for the married guy? Well it looks like what's in Ephesians 5:25 to 32. Now if you don't know this passage pretty well and you're married, I would really suggest that you get to know this passage because it really gives, frankly, the one rubric that a man needs to start from if he's going to have a successful marriage. And I'm not going to read the whole passage. It's a great passage. But let me start with this. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

That's it. That's the key right there. That if you want to have a successful marriage, it starts with a man who loves his wife so much, he would die for her. Every day. So now you say, well, I can only die once. Yeah, physically. But there are things in marriage that happened and find a happily married guy and he'll tell you this. There are dreams that I had that I had to let die because I love my wife more than I love my dream.

Now you might say, "Well, that sounds horrible." No, no, no, no. God gave better dreams. God gave better experiences than I thought. My dreams were selfish. I mean I talked myself into thinking they weren't selfish. But my, but my dreams were things that would make me happy, but God put us together. He says, one flash. And so the things that God has prepared for us together have been wonderful. And way different than I ever would have imagined my life to be. But I had to let some things die in order for that to happen. And so if you love your wife, well, you will have death.

Some of the things that you want, some of the dreams that you had, those things will have to die. But God will give you something better as a couple. And so here's our Big Idea then for a married guy that: **After God, but before all others, you make your wife your top priority.** Not your dreams, not your desires, not your wants, not even your needs. Your relationship with God is first and then your wife becomes your next priority. If you will make your wife your top priority after your relationship with God, a whole lot of other things are going to fall into place.

Now again, you may think, well, I've got these things going on in my life and they need to be my top priority so that I can take care of my wife. It's a balancing act. I mean, she needs to eat. She needs a roof over her head. So it's not just a matter of looking in your planner and saying, "Well, I spend 50 hours a week at work. I must not love my wife." No, no, no, no. She's spending that money. I mean, she's benefiting from that. That's part of how you love your wife is by providing for her and protecting her.

But, the biggest way that you can make your wife your top priority is by helping her make her relationship with Christ her top priority. And so are you leading your wife towards Christ? Because let me tell you guys, if you're not leading your wife towards Christ, you're allowing her to be led away from Christ. Adam stood there and the serpent led his wife away towards Christ and he didn't do anything. Well, she gave him the apple. Yeah, but he let her be led away because he wasn't leading her towards God. He was doing nothing. So that's our job as men. Die to ourselves and live to help our wives have a better relationship with Christ. If you will do those two things, a lot of other things will fall into place.

So here's an action step I'm going to give you for each of the... I'm going to give you three big ideas and three action steps today. I know it's a lot. It'll be okay. All right. So, for married guys, after God, but before all others make your wife your top priority. So, your action step is this. To pray with and for your wife both. Now, some of you are like, "Pray with my wife. If I tried to pray with my wife, do you know what she would... She would laugh in my face." It's all right. Just ask her. If she says no, she says no. But I'll tell you what about the third or fourth time, even the most hardened heart of your wife, the third or fourth time that you say, "can I pray for you right now?" You know, maybe it's a hug on your way out the door.

That's what I often do with my wife. I've got a friend who like... They had planned devotions time at eight o'clock every night in their room and they spend like 45 minutes doing devotions together. Isn't that amazing? Yuck. Right? I'm like, that's great for them. Not good for me, maybe not good for you. Figure out what works for you. So for me, one of the ways that I pray with my wife is that at the beginning of the day when she's up, because she's not always up when I leave, but when I give her a hug, I whisper in her ear, I say, "Can I pray for you?" And she melts a little bit. She's like, "Yeah." And so I just pray a quick prayer right in her ear. I say, "Lord, would you please bless Kimberly today? Would you help her be closer to you today."

I'll pray maybe about something that I know that she's got going on or a struggle that she's having. And then I say, "And bless our kids and bless our parents and bring us back together soon for your glory."

Amen." And she loves it. She loves it. And it's just those moments. You can have those moments where you're helping your wife move towards Christ. So, pray with your wife and then pray for your wife. So on your table we put the marriage prayer card and you can get these on the Man in the Mirror website. You can get marriage prayer cards on the Man in the Mirror website. It's a great little prayer. You can actually tear the card in half if and if your wife would be willing to pray for you.

She's probably already praying about you a lot, but pray for you. You can give her the woman's half and you can keep the man's half and it's just a little 68 word prayer that you can pray every day that sort of help center you on what the marriage relationship looks like and how it works when it works well. So a final thought. If you are married and you are in a tough place, please don't give up. Please don't give up. Especially if it hasn't been going on for more than a couple of years. You're like a couple of years... Yeah, a couple of years. Because I will tell you, Pat and I have talked about this a lot. If you're in a tough place in your marriage, if you'll just say, "I don't know if I can take it anymore." And you say, "All right, give it two years." And really be willing to commit for those two years to pray for your wife every day and to pray with your wife as much as you can and to commit your marriage to the Lord.

I can almost guarantee you in that as much as you can guarantee something in a fallen world, that in two years you'll be like, what was I thinking? Like every marriage goes through rough patches and they're not like a week or two long. Some rough patches are long rough patches. But on the other end, you can find happiness and success in your marriage again.

So if you're in a tough place, don't give up. Don't lose hope. All right? Find a brother to walk with you. Find a counselor if you need it, drag her along if that is necessary. But don't give up. Fight for your marriage, even if you're in a tough place. Now I know there's probably one or two guys in this room, probably a bunch of guys watching this. That are like, "You don't understand what's happened." I don't, I don't. And it may be so broken that it's not fixable. So, I'm not trying to put a guilt trip on you at all. I'm just trying to give you hope. It can get better, it can get better.

MARRIAGE FOR THE DIVORCED GUYS

And so that brings us then to the next group of guys. Let's talk about the divorce guys. Now, depending on what church you go to, your divorce could be the worst thing that anybody ever did to anybody in the history of mankind. Or it could be like, eh, whatever. All right, it is neither of those two things. It is not eh whatever. It is a big deal. There's a reason that divorce hurts because it's a bad thing. It's not a good thing.

I don't think there's anybody that's ever been through divorce that would say, "Whew, I wonder if I could do that again." Man, right. Divorce stinks and there's probably no verse that's been used to sort of beat up divorced guys or guys going through divorce that I've seen is the Malachi 2:1. So Malachi 2:16 says in the King James version and in the new American Standard Version, anybody know what it says? "God hates divorce." God hates divorce. Now it can also be translated that a man who hates his wife and divorces her. That's the other way that those, that series of Greek words can be translated, all right? But in God, in his sovereignty, he gave us a Greek phrase that could be translated either way on purpose. It wasn't an accident. So God hates divorce.

Well, of course he does. Don't you? Divorce sucks. Of course he hates divorce. Why does he hate divorce? Because he loves you and he loves your wife. And so when he hates things that hurt you, he hates things that pull you away from him. And so he hates divorce. He doesn't hate you. He loves you.

So, if you're walking around with mountains of guilt on your shoulders because you're divorced... God loves you. He wants you to talk to him every day. He wants to be in relationship with you. He's written... This book isn't just for like super Holy people. It's like for super unholy people. He wrote a whole book for you. He got like 40 authors to write a book for you, like read it. Get to know him through it. But there's no separation between you and God just because you got a divorce. So, don't... So, here's the other part. Don't use it as an excuse either to walk around like Debbie downer and be like "I stink. I'm divorced, I'm not worth anything." Bull, you are a most loved son of the most high God.

So you've got a lot of hurt and pain and brokenness. Absolutely, deal with it. I don't, I don't mean like forget about it. I mean literally deal with it. Go to counseling, get a mentor, work through it, get healthy. Because God can restore your marriage if he chooses to or God can bring you to another relationship that can be glorifying to him. But deal with it. Let God deal with your brokenness.

I will tell you I'll give you sort of four things especially if you would say, "Well, this divorce was sort of my fault. It's never one person's fault. But it's kind of more my fault." You know, it starts with repentance, being honest about what you did wrong and repenting of those things. Then it moves to compensation. Like if you've hurt somebody, you need to make it right any way you can. Then forgiveness both for yourself and for the person that you've been in that conflict with. And then righteousness, doing the right thing, living in a way that's in accordance with scripture. So, if you feel like sort of divorce was your fault, repentance, compensation, forgiveness, and righteousness. Now, if it was her fault, here's the four steps. Repentance, compensation, forgiveness, and righteousness. It wasn't her fault. Give me a break.

Wives blow up marriages, yes, but I don't know of a guy that was in a situation like that that didn't bear at least some responsibility. So just own up to it. Repentance, compensation, forgiveness, and righteousness. That is the way through that dilemma. All right, so that brings us to our Big Idea. So **remember who the real enemy is**. There's a movie called *Hunger Games* that some of you saw. It's somehow we thought it was entertainment to see a movie where they put teenagers in an arena and had them kill each other until only one was left.

I'm sorry to spoil it for you if you haven't seen it. But that's the basic premise of the *Hunger Games*, but in the end they realize that the government is sort of forcing them into this... Great morality tale by the way, it's about the kingdom of darkness. The government sort of forcing them into this. And so the kids that get put into this conflict realize that they've been like each other is the enemy, but each other is not the enemy. The enemy is the government. Look, if you're in a horrible divorce situation or even a great divorce situation, your wife is not the enemy. Satan is the enemy.

Satan is the enemy. So don't, don't treat your wife like an enemy. And I think that will help you move through it and get to a place of forgiveness and righteousness. So what's your action step? Pray for her. That'll show her. Pray for her. Pray for her to have a good life, pray for her happiness, pray for her healing, pray for her restoration, but pray for her. Because as you pray for her, God will change your heart towards her and you will begin to want what's best for her and if you're ever going... If God does have reconciliation in the future for you, you're never going to get there if you don't like her and God will change your heart towards her if you will pray for her.

MARRIAGE FOR THE SINGLE GUYS

All right, third group of guys, single guys. Single guys, I want to give you a word from the father of the woman that you may one day or now be dating. This is me and my daughter. She's about 16 in this

picture. This is me and my son. He was about 13. So, behind my son and I is a target that we were using to practice and the woods that we are in is my daughter thought we were there for rock climbing. We were there so I could scout a place to bury the guy that did bad things to my daughter. All right.

So, do I really need to say anything else now. All right, look, here's your goal. If you're a single guy, here's your goal. Find a Proverbs 31 woman, find a Proverbs 31 woman. So, Proverbs 31 is this great... The last half of Proverbs 31 it's what Proverbs ends with. It's this great description of an amazing wife. It starts at verse 10, "An excellent wife who can find she is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life." All right? And then it goes on to talk about her intelligence, her business acumen, the way that she runs the household. It's a great view of the woman that you want. If you are dating a woman that doesn't meet most of this criteria, go find another one.

Talk to guys that are married that didn't marry Proverbs 31 women. And they will tell you that marriage is a lot harder than it needs to be when you marry the wrong woman, you need a woman who loves Christ and who fits with you. And if you're just scared of being alone and so you just... Well she goes to church and she seems to enjoy hanging out with me. Like that's not enough. It's just not enough. So, find a Proverbs 31 woman, that's the woman you want to marry. So, here's three steps. First, know what you're looking for. Proverbs 31. Second, look in the right places. Okay, now I am not going to stand up here and tell you that you should never meet a woman on the internet or on an app and you can meet great women on the internet or on an app.

Just make sure she's a Proverbs 31 woman. This is 2020. This is the way we meet people today. So don't act like it's evil in and of itself. Just make sure that you're meeting the right woman. Whether you meet her at church or you meet her in a social situation or you find a profile on an app of a woman that looks like she loves Christ and wants to be married great. I know lots of guys that married women that they met on the internet. It's fine. Just make sure she's a Proverbs 31 woman.

All right, and here's the third step. **Become the man you would want your daughter to marry.** That's the Big Idea for a single guy. Not only does she need to be a Proverbs 31 woman, but you need to be the kind of man that deserves a Proverbs 31 woman. You need to be a man that loves God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. You need to be a man who does everything that he does, works hard as for the Lord. You need to be the kind of guy that you would want your daughter to someday marry. Because let me tell you another little truth. She will, if you get married and have a daughter, she's going to marry a guy just like you.

So if you're a rascal, if you're a philanderer, if you're an adulterer, if you're a liar and a cheat, if you're an addict, she's going to marry a guy just like you. So think about that right now. Become the man you would want your daughter to marry. That's the big idea for the single guy. What do you think the action step is? Yeah. Pray about your future wife. Pray about your future wife. You need wisdom. You need God to bring the right woman into your life at the right time. Because a lot of times we run around and we're not ready. We're not ready.

And by the way, this goes for single guys who have never been married. This goes for divorced guys who feel like God has a marriage for them in the future. And it goes even for widowed guys who feel like God has another woman for them. You don't need to be... If you've been married and you're like, "That was great, I'm done with that." That's fine, that's great. But if you feel like this is still in your future, then look, make sure you're marrying the right woman. I have news for you. There's more of them than us.

The numbers are in your favor. Okay, so go look for the right woman. Right, just go look for the right... I know it sounds selfish and this is like going out on the internet, so I'm probably going to get killed for it, but like go find the right one guys. Don't settle. They shouldn't settle either. Women shouldn't settle, but we've got the numbers in our favor. So, don't you settle either. All right.

All right, so let me... I'm going to pray for us as a little bit of a different morning. So, you've got your sheets here and so go through that. I really want you to make sure though that you spend some time on number three and it's going to have you open your Bibles and read some passages and really come up with some attributes that you think describe a godly husband and a godly wife based on those passages. Okay.

And then I'm also going to show you this, because you guys always ask me, I've got two slides up here, one with all three big ideas and the other with all three action steps. And so we'll make sure that those are available to you if you want to come up here and switch back and forth on the slides, you can, and I know a lot of you guys like to take pictures and stuff. So, feel free to do that or share those slides. All right, well let me pray for us, for all of us, for married guys, for divorced guys, for single guys and let's pray for our marriages in whatever states they may be in.

Father, you know the heart of every man in this Bible study, you know the heart of every man sitting around a table studying your word and father, your word is full of wisdom and truth. Lord, it's full of direction and Lord, we just need to follow it. And in our marriages, Lord, more than any other place, perhaps you have given us so much wisdom. And so Lord, would you help us, those of us that are married, Lord, would you help us to love our wives above everything else but you. To be willing to sacrifice for them so that they would know you and so that together we would follow you and bring you glory. And Lord for divorced men, would you heal the hurts that are there both for a guy that's been through the divorce but also for his wife that's been through divorce. Or would you bring healing? Father, we would pray for restoration and reconciliation whenever possible, even if it's years in the making, Lord, we know so many stories of marriages restored after healing has taken place.

Would you Lord make us as men repentance? Would you help us to make things right, to be forgiving and then to live righteously Lord so that we could bring you glory and bring you honor and bring healing wherever possible. And then father, for single guys, I pray, Lord, that you would bring Proverbs 31 women into their life. At least one Lord, that you have selected for him, that you have chosen, Lord, that you would help us to be patient and discerning in our dating lives. That we wouldn't just settle for somebody because we don't want to be alone, because we want to have fun, Lord. But instead we would live righteously. We would live righteously towards a woman that we're dating, Lord, and not engage father in things that would hurt you, that premarital sex or anything else, Lord, that would undermine your authority in our lives that would separate us from you. Lord, help us to be a righteous men who love you well.

So, father, we pray for all the marriages represented from everybody together with us today. Lord, use us for your glory. Use us to bring joy and happiness and completeness to another person as best we can, Lord in a fallen world, and we will give you the glory and the honor. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.