

**Episode 064 - What Did We Know about Marriage as a Six-Year-Old
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[00:40] **Jonathan:** Welcome to the Love & Respect podcast. I'm Jonathan Eggerichs. This is Episode 64 titled "What did we know about marriage as a 6-year-old but forgot as an adult?" I'm joined here by my father Emerson Eggerichs.

[00:57] Just as quick reminder here, last week's episode, Episode 63 was called "Experiencing the presence of God". If you haven't had a chance to check that out please do so and forward it on to those that you know that might benefit from that as well.

[01:13] I think recently, dad, you ended up seeing a video on YouTube or a video that went viral. You'll get into that in a second. But I think that's what prompted some of your writing on this topic and what we're about to kind enter into in a discussion as well on this episode.

[01:33] So what did we know about marriage as a 6-year-old but forgot as an adult? I want you to start us off.

[01:37] **Emerson:** Well, yeah, I did see a viral YouTube thing. It was just emotionally moving of this 6-year-old appealing to her mommy, who is videotaping her, basically not to cause problems in the marriage and to really be friends and to be nice.

[02:02] And we're going to talk about some of her exact quotes. This 6-year-old was absolutely brilliant in terms of her assessment of a marriage. So that question what did we know about marriage as a 6-year-old.

[02:15] I mean, we all had a sense about what a marriage ought to be when we were six. We couldn't articulate it like this girl, but we kind of knew; and we're going to address that issue because as adults now, and we who are in marriage, we suddenly begin to experience tensions and troubles. And some of us want it to call it quits perhaps, or we're thinking we made a mistake, or, "Why is this not working out in the way that it seems that everybody else is happy but us?"

[02:45] So we want to just remind us of a basic concept that this 6-year-old brings to our attention. Out of the mouths of babes come words of wisdom.

[02:55] **Jonathan:** So what were some of the things—

Emerson: And that's why I asked the question... Yeah.

Jonathan: Keep going.

Emerson: Well, yeah, exactly. She basically made the point that a mommy and daddy ought to be friendly with each other because all mommies and daddies ought to be friends!

[03:11] It's kind of like there was a book years ago, a guy wrote something, "Everything I know about life I've learned in kindergarten." You know, share, be nice, be friends... Even though we all

granted that, you know, when it's all said and done some of these things we lose sight of, one of which is this idea of friendship and being friendly.

[03:29] And we knew that it frightened us as 6-year-olds when mommy and daddy were unfriendly with each other. We're insecure as kids when they were not getting along. We knew that mommy and daddy should like each other, and we assumed that they did at one point, because otherwise why would they get married.

[03:51] We knew it intuitively that when they married, and because they married, they were to love and honor each other. That's kind of what we knew, though we might not articulate it that way. That was kind of the obvious conclusion. We just know that.

[04:04] Yet, something happened along the way when we created no-fault divorce. No-fault divorce means for some people, "Hey, there's no fault here. The kids won't be hurt besides." Right? I mean, kids are not going to be hurt.

[04:18] But just because there's this legal proclamation, so to speak, of no-fault divorce doesn't mean there isn't fault and it doesn't mean that there aren't issues that seriously damage our kids.

[04:37] I sometimes think in our subconscious have we concluded that since lawmakers and since society announced an end to the criminalization of breaking a wedding vow, though one can sue the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker who break their contracts.

[04:53] I mean, it's more difficult for a plumber to get out of a contract than it is for a husband or wife. Now, go figure! The longest lasting institution is marriage, and yet we basically have said as society because somehow we think we know better that, "You know what? Let's just no assign blame because that's going to create all problems."

[05:12] When the truth is it's worse now than ever, and the damage on the children is incredible. So at the end of the day we need to remind ourselves that we're Christ followers that we're making a covenant. And even though stuff happens, we've got to remind ourselves of the sacred promise. And children, a 6-year-old knows that it's sacred. It's very sacred. Does that make sense up to this point, Jonathan?

[05:40] **Jonathan:** Absolutely.

Emerson: And this girl's name was Jenna. She was 6-years old and if you haven't seen it, you need to type in maybe "Jenna 6-year-old," or, "6-year-old talking about marriage". It's just incredible the insights that she has.

[05:56] And I want to read some of the transcript that I typed up of what she was saying to her mommy who, as I said, was videotaping her. In fact, Jonathan, why don't you, if you would be so kind to read what Jenna said. It's just potent stuff!

[06:11] **Jonathan:** She said, "Try not to be that high up to be a friend," and you put parenthetically, "As she rises up her arms to suggest mom was looking down at the husband or daddy." "I

want everything to be low, okay? Just try your best. I don't want you and my dad to be replaced and mean again. I want you and my dad to be settled and to be friends."

[06:32] "I'm not trying to be mean. I just want everyone to be friends. If I can be nice, I think all of us can be nice too. I am not trying to be mean, but I'm trying to do my best in my heart. Nothing else than that. I want you, mom, and my dad and everyone to be friends."

[06:50] **Emerson:** Wow! She put a voice and vocabulary, I mean, that little girls... I mean, the visuals, the word pictures, I mean, she said it all right here. Again, I want everybody to realize this is a 6-year-old! It was moving as I watched this.

[07:09] And the bottom line is that marriage is about being friends and being friendly. I love Song of Solomon where the Lord most conclude is the Lord speaking; He refers to the couples as friends and lovers. And Song of Solomon 5:1. That's very rich. Friends, oh, lovers. I call it lover friendship.

[07:30] And that I often say when Sarah and I married I didn't say to Sarah, "I hate you and you hate me. So, hey, let's get married!" It doesn't go down that way. Half of marriages preps around the world are signed marriages, but even there they don't go into the marriage hating each other. I was just on the plane with a Hindu, his marriage was assigned. He's Indian, Hindu, and he didn't even know the woman, but they certainly didn't hate each other, and they certainly learned, "You got to be friends, you got to learn how to be nice."

[08:02] It is an interesting thing. But the Lord expects us eventually in all relationships to be friendly with each other. What happens is that we're madly in love, but then we come to a point where we're just mad. That sitcom years ago called "Mad About You" is a double meaning there.

[08:22] I'm mad about you, but I'm mad about you! And I think some of us have lost sight of just the basic need in the relationship to be friendly. Somehow we think that I can be unfriendly to motivate my spouse to be friendly. And the same thing, Jonathan, in Titus 2:4, "The older women are to encourage the younger women to phileo their husbands." Not fillet, as I always say.

[08:41] Phileo, Philadelphia, friendship love, brotherly love. That no one doubts as a man that the wife loves him in most cases, unless she is in love with somebody else. I say to Joe, "Does your wife love you?" "Oh, yeah." "Does she like you?" "No, not today."

[08:57] And so there is this sense that though my wife loves me she really didn't like me. We're no longer really friends. And friendship is a huge thing to men, and a lot of times, you know, as I say, women want the relationship to be more positive—"surprise me, romance me, make me laugh"—but men just want the relationship less negative—"Can't we just be friends again?"

[09:17] And he doesn't see friendship as talking an hour every night about our feelings. He sees friendship as doing activities shoulder-to-shoulder and so on and so forth.

[09:27] And so it's a challenge. In Proverbs 2:17 says about the wife who leaves her husband, the closest friend of her youth, and forgets her marriage vows to her God. And you'd also see the challenge to men about, "You're forsaking your companion." Your companion. That whole idea of friendship there again.

[09:46] So the Scripture is big on this issue of being friends in marriage. Jonathan, do you have any comments or questions about what those Scriptures are saying or just this broad-brush stroke of friendship, or in your estimation why do people become unfriendly with each other?

[10:04] **Jonathan:** Well, I guess it's responding to some of Jenna's comments as she's recognizing that mommy and daddy aren't being friendly. We can make assumptions. We don't know if she's got older siblings or whatnot, but they're in possibly that first 6 to 10 years of marriage.

[10:23] And in couples counseling or whatever most people come in six years after the problems begin. So problems begin at some point. So I guess my question is what ends up happening? I mean, we're in love, we're courting, we're friendships, we like each other and love each other. So in those first few years of marriage and beyond, what ends up happening between two people, that as Jenna pointed out, friendship erodes and we become mean?

[10:50] **Emerson:** Well, I think after the 87th time where we've disagreed about something suddenly one day we find ourselves just being disagreeable in our persona. I think we become less congenial, we are less welcoming, we're less pleasant.

[11:08] And all of these are ways of sending a message to the other person, "Please change, please stop treating me this way." Some of us become sourly and sour. We even become hostile and contemptuous, which is the opposite of loving and respectful, which is the opposite of what God calls husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:33 where, "A husband is to love, a wife is to respect."

[11:31] The man starts being angry, hostile, unfriendly. She is contemptuous and unfriendly. It's a killer. And what's sad is that we're really just trying to send the message, "I'm upset about something. You need to make an adjustment here, and if you do, well, I'll be happy." But it doesn't seem to work that way.

[11:52] You can't be unfriendly to motivate somebody to be friendly anymore than you can yell at your kids to get them to stop yelling. I mean, yeah, obviously it works short term, but long term you're killing it, you're winning the battles perhaps on any given day, but you're going to lose the war.

[12:09] And so as a mature person you cannot subscribe to tactics or means that just simply no one in the right mind would say are going to work in terms of relationship. And I get it, it's not easy to be friendly with someone who may really have some problems. I get that, but why should you become an unfriendly person just because they've got issues?

[12:28] And you're only going to undermine the relationship with your unfriendliness. Unfriendliness doesn't mean that you just smile and go along with whatever. It means that your demeanor, you're a pleasant person as you confront things truthfully.

[12:41] You don't have—truth will carry its own way. You don't have to carry the truth about something in a hostile, contemptuous, unfriendly way. My question to you, Jonathan, is why do people think, "Okay, I'm not going to carry this truthful statement in a friendly, loving way?" Why do people come across sometimes in such a mean-spirited way? What's your opinion about that?

[13:03] **Jonathan:** I mean, again, I think there's something self-justifying about it. I think that's something that feels good about it in the moment. I mean, my own interactions with my wife and what I observe in my own clients, I mean, it is, "I'm feeling offended, I'm feeling attacked, I'm going to defend myself," or, "I'm going to show them."

[13:25] There's something empowering about it and yet it's not empowering at all, but it feels that way in the moment. It's our nature coming out, right? And it spills out, especially in the face of somebody that we view as disagreeable, discontent, mean-spirited, all those things, and we've labeled them as such, so therefore we justify our own behavior and response.

[13:51] **Emerson:** Yeah, and I think that's well said. There is this sense of empowerment that, "You can't treat me this way. I'll show you!" And yet long term—we're all smart enough. There isn't anybody listening that wouldn't say, "You know what? That's the most effective way to treat your spouse."

[14:08] **Jonathan:** Well, that's not real power. I mean, it's illusory, right? It's there and it's gone.

Emerson: Yeah, exactly. There's a positive power, there's a negative power. I would say that it's mean-spirited, it's manipulative, it's trying to keep that person in line somehow by that glare, that glower, the kind of this dark eyes, the grinding of the teeth as the man walks away. These are all things that, "I'll teach you," but it never works.

[14:41] And I guess it really bakes the question, "How can we move forward in being friendly person in the midst of upset and when things are not going the way that we want them?" And it doesn't mean that we have to be happy and just smile and pretend that there's nothing wrong. It's more of, "Hey, I'm not going to let that other person turn me into a sour, negative, ugly soul. I'm just not going to let them do that."

[15:09] But at the same time, how do we proceed in such a way without feeling like we're compromising our convictions? How do we proceed without feeling that somehow they're going to take advantage of us?

[15:21] And my position here is: Look, first of all I want to give three suggestions and what we'll close with this today. The first thing is people I think misread things. I want to challenge those of you listening: assume your spouse has good will, but that their gender causes them to react—

[15:40] **Jonathan:** Yes, I want to jump, I just want to clarify. These are three suggestions on what how we become, how to become better friends if we feel that something has eroded.

Emerson: Yes, on being better friends, exactly.

[15:51] I think people become unfriendly because they don't adhere to what these three things are that I'm about to say.

Jonathan: Okay, sorry to cut you off.

[15:59] **Emerson:** That's fine. So some of us assume over a period of time that, "My spouse doesn't have good will." That somehow they are doing whatever they're doing because they're not nice themselves. "They don't value me. That I don't matter to them. And so why should I then treat them in a nice way."

[16:19] And there could be an evil willed individual, but I would say that the better part of wisdom first of all is to assume your spouse has good will, but their gender causes them to react in ways that do not feel like they have good will.

[16:32] And this is why we become convinced at times that our spouse doesn't have good will because they react in ways that we would never react. And so it's got to be that they really don't care. "Because I care and I would never react the way they're reacting." So now what does that look like?

[16:47] Well, one of the points we continually make is that 85% of those who stonewall and withdraw at a point of marital conflict is the male. And to a woman that feels like an act of hostility, but as we point out, it's really an act of honor to a man because when his heartbeat get to 99 beats/minute he's in warrior mode and he has to calm down.

[17:08] So he will just say, "Drop it, forget it, I don't want to escalate this thing out of control. Just leave me alone." And of course she chases him through the house and wants to talk right now. So from her standpoint he's unloving and he didn't have good will. From his standpoint he's trying to do the honorable thing because he does have good will.

[17:25] It's best that both of them conclude that their hearts are in the right place, but they deal with conflicts differently. The way she wants to solve it is by talking about it. The way he'd like to solve it many times is, "We don't need to talk about this. Let's just move on. It's no big deal. It's just not that important. I don't need to talk about this. Let's just drop it and move on."

[17:46] But both choose tactics that offend the other. And this is where problem comes. So I know with mom and me, we had to come to a point where we assumed that the other had good will even though they were choosing to deal with the situation in a way that we found unacceptable.

[18:01] And instead of judging the other person's unacceptable, we just realized God designed mom to deal with conflicts one way. He designed me to deal with conflicts another way. Neither one of us are wrong, we're just different.

- [18:14] So this idea of assuming good will. You have to assume it, because sometimes you don't feel that they have it because they're mad at you and they're mad at you over something you think is ridiculous.
- [18:23] And you're double insulted. She shouldn't been mad in the first place, but they're actually holding me hostage and responsible for their sentiments. And talk about insulting, but in many cases we're two steps removed from the truth.
- [18:37] They're just insecure. They're a good willed person who has a need that only we can meet, and they're reacting this way as in an attempt to send out that message. Any comments on that? First point, Jonathan.
- [18:49] **Jonathan:** No, I mean, I experience that and I see that all the time. This is what ends up happening, and yet in the context of we're good-willed trying to get our intent across, in the heat of it, whether it's the heart rate getting up or things have just escalated, we say things that taken in a vacuum, right, just as they are. They are ill-willed comments. We end up with the heat of it intentionally saying things to the other person.
- [19:21] And yet these are often snapshot moments because it got out of control, whether it was pursuing, whether it was withdrawing, whether it was dropping an F bomb as I became irrational because I was on "warrior mode" or whatever the case may be. I mean, things get out of control and we say mean and nasty things. Yeah, this happens.
- [19:45] **Emerson:** Yeah. That's an excellent observation because at that point, and I have proof, I have evidence that my spouse has got serious problems. And that's why we point out, we distinguish this snapshot from the movie. You can incriminate anybody. I say, "Let me live with you for a week and I'll take in photographs." And I can get you in a photo that really makes you look wicked, like you're about to strike your child and I can put that on the front page of the paper, but we don't permit that because you're liable for that. That's slander, that's defamation.
- [20:16] And because it's a mischaracterization of the individual and we don't permit that in society. Politicians, celebrities, they don't sue because they can't, but the individual you can't do that because you're misrepresenting the soul. Even though that picture is an accurate picture, but it's misleading.
- [20:38] Some of us mislead others about our spouses because we take that on stupid comment, or I've even had women say, "My husband cursed at me." And I say, "Wow! What happened before? What happened before?" "Well, I went into a 5-five tirade of cursing him." And I say, "Wait a minute, so now you're telling me that he cursed you and you're all upset, which he shouldn't do, I'm not justifying, but you just now told me without having telling me this before that you went into a 5-minute cursing of him."
- [21:09] "Yeah, but he should know that I didn't mean it. But when he said it he meant it." And so one of the things we got to do is, come on folks, "What did I do before this that triggered probably

a defensive reaction to my spouse and they're reacting that way because they're insecure, they're trying to push back."

[21:25] It's kind of like a wolf that has his legs broken and you corner a wolf with its legs broken and it's going to bite your hand when you reach it to help it. And many of us are hurting and we are reacting inappropriately—I don't justify any of what I'm saying, but I'm saying you got to decode this.

[21:42] If you want to incriminate your spouse you can do that by taking that snapshot. And as Jonathan pointed out, hey, if you want to do that, you can, but I think that's why then it leads to our second point. When you do differ, when you have these moments you've got to remind yourselves that you are allies and not enemies.

[22:01] You got to remind yourself that you're allies, not enemies. I remember when I first heard that metaphor applied to marriage it really brought perspective and a challenge, and many people have said to me, "Of course, we need to approach our differences from the standpoint of being allies rather than declaring war like enemies."

[22:20] I'm not here to do battle with Sarah so I win and she loses. That can't be the goal. I'm here to find a win-win solution to our differences. And if she feels like a total loser, then I will not win her heart. That was kind of the realization of the early point in the marriage. It's kind of like, "Duh! Why didn't I think about that before?"

[22:39] At the same time we're not to compromise our convictions and our interests. Allies do not absolutely acquiesce to the other, but they find third options that achieve the goal of both sides, diplomatically they're finding creative alternatives that can actually bring about greater satisfaction to both parties than if one got its way upfront. There's a brilliant truth there.

[23:01] Sometimes that tension, the tension prompts greater thoughtfulness, which then results in a better solution. That's why we shouldn't be upset about these troubling moments because creativity can come from that. If two people say, "Well, let's think of a better way here," rather than putting one's heels in and fighting with each other and feeling the other's taking advantage of us or we're not going to get our way. I mean, we've got to grow up a little bit.

[23:26] Getting to that creative alternative is going to demand some more time. I mean, the truth is it eliminates a whole lot of times spend being mad at each other when one wins and the other loses. Jonathan, do you have any comment on the ally-enemy metaphor?

[23:42] **Jonathan:** I mean, I think just the reminder that we're not always going to get all of what we wanted, but we're going to get some of what we wanted, and the same thing applies to them. That's the definition of compromise. We heard that term "win-win" thrown out a lot, but I mean, I don't know how often I see that completely inside marriage in particular.

[24:05] I mean, we have to give something up and we will get something as well. We got to remember that they're doing the same thing. We acquiesce on some things and others we don't. We have to define what are our preferences, our core beliefs and we can't back off of them.

[24:20] And so we make our choices based on that, but we can't be absolutely selfish in the sense that I'm going to get 100% of what I want and they get 0. It's somewhere in between.

[24:34] **Emerson:** Well, but the counter-argument there is I think there are some people out there who are selfish and they see compromise as such that, "We got to come up with a compromise so that both of us are unhappy."

[24:46] I think people have this idea, "If we compromise we'll find a solution that is a compromise that will result in both of us being less happy than if I got my way."

Jonathan: Yeah, and that's not a compromise. That's a failed negotiation.

[25:00] **Emerson:** Well, that's a great way of putting it! And that's why my emphasis here with a little tension you can come up with a third option that will actually make you happier than if you got solely what you wanted.

[25:13] In some ways some people think that's superficial, but I've talked about that "Designing for the Sexes," that program where this interior decorator would have two husband and wife who are polar opposites of what they wanted. One is a traditional, one is modern.

[25:27] And at the end of the program he brought it together that actually both were happier with what he had done in terms of bringing them together. They liked better what he had done by bringing them together than what they had originally proposed. She wanted traditional; he wanted modern or vice versa. And it was amazing what this guy did with couples who were on the edge of divorce because they couldn't settle this.

[25:50] And I thought that was a great visual aid to me that you can actually find a third option that is even more exciting, but it takes a little time. And so I want to put that out for some—it's not always true. I mean, there are some moments where we wanted to play golf and the 18 holes and we've got an event that afternoon, so we have to play 9 holes. And the truth is we're not going to get the 18 holes in.

[26:13] So I think to your point there are going to be moments of sacrifice, we're going to get less of what we want, but we're also then contributing to the greater good of the family. And that's part of compromise indeed, but I want to hold out this idea that sometimes we're depriving ourselves of even better ways.

[26:33] Because God is interested in a husband and wife coming together where they only experience half of the joy because they've got always let go of the other half to make the other happy. I don't think he designed it that way. And I want to keep this idea of thinking a little bit more in the heels of tension rather than just fighting with each other in the heels of tension.

[26:50] **Jonathan:** And so the first one is: assume your spouse is good-willed but that their gender causes them to react in ways they don't feel like they have good will. The second one, which we just covered: when you differ, always remind yourself that you are allies, not enemies. And I think you said there was a third point as well.

- [27:06] **Emerson:** The third one is: Before you speak ask yourself, “Is that which I’m about to say going to sound loving and respectful or hostile and contemptuous?” This is based on Ephesians 5:33, “A husband is to love, a wife must respect.” And so in a sense every husband, “Is that which I’m about to say going to sound loving or unloving to my wife?”
- [27:27] And the wife, “Is that which I’m about to say going to sound respectful or disrespectful to my husband?” It may not be fair to them, it’s just a prudent way to approach it because it doesn’t take rocket science to figure out if I sound unloving to my wife.
- [27:45] This is not going to create friendship. This is simply not going to enhance the friendship. And even if I’m—you know, particularly, “I’m not going to be loving with her until she’s more friendly.” Oh come on! I mean, we’re smarter than that!
- [27:59] That’s completely ineffective. “Well, I’m not going to be respectful until he acts nicer.” Well, so, I mean, how is it that we have concluded it’s okay for me to be un-nice in order to motivate them to be nice? It’s that whole idea I’m going to be negative to motivate them to be positive.
- [28:16] These things just don’t work. So, you know, pause. “Is that which I’m about to say going to sound loving and respectful to my spouse?” They may not deserve it, but if I want the truth of what’s on my heart to get through to them, you can’t deliver the truth in a way that sounds hostile and contemptuous. They won’t hear the message.
- [28:34] The issue is no longer the issue. The issue now is they’re going to feel unloved and disrespected. And you can kiss the topic goodbye. Now you got another fight that’s going to ensue and you’re going to now be often running on that issue and you’re simply you’re not going to get around to what really prompted the whole conversation in the first place.
- [28:53] This again is a challenge, but some of us default to a negative reaction due to our family of origin, due to our sinful nature... there are any number of reasons for this. And so a thoughtful person says, “You know what? In order for this friendship to continue, I’ve got to come across in a loving respectful way.”
- [29:15] And it’s a question that many have said, “Thank you for reminding me that.” It is a simple thing. “Is that which I’m about to say or do going to feel or sound loving and respectful to my spouse?” And it’s a beautiful thing. It’ll just soften your delivery just enough to keep things I think on a more friendly basis.
- [29:34] But I will tell you, if friendship goes out the window on the heels of an unloving, disrespectful comment, it just ain’t going to happen. But I have a final word from six-year-old Jenna. Maybe you could read what she had to say there, Jonathan.
- [29:51] **Jonathan:** Jenna said, “I think you can do it. You can settle.” She lowers her arms downward. “Be steady, not way down, but in the middle where my heart is. My heart is something. Everyone else’s heart is something too. If we live in a world where everyone is being mean, everyone will be a monster.”

[30:10] **Emerson:** Wow! You got to see this viral video, folks. I mean, the words don't do it justice. She's demonstrative, this 6-year-old little Asian girl. It's just... "My heart is something. Everyone else's heart is something too. If we live in a world where everyone is being mean, everyone would be a monster."

[30:31] About to begin to cry when I just listened to her heart. Here's the deal: don't be perceived as a monster by your good-willed spouse who wants your marriage to succeed. Be their friend. Act friendly. Jenna has reminded us as a 6-year-old what we knew as a 6-year-old.

[30:52] You know it, you're not going to compromise yourself if today you choose to be more friendly. You're not going to lose power over the course of the relationship. You're actually going to be more winsome and your spouse in my prediction will be more friendly in response. It was a tendency to create reciprocity.

[31:11] **Jonathan:** Well, thanks for joining us this week. We always appreciate it. We appreciate you sharing with others. We appreciate the likes, the comments in iTunes and other places. We're very grateful. Take care, have a wonderful rest of your week. We'll see you next week.