



Uncommon Marriage Month Sermon Notes, Week #1: Daring To Trust

Text: Proverbs 3:5-6

Tony and Lauren Dungy have, as a couple, written a candid book about their families of origin, their time in the NFL, their marriage, and the building of their family. In this series of sermons based on sections of their book, I want to look at some topics that are encountered and considered in every marriage.

We will look at trust, mutual submission, identifying our priority, anger, and legacy building.

Biographies and autobiographies sometimes discourage the reader. We read of those who have accomplished the outrageous and the dramatic and we think, *I cannot do that*. Then there are writings that inspire and instruct. Such is the Dungys' book. As they, with great vulnerability, tell their story, we are greatly encouraged. As you read about *their* marriage, you will have hope for your own. As you read of how they interact with



their children, you will get ideas for interacting with your own. As they describe *their* faith journey, yours will be strengthened.

Introduction:

The trust fall is an exercise practiced at corporate retreats, youth group gatherings, and family reunions. A person stands, with her/his arms folded across the chest. In a daring move, the person falls backward, without trying to break the fall. A person behind them catches them. That's the way it is supposed to happen. However, some have fallen and not been caught. Some have fallen backward, only to find themselves buckling their own knees in an attempt to break their fall. For some, trust is better as a concept than a reality. On YouTube there is an amusing clip of a trust fall gone bad. A young lady is told to fold her arms and fall. The problem is, no one tells her in which direction to fall. A person is standing behind her, ready to catch her. The young lady then falls *forward*.



When the wisdom writer says we should "trust in the Lord" it is more than a good idea. Trust is a way of life. It is the risky adventure of putting our lives in the hands of another. In our marriage and in our walks of faith, we learn to trust another. Over time, we learn that the other person is trustworthy. We give more and more of ourselves to the other. The writer in this text says that trusting the Lord is something to which we cannot commit partially. That trust should be expressed and given "with all your heart."

ILLUS. On Sunday, June 23, 2014, aerialist Nik Wallenda walked across a gorge near the Grand Canyon on a tightrope. He was 1500 feet in the air. He wore no harness and had, beneath him, no net. He prayed aloud during much of his harrowing walk across the gorge. Many of us watched it on live television. Wallenda trusted in the Lord as he walked. Had you been invited to ride on Nik Wallenda's shoulders during his walk, would you have accepted? Most of us would say no, because



watching the aerialist take himself across and trusting him to get *us* safely across are two different experiences. So it is with trusting God. We'll watch Him work in other people's lives but we're unsure He'll work in ours. Our text says we should not only trust Another, but we should cease leaning on our own understanding. We become, as we trust God, keenly aware of his presence in our lives. To acknowledge God is to be in fellowship with Him, to be aware of Him and his activity in the world. When we forsake our own understanding, our God makes our paths straight. He changes our outcomes. He directs our paths. He makes the crooked places straight and the rough places plain.

Three observations about trust in a marriage:

- In an uncommon marriage, we learn to trust the other, as we also trust God.
- In an uncommon marriage, we acknowledge our mates (are aware of them, are in fellowship with them), as we also acknowledge our God.



- In an uncommon marriage we may expect our paths to be straightened and directed.

ILLUS.

One cold January morning, Tony drove to the Northside Library in Pittsburgh, to tell Lauren that it appeared that the Lord was moving the Dungys along to another city. "I was crying and very emotional", said Lauren. "I told Tony I would support him either way....I was in it with him." (Chapter 3). When a couple trusts each other, they are "in it" with the other, no matter what. Lauren had to believe that Tony wasn't being impulsive and that he had sought the guidance of God.



Uncommon Marriage Month Sermon Notes, Week #2: Putting on the 'Mit's

Text: Ephesians 5:21-22; Colossians 3:18-19

In chapter two of The Dungys' book, *Uncommon Marriage*, Tony and Lauren write about some lofty ideals and goals for their marriage. One of them was their idea of spending some time together every day. Often, after the children were in bed, the Dungys would take a walk or an evening bike ride. Did any of you feel like the Dungys were taking you into the make believe world at that point? My response:

1. **Admit** that I cannot do anything ideal or heady or lofty without divine enablement. Whenever we read a command we find difficult to obey, a promise we find impossible to claim or a challenge too daunting to take on, we need to call on God. The easiest response to the Dungys' writing is for us to say, "That may work for them, but it doesn't work in the real world. That works in the world of those who have money or a nanny or a large support system but it will not work for me." At



that moment when we are overwhelmed for feelings of inadequacy, we appeal to our God and admit our inadequacy.

2. **Commit** to the process and the goals. God is at work in us and we do well when we cooperate with Him in His work. Along the way, in our adventure of faith, we commit to the process of becoming uncommon, different, holy. Tony Dungy writes about his getting over the stereotype about roles in a marriage. Citing his one-time boss, Chuck Noll, Dungy says that his job is to help the players play the best they could. That principle works on a football team as well as in a home. At some point we so commit to the goal that even if we get there through non-traditional means, we rejoice.

3. **Submit to one another.** Many people who quote texts about submission love to cite Ephesians 5:22. May I remind you of 5:21? "*..submitting to one another in the fear of God.*" What makes a marriage uncommon is that mutual submission has each partner



respecting the gifts of the other. Lehman Strauss in his commentary on Galatians and Ephesians: *When it is too hard to admit our wrong, or when it is too difficult to give place to another, we may be certain we are not filled with the Spirit.* (p. 204)

One of the ways we declare and demonstrate our uncommon status is by our glad submission to one another in our marriages and in our functioning in the Church.

4. **Transmit these truths.** The Dungys modeled what it means to establish a pattern and then "sell" it, down through the family. The children caught the vision. The players whom Tony led caught it. When a complaining spirit begins to creep into our lives, we would do well to rehearse the fundamental truths to which we've committed ourselves.

Does your job have you moving to another city? Will you, in that new city, submit to leadership? Will those around you sense what is most important to you?



ILLUS.

In chapter 8 of their book, the Dungys admit their lack of consistency in praying together. Like most of us, they found busyness (even *good* busyness) to be a drain on their marriage.

"Creating time together was the key for us as we made this move", said Tony. "During difficult times, it's natural to pray more, asking for God's help. But over the years we have seen that sometimes blessings can put a strain on a marriage. So we talked, walked, prayed, and tried to stay connected during our transition into a new city. That helped tremendously."



Uncommon Marriage Month Sermon Notes, Week #3: Farewell to Priorities

Text: Matthew 6:25-34

Introduction

If we're not careful, we could reduce the adventure called "life" to the simple acquisition of food, clothing and shelter. Yet, life is so much more than that (Matthew 6:25b). According to Jesus, the life to which we ought aspire, is that life in which Christ is central. Rather than concentrating on food, clothing, shelter and those things mundane, we are called to a non-anxious, restful relationship with the living Lord.

Jesus, in this excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount, teaches about the importance of a balanced life. What is the one thing in your life that drives you?

John R.W. Stott, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, writes that there are three immunities that faith does *not* give us.

1. Believers are not exempt from earning their own living.



2. Believers are not exempt from responsibility for others.

3. Believers are not exempt from experiencing trouble.

The Dungys, while high profile and committed to a Christ-honoring lifestyle, still had to find their rhythm, become a team of two (and eventually 9) and find their strengths. Jesus teaches that one cannot spend one's time being anxious about life's details. Those who do not know Christ live in anxiety, but the righteous rest in Him. Are you a worrywart? Are you a person of peace? In chapter 9 of their book, the Dungys write about maintaining their priorities. In the ideal life, there is one priority, which is to love God with all one's heart, soul and strength (Deut. 6:5). Business writer and management consultant Peter Drucker (1909-2005), in his *The Effective Executive*, says that we ought to have a list of *posteriorities*. Those are the items that come behind *the* priority. An uncommon marriage will have a named priority ("the kingdom of God and His righteousness") and named posteriorities ("all these



things"). Verse 33 of Matthew 6 says it well: Set your priority and, don't worry, the posteriorities will be added to you.



Uncommon Marriage Month Sermon Notes, Week #4: Bedtimes and Blowups

Text: Ephesians 4:26-27

Is this to be taken literally? Should we never go to bed at night unless all issues of anger are resolved? Wait. Wasn't Jesus Himself angry enough to overturn moneychangers' tables?

John 2:13-16: Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He has made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"(NKJV)

Didn't this same Jesus speak harshly against those who would cause children to sin?



Matthew 18:6: But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea(NKJV).

This same Lord inspired Paul to give this instruction about anger management? Surely this is not to be taken literally!! When a couple commits to an uncommon marriage they, at the same time, commit to handling their anger in a God-honoring way. We do not nurse our anger. We talk about those issues that concern and upset us.

Speaking of our all-too-volatile emotions, E.K. Simpson writes, "God has given us those passions 'under lock and key'. We must never allow the infernal housebreaker to pick the lock and gain entrance unawares." (The International Commentary on the New Testament. Ephesians. p. 109).

Three observations about anger:

1. There is a time (occasion) in which anger is appropriate.



2. At no time should anger lead us to sin.

3. Anger ought be resolved within a reasonable amount of time. A day?

A few hours?

The prolific author, Anonymous, said, "A person who is angry on the right grounds, against the right persons, in the right manner, at the right moment, and for the right length of time deserves great praise." As we handle our anger, appropriately and efficiently, may we praise God and provide a watching world a much-needed model.

ILLUS.

The handling of anger is a life-long pursuit. Tony admitted, "I used to let my temper get the best of me a lot more often...I was ejected from some of my high school games, but with the Lord's help and my dad's correction, I learned to control my anger publicly. But that person with biting words...I sometimes find him lurking too close to the surface."(Chapter 10)



Uncommon Marriage Month Sermon Notes, Week #5: Framing the Future

Text: Psalm 78

In their chapters 13-15, the Dungys speak about legacy. In our text, so does Asaph. Asaph is the writer of Psalms 50 and 73–83. In this 78th psalm, Asaph considers a body of teaching that we'll simply call "the story." It is the collection of parables, sayings and testimonies of what God has done(verses 1-2).

Asaph says that his goal is to speak into the lives of the first generation after him. He will declare what was told to him(verse 3)by his forbears. Then those to whom Asaph has told the story will tell it to *their* children. Asaph says that to fail to pass on a legacy(the story) is irresponsible(verse 4).

The goal of uncommon legacy-living is four-fold:



1. That the next generation may know the story(verse 6). The "them" in verse 6 refers to the parables, dark sayings and testimonies of Yahweh's faithfulness.
2. That the next generation may set their hope in God(verse 7a)
3. That the next generation would not forget the works of God(verse 7)
4. That the next generation would avoid the rebellion and disobedience that marked their forbears(verse 8).

When an individual or couple makes a decision to leave a legacy, they touch the generations yet unborn. What a concept.

We positively *affect* and *infect* our family line when we live for God.

Note verse 6. It reads like a summary of multi-level marketing. We tell the story to some, who tell it to their children, who tell it to theirs.

Lauren says, "Because of what Tony and I have learned about the effect our family backgrounds had on each of us, we know that the way we



relate to each other and the way we handle our problems is serving as the blueprint for our own children."

Now that's legacy!!

May God use us to live out the story and tell it, in such a compelling way, that the generations yet unborn will benefit from our lives.

Amen

Tony and Lauren Dungy would like to thank Pastor Richard Allen Farmer for contributing to the Uncommon Marriage Month sermon notes.

For more information about Pastor Farmer and his ministry, visit www.RichardAllenFarmer.com

Richard Allen Farmer
PO Box 540997
Grand Prairie, TX 75054-0997
972.642.7962
Email: raf51@sbcglobal.net