

Growing a Marriage

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 00] I want to turn to Galatians chapter 5. Galatians chapter 5, I believe family matters and that's why we are taking time this summer to talk about some family matters.

You know, gardening is not easy work. You have to clear uncultivated or foul ground and that's not fun. It is essential that you do that, but it's not fun.

You have to dig holes to put the seeds in. There's a lot of getting down in the dirt and dealing with it and you may not like that, but you have to do that to enjoy the fruit, to enjoy the vegetable that you are wanting from the harvest.

I heard about somebody who was planting a herbal garden and a neighbor came up and asked her what she was doing and she said, I'm putting my plants in alphabetical order.

And the neighbor said, really? How in the world do you find the time? She said, oh, that's easy.

[1 : 04] It's right next to the sage. You'll get that later. Not a whole lot of herbal gardeners in here, right?

There's watering. There's weeding. All along the way, there's wilted blooms and dead leaves that have to go as well.

But you kind of know you have to do that when you get into it. You're not going to have a bountiful harvest unless you put the work into it. That's a lot like marriage.

It takes daily work. And if you are married, that is the most comprehensive and it should be the most long-term relationship of your life.

And it takes commitment. And if you back off, the weeds will grow. It won't bloom like it needs to.

[2 : 07] You won't have the fruit from it. It takes commitment in order to be fruitful. The Apostle Paul shows us in Galatians chapter 5 how to get along in a Christian, Christ-like way in life, period.

Never is this more relevant than in marriage, however. Galatians chapter 5, beginning in verse 16, the Apostle Paul said, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other and to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

But if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident.

Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of rage, rivalries, drunkenness, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these, I warn you, as I've warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such things.

[3 : 37] There is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Well, I want to give you two points today.

I know that's good news for good old Baptist congregation, but just try to keep it as simple as I possibly can, because the first part to maintain a good growing garden is to pull weeds.

And if you're going to grow a good marriage, you've got to pull some weeds. Let me name some weeds that I think you ought to look for. When you see it, you need to take care of it.

Pluck out the selfishness in the relationship. Paul mentions in this passage all kinds of sexual sin here, from involving others to those sins of the mind.

[4 : 54] And there's not room for any of it in the Christian life. There's not room for any of it in the Christian home. All of it is selfish.

And if you watch the garbage of the world, there is a strategy. Listen, folks, and I'm going to talk about this in August and may talk about it for the rest of the year.

We're in a war. We're in a war, and it's more than a sniper on a metal building. That's some evidence of the war that we're in.

But we're in a real war, and it is not against other people. It is not flesh and blood. It is spiritual. And it personifies itself in so many different ways. I believe we saw evil on a national scale last night.

[5 : 58] I believe that attempted assassin that's now dead was just a tool of the evil one working on a much bigger plan.

And the reality is that same evil one wants to attack your home. He wants to attack your family. And he looks for avenues to do that. I'll tell you a good avenue to do it. Cut on the TV. Cut on the TV. Have you noticed that anything that has a plot is filthy?

That the F word is used as frequently as any word in any show that has any merit to it, it seems. And that strips it of its merit.

They feel any program that they can with all kinds of sexual. It just went from beyond innuendo to blatant garbage, enticing, tantalizing.

[7 : 24] It lowers our guard. We don't pay as much attention anymore to those things. And your mind just gets full of it.

Social media, TV programs, everywhere you look, it's tantalizing and it is part of the devil's schemes. We are in a sex-driven society that promotes all kinds of perversion and not only says it's okay, but celebrates it.

Promotes it. It tells you if you have a problem with it, you're full of hate. That you're a bigot. That is a twisted, perverted world.

And it's not new. It's not new. Seems much more pronounced in our country today than I've ever seen it in my lifetime. And I feel sure that my lifetime, in the time that I've been on this earth, Corinth has been worse than any time in the history of America.

But I'm telling you, it's not new to the world. In the first century, Corinth was that way. There was a huge cult in the midst of that city that was celebrated and worshipped through sexual immorality.

[8 : 49] It was at the forefront of what they did. It was marked by sex-driven cults. And it just marginalized and compromised the city and how they looked at it.

And the Apostle Paul warned them, be careful because if we're not careful, folks, we'll be more prone to condition ourselves to the world and let ourselves be influenced by the world, then we will influence the world.

And that's not what the salt is to do that Christ called us to do. That is not what the light of the world is to do. I light a lamp because it lights the room.

It invades the darkness and overtakes it. But if we're not careful, we'll just cut the lamps off in our life and live in the midst of the darkness. And we've got to be preventative about that.

We've got to be diligent about that. Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 7 of a marital problem that can cause a lot of greater problems in such an atmosphere. And Paul gives a good word of warning in 1 Corinthians 7.

[10 : 03] Beginning in verse 3, he says, The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time that you might devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again.

Listen to me, folks. I don't want to get into your business, but I want you to hear what he has to say. So that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

It's selfish to go outside your marriage. It is selfish to neglect inside the marriage.

And that's just one form of selfishness. One sin is not, and I want to be clear about this, one sin is not caused by somebody else's sin.

[11 : 00] And your sin is never justified, no matter what your circumstances are at the house. But we are to help one another in our walk with the Lord.

We have a responsibility as a congregation to help one another in our walk with the Lord, to encourage one another in our walk with the Lord. And you have that same responsibility, greater responsibility for your own family, especially the one you're married to.

We encourage one another and help one another in our walk with the Lord. But selfishness comes in a lot of different forms. And the only reason I hit that is because it affects marriage and because Galatians 5 is filled with all kinds of sexual sin that the Apostle Paul addresses.

But selfishness comes in a lot of forms. But it always comes from us being more concerned about what we want and not concerned about what others want.

Let me give you another form of selfishness. Pouting. Pouting is a form of selfishness, you know. Let me give you another form of selfishness.

[12:08] Bossiness. Bossiness. Taking charge of everybody. And do it in a way that's not delicate. A lot of resentment comes from selfishness.

Get rid of it. Pluck it out. Just a weed in the garden of marriage. Let me tell you another weed in the garden of marriage.

Busyness. Kill. The busyness. I want you to hear me. We live busy lives today. There are a lot of events and opportunities that we can be a part of.

And if we're not careful, we will be a slave to it. We idolize the things we love to do. And...

You don't need to be a part of everything. Not everything. And too much of that can strain at the fabric of a marriage. It kind of makes for a marriage on the fly, if you will.

[13:19] Marriage does not work well when it's always in between items. When a marriage fights for recognition. Because a marriage, like a garden, requires cultivation.

And business can cause a lot of things, but one of them can be caused by a lot of things. One of them is materialism. I mean, we like our stuff. And you see what somebody else got?

Man, we need one of them. We like our stuff. And I'll tell you what happens to our stuff. In order to have stuff, we either spend too much of our time working extra to get what we want, or we spend way too much catering to it.

And I don't only mean money, I mean time. If you're not careful, you'll be enslaved to the responsibility of maintaining and upkeeping and entertaining the stuff that you've got to have.

Possessions can drag you around like a ring in a nose. And that is not what we intended. It's not what we wanted when we did it. But you see it again and again. We always spend too much on things that depreciate too.

[14:36] I mean, they do. Go buy a new car and find out a week later how much it's worth. It'll hurt your feelings, I promise you. And if they're going to depreciate, we've got to use them while we can.

We better take advantage of that. I mean, if we've got that item, we've got to put that thing to use, so let's get after it. But we don't have time. We've got to have time. We've got it. We've got to go use it. And if you're not careful, all of that, that busyness, impedes our relationship with God, interrupts our relationships with each other.

It becomes a strain of all. So kill the busyness. You know what? It don't hurt to be still from time to time.

Now, for others, I may need to say every now and then, you've got to get up, you know. But I'm just telling you, it don't hurt sometimes to just sit down.

Spend time together. Busyness can be a weed that can interrupt growth in the garden of your marriage.

[15:54] Another weed that often needs to be pulled is inattentiveness. So quit being inattentive. Start paying attention to the people in your home. During COVID, many medical procedures were canceled.

People had heart surgery that were scheduled. And they needed to have heart surgery in order to live. But we can't have heart surgery because of COVID. So we put that off.

All kinds of circumstances led. If you got a cold, well, you may have COVID. So you better not go to the doctor because you may get it. If you don't have it, then you may get it.

And if you do go, then they'll tell you you got it. And you can't see anybody for a month. And after that, you're banned. They put a big C on you and all that stuff, you know. And people came out of COVID.

Some never did. They're still in it. But people came out of COVID with more problems because they did not maintain their health during COVID.

[17:02] And a similar problem happens often in a marriage. The emphasis can often be on the other things.

It can be work. It can be kids. And listen, those are legitimate matters that require much. You have to do those things.

You got kids, you got to maintain them. You got a job, you better show up. Completely legitimate. They might be independent hobbies.

They might be travel that separates. All of those things seem good. And many things that have to be or need to be done. However, all of which, all of which can cause a lack of attention to the marriage.

When a couple is dating, it's all about each other. One mate's giving full attention to the other. I remember my daddy played ball and played softball when he was dating mama.

[18:14] And mama always went to all the softball games. And they got married. She never went to another softball game. He said, what in the world happened? What happened? When that mate stops giving all that attention to the other, when that stops, and life demands that it changes, it can be devastating to the relationship.

And that has to be something that's not ignored. I mean, some weeds that gain our attention and move us away from our spouses need to be pulled. And we need to be sensitive about that and watch for that.

Another weed, and there are several. This is my last weed that you need to pull, is throw out the laziness. The laziness.

If you're not careful, laziness will allow the weeds to grow in your relationship. Let me give you one example of how laziness can affect your marriage. One example is dealing with anger.

Ephesians 4 verse 26 says, Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Now leave that up for a minute, because I want you to think about this, okay? Notice what it says.

[19:30] Be angry, but do not sin. So God never discounts the fact that there's sometimes you get angry. It's going to happen. There's a such thing as righteous anger.

We'll try to justify our anger a lot of times righteously that it's not, but there is such a thing, and you're going to get angry. It's not what happens to you. It's what happens to what happens to you. Okay, so you got angry.

So what are you going to do about it? If you're angry, don't sin. And don't go to bed mad.

And you know that. If you don't know that, don't go to bed mad. But many do, because it's easier.

It's just easier, you know?

I don't want to deal with that again tonight. And so instead of fixing the problem, I'll just go to bed.

Some people don't brush their teeth before they go to bed.

[20:36] It's too much work. Let me tell you something, folks. You need to brush your teeth before you go to bed, okay? And you need to do it before you come to church. But the problem is like a bad wound that's not treated.

That thing will fester overnight, and so will the problems in your marriage if you don't deal with them. And the reality is sometimes laziness can keep you from dealing with it. Proverbs 24, 30, and 31, the proverb writer said this, I passed by the field of a sluggard by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns.

The ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. Now there is so much there. It's a sermon in itself that I don't have time to deal with. But listen to me. The wall of protection around your marriage will deteriorate if you don't maintain it because you're being lazy. Don't be lazy in your relationship. It'll slip away from you before you know it. We have to pull some weeds. But growing a marriage is not just about pulling weeds.

That's the stuff you got to get rid of. The first part of Galatians 5, 16 through 26 deals with what you got to get rid of. Then it tells you what you got to get. And so let me get on to what you have to do.

[21:54] You have to plant seeds as well. You got to pull weeds, you got to plant seeds. And I'm just going to tell you two ways to plant seeds in your marriage for good growth.

One of them, the first way to plant good seeds in a marriage is to be quick to forgive. Be quick to forgive. Quit hanging stuff over the head of your spouse.

1 Corinthians 13 says, Love keeps no record of wrongs. And a marriage is not going to grow stronger when it lacks seeds of forgiveness.

Forgiveness should be fruitful in our marriages. Let me let you in on a secret, okay? If you ain't figured this out yet, you need to know this.

I speak to every married person in this room. You are married to an imperfect spouse. And if you didn't realize that when you got married, that's your fault.

[22 : 55] You didn't look close enough. But you know what? Your spouse married an imperfect spouse as well. And so y'all quit elbowing each other. You're both guilty. In a marriage, you support one another.

And that's the mark of a marriage. Sometimes you grin and bear it. Sometimes you might grit and bear it. Either way, bear it. However, sometimes we don't. We don't grin.

We don't bear. We sin and we sneer. And that can cause bitterness. And that is a weed that has to be pulled and replaced with forgiveness. And that will require you taking that matter before the Lord. Pray for your spouse. Pray for your spouse daily. God's going to work on both of you if you'll pray for your spouse. But it also requires a commitment to say enough is enough.

Not to say that to your spouse, but to yourself and to the Lord. Enough's enough. I'm not going to point my finger anymore. I'm not going to do it. Paul David Tripp wrote in his book, *What Did You Expect?*

[23 : 59] He challenges us to make the following oath to the Lord. I will not listen to myself defend my actions. I will not carry around a list of my spouse's wrongs in my head.

I will not judge. I will not criticize. I will not blame. I will not require more of my spouse than I do of me.

I will not complain. I will not argue. I will not withdraw. I will not manipulate.

I'll trust God to correct what's wrong. Discipline misbehavior. Cultivate better thoughts in my spouse. I will not have self-righteous standoffs that never do any good.

I will not paint myself as a victim. I will not paint my spouse as a criminal. I will not be demanding. I will not feel entitled. I will not threaten.

[25 : 04] I will not brag on myself. I will love. I will forgive. I will hold up. And I will cherish my spouse.

Old, untreated, festered wounds infect and can cause the whole relationship to get septic. So deal with your resentments.

Deal with them. Galatians 5 verse 15 says this. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you're not consumed by one another. I like what I heard an old preacher say one time.

He said, when we first got married, we could eat each other up. After we've been married a while, we wish we had. So deal with your resentments. Plant seeds of forgiveness.

Lastly, another way to plant is to serve. Paul says in Galatians 5 verse 13, through love serve one another.

[26 : 11] Nowhere is that more needed than in marriage. Now to do that right, there has to be a love for God. And that love is serving him. And when you realize that, that by serving others you serve the Lord, you'll get joy from serving others.

Even when you don't want to. You'll get joy from serving others if you love the Lord. And to be clear, most problems in a marriage, I want you to hear this. Most problems in a marriage are vertical problems.

They're problems between you and the Lord. Not your spouse and the Lord. You and the Lord. That's most of the problems. And they appear horizontal.

So we blame it on other folks. But the reality is, most of the time it's just us and the Lord. Therefore, if you're not right with God, you're going to have a hard time getting right with anyone. So when you walk with the Lord, if you're married, you want to serve your spouse.

How do you do that? Well, where does your spouse get discouraged? Where does your spouse get overwhelmed? Be a help there. Where does your spouse, what does your spouse do daily that she or he may need your help?

[27 : 24] How can you communicate your affection today for your spouse? You have your own love languages. But you need to speak in love languages and not just in other languages.

Can you serve your spouse better in a way, in the way you communicate? Where can you be thankful today for your spouse?

And how do you express that? You see, serving is loving. And it takes a daily commitment to make it work. And when both do it, it's like magic.

When one does it, it's tough. It's tough. So keep in mind, what I'm doing, I'm doing for the Lord.

What I do, I do for the Lord. So if in what you do, you don't get the response that you wish you got, remember, you're doing it for the Lord.

[28 : 36] I want to honor the Lord in the way that I love my spouse. And the influence, hear me, the influence of that kind of attitude can be amazing.

It may not be what you're doing for your spouse. It may be how you're doing it that makes the difference is what I'm saying. So spend time together in the garden of marriage.

You don't need to work in your yard on the Lord's day. It's a day of rest. You shouldn't do that. But you can work in your marriage. So uproot selfishness and uproot bitterness and uproot the lack of attention, uproot laziness.

And I'm talking about laziness in that relationship. And plant some love and plant some forgiveness and serve one another because God honors such as that. And if you'll do it, you'll be surprised at how your marriage blooms.

With every eye closed and every head bowed, I want to ask you today, What is it that the Lord needs to do in your life today?

[29 : 50] It may be connected to your marriage. It may not be. I don't know how the Lord has spoke to you. But I know you'll never be satisfied unless you obediently follow what he tells you to do.

And that begins with a relationship. And if you don't have a relationship with the Lord Jesus, If you've never asked him to forgive you of your sins and to come into your life and to change you, To save you, I want you to know today's the day of salvation.

He'll change your life if you'll surrender to him. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've never acknowledged that publicly. It's always been a private thing.

Jesus said, If you're ashamed of me before others, I'll be ashamed of you before my Father. In other words, there's not a real relationship if you're ashamed of him. So make that public today. Let me guide you in doing that. Being baptized as a believer. Letting other people know what's going on in your life. Maybe God's drawing you to this church. God's doing wonderful things, and I'm thankful for that.

[30 : 50] And maybe God's leading you to be a part of that. I'd love to guide you in that process. You come. Or maybe God's just speaking to your heart and life. Maybe he's speaking to your marriage. Or maybe he's just speaking to you.

I encourage you to spend a few moments before we leave here. God, what would you have me do in my life? What do I need to do?

And then surrender to what he tells you. And live in response to that. None of us are perfect at this, folks. Well, let's get better at it.

Lord Jesus, I love you. And I thank you, Lord, for your love for us. I'm burdened about the attack of the evil one on the family unit.

And that means the people in a family. And I ask that you'll help us to see where our strength is and to respond to it in obedience today, right now.

[31 : 55] Oh, God, I pray. In Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Ni h