

Sermon for March 3, 2024

BMZ Church

Series: TRUTH FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Text: 1 Corinthians 13; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 4:2; Hebrews 13:4

Title: "Truth for MARRIAGE"

Introduction: WELCOME, BACK ROADS CHURCH! Glad you're with us TODAY as we KICK OFF **"TRUTH for RELATIONSHIPS"**!

LAST WEEK, I was unable to PREACH due to ILLNESS, so we took a COMMERCIAL BREAK from TRUTH for RELATIONSHIPS and were REMINDED of WHAT we DO as FOLLOWERS of JESUS. We SHARE JESUS with OTHERS! This is so IMPORTANT ... like, RIGHT NOW! As we HEAD towards EASTER (when people go to church), and WHILE there is a SURGE in INTEREST in CHRISTIANITY ... the TIMING is RIGHT to LEARN AGAIN HOW to INVITE a NON-BELIEVER to WORSHIP WITH YOU... MORE about this as we get CLOSER to EASTER ... Back to the TRUTH SERIES ...

AS we CONTINUE, let's be REMINDED that no matter HOW the REST of our LIVES are GOING, IF our SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS are NOT GOOD, our QUALITY of LIFE is NOT GOOD. The QUALITY of your LIFE is DETERMINED by the QUALITY of your RELATIONSHIPS. AGREE?

NOW, if we are RESEARCHING **"TRUTH"** ... TRUTH for RELATIONSHIPS, we are going after GODLY TRUTH. Like, WHAT does GOD WANT for US? Well, GOD does NOT want you to have OKAY Relationships. HE does NOT want you to have PRETTY GOOD Relationships. GOD wants YOU to have the BEST RELATIONSHIPS POSSIBLE this SIDE of ETERNITY. He LOVES YOU and wants the BEST for YOU, so He GIVES us TRUTH to FOLLOW. Will WE TRUST Him? SO FAR, we've APPLIED this to DATING and FAMILY. If you MISSED THOSE ... well, DON'T.

TODAY ... MARRIAGE. If GOD wants us on the BEST PATHWAYS for our RELATIONSHIPS, then HE INVITES us to HIS WAYS for RELATIONSHIPS. MARRIAGE ... LIKE DATING and FAMILY, we have a CHOICE to MAKE. Will I FOLLOW the WORLD'S ADVICE or The WORD'S PRINCIPLES?

Here's MY FEAR – TOO MANY MARRIED couples are SETTLING ... SETTLING for a VERSION of MARRIAGE that the WORLD OFFERS without REALIZING it's just a CHEAP IMITATION of what GOD CREATED MARRIAGE to BE!

Listen, there are NO PERFECT MARRIAGES, so STOP EXPECTING YOURS to BE. BUT we can CONTINUE to LEARN to make it THE BEST it can BE in a BROKEN WORLD. Please HEAR me – GOD LOVES MARRIAGE, and God LOVES YOUR MARRIAGE!

OK, GRAB your MESSAGE NOTES, and let's START with JESUS' TALKING specifically about MARRIAGE ... **MARK 10:6-9 = But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. 7 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, 8 and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, 9 let no one split apart what God has joined together.**"

Please UNDERLINE **"What God has joined together."** This is the HEART of what we're TALKING about. MARRIAGE is GOD'S PLAN. HE CREATED IT ... BUT SOMETIMES, we CUT God OUT of the MARRIAGE and THINK we can MAKE the RULES. Here's a TIP: DOESN'T WORK. ONLY God's TRUTH for MARRIAGE brings FULFILLMENT.

Let's read this verse together ... **PSALM 127:1 = Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.** You can keep TRYING to BUILD your MARRIAGE YOUR WAY, but you're WASTING your TIME! Today ... GOD'S WAY!

Four Decisions for the Best Marriage Ever

Here's some GOOD NEWS: These DECISIONS are IMPORTANT, but NOT IMPOSSIBLE. These are GODLY DECISIONS that will make a SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE in your MARRIAGE / FUTURE MARRIAGE ... and OTHER RELATIONSHIPS. #1 ...

#1 = CENTER My Marriage on JESUS

Any TRUTH for MARRIAGE is BASED on THE TRUTH. Jesus SAID HE is the TRUTH (John 14:6), so let's BEGIN with HIM. To have the BEST MARRIAGE EVER, it MUST have JESUS at the CENTER. It's JESUS who GIVES you LOVE, STRENGTH, and COURAGE to PUSH THROUGH when HUMAN LOVE FAILS and things get TOUGH.

PAUL ... **2 CORINTHIANS 5:14 = Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.** As FOLLOWERS of JESUS, we ALLOW Christ's LOVE to CONTROL US ... we GIVE OVER CONTROL to HIM as LORD. Jesus EMPOWERS US and DIRECTS US. We INTIVE HIM and ALLOW HIM to LIVE IN and THROUGH US.

Well, if JESUS is IN ME and IN CONTROL, and JESUS is IN SARAH and IN CONTROL ... IF JESUS is LIVING IN and THROUGH BOTH of US, then we will have FEWER FIGHTS. WHY? Because JESUS is NOT going to FIGHT MUCH with JESUS.

I'm NOT trying to be WEIRD, but IT'S TRUE. IF BOTH are COMMITTED to and MOVING TOWARDS Jesus, it BRINGS you CLOSER to each other. Again, NOTHING will bring you CLOSER to your SPOUSE than if you are BOTH MOVING CLOSER to JESUS ... no matter HOW DIFFERENT you ARE from your SPOUSE.

Anyone here consider yourself DIFFERENT from you SPOUSE? Like, the phrase OPPOSITES ATTRACT is YOUR STORY? NOW, after 35 YEARS of MARRIAGE, we've sort of BLENDED TOGETHER, but there are STILL some STARK CONTRASTS!

We DON'T AGREE on some FOODS, what TIME to GO to BED, MOVIES / SHOWS, ACTIVITIES, RAISING our KIDS and FAMILY STUFF ... I'll get to COMPROMISE in a FEW MINUTES ... But even though we are VASTLY DIFFERENT in MANY WAYS, the ONE thing that PULLS US TOGETHER over and over again and ALLOWED US to COMPROMISE on THESE and BIGGER THINGS, is the FACT that we are COMMITTED to JESUS. The GREATEST THING you can EVER DO for your MARRIAGE is to place JESUS at the CENTER. HOW? **THREE DECISIONS:**

- 1) INDIVIDUAL – as an individual you INVITE JESUS INTO your LIFE. Each person must, at some point, CHOOSE to FOLLOW JESUS as LEADER of your LIFE.
- 2) COUPLE – as a COUPLE you COMMIT your MARRIAGE to JESUS and AGREE to TREAT EACH OTHER in the SAME WAY JESUS TREATS US.
- 3) COUPLE to CHURCH – One thing that will BOOST your MARRIAGE is COMMITTING to a CHURCH TOGETHER ... Growing in FAITH, Sharing it with OTHERS ... TOGETHER!

DID you know the DIVORCE RATE among those who CLAIM to be CHRISTIANS is only a LITTLE BETTER than the NATIONAL DIVORCE RATE? 50% BUT the DIVORCE RATE among CHRISTIAN COUPLES who are ACTIVE TOGETHER in their CHURCH and are taking STEPS to GROW TOGETHER in their FAITH ... Less than 8%!

WHATEVER AREA you put GOD FIRST IN, HE will BLESS ... **MATTHEW 6:33 = Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.** This INCLUDES our MARRIAGES. CENTER your RELATIONSHIP on JESUS.

#2 ...

#2 = **CREATE BOUNDARIES In My Marriage**

NO matter how STRONG your MARRIAGE is, you will FACE TEMPTATIONS. IF you do NOT KEEP your GUARD UP, there are LINES that GET BLURRED and CROSSED. In a RECENT STUDY on INFIDELITY, they FOUND that AFFAIRS are MOST LIKELY to OCCUR TWO YEARS into a MARRIAGE. 7 Year Itch? 2 YEAR ITCH! BTW – MOST AFFAIRS Begin at WORK ... and OVER 10% of AFFAIRS START ONLINE.

THEREFORE, we need BOUNDARIES in our MARRIAGES. Draw LINES. REFUSE to CROSS them! **HEBREWS 13:4 = Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.** What we KNOW is that INFIDELITY NOT ONLY HURTS YOU and your SPOUSE, but IF KIDS are INVOLVED ... it can LAST for GENERATIONS. WHEN God JOINS TWO into ONE and that ONE RIPS APART, there is a LOT of COLLATERAL DAMAGE! INFIDELITY and UNFAITHFULNESS are HUGE to GOD ... they need to be to us ... CREATE BOUNDARIES!

Now, MOST AFFAIRS do NOT START with someone CHARGING ACROSS THE BOUNDARY! Most affairs START with some TIPTOEING ... SMALL STEPS to get CLOSE to the BOUNDARY ... CHECK the WATER with our TOES ... maybe TEXTING or MESSAGING someone you SHOULDN'T be TEXTING or MESSAGING ... RECONNECT with someone on FACEBOOK you really do NOT NEED to CONNECT WITH. Spending time ALONE with someone you SHOULDN'T. Then, there's an EMOTIONAL connection that should NEVER have HAPPENED. It seems INNOCENT until it's TOO LATE!

So, SET your BOUNDARIES BACK far enough from the EDGE so you NEVER get CLOSE. Please allow me to OFFER some **GODLY BOUNDARIES**. Write these down. 1) **Never EAT or TRAVEL ALONE** with someone of the OPPOSITE SEX. IF you MUST (work), TELL your SPOUSE ALL about IT! 2) **Don't HUG PEOPLE** of the OPPOSITE SEX. IF the Situation makes it NECESSARY, do the SIDE HUG ... and TELL THEM, "*I'm going to do the awkward SIDE HUG.*" 3) **Never COMPLIMENT** their LOOKS. Compliment their clothes / shoes / work, but NOT their LOOKS! 4) **DON'T FLIRT**. When you're MARRIED, there's NO SUCH THING as HARMLESS FLIRTING! BUT DON'T LOSE the ART of FLIRTING. FLIRT like CRAZY with your SPOUSE (today)! 5) REMIND each other of your **WEDDING VOWS** ... in sickness and in health. 6) **SPEND TIME** every DAY with EACH OTHER ... even a BRIEF DE-BRIEF of the DAY. 7) **SPEAK POSITIVELY** about your SPOUSE EVERY CHANCE you GET! Some of these seem a little OVERBOARD, but I'd rather have OVERBOARD BOUNDARIES NOW, than to get THROWN OVERBOARD LATER by SARAH or the CHURCH!

IF MARRIED, SET and MIND your BOUNDARIES! I understand, AVERAGE MARRIAGES DON'T have BOUNDARIES. We're going for the BEST MARRIAGES. #3 ...

#3 = **COMPROMISE My PREFERENCES For My Spouse**

This is IMPORTANT BECAUSE COMPROMISE is a BIBLICAL MARK of GENUINE LOVE! Compromise is SELFLESS. BEWARE if you FIND yourself ALWAYS DEMANDING your OWN WAY in your MARRIAGE! Like, IF you STOOD at the ALTAR and said, "*I DO,*" but were THINKING ... "*I WILL as SOON as I FIX HIM! He's BROKEN, but I CAN*

GET HIM INTO SHAPE!” ... You're SELFISH. You're FORCING another PERSON to BE WHAT YOU WANT! That's ALL about YOU. NO MARRIAGE is ALL ABOUT EITHER ONE! There is NO PERFECT SOUL MATE. There is NO PERFECT MAN or WOMAN. We're ALL BROKEN. BEST PLAN? COMPROMISE!

Listen to PAUL'S (that he got from Jesus) DEFINITION of LOVE ... **1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-5 = Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.** Remember, CHRIST-LIKE LOVE is UNCONDITIONAL and MARRIAGE is like a SCHOOL for GROWING CHRISTIAN MATURITY. You are DIFFERENT from your SPOUSE, and you will have DIFFERENT IDEAS and PLANS. When there is CONFLICT, a GREAT TOOL to GROW your FAITH is COMPROMISE!

Think about the CONFLICTS around VACATION, FAMILY EVENTS, HOLIDAYS, DINNER, DATE NIGHT ... WHAT MOVIE? HOUSEHOLD CHORES, CARTING the KIDS, INTIMACY ... WHEN? How OFTEN? These can be a TUG-of WAR, right?

OTHERS are NOT. IT is EASY to COMPROMISE on SOME THINGS. I'm COLOR-BLIND. If it has to do with COLORS, I DEFER to SARAH. SHE HATES shopping for CARS. She DEFERS to ME. BE CAREFUL if you THINK YOU have to CONTROL EVERYTHING. There is NO COMPROMISE THERE... **Memory Verse - EPHESIANS 4:2 = Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.** Okay ... LAST DECISION for BEST MARRIAGE ... **#4 = COMMIT To My Spouse For A LIFETIME**

So, Jesus at the CENTER, CREATE BOUNDARIES, COMPROMISE my PREFERENCES and COMMIT to my SPOUSE for FOREVER! COMMITMENT is a SCARY WORD and CONCEPT many people do NOT LIKE. But IF you take a CLOSER LOOK at PEOPLE'S PROBLEM with COMMITMENT, you BOIL it DOWN to ONE WORD ... SELFISHNESS. People STRUGGLE with COMMITMENTS to OTHERS because IF they COMMIT, they MIGHT NOT GET what THEY WANT. They might need to COMPROMISE!

Have you EVER HEARD in MOVIES when a GREAT DECISION is MADE and the KEY CHARACTER says, **"I've GOT to DO what is BEST for ME."** Do you know what? NO, YOU DON'T! IF you keep DOING what is BEST FOR YOU, you are going to get MORE SELFISH, BITTER, and LONELY. STOP DOING what YOU THINK is BEST for YOU and START DOING what GOD THINKS is BEST for YOU ... that will be what's BEST for your WHOLE FAMILY.

God SAYS to KEEP our COMMITMENTS EVEN IF ... ESPECIALLY WHEN it's HARD! Sometimes the MARRIAGE COMMITMENT is HARD. So, here is a WORKING DEFINITION for COMMITMENT in MARRIAGE ... **"COMMITMENT is the WILLINGNESS to be UNHAPPY UNTIL we WORK it OUT."**

I VOWED before GOD ... **"UNTIL DEATH DO US PART."** That's the PLAN. Honestly, I HOPE I DIE BEFORE her. I'd be SO LOST WITHOUT HER. Then I REALIZE I'm BEING SELFISH. That's what I WANT. BUT I can't SAY I HOPE SHE DIES FIRST, right?

I pray every day that God will HELP ME SEE SARAH as HE SEES HER. She is a PRECIOUS, BEAUTIFUL CHILD of GOD. She is UNIQUE and SPECIAL, and I am a BLESSED MAN. I want to LOVE HER MORE EVERY DAY for the REST of my DAYS.

JOSHUA 24:15c = "But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

Let's Pray!

Next Steps: *Memorize Ephesians 4:2*
Read 1 Corinthians 13
Sign me up for GG#_____

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!
 In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.
 It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is HIT "**SEND**" your COMPLETED Connection Card

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As our ushers GET READY to come forward

- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **JOSHUA 24:15 = "But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."**
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- Next Week: **EXTREME ... What does GOD'S WORD SAY about HONORING GOD?**

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

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