

Protecting Marriage

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[0 : 00] Ephesians chapter 5, I had the opportunity to be those girls pastor when they were young and I remember when they sang with their mother and Sidney would get on a little chair or something in order to be tall enough to join in.

Blessed, blessed. I believe they probably got all their talent from their daddy because he don't have any left. He's a whole lot bigger than I am or at least he's big in a different way.

I'll put it that way. There are two approaches that individuals can take toward their marriage.

A couple can decide that they are together and stand back to back or side to side. And fight off whatever may come or they can stand toe to toe and try to win the fight between each other.

And I want to encourage you today to fight together and to protect your marriage.

[1 : 25] Now I realize with such a message like this, it does not apply to everyone in the room. At least not in the same ways. But I do believe it is a weighty enough subject.

I do believe it is important enough that we need to deal with it. Even when it may not particularly apply to our individual lives where we are in our life.

I think it is important enough to maintain families for the Lord Jesus Christ and the world in which we live that we need to take some time out this summer. As I have said, I believe family matters.

So we took some time this summer to talk about family matters. And I will tell you that a strong, healthy, godly marriage that protects itself through the power of the Holy Spirit of God from what the world faces does not come naturally, yet it can come.

It just depends on which nature you're relying on, quite honestly. Ephesians chapter 5, beginning in verse 15 says, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of time, because the days are evil.

[2 : 41] Therefore don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for this is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. And then he speaks of marriage. And he closes with this in verse 33. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

I have two daughters, and both of my daughters have had historic softball careers. I say historic because they are in the past.

In the long past, even though both of them are young. Abby, I believe, played for one year. She was the daffodil puller out in the outfield.

She was very successful at it, unless the ball came out there, and then she ran the opposite direction. But man, she looked good in a uniform.

[3 : 57] So when Millie came along, she was our great white hope. And Millie was a lot more engaged in it, cared about it, tried harder at it. It meant something to her.

Abby just wanted a better bat bag so she could look good walking in. But Millie had the passion, and you can tell in girls' softball where the passion is by the dugout.

Because the dugouts of girls' softballs are usually loud with chants and songs and such. And I would look over there, and Millie would be wearing herself out, yelling to the top of her lungs, You ugly! You ugly!

You ain't got no alibi, you ugly! And things like that. And I thought, oh dear God, give her that passion on the field. And when she moved to shortstop, man, I was beaming.

I mean, the girl got a hot spot, you know. She's playing in a hot spot. She was less than a year off corrective eye surgery when the ball took a bad bounce, and she played it off her eye socket.

[5 : 03] It was the beginning of the end. Her career went down like flames. And the stitch mark on her face, I'll just be honest with you, it made her daddy proud.

But leading up to that time, we had spent hours in the yard practicing. I'd stand behind them and show them how to swing.

I would show them how to get in front of the ball and protect the ball, keep it in front of you. It's a whole lot harder to get it if it gets behind you. Keep it in front of you.

I'd show them how to throw, and I'll just tell you, Millie had a main arm. She was successful until she wasn't. But the success did come with a price. She could hit the ball because she was shown how to stand, how to get ready, how to take her best swing.

And she worked at it. I thought about that when I thought about how I want you to hit a home run in your home life.

[6 : 18] And you can't do that unless you work at it. You can't do that unless you give it your best swing. And so this morning, I want to show you how to prepare and protect.

And it is similar to softball training, at least for me, and I'm not a coach. The first thing is keep your feet planted. The Apostle Paul put it this way, look carefully how you walk.

With the best of intentions, things can easily go adrift in a marriage. And it's not immediate, and it's not always obvious. It's kind of like putting one foot on the boat and keeping the other on the dock. You better pay attention to what you're doing. Because the drift can get ugly quickly. And even when there is a sudden mishap or slip up or let's just say that one sins against God and against each other.

I will tell you that sin did not come overnight. There's a vulnerability that you had in your life that the devil got a foothold.

[7 : 29] And you put your foot in the wrong place and you begin to drift. And those drifts usually end in a plunge.

And it's never apart from putting yourself in such a position. When two Christians marry, they both have a built-in advantage.

I'll be honest with you. Christians also have a built-in disadvantage. And that disadvantage is that they come into their marriage with high expectations.

They know that Scripture teaches that it ought to last forever. And so they plan on it lasting forever. So when things go awry, they're surprised that they went awry. And they don't know how to respond to that.

But even greater than that, there's a built-in advantage. Because the advantage for the Christian is they have a built-in lifetime warranty. And you know what that warranty is?

[8 : 31] The grace of God. The grace of God will give you everything that you need. Not just to sustain you in marriage, but to help you thrive in marriage.

His grace enables us in the midst of our weakness. His grace reconciles the wrong and the strained. His grace restores the worn and the broken.

His grace repairs what is wrong. He gives us all we need. But I'll tell you that we still have to do the work that goes along with it.

You have to ask for forgiveness sometimes. And you have to be willing to forgive. You must have to look past the wrongs and keep no record of them.

You have to keep standing strong. You have to resist. You have to give. You have to decide that you're third behind God and behind your spouse. You have to be faithful to rest in him and be willing to be good and angry at the same time.

[9 : 43] And I mean be good even when you are angry. But I want you to understand something, Christian. You don't do it alone. He enables you. But you have to follow his lead.

When the Hebrews were at the Red Sea being pursued by Pharaoh, they wanted to give up. They wanted to go home. They thought it was a dead end.

But they paused. As uncomfortable as they were and with an army pursuing them, they paused and waited on God. And God parted the sea and dried the land for them to walk on.

Later on when they were led by Joshua, walking around Jericho to claim that city, by about the third day they were walking around going, what in the world are we doing?

Is this really worth it? Is it really going to work? Should I continue? But they did continue. And God made the walls tumble in his due time. And what I'm saying is that God has given you everything that you need.

[10:52] The promise of his presence. The promise of his power. The promise of his guidance. You just got to keep both feet planted on the dock.

Don't put your foot on the side of a boat not tethered to the dock. You'll drift. And it may be slow, but it will be certain. Keep your feet planted.

The second thing I advise you do is keep your knees bent. To put it plainly, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 16 through 18, Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. First he says, rejoice always. In other words, don't walk around sour all the time.

Praise the Lord in the good times. Praise the Lord in the bad times. Thank him for walking with you. And don't act like and don't look like you're miserable.

[11:57] Rejoice. No one wants to be around a negative person. That's not fun. Don't always talk about your troubles.

I heard Lou Holt say one time, don't talk about your troubles. 90% of people don't care and the other 10% are glad. Take those matters to the Lord.

Take them to the Lord. But he also says, pray without ceasing. And you may look at that passage like I did for the first few times I looked at it.

How in the world do you do that? You've got to function in life. How do you do that? But I've learned what that really means is keep your eyes on Jesus and take everything to him in prayer. And to always be dependent upon prayer.

Do the same in your marriage. Realize that you're not independent. You're dependent upon the Lord. You're dependent upon him. You'll remain dependent upon him.

[12:59] That will not change. There's never a moment that we don't need his wisdom. There's never a moment we don't need his strength. There's never a moment we don't need his forgiveness.

And I will tell you, I don't care your age. You've not outgrown the mercy of God. If you're married, nor has your marriage.

Temptations come. Disagreements come. Discouragement comes. And every day we sin. And our sin not only affects us. I want you to hear me. Our sin not only affects us.

No matter how private or public it is. It does not only affect us. One of the evil lies the devil loves to tell is this ain't going to bother nobody.

What's it hurt? It's a lie. It affects you and it affects your relationship with others, especially your marriage. And therefore you need to be in constant prayer.

[14:02] Preacher, what does that mean? How often do I pray? Every time you think about it. A dedicated time of prayer daily, I believe, is necessary. And calling on the Lord throughout the day is necessary.

Both can become habitual if you'll be faithful with it. Just keep two things in mind. One is we are not our own.

God created you to worship him. And everything that we are, everything that we have, every situation, every relationship, everything in our lives are for him.

We purposely set our lives and our marriage in a way that make them distinctive and comprehensively about God at all times.

Because they're not your own. They're his. So honor him. And the second thing you need to remember is this.

[15:04] We are and will always be dependent. Will always be. I raise my children with the hope that they will be independent one day.

I cannot say the same about how God raised me. Because God raised me to be dependent upon him. And that can never change.

Why? Because I'm a sinner. And I must lean on him constantly to forgive me. To strengthen me. To guide me to be more like him. And we're all that way. Don't look at me like that. We're all that way. We don't think as we should.

We don't speak as we should. We don't act like we should. We need his help. We need his wisdom. We need his forgiveness. We need his strength. And if we need that as individuals.

[16:12] How much more do two individuals. Need it. Who are building a relationship. Together. Trying to honor. And please the Lord.

And honor. And please each other. The only way that can happen. Is to realize. We are and will always be. Dependent.

And so because we're dependent. We ought to ask. Matthew chapter 7. Verse 7 through 11 says. Ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. And the one who seeks finds. And the one who knocks it. Knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you. If his son asks him for bread.

Will give him a stone. Or if he asks for a fish. Will give him a serpent. If you then. Who are evil. Know how to give good gifts.

[17 : 09] To your children. How much more will your father. Who is in heaven. Give good gifts to those. Who ask him. So in other words. Jesus is saying there.

Ask. God cares about you. God cares about your spouse. God cares about your marriage. And he cares about it more than you do. And so he'll give you the good things.

That you ask for. When you ask. So ask. The second thing is listen. Listen to him. A lot of us act toward God.

Like that man acted toward his wife. He's worried about her. And he went to the doctor. And concerned about his wife's hearing. And the doctor said. I'll tell you what you do.

Stand behind her. And say something. And tell me how close you are. When she hears it. So the man went home. And saw his wife in the kitchen. Cutting carrots on the countertop.

[18 : 09] And about 15 feet away. He said. Honey what's for dinner. She didn't say anything. He went about halfway there. And repeated the same question. Still nothing.

Very concerned now. He gets right behind her. And asks. What's for dinner? And she turns around. And says. For the third time. Beef stew. We're the same way with God sometimes.

We think he's not answering. And the reality is. We're not listening. So let's keep our knees. Because. We're not our own.

And we're dependent upon him. So ask him. He tells us to ask him. Seek him. Not. That speaks of a persistence. And then listen. Because your relationship with God. Highly affects. Your marriage.

[19 : 15] And. That's a huge. Lastly. Be in your spot. When Millie played shortstop.

She had to learn to stay in the spot. To alter. Where she needed to be. For the play that was at hand. And as well.

You need to be in your spot. And what I mean by that is. You need to be right here. In your spot. I've seen it again and again.

When the strains come. In a family's life. Church too often becomes secondary. If things are rough. If things are rough at the house.

Sunday morning can be pretty rough. And so sometimes it's easier. Just to let things slip. It's a horrible.

[20 : 26] Wicked strategy. Of the evil one. To lead you. To neglect. Your spiritual life. When things are not going. The way they need to go.

And when the marriage. Feels the heat that comes. Without a constant. Reiteration of the need. And the presence. Of the Lord. In that relationship.

We become too forgetful. When the struggles come. Where do we turn? If we've neglected. Our relationships with God. If we've already stopped. Turning to him. And stopped asking him. And stopped listening. Where do we turn?

I'm just telling you. It often happens. And if you're not listening.

[21 : 29] To the Lord. Then who are you listening to? Other voices. Other voices.

Other voices beside the Lord. Other voices beside his word. Other voices. Besides the church. And I'll just tell you. You get beyond that. There's not a whole lot out there. That believes in sustaining. A marital relationship. It's not there.

The church. And the word. And the people of God. Will always remind you. That marriage matters. Will always remind you.

You are not alone. I'll always remind you. You are dependent upon the Lord. You'll remain dependent upon the Lord.

[22 : 31] And you need those reminders. And you need to be in your place in worship. The crowded world. The crowded world. Can sure feel. Lonely.

New hardware store was opening. Wife wanted to go see the new hardware store. Husband didn't care anything about going. She kept badgering him about going. And finally she said. If you don't go. I'll be the only woman there. Among all those men. And he said. If I go. You'll still be the only woman there. Among all those men. He didn't get it. He didn't get it. She wanted him there. I'm telling you this morning. I don't pretend to know the timing of God. And how he works in his economy. I just know that I trust it.

[23 : 39] And I try to obediently follow it. I just got a strong sense. That possibly. There's a wake up call today. To get it.

Protect your marriage. Keep your feet. Planted. I tell my kids. Text Abby.

Last night. I tell Millie. About every time she leaves the house. Nothing stupid. That covers a lot of territory.

And if you think that's inappropriate to say. You just go see what some kid will do. If they act stupid.

I promise you. It's not inappropriate. Tell them not to do something stupid. Covers a lot of stuff.

And I've come today to tell you. Don't do anything stupid. Wake up to the reality.

[24 : 44] Keep your feet planted. Keep your knees bent. And be in your spot. Because God cares about your family.

And because we care about your family. And because we've got to work hard to protect it. Just by being persistent.

Just by being persistent. To be dependent. To be dependent. Upon him. To be dependent. Upon him. With every head bowed.

I ask you today. Has there ever been a time in your life. When you've surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ? Because the reality is.

There's a built-in advantage. I told you that. If you are a child of God. You've got the Holy Spirit living within you. To lead you. And if you don't know the Lord.

[25 : 44] There's a great disadvantage in so many different ways. And one of them is in your home. I'm thankful that today is the day of salvation. If you don't know the Lord.

You can come forward today. I'd love to guide you. In what it means to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. Just surrender to him. Admit you're a sinner. Admit you need him in your life. Make a commitment to follow him from this day forward. He'll change your life. Maybe you're here and you have done that. But you've never acknowledged that publicly through baptism. Jesus showed us by an example.

As well as told us by his commission. To follow him in baptism. Maybe you're here and God's leading you to be a part of First Baptist Church. You've visited with us.

You've felt a part of it. You want to be a part of it. Feel led to be a part of it. You come. Love to guide you in that. But I got a feeling that. For a lot of us.

[26 : 42] There's just matters that we need to lay before the Lord. And we can do that where we stand in a few moments. You can do it where you sit right now. Or you can do it at this altar. Or you got a pastor here to pray with you if you'd like.

Lay it before the Lord. Take the warning that he gave us. And live in response to it. He'll be honored and your family will be strengthened.

Lord Jesus I ask today. That you'll work and you'll move in hearts and lives. Like only you can. Help us to hear what you have to say.

Work and move in us oh God. As only you can. And help us to have the fortitude. And the courage and the obedience. To just follow. As you lead oh Lord I pray.

In Jesus precious name. Amen.