

Over You!

Empowering Authentic Families [Part Two]

The Purpose of This Series: These six messages are for the purpose of equipping individuals who are planning to or are already in a marriage. We want to assist marriages in reaching their highest potential of relationship and effectiveness. Some of the teachings may be lessons already learned, but it will never hurt to brush up to renew their simple truth. Other things might become a new revelation, and just in time, because we are not getting any younger. Keep your hearts open to allow the Holy Spirit to give you new insight to what will give you the ability to live in a life relationship as God expected marriage to be.

The Purpose of This Message: There are times in our life where we attempt to show love and it is never returned. This could happen in family relationships, social settings and at work. This love that I am talking about is powerful because it is not the affection that you might experience when you are overwhelmed in love, but it is the love that causes you to overcome every diversity and survive every fracture. This is the Love we want to talk about today. This is the love that Christ wants us to have for each other and the Love that Christ has for us.

Erwin McManus tells the story of a billboard that became very controversial and popular in the city of Los Angeles, California. The billboard read:

“Life is Short, Have An Affair.”

Our natural inclination is to begin a discussion on adultery and what the Bible has to say about that. But the interest of why or who put that up Billboard became a churning question. After some research, one of the staff members of his church found a website link to the billboard and found a membership that boast of 1.6 million members. It is a site that you can pay money to find someone to have an affair with.

The site is supported by a foundation that believes this,

“We value and hold to a belief in individual rights and the human condition.

- The positive affect of women in modern society in business, sex and family life.
- The evolution in female sexuality and democratic principals upon which this country was founded are the basis for our philosophy and our corporate giving program.

The foundation gives money to non-profit organizations addressing critical issues in the area of civil rights and civil liberties, freedom of expression, human sexuality, women's rights, and health.”

It would seem right that we just dive into all the Biblical passages that would reveal the truth on all that was just read, but really that is obvious...or I hope so. And just to keep it real, if the question is, “Is it alright to have an affair?” The answer is, “NO!”

But there is another question begging to be asked here. A question that actually goes deeper to the core of our very being and that is,

“What really makes a person free?”

What is the essence or purpose of freedom? As we look at the “values” of the foundation that supports the billboard, some of their key words were, individual rights, civil rights, civil liberties, freedom of expression, women's rights... You might consider yourself a fighter for freedom, and as Christian's that is part of our role. But here is a question that screams to be considered,

- Does everything you do for freedom actually make you free?
- **Is it the freedom to choose that makes you free?**
- **Is it what you choose actually makes you free?**

Somewhere, somehow, down the road we began to believe that the freedom to choose actually made us free. The freedom to choose made freedom. Somehow the whole wisdom of this has absolutely been lost and keeps us from realizing that not all the choices we make will actually give us freedom. Obviously you have come to the understanding that your freedom to choose doesn't always mean you end up with more freedom. Right?!

- Sometimes the choices we make actually costs us our freedom.
- Sometimes the choices we make limit our freedom.

Whether you realize it or not, every choice we make either expands our freedom or limits and takes from our freedom.

Hugo Chavez: It hasn't been but a few months where the Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez attempted to use the democratic system to have his country vote for ultimate rulership. In other words, he attempted to get the country to vote for him to become Venezuela's unchallengeable dictator. The vote failed, but not by much. Somehow he has convinced himself and obviously thousands of others to vote away their own freedom.

You can actually give away your freedom within the confines of freedom and be limited in the future. Look what Solomon has to say about this:

“I thought in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.” But that also proved to be meaningless. “Laughter,” I said, “is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?” I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.”

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3

“What is worthwhile for everyone to do during the few days of their lives?”

- **Life is short...both Solomon and the Billboard agrees, at least on the first half of that phrase. And, if that is all that it said, I would encourage everyone of you to post a picture of that Billboard on your refrigerators, because we constantly need to be reminded that “Life Is Short.”**
- There are times when you think life is as slow as a turtle. You are wondering when will things ever pick up, when will things ever change, when will my kids ever grow up, when will my spouse ever change?
- Here's what I've learned, the older you get the faster it goes! Life becomes a blur. You wonder where everything went! I remember when I used to think that everyone that is my present age was next to their last breath. I used to think that older people were so slow, but everything is flying past them. Life is short.

- You look around our church and you realize that the kid you just prayed for in the hospital after it was delivered is now walking and the next minute you see them they are starting school and before long, I'm sure, I'll watch some of them play football at a High School game or play in a High School production. Life is short!
- We get in such a hurry to get somewhere else that we don't know that we are passing up the best parts of our life. Without knowing it we are inundated with offers of “**sustenance**” abuse!
- **Merriam-Webster Dictionary: Sustenance- means of support, maintenance, or subsistence. It is something that gives support, endurance, or strength**

Solomon's Realization

Solomon was coming to the realization that you don't really get all those breaths, that the choices you make can define or at least help shape your future, either for the bad or the good. There is a realization that we all must come to that Solomon came to, and that is “Life is short.” And you need to figure out what you are going to do about that.

The longer that you continue to go down your road of life without reviewing it, possibly blaming everyone else for it, being infuriated at your job for it, cursing your parents because of it, secretly being resentful and holding God hostage for it, you will look back, if you are fortunate enough and realize all the wasted years that was spent for unimportant reasons.

I believe today that there are probably more people, in their old age who looks back on their life and see it as waste rather than a life well spent with a sense of meaning. Obviously we all know this, we know that life is short, and every day we are drawing closer to a shorter life.

Marriage and Relationships

Maybe you have a marriage or relationship and it isn't working out the way that you thought it should. You come home to a cold house and an empty relationship and all you think you can do is find one more thing to distract you from the reality of your marriage and home. You tried pleasures, you attempted laughing your way out of it, you worked at getting more mentally positive, cheering yourself up. And at times you just got plain stupid. You did dumb things that if fully revealed you would be embarrassed for even your best friend to find out. You may have done something that you don't think your marriage could survive or something that you don't think your relationship with God will survive over.

One of the saddest things is that there are many homes that are not at peace that there is no warmth when the two are together. As a matter of fact, things are a little better when the two are apart, there is no stress and no friction. So you dive into other things that Solomon describes to try and make it one more day.

“I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.”

Ecclesiastes 2:4

Solomon found himself taking on projects, building houses, planting vineyards, gardens, parks and planted fruit trees. He was doing things for himself, doing things for the “business,” just doing things to see what would happen when he planted this and planted that.

“I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female

slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

Ecclesiastes 2:4-7

He created his own irrigation system, created an enterprise of slaves, cattle and sheep, more than ever recorded in Jerusalem's entire history. Talk about distracted, he was absorbed with it. He was so focused on nothing he didn't realize that he was actually accumulating "nothing."

What is so dangerous about the sign in Los Angeles, "Life is short, have an affair," is that when people drive past it, it has a way of going straight to the pain of their heart, the shallowness of their relationships and the failures of their dreams. And they realize that there is something missing in their life and they become susceptible to the suggestion that there is something of worth over there.

Here's what we would hope, and that is that Cornerstone Church becomes a sign. And somehow in a passing glance the reality of one's cold heart and dead relationship would be made aware of how short life is and that maybe, just maybe there is something on the other side.

There is so much pain and tension in so many homes. So many words have been carelessly thrown out that the baggage is so heavy it seems hopeless...no, more than that, impossible! They don't like who they are married to or who their children are, and what's worse is, they don't like who they are. So they dive in to things that offer, maybe not a way out but at least a way to **avoid the void**.

"I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me."

Ecclesiastes 2:8-9

MORE IS NOT BETTER- Now you can see him move into the political realm, acquiring wealth, expanding his kingdom, building the best late night show rock band that man could ask for and had any woman he wanted. He had the best of everything. Again, he exceeds anyone who had ever lived before him.

MORE IS JUST MORE- It leaves you empty in the end. It ends up with a projector at the end of your life seeing the true value of everything you sacrificed or sacrificed for.

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

There was an interview with the individual who hosted the particular website I had discussed earlier. The question was his motivation for doing so. One of his responses was, "Well people are having affairs on their spouse and we are just trying to help them alleviate any shame that someone might feel when they do that." But in the end of that interview it was

finally directed to this question, "You really do it for the money, don't you?" And the guy said, "Yes." Because it really doesn't matter what you do in this life, get what you can, while you can.

See, he doesn't want to worry about the consequences of his thinking. He doesn't want to think who it might get hurt. He doesn't want to consider that life is really short and that all that he has accumulated will one day end up to nothing. Honestly, I have never met anyone who had an affair where it went well for everyone involved.

When you are in the relationship and you are convinced that this other person really loves you or that it will all work out, you are in deception and I have never found a person caught in that trap to ever be able to know exactly how that will affect everyone involved. How it affects the kids, the extended family, the job situation, the places you go and eat, where you buy, shop and hang out. Life literally flips and what you considered a freedom has now given way to burdens that hang in your heart and your mind. Eventually both parties began to feel used or wasted.

I can't tell you how many people, especially men who lost everything they loved. Everything that was precious to them. It is the most painful experience I believe I have ever been a witness to. It is the closest to the death of a child I believe I have seen.

One of my dear friends told me recently that his one, stupid mistake took so much from his life that it was almost unbearable. All of this based upon a short enticement with a sexual fantasy that turned into a reality.

When they look back they didn't only lose their wife but the trust of their children. How deceptive this who mess is. How painful and confusing.

See, many of you don't have to go too far to relate to what I am telling you because you remember when your dad stepped out on your mom or the other way around. You recall the pain of that situation and all the questions that filled your mind. You are living proof that it didn't go well with your dad, mom, brothers or sisters. Some of you are living proof that the pain doesn't go away after a month or two, or in one sweet drop of Jesus love the whole incident has been wiped from your past. You are still devastated.

Just because you have the freedom to make a choice doesn't mean you don't have the freedom in that choice!

James' Reflection

Here are some key observations James makes for us to recognize found in James 1:14-15,

1. We are all tempted to be drawn away

*"...each one is tempted **when**, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

James 1:14-15

Fasting/Dieting- Have you ever been attempting a fast or a diet and that's the day someone decides to bring their famous baked bread or cookies? You have listened to God or prayed for direction, you focused on your target, one day, three days, 20 pounds and all of a sudden you pass McDonald's...hummmm that sounds really good.

For some reason McDonald's sounds so good to you. You haven't eaten there in quite a while, at least day before yesterday. But for some reason you don't even realize that temptation is nudging you. See, the temptation never comes when you are looking in the mirror does it. You never stand in front of a mirror and see the Arby's sign above your head. The voice, though we would claim it is the devil doesn't come with a gravelly voice, but much like a friend...a good friend.

Cinnabon- I remember walking through the malls where the Cinnabon's franchise would be strategically placed in the food court. It had the sweetest voice...:) It was quickly renamed in my family, "Sinabounds." There was no question as to what that meant when "Sinabounds" was spoken.

Here is the reality,

"If you don't take care of what you are hungry for you will end up eating what you don't really want."

What they have learned is that **starving** yourself **can actually contribute to unhealthy eating**. I believe that many people who attempt to live for God are not on an intentional diet, but are starving. They are so hungry for a deeper more meaningful relationship but the other spouse is unable to deliver because of past offenses or wounds that was brought into the relationship long before they met.

What **Solomon** is **explaining** is that what your **soul longs for** is a **life** that is **healthy** and **beautiful** and **true**. Our **soul longs for love, intimacy and relationship and community**. What our **soul longs for** is **meaning and purpose and value**. And if we **don't find that** in the way that **God** created us to we are **going to find other avenues** of attempting to **fill** that **void**, at the **fast food chains of your life**. Have you ever **wondered** why they call it fast food "**chains?**"

We are going to yield to the temptation to take the unhealthy offer and in the process contribute to the failure of someone else.

James tells us that we come **prepackaged**, not pure, but with a **lean**. We are all **tempted by something**. There is **something** that we are probably **good** at that can eventually get us in **trouble**. We are **great at our job**, but it really is more than that, we are **great at working**. We can **crank it out** and so we do. We spend **endless hours** perfecting whatever it is that we do, fixing, refixing again and again.

Some of us are **great at relationships**. Talking to others in a crowd is not problem at all. You are gifted at connecting with others and leading a discussion and without knowing it your gift has turned into a discussion that doesn't glorify God or it goes a little deeper with another individual, it got personal, and the void that you have aching inside your heart to be known, to be loved, to be valued begins to guide that conversation with the opposite sex. You didn't see the three yellow lights you passed on the road you were taking.

We are all tempted by something and it is more than likely found in what we are good at. It may not be sexual, but here are a few that I think God might be addressing today, you may be enticed:

- To make verbal statements whenever you feel like it without ever considering

what you are saying or how it may cause that individual to think toward another person.

- You might be enticed to lean toward rebellion and resistance. You can't tell the difference between a good debate and an all out fight to win. You resist just to resist, there are no real reasons sometimes.
- There are some who have a pleasure to watch others fail. For some reason you seem to find out the weaknesses of others and take pleasure when you become aware of that weakness.

There is something in each of us that is attracted to a specific sign. It calls your name and reveals the lack of satisfaction that you are facing in your life. It walks with you all the way through the process. It tells you that you can get away with it, that it's not that big of a deal.

1. **We are all tempted to be drawn away.**
2. **Our evil desire tempts us.**

*"...each one is tempted when, by **his own evil desire**, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

James 1:14-15

Jesus teaches us that we are more than just this material being. There is more to this life than the 70+ years you might live on this earth. When you see this activity so rampant and alive in you, you can see why many people are enticed to be a part of some religious cult to suppress all these inter-workings and emotional challenges. You can see why some have given over to the idea of Chaos, that what was once evil is now permissible and promoted and encouraged because in that only true freedom can be found. But that freedom of choice does not lead to real freedom of the soul.

1. **We are all tempted to be drawn away.**
2. **Our evil desire tempts us.**
3. **Temptation is always a process, never an event.**

*"...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, **he is dragged away and enticed**. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

James 1:14-15

We don't realize that the journey that we get on is not a slippery slide, but somehow we are so enticed, the hand that has my hair in it seems to be doing me a favor! That's what enticement is, the luring and eventually "dragging" away.

The night before I got married, my brother-in-law thought I needed a bachelor party. There were a few of my buddies who gathered around me while we were eating pizza. I didn't see it coming. They tore my shirt off and de-pants me and wrapped me in a blanket, carried me down stairs and put me in the back of a pickup truck. They sat on me until we were in a Wendi's parking lot about a block down from the apartment where we were staying. That's where they threw me out.

Can I tell you, I wasn't thinking I needed a "Frosty" or a hamburger. It didn't cross my

mind that I could easily walk up to the drive up window. Food was not on my mind, being naked and getting arrested was!

That's exactly what happens in our enticement. **We are stripped of everything we have thinking we are gaining everything we want!** I didn't realize how difficult it would be to maneuver back to a place where I wouldn't get caught. So many people struggle, attempting to get back to where they were before because they didn't realize the process they were caught up in. All they see is that they find themselves in the middle of a Wendi's parking lot, totally exposed and about to be revealed. Temptation is a process, it is never an event.

1. **We are all tempted to be drawn away.**
2. **Our evil desire tempts us.**
3. **Temptation is always a process, never an event.**
4. **Desire + Temptation= Cycle of death**

*"...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after **desire has conceived**, it **gives birth to sin**; and sin, when it is **full-grown**, **gives birth to death**."*

James 1:14-15

The Real Life

*"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would **come after me**, he must **deny himself** and **take up his cross** and **follow me**. For whoever wants to save his life will **lose it**, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*

Matthew 16:24-25

Jesus tells his disciples very clearly what He is expecting them to do concerning **having a meaningful life**. Actually Jesus is telling us that life and the meaning of it is found fully in the way you *come after Him*. He tells them that there is more than just being satisfied sexually or relationally. He is saying that the more we try to satisfy ourselves, all we have in the end is more, but more is not better. Solomon proved that for us.

Jesus was telling them that there is a connection between time and eternity and this moment that you are living. You can try your whole life, trying to accumulate everything that you think will make you happy but you are going to lose your soul. Because it is more than this. If you were about to own everything that has been created you would find that it is not everything that it is talked up about, because there is more than this. He gives us three components in doing that.

Poverty- When a person grows up in poverty, it's hard to believe that there will be enough for tomorrow. And you can hold on to things thinking that you will never have any more.

In a since, we are all like this and we have the tendency to believe that this is all there is and this is all that life has to offer and we get distracted and enticed, dragged away by the head of our hair thinking that we are actually "being led."

This desperation begins to entice us and we see that life is short so we look at ways to

take shortcuts in our work, in our family and in our relationships. Life is short, so we start taking advantage of others, we don't consider our ways. We start living in desperation...because life is short!

John 10:1 – In John 10:1 Jesus tells us,

"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber."

John 10:1

This scripture came to life for me when it comes to relationships. I would actually question about 90% of our marriages today. Not that they are unfaithful, but that they were ever built on proper principles when they began. Jesus says that there is a way to do things, and if you go outside those perimeters then there is only one way to look at it, "your are a thief and a robber."

I realized that I got married for all the right reasons, but for some of the wrong ones too. I believed that I made the best commitment I could make at the time, but over time all the inconsistencies and selfishness and self serving heart began to be revealed to me and I had a choice, to hide that revelation or change.

For years Carol and I had learned to love and serve each other, but there were pockets where manipulation, selfishness and plan old selfishness ruled and reigned. I would scratch her unhealthiness as long as she would tolerate mine. And that was confronted in during my prayer life one day. It wasn't a total exposure of all the unhealthiness that we had grown accustom to. But like dismantling a building, one brick at a time. There were so many areas I was walking through the proper gate with my wife. But then, through the help of the Holy Spirit, He began to reveal to me areas where I was jumping the fence or climbing the wall.

I had learned early in my marriage how to get what I wanted and Carol had grown accustomed to it. Some of the areas weren't really a big deal, but they were areas where I was not honoring her or being committed to her with assuring words or kindness. God's revelation of this started a change in our marriage and a healing in me. All the things that I had attempted to get over the fence is now freely given through the door.

See our wounds and hurts cause us to try to take, rob or steal, what is rightfully ours. Jesus said, "If you go through the gate, it's yours." Some of you are climbing the walls to get what is rightfully yours, but you will never have it. The joy of it will somehow escape you because it is stolen, not given. Here's what Jesus says in Matthew 16,

*"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would **come after me**, he must **deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*

Matthew 16:24-25

1. **Deny Yourself**- See, the ability to discover this real life is found not in your ability of resisting temptations, it is found in the process of being less focused on yourself. Less of what I want. Less of what I think. Less of what I must have! Some people have made a religion out of becoming less. But Christ didn't stop

there.

2. **Take Up Your Cross**- This is not a ball and chain, this is allowing the Holy Spirit to shine in your heart and life. The cross is symbolic of keeping your life in check. Keeping you from being enticed, not only living in denial, but living dead! Notice again, Jesus isn't saying, "Let me put this on you." Jesus is asking you, "Take it up!" He doesn't walk around and put things on your back, we put on our back what he put on His back, a life that refuses to be enticed with the presentation of what this world might have to offer to fill our void.
3. **Follow Me**- There is an effort on our part that we take the initiative to move from where we are and "follow" after Him. **He is not going to pull you out, but He will lead you out.**

Conclusion:

Jesus is very clear with what He asks of us. He knows exactly what we need and what is eternal. He wraps up His discussion with His disciples when He tells them,

*"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 27For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."
Matthew 16:26-27*