

WHEN YOUR CHILDREN ASK ABOUT MARRIAGE

Program #1032

Eddie Parrish & Mark Teske

EDDIE: One of these days, your son or daughter is going to ask you about marriage. Are you prepared to give them the right answers to their questions? Stay tuned for our study today.

(Singing)

EDDIE: Welcome to *The Truth In Love*. Along with Mark Teske, I'm Eddie Parrish. We welcome you to the program today. We hope you have your Bibles with you and are ready to study. We're going to be concluding our series of lessons today on "When Your Children Ask," as we look at a number of questions that our children at some point or another may ask us. Today we come to another of those important questions.

MARK: Each one of these studies has been predicated on an event that we see in everyday life and that our children would be asking questions about. One of the things that a child, at some point in his life would naturally attend and be a part of, is a wedding ceremony. As they go through life, they see people who are married. What's the difference between somebody who's married and somebody who's not married? How does this all work? It leads to questions and children asking about marriage. How do we answer that?

EDDIE: Well, for one thing, we need to face the reality that many of our kids today are growing up and getting their ideas about marriage from what they see on television and in movies. If our kids are getting their ideas about what marriage is supposed to be from "Desperate Housewives," then we're in a world of hurt. We've got a lot of problems,

because Hollywood is not known for its appreciation for and adherence to Biblical principles.

MARK: Also, the people who are parts of programs like that aren't trying to teach basic marriage principles. They're trying to entertain and titillate people, more than teaching them about the principles of marriage. That's not their intent. But often, that becomes the basis upon which our children learn.

EDDIE: It is. What ends up happening is the teaching that is ultimately done about marriage usually comes when marriages end up in trouble. Instead of people engaging in preventive teaching, they end up in a corrective mode, when in reality that shouldn't be the case.

The first thing that we need to emphasize to ourselves as parents and then as a result to our children, is that there's a need for teaching regarding marriage. God said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," (Proverbs 22:6). Sadly, a lot of people don't ever contemplate or think about what marriage is supposed to be like, how marriage is supposed to work and what the particular functions of a husband and wife are until they're actually in a marriage. Then all of a sudden, they wake up one day married, and wonder "now what do we do?" A lot of people aren't prepared.

MARK: So as parents, we need to be proactive in teaching our children, making sure to give them the concepts as they're young and therefore to prevent the problems before they actually occur.

EDDIE: Yes. In other important areas of life, we start teaching our kids early. We teach them how to write and how to communicate, and those are all important things. We teach them not to play with fire and things like that. Those are all important principles to learn. But so is marriage. How often do we teach our children about marriage and what marriage is supposed to be? Probably a lot of the reasons why teaching isn't done is because there are so many people that are in marriages today, and they don't know what it takes for a marriage to be what it's supposed to be. So how can they teach their children something that they themselves don't already know and certainly aren't experiencing?

MARK: You asked my own question there. Because with so many marriages and with "Desperate Housewives" being the example, so often there arises a difficult situation around the family. As a parent, I want to be proactive. I want to teach my children about these things. But where do I start? How would I bring up the subject? When my child asks about

marriage, how do I begin answering the question?

EDDIE: You have to start by teaching children respect for authority. In my opinion, it really all begins there, because children have to be taught to respect those who are in authoritative positions. They need to respect the authority of their parents. They need to respect the authority of the state. They need to respect authority of police officers and judges, etc. But most importantly, kids need to learn to be respectful of the authority of God, because marriage is a God-designed and God-ordained institution. It was God that created marriage. We didn't create that as human beings ourselves. In Genesis 2, it was God who brought the woman to the man, joined them together and created the first marital arrangement, and the first home. If our kids learn from the earliest possible days to be respectful of their parents and then ultimately to be respectful of God and His will, that's a good start to lay a proper foundation. If we can instill within them a respect for the authority of God, then when we go to God's word and show them what God has said about marriage, they'll respect it. They will see how marriage is supposed to work, and the proper roles and functions of the husband, wife and children. Then, with the foundational principle of respect for the authority of God's word, when they read about marriage and how it's supposed to work, they'll respect it and obey it.

MARK: So you're saying that as we begin to teach about marriage, we will begin, not with marriage itself, but with foundational principles, even before we start talking about husband and wife. With little kids running around the house, there are some things you can talk about, and some things you really can't talk about. Even with my five year old, can I begin teaching principles now that will help him understand marriage later?

EDDIE: Absolutely. Even the simple teachings we start with our children lay that foundation. Very early in life we teach our children about the word "no," what "no" means, and they then learn what it means to be submissive to someone who has more authority than they do, like a parent. As we apply that to God and as we teach our children about the inspiration of the Bible (as we've discussed in previous lessons), we are giving them the reasons that prove God's word is inspired and that it is a trustworthy document. In that way, we are laying a proper foundation for them so that when they grasp these principles, they will know this is what I should do, because God says so.

We also need to teach our kids that God is looking out for us. I think some people have bought into the false idea that God doesn't really care one way or the other about what we do and that He's not really looking out for our well-being. Now, we didn't get that idea from the Bible. Somehow we've come up with that on our own. The Bible is very clear that God knows what's best for us. God is the one that created us. So He obviously should know what would bring us the greatest happiness and fulfillment in life, including in our marriages. He wants us to have a happy and enjoyable life. Now, if God knows what's best for us, and also that God desires what's best for us, then our kids need to know and be reassured of that so when they read what God says about marriage, they can say, "you know what? I may not understand all those principles as to why God says it needs to be this way, but I trust Him because He knows what's best for me and He wants what's best for me."

MARK: So that underlying trust in Him and in the things He said gives us the basis upon which to jump off and build a strong marriage.

EDDIE: Right.

MARK: That proper understanding of His authority is important. He wants what's best for us. I was thinking that if we just understand that He's looking out for our best interest, that realization would help us in so many areas of our life, and would help me in my obedience to Him in the situation of marriage and other places. If I really am convinced He's looking out for my best interest, it's going to make it a lot easier for me to follow His word.

EDDIE: It is. You won't find yourself in a situation where you're questioning what He said, whether it's marriage, the church, or any other aspect of daily life. If we begin to think that God doesn't have our best interest at heart, that's when we start questioning His word. That's when we start saying things like, "Wait a minute. God says don't commit adultery. Why is He telling me not to do that? Is He really looking out for me, or is He just trying to keep me from something that would really be enjoyable and good for me?" See, if we start thinking that way about God, then we'll question everything He says and we will always wonder in the back of our mind whether or not He's really looking out for our good. But if we know that He is and we trust that He's looking out for us, then it doesn't matter what He said, or what the particulars are. If God says "Do this but not that," or "Do that but not this," then it's okay by me, because I trust God, and I'm going to do what He says, because

He knows what's going to bring me the best fulfillment in my life.

MARK: It brings a different spin to the phrase "father knows best." God, our Father knows what's best for us.

EDDIE: No question.

MARK: Are there any other fundamental principles in scripture that we need to understand to help us build this basis for understanding marriage?

EDDIE: There are. One of those principles that comes out of a respect for God's word is the need for us to teach our children the importance of keeping promises, and the importance of keeping our word. We need to teach them what it means to vow or promise something, and then the necessity of making sure that we keep that promise.

There's a passage in Deuteronomy 23:21-23 that illustrates God's view of promises and the need to keep promises. Here's what the word of God says. "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips, you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth." So you see, God says there are vows that you don't have to make. There are promises that you don't have to make with your mouth. But if you do, then you are required to keep them. The Lord "will surely require it of you," He said.

MARK: So even if the Bible taught nothing else about marriage other than what you just read, and because I stood before God and witnesses and said I promise all these things till death do us part, then I would still be bound to my promises.

EDDIE: It shows us the importance and the permanence of marriage. We'll talk more about that later in our session. But that is exactly the case. If God said nothing else about marriage in particular, just this general statement of His view of what it means to make promises, that alone would teach us something of the permanence of marriage. When we get married, we make vows. It's a major part of the ceremony.

MARK: Yes, it is.

EDDIE: And we promise, "I will stand by you in sickness and in

health, for richer or for poorer”, or as one fellow said, “for poorer and even poorer.” But regardless, we promise to stay with our chosen mate “until death do us part” and “so long as we both shall live.” Those are promises. And God expects people to keep their promises. As our children grow up, we need to teach them the importance of this: If you promise to do something, regardless of the context, then you need to keep your promise.

MARK: So in teaching my children about authority and the importance of keeping promises, I've really taught them all about marriage, without even talking about husband and wife yet.

EDDIE: Right. Because if your kids know how important it is to keep promises and that God expects us to keep promises, then when they reach the point in their life at which they're ready to get married, they will realize, “if I marry this person, I'm going to make promises to them.” They will already have a foundation that will help to solidify that marriage and keep it from falling apart.

MARK: So I will be training up my child in the way he should go, and giving him or her the principles upon which to build. And later, those principles will help guide them down the road.

EDDIE: That's absolutely true. I couldn't have said it better myself. Since we mentioned the permanence of marriage earlier, we'll go ahead and talk about that now. The permanence of marriage is another one of those principles that we need to teach our children. Beginning with the general principles of being respectful of God's authority and being respectful of the scriptures, and moving to the general principle of what it means to make a promise, the importance of that to God and how God requires us to keep our promises, then with that foundation we can start applying some of those principles to the specific questions of marriage. One of the foremost principles about marriage that our children need to learn growing up is the permanence of it. The permanence of marriage is a concept that's fallen on hard times in recent generations. Marriage to a lot of people today is not a permanent thing.

MARK: It's a tax deduction.

EDDIE: Yes. Exactly. It's not much more than that to a lot of people. It's a living arrangement that, “we'll try it for a while, and if it doesn't work, , we'll just get a divorce.” Divorces are so easily granted in our culture. We have things in our country called no-fault divorces which basically say, “the breakup of this marriage is nobody's fault, so we'll just

dissolve it, and go start another one.” With divorce being so easily granted, the permanence of marriage is a concept that is absolutely foreign to the thinking of so many people today.

MARK: If people would write their vows in their marriage the way they really think marriage is and should be, I think the vows would probably read a whole lot different from what you and I as preachers get up and talk about.

EDDIE: Even though I haven't witnessed this myself, I've heard others say that in some marriage ceremonies today, promises are not made to extend “so long as we both shall live,” but “so long as we both shall love.” That leaves people an “out” that says, “yeah, I'll stay married to you until I quit loving you. And then after that, all bets are off.” That is so opposite of the way God designed the home. But it just illustrates how far our culture has drifted from Biblical morality.

MARK: The first time she squeezes the toothpaste the wrong way...

EDDIE: That's it.

MARK: ...I'm out of here.

EDDIE: That's it. I'm gone.

MARK: What other passages in scripture do we have that help us to understand the permanence of marriage?

EDDIE: Jesus was asked a question about marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. The Pharisees asked him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” (Matthew 19:3) In other words, they were asking about the teaching with regard to divorce. In the Lord's answer to their question, He took them right back to Genesis 2 to try to emphasize the permanence of marriage. And in a couple of places, He speaks very definitively and clearly, like in Matthew 19:6. He says, "So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh." That's drawing on the Genesis 2 example. And then He adds, "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder," or let not man separate. There's a statement to the permanence of marriage.

MARK: God has brought them together, and for us to divorce is man separating what God has already brought together .

EDDIE: Yes. God says not to do that. His critics came with this question. And when Jesus answered them, they then responded by saying, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?” (Matthew 19:7) His answer was that Moses didn't

command that. Moses allowed you to do that because of the hardness of your hearts. Then He adds, "From the beginning, it was not so" (Matthew 19:8). It was never God's desire for marriages to ultimately be broken. But for a period of time, it was allowed, though it was not God's ideal arrangement and situation. In Matthew 19:6-8, you've got clear statements about God's desire for marriage to be a permanent arrangement.

MARK: So you're saying that God brings them together, and that's His design and His plan. How does He feel about divorce?

EDDIE: He feels a lot differently about it than a lot of people today do. Malachi 2:16 states very clearly what God says, I "hate putting away". Some translations use the word divorce there, and rightly so. "I hate divorce," God said.

MARK: That's a pretty strong statement.

EDDIE: It is strong. A lot of people probably don't realize that is in the scripture, but that doesn't mean that we ignore it. But again it is another example of how foreign some Bible teachings are to people in our culture. We've gotten so far away from allowing God and His word to direct our lives that for somebody to say that God hates divorce, people are saying, "what are you talking about? And what planet did you come from?" Well, it's been in the Bible all this time. You see, the problem is not with God and the problem is not with God's word. The problem is that we have allowed ourselves to stop being acquainted with and studying the word and now we don't know what it says anymore.

MARK: So God wants us to keep our vows. He doesn't want us to break our vows. In Matthew 19, it even says that He's joined us together in this process, and He hates it when we separate and divorce.

EDDIE: Right. That's true. Now, the interesting thing is in Matthew 19, though God does not desire ultimately for divorces to happen, He did indicate in verse 9 that there is an exception and a situation in which God would allow and approve of a divorce and a subsequent remarriage, and that is in the case where fornication is involved. In other words, if a man and wife are married, and let's say for the sake of argument that the husband commits fornication. He is sexually immoral, or sexually involved with somebody other than his wife, and that is fornication. God would allow that wife, the innocent one, to put that guilty husband away, and then she would be free to contract another marriage with God's approval. But Matthew 19:9 is the

only exception. Jesus said, "Whosoever puts away his wife and marries another except for fornication commits adultery." That new union is not a marriage. If a divorce happens, and if that divorce was not for the cause of fornication, then Jesus said that new union (remarriage) is adultery, which again highlights the permanence of marriage. God wants marriages to stay intact. To break those marriages up for reasons other than fornication is something that God simply does not approve of.

MARK: As we talk about all of these principles and how important that covenant is and that vow that we've made, to say that because of adultery you can break that covenant up, really highlights how tragic adultery really is.

EDDIE: It is. For God to be so concerned about keeping marriages together, then for Him to come along and allow an exception to that does, indeed, highlight the awfulness of the exception, and the awfulness of fornication for God to allow a marriage to end. Yet so many marriages have been ended because of that kind of unfaithfulness. But our children need to know that. Our children need to know as they are going into marriage that God does not approve of breaking up a marriage. The teaching needs to be done early on, so that our children don't find themselves ending up in unions which the Bible defines as adulterous. Yet so many today are. But if our children are raised to understand these principles, it will make a huge impact on who they choose to date, because you're never going to marry somebody that you don't date first. So kids need to be made aware of that and not start dating people that are not interested in doing God's will, and to marry only those people that are trying to do what God wants them to do.

MARK: We talked before about prevention being much better than the cure. So applying that principle, we should take those proactive steps as parents before the problems occur, cut them off, and prevent that problem from even happening.

EDDIE: Right.

MARK: In doing so, we can make everybody's life a little happier. That sounds like good parenting to me.

EDDIE: It is. It's exactly good parenting. Nobody likes to see their children in any kind of distress, but especially when parents see their children growing up and getting into marriages that are not what they ought to be, because one or both of them are not living up to Biblical principles of morality and teaching. If we can prevent that by teaching

them while they're growing up, then it'll be all the better.

MARK: Eddie, as we talk about marriage, let's talk about the relationship itself. Are there any hints or any things that we can do to help out in the marriage relationship itself?

EDDIE: We need to show our kids what a happy marriage is, which means we need to be in one that's good in the first place. If we can top all of that teaching off with showing them a happy marriage, then that will help them as well.

We appreciate very much you being with us today as we've talked about marriage and the importance of it. We've talked about not only the importance of teaching, but the importance of showing our children what a happy marriage is. We need to be able as husbands and wives to know how to handle our disagreements and settle them without violence and things of that sort, because our children are going to learn what they see. We can teach them by word all of the important principles, but if they don't see us living those principles, they're going to learn more by what they see than by what we say. So let's give them the teaching they need as they are growing up, about marriage and what the scriptures say about it, but we also need to be in the right position to show them what a good marriage is.

If you'd like to have a copy of today's lesson, we'd love for you to have one. We have it available on audiocassette tape or CD and even DVD. Regardless of which one you'd like to have, they're all free. It won't cost you anything. Just contact us at P.O. Box 865, Hurst, Texas, 76053. You can also send us an e-mail, if you'd like. Our address is requests@thetruthinlove.com. Or if you can access our website, you can contact us through that means, www.thetruthinlove.com.

Mark, I appreciate you being on the program again today.

MARK: It's a pleasure, Eddie.

EDDIE: I think our study was good. We invite you to come back and be with us next time.

© 2006 The Truth in Love

Eddie Parrish, Speaker
Mark Teske, Executive Director

The Truth in Love
P.O. Box 865
Hurst, TX 76053

www.thetruthinlove.com
requests@thetruthinlove.com