

BUILDING to LAST

SESSION 5: THE STORIES MARRIAGES TELL

1. Marriage tells the story of the gospel.

Hosea 2:14-23 and Ephesians 5:21-33.

1. *Marriage depicts the faithfulness of God with his people as God calls himself, “husband” to Israel (Hos. 2:16).*
2. *God’s marriage to Israel shows that it would be through the power and activity of God that Israel’s faithlessness would be removed from her (2:17).*
3. *God’s marriage to Israel shows that it would be through the ongoing faithfulness that the future of God’s people would be made safe and blessed (2:18-19)*
4. *And the result of Israel being married to God would be the people of God actually growing in righteousness, justice, love and mercy, and in faithfulness (2:19-20).*

What does the story of your marriage tell right now? Does it reflect the love and cherish of Jesus Christ with his bride?

2. Conflict provides core sampling to the story we’re telling.

Our main extremes in conflict: fight or flight

- Fight (Anger) contempt and bitterness through acts or words of anger that seize control and manipulate through force. This is the brazen, brutish way shown to us in James 4:1-10.
- Flight – fear – contempt(!) through avoidance or silence that seeks to avert conflict. The cowardice of avoidance shown to us in the Proverbs under the moniker, “Fear of man” (Prov. 29:25).

Case Study: Conflict Before Caregroup

Larry and Lucy were driving on the way to caregroup when Larry's lack of conversation (as always) tempted Lucy and she at one point blurted out: "I might as well talk to a wall!"

This (as always) was offensive to Larry, who became angry and defensive to Lucy, and after he pushed back with how he had a long day and that "you never seem to appreciate me!" — a grand conflict commenced halfway to caregroup and that didn't land very well by the time they arrived, cold and distant from one another.

This is common ground for Larry and Lucy. They struggle with conflict often, and usually because Larry is highly sensitive to Lucy's criticisms and Lucy struggles mightily to have a soft or grateful heart towards Larry. Larry hasn't done well in trying to address the root problems they're dealing with. He wouldn't know where to begin, and Lucy seems too bent out of shape for him to start now.

1. Who is at fault in this marital conflict? And what is their fault/sin?
2. How does James 4 help us understand what is really going on inside both Larry and Lucy?
3. How do we help this couple understand what is going on, and how to make progress?
4. How can you connect the gospel to their marriage and help them see true change?

HOMEWORK:

1. PRAY TOGETHER DAILY
2. Work through a recent conflict with tonight's teaching in mind:

First: decide on a recent conflict then both write down answers to the below questions, then come together and share answers and discuss. Seek especially to go deeper with repentance and reconcile if needed.

- What are the details of the conflict: who, what, when?
- What does James 4:1-10 show me about myself in this conflict?
- What did I want to achieve in this conflict? Why is it so important to me that I'm willing to fight to get it?
- What is the Lord calling me to repent and bring correction to in this conflict?
- What do I need to correct and learn from this conflict for following Christ more closely and loving my spouse as Christ commands? (Anything I should repent more thoroughly of? Anything I should let go and overlook? Anything I should start/stop doing here on out?)