

## Healthy Marriages

Like most of you, I watched Sunday's Super Bowl along with an estimated 150 million viewers, but the night before I attended our church's Valentine's Banquet. Our attendance was 150 instead of 150 million, but we shared a delicious meal, listened to some great music and thoroughly enjoyed celebrating love and marriage.

The banquet concluded with our version of the Newlywed Game where four couples had fun answering challenging questions. Everyone seemed to have a great time.

Our delightful evening and the fact that February 14 is Valentine's Day, prompted me to think more than usual about love and marriage. Romance and love are God's ideas and worth celebrating.

In 42 years as a pastor, I have observed many healthy marriages as well as many unhealthy ones. I can confidently say there are no perfect couples because every husband and wife has flaws.

Despite those facts, the Bible tells the stories of numerous strong marriages, however, not every marriage in scripture is strong. For example, Genesis 25-29 shares the story of Isaac and Rebekah and their very dysfunctional marriage.

In the book, *Creation and Blessings*, author Allen Ross, suggests the story of Isaac and Rebekah reveals a very broken family. They never share a meal, or positive moment and in fact often seem to be peeking around doors, speaking in hushed tones and undermining one another.

The Bible tells how God revealed to Rebekah before her twin sons were born that, "*your older son will serve your younger son.*" (Genesis 25:23, NLT). Later, when husband Isaac ignored the message she had received from God, Rebekah retaliated by deceiving him to get her way (Genesis 27:5-29). Rather than working together for the good of their family, each focused on how to manipulate their spouse in order to get what they wanted.

I read a Dear Abby Column from 1996 in which the columnist shared advice from a reader who described her parents' beautiful marriage saying "*it sparkled for nearly fifty years.*" She recalled never hearing her parents say an angry word to one another. While going through her mother's papers after her death, the daughter found these *Rules for a Happy Marriage*. Abby was so impressed she shared them with her readers. Here are several of the rules:

- *Never both be angry at the same time.*
- *Never yell at each other unless the house is on fire.*
- *If you must criticize, do it lovingly.*
- *Never bring up past mistakes.*
- *Neglect the whole world rather than each other.*

- *Never go to sleep with an argument unsettled.*
- *At least once every day compliment your life partner.*
- *When you have done something wrong, admit it and ask forgiveness.*

These rules stand in stark contrast to Isaac and Rebekah's tragic relationship. Honor one another and treat each other with kindness and respect. Couples who do this nearly always have healthy meaningful marriages, couples who don't rarely do.