

Godly Fellowship

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of godly fellowship in the Christian life, highlighting the need for men to be around other men who are godly and preferably more godly than them, and to model godly character in their children.

Duration: 59:25

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:1

Topics: "Fellowship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not growing dull in our spiritual lives, particularly in the area of missions. He acknowledges that it can be easy to forget about missions amidst the busyness and challenges of daily life. The preacher also highlights the decline in people's ability to endure sound doctrine and sit under sermons for longer periods of time, attributing it to the influence of modern culture and lack of biblical literacy. He encourages the congregation to seek inspiration from examples like George Mueller and the great preachers of the past, and suggests surrounding oneself with Bible exhortations to stay focused on honoring Christ. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the significance of preaching and teaching in fellowship with the godly, emphasizing the need for reproof, rebuke, and exhortation to communicate truth and knowledge to God's people.

Transcript

This sermon was uploaded by Grace Community Church in San Antonio, Texas. And our website is www.gccsatx.com Or you can find us on Sermon Audio by going to www.sermonaudio.com slash gcc. Well, it's great to be here.

You look terrible. I mean, terrible. I said, yeah, my wife has to put up with that about every day of her life.

I was gone for two weeks in the Dominican Republic and Peru. And God really did a lot of glorious things. I did get sick there.

I lost about 20 pounds in 16 days. If anyone wants the diet plan, I'll give it to you for free. But it won't be too enjoyable, I can assure you.

It's a great way to lose weight. Tonight, we're going to continue with what we're doing. But I want to give kind of a foreword about something.

I really don't like doing a lot of just topical type of preaching. But we're going through this thing about family. We're dealing with men.

And we're going to deal a little bit with women tonight also. But this is important. It's very important.

Because I've discovered, as I've said here before, that church can be very cosmetic. It looks really great because the worship is good. And a lot of people are in attendance.

And there seems to be a good spirit about the thing. But that really doesn't tell us what church is like. What tells us what church is like is when everyone goes home on Monday.

And we see men, are they moving in the sphere of biblical truth as fathers and as husbands? And women, are they doing the same? And the children who have professed faith in Christ, are they moving in the sphere of biblical principle? And so that's what makes, in a sense, the New Testament Christian life so glorious. You know as well as I do, it doesn't matter how good church is. If your family's a wreck, it's not that good.

As a matter of fact, many people, and I must say, especially women, will oftentimes use the church as a refuge. Do a lot of things in the church simply because home isn't good. But we want, what we want is for home to be good.

For it to be a blessing. For it to be a place of scripture, of learning, and most of all, of the presence of Jesus Christ. Now how do I know all this about you? I'm a prophet.

No. It's in the scriptures, in part. But I know you've got to be just a whole lot like me.

There can't be a whole lot of difference between both of us. There's not, I assure you. And that's what I want.

That's what I desire. I desire a godly family. And I desire all my other Christianity to kind of spring out of that.

And I'm sure that's what you want too. So let's talk about a few things tonight that I think will be helpful to us. And I want to start off with, we've been talking about how can a man be godly? But at the same time, how can a woman be godly? Now, one of the ways that we do that is by excluding fellowship with the ungodly.

Now that doesn't mean we go around with our little spiritual microscopes trying to figure out who's perfect and who's not. Because we'd have to eliminate everybody. But you have, through your study of scripture, you have a good idea who is a godly man.

And who is a godly woman. Or who is a godly young person. And what you want to do is you want to seek out godly fellowship.

It's very important. Extremely important. Literally, I can't make it through the easy days without godly fellowship.

And I most certainly can't make it through the tough days without godly fellowship. Now, there's a biblical principle found in Proverbs 27, 17. And let's look at that.

Proverbs 27, 17. In Proverbs 27, 17, it simply says, Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. There are simply areas of your back you cannot scrub.

Now, I don't suggest getting another man to do that for you. But the point is, there are certain things in the Christian life that we simply are not going to achieve. Apart from the fellowship of other men.

And there is a conformity to Christ that we're never going to experience unless we're around other men. Who are as godly, and preferably, more godly than us. Men who are going to sharpen us.

They're going to file us. Sometimes they're going to wound us. We'll watch their character.

Not just what they say, but the way they say it. Their character. The way they walk in the mundane task of life.

We'll watch that, and that sharpens us. So there's two ways in which men sharpen men. One of them is through their teaching.

But the great way in which men are most sharpened are by watching the lives of other men. The way they live. The decisions they make.

The choices in their life. An example. That's why it's so easy to preach, and it's so easy to disciple the way discipleship is done today.

Because discipleship today is basically, I'll meet you once a week over coffee. But real discipleship, where you may take the person into your home. Or they're around you all the time.

Or they're watching you when you work. Maybe it's someone that you're discipling who works right by your side. That's very difficult.

Why? Because they really see you. I mean, they really see you. Let me give you an example of how character comes out in real life.

If you ever bumped into a person, maybe in the hall or something. And they really maybe were short with you. Grouchy.

A little bit angry. Turned off. Maybe offended you a little.

And they just kept going down the hall. And then maybe two hours or three hours later, they come back and they say to you. Hey, look, I'm sorry.

I'm just not myself today because I'm sick. Or I'm just not myself today because I've got so many problems. We've all heard someone say that.

But what we have to realize is it is exactly the reverse. You see, when everything is going well with a person, you're not seeing their real character. You're seeing them held up by all the good circumstances in their life.

It's when all those things are tore down that you start seeing who the person is. It would be preferably to go back and say, excuse me, I do apologize. But I have no excuses because you saw the real me today.

Fasting. I don't know if many of you have ever fasted. It's a great practice.

It's taught in the New Testament. But one of the things that fasting does, at least the first four days, is it brings out your character. Because if you're a typical American and you eat all the junk food we eat.

Your first four days of fasting, you're not starving to death. You're actually not even that hungry. But all the toxins are coming out of your body.

And when they're coming out of your body, you're cramping. You're dizzy. You feel like you're going to fall over.

And boy, the real you comes out. My wife always likes to take the kids on a vacation when I tell her I'm getting ready to go on a fast. At least for four days.

Now, so iron sharpens iron. Now, for fathers, this is very important. I walked out on the back porch one day when I was about, I don't know, 23, 24 years old.

My father had been dead for quite some time. And I was standing there like this with my knees kind of locked back. And I had my head tilted to one side and I was looking like this across the fields.

And my mom came out and she goes, oh, my goodness. And I said, what? She goes, look at you. Look at you.

Look at your legs. Look at your hands. Look at the tilt in your head.

That's identical to your dad. Now, he didn't teach me that. He didn't.

I never even thought about that. But because that's what he always did, it was imprinted in me. Do you see the power? Fathers, you're nervous, full of anxiety.

Come home with it. Show it in the house. You just bet your life on it.

Your children will be nervous and anxious. You see, we have to model these things. And we have to be around men who don't just talk.

They really walk. They really believe this stuff. And they fail at it.

But at least you can see something increasing. Also, do you know that sometimes, and it's true, I don't want to offend anybody, but you get a couple that's been married for 40, 50 years, they start looking like each other. It's scary.

And then if they've owned an English bulldog for 25 years, all three of them start looking alike. They really do. Now, why is that? It's the power of being with another person.

Iron really does sharpen iron. We impact people with our lives. And so if we're going to be around people, and young people, listen to me, if you're going to choose your friends, you better choose them well.

Because when you look at your friends, you're looking at a mirror reflection. You're looking at you. You are looking at you.

Now, let's get back for a moment, though, to the man and the woman. Sir, in many ways, that woman you have, you're creating her. You're forming her with your own life.

So you better be careful about your workmanship. But iron sharpens iron. That's a biblical principle.

We need each other desperately. Now, here's something that's very, very important. You need a preacher.

You need a pastor. But the most experienced pastor needs the youngest member in the church and can learn from the youngest member and can even be, if properly done, rebuked by the youngest member in the church. You see, I go to conferences and I listen to some pretty big guys who really say a lot of hard stuff to understand.

And very rarely do I walk away going, Wow, I learned something new. But, like a few years ago at a conference in Kansas, before I was to get up and preach, they let these new believers, six of them, got up for about ten minutes apiece and gave their testimonies. You know, I didn't learn anything from them, but you know what did happen? I remembered everything I'd forgotten.

The freshness of their Christianity, the newness of the Word of God, their desire. You remember all those, I can say it, feelings of emotion and the reality of Christ when you were first a new believer? That's why it's important, not just to see an old guy who studies the Bible all the time, but also see and hear some of these people, even brand new believers, and just rejoice in what you're remembering from them. So, there's a biblical principle that we need godly fellowship.

Part of that is one-on-one fellowship, person-to-person, flesh-to-flesh, incarnational ministry. That means you're ministering to people as you're walking around, as you're talking, as you're doing your daily activities, if you're doing them filled with the Holy Spirit, seeking to honor Christ. Now, there's another way in which we have fellowship with the godly, and that is through preaching and teaching.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 4, 1-4. Sorry, 2 Timothy 4, 1-4. Paul tells Timothy, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing in His kingdom, preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season. To do what? Reprove, rebuke, exhort. Now, I want us just to look at these words for a moment, because they're greatly misunderstood.

In teaching, there ought to be instruction. There ought to be instruction in teaching. We want to communicate truth, and we want to communicate knowledge.

Why? Because God's people actually do perish because of a lack of knowledge. That is true. I want you to understand that.

There's knowledge you need, and if you don't have it, you can get in a whole lot of trouble. You can get in a whole lot of trouble. Some of you men may work in a factory, or you work around heavy equipment, or farm machinery.

Just right there next to our farm, two men, one lost his leg, the other one lost his leg. Why? There are certain things you better read when you're dealing with farm equipment. There are certain shields you better not forget to put back, or you're going to be in a great deal of trouble.

And so knowledge is important, but knowledge isn't enough. The teacher will also reprove you. Now, if you don't like that, you don't like biblical preaching.

The preacher will reprove you. Now, what does that word mean? It means to expose or prove a fault, to convince with reason and sound arguments. Now, this is a pulpit, right? It is also a shield for cowards.

It is. It's the biggest shield in the world for cowards. Really.

I don't know what it is about this pulpit. You can be the meekest man in the world, unafraid. I mean, you're totally afraid to confront even a mouse, but you get in this pulpit, you can start railing on people.

I don't know what it is. So, what I want you to see, reprove does not mean that you stand up here and you nitpick people apart. It doesn't mean that.

If you're always going for the juggler, if you're always seeking to expose error, you're going to eventually exasperate the congregation and you're going to exasperate anybody else. A father does that. He's going to exasperate his children.

I mean, you can't do that, but you do have to do it. It's to expose or prove a fault. Now, let's say that a pastor recognizes one day or learns that somebody did something.

So, immediately he gets in the pulpit, he exposes it. That's not what this is about. This is exposing error.

Now, sometimes we do have to address things from the pulpit. I'm not saying we don't. But this is basically telling us in our preaching of the Word, as we preach through the Bible, as we seek to teach the full counsel of God, in that there's going to be reproof.

And the preacher who truly loves you is going to expose your faults. He's going to actually seek to prove it. And he's going to seek to convince you with reason and sound arguments that this is wrong and it shouldn't be in your life.

That's basically what counseling is. Counseling is not to sit around for two or three hours and talk about somebody's mother. Counseling is to deal with the issue at hand, and that is sin.

Now, let me just share with you something. Man only has one problem. I learned this years ago from Charles Leiter.

Man only has one problem, and it is sin. I don't care whatever your problem is, it is a result of sin. It is.

It's a result of sin. You and your wife are having problems? It's the result of sin. Maybe both-sided, one-sided.

It's usually both-sided, but not always. But it's the result of sin. And that's why it's so important to expose faults, to expose sin.

Also, you need to realize something. I remember a few years ago, when I first came to Alabama, I think Evan was around three years old, and I took him out to the TVA trails there. And all of a sudden we were hopping from rock to rock, and about two feet below us on the next rock was a copperhead about three feet long, coiled up.

Evan, oh wow, let's get it! I had to reprove his fault. I had to prove to him with many arguments that it was a wrong thing for him to do, because he isn't born with that kind of knowledge. And Christians are not born necessarily with that kind of knowledge.

We need to be taught what is right and what is wrong. There is a great deal that the Holy Spirit will do, a lot of work in the life of a new believer, and especially believers who live in places where there is no Bible. But for those of us who have a Bible, and we have the opportunity to congregate, we need to have people tell us what's right, and have them tell us what is wrong.

Now, let me say something here though, because it's very important. When the preacher tells you what's right or wrong, it might be as clear as day to everybody. But then, it might not be clear.

Even among godly Christians who are examining the Scriptures. And that's why there is a sense in which the pastors hold the congregation accountable, and the congregation holds the pastors accountable. And it's not with, well, I ain't never heard it that way before, or my grandma didn't believe that.

But it's with a Bible open. Now, when you approach somebody, a pastor, you should do so with respect, but you should not do so with fear of retaliation. It should just be, hey, thank you.

Thank you. I needed to hear that. Alright, so there is reproof, and then rebuke.

Rebuke is to charge men to make the necessary corrections regarding their error. You've exposed the error, and now you're challenging men to make the necessary corrections. Look, sir, I've told you what it is, but that's not good enough.

You need to make the necessary corrections. You need to change. Preaching is not simply about knowledge.

It's not simply about hearing something. It is about change. I am well aware that I want to change.

I want to change because I have some awareness of my lack of conformity to Jesus Christ and my need to change. I hope you're there too. Because if you're satisfied, and you have no desire to change or to be like Christ, you've got some severe spiritual problems.

We should all desire change. So it's to charge men to make the necessary corrections regarding their error. And finally, to exhort.

To exhort. What does that mean? I'm going to read from Albert Barnes. And he says this, The word properly denotes one who urges to the practical duties of religion.

So it's not just talking about the Trinity. It's not just talking about eschatology, the last things, or when Jesus is coming back. But it's teaching practical things like go over there and ask for forgiveness.

That's what you need to do. Or stop being angry with your wife. You see, this word properly denotes one who urges to practical duties of religion in distinction from one who teaches its doctrines.

One who presents the warnings and the promises of God to excite men to the discharge of their duty. You know how I judge if I've heard a sermon that really, I mean, man! I say to myself, that excited me to duty. That excited me to want to change.

To want to be different. To want further progress. I just didn't learn something and stand there in awe.

But it excited me to want to strive to be different. When I watch, there's a little film made out now that's half documentary and half actual film of George Mueller. And when I watch it, it excites me to want to believe

God and to pray.

So I know it's fruitful. Warren Wiersbe, years ago, wrote a book, *Walking with the Giants*. And it has short two-page biographies of the great preachers down through the ages.

And you know what? When I would get tired as a young minister, when I would get tired of studying and tired of everything about it, I'd open that up and I would read about one of those guys. And it would excite me to want to be better. Now, let me share with you something.

I really appreciate you don't have a whole bunch of just religious pictures and everything around here. But I'm going to tell you something. There wouldn't be anything wrong with putting Bible exhortations on every place on this wall.

Now, I'm not saying that literally. I'm just trying to prove a point and that is this. We grow dull in areas of our life when no one touches those areas.

Like, you forget about missions. And that's easy to do. It really is easy to do.

Why? Look, most of you men work eight, ten hours a day. Come home, you're tired. You've got your family.

There's all kinds of things going on in your life, good and bad. You're busy, you're tired, you're worn out. A preacher ought to understand that.

But at the same time, every once in a while, you need to hear about missions and all of a sudden you go, what am I doing? I need to wake up. You see, that's what we need. That's what we all need.

Now, so it's reprove, rebuke, exhort. It says with great patience and instruction. Right now, my seven year old and I are putting together a crane from a rector set for like a twelve year old.

Great patience and instruction. Because those little seven year old fingers, it's really hard. I mean, it's hard for me to get my hand up.

I don't know what engineer designed those things. It would drive you crazy trying to put that thing together. So it's with great patience, great patience and instruction over and over and over.

Men, if you're going to teach your wife great patience and instruction. If you're going to teach your children, if you're going to teach anybody, and if ever you think you shouldn't have to be that patient, then ask yourself how long, how many years the Lord has worked to change one thing in your life. Sometimes I'm astounded at the years that He works to do one thing in my life.

It is. It's astounding. Now, with great patience and instruction, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

They just won't be able to. Why? Well, there is a bunch of reasons. But some of them is simply this.

Some of them are actually quite practical. Everyone in modern day kind of church growth preaching classes tell you, look, that American, he can't sit but maybe 15-20 minutes. That sermon needs to be 15-20 minutes.

He can't endure any longer. Why? Because he gets about 10 minutes and then there's a commercial on television. 10 more minutes and there's a commercial on television.

And he knows he can run to make more popcorn. He's not trained anymore. Men are not trained to sit under sermons.

That's a shame. It is a reality, but I think it can change over time. That and just the spirit of the age.

We are not a people any longer who read the Bible very much and we're not people who read good books. And we're also people who have spent many, many decades in America telling us that Christianity could be like a fast food chain in the sense that you could just have it your way. Just do what's right in your own eyes.

And when someone comes along and goes, look, the Bible contradicts you, I can't endure that. I'm not going to endure that. And there are many, many other reasons.

Just the hardening of a heart because of lack of godly fellowship, lack of studying the Scripture, and one of the greatest of all killers of true godliness, and that is busyness. Whether you work in a factory, farm, you own a construction company, it doesn't matter. Busyness will kill you.

The psychiatrist Hung said, and he didn't believe in a personal devil, but he makes a good statement here, he said, busy is not of the devil, it is the devil. In a sense, well, I don't agree with him in that sense, literally, but there's some meaning in what he's saying. It is a dangerous thing that you become so busy that you can't endure sound doctrine.

You can't learn. You just do not have time. It says, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled.

They want to have their ears tickled. My dear brother and sister in Christ, that's what's happening today in America. I want you to understand that.

Now, not all TV preachers are bad. Even the some that I don't agree with, in some things, they're still not bad. Sincere men striving to do Christ's work.

But there's many of them out there that have huge coliseums of people, and the only reason they do, and they sell a whole bunch of books, and the only reason they do is because they tickle people's ears. They tell people what they want to hear. And I want to tell you something.

Someone is desperate, whether they're desperate because they're sick, they're desperate because they're lonely, they're desperate because life just didn't turn out for them like they wanted. A guy like that who stands up, he knows how to tickle their ears, and he will draw them in by the droves. Even teaching them things that is against not only Scripture, but reality.

And yet they want to believe it because they're so desperate and so far away from the truth. They want to have their ears tickled. They will accumulate for themselves teachers.

Man, I know people that, man, you listen to this guy, and you listen to this guy, and you listen to him, and him, and her, and this, and that. I mean, they've got just books on the latest fad, latest trend, the latest preacher. They accumulate for themselves people who tell them exactly what they want to hear.

And do you realize what that is? That's insulation from the truth. The more people you have around you flattering you and telling you good things about you, the less likely you are to ever hear the truth. When I started preaching and God began doing things and doors began to open, I remember, I forget one time, I was preaching in Romania and God really moved and I was coming back and I was in Zurich at the airport and I was seated there and a dear pastor friend of mine had many, many years of experience.

He walked over to me and he said, Boy, God used you. Just remember, you're dirt. You're dirt.

Another one told me, he said, Paul, the moment a preacher begins to believe the hype about himself, he's destroyed. He is destroyed. Okay? So we don't want to insulate ourselves with people who are going to tell us everything we want to hear.

Now, we do that two ways. One, we get teachers who tell us what we want to hear or we get friends just like us. Don't we? Why? We don't want anybody to rain on our parade, spoil our day, or tell us the emperor has no clothes.

We want our ears tickled and it's very, very dangerous. And he says, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires. Man, I like that guy.

You better be sure why you like that guy. Is it because he tells you everything you want to hear or because he's helping you grow in godliness? You see. According to their own desires.

Let me say something about desires. Desires are absolutely wonderful, but they are deadly. They are deadly.

And I'll tell you why. The Pharisees wanted to be seen by men, didn't they? That was one of their big problems. When they prayed, when they fasted, when they gave alms in the temple, they wanted men to see them.

And do you know what Jesus said? God gave them their reward in full. Now that's terrifying, folks. He gave them the desires of their heart.

God will give you the desires of your heart. You better make sure those desires are right. Because He will.

That's why it's both good and bad. Now, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. How can I picture? You all know probably what Greek mythology is.

Different stories, fables, and things like that. But how could I picture it for you? It's kind of like poof. It looks like something.

And all of a sudden, in one second, it just poof, it disappears. Or it's like a mirage that looks like life-giving water. And then you look at it and you think, oh, this is it.

But when you get up to it, it's sand. It's sand. There's a lot of myth makers out there.

Myth teachers out there. And the more you believe a lie, the less you're going to believe the truth. There's only so much room in that head of yours.

So the more you fill it up with lies of modern day media and ungodly individuals and the myths of maybe even grandma and grandpa, the less likely you are to receive the truth. we receive godly fellowship

through iron sharpening iron. We receive it through preaching.

Now I want us to look at something. I'm going to hit this again. We receive it through individual people in the body of Christ.

Go to Hebrews 10.23. Hebrews 10.23. It says, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together as in the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Now, I could rail on you with this.

I mean, I could flat out wipe you out. I promise you right now, I could grab a stick and whack every one of you in the head. Whap is a word that my son made up, and I guess I've adopted it.

Whack you in the head. I could beat you down to powder with this. I could.

Because none of you did this when you came in here probably. The only problem is I didn't either. So I don't know how hard I want to preach on this.

We forget why we come to church. Now there's a statement, isn't it? Come to church. That borderline is unridiculous.

We're coming to church. Coming to church. You are the church.

The church is coming to a building. It would be better to say that, wouldn't it? I'm the church. I'm going to the building where sometimes our church meets.

Because this isn't a church. I mean, we could turn this thing into a roller ring if we wanted to. It's not a church.

You're the church. And when you come together, whether it is in this building or out on the streets of Russellville or a bunch of you just get together in a house, somebody's house, to eat ribs and talk about Jesus. I better get my priorities right.

Talk about Jesus and eat ribs. You get together. What are you supposed to do? You're supposed to go to those types of things with this.

Considering how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Man, I forget that. You go into church.

Why? You'll hear a sermon. Whoopee! How to stimulate one another. I mean, how to provoke one another.

How to get other people doing things to love and good deeds. Not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some. Let me share with you.

You need to congregate. Be very, very careful about something. First of all, what they're talking about isn't necessarily what we're doing here.

I'm going to be honest with you. Because you did some worship. That was really good.

You sang well. You hear a sermon. You're out the door.

You're probably going to do more of this at Rancho Viejo or some restaurant after you get out of here. Why? Because you're actually going to talk to one another. Now, listen to me for a second.

I love coming to church. And I'm a pastor, so if everybody stops going to church, I'm like out of a job. But listen to me.

Do you realize how goofy we've gotten? How, I don't know, organizational? You went to church. What did you do? Well, I listened to a sermon. Well, we worshiped together.

What else? I don't want to make light of that, but some of you are going to have more church after the church gets over tonight. Because maybe you'll go to somebody's house or go out to eat and you'll actually sit down and talk about your life. You'll actually talk about, hey, what do you think? This is going on in my life.

What do you think the Scripture says? Folks, that's church. That's church. So one of the things that everyone sometimes needs to think about is learning how to get together in little groups, sharing with one another, exhorting one another, blessing one another, praying for one another.

An expression of the church. Do you see that? It's a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing.

I guarantee you, I could come over to some of your houses, get about two or three families together and sit down and say, let's talk about Jesus. And some of you would have the best time you've ever had in your life in church. So I want you to, when you come here, think about stimulating one another.

When you leave, think about stimulating one another. Think about, you know, going out there, sharing and talking and loving and blessing. That's a whole lot better than just sitting in a pew.

Now, he says, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. Drawing near. There's the motive.

Be busy about what? Blessing His people. Blessing His people. And not under the control of me, or this building, but just blessing.

I mean, folks, I literally lived through a war in Peru. Dead people everywhere, bombs blowing up. It was horrifying.

And yet, it was the greatest time of my life. Because no one had anything. We'd stand at two hours in line to get a bag of rice.

No one had any money. But we'd come together almost every night in little groups. And we'd sing about Christ.

And we'd read the Bible. And then we'd just talk. And then maybe someone had some coffee.

And then my wife would start playing Uno with everybody and a fight would break out. But other than that, everything was wonderful. Those were some of the greatest times in my life.

So through other people in the body, we grow. You can't grow just through a preacher. It's impossible.

It's just impossible. You can't grow outside of genuine fellowship. It's not possible.

Now, let me say this. Through close friends. Proverbs 18.24 Close friends are very good.

A man of too many friends comes to ruin. But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. There is.

That's not to say that, especially with our children, we shouldn't try to do everything in our power that they create unbreakable bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. But the reality is, especially once you come to know Christ and you're kind of out there on your own, and many times some of you may be the case where you don't even have family that are believers, that friends become closer to you than a brother. But you need to choose your friends really, really wisely.

They've got to be honest. They've got to be men who know the Scriptures. They've got to be honest about their own sinfulness.

They've got to be broken. And they've got to be willing to be honest with you. They've got to love you enough to tell you the truth.

And friends who know that friendship doesn't mean some 24-hour-a-day bond. Benjamin Franklin said a lot of wise things, a lot of very wrong things. He was a very secular man.

But one thing he said I really love, dead fish and friends, house guests, stink after three days. And that's the truth. That's the truth.

And so it's someone who knows to be there. Also in Proverbs 27, 5, better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Someone who will pop you. And they can. Why? Because you know they love you.

A guy told me one time about raising children. A lot of the things I know isn't from experience, but I went to godly men, not just older men, not just men who had raised families because some raised them wrong. But I literally hunted down men who had had a measure of success in raising children.

And one of them told me this, very important. He said, Paul, your children will forgive a lot of your mess-ups if they know you love them. If they know you love them, they'll be willing to forgive you in a lot of things.

Because you are going to blow it, Paul. It's the same way. If I have someone in my life I know this friend loves me.

When he corrects me, I listen. And sometimes even when he corrects me, and after a while we both discover he was wrong and out of line, it doesn't mess up our friendship because I know it's always in the context of this love. Let me just give you a little bit of wisdom about friendship.

You have a friend. He's going to blow it. He's going to hurt you.

He's probably even going to talk about you sometimes. Why? You talk about him. When you find that out, you just realize this.

You don't judge him by that moment. You judge him by the whole of your relationship. Not by one thing said or one act, one failure or a few.

But you look at everything about that person. Because someone will come to you and say, you know, they talked about you. Yeah, I know they did.

And I'm going to have to deal with that. But I know their life. I really know them.

And I'm not going to judge because I've done the same. Just a little bit of wisdom there. Through close friends.

And now, we're going to go a few minutes over because, men, you're going to enjoy this. I'm going to talk about your wife. OK? Men, we are changed through preaching.

We are changed through individual men in the body. We are changed through close friends. And we are changed through our wives.

Since the wife is a fellow believer in the community of faith, Ephesians 5.21, be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. And since she is a dear friend, then she can be an instrument of encouragement and correction. But her actions must be marked by the following.

Now, let me say what I'm saying. Let me explain what I'm saying. Wives are to be submissive to their husbands in the context of the family.

OK? But the wife is also a believer with you in the community of faith. And so there is a sense, not in directing the family, but there is a sense in which we are to be submissive to one another. So when my wife points out an error in me or a spiritual malady or something, she has that right because she is my closest friend.

And in a sense, being a part of the community of faith, she has a right to say to me something and I have an obligation to submit to it, if it's true. And at least listen to it and examine it if I don't think it's true at first. Now, but wives, here's the problem.

Many times you want to do the right thing. Change him. You do it the wrong way.

You do it the wrong way. And you set yourself back years. Now let's look at some of the ways, some of the things that must mark your attempt to change your husband.

She must foremost rely upon the quality of her life and not argumentation. Her husband is most likely to be changed through the quality of her life, her character, her actions, then her argumentation. 1 Peter 3.1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.

Now, I can prove right here the Holy Spirit inspired this. I can prove right here that the Bible is the infallible word of God because, buddy, the Holy Spirit says something here that every man in the world knows. And it's what? Listen to this.

Your husbands may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives. See, the Holy Spirit knows the first thing that woman's going for is her tongue. Sharper than any two-edged sword.

Listen, dear woman, you're able. I don't know where you got this ability, but you're almost 100% of the time able to whip your husband with your tongue in an argument. You can get him.

And that's why he gets mad and punches holes in things. Because you are able to beat him. A woman can almost always beat a man with her tongue.

A woman came up to a preacher one day. After he got through preaching, he said, I just want to lay my tongue on the altar. And he said, well, it's only 20 feet wide.

I don't know if it's big enough. But see, what you're doing to a man, when you're arguing, you're not arguing. I want you to know what's going on in the man's head.

You're attacking his character, his masculinity. You are not showing him any respect. And in Ephesians chapter 5, the Bible says, love your wives, but it never says, wives, love your husband.

Now, they're supposed to, and it does say that in other places. But here particularly, it doesn't say, wives, love your husbands. It says, wives, respect them.

Because I do not need my wife calling me 24 hours a day saying, honey, I love you, I love you, I love you. She does. What I need from her is respect.

If she unsheathes her tongue and begins to argue about changes, it's not going to do anything. She's in disobedience. I may need to change, but what she's attempting to do is a good thing.

Bring me closer to Christ, possibly. She's doing it all the wrong way, and she's going to drive me further away. But listen to what it says.

I mean, this is amazing. In the same way, you wives be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives. My wife's behavior is the most powerful thing in my life, in a sense.

If she's walking with Christ, and I had a bad day, and I come into that house, she lashes out at me, the battle's on. She shows godly character and qualities and submissiveness and a gentle and quiet spirit. She will crush me.

I mean, I'll just have to walk out. I've got this stick out in the back. It's made out of hickory.

It weighs about 7 pounds. I'll just beat myself in the head because it's that godly character of hers that turns the tide, that wins the day every time. You know, there has never been a time when my wife has tried to use her tongue to change me that it's worked.

But there has never been a time also that she's used the godly quality of her life and it's failed. God knows what He's talking about. He truly knows what He's talking about.

Now, she must foremost rely upon the quality of her life and not argumentation. Number two, she must not sharply rebuke, but appeal to Him. Now, this is found in a principle in 1 Timothy 5.1 which has an application to the elderly.

But here it may also apply to anyone that's in authority. And the idea is you don't sharply rebuke Him. You appeal to Him.

You use sharp rebuke, you're not going to win. If you want to hurt Him, you're going to hurt Him, but you're not going to win. You appeal to Him.

Also, she must demonstrate reverence and respect. Ephesians 5.33 The wife must see to it that she respects her husband. Listen, if everybody in the world, I wake up one morning and I look out the door because I hear a noise and six billion people are out there saying, we hate Paul.

Down with Paul. Paul's the worst human being in the world. It's going to shake me up.

But if I know the woman in that house respects me, I'm going to be able to deal with it. Women, you know, and it's true, and you're constantly saying in your literature, your books and everything, I need to know my husband loves me. He needs to prove his love to me daily.

I'll give you that. That's true. Your husband needs your respect.

And he needs you to prove that to him daily. Now, another thing here, she must demonstrate a submissiveness, a genuine submissiveness. Again, 1 Peter 3.5 For in this way in former times, the holy women also who hoped in God used to adorn themselves being submissive to their own husbands.

Look what God's saying. When a woman is submissive to her husband, it's like she has put on this beauty before God. It is a beauty that she puts on.

Holy women also who hoped in God used to adorn themselves. I'm going to tell you something. There's nothing wrong with fashion.

There's nothing wrong with trying to look beautiful, as long as it's not sensual or luxurious or just extravagant. But I want to tell you something. Let me let you in on something, ladies.

Maybe young guys who don't have a whole lot of sense are going to fall for a girl that sparkles and glitters and just, you know, draws the attention of everybody in the room. You talk about beauty. It is a gentle and quiet spirit.

A gentle and a quiet spirit. There's nothing like it. There's nothing like it.

It is absolutely breathtaking. It is. It's breathtaking when a woman does that.

And I mean, it could be a woman of average attractiveness physically or a very low attractiveness physically. She has a gentle and a quiet spirit. I want you to know she's going to be beautiful.

At least in the eyes of a man who has the Holy Spirit. And I'm not creating poetry here. I'm telling you the truth.

It's real. I'm not trying to make you feel good. I'm not trying to tell you something that's a myth.

It's really true. A godly man will appreciate more than anything else a gentle and a quiet spirit. Then, as I said, she must demonstrate a gentle and quiet spirit.

That's number five, 1 Peter 3, 4. But let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God. Now, look at this word imperishable. Imperishable quality for a moment.

Most of the things that the world sees attractive in a woman is perishable. That's why they sell cosmetic products. It's perishable.

Young ladies, you are going to spend so many years of your life, I mean literally, if you add it all up, probably be years in front of a mirror trying to maybe adorn yourself with the things that only attract ungodly men that you don't want. Ask any married woman. She'll tell you.

Take an ugly godly man over an attractive ungodly man. So you'll spend all your life or a big part of your life trying to beautify what is perishable. I mean, I don't care how beautiful you are.

I always like to do this thing, you know, I tell the young girls, like teaching a youth group, I say, girls, you're young, you're very, very beautiful. I just got some news for you. One day you are going to be terribly ugly.

I'm sorry. It happens. But you're going to spend much of your life propping up the perishable instead of doing what? Adorning yourself with an imperishable quality, which is a gentle and a quiet spirit.

It's beautiful to the Lord. It's beautiful to everybody who has any spiritual sense at all. So how does a woman become an instrument of transformation in her husband's life? Well, she must first and foremost rely upon the quality of her life and not argumentation.

1 Peter 3. She must not sharply rebuke, but appeal to Him. 1 Timothy 5. She must demonstrate reverence and respect. Ephesians 5.33. She must demonstrate a submissiveness, biblical submissiveness.

1 Peter 3.5. And she must demonstrate a gentle and a quiet spirit. 1 Peter 3.4. Those are the things that you want to work on. Now, I've held you over for quite a long time.

Thank you for your patience. I hope this has helped you. And finally, after weeks of preaching, you men can now go back and elbow them.

Say, did you hear that? You needed to hear that. Maybe, probably, I should probably put like a hundred dollar thing, you know, sale sign on the tapes because men are going to buy these. Play them all day in the house, everywhere.

Be passing them out to friends, probably. Because whether they let you know it or not, woman, this is what they desire. And this is what works.

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