

Family Ties



Touching Lives
WITH JUDITH MERRILL

FAMILY TIES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Series Summary

In this series, Dr. James Merritt will explain how he is absolutely convinced not just from a biblical perspective, but from a social and cultural perspective that the family is still a vital institution, and marriage is where the family begins. It is still God's best plan for the beginning of the family and the continuation of the family. He will dive into the different pieces of a family and what the Bible has to say about each of them. And He will ultimately point us back to Scripture as we learn more about how God intended for the family to look, live, and love.

Love And Marriage

Family Ties | Week 1 | Genesis 2:18-25

INTRODUCTION

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Marriage is tough. Marriage is hard work. Dating reveals the best in you; marriage can reveal the worst of you. But that doesn't mean marriage isn't worth pursuing. Marriage was God's ideal idea. It was His creation, and therefore it is meant for good. Does that mean it doesn't come with challenges? Absolutely not. But it does mean that marriage can be an incredible tool of sanctification and a beautiful model of God's relationship with us if we will lean into learning how God intended marriage to be. So with this in mind, let's take a look at three principles of love and marriage we need to recapture in the present day.

KEY POINTS

1. We Should Experience Marriage As The Supreme Companionship

God never intended for humans to be alone. From the very beginning of mankind, Adam needed a companion. He needed someone like him that he could communicate with and share life with. His plan was to give Adam a "helper" suitable for him.

I would like to point out here that the English word "helper" is probably not the best translation for the Hebrew word "Ezer." Normally when you think of a helper you think of someone that is just an assistant that may be needed or may not be. It may surprise you to know that the word is almost always used in the Bible to describe God. Actually, it is used eleven out of fifteen times to describe God. Other times it is used to describe military reinforcements that are needed to win a battle. It is actually someone that is necessary to make up for what might be lacking in strength or ability.

The word "helper" is not a menial term that makes a woman simply "man's assistant" or in any way less equal to a man. The word has the idea of supplying something that would otherwise be lacking. In other words, God created marriage to be a supreme companionship made up of two equal partners – two teammates working together toward a common goal. Therefore, if that was God's viewpoint of marriage, it should be ours as well.

Love And Marriage

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2. We Should Envision Marriage As A Sacred Communion

The only person you should consider marrying is the person you truly believe God has brought to you. It may sound idealistic to you, but I still believe that God is in the building business and God is in the bringing business.

The point I want you to grasp is marriage is a divine institution. Marriage is a sacred communion. It is God’s ideal idea. And therefore marriage will always be the ideal relationship between a man and woman who want to build a life together because it is a sacred, divine godly communion.

3. We Should Enter Marriage As A Steadfast Commitment

Once you understand marriage as the supreme companionship and as a sacred communion it stands to reason that you should go into a marriage with a steadfast commitment. To break down what that means practically, let’s look at the detailed instructions for the first marriage described in today’s key passage.

The man is to leave his father and his mother. In other words, the primary allegiance now of the man is not as a son to parents, but as a husband to a wife. This doesn’t mean that you ignore your parents or disrespect your parents or quit loving your parents, but it is a matter of allegiance.

There is also the matter of permanence. “A man is to leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.” The word “united” literally is translated as “hold fast.” It means to be “glued to” or “be cemented to.” Do you know what every husband is to do with his wife once he marries her? He is to hold on to her for dear life no matter what. It is the attitude of a husband that says to his wife, “As soon as the wedding is over if you ever leave me I am going with you.” Marriage has to be that kind of commitment, not just practically, but biblically, spiritually, and theologically.

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Love And Marriage

Family Ties | Week 1 | Genesis 2:18-25

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does God's idea of marriage differ from the world's idea of marriage?
2. What did you learn about marriage from this message that you didn't already know?
3. If you are currently married, how has your marriage helped you grow in your relationship with the Lord? If you're not currently married, how has the Lord used godly marriages around you to point you to Him?

Here Comes The Groom

Family Ties | Week 2 | Ephesians 5:23, 25-33

INTRODUCTION

I don't believe there has ever been a marriage in the history of the world that did not end up happily ever after when the wife was the wife God wanted her to be and the husband was the husband that God wanted him to be. This week and next week, we are going to see what Scripture has to say about what it looks like exactly to be the kind of husband and the kind of wife God wants. In Ephesians 5, we begin with the husband. It is extremely important to note that Paul takes more time and gives more space to what he says to the husband than he does to the wife. In fact, he says three times as much to the husband as he does to the wife. So let's look at what exactly a good, godly husband is to do for his wife.

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KEY POINTS

1. Lead Humbly Like Jesus

“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” (Ephesians 5:23). The word “head” in this verse means “authority.” Being an authority or in authority does not mean being authoritarian. There is nothing in this word or this passage that says a husband ought to be a dictator, a despot, or a drill sergeant. If we are to be like Jesus, then that means we need to lead like Jesus.

When you study Jesus as a leader you will find that people didn't follow Him because they had to; they followed Him because they wanted to. The way God wants you to lead your wife is by serving your wife because Jesus came to serve us. If He is our example, then we need to love and lead our wives with humility, kindness, compassion, selflessness, grace, and servanthood. As the husband, you are the leader, but you are to lead humbly like Jesus.

2. Love Sweetly Like Jesus

Husbands are to love their wives the way that Jesus loved the church. How do we know He loved the church? He gave his life for the church. The way you love your wife the most is not through giving her diamond rings, cars, or houses. In a real sense, it is giving her your very life. The real simple test of whether or not you love your wife like you should is, “Do you love her enough not just to live for her, but to die for her and to die to you?” The best way you can love your wife is to quit worrying about what she brings to you in the marriage and focus on what you can bring to her in the marriage.

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Here Comes The Groom

Family Ties | Week 2 | Ephesians 5:23, 25-33

Have you ever thought about what the word “husband” really means? It comes from the word “house-band.” The husband is a band that is to stretch around his wife and his family, protect them, provide for them, preserve them, and promote them to godliness and goodness. This is what Jesus is doing for the church and that is what we should do for our wives.

3. Live Continuously Like Jesus

Marriage at its deepest level is a copy of the relationship between Christ and the church. Every marriage is to be a model of that divine relationship between Jesus and the church. The relationship is based on a life that keeps the covenant.

Just like Jesus, we are to keep our covenant. Jesus is going to keep His covenant with His bride the church. Husbands, we are to keep our covenant with our bride that God has given us. There is something you may not like about your marriage, but the key to staying married, is not to stay in love with your spouse. The key to staying married is to keep your promise.

If you are a husband, you owe it to your wife to keep your promise. You owe it to your children to keep your promise. You owe it to your God to keep your promise. You made a covenant with God when you got married, and God is going to keep His end of the covenant. Therefore He expects you to keep yours.

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Here Comes The Groom

Family Ties | Week 2 | Ephesians 5:23, 25-33

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Does the way Jesus models leadership in Scripture seem counterintuitive to you? Why or why not?
2. What is one way you can show selfless love to your spouse this week? If you're not married, how could you show selfless love to a friend or family member?
3. When was a time you kept a promise to someone, even when it was difficult? How can you apply what you learned from that situation to your marriage?

Here Comes The Bride

Family Ties | Week 3 | Ephesians 5:21-24

INTRODUCTION

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Last week we talked about how husbands should give their wives leadership, love, and loyalty. We have already noted that Paul had a lot of strong things to say to the husband, even more so than he did to the wife. But now let’s now turn our attention to the wife. Paul lays out two principles for a godly wife to follow to be the wife that God wants her to be and to be the wife that her husband needs her to be.

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of 21 horizontal lines.

KEY POINTS

1. Be Completely Submissive To The Lordship Of Jesus

The road to a relationship with God was paved by God the Son, submitting to God the Father, and going to the cross to die for our sins. The way to a harmonious and happy marriage is not only paved by the loving leadership of the husband but it is paved by the spiritual submission of the wife to the authority of Jesus. Jesus made it plain from the beginning that He came to do the will of his Father. If He didn’t have a problem with submitting to the authority of the Father, then wives, you should not have a problem submitting to the authority of Jesus.

Our main motivation for submission should always be out of love, respect, and reverence for the Lord of your life. When you revere Jesus you put Jesus in your life where he belongs and he belongs at the very top. Wives, when you put Jesus above you, you will willingly put your husband before you.

2. Be Confidently Supportive To The Leadership Of Your Husband

The way the wife relates to the husband is the way the church is to relate to Jesus. The way the husband relates to the wife is the way that Jesus relates to the church. Jesus is the head of the church, and the husband is the head of the wife. The church supports the leadership of Jesus. The wife supports the leadership of the husband. Again, that is the way it is in all of life. Children are to support the leadership of their parents. Citizens are to support the leadership of the government. Employees are to support the leadership of their employers. Wives are to support the leadership of their husbands. Never in scripture are these relationships reversed.

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Here Comes The Bride

Family Ties | Week 3 | Ephesians 5:21-24

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Would you say you are living your life in full submission to Jesus right now? Or is there an area of your life in which you have yet to submit to Him?
2. Do you find it difficult to submit to your husband? If so, what is holding you back from submitting to Him as Scripture commands?
3. As a wife, what is a practical way you can show support of your husband's leadership this week?

Father Figure

Family Ties | Week 4 | Ephesians 6:4

INTRODUCTION

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I love what President Franklin Roosevelt said: “We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future.” In the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul gives fathers the best advice and wisdom on how to be the father your children need you to be. In a simple but sublime sentence, Paul shares with us four things we need to give our children to be the parents we ought to be.

KEY POINTS

1. Give Your Children Gracious Affection

Paul starts today’s key verse by telling fathers not to exasperate their children. The word “exasperate” is a very strong word. It means to “provoke anger” or in today’s language we would say, “Don’t do anything to light their fuse.”

So what does this look like practically? In the spirit of what Paul said, let me share with you four things never to do with your children. First of all, don’t aggravate your children. Has this ever happened? You aggravate a child. You make him angry and then out of his anger he pops off and says something disrespectful and then you punish them because they were disrespectful when you started it to begin with! That is exasperating your children.

Second, don’t humiliate your children. Don’t ever publicly embarrass your children; it can cause more damage to your relationship than you realize. Third, don’t frustrate your children. Don’t start unnecessary arguments. One of the most important things parents need to learn is not every hill is worth dying on. As your kids get older, there will be plenty to debate and discuss that needs to be debated and discussed and can be done so with passion and conviction. But don’t ever create a hill to die on that is not worth dying on.

Finally, don’t intimidate your children. Don’t push your children to be something they don’t want to be or can’t be. Don’t try to live your life through them. Let them choose their own path and their own careers. If you have been guilty of doing any of these things I would encourage you to do what I’ve done. Go to your children and ask forgiveness in those areas where maybe you have failed as a father. Model for them what it is like to give children gracious affection.

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Father Figure

Family Ties | Week 4 | Ephesians 6:4

2. Give Your Children Gainful Direction

It is not enough to put a roof over your children’s heads. You must do all you can to put the Lord into your children’s hearts. So Paul tells us, “...bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

The word “bring up” literally means “to rear” or “to nurture from childhood.” I don’t believe it is ever too late to try and give your children good direction, but it is best to start early. We are to “bring them up in the training of the Lord.” Now the word “training” refers not just to education (that is knowing what is right), but it refers to direction – to leading them to do what is right. It literally means “train up a child.” Again, this is why you start early.

Early on you give them gainful direction on how to respect other people, how to be courteous to other people, how to be kind to other people, how to get along with their brothers and sisters, how to obey their parents, and how to be responsible for their actions. Start from the womb dads and moms and get the God of the Word into their hearts and get their hearts into the Word of God. There is a right way to live life. There is a right way to relate to children. There is a right way to think and act and it is found in God’s Word, and from that Word, you give them gainful direction.

3. Give Your Children Good Correction

There are two things to remember when you do have to discipline your children or correct your children.

#1 – Correct at the right time, in the right place, with the right spirit.

#2 – Correct constructively – not destructively

You see if you are always too hard on your children you will make your children hard, but the reverse of that is also true. If you are too soft on your children, you make your children too soft. When you have to correct your children, you need to make sure they understand why you are correcting them. What you are saying is, “I love you too much to let you behave this way. I love you too much to allow you to be less than what I know God wants you to be.” The purpose of correction is not to discourage your children; it is to encourage your children. The purpose of good correction is not just to punish your kids if they do something wrong, but to encourage them to do what is right.

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Father Figure

Family Ties | Week 4 | Ephesians 6:4

4. Give Your Children Godly Protection

Every parent should bring their children up to be moral, good, kind, respectful, courteous, obey the law, and behave. That is a given. The difference is, for most parents, that is the ceiling. For a Christian parent, that is the floor.

As a parent, your primary job is not to raise good children; your primary job is to raise godly children. The goal and ambition you should have for your children is that they know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and that their lives are completely and fully surrendered to Him.

This is the primary responsibility of dad and mom because ultimately the greatest influence in the lives of your children should not be the church, the school, the pastor, or the coach. The greatest influence should be the parents. As a parent, you are the spiritual leader of your children. This is not a responsibility you can delegate to someone else. The number one desire, goal, ambition, and hunger of a true godly parent is to rear godly children. It takes godly parents to raise godly children and it takes God to make a godly parent.

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Father Figure

Family Ties | Week 4 | Ephesians 6:4

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is one way you can show your children gracious affection this week?
2. How are you giving your children gainful direction right now?
3. When was a time you didn't correct your children in a healthy, God-honoring way? What can you learn from this experience that you can implement next time you need to correct your children?

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Model Mom

Family Ties | Week 5 | 1 Samuel 1:1-28

INTRODUCTION

So far in this series, we have talked to husbands, wives, and fathers. Today, we are going to talk to and about mothers. I know from both having one and being married to one that the dad may be the head of the home, but the mother is the heart of the home. I read one time where someone said, “A mother is she who can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take.” That being said, it’s a tough task to be a mom, but thankfully Scripture gives us a great picture of what it looks like to be a model mom. In this message, we’re going to look at this example and learn from this model mom how to navigate through the tough times of life in such a way that the peace of God will comfort you, the joy of God will bless you, and the power of God will strengthen you.

KEY POINTS

1. In Your Frustration Serve The Lord

In the midst of her biggest hurt and frustration, Hannah chose to continue to go to the temple and serve the Lord. We aren’t told why the Lord up to this point had closed her womb, but here is one result. Hannah was driven to the point where she realized she was totally dependent on Him. She realized her hope was in God, her health was from God, and she had a heart for God.

Too often we let the bad times, the tough times, and the hard times drive us to do exactly the opposite of what we ought to do. Instead of running to God, we run from God. Instead of going to church, we quit church. You may be going through one of the most frustrating times in your life right now. If you are, this would be my biblical counsel to you. Continue to serve the Lord. Continue to be an active part of the family of God. It’s the best thing you can do in the midst of the toughest seasons in life.

2. In Your Desperation Seek The Lord

Desperation is just frustration on steroids which was becoming increasingly unbearable to Hannah. In biblical days, if a woman could not have a child to continue the family line, it brought her great shame. In fact, people would wonder what sin or fault would cause God to close their wombs. Every day all Hannah had to do was just look at Peninnah or listen to her constant nagging and the knife in her heart just went in deeper. So what does this model mom do in this instance? “In her deep anguish, Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly” (1 Samuel 1:10).

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Model Mom

Family Ties | Week 5 | 1 Samuel 1:1-28

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do you normally react when you're frustrated? Do you draw closer to God, or do you distance yourself from Him?
2. When was a time you sought the Lord in desperation? What did you learn from that situation?
3. Has God given you an answer to one of your prayers, but that answer is starting to turn into an idol? If so, pray and surrender that to Him today.

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Poster Child

Family Ties | Week 6 | Ephesians 6:1-3

INTRODUCTION

As we wrap up this series on the family, I want to speak directly to the children. Whether you're still living at home with your parents, or if you've moved out and started your own life but still have your parents around, this message is for you. If you are a child of God, then your goal should be to be a godly child. And while that is a responsibility you should take seriously, it's also a responsibility your parents share with you to an extent. It takes godly parents to do their best to have godly children. Godly parents must provide leadership, and godly children should give followship. Again, if you are a child of God, your goal should be to be a godly child. So with that in mind, I'm going to give you three things you need to do to be a godly child.

KEY POINTS

1. Be Right By Obeying Your Parents

The number one part you are to play in your family is to be an obedient child. Parents, the first lesson you begin to teach your children from the time they are born is the lesson of obedience. As you know, children do not come out of the womb obedient; they come out of the womb disobedient. Obedience doesn't come naturally to any of us. Disobedience does.

Therefore, it is the job of the parents to teach their children the difference between right and wrong. It is right for children to obey their parents and parents have the right to teach their children what is right. Not only is it the parents' right, but it is their responsibility. It is not primarily the responsibility of the school or the church to teach your kids right from wrong. It's yours.

To help you do that, here are three basic lessons we need to teach our kids from the time they come out of the womb.

- There is a difference between right and wrong and as a believer we let God tell us which is which.
- You are to do right and not wrong.
- If you do wrong and not right you will suffer the consequences.

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Poster Child

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2. Be Respectful In Honoring Your Parents

There is a difference between obeying your parents and honoring your parents. Obedience is an action you do on the outside. Honor is an attitude you have on the inside. "To honor" means to respect. You see, when you obey your parents if you do it grudgingly, griping, complaining, moaning, and back-talking you may obey them, but that is not honoring them. You can't honor your parents without obeying them but can't obey them without honoring them. It is one thing to disobey your parents. It is another thing to disrespect them.

By the way, you never outgrow the requirement to honor your parents. You never get too old to do that. We are to hold our parents in high esteem and treat them with respect no matter how old they are or how old we are. You don't have any right to speak to them any way you want to just because you are an adult. You don't have to agree with them, but even your disagreements should never ever dissolve into dishonoring.

3. Be Reverent In Loving Your Parents

When you obey your parents, you obey God. When you honor your parents, you honor God. This is important for children to know. But it's also important for parents to know that their children will not know the Lord unless they teach their children those things that please the Lord.

One of the greatest questions you could ever teach your children to ask themselves before they start to do something is this one, "Would this please the Lord?" They should ask, "Will this bring joy to the heart of the Lord?" or "Will this put a smile on the face of the Lord?" If you seek to honor and obey the Lord, you will honor and obey your parents. And in doing so, you will show them that you love them.

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Poster Child

Family Ties | Week 6 | Ephesians 6:1-3

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In your own words, how do you think obedience shows or implies love?
2. When was a time you dishonored your parents? What did you learn from that situation?
3. The next time you go to make a decision, how do you think your life would be impacted if you first asked, "Would the decision I'm making please the Lord?"
