

Heart to Heart Talk on Marriage

by Jim Cymbala

The key to a successful marriage is humility, giving up one's way, and being open to one's spouse's culture and expectations.

Duration: 39:36

Scripture: Matthew 19:6, 1 Corinthians 7:2, 1 Corinthians 7:5, Ephesians 5:21, Ephesians 6:11, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Marriage"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker starts by sharing a personal anecdote about watching a nature channel and being disturbed by the aggressive behavior of wild dogs in South Africa. He then transitions to discussing the dangers of bitterness and isolation in our spiritual lives, emphasizing the importance of acting in a Christian way and avoiding conflicts that can lead to negative consequences. The speaker also highlights the significance of humility and self-control in relationships, particularly in marriage. They emphasize that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, and encourages single individuals to avoid being self-centered in order to receive God's blessings. The sermon references biblical passages such as 1 Peter 5:5-7 to support these teachings.

Transcript

I would like to close this service by addressing myself to a couple concerns that every pastor in America now is addressing more and more. And that is the tremendous attack that is being made on marriages throughout the country. Among people who go to church, the divorce rate now has reached the same exact percentile as people who don't go to church.

And in the last year, there has been an explosion, I've learned, in the year 2000. There's an explosion among a lot of well-known TV evangelists or TV personalities or pastors of large churches who have divorced and then remarried right in front of their churches, some within seven days of divorcing, some marrying women 25 years younger, nothing against the Bible, but in the Bible about that. But it has gotten to the place where such deception has come in that pastors have, in one case, this is in a public Christian, very, very largely circulated Christian journal, a pastor told his cheering congregation that the Lord told him to divorce his first wife.

So that he could marry this new one. And that now his anointing was stronger now that he had a new wife. In another case, much to the sadness of this periodical, that usually covers ministers of this ilk in a rather positive way.

The minister, and this is how far the deception can go, told the congregation, because he had divorced and remarried, don't worry, I have to do what I have to do because God didn't call me to marriage. God called me to ministry. So we know that Satan is working overtime.

So I want to address something to the single people that are here and to married people that are here. And this is no sermon. This is just me, the pastor of this church, opening my heart to you.

Not as some great example or not as someone who's saying to you, I've never made mistakes or my wife and I have nothing to learn. No, not that at all. But I do want to pause to share just these few thoughts with you before we dismiss in prayer.

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all of your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be self-controlled and alert. Some translations have it, be sober or circumspect and alert, awake. For your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring hungry lion is what's implied, looking for someone to devour.

Resist him standing firm in the faith. Just listen, this is not a message. This is an exhortation.

But something I have felt that, you know, I should say to all of you here. I am sad in, you know, just about now 30 years of doing this, being a pastor. The hardest part is when you sit in an office and you see the devil has gotten into marriage.

And it's destroying. And in fact, one recently where I was counseling a couple. I just broke down inside of me.

I didn't let them see it. But I just broke down and started to weep. And then very soon I just started to pray out loud.

And they joined in my prayer. Because people start out in the Lord, loving the Lord. And the next thing you know, incredible things are happening.

This is because, of course, marriage, which is ordained by God, is potentially so full of blessing that Satan makes it his great point of attack. And also because when you're married, you totally expose yourself to your spouse. No one knows you better.

And because when you love someone, you become vulnerable. If the flesh gets in and anger gets in, you can really end up hurting each other. In fact, nobody can hurt you as much as your spouse could hurt you or your child, someone that close to you.

Also, what saddens me is when I see single people who, to me, aren't approaching life in a healthy, normal way. Something has spooked them or frightened them or turned them off or they're just too selfish or self-centered to open themselves to the possibility of sharing their life with another person. So let's start with single people.

The Bible talks about the fact that not everybody's called to marriage. Some people are called and have the ability, by God's grace, to live a single life, live with self-control, and work for the Lord and ask for the Lord's blessing. But you can't actually do things as single people that you can't do as you're married.

Even as married people can do certain things that single people can't do. But single people can be devoted to the Lord and give time and energy to the Lord, unlike married people who are tied down to responsibilities with children, etc. But when you're single and you feel that you're called to marriage, and remember what the Bible says, he that finds a wife or husband finds a good thing.

Marriage is potentially just blessed by God. It's blessed by God and potentially can bring a lot of help to others. But marriage is a two-edged sword so that it has the potential in there, if Satan gets in, to hold people back because of a bad marriage, of a heartache in their marriage.

Now, to get married to someone, you have to be open. And if you're a man, you have to be delivered from the selfishness and the insecurity that you won't share your life with someone else. I'm meeting more and more men who now are getting older and are alone.

And when I talk to them and say, why didn't they get married? They had a chance to get married. There was someone who cared for them and they cared for that person. But they were either too insecure, were afraid of rejection, had been hurt by somebody before, were too selfish.

Because, you know, when you're single, whether you're a man or a woman, the longer you live single, you can develop selfish tendencies. You don't have to say amen, but that's true. Because you do what you want when you want to do it.

Nobody... you're not responsible to anybody. You go where you want, you stop where you want, you eat when you want, you do whatever you want. And when you get married, them days are over.

You know that. It's a life of sharing with another person. And I actually think that one of the causes why men... I will speak to men because I am saddened by this.

I have to say this. Not just here in this church, but every place I travel, I see men that I know love the Lord, who make no attempt to even know Christians of the opposite sex, to open up their heart and their life to them, to go out on a date, which means nothing. You're just going out to get to know one another.

Doesn't mean anything. Doesn't mean you're going to, you know, take her to the senior prom or anything. It just means that you're going out with someone or a group of people.

I mean, more and more men who just... There's these lovely Christian women who love the Lord, single women who love the Lord, and they are just so into their own lives, or I don't know what they're into. It's... I knew this was going to happen. I knew this was going to happen.

I knew it. I knew it. All right, let me get off that point quick.

But you know what? Seriously. It's insecurity. Sometimes it's hurt.

It's pain. It's stuff learned in a house. It's men saw their mom and dad fight like a cat and a dog and said, if that's what marriage is, I pass.

And this is something God has to deliver guys from. Because a lot of guys have insecurity. They're afraid of rejection.

I talk to men who tell me, she'd never go out with me. I know she would. No, no, I'm afraid.

Because, you know, our machismo, our pride can get so big that fear stops us from reaching out to anyone because we're afraid we'll get rejected and then you end up rejecting yourself. You just end up nowhere. So men and women have to be willing to open their lives.

The other thing and the main point I want to bring to you here, because I'm not trying to give you a classical teaching on marriage and the difficulties of marriage. I just want to exhort you what's on my heart. And I just pray God will make it a blessing.

Peter tells the Christians here in First Peter, the fifth chapter, he tells them, I'm sorry, yes, the fifth chapter about walking in humility and humbling yourself. And God resists the proud. And I, from what I can perceive, that is one of the major problems.

We're going to get to marriage in a second, but let's stay with single people for a moment. And this is single, whether you're 20 or whether you're 40 or 50, is that God will never bless anything we do if we're full of ourselves. Do we all agree on that from scripture? Now, you have to understand the strong language God uses here.

He resists the proud. I don't care if it's in preaching or directing a choir or teaching a class or being a gospel singer and ministering or looking for a date or trying to, you know, find the wife or the husband that God might have for you. The only way it'll be blessed is if you walk in humility.

Because God resists the proud, he gives grace only to the humble. And the humble are those who count others better than themselves and empty themselves of self by God's grace so that God can fill them, as Damaris was saying. So, without humility, here's what happens.

I see single people with expectations for their spouse that are from another world. I don't even mean that to be funny, but obviously you're in a laughing mood here tonight, I can see. Why girls think that there's a perfect guy or guys think that there's a perfect girl and they're not going to commit or even date until they find Miss Perfect or Mr. Perfect.

You better wake up and smell the coffee before you're in a senior citizen's home. There is nobody that's perfect. And here's what you have to understand.

God is working on all of us. And brothers and sisters, listen to me, I'm serious. If I was your dad and you were single, I don't care what age you are, but imagine me as your dad.

I want to tell you this. Don't you understand, and this is only humility, God's humility helping us to see this. Whatever you see in another person, don't you understand that they see things in you? Don't you understand that when you see something that irritates you or irks you or bothers you, maybe they see two things for every one that you see, but they're not saying it and you're not saying it, and now you won't even talk on the phone because you're looking for someone who doesn't exist.

Nobody is perfect. And really when you come to it without Jesus, nobody's a bargain either, starting with you and me. And without that humility of, I'm not going to find someone perfect, and if I did, how would they ever go with me, who's so imperfect? This is something that is very practical, but I'm telling you, people are living in another zone.

They're thinking that there's a perfect way to get married, that there's some storybook way. Are we ready to get married? Nobody's ever ready to get married. You just get married and then God helps you.

There's counseling. There is a level of maturity and commitment to one another. But Carol, were we ready to get married when we get married? You better marry back here.

Were you ready? No, you just get married because God's saying, this is what I want, and you start adjusting to one another, and you start adapting, and you can't do that without humility. Just like you need humility to date properly and not take yourself so serious. Because don't you get it? Right now as I'm speaking, just every Sunday I speak here, I've learned now that there are people who don't like just the way I look or the way I'm going to speak.

That's just the way it is in life. And as much as somebody troubles you, you know, aren't there some people that just drive you nuts in this earth? Come on, is everyone with me? There are some people who just irritate you. Listen, how many have people that just irritate you on your job, or in your family, or an in-law, or somebody, but you've never told them? Don't you know? Listen, don't you realize that tonight somebody is laying in their bed thinking about you? Well, of course.

Someone can't take Maritza. Someone can't stand Damaris. Someone can't take Chevy.

Well, why would it be different if there are people that bug you? Don't you think that you irritate other people? Do I get a witness here? Not because, listen, not because you mean to irritate them. It's because we're all so imperfect. Haven't you noticed? And when we're married, that's the thing that really helps ultimately.

If a husband doesn't walk in humility, he's going to try to jam down his wife's throat. Wives, obey your husbands. Submit to your husbands is unto the Lord.

Ephesians, and it's in the Bible. But listen, the same Bible says, Husbands, love your wives. Love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Now, now, is there any husband here who could stand up and say, I love my wife exactly like Christ loved the church and he gave himself for it. Does Michael love Vilma that way? Does Joey love Missy that way? I know they love their wives. These are two good godly men and they love their wives.

But as Christ loved the church, I bet there's imperfections in their love. I bet there's selfishness mixed in. So if I don't love my wife the way I need to, God's still working on me.

Isn't it insane for me to start laying in bed at night or thinking about all the ways that Carol's not what she wants to be. Then marriage will not be a blessing. It'll be hell on earth.

Because when pride gets in, and a man wants to show his wife that he's the boss and she's not what she needs to be and even use the word of God on her, literally all hell will break loose in that situation. Or if a wife is going to show her husband, I'm going to have the last word on you. And I'll use, I'll use turning you off sexually.

I'll use whatever. I'll use a way to get back at you without challenging you even verbally. You know what brothers and sisters, it's best to just drop on your knees and start to pray.

Because that breaks the heart of God. That just destroys everything. And we've all been guilty of playing games inside of our marriage and saying and doing things.

There's not a married couple here that hasn't had a perfect record in their marriage. But you got to understand, this is very, very volatile ground that you're on. Because the same portion of scripture says, as I draw this little exhortation toward another stage, it says that we're not only to humble ourselves, you need humility to date and look at things in perspective and not take yourself so serious and realize that nothing's perfect except for Jesus.

God's working on everything You know, I meet people, I've been dating her for six months, but you know, I don't know what to do past the symbol. I just, I saw a fault in her. You know, oh please.

And also if I could just say this, when single people do get involved with one another and you feel like God wants you to get married, you got to realize, you got to say goodbye to your family if you're going to get married. Oh, I didn't get much of a wedding, let me say that again here. The Bible says, for this cause, a man leaves his mother and father.

And that doesn't mean you always are there for your family, but you never bring your family into your marriage to harm your wife who didn't marry your parents and didn't marry your family. She married you and that's not fair to make her put up with the nonsense that might be in your family. With all due respect, listen, wait, listen.

They're clapping in the lobby. When I got married, when I got married, my dad was an alcoholic, my late father. He never made it to my wedding.

We would get phone calls, right Carol? The first few years of our marriage, I would get a phone call. My mother would be crying. That meant my dad had gone over the edge and started to strike her.

That had happened with me growing up. Unfortunately, now all the kids were married, so she was home alone with no one to protect her. When that phone call came, my wife knew I had to drop everything and race to my mother.

Right, Carol? There were times I just said, I'm sorry. I got in the car. And my wife understood, thank God.

But I try to shield. I never had my dad when he was drinking in front of my wife. I didn't want to shame him.

But that wasn't something part of the bargain with my wife. She married me. She didn't marry my father.

She didn't marry my mother. So while I respect, and of course, she loves my late father. She loved him and my mother who's living.

And I loved her late dad. He was like a father to me and her mother. You have to be very careful that you never let your family get involved in your marriage because they're always going to side with the kid.

Never. I don't care what would ever happen between my wife and I. There have been attacks on our marriage and we've had disagreements and the devil has attacked. My mother and father have never heard the first sentence of anything I've ever said about my wife, no matter how I felt she had treated me or whatever we were going through.

You don't bring your parents into your marriage. They have their marriage. Let them take care of their marriage and you work on your marriage because that is unfair to Carol if I bring in my family into the marriage and Mom, she's not treating me the way you did and she doesn't make the meatloaf the way you do and all of that.

I was one time at a place where a man, a young minister said in front of his wife and his wife when he's being served some food. You know what? It's so good that you serve butter that way because you know, my wife doesn't serve butter the way my mother did. Oh, exactly.

I wanted to just jump out of my seat and say, how do you dare put your wife down in a comparison to your mother? If you wanted your mother's butter then why don't you just stay home and not get married? How many say amen? So, so listen. Now that's dangerous. Listen, this is all dangerous because you love your family.

See, marriage is fraught with difficulties because I love my mother and when my dad was drinking you know, I had to navigate through that. But you never talk out of school. You never, you never talk like that and then just get emotional support.

Then your spouse feels more isolated because the parents usually side with their own child and feel they're not being treated correctly. So, there's a saying in Spanish, I don't know how to say it but it's a play on the word casas, I think, but it's what it says in Argentina is whoever wants, whoever wants a house, whoever wants to get married wants a house. You have to want your own house.

If you don't want your own house then don't get married. Now, and you have to drop what you're used to because you have to share now in humility. You can't force your culture and what you're used to onto a spouse.

You know, it takes maturity and grace to be married because you got to share. You got to give up your way. You got to be open to other ways.

My mother and dad brought up Eastern Europe, never put garlic on any food. I never had garlic on any food growing up. I married this lady over here.

She loves garlic. Then she got into West Indian food. She has me eating rotis.

Then we got into rice and beans. Wait, now we have garlic on ice cream. We put garlic in our tea.

She has an effect on me. Now, the other warning is when you're dating and when you're married you have to understand that the other warning that we have to listen to is not only to be humble, walk in humility and not take ourselves serious and realize there's got to be give and take which we all struggle with because we're all used to having our way. We're all egomaniacs naturally.

We need God to help us. And just not type A personalities are egomaniacs or aggressive people are egomaniacs. Quiet people can want their way just as strong.

Sometimes still water runs very deep and it's dirty on the bottom. Now, Paul Peter says be alert and be sober because your enemy, Satan, who by the way the word there means the condemner or the accuser of somebody. That's what his name means there.

The devil, your adversary, the devil goes about like a roaring lion. Nowhere is this more true in dating and in marriage which I want to close with. It's true in dating because you can lose your reputation and your good Christian name if you don't date properly because of the flesh and because the part of getting married to someone is a physical attraction to them.

There is naturally the sexual temptation. So the devil has some buttons that he can try to press and we have to be sober and diligent the Bible says and we have to be alert to see what kind of situations would be very combustible so that there's not a lot of heartache and shame and just a mess. And that's why people need to pray together, don't they? You got to make Christ the center of relationship, guys.

You got to talk about Jesus and in marriage even though the sexual temptation of illicit sex before marriage is taken away because now you're married you have to be very careful because in marriage is where the devil can come in and attack because once when you're vulnerable and you love someone once anger and a fight come in and you feel alone Satan has a temptation waiting for you and uses the hurt of your marriage to springboard you into that temptation. Are you all listening to me?

In marriage Satan uses a feeling of rejection she doesn't care for me he doesn't respect me he doesn't like you love me he wants to be with his friends she wants to be over there whatever she's still with her family and you got to understand women we got to understand men husbands and wives it's a feeling of tremendous violation when you feel like the one that you love that you've given your life to now doesn't want to be with you or Satan and the word they use is he's the accuser he will accuse Carol to me he will bring negative things about my wife to me he will bring negative things about me to Carol that's his strategy because in our situation once the wall goes up then we can't pray to God because a fight a marital fight means you can't pray and in my case I couldn't preach it's more

than one time since we've been in this building since 1979 that I've had to walk over to the piano at the beginning of a service and apologize because I knew I couldn't leave we had had words thing wasn't right between us and I knew I'm going to get up and preach God's word to you and I'm not talking to my wife how would the Holy Spirit bless that? not just once I had to do that but that's where this great blessing and support because I couldn't have a greater wife she compliments me where I'm weak she's strong maybe where she needs encouragement I'm there for her but the devil knows that and he knows the potential blessing Gene and his wife can be and Damaris and Rod can be and the rest of us Pam and Corey the whole group of us here that are married he knows the blessing that Henry and

his wife could be so he's going to attack to try to cut us off from being what God wants us to be and blessing other people because do you know how horrible you feel when you've been compromised either in a relationship and you've messed it up somehow or in your marriage if you're on the outs with your spouse you can't witness to anyone you can't sing you can't pray you got to get it right you got to get it right and what Satan tries to do as I close is he tries to by the way what you got to do I very rarely give you physical instruction about these things but see when you love your woman you got to show whether you're dating her you're married you got to show that you love her right? so you don't even wait till Valentine's Day how many know when Valentine's Day is? wait what you do is

wait wait wait wait wait wait wait sit down sit down you're all out of control wait would you be my Valentine? and don't be cheap go for a few flowers will you please? don't bring something from Prospect Park now listen last night my brother was at my house and we had to have a family talk about some things and Carol was over with one of with the grandchildren and one of my daughters her husband so Bob and I were watching something on the news before we I got to get to get along with the Lord and study and he had work to do so we were watching the news but as we went past one of the nature channels they had one of those specials on and it just hurt me again as I saw in this case it was those wild dogs of South Africa that you can find in Kruger National Park there where I've been

invited to go but I've never been able to go and these you know Andrew these wild dogs they are so nasty and my friends from South Africa Chosen they told me that these wild dogs are so bold and aggressive that in a pack they will go after a female lion if they can just get her alone and start snipping and fighting imagine well these wild dogs who are nasty they went after there were some impalas there and they made a run at it when I saw the size of the impalas I was wondering how would these little dogs as they're impalas are pretty big but you know what it was it was they ran and they have some kind of communication these dogs with each other they have a strategy and they bewilder one of the impalas and they get it away from the pack and it was so sad because impala was running saw a

dog so it turned but as it turned it turned away from a pack then another dog turned it another way then another dog turned it another way and now the pack is there and it's all alone and it was horrible those dogs went in and ripped this animal apart I thought that's just like satan you see when you're married or when you're single what he wants to do is isolate you and make you feel alone that nobody cares that nobody loves you this is why it gets people to try to leave churches you know things don't work out in the church and it gets people to say no they don't care about you they're the minister never cared about you and if he can get you feeling alone with nobody to pray for nobody to love nobody to pray with you nobody to encourage you you got to understand brothers and sisters

listen to me married couples you got to understand this at the worst moment of my marriage or your marriage or whatever you got to understand as you look at your wife or your husband no matter what they've done wrong when things are going south you have to realize the devil is behind this the devil is behind this are you listening to me? the devil is behind this yes she might have her faults but I have more but the one causing this conflict this adversary this roaring lion seeking whom he may devour because once you get hurt and you feel isolated and you feel sorry for yourself if anybody here is in a pity party that is the most vulnerable position because if you think this lion if you think this lion has any feelings whatsoever about you your family your name he will tear you to shreds

but you might say but I've been hurt and nobody cares about me he could care less he loves to hear that kind of talk he will rip you up one side and down the other because he's a roaring lion and the bible says we have to be alert for the tricks that he uses of isolating us we have to conquer him by praying for one another and loving one another and praying with one another and saying I'm sorry first before your wife can say she's sorry and when you have a relationship even if it doesn't work out to be respectful and say you know what God's not in this for us to get married but we're going to be reasonable and we're going to act in a Christian way and not act like a cat and a dog because it didn't work out that's a horrible thing and what it does is once that bitterness or isolation gets

in you then the enemy just slowly spiritually isolates you Carol and Jonathan if you play or whoever's over there he isolates you over there and then he has a plan for you that woman is waiting that guy is waiting a situation is waiting listen brothers and sisters last thing I want to say to you I have counseled people who have ended up in situations that they never dreamed and you know what it began with a fight but the fight leads to something else which leads to something else which leads to something else which leads to words which leads to yeah and those you know there are four letter words that they won't let you on TV to say anything but you know there are words you never say in a marriage better to say a four letter word than ever to say I'll leave you or I'll divorce you those

are words you never say if you're a Christian you never say those words why not then just whistle for the devil to come for both of you you never say those words you can say I'm hurt you can say you know this I

don't feel this is right better yet say could we pray because the devil goes about like a roaring lion and we have to rise up and fight him so that the world can see the way God intended young single people middle-aged single people to live and married couples to live let's close our eyes and bow our heads I want every married person in the building whose spouse is in the building if you're sitting with them sir would you take her by the hands and walk her up here to the front for Valentine's Day if she is another part of the building meet her at the altar if you're here and you're

dating someone regularly and you consider yourself you're in premarital class or whatever but you consider that you're dating somebody regularly and you feel like you two should come up then come up with these married couples you do if you're here and you're single and you're sitting somewhere in and you are open tonight that God would send somebody into your life and you want to say to God tonight God I am open I would want to date in a Christian way I would want to have a Christian marriage and I would want to be all that you want me to be if that's what you have for me but I want to I want to surrender myself again and open myself up to your purposes I don't want to have some childlike attitude of I'll never go with a man I'll never be with a woman I'll never I want to be open to

whatever your plan is I release any resentment or hurt pain that I have I want you to stand up wherever you're sitting if you're single I know that takes a little courage but I want you to do it I don't care if you're 20 or 50 or whatever if they just play that quietly I want you husbands with your arms around your wives right now begin to pray and minister to your wife right now just pray over her out loud let her hear your prayer everybody else in the building just let's begin to pray and call on the Lord that God would make us the kind of men and women He wants us to be single or married come on everybody just grab somebody's hand on the left or right whether you're standing or sitting or in the lobby everyone grab hold of somebody next to you and begin to pray

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