FBS “Marriage Matters: Wisdom from God’s Word—Communication” 4-23-17

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**Intro.** How many of you are glad school only has a few more weeks? How many of you wish students could go longer? How many of you wish you were back in school, because you loved it so much? I’m going to give you a word you may not have heard since your school days (and if you went to school in West Virginia, you may not have heard it at all)—double entendre. It refers to a word having more than one meaning. We start a new series today called “Marriage Matters” as we look at “Wisdom from God’s Word” (the wisdom literature of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon). Marriage matters in the sense that godly marriages really make a difference & “matters” is also used to talk about key issues marriages face. The 3 biggest areas are sex, money & family (especially in-laws). But I’m a big believer that the #1 issue in marriages (& relationships) is communication. Let’s read 1:1-7 together, which is both introductory & foundational to Proverbs.

Theme: Marriage

Background: King Solomon wrote most of the Proverbs & they are written as a father’s advice to his son. It centers on wisdom—knowing & doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord. It mixes instructions on work, finances, spouses, parenting, character, communication & more.

* If you listen to secular media & some preachers, they’ll tell you Christian marriages are just as bad as non-Christian marriages, with as many as 55% ending in divorce. But those statistics were made up & others jumped on them. The truth is of all 1st time marriages, 41+% end in divorce; 2nd marriages are 60+%; 3rd marriages are about 74% (divorcestatistics.info). When looking at Christian marriages, ChristianPost.com says couples who worship together regularly have a 74% success rate & CBNNews.com says the success rate is 80-90%. Thus, Christian “Marriage Matters” & so does how we communicate it.
* Solomon taught his son about the importance of communication in life & in marriage.
* Whether you become a master of communication in life or not, to have a successful & growing marital relationship, you must master the art of communication.
* **Utilize these matters in your communication within marriage:**

**1. Substitute wise/godly qualities for foolish/ungodly ones (10:8, 19; 12:23; 14:1; 15:2; 16:23; 17:28; 18:2, 7, 13; 26:4-5; 29:11; Ecclesiastes 9:17; 10:12-13)**

1. **Righteousness for wickedness (15:28)**
* There is plenty of evil & wickedness in the world & our pre-conversion state may have been saturated in wickedness, but righteousness (right living) is rooted in a relationship with Jesus Christ & regular time in His Word to know right from wrong
1. **Humility for pride (11:2; 13:10; 16:18; 18:2; 26:12)**
* More than any other sin, I struggle & wrestle with pride regularly, but the one person I dare not try it on is my wife, because she’s seen me in my weakest moments & knows me better than anyone
* Some unbelievers have said they would love to see more humility in Christians & while we can be confident in the hope we have in Jesus, we need to work on how we express it to the public & how we live it out in our homes
1. **Gentleness for harshness (15:1)**
* Many an argument in marriage could have been prevented had one of the spouses used gentleness rather than harshness

Illus: I’ve told you before that after more than 20 years of marriage, Annthea & I have never had an argument. We have several moments of intense fellowship, but never an argument.

1. **Restraint for anger (12:18; 14:16-17, 29; 16:32; 17:27; 19:11; 22:24-25; 29:20, 22; 30:32-33)**
* Just as a gentle answer rather than a harsh one can prevent an argument, so can a dose of restraint & patience & biting one’s tongue make a difference rather than becoming angry or losing your temper

Illus: Jesus expressed anger at religious leaders making a profit in the temple over every worshiper—it’s right to be angry at sin. If a man is addicted to pornography, his wife has a right to be angry. If a woman is flirting with a co-worker or neighbor, the husband has a right to be angry. But anger should not be the way either normally functions.

Illus: The evangelist Billy Sunday was approached by a man ridiculing him for believing in the Bible. Billy Sunday asked him, “If I can prove something in the Bible to you, will you believe?” “Sure!” the mocker laughed. Billy Sunday grabbed his nose & twisted it, making it bleed & quoted Proverbs 30:33!

1. **Peace for quarreling (17:1, 14, 19; 19:13; 20:3; 21:19; 25:24; 27:15-16)**
* As you can see, the Proverbs have a good bit to say about a quarreling wife—that doesn’t mean there aren’t quarreling husbands, but Proverbs is primarily advice from a father to a son
* Real righteousness & wisdom & peace are found in Christ, because none are righteous apart from God’s grace (due to our sin) & our best wisdom is foolishness apart from the Lord & we cannot have real peace with God unless we have a right standing with Him
1. **Truth for perverseness (4:24; 8:7-8; 10:31-32; 12:19, 22; 17:20; 19:1; 24:26)**
* While some people in society have a propensity to lie & twist the truth, such should not happen in marriage—talk to each other as husband & wife & tell the truth, because trust builds marriages

Illus: But don’t be like Honest Albert who could never tell a lie. When his wife asked him, “Honey, does this dress make me look fat?” He replied, “No, it’s your hips which make you look fat”—be careful how you phrase things in telling the truth

1. **Encouragement for gossip (10:11; 12:6; 13:3; 15:4, 26; 16:24; 18:21; 21:23; 25:11)**

Illus: Sometimes in marriage, a husband or wife will talk with their friends or co-workers in a negative light about their spouse, but that only adds fuel to the fire (show 2 min clip from Fireproof).

**2. When necessary, confess & apologize & the other must forgive (6:2-5; 17:13; 28:13)**

* When a husband or wife does wrong, it is wise to confess one’s sin & apologize

Illus: I have had to apologize to Annthea on several occasions (less than a year into our marriage, I told her in front of the cashier that she shouldn’t buy certain things as we were checking out—that was not the time or place to have that conversation & she let me know it & I apologized). She has always been quick to forgive (even telling me, “I’ll guess I’ll forgive you again”)

* Forgiveness from the offended party is key—realize sin is 1st & foremost against God, not you. If the confession & repentance is genuine, Jesus teaches you to forgive (cf. Matthew 18:21-35). If you will not forgive your spouse (or yourself), you are placing yourself above God

**3. Listen to & learn from wise advice & rebukes (1:5; 12:15; 13:10; 15:14, 31; 18:15; 19:20; 23:12; 25:12)**

* Men do well in meeting with older men & women in meeting with older women (cf. Titus 2:1-8)—when you gather listen to some of their life lessons, especially in regards to marriage
* At the same time, when you are considering making a physical move or job change, talk openly & honestly with your spouse. Search for wisdom & the Lord will grant it to you.
* These issues are important for every stage of marriage, because even if you have children & pour a lot of time into them, you still need to communicate with your spouse or you will find yourselves growing apart during the parenting years. Far too many marriages end in divorce when couples become empty-nesters, because they quit fanning the flame of marriage.

**Conc.** I’ve mentioned several different proverbs today, but some of the most important ones teach you to “trust in the Lord with all your heart & do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him & He will direct your paths.” One of the bits of wisdom I try to pick up from others who are a generation or two ahead of me is to find out what worked for them in their marriages or in raising their children. No one claims to do them perfectly, but I especially like the ones who give the Lord credit for directing their paths, even when the world appeared to offer something better. For some of you, I’m a few years ahead of you; others are in the same stage of life; several have more life experience than me. Here’s my advice (& that of those ahead of us): put Jesus first & surrender to Him. Learn from His Word & talk with Him often. Put your spouse 2nd & learn to communicate openly, honestly & wisely. Will you surrender to Jesus? Maybe you need to recommit to your marriage. Follow the Lord.