

Topic: “Fit to be Tied” – Pt. I **Text:** Proverbs 24:3-6 HPC 6/20/10 Father’s Day

INTRO: For the next several weeks I want to look at marriage. What does it mean to be “fit” or prepared to be tied instead of “fit to be tied”? **Quiz: What is love?** If you answered F on all 10 you get 100! Today it is easier to get a marriage license than a driver’s license. In an age when progressives in our culture and denomination are deconstructing the meaning of marriage, we need to review the wisdom that builds a marriage house.

I. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR A FIT MARRIAGE

A. Metaphors for building a marriage – in our passage this morning the writer gives us two metaphors, home and military, that convey security and safety. The house built by wisdom is constructed with two tools: Understanding and knowledge. These tools fill the house with rare and beautiful treasures like a healthy marriage. Security is a key word – it is one of the key qualities wives look to their husbands to provide. It involves mature delayed gratification to save for retirement, provide insurance for a tragedy so your family can be provided for, savings etc.

The 2nd metaphor is a military one. Great victories are most often wrought by wisdom gained in counsel & strategy from many advisors to arrive at the best decision. It is the “**we are better together**” principle. Together we stand and alone we fall. Home and military are metaphors that secure and protect community, including families. Such wisdom is found in basic truths from the Bible.

B. Scriptural teachings on marriage – In *Theology Matters*, a Publication of Presbyterians for Faith, Family and Ministry, **Alan F.H. Wisdom** notes:

1. That marriage was established by God in creation for the good of all humankind.
2. That marriage unites the two created sexes, man and woman, as “one flesh” – we use the candle, hand or sand ceremony in weddings to symbolize this truth.
3. That marriage is related to God’s command to “*be fruitful and multiply*”
4. That marriage is consummated by sexual intercourse and thereafter the husband and wife have reciprocal and exclusive claims to one another’s sexual intimacy.
5. That through marriage the spouses bring one another companionship and help through the vicissitudes of life. **Ex.** In our **Men’s Fraternity** materials “**companionship**” was the one core trait both the husband and wife desire to give and receive from each other in the “**side-by-side**” Biblical model for marriage.
6. That the marriage relationship has been corrupted through human sin. **Ex.** Robert Lewis of **Men’s Fraternity** notes that Adam abandoned his servant leadership role in the garden by being passive. His sin was passivity. God held him accountable for abdicating his responsibility and his sin led to male domination as a personal moral failure. It is a model for marriage **NOT** found in the teaching of the Bible.
7. That violations of the marriage bond are among the most abhorrent sins, comparable in God’s eyes to idolatry.

8. That God has provided marriage as the proper way to satisfy sexual desires that otherwise might lead to sinful non-marital relations.
9. That God intends marriage to be life long, and that divorce can be justified only for narrow reasons as a concession to human obstinacy.
10. That marriage is an icon of God's relationship with Israel, and of Christ's with the church.
11. That faithful marriage is to be honored among Christians, as also a life of celibate singleness is to be honored. Robert Lewis talks about core values in his **Men's Fraternity** teaching. He teaches parents practical ways to incorporate ritual and relationship building to model these counter cultural values.

I say counter cultural because progressive denominational voices are stretching **Galatians 3:28**, "*neither male nor female*," and other scriptures. They seek to deconstruct the Biblical values I just mentioned and redefine marriage as merely a relationship between "**two persons who love each other**." They see no difference between husband-wife couples and relationships involving two men or two women because "**there is no longer male and female**." This is a total distortion of Paul's words. He teaches in this passage that regardless of whether we are Jew or Gentile, slave or free, or male or female, we are all equal in Christ. We all stand on the same level ground of God's grace as children of God through faith. Paul is not doing away with gender.

God's blueprint from the getgo was marriage between a man and a woman. That two become one flesh as noted in the meditational quote at the top of your bulletin. As some of us learned in our Life Groups from *Laughing Your Way to a Better Marriage*, God knew what He was doing. There is a chemical dimension to the tie that binds a husband, a wife and the children that are the fruit of their union. The hormone oxytocin is released into a woman's bloodstream particularly on 3 occasions:

- 1) During Sexual intercourse
- 2) At Childbirth
- 3) During breastfeeding.

The *Theology Matters* article notes that this bonding hormone "appear(s) to promote emotional intimacy and feelings of love" for the man and then for the child that she holds in her arms.

Quote: On men this hormone has a biochemical effect: "Studies suggest that marriage - sexually bonding with a spouse—reduces levels of testosterone in men. This hormonal change appears to incline men to less violence, less sexual promiscuity, and more nurturant fatherhood."

Thus the colorful merging of orange and blue sands in the wedding ceremony in here a week ago was more than just a colorful metaphor for two becoming one flesh! **So how do we become "fit" to be tied?**

ILLUS: A teacher once asked a little girl to draw a picture of what she wanted to be when she grew up. She said, "I want to be married but I don't know how to draw it."

I want to help you draw it this morning now that we have a Biblical foundation. Let's draw it by asking a number of questions over the next several weeks. But first, let's see what we are up against in a world of conflicting values as seen through the eyes of children as they observe their fathers and then a clip from *Imagine That*. **Eddy Murphy** plays **Evan Danielson**, a financial executive whose career is headed south but who learns from his 7-year old daughter.

CLIP: *Imagine That* (1:59) Wingclips.com

II. QUESTIONS FOR A FIT MARRIAGE

A. Have you done your observational homework? – I am amazed at dumb questions asked in the advice columns that could be answered by observation and drawing simple conclusions. An article from *Good Housekeeping* a few years ago betrays such common sense discernment. It offers 6-ways to learn about a man before you decide to marry him. This isn't rocket science.

1. Watch him drive in heavy traffic.
2. Play tennis with him.
3. Listen to him talk to his mother when he doesn't know you are listening.
4. Observe how he treats those who serve him such as wait staff & sales clerks.
5. Notice what he is willing to spend his money on to buy.
6. Look at his friends.

Guys, I'm sure we could come up with 6 for a man to ask about a woman too!

B. Are you emotionally prepared? – Living intimately with another person is emotionally demanding. More than any other culture in history, we have the option of following the Apostle Paul's advice and remaining single. Of ordering our private world without the counterpoint of a mate. Are you ready to relinquish some of your freedoms? To surrender some of your emotional space? Marriage is like electricity - it has "**peak demand**" times in extreme heat or cold. It will stress your emotional circuits to the breaking point.

STORY: I love the story of Johnny, age 10, who said I don't know much about marriage but I won't get married unless she signs a paper that she will take out the garbage and I can control the remote and what we watch on TV. Now that is funny because his name is Johnny and his age is 10. When he is John, age 25, it isn't so funny if he hasn't grown up emotionally.

Most marriages based on all kinds of conditions and clauses aren't usually long enough to justify the cost of the paper and legal fees to draw up them up. People who think marriage is a 50/50 gig are only going to argue about whose 50 it is. Friends marriage is a 100/100 deal if it is ever going to cover the emotional gamut of life's emotional surges.

- You have to be mature enough to be willing to add value to your spouse's life.
- You have to be mature enough to go into marriage not for what you will receive, but for what you will give.

There are three signs of emotional maturity and preparation:

1. **There is no rush into marriage** – if you show me someone who is emotionally prepared then I can show you someone who can wait. If you are not sure if it is “time” to get married then follow the counsel of our scripture this morning and wait by letting good sense fill the rooms of your home with the treasure of a good decision. Slow down and wait for wisdom to prevail.

Real Life - About 25 years ago I had a couple come to me to get married – we did the premarital counsel using the TJTA profiles. The graphs showed it was obvious the bride was not ready for marriage. Wisely the groom broke the engagement. She still wasn't ready 3-months later when she married someone else. She wanted a husband not a marriage. A couple of years later I married Tom to a lovely bride and they are still married today with lovely twin daughters now in their 20's – it was worth his waiting!

2. **Selfishness is under control** – people are emotionally mature when they are no longer selfish, no longer behaving like children. When we put away childish things, we begin to put others on par with ourselves and see things from their point of view before making a decision.
3. **Love is based on character and commitment not just emotion** – To often we think love is only a feeling. We get into trouble because a “feeling” is like a roller coaster from downhill fast to uphill slow.

ILLUS: I like the kid who once wrote a report on Benjamin Franklin. He said Ben Franklin saw a pretty girl one day and before long they were married and he discovered electricity. Hollywood thinks like that – they forget to tell you what every electrician knows, that same current that lights you up can also kill you!

John Maxwell says each of us has a “**Wiggly Line**”- our emotional graph. When you bring another person's line into the picture, you can soon feel like you have fallen out of love. Commitment and character can see behind the wiggly lines!

Segue: I will continue this series next week with the question: “Am I the right persons?” Until then, I close with this question:

CLOSE: Are you “Fit” to be tied or are you just “Fit to be tied?”