

THE CHURCH: WHO? WHAT? WHY? HOW?- Calvary Church Values-3

Oct. 29, 2017 – Pastor Randy

Ephesians 5:25-33

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body. 31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: 3 If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

Today I am continuing our series on the church. I have been covering our 7 core values. These are not our only values. They are the values that are at the center of shaping our church's culture. So far I have reviewed with you what it means for us to be a church where the Bible matters, where spiritual passion matters, where the spiritual maturity of God's people matters, and where a grace-oriented approach to people matters. Today I want to unpack what it means for us to be a church that affirms the family.

Family Affirming

We seek to provide a ministry environment that strengthens and supports marriage and family. We believe in providing age appropriate ministry for all family members.

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Let me make a disclaimer or a qualification. To say we value marriage and family is not to say that we don't value single people or childless people. If you have been at Calvary for any length of time you have heard me emphasize the fact that God's family includes the whosoever's of the world. John 1:12 tells us that Jesus gave the right to become children of God to ALL who believed him and accepted him. The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for every man, woman, and child to be reconciled. The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for every shade of skin to be born again. Everyone has value in God's eyes.

The reason we give special emphasis to the importance of marriage and family is two-fold:

1. Marriage was the primary social institution established by God and God's ordained social structure for the bearing and rearing of children. The family serves as the foundation for every other social institution. When we say, "We seek to provide a ministry environment that strengthens and supports marriage and family" we are communicating the vital need to promote, support, and strengthen marriage relationships and parent-child relationships, regardless of whether you are a biological parent or a surrogate parent. These are not the only familial relationships that are important, but they are the most vital, and the health of these relationships contribute to the health of all others.
2. The second reason these relationships need special support and strengthening is due to the weakening and degrading of these relationships in society. Marital infidelity, divorce, abandonment, abuse, and an outright rejection of the institution of marriage itself are endemic in American culture. In addition, the prevalence of child abuse, child neglect, along with a disinterest in, and devaluing of, child-bearing and child-rearing necessitate a strong counter-cultural emphasis in the church regarding marriage and children.

A church that values grace, faithfulness to the Bible as God's inspired revelation, passionate devotion to God and His will, and the maturity of God's people, will necessarily find themselves honoring and valuing marriage and parenting. A church that values marriage and parenting will unapologetically teach God's people to pursue God's design for the family while extending grace and support to those whose family structures have fallen short of God's ideal. In reality, all of our families fall short of the ideal. I have not always been faithful to my wife. Early in our marriage my wife had to confront me because she was feeling like the ministry had become my mistress. Sexual infidelity is not the only kind of infidelity. Work or sports can be your mistress.

I. Marriage Matters – Your relationship with your spouse matters.

We will do everything we can to encourage God's people to fulfill God's design. Last year I preached a message entitled "Marriage Matters". In that message I took the time to defend the view that Jesus, in line with the overall teaching of scripture, did in fact define marriage for us as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman. I would encourage you to read the notes and/or watch that message [HERE](#). Go back with me to the scripture we read to begin. Here is a beautiful description of God's design for the marriage relationship. Here is the ideal that we should be striving to towards in our marriage relationships? Look at Ephesians 5:31-32.

As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.

The highest purpose of marriage to reflect the character of God and display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and the church. There are numerous passages in both the Old and New Testament where the husband-wife relationship is employed metaphorically to depict God's relationship to His people. God intended marriage to reflect the characteristics of His relationship with us; a loving relationship characterized by monogamy, unity, and permanency.

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Monogamy – God calls His people to love him in an exclusive manner. This means that our love for God takes priority over all other loves. We must have no other God's before us. The marriage relationship reflects this exclusive love as husbands and wives share a special love that they share with no one else!

Unity – God wants us to be “one with Him in mind and heart”. Husbands and wives are called to reflect that “oneness” in their marriages. We need to be united in our values and purpose; united on a soul level.

Permanency – The enduring, permanent nature of marriage is the logical consequence of the two becoming one flesh. Jesus commenting on this OT verse said, “Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate. God calls us to Himself forever, not for a season. If our marriages are going to fulfill their primary intended purpose of displaying the covenant-keeping love between Christ and His Church, our marriage relationships must be forever, not for a season.

In verse 25 and 28 we read that the ideal is for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and to “love their wives as they love their own bodies.” The depth of one's love is measured by the degree of one's sacrifice. Jesus love was ultimate because it was expressed through the ultimate sacrifice – the sacrifice of His very life. We are called to love our wives as we love our own bodies. Paul writes, “No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. Men we ought to be just as invested in feeding our wives emotional and relational needs as much as we are invested in feeding our stomachs! We ought to be as committed to protecting our wives as we are to protecting ourselves: Not just physically but psychologically and emotionally. In other words, protect and guard your wife's honor just as you are inclined to protect and guard your own. It is sad when we treat our spouse in a manner that would highly offend us if someone else treated them that way. If we make our wives feel safe and protected from others but not from us....God help us!

Now to the wives. In verse 33 we read,

So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Earlier in chapter 5 Paul wrote, “Wives submit your husbands”. The call for the wife to submit is built on the assumption that the husband has the primary responsibility for the security and sustenance of the wife and family. The husband’s authority in the relationship only exists because he bears a greater responsibility. In areas unrelated to his responsibility to provide and protect his wife he ought to work with her in a collaborative manner than to assert himself unilaterally in all the decisions of the household.

The husband who abdicates his responsibility as protector and provider dare not try and exercise his authority as head of the wife. Wives, God has placed your husbands in a position of leader in the home. Husband, God has called you to follow His example of servant-leadership.

We do not condone divorce, but we do not condemn victims of divorce. If you plan to walk out on your spouse because you feel like you have “fallen out of love” with him or her, and have “fallen in love” with someone at your workplace or community, do not expect sympathy for that decision and acceptance of that decision from your church. If your spouse has walked out on you. Our problem is that we don’t treat vows like vows. We don’t treat marriage like a covenant, but as a relationship that exists for our convenience. Marriage vows are supposed to be declarations of a promise of a present and future love; a love that acts in the best interest of another. Unfortunately, vows are often nothing more than affirmations of a love that two people feel in the present. Love is both a noun and a verb. It is something we do and something we feel. Marriage is a decision to do something. They promise to do something. It ought to be accompanied by feelings. I wouldn’t want to perform a ceremony for two people who did not possess a passion for each other. But the passion is not the foundation. Passions are fleeting.

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The foundation is a covenant promise. A healthy marriage rests on the foundation of a decision to love and it is nurtured by the feelings of love.

Now, if your spouse has walked out on you, or left you for another person, you deserve sympathy and support. The church needs to be there for those abandoned just as we need to be there for widows and widowers. Help you in anyway we can. We will not stigmatize divorced people, but neither will we sanction unfaithfulness.

Parenting Matters.

Look again at Ephesians 6:4. *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord."* This training is not only the role of the father. In the immediate context Paul instructed children to obey their parents and in doing so to fulfill the fifth commandment of the Mosaic Law which requires children to honor to mother and father.

God designed the sexual union to create an emotional and psychological bond between husband and wife and He has also designed moms and dads to experience emotional and psychological bonds with their children. This bond is important because it helps parents to stay committed to the task of nurturing their children. Why do we need help to stay committed to these bundles of joy and delight? Well these bundles of joy and delight can also stress you, distress you, oppress you, and depress you. Children are like spouses. It's hard to live with them but we can't without them.

We believe that God, according to Ephesians 6:4 has entrusted parents with the primary responsibility for the discipline and instruction of their children.

We are committed to assisting parents to fulfill their responsibility by:

1. **Creating** weekly engaging environments and periodic special events that serve as *catalysts* for spiritual growth. If you weren't aware, every Wednesday we have a youth group as well as boys and girls clubs for pre-school and

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elementary school meeting in our lower level. Every year we take our elementary age kids to a week long kids camp and we send our teens to a dynamic youth convention and a winter retreat. This year we are planning on running a “Kids Fest” during the summer for our elementary age kids and hope to take our teens on a missions trip.

2. **Connecting** every child/teen/young adult to their peers and to adult leaders in a small group **community**. We want our young people to develop strong relationships with other young people who share their faith. Our goal is to support parents by providing your child with other adult role models.

3. **Equipping** parents/guardians to fulfill their responsibility as the primary spiritual leaders in the lives of their child(ren). Our “First Wednesday” praise and prayer gatherings give parents an opportunity to worship with their young people. A purpose of Jingle Jam is to build the faith of families via bringing the family together. We communicate with the parents of our kids and teens about what they are learning so the parents can continue the conversation.

4. **Encouraging** children/teens with age appropriate **Kingdom construction** opportunities. We have a team of kids that lead worship during their Sunday and Wednesday programs. They have a child from Haiti that they have receive offerings for his education in a Christian school. They will be raising money for a special project this Christmas season. Some of our kids inspired our whole church to give personal care items to the homeless in Center City. Several of our teens assist in our kid’s ministry and in our media/sound department.

Our goal is not perfection but progress. The question is not, “Have we arrived?” but, “Are we headed in the right direction of God’s destination?” In closing I want you to watch this video clip that reminds us that we need to fight for these crucial relationships in our lives.

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