

May 6, 2012 by Steve Brandon



An Infomercial for the Art of Marriage (Various)

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I don't watch a lot of television. We have 3 stations at home -- CBS, ABC, and FOX. We don't get all of these clearly all of the time, but it works. This is not a statement of my spirituality. It is a statement of my weakness. If I had cable television, I would be killing a bunch of hours in front of the television. But, there is one show that I do like. It's called The Chicago Bears. During the NFL season, I attempt to watch the Chicago Bears play each Sunday afternoon.

Often, when the game ends, I look for another game to watch. Sometimes there are other games on television. At other times, there aren't. During these times, the television stations often run "infomercials" (i.e. commercials that run 30 minutes, an hour, maybe 2 hours). And for an hour or so, they attempt to show and sell you their product -- exercise equipment, skin lotions, golf equipment -- in hopes that you will call in and purchase it.

I'm sure that many of you are aware of such programming on television. You have probably even watched a few infomercials in your life. Well, this morning, I want to give you an infomercial. I want to sell you something. I want to sell you on the idea of the Art of Marriage Conference that we are hosting at Rock Valley Bible Church on June 1-2. An announcement about this has been in the bulletin for several weeks. I want to highlight it today.

The conference will go from 7-9:30pm on Friday, June 1st, and will continue on Saturday from 9am - 4pm on June 2nd. The cost is \$35 per couple, which really only covers our cost for the workbooks that you will receive. It is also pretty neat that when you get your workbook, there is a code on it that will direct you to a website where you can watch any of the video session any time you want on your own for the foreseeable future.

The title of my message this morning is "An Infomercial for The Art of Marriage." I am all-in on this conference. I am taking a Sunday morning to promote the event. My aim in my message this morning is to convince all of you married couples to come and be there. Usually, I'm not so forthright with my specific application. And yet, in this case, I think it to be important. I think that it will be enjoyable for you. I think that it will be helpful for you. And I want for you to make every attempt to be there.

In fact, when my message is done, I want you husbands to turn to your wives and ask the simple question: "Is this event something that you would like to attend?" And if she says, "Yes," I would like you to make every effort to bring your wife to the event. You clear your schedule. You figure out the babysitting. Next week is Mother's Day. I believe that this would be a great Mother's Day gift to your wife.

And wives, if your husband doesn't take the initiative and ask you this question, and you would like to come to this event, I want you to tell your husband, "I would like to come to The Art of Marriage" event. Husbands, this is a message from God to you. Wives, if your husband still refuses to come, I would be more than willing to talk with your husband, and plead your case.

Now, if you wives don't really want to come, I still want you to ask your husbands the same question, "Is this event something that you would like to attend?" If he says, "Yes," then I encourage you to do everything in your power to come. It may be that you are both hesitant to come. Perhaps, there are some things that you simply don't want to have exposed in your marriage. It may not be comfortable. But, it may be necessary. I encourage you to come. Problems in your marriage won't simply blow away. You need to address them. You will find many helpful things in these videos.

It may be that circumstances prevent you from attending. You may already have plans for that weekend that are not possible to reschedule. That's OK. But, if you are able, it would be a great thing for you to attend.

Now, if you are here and not married, there is really no application for you to come unless you are engaged to be married. But, I do have application for you this morning: I want for you to come away from my message being a champion for marriage. If you are a child, encourage your parents to come. Ask them, "Mom and Dad, are you going?" Children, it is for your good. If you are single, perhaps you could offer to babysit for another couple, so that they might come.

Perhaps there are even some people that may come to you mind during my message this morning who you may might want to invite to this event. I would love for every couple here to invite and bring another couple as a guest to this event. We will be inviting the neighborhood as well. Like I said, I'm all-in on this.

I believe the best place to begin is with the official trailer. That gives you a good flavor of the videos used in the event. You can watch the trailer [here](#).

I spent a good portion of my week watching all of the videos. They are very well done. They contain a great message. It's really a fast-moving video, with a bunch of short segments. Sometimes these segments are montages of interviews with those on the street. Sometimes these segments contain snippets of well-known Bible teachers talking about marriage. Women like Barbara Rainey and Mary Kassian. Men like Al Mohler and Voddie Baucham and Russell Moore and Michael Easley and Paul Tripp. And what's especially special for me is that a good friend of mine, Bobby Scott, a pastor in Los Angeles is one of the speakers.

Sometimes these segments tell real-life stories of those who struggled greatly in some aspect of their marriage, but found help in Christ. Sometimes these segments are fictional drama to help make a point. All of it comes together to make a complete message to help us in our marriages.

Now, regarding my message this morning, we are going to be doing something out of the ordinary again this week. But, bear with me, we'll be back in our exposition of Mark soon. Normally, we open to a passage of Scripture and dig deeply. But, this morning, in order to promote this event, I'm going to show a sampling of video clips from the event, so that you might get a flavor of what's going on. I've picked all types of videos -- interviews, teaching segments, real-life stories, and drama. We are in an infomercial, right? It is helpful to show the customer the product, right?

So, that's what I plan to do. I have even ripped my points this morning right from the titles of the first six video sessions -- just to give you a heart of where the videos are heading. The first video is entitled, ...

1. Love Happens

It explores the way that marriages often begin with love and optimism and hope. The Art of Marriage shows a cute little video clip of some children talking about marriage. The video shows kids giving their idea of love and marriage. Why do people get married? The common view is, "I guess because they want to spend the rest of their lives together?" Apart from Biblical revelation, their idea of marriage may easily be our idea of marriage. But, let's allow the Scripture to focus our attention upon what marriage is. So, take your Bibles and turn with me to Genesis, chapter 2. In this chapter, we see the first marriage. In this chapter, we see the foundations of all marriages.

In Genesis, chapter 1, we see the universe created and the earth populated. And it all was "good". [\[1\]](#) In fact, it all was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). And yet, there was one thing that wasn't good. We see it there in verse 18, ...

Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Right from the beginning of the creation, we see the purpose of marriage. It is for companionship. "It is not good for the man to be alone." So God creates another being to fulfill his loneliness.

God created us as social beings. And social beings need others. We need interaction. It's why solitary confinement in prison is one of the worst tortures imaginable -- because it reaches to the core of our being. People in solitary confinement have been known to go crazy. We are made to be with one another. That's part of who we are. And it began with Adam.

This is why the Bible prescribes marriage. This is why Paul urged the young widows to "get married" (1 Tim. 5:14). This is why Paul identifies singleness as the exception to the rule (1 Cor. 7:8-9). It's only those who are older (1 Tim. 5:9-16) or have a "gift" (1 Cor. 7:7-9) who should remain single.

We need companionship. That's why God created the woman. We need help. That's why God created the woman. "I will make him a helper suitable for him" (2:18). This verse gets to the role distinction between a husband and a wife. In verse 15, we see the job description given to Adam. "The LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it" (2:15). But, this job was a bit too big for him alone. He needed a helper. Thus, the reason for Eve.

This carries over into marriages today. Wives are to come alongside their husbands and be a helper to them. It looks different in every marriage. But, the principle is the same. The man has responsibility in the marriage. But, the woman shares in that responsibility by helping her husband. In fact, back in chapter 1:28, we read of the charge given to both the man and the woman:

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Both man and woman together were given the charge to fill the earth and to rule over the earth. It's not only man's job. It's the woman's job as well. They were both created in the image of God (1:27). They are both equal in His sight. Both are "fellow heir[s] of the grace of life" (1 Pet 3:7). But, there are role distinctions. The wife is the helper.

Turn back to chapter 2. Let's read of the creation of Eve, ...

Genesis 2:19-25

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to

see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

I love the story. God parades all of the animals before Adam and gives him the authority to name the animals. And he allows Adam to notice that there weren't any of them capable of being his helper, his companion. And so, the Lord takes from his side and forms the woman. She was "taken out of Man" (verse 22). And then, in verse 24, we have the establishment of marriage.

Genesis 2:24

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

This is commentary on the creation account. It surely wasn't written to Adam and Eve, for they had no parents. Rather, it's a statement saying that the manner in which Adam and Eve have been created, is a prototype for all marriages to come. A man and a woman are to leave their parents. A man and a woman are to cleave to each other, forming a one-ness.

And this is marriage, one man with one woman forming a bond of unity as long as they both shall live. As Jesus said, "What God has joined together, ... let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6). It's why divorce hurts so much -- because it is the tearing away of the one-flesh union.

Notice, here, that in the establishment of marriage in Genesis, there is no mention of "love." You might get a hint of it in verse 23, depending upon how you think that Adam first responded to Eve. But, other than that, love isn't anywhere to be found in Genesis 1 and 2. That's not to say that love isn't important in marriage. Because it is. In Ephesians 5, we learn that a husband's love for his wife ought to parallel Christ's love for the church. That's a deep and abiding love. But, love isn't at the foundation of marriage. Rather, at the foundation is a commitment to love, to be with one another. This is Biblical love. It is a promise: "I am going to love you!" And then that promise is followed by an action. It's a commitment to love -- "Till death do us part."

Too often in marriages, the foundation of the relationship has been "love" (according to the world's definition). That is, "You make me feel good. I want to be with you, because you make me feel good." And when marriages are founded upon that sort of love, it's no accident that problems surface in marriage. This is what the second session of the videos is about. The first is Love Happens. But, the second point is, ...
2. Love Fades

And when love fades, problems arise in marriages. For any student of the Bible, this isn't so difficult to understand. You simply need to look to Genesis, chapter 3. Do you remember the story? The serpent comes and tempts Eve to eat of the fruit. Verse 6 records her tragic choice, ...

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Verse 7 records the results.

Genesis 3:7

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

What once was perfect in paradise -- total openness with each other and with God, naked and not ashamed (2:25) -- was now ruined by the choice to eat. They knew of their nakedness. They came to know shame. They attempted to hide from God.

Genesis 3:8-10

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

God knew what had happened (3:11-13). And so, He cursed the serpent and the wife and the husband (3:14-19). And then, He cast them out of the garden (3:24). Now, I want to direct your attention to verse 16, the curse upon the woman.

Genesis 3:16
To the woman he said,

"I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth.
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you."

My first observation this morning is that this is a curse. I have heard people use this as a mandate, as a command for the husband to rule in the marriage. But, it's not. It's a statement of fact. It's a curse. It sets up the battle that takes place in many homes all over the world.

There is a battle for authority. There is a battle for control. She wants to be in charge. The ESV footnote on this verse is very good. It reads, "Your desire shall be against your husband." Just like sin's desire was against Cain (Gen. 4:7), so also will there be a desire against her husband. She will want to be in charge. But, so will he. It's the battle in many marriages. And since, in general, he is stronger and he overrules her, frustration prevails in the home.

By the way, frustration will prevail even when the wife is stronger than the husband. She will manipulate and control something that he knows he should lead. There is frustration in the home either way.

The Art of Marriage has a great video segment that demonstrates the problem in marriages. It sets a couple before a marriage counselor. Both the husband and wife share their perspective in marriage. They each think the problem is the other person. Then the counselor arises from behind his desk and says, "I am going to cut to the chase. I'm going to tell you what the problem is with your marriage." Starting with the husband, this counselor says, "The problem with your marriage is you." Then, the counselor turns to his wife and says, "And the problem is you."

This is at the heart of all marital problems. We are the problem. We are sinners. We sin against our spouses. This brings on more sin. Sin in them. Sin in us. The good news is that there is hope.

Hope begins with the gospel. The only way to save us from ourselves is to believe and trust in Jesus. He alone can forgive us. And when He forgives us, we will be empowered to forgive our spouses. And when forgiveness takes place, there are new beginnings.

Hope in marriage continues when we know and function within our roles in marriage. That is the next point, ...

3. Love Dances

When a man and a woman dance together, the man must lead, and the woman must follow. He leads with subtle weight changes. He leads with arm movements. He leads with eye contact. He doesn't push or pull his partner. Rather, he helps the woman to enjoy her dancing. [\[2\]](#)

The same concept comes in Ephesians 5. Let's turn there. This is the quintessential passage for marriage. It describes the husband's role. It describes the wife's role. The husband loves and leads. The wife submits and helps.

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

The wife dies to herself and submits to her husband. The husband dies to himself and leads her sacrificially. An example we see in the videos is of Dr. Wayne Grudem and his wife Margaret. They tell the story of how Margaret was in a serious car accident, which caused some health issues for her. But, at one point, the Grudems took a vacation in Arizona. While there, the dry climate helped Margaret to feel better. Repeated trips showed the same result. Margaret felt better in Arizona.

The Grudem's were then faced with a dilemma. Should they move to Arizona for Margaret's health? Or should they stay in Illinois where Wayne's teaching ministry at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School was flourishing. And so, they wrestled with the matter. At one point, Margaret told Wayne, "I know what we should do. ... You should decide what we should do." In saying this, she was submitting herself to her husband.

One day Wayne was reading Ephesians 5:28, "Husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies." As he reflected upon it, he wondered if he was having the health difficulties that his wife was experiencing if he would move or not. It was a turning point in the decision

process. So, Dr. Grudem chooses to lead his family across the country for the benefit of his wife's health. In doing this, he was choosing to love his wife's body as though it was his body.

There is something very beautiful about how the Grudems deferred to each other in love. That's how love dances. The husband tenderly leads, and the wife lovingly follows. The husband takes the responsibility for leading the family. But, he doesn't lead in a vacuum. He seeks to know and understand his wife. He is sensitive to her needs. And she knows that so much that she is willing to follow him, wherever he leads.

That's how God intended it. That's how we enjoy it. And yet, in any marriage, conflict takes place.

This conflict is the topic of the fourth video.

4. Love Interrupted

There are times and seasons in any marriage when conflict arises and when troubles come. It's at those times, that communication is necessary to resolve the conflict. The Bible gives some clear directions in how we are to communicate with one another. Consider the following verses, ...

Ephesians 4:25, 29, 31-32

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. ... Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. ... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Obviously, these words were written regarding our relationships among the church body. "We are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25). But, they words are are even more true in marriage. The Bible describes husbands and wives as "one flesh."

These verses tell us that we should be careful about our words. We should be tender with our words, especially to those we have promised to love for all of our days. Yet sadly, within marriages, some of the harshest words ever spoken are uttered. People say things to their spouses that they would never, ever utter in public.

I was talking recently with someone who mentioned Philippians 2:14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." All the while, this person was justifying his grumbling. In many ways, he was mocking the verse. Let us not mock these verses in Ephesians 4. Let our words be kind and gentle with our spouses. "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God" (James 1:19).

The video in this portion of the series focuses upon the following verses:

James 4:1,2

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

The main idea of this passage is that somebody else can't make me angry. Only I can make myself angry. Anger comes from me. It comes from me not getting my way. Anger kills relationships. If you would apply the truths of this video in your marriage, I believe that you would see many of your conflicts reduced.

5. Love Sizzles

I trust that you know what this point is about. It's about the sexual relationship within marriage. And with the children here this morning, we are going to speed through this section of the infomercial. If you want to see it, then you can come on June 1st and 2nd. Isn't this how an infomercial is supposed to work? I'm supposed to leaving you hanging in there for more. I'm supposed to give you reason to pick up the phone and call in and order your item.

As a husband and wife's sexual relationship is fundamental to the one-flesh union, it is sprinkled throughout the video series. There is a reason why children are not invited to this event. There is very plain, very straight-forward talk about all aspects of marriage. So, come and hear.

Finally, ...

6. Love Always

These videos do a great job of helping you to see that your marriage is bigger than you. Sure, marriage is for your happiness. Marriage is for your joy. But, there are often children who need to learn about the lovingkindness of God through your marriage. They will learn this as they watch your love for your spouse. Your marriage will also have an effect upon your grandchildren. There is a lost world that needs to learn about the love that Jesus has for the church.

Ephesians 5:31-32

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Our marriages teach others of the gospel. You are leaving a legacy. What kind of legacy are you leaving?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 6, 2012 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Gen. 1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25

[2] The Art of Marriage workbook, p. 51.