**7 SENSES OF MARRIAGE : VISION**

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There's a pandemic out there. Have you heard about that? It's everywhere around the world and there's obviously a serious side too at a life and death situation to it. But also on the other hand, there's a lot of smoke and mirrors involved. We're freaked out about the pandemic, but I would argue there is even a greater pandemic in our world today, and that is over marriage. There is some sickness, some problems, some issues about the foundation of our culture, and we don't really talk about it.

Now and then our culture will address it, but we're not really facing it head on. If the truth were known, our nation and I would say our world is anti-marriage. We're not pro marriage. Name an entity that is pro-marriage other than the church. You would be very hard pressed to do so. You might could come up with one nuance here or one anomaly there. But for the most part, marriage isn't really the deal. Why is that? Obviously, we know our great God has a great plan for every life here and for most of us, that great plan involves marriage. God has a plan, a purpose for marriage. It's great. It's abundant. But on the other hand, the enemy has a plan for your marriage in mind. The enemy always wants to thwart the gift of God.

I've had the opportunity for decades now to speak about marriage, to write about marriage, to lecture about marriage, to counsel people going through different marital issues. I feel unqualified every time I talk about marriage. I haven't arrived yet. Lisa will tell you the same thing. Marriage takes work as we all know. We all face the same issues.

Don't look at me and go, "Wow, they must have this storybook romance 24/7. They must never have the problems or issues or arguments over the subjects that we have." that line of thinking is false. I'm going to talk with you, not at you, and I want to share with you over the next several weeks something that I've never shared before about marriage. I'm probably going to write a book on this subject. It's called the "7 Senses of Marriage".

We have senses, obviously, and a lot of times we use the senses reflexively. Now and then, we'll use them intentionally. Just like today, I woke up, so did you. I woke up, opened my **eyes**, I saw Lisa lying there next to me and I **heard** our cat, Meow-Meow. That's her name. It's not Meow. It's Meow-Meow. I heard her Meow. Then I walked into the kitchen and **smelled** the coffee. I'm a coffee snob. I'm sure many of you are as well. Then I **tasted** this massive breakfast that Lisa makes for me every morning. I'm just joking. Some of the guys were like, "What?" No. No. I haven't had breakfast this morning. Then I **thought** about what was on the agenda today, this message. I thought about all the time and energy that I've put into this series along our team. Then I **felt** nervousness. I feel anxiety every time I speak. Whenever I don't feel any anxiety, which is rare, that's when I worry. I get nervous every time I stand before people, especially when something like this is on the agenda. Then reflexively, I **kissed** Lisa, she was putting her makeup on, so I kissed her on the forehead, and walked out of the house. I used my eyes, ears, nose, taste, my mind. I used feelings, emotions and touch.

What if we could touch the senses every week in our marriage? Over the next several weeks, we're going to do a census on our senses. We're going to really get intentional about going through all of these senses, the senses that Lisa and I are going to discuss. They're not always what you think they would be, but I'll promise you something. If you're willing to work, if you're willing to do the hard yards, your marriage will be better. It'll be stronger.

I know in a crowd this size here and online and at our different environments, I know a lot of people are watching and you're like, "Ed, you have no idea. You have no clue about my marriage. I'm ready to call the lawyers. I have had enough." You're right. I don't know, but I know in a crowd of this size, there are people going through situations like that.

I want you to know that we have been praying for you and we identify with you and we want you to lean into this series. Others here, you knew what was on the docket and you still had the courage to walk in here and listen and pray and hear the voice of God. Because all I've got when it comes to marriage is not about me or about Lisa or about this and that, it's about what God says. That's all I've got because without the Lord Jesus, Lisa and I would not be married today, and you wouldn't either.

Others here, you've been married for a long time, like Lisa and I. I don't care how long you've been married, we all need a booster shot, multiple booster shots. Booster after booster after booster. Unlike the boosters that we're talking about in our culture, these marriage boosters actually work. They do.

You might single, you might be a kid and you're like, "Man, this doesn't relate to me. Are you kidding me?" Well, I would beg to differ. In fact, I would say it might relate to you more so than someone like me who's been married for 40 years. Because it'll arm you with the stuff that you need as you go about this whole spouse selection process. The seven senses of marriage. Can we hit on the seven senses of marriage? I believe we can and we're going to discover in this journey how to do so.

A friend of mine said the other day, he goes, "Ed, marriage is like a walk in the park, Jurassic Park." I said, "I know what you're saying." It is in a lot of ways. Guys, when we get married, the husband loses his bachelor's degree, but a wife gains Master's degree. It's okay to laugh. There's a little truth in all of that. That's why humor is humor. I saw a guy yesterday opening a car door for a woman and I said, "Hmm, that woman A, is either his girlfriend, B his new wife or C that's a new car."

Marriage is not the easiest thing. It can become the greatest thing when we're willing to put forth the effort. I've got to say, though, that marriage is about the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what marriage is. It's about the gospel of Jesus Christ. You hear me say all the time, because it's throughout scripture, that marriage is the only relationship that mirrors God's relationship with his people. The gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what it is. In marriage, there needs to be a death to self, a burial and a resurrection. We have an opportunity because Christ is in us to tap in to that power, that resurrection power that brought Jesus back from the grave. It's the only power that can give us unconditional love.

Think about it. We have an opportunity to reflect the gospel. What do you see when you see marriage? Seriously, what do you see? Think about your eyes for a second. I would dare say most people that you talk to, if you just did a straw poll at your school, your office or around their neighborhood, and you ask people, "Hey, what is marriage?" I promise you 99% would go "screensaver" on you. "It's a platform for procreation." Oh yeah. A little bit. "It is something you just kind of do. It's the capstone of a young man or a young woman's life, and it's about romance and all those things." Yeah. They're partially true, but that's not really what marriage is. Marriage is a picture, an image, a mirror of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It illustrates in human form God's love for his people. Marriage is marriage and we're married to glorify God. When we look to Jesus, we see the gospel. When people look at your marriage and mine, they should see Jesus.

It's easy to say that. Sounds cool, but it's difficult on those rugged plains of reality, isn't it? We need to know what marriage is so we can know what marriage does. What is marriage anyway? Marriage is about the eyes. It's about vision.

Have you ever thought about how much time we spend at trying to be good looking? We all want to be good looking, don't we? Don't we? Well, that's cool to be good looking. As we know, looks fade, but I want you to think about spending time being good at looking. Where are you looking? Where are you getting your cues when it comes to marriage? It comes from the person of Jesus.

I want you in this series to use your eyes and to use your eyes when you get home to **look upward**. That's the first thing that will bring in a successful marriage. Look upward. I have a painting in my house that I did years ago in one of the sermons of Jesus. I see this painting a lot. And of course, being a frustrated artist, I like to critique the painting and I would change this, change that. The way the painting is positioned, the way I sit in this chair, I'm always looking up into the eyes of Jesus.

That is where marriage happens. That's where marriage takes place. Because without Jesus, why even get married? Without Jesus, I wouldn't be married, Lisa wouldn't be married. In fact, Lisa and I, during our 40 years of marriage. We have gone through five of the eight markers of divorce, and we didn't even know it. We were talking this summer to a woman that helps us with some of our books, and she was challenging us to write a book about marriage and about pain and other subjects. We were talking to her in these meetings and Lisa began to talk about that and this agent that works with us was shocked that we had gone through those. We're going to talk about those things over the next couple of weeks. The five of the eight devastating issues that we've gone through in a marriage. How do we get through it? One word, Jesus. Looking upward.

I'm not saying it flippantly. I'm not saying it casually. I'm not saying it, wow, okay. Yeah, of course he's going to say that. I'm saying that's the situation. The Psalmist said this about looking up, in **Psalm 5:3 (NLV), "In the morning, O Lord, you'll hear my voice. In the morning I will lay my prayers before You and will look up."** Look up. When I look to Jesus, I'm going to see the **perspective** of marriage like I can't even get my brain around, away from him.

You know we have a retina in our eye. You've heard about that. When we use the retina, the world is upside down. But as it's filtered through our brain, our brain turns it right side up. Isn't that crazy. We see everything upside down with the retina. Then it goes through the brain. It inverts it.

When we have Christ's perspective in our lives, when we have the mind of Christ, when we've acquiesced to Jesus Christ, we're going to see things in the flesh upside down. But because of Jesus, what happens? Our perspective changes. The mind of Christ puts things right side up. Our culture is seeing things upside down. We shouldn't expect anymore. Our culture says, oh yeah, if you're feeling it, it must be real. I deserve to feel and to be happy. If he or she, if they don't satisfy me anymore, I'm out. It's like, no big deal. A disposable marriage, like taking out the trash, disposable razors, everything else is just disposable. It's no big deal. We need a perspective. God's perspective from marriage. Also, looking up gives us **power**. I'll say it again. We can tap into the power of the Holy Spirit of God who gives us the ability when you're in that argument, that conflict to look to the cross. And as we see how readily we've been forgiven, it should rush us to forgive our spouse. We can walk in the **presence** of God as well. God is always with us. He's always looking at us. He wants us to look at him, look up.

As I was writing this message, I want to read something that I wrote in my journal. I just started just flying through this. Marriage is more about **commitment** than **comfort**. It's more about **sacredness** than **satisfaction**. It's more about **faith** than **feelings**. It's more about **devotion** than **delight**. It's more about **God** than **gratification**. It's more about **worship** than **wants**. It's more about your **spouse** than **yourself**. It's more about **submission** than **selfishness**. It's more about **purity** than **power**. It's more about the **gospel** than **gladness**. It's more about **holiness** than **happiness**.

All those things, obviously, are results in having a great marriage. Are you going to be comfortable? Yeah. Satisfied. Okay. Feelings. You'll have feelings, but feelings come and go like the tides. Will you be delightful? Yeah. Will you have gratification? Yeah, sometimes. Will you have your wants and desires met? Yeah. How about yourself? Yeah. Your self will get some good stuff. Selfishness? Yeah, sometimes I'm selfish, and I get what I want, right? Power. Yes. The power. That's always an issue with the power, who makes the choice, who makes the decisions. How about gladness and happiness? Yeah, you can have those in marriage, but those aren't the main things.

Marriage is more for our holiness than our happiness. People say, Ed, are you and Lisa happily married? No, we're not happily married. We have moments of happiness. We're not happily married. We are holistically married, and I say holistically in the best sense of the word. So, look up. That's the first thing when it comes to using your eyes. Look at God's definition of marriage. Why are you married? It's about Jesus. It's about the gospel.

Another way we can use our eyes is **look inward**. **2 Corinthians 13:5 (ERV), "Look closely at yourselves. Test yourselves to see if you're living in the faith."**

Have you ever had an eye exam before? Eye exams are strange. You go a darkened room. It's just you and the doctor. He closes the door. You're like, this is kind of weird. But you want to pass the exam because it's called an exam. You're just looking, and he puts this weird machine right in your grill, in your face. You put your chin and he gets closer and closer. It's really, really strange. You can smell his coffee breath. He talks in a soft voice. "Hmm," he said, "Mr. Young, did you know your left eye is set lower than your right eye?" I'm thinking, "No." "It doesn't affect your vision. I just thought you'd want to know." I'm thinking, "Oh, great. I'll have a inferiority complex for the rest of my life." Now, let's see here, this or that? Go back to the first one. This or that? Oh, and I'll find myself pressing and squinting just to try to read those letters. You have the giant letter. Of course, everyone gets that, and it gets smaller and smaller. Our vision is a top priority, right? Our vision.

We have a vision for so many other things. A vision at work. A vision for kids' successes, a vision athletically, a vision if we're a hunter, a vision for a house. But do we regularly think about God's vision for the marriage because when we look up only God gives us the opportunity and the ability to look in. It's called being self-aware. You've heard me talk about it before. There is no way you're going to be self-aware unless you see yourself the way Jesus sees you. It's not going to happen. A lot of us are afraid to do that. It's like, whoa, man, I don't know about that. Because in marriage, when you look into your spouse's eyes, reflected back is who you really are. That messes a lot of us up. No wonder we don't want to work on that. We spend all this money helping our kids become better athletes. That's cool, club, cheer, and soccer and basketball and football, and on and on and on. Then we take these golf lessons and spend all of this money, and we're hunting. We're taking trips and doing this and doing that. Yet, for the life of me, I look around and I'm like, why aren't these seats packed? You mean to tell me that you'll do all of that other stuff, crap, and you'll miss out on working on the most important human relationship on planet Earth.

As you look around more and more use your eyes, you see our culture has gone totally and completely off the ranch. We're trying to redefine marriage, tweak marriage, change marriage. I'm sorry, but your neighborhood, my neighborhood, your culture, my culture is not pro-marriage. But God is, and God's way works.

Look upward, look inward. Do you know yourself? Then **look outward**. Look outward to your spouse. That's the third thing. Look upward, inward, and outward. The Bible says in **Philippians 2:3-4 (NIRV), "Value others more than yourselves. None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others."** It always gets quiet when you talk about marriage. I dig it. I understand because it's so real. No wonder people say, "I'm not sure I want to talk about marriage. I'm not sure I really want to deal with that because it's just a little bit too convicting."

Here's what happens. People come to me. They come to the church when too much marital water has gone under the bridge, and they say, "I even went to church, and they couldn't change me." Give me a break. Now's the time to work on your marriage. Now's the time. I know there are reasons for divorce, biblical reasons. I hope you hear me. Addiction, abuse, adultery and abandonment, I understand that. I get that. My heart goes out to those here who've gone through that. But most of us, the majority here can work through these issues and have a fantastic marriage. What is your perspective when you look at marriage?

I remember several years ago, a wealthy lady wanted me to speak on this island in the British West Indies, She flew Lisa and I down to this island. I'm not going to name the island and she had this compound. She goes, "You guys just stay with me at the compound. Then I want you to do this conference on this island." So we were like, "Great." She put us up in this room. I've never stayed in a room like this in my life. Lisa and I are looking around and we see the ocean here, we the ocean there. And I go, "Lisa, we have a 360 degree view of the ocean. Sick. Must be Nice." That's the kind of view that God wants for you and you and you and you and you and the future spouses here. He wants us to have his perspective. Marriage is not the easiest thing. It can become the greatest thing, which at this moment in time, my marriage is, if you're willing to work.

I've only been sexually with one woman in my life, Lisa. She's only been with one man in her life. Me. It's because of God's grace and power. Young people, it's not worth it to go to bed with someone outside the marriage bed. Because when you do, when you get married, you'll always bring that sexual history back into the bedroom. Don't do it. Do it God's way. And by his power, we've done it his way. I want you to do it God's way. I get sick and tired of people going, yeah, I was this and that, I was a pole dancer and I was a gigolo, and Jesus changed my life and now I'm married. Okay, good. Awesome. Where are the testimonies of purity?

Where are the testimonies of you know what? I've lived the life. You are looking at someone by God's power and God's grace who has lived the life. Not perfectly. Oh no, no. But when are we going to stand up, when are men going to be men and women going to be women and say, "You know what? As for me and my house, we are going to serve the Lord."

This is a critical series. This is not some lightweight series. This is not Christianity 101. The gospel is about vision. Jesus looked at your sin and mine. He did something. He died on the cross for it. He conquered death. Now he offers you the gospel. Make that decision today to live out the gospel in your marriage because only then will your marriage make sense.

Jesus, thank you for what you've done for us. I thank you for marriage. I thank you for your death, burial, and resurrection. It's my prayer that we would say to husbands and wives, I want to die to myself. I want to bury my selfishness, my chicanery, my pride. And God, I want a new power which comes from you, Jesus, a resurrection power operative in my life. It's my prayer that any decision we make in marriage would be reflective, God, of your glorious gospel. I pray Lord that we would walk with you and use our eyes to look up and in and out. For Christ's sake, we pray. Amen.