

Do you remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was?

Matthew 22:37–39 NKJV

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Here Jesus emphasized in a big way the importance of relationships

This is what life is about—loving God, loving yourself, and loving others

- It is never wrong to love
- It is never out of order to love
- You do not compromise when you love
- You never lower your standards when you love

God’s Love Never Fails!

1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails.

Two Are Better than One

Marriage was God's idea

- The first book of the Bible has a man and woman joined in marriage
- The last book of the Bible speaks of another marriage
 - The marriage supper of the Lamb

Healthy marriages are still one of the ways God builds His Church and intends for strong families to influence the world around us

Malachi 2:15–16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But did He not make *them* one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. “Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. ¹⁶ “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

The enemy is aware of the power of a strong marriage and family

- There is an all-out attack on the institution of marriage
- Divorce statistics in the Church are as high or higher than in the world

God takes marriage seriously

God did not design marriage for you to play house and hope for the best

- You need to fight for your marriage
- It is worth every battle
- God hates divorce and it should not be an option

If you have been divorced there is no condemnation and God forgives you

- If you're married, stay married!
- Outside of adultery, physical abuse or abandonment you are called to stick it out!
- For better or worse

The Cave of Double (*couples*)

Genesis 23:7–9 (NKJV)

⁷ Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. ⁸ And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, ⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which *is* at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.”

- Machpelah – Double or *Couples*
- Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob are buried there

How do we keep our marriages together and make it all the way to the cave of couples?

Adam and Eve were the first couple

Genesis 2:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*”

- NLT – “*Just right for him*”
- KJV – “*Help meet*”

Genesis 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ And Adam said: “*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*”

- God did not give him another man
- He did not give him three women
- He made them a couple!
- Male and female

God looked at man and stated that his number-one need was divine help

- Women are multipliers and incubators
- They bring increase and nurturing
- They take a seed and make a family
- They take a bachelor pad and make it a home

Men, cherish your wives

- Appreciate them
- Love them

How you treat her determines how God listens to your prayers

1 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

- Whatever success a man enjoys, his wife has had a profound impact on it
- Remember your wife
- I don't want a man cave, I want a couple's cave
- Your wife is important!

Psalm 127:1 (NKJV)

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

- When the Lord builds the house of marriage it is built to last

Each spouse striving together, praying together, dreaming together, following Gods will together, raising kids and doing life together

Research shows that statistically, the happiest couple are those who have been married for thirty to thirty-five years

- It typically takes the first 9-17 years to die to self
- Highest % divorce in the first 9 years of marriage
- Some days are good, other days rough
- Stay determined to stick it out together

Statistics – 70% of men will cheat on their wives, 60% of women will cheat on their husbands

- Under the marriage covenant the two become one
- Violating that covenant devastates both parties
- Infidelity can be forgiven, scars are permanent
- It hurts – it shatters trust – it severs relationships – it degrades – it destroys families
- Marriage is about giving
- Adultery is about taking
- That's why adultery is sin

If there has been infidelity in your marriage, it will take work, but a crisis can become an opportunity

Are you willing to consider a second marriage with the same person?

Many couples who have worked through difficulty end up having very strong marriages

How to Affair Proof Your Marriage

Get it out of your head

Matthew 5:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

- The temptation to cheat begins with one thought
- Jesus was talking about the lust of the eyes
- How do you pluck out your wandering eye?
- Cancel your subscription to Playboy
- Get rid of certain channels on TV
- Don't click on certain websites
- Pluck things out that may cause you to stumble in your marriage

The enemy creeps into your home through the eye gate of technology

- Adultery always begins with thoughts

Watch your words and the things you look at because they become thoughts

- Thoughts become actions
- Actions become habits
- Habits become character
- Character controls your destiny

Respect One Another

No Slide: Ephesians 5:21-33 Christ and the Church

- Be more interested in respecting one another rather than casting blame
- Fix problems rather than fight about them
- Do you want to be reconciled or right?

Take Responsibility

Philippians 2:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- Major problems come from one word – Selfishness
- We never think we're selfish when we're single
- Marriage doesn't make you who you are, it reveals who you are

What we do with what we learn about ourselves is what makes us either more tender hearted or hard hearted

- Selfishness is a heart matter
- Deeply ingrained through habits and routines

God and His word are like a mirror that reveal what you look like to others

- Read your bible, pray and plant yourself in God's house
- Let God work out all the rough edges and make you look more like Jesus

Rekindle the Romance

Remember when you first starting dating?

- You anticipated every date

If you don't watch out the fun goes right out of your marriage

- Cultivate romance again
- Set a weekly date night
- Get away for the weekend

If we continued to court after marriage fewer marriages would end up in court

Have a Made-up Mind

Trying times are not the times to stop trying

- When things are tough don't give in and flirt with that co-worker
- You made a covenant – *“for better or worse...”*
- Marriage must endure storms

It's not just a battle with the enemy over you and your wife, he's out to destroy your whole family

Leonardo da Vinci is purported to have said: *“An arch consists of two weaknesses which, leaning one against the other, make a strength.”*

Men

Joel 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Proclaim this among the nations: “Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.

- Men are called to be the leaders of the home
- It's not chauvinistic, it's God's order for marriage

I applaud all of the single moms out there who have had to take on the responsibility alone

Men need to take responsibility for the spiritual condition of your family

- I know marriage in the 21st century isn't easy
- You may feel discouraged

You may feel like you don't even know the woman you married five or fifteen years ago

- Be strong and courageous

Stand up and step up in the middle of the mess you're facing and lead your wife well

Play the man – Lead, don't follow

- Watch what's happening under your roof
- TV – Computer – Phones, tablets and devices
- Get control of your anger
- Communicate to your wife and children in more than a grunt as you retreat to the man-cave

1 Corinthians 16:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all *that you do* be done with love.

- Forgive – Again
- Say you're sorry – Again
- Speak words of encouragement over you wife and family
- Pray for God to help you lead well

Women

Proverbs 14:1 (NKJV)

The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

If you're going to keep your marriage together and raise godly children, you are going to need Gods help

- Your home is your classroom and you are the teacher
- You need a clear vision of victory for your marriage and home
- You must have a sure foundation and that foundation is Jesus Christ

Proverbs 31:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth *is* far above rubies.

- Your virtue is what makes you priceless

You have the ability to create a life-giving atmosphere in your home

- *“If mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.”*

I know it isn’t easy to love and create a life-giving atmosphere when your husband is working long hours or not at all

- Or you’re in a season of diapers and no sleep
- You feel like you’ve lost that lovin’ feeling

Remember you are the doorway to spiritual life in marriage

Proverbs 21:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

Proverbs 27:15–16 (NIV)

¹⁵ A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping of a leaky roof in a rainstorm; ¹⁶ restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand.

- Enough tearing down your husband
- Stop complaining
- Quit being negative
- It’s up to you to build up your home
- Watch what you say

Proverbs 31:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.

- Use your words to produce happiness in the home

A kind word will go further than one spoken in haste and anger

- When was the last time you thanked your husband for doing something?
- When was the last time you called him a good man?
- When was the last time you cut him some slack instead of nagging him to take out the trash?
- Show him some respect – Believe in him!
 - Say, “*I am sorry*”
 - “*I was wrong.*”
 - “*Forgive me.*”
 - “*I need help.*”

Be like Rizpah – 2 Samuel 3:7; 21:8-14

Her sons had been put to death by the Gibeonites and their bodies hung for the wild animals and vultures

- She pitched a tent for three months and fought off the wild beasts, even though her boys were already dead
- Her story reached the king
- He cut down the boys and gave them a proper burial

God can restore and heal your marriage and children

Fight for what’s left of your family!