

Gospel-Centered Marriage Counseling: Four Pillars for Glorifying God through Oneness in Marriage



*Promoting Personal Change Centered on the Person of Christ
through the Personal Ministry of the Word* —Ephesians 4:15

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Presentation Focus

Every pastor and biblical counselor wants to help couples to enjoy a God-honoring, mutually-meaningful marriage. And many have taught the “leave, cleave, weave, and receive” biblical marriage blueprint. So why are so many Christian marriages struggling? In this session, you’ll learn how to use the four pillars (leaving, weaving, cleaving, and receiving) for building oneness in marriage to address *heart motivation*. Rather than practicing “solution-focused marriage counseling,” you’ll be equipped to offer “SOUL-u-tion focused Gospel-centered marriage discipleship.”

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➤ The Big Idea: Our Biblical Marriage Counseling Duty

- “The first duty of a true leader is to _____.”
- “The first duty of a biblical marriage counselor is to define _____ reality.”

I. Laying the Christ-Centered Foundation of Marriage

➤ Two Typical Marriage Counseling Problems Result When We Do Not Define Marriage Based upon God-Reality

A. Problem # 1: Self-_____ Goals—“Marriage Is about Meeting My Needs.”

- We have mis-defined the goal of marriage so that it becomes about me and my needs instead of following God’s ultimate three-fold purpose for marriage which are:
 - ✓ Purpose # 1: Every marriage is meant to represent the _____: God’s perfect relationship with Himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - ✓ Purpose # 2: Every marriage is meant to reflect _____ and the _____
 - ✓ Purpose # 3: Every marriage is meant for couples to assist each other to become more _____
- Our marriages have the calling, opportunity, responsibility, and privilege of being living pictures of the Trinity, of Christ and the Church, and of maturing image bearers!
- The purpose of marriage is to reveal God’s glory as we represent the Trinity, reflect Christ and the Church, and enhance the maturity of our spouse.

B. Problem # 2: Self-_____ Means—“Working on My Marriage Is a Self-Improvement Project.”

- We have mis-defined the problem with our marriages and, therefore, we have mis-defined the “solution” to our marriage problem. **Three false diagnoses include:**
 - ✓ False Diagnosis # 1: “We fight *because* we misunderstand each other. We need good teaching.”
 - ✓ False Diagnosis # 2: “We fight *because* we miscommunicate with each other. We need good communication skills.”
 - ✓ False Diagnosis # 3: “We lack intimacy *because* of our misunderstanding and our miscommunication. *The solution* to our marriage problems is to apply good teaching and communication skills.”

- We must hear God’s diagnosis of our true marital problem so that we can grasp God’s “SOUL-u-tion” to our marriage problem (James 4:1-4).
 - ✓ Problems in our _____ begin with problems in our _____.
 - ✓ Problems in our heart require _____-dependence, not _____-dependence.
- Much of biblical marriage counseling is exposing the old (worldly) marriage narratives and engaging people in living out the new (biblical) marriage narrative.

II. Seeing the Christ-Centered Marital Foundation at Work: Ephesians

- A. _____ God: Ephesians 1:1-23
- B. _____ before God: Ephesians 2:1-3
- C. _____ from God (For Salvation and Sanctification): Ephesians 2:4-5:17
- D. _____ through God’s Spirit: Ephesians 5:18-6:20

- Our pulpit ministry of the Word and our personal ministry of the Word both must be founded on the Gospel indicatives—what Christ has done for us, who we are in Christ—and then move to Gospel imperatives—how we live out our new life for and through the Spirit.

III. Establishing Four Pillars for Building Oneness in Marriage: Designed to Delight—Each Other and God (Genesis 2:23-25)

A. Leaving

1. What Leaving Is
2. Why Leaving Is Vital from a Christ-Centered/Spirit-Dependent Perspective
3. *Now...* Practical Implications: One Example—“In-Law By-Laws”
 - a. Other-Centered: Seek to _____/_____ your spouse’s family culture
 - b. Christ-Centered: Seek to create _____ culture to honor Christ
 - c. Marriage-Centered: _____ the husband/wife relationship

B. Cleaving

1. What Cleaving Is
2. Why Cleaving Is Vital from a Christ-Centered/Spirit-Dependent Perspective
3. *Now...* Practical Implications: One Example—“Gospel Communication Principles”
 - a. Speak _____ words with _____: 4:25
 - b. Speak _____ words with _____: 4:26-28
 - c. Speak _____ words with _____: 4:29-30
 - d. Speak _____/_____ words with _____: 4:31-32

C. Weaving

1. What Weaving Is
2. Why Weaving Is Vital from a Christ-Centered/Spirit-Dependent Perspective
3. *Now...* Practical Implications: One Example—“Tapestry Principles”
 - a. Understand that to _____ is to _____
 - b. Understand who _____ are _____ in Christ
 - c. _____ one shared husband/wife _____ narrative

D. Receiving

1. What Receiving Is
2. Why Receiving Is Vital from a Christ-Centered/ Spirit-Dependent Perspective
3. *Now...* Practical Implications: One Example—“Intimacy Instructions”
 - a. Risk _____
 - b. Respond _____/with grace
 - c. Restore _____

So What? Taking It Home with Us

1. How will your biblical marriage counseling be different when built upon God’s narrative of the ultimate purpose of marriage?
2. Consider other practical implications we use in marriage counseling (communication skills, conflict resolution). How would you use these differently with a Christ-Centered/Spirit-Dependent focus?

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