

Radical #10

Radical Marriage

Eric Cepin

3-12-23

Being a disciple is radical and extreme: Luke 9:23 is our anchor, our theme verse, that tells us to take up our cross and follow Jesus. We've been applying this idea to many different ideas: courage, waiting, hospitality, gender, ect. Today, we will talk about radical marriage...and this applies to singleness as well.

Point #1: The Gift



In this modern age, most of you have read many books on how to have a good marriage: steps and philospities are abundant. There aren't as many books on how to be single, though. I want to take a different approach that I hope applies to you wherever you are in this. Being single or being married is a gift.

I feel honored when I get a gift from my children; likewise, when an adult gives me a present, I feel honored because someone spent time thinking about me. Living radically is realizing that whatever state you are in is a gift. Yesterday was my mother's 80th birthday and I was watching how our family honored my mother by giving her gifts.

I Corinthians 7 is a beautiful, radical chapter about marriage. It says a woman's body is not her own but belongs to the man. This was not very radical but it also says that a man's body belongs to the woman: this was radical in the first century. You cannot hold your body or possess it. In verse 7, it says:

I Cor 7:7

I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

He wants to hammer home that the state you are in is a gift. So my **first point** is that to live out a radical life, no matter what, it's critical to realize the state I'm in right now is a gift, an opportunity. Anchor here.

Point #2: Very Important Pastor

Let's go back to the sermon on Radical Ministry: each of you is a Very Important Pastor. This defines and drives you if you own it. Listen to what Peter says:

I Peter 2:9a

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,

When I was young, my mother had a ceramic cross which was important to her. It was hanging on the wall and one day as we were doing dishes, things were flying about and the cross fell down. It was precious to her, a special possession that she cherished. Our singleness or our state of being married is like this: This gift is something that God is deeply engaged in and wants us to live out.

We are royal priests and very important pastors: in fact, this is key to having a radical marriage. When I am helping people with their marriages, the main questions I ask are, "What kind of pastoring is happening in this marriage? Do these people understand themselves as pastors to one another?"

In I Peter 2, Peter says that pastors must declare to each other how they moved from darkness to light and offer spiritual sacrifices. What are the spiritual sacrifices of a priest?

- binding up, tending to wounds
- pointing people to Jesus
- engaging people with Jesus
- offering peace, grace, love, and mercy to others
- calling out good qualities
- Honoring and developing others

When both a husband and wife think of themselves as priests in a marriage, it is not about them but it is tending to the souls, hearts, and minds of their spouse and children. When you struggle in marriage, I would argue that this priestly identity is not being practiced.

As a single person, this is also true. You are called to pastor the people in your sphere or those in the community you are in. When a single person puts this aside, they become toxic and selfish. Likewise, when this happens in a marriage, Larry Crabb would say it's like two ticks and no dog: you are trying to draw blood (satisfaction) where there is none. You try to get the person to do what you want to help you feel good about yourself and make life work. In other words, you become manipulative.

You must be anchored in the belief that your state right now is a gift: as a single person, you cannot be searching for a spouse but rather must see this moment as a gift and that you are a very important pastor with people to take care of.

Point #3: A House of Spiritual Offspring

I have noticed that in the church, people often get married and step outside of the church and decide that their little family needs walls and that their marriage needs protection from the church. They see the church as a utility to help them have a better life, not a community to build. Therefore, they limit the amount that the church can influence them. They don't submit everything and so end up the outside. On the opposite end, if the church is a lonely place to be sometimes people can see marriage as the end goal. This person decides they don't fit and also ends up on the outside. But Paul says"

Building a house with spiritual offspring

Eph 2.21 In him the **whole building** is joined together and rises to become a **holy temple** in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being **built** together to become a **dwelling** in which **God lives by his Spirit.**



Notice when God's people gather and are being built together as a temple, the veil between heaven and earth is thin and the voice of the Holy Spirit should be able to be heard more clearly. You cannot be outside of the church and be radically single or married. Your state as a married or single person will be radical when you are willing to submit it to the people of God. Your calling is not just to your husband or children but to a whole collection of people you are called to invite into your life and space. As a single person, as you step in and see the church as a place where you have spiritual offspring that you are called to disciple and engage with and be transformed by.

Point #4 Your identity

These next three ideas are from **John 15** and Henry Noewen and others. I want you to understand what motivates us and who we are as people. **John 15** is a fascinating study on human beings and what they need.

1. All of us need and long for intimacy and need to know we are loved.

John 15:4

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Jesus is saying that you don't need your husband or wife or someone else to have intimacy. This is powerful! The only way to know you are loved is by choosing to remain in Jesus. This is the only place of true fulfillment. In marriage, we think that our spouse should take on this role and affirm that I am loved. I do this, too! I go to Susan and I would rather abide with her to get what I need. When you are willing to go to Christ for this, it is beautiful because your spouse begins to experience Jesus! In marriage, you do get to taste different forms of intimacy: physical, relational, spiritual, emotional. Single people, for the most part, do not get this in a tangible sense. This is my advertisement for offering a hug to a single person. As a married person, you are called to attend to your single brothers and sisters, to go out of your way to check on them and encourage them in their relationships with Jesus.

2. We need to have an impact.

John 15: 5

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

When things don't go our way, we shut down. We cut off emotions, expectations, and desires. Or we go the other way and do, do, do and try to accomplish things and numb the feeling that I don't have an impact. Then, there is no intimacy or impact.

This verse says that if you have intimacy, you will bear Jesus's fruit. People will taste Jesus as a result of what you offer. When you offer Jesus, you will have a sense of impact, regardless of what people say. This works whether you are single or married: you have the long-suffering, peace, love, care, forgiveness of Christ. We bear much of these when we remain in Jesus.

3. Out of our need and impact comes joy.

John 5: 11

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

We have lots of words for bad things because they are static but it's hard to describe joy. Joy is always new and changing and bubbling up. Jesus says when we offer HIM, he will bring us great joy. This is the key to a wonderful marriage even if your spouse doesn't think you have a wonderful marriage is to understand your ID as a pastor. Know that you can experience and offer

the love of Christ. You may feel lonely at times but you will have joy in your marriage and in your singleness. Things will be different around you! I guarantee it. But If you are fighting and demanding people love you in a certain way, you will be lonely. Jesus is saying this is what you are designed for. He can give us the ultimate joy and impact.

Point #5: Mission

Matt 28: 19-20

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

What is my (our) mission? You are called to make disciples in marriage and singleness. This is your ONE mission: to make disciples in your family and church, to baptize and teach what you know. This is what drives you and what you should be about! Everything falls through this grid.

Let's add something to single people:

I Cor 7

32 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. **33** But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—

This repeated for the woman as well. Paul's challenge is that single people have one concern: the Lord and making disciples. In fact, in the community of God you are called to be the leaders of discipleship making. This is a weighty calling. I invite you to ponder this: what does it mean to be a disciple maker in this community? Single people will need to get their hands dirty in married people's lives. Married people need to ponder how they can support single people in this endeavor. We need to talk about this mission.

Challenge: Married people need to open the door to single people. Invite a single person you know to your house and ask their input in how they see you minister. Give them 45 minutes to tell you how you impact them: what you see in your marriage, the good and the bad. Ask them where they see sin in your life. Do not argue with them even if you disagree. You can do this with teens as well. This takes courage and a voice for the single person and for the married people. The church community is important and marriage is a building block in this community. This is about single people leading the mission. Ask God, “what am I called to do at the Village right now?”

Point #6 - Submission

Finally, we must talk about submission. Eph 5 asks us to submit to one another. This means to organize oneself under another person. Under the person we are subject to

Eph 5:22-24

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Reverence can also be fear of Christ. The presupposition is that we are already subject to Christ. Submission is a military, power word that means organizing yourself underneath someone else. You can see the humor when two people are trying to organize themselves under each other: When you submit to someone, you are putting them into a power position. I think Paul is transforming this word (like he did with other words) and offering a different view, one which is very important when it comes to radical marriage. A healthy marriage involves both spouses understanding what submission looks like.

In Genesis 1, Adam and Eve stand next to each other, not one in front or one behind. In Genesis 2, Adam is created first and he names himself and then Eve which means “one who comes alongside to aid and to help.” Paul is trying to show us that Christian service is to come alongside one another to aid and help. You are to do this for me and I am to do this for you. It looks a particular way for women and men. I think this is mind-blowing:

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

This does not mean the wife submits to her husband in everything: if he wants to rob a bank, she is not to submit. There is a context.

If submission is coming alongside and to rescue, and that is what women are called to do, the question is, if women are in Christ, how did Christ submit? We have to go back to John 4 where Jesus says he doesn't do or say anything that the Father hasn't told him to do or say. If you've seen Jesus, you've seen the father (John 14:9) and in the Garden where Jesus said “Not my will, but your will” (Luke 22). The invitation for a woman to submit and be in Christ is for her to understand that she is one with her husband and that she speaks for him and represents him. His will on the mission is what she is called to aid and come alongside and support. This is a hard teaching but that is what Jesus did.

In a culture where women were nothing but owned, **Gal 3:27** says “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Now women are not second-class citizens and sons...but this does not mean men lord it over you. It is the way of Christ and that is to give yourself to one whom you have been bonded with.

Husbands also have a role:

Eph 5:25-27

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her **26** to make her holy, cleansing^[b] her by the washing with water through the word, **27** and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

What Paul is saying when you look at a marriage and see how they interact, you should see Jesus and the church. When he tells men to submit, he is telling men to do what Jesus did to the church and reverse it.

Gen 3:16

16 To the woman he said,

“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.”

Paul is telling men to honor their wives. What did women lack in the first century and also lack today? Honor. The way that a man submits to his wife is to invite his wife into the place of honor and to come back alongside him instead of in front or behind and invite her into the place of sonship.

How did Jesus treat women? Chat GPT gave me four pages on this! Jesus honored women in a place where there was no honor. Husbands are called to honor their wives. When Paul tells women not to be noisy, etc., he is telling them to be in a place where they are in a position of honor.

When I was praying this morning, I felt God telling me to close this message with:

I Cor 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

As you live in radical singleness, what you do in Jesus has a point. In marriage, when it feels pointless, and you struggle to step in, it is not worthless in Jesus.

Questions from a.m.

How can I show respect to a person who is struggling with their gender? [You listen well, ask good questions: “tell me more about this, sounds like, explain a little more about this”...also if you think someone is in danger, you talk to someone who can help. You pray; the spirit will help them move in the direction towards God. You fight the enemy on their behalf.](#)

Do we treat our teens like single people? [You disciple them by helping them express their thoughts constructively.](#)

I'm noticing that we have no one on the leadership team who is single other than the pastor's daughter: it's really hard! [Single people, step into this!](#)

Metaphors: we deal with time as a possession and not a gift: we need to stay present to the moment when we have this belief.

How can a family cultivate its own culture within a community? [Genesis and Ephesians tell us a man is called to fuse himself to make a new family. This unit is important. My challenge is that we want to close the holes where people could impact us: we need to be more pourish. We tend to worship the god of family and we worship our kids and our experiences with our family: we want to develop something better than what we have. But it is not separate from the church.](#)