

Marriage: Breaking Up Fallow Ground

by Shane Idleman

Breaking up the fallow ground in our lives requires humility, surrender, and a recognition of our need for God's help and guidance.

Duration: 55:14

Scripture: Matthew 7:24

Topics: "Marriage Restoration", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of addressing issues like marriage struggles, divorce pain, and the need for pursuing relationships with Christ and others. It highlights the significance of humility, forgiveness, and obedience to God's Word in restoring and strengthening marriages. The speaker urges the congregation to seek genuine relationships with Christ and to address wrong attitudes and disobedience that hinder spiritual growth and marital restoration.

Transcript

This is probably one of the most challenging series that I've ever been faced with as I'm studying because how do you hit a broad group of people? I mean, we've got people in here that the marriage is hanging by a thread. Their marriage is hanging by a thread. If God does not do a miracle, it will not last.

There's marriages in here that have been doing great. There's marriages in here that have been married 30 years and they're up and sitting down there going, what's this young whippersnapper gonna tell us? Give him ten more years under his belt. Then let him preach on marriage.

But all joking aside, we also have people that have experienced a devastating pain of divorce. If you've never been through that or have had an affair or had an affair done to you, there's damage, there's emotional pain, there's all kinds of things that happen. And what happens is a lot of times when we come and we give a series, we expect, okay, this is a cure-all for everything.

And a lot of times it's not because you can't preach a blanket message necessary that covers everybody. However, I do want to remind everyone in this room that God makes provision for us in his Word. I don't mean to discount the deep emotional pain, but I do want to remind you that the Word of God is meant to heal and to restore and to rebuild marriages.

And as I'm studying this series, I'm realizing that half the problem is we've got to pursue relationships that are important to us. Marriages will fall apart unless you pursue it. Your relationship with Christ will grow cold and wither on the vine unless you pursue it.

Your relationship with your children will die if it's not pursued. So there has to be a pursuit there. There has to be a desire.

There has to be a willingness to say, okay, Lord, I want these things. I want areas in my life to change. And that's what I spoke about last week.

If you were not here, go online and at least get the audio or the video. The title was, Will Thou Not Revive Us Again? And I talked about revival in the church, revivals in our marriages, because if God does not revive our nation, revive our church, revive our marriages, we are going in a very destructive path. We are on a very destructive path.

They say, Shane, well, you're an alarmist. And I'm not. I'm just a realist.

Look at everything crumbling around us. But there's great hope. There's great hope in the Word of God.

But we need to remember that although some of these things will not touch your situation exactly, God's Word provides safety and security and direction if we look to this. Because I would submit to you that many are not looking to this. We're looking to Hollywood.

We're looking to pop psychology. We're looking to what others are telling us. And we're not looking to the Word of God.

And we're not necessarily obeying it. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only deceiving yourself. So as we come into the series, please understand, I realize that there are many different situations.

And there's not a blanket approach that's going to cover everything. And I know some of you will come up and say, yeah, but you know, my husband did this or I did this. And it doesn't, you know, so that's not really the design is not to say when I say marriages are falling apart and different things are happening.

I know sometimes it's no fault of some of the spouses. Some spouses are doing all they can do. They're hanging on, they're contending, they're praying, but there's no difference in the other spouse.

So I realize that as well. And I just want to encourage you that God is faithful. God is faithful.

If you weather the storm, Jesus said the storm will come. The storm came to both men. Both men built their house upon the rock.

One built his house upon the rock. The other built his house upon the sand. The storm came to both of them.

But it was the man who built this house upon the rock that's withstood the storm. So you have to take courage in that and encouragement that the storms will come. Challenges will come because perseverance is a biblical attribute.

Perseverance, discipline, commitment. These things are spiritual muscles, so to speak, that keep us going in the right direction. So be encouraged in that and understand that this message really going into this is

tough because I want to tie in a message to marry people.

I want to talk to divorced people, of course. I want to talk to single people. I want to talk to people dating.

And I even want to talk to you if you don't know Christ. If you don't have a relationship, you've been searching for God or you want to know is there a God out there. The good news is this will relate to you as well because God wants relationship.

And really this message should have been titled a series on relationships. You know, relationship because we're going to hit all those angles. And another challenge for me is, you know, do I start this off by giving you a little bit of my background? And some of you who heard my testimony, you can go online.

You can listen to that. It was about six or seven months ago and sharing some of the struggles that me and Morgan have had and have went through to kind of, you know, help all of you as well. I mean, we're not sitting up here as some perfect couple pointing fingers.

We're in this boat together, as I said last week. I'm just steering the boat, but we're all in this boat together. And if you go to last week's message, you'll hear some of the things I talked about and, you know, wondering, you know, what do I share? What don't I share? So I want to probably tie in a lot of our story, a lot of my past into the message as it comes up.

For example, a lot of people don't know that I experienced divorce in 1998. And I'm going to open up a little bit about that. And I was actually the victim of an affair.

So I know how it feels to have that pierce your heart. And what do you do? And that's actually what God used to turn my whole life about and look back on the cross. Call the prodigal home because I cannot do this without you.

I cannot get through life. I need him on this side of the cross as much as I did on that side of the cross. And he used that to break me and to shape me and mold me and to humble me.

Remove that arrogance. Not that I'm perfect, of course. Please don't misunderstand.

Pride is a problem for all of us. But he used that point in time in history to break me. And I don't believe it had that not happened.

I might not be up here today because it takes broken men to break men. I cannot talk to you about something I've never experienced before. I know the devastation of divorce and waiting and never seeing the person come home.

And I know the devastation of living in the same house, but feeling alone and not knowing the person. Yeah, we live in the same house, but I don't even know you. What about single? Burden or blessing? What do you do with the singleness now in dating relationships? How are we going to handle these things? So I understand all those things.

But the word of God even understands it obviously more. So this is applicable to all areas of life. So that's what I'm going to try to do is weave in parts of our own story as the series continues and show how this has affected me and how the cross has changed my life and how the marriages are really built on a solid foundation of Christ.

If it's not built on that, Jesus says the whole house will come down and great as its fall. And you might say, well, Shane, you feel pretty passionately about that. Absolutely.

Because it is the solid rock on which our lives must be built. That is a sermon in and of itself. What's happening, if you saw today's article in the Antelope Valley Press that I'll probably catch a little heat on, is that I said that the marriages are deteriorating, not because they're getting more difficult.

It's because we're leaving our first love. They're no longer built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. Broken, humble men and women serving Christ, falling wholeheartedly after Him.

Two sinners coming together. And He is our rock. He is our fortress.

We look to Him. So many are crumbling because they reject Him. They might have verbal profession of faith.

Or sure, I play church on Sunday or the weekends, but I really don't know Christ. I don't have a relationship with Him. So the whole thing comes tumbling down.

That is the solid rock on which it must be built. And I'd rather err on the side of speaking too much about that than too little. Because we'll be the man who comes up here and offers pop psychology and seven ways to financial prosperity and seven ways to make your marriage happy.

And those are great things. But when it's all said and done, the rain falls on the unjust and the just alike. I need to prepare people for the storms that are coming.

The child losing a child. A spouse walking away. An affair.

What do you do with these things? God, wilt thou not revive us again? Because you have to know Christ as your shepherd. You have to know Christ as your Redeemer. You have to know Christ as everything.

And I'll preach that until the day I die because I truly believe in that. I see so many people following principles and this and trying that. You don't try anything.

You submit your life. You surrender. You come as a broken sinner.

You repent of your sin. You allow that relationship with Christ to guide everything. That's why men are so angry at their children, angry at their spouse, because that relationship is suffering.

Trust me, when you spend time in the prayer closet, in the Word of God, commit, surrendering everything and repenting, you think anger is going to have a stronghold in your life? Sure it might rise up now and then, absolutely. But for the most part, everything rests upon that foundation. Everything.

Everything rests upon that foundation. And I must preface this entire series with that because my fear was that we would offer some of these points, some of these suggestions, and that people forget the actual foundation. Because what happens is if you don't build upon that foundation, you can put up the lumber and the brick and the mortar and the drywall and the roofing, but if it's built on sand, the whole structure comes crumbling down.

So on that note, the verse that I chose and the message title for this is Breaking Up the Follow Ground. Breaking Up the Follow Ground, it's based on Hosea 10-12. This is a minor prophet.

Again, we talked about prophets were those men chosen by God to call the people back to God. And Hosea is writing at a time in Israel's history when they are beginning to reject God and walk away from Him. So he says, sow to yourself in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord.

Till he comes and rains down righteousness upon you. And you might say, what in the world is that verse talking about? Well, a lot of this is kind of parallel with farming, sowing, reaping. And what fallow ground is, let me give you the best illustration I know.

Fallow ground is that ground that's so hard that not even the water goes down. It just sits there, puddled up. You see it out in Avenue J or I, you know, in the rains.

It just sits there. It's a fallow ground. Nothing can happen.

In construction, we used to call it hardpan. You got to go through that hardpan to get to the soft dirt. In this fallow ground, the ground is so hard that nothing can grow, no living, no nourishment takes place.

The farmer can't do anything. So the farmer must come and rip up, literally rip that fallow ground and turn it over so now he can plant. And some of you saw War Horse.

When that horse was trying to plow into that soil, he couldn't go into that soil until he got that plow down into the dirt. So the fallow ground is this hard dirt that prevents sowing. You can't sow, you obviously can't reap.

And you see sometimes on those big, like a D10 bulldozer. I used to, I never drove one that big, but I used to love to drive those because they could just push dirt like this. I mean, they could knock a house down.

But on the back, they've got three inch, big three inch teeth that actually go down into the soil. And they just rip it. They're called rippers.

They rip into the soil and they just go and they just rip the ground to shreds. Because now it's now they can work the soil. Now they can work the dirt.

Now the water can come in from the water trucks and now they can fashion that dirt. A lot of times the Bible would parallel hard hearts with fallow ground. Our hard hearts.

Soften your hearts. You hard hearted people, you don't hear the Word of God. You draw nigh unto Him with your lips and draw close to Him with your words, but your hearts are far from Him.

So a lot of times he's talking about our hard hearts. It needs to be broken up. It needs to be ripped apart.

Literally, to put the rippers down and just rip our hearts. And that's what he's saying. In the Old Testament, they'd say, rent your hearts and not your garments.

Rip the heart apart. Humble yourself and break your heart. And that's where it all starts, folks.

I will submit to you that most issues in marriage and relationships start with the heart. The heart issue. It's a heart issue.

Broken, humble hearts. And hard and rigid. God can't work.

Change can't occur because we have this hard, rigid heart. So that's what he's saying. Follow, rip up this ground.

Follow, you know, rip it up, take whatever it requires and just rip this ground to pieces. So now life can be sown into it. Seeds, water.

Now nourishment can come up. And that's what I want to talk about briefly. Number one, the number one thing I want to cover in this series, or actually in this message.

Last week was reviving the church, reviving families. It kind of set the stage for this. This week, I'm going to get into how do we break up that follow ground? You might say, okay, Shane, that sounds great.

How do I do that? How do I rent my heart, per se? How do I open myself up? Because what we're about to talk about over the next few weeks, maybe another month or two, I don't really know how long it's going to take. I want to be led by the Spirit and get everything out. Some of the things that are going to be said are going to be hard to say, and hard to hear, and hard to process.

But that's God ripping that follow heart. Remember what I said last week? That nail does not go into the wood until the hammer confronts it. The wine does not come forth from the grapes until the grapes are trampled upon.

The olive oil, until the olives are crushed. So the heart must be broken. It must be humble.

And that's where true change is going to happen. So with that, how do we break up this follow ground? Number one, pray, Lord, we need you. You might say, what in the world are you talking about? Pray, Lord, we need you.

You know, God is attracted to weakness. God will swoop down a weakness in a heartbeat and help it. Help the prodigal son.

Help the wayward daughter. Help those who are weak and saying, Lord, I need you. So I will submit to you before we start doing anything or applying anything we need to say, I need you, Lord.

I need you to move in my marriage that is on the rocks. I need you to move in my marriage because if you don't, it's going to fall apart. I need you to move in my life.

Dating relationships or single or divorced. Lord, if you don't move, I need you. My weakness, I trust in you.

I give you all of my life. Lord, direct me. It must start there.

That is also the foundation on which this series will be built on trusting the Lord and saying, Lord, if you do not move, we will not make it. I need you. And he's attracted to that weakness.

That's the prayer God hears. He doesn't hear the prayer of a prideful heart. Remember Isaiah, it is not my ear heavy or my hand short that I cannot save, but your sins, your iniquities have hid my face from you so that I won't even hear your prayers.

So we can go through life playing church and God not hear our prayers. If you don't even treat your wise right husbands, God won't even answer your prayers. So it all starts here saying, Lord, I need you.

I need you to move in this place. And I came up here saying, Lord, I need you to move in my own life with this type of message. So it goes forth and it helps people and it encourages and it builds up, but it also helps to break that follow ground.

And that's what a lot of people ask me. They say, Shane, sometimes I mean, your messages are pretty deep or hard or this. And I say, I just believe that's what God has called me to do.

He's called me to preach in love, of course, but a hard message that goes and pierces the heart, because that's when you see lives changed is when they're convicted in their challenge and they say, Lord, I must change. I need you. So if you're searching for him tonight in any capacity, any capacity whatsoever, that is the prayer that he hears.

Lord, help me. Lord, help my marriage. Lord, help my bitterness.

Help my anxiety. Help my depression. Lord, help my fear.

Help my insecurities. Lord, help me. I need you.

God answers those kind of prayers. So we must start there. That is the first point that we must that we must incorporate if we want to break up, follow ground.

The next point, and I hope I can get through these because there's a lot to say. And I've talked about this before, but there's a lot of new people here and it bears repeating and God put it on my heart for a reason. So here we go.

The follow ground that prevents change is pride. Pride will prevent change. Pride will destroy your marriage.

Pride will ruin your relationship with your children. Pride keeps people away from a relationship with Christ. Pride, arrogance.

God says, I hate pride. I hate even the look of pride. Seven things are an abomination to him.

I hate pride. I hate a lying tongue. I hate hands that are shedding innocent blood.

I hate feet that are swift to running to evil. I hate discord among the brethren. I hate a false witness.

But at the top of it all, he says, I hate the look of pride. Because it's the devil who said, I will be like the most high God. Pride is at the root of all sin.

Really? Absolutely. Pride is at the root of all sin, at all quarrels, at all debilitating arguments. Pride is at the core and we must crush that, that not an attribute, it's a weakness.

You must, husbands, wives, you must say, Lord, I need you tonight. Please open my heart. I don't want to be prideful anymore.

And I would even like to suggest if couples, if you're sitting there and you hear things that you say, I need to work on that, just squeeze your wife's hand or arm or vice versa. Just let them know, you know, just acknowledge that I need to work on this area. Help me and let's do this together.

Let's come into this as a friendship. Because marriage wasn't designed to be shoulder to shoulder and fighting. It's designed to be a friendship where two people come together, become one flesh and go through life as friends, not as enemies.

That was how it was designed. So we must break up this follow ground of pride. And pride is, what it does, it says, aren't you so lucky to be married to me? I mean, really? I mean, right before we're getting married, Morgan, she's getting a good deal here.

I mean, that's what pride does, right? It's all about me. So husbands go into the marriage. There's kids here, so I won't say that, but we expect intimacy, you know, every day, dinner, breakfast, lunch, cooked, hot.

You know, let's get a back massage before bed and all the laundry folded. And she's going to serve me and she's going to esteem me. I've got my trophy wife and I can pursue all my pride.

It gets in the way. It's about me. I'm going to accomplish my goals.

She'll raise the kids, give us a family. Aren't I going to look good? It's all about me. But what does God say? Humble yourself, submit to yourself.

And we'll talk about that role of submission in the man leading because we've messed it up in our culture. It's servant leadership. It's not being a boss and being domineering in the household.

It's serving my family as a servant leader. I'm called to lead the family in the fear and admonition of the Lord, but at the same time, submit to Christ, submit to my family and lead them in love. Not coming up and saying, I'm in the husband of this house, you better listen to me.

The day I have to say that is the day I need to resign from this pulpit, to be quite honest with you, because it should be evident in my actions and in my attitude. And again, I'm not talking about perfection. I struggle monthly on this, if not weekly, if not daily sometimes.

And then the wife comes into it selfish as well. Let's be honest. He's going to meet my emotional need, my physical need, my relational need, and my spiritual need.

We'll have devotions every night. He'll put the kids to bed, give them bath and showers while I sit and sip a decaf latte. He'll probably do the laundry.

He'll take out the trash and do the dishes, all in his spare time. It's all about me. He's going to serve me.

And he needs to be handsome, healthy, wealthy. Why? Because it's all about me. And so we go into the marriage all about me.

And then all hell breaks loose and we say, what happened? Unrealistic expectations and pride. Pride. I've told you guys before, I thought I was so humble after three years of being single.

I mean, I've got through the Bible a few times. I was reading church history and biographies and books on humility and books on servitude. Man, I'm just going to make the best spouse.

I don't know what's so difficult about marriage. And then you say, I do. And you're like, holy cow.

I mean, we were asking people, is the first year this difficult? Because we're kind of, I mean, it's hard. It's challenging. But all it did was reveal what was already inside of me.

There's a saying that my mom used to tell me all the time, when a vessel is struck, what's inside spills out. So when I was being challenged and when we got together as marriage, what was inside of me simply came out? Selfishness and awe. But God uses that.

I believe he uses the marriage relationship to help chisel and shape and mold the spouse. And not necessarily two people alike, sometimes two people that are dislike. I mean, Morgan's definitely more social.

I could live up in a cabin way up in Big Bear and Tehachapi and not see anybody for a few days and I'd be okay. I'd like to go to bed at nine, up at 4.30 this morning. I got my programs out, and I get a light time.

You know, she's more of, let's, you know, late night, let's fly to Hawaii. I say, let's go somewhere else for vacation. Let's, you know, it's different.

We have different things. I couldn't think of anything worse than shopping. I hate it.

I absolutely do. If we go somewhere and I just sit and read or something because I just, I just don't like it. I don't know why.

And she says, even if we're not buying anything, we don't buy anything because there's no money there. We don't buy anything. Well, that is the most boring thing you could ever do.

For a guy, it's like test driving Corvettes all day and saying, sorry, we just wanted to show you what you couldn't have. So we go into this with, and that's what I'm trying to tell, especially guys. And I'll be honest with you, that's what guys mainly struggle with because God has given us the ability to lead our home.

He's called us to be the spiritual leaders of our home. That's why we struggle with it. That's why it's hard because it's our calling and he's called us to do that.

So inside of us, there should be some type of initiative and stick-to-itiveness and wanting to go forward and wanting to, you know, provide for our family. These things are all good, but they must be harnessed. They must be harnessed.

And that's the difference between meekness and weakness. Weakness is the absence of strength. Meekness is strength under control.

And so men are supposed to be meek, have strength, but under control. You control that strength. So on that note, with pride, I want to read a few things.

And actually pride will kill your single life. Pride will kill your dating relationships. Pride will be, it's all about you and those who've experienced divorce.

What happens with pride is we become bitter, resentful, anger, and all these things. And eventually when you've divorced, the walls you build to protect you eventually imprison you. The walls you build to protect you.

I'm not going to ever open up again. Nobody's going to hurt me again that way. I hate the opposite sex.

I'm not going to do that. I'm so bitter and angry and I'm going to put up these walls to protect me, but they eventually imprison me. And I went through some serious anxiety the first few months we got married because I had these walls built up.

I'm not going to let that happen to me again. There's no way. These walls were built up and it hindered a lot of things because you can't trust again.

You can't open up again. You can't be free again because you're always thinking, if that happens again, my ship's going down. I cannot go through that again.

So that's why humility is so important. One of the verses I chose, actually there's a few from Psalms 10.4, in his pride, the wicked does not seek God. And sometimes many people make the mistake, well, I'm not wicked.

Well, wicked, we think of, I don't know what you think of, witches or satanic things. And that's definitely true. But wicked means those things which oppose the wills and ways of God.

So it's not, so he says, those who oppose the wills and the ways of God, they do not seek God because of pride. And I would submit to you that many people today do not seek after God because of pride. If a person doesn't truly know him, it's because of pride and arrogance.

I don't want to submit to a Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm the master of my own destiny. I'm the captain of my own ship.

So pride comes in and it stops people from seeking God. It also prevents couples from seeking God in the relationship. They think they know what's best and they begin serving themselves.

So pride comes in and seeks to destroy that. It's hard. It's hard for a spouse to get upset at a humble, broken spouse, serving them, loving them, choosing their words carefully.

You don't, it's hard to get mad at that. It's very difficult. What happens is we start getting in arguments and fighting and bickering and we fall farther and farther away.

We say, I'm just falling out of love. You're not falling out of love. You've left love.

You don't fall out of love. Let me remind everyone in this room, you do not fall out of love. You leave love.

And what happens is somebody, they get right into another dating relationship. They say, this other person makes me feel so loved and appreciated and accepted, but so did your spouse when you first met them. Watch out for the grass is greener syndrome.

And what happens, let me be honest with you, those who marry again, let's say they've divorced, they marry again. They usually stay in this destructive relationship because of pride. I can't admit I was wrong.

Even though the grass isn't really greener, I'm going to make it look as if it's greener because I can't admit to my friends and family that I did make a mistake. So they stay in the second relationship. I'm not talking about me, please don't understand.

I'm thankful for my second relationship, but they stay in the second relationship that wasn't ordained by God. That's what was outside of God's will, but they stay in it because now there's nowhere to go. They

realize they made a mistake.

They realize pride comes in, and then they go on Facebook and paint this great picture that they're so happy and joyful. Sometimes I think Facebook is making everybody think things about us that aren't really true sometimes. I'm so happy.

I'm so this. I'm always doing this. I'm always doing that.

I don't know. I just had a latte. I just went to the gym.

Like who has time to go on their computer and say, I just went to the gym. I just had a latte, just drove by McDonald's, sure looked good. What the heck? I mean, this is overkill to the core.

Back on track. My wife said, you better bring some humor to these messages or people aren't going to come back. I'm kidding.

She didn't say that. Probably wants to, but she didn't. Psalms 59, for the sins of their mouth, let them be caught in their pride.

By the sins of their mouth, pride allows us to get caught. Those who commit sexual sin or different things get caught in their pride, pride in marriage. You get caught in this and you get trapped in this pride and arrogance, and it doesn't let you go.

Pride also will break down, or God says in Obadiah, the pride of your heart has deceived you. Listen carefully. Pride will deceive you.

Pride will deceive you. There are thousands, if not millions of people, especially in our nation, on a weekly basis or on a highway to hell because of deception, because of pride and arrogance. They don't need God.

It is deceiving them. Pride comes in and thinks, I know best. I know what's right.

And it's deception at its core. And that's what I would tell you up front. One of the hardest things, when I counsel people, is trying to break and chip away at that pride.

Because they'll quote scripture, but they don't live it. They'll say the right thing, but they don't truly believe it. And pride comes in, it sits there, and you can't work around it because it deceives.

Yeah, shame, but you don't know about this. Yeah, but shame, but you don't know. Okay, I understand that.

But you're being deceived by the sinfulness of your heart, by your pride and arrogance. It's actually deception. That's why James in 122 can say, be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself.

Pride says, I know what the Word of God says. I just don't do it. That was a problem of the Pharisees.

They went around putting rules on people and regulations and acting so spiritual, but they were so prideful and spiritually blind that Christ rebuked them. You whitewashed tombs. You're all clean on the outside, but your dead man's bones on the inside you travel land and sea to win over one proselyte.

When you've won them, you've made them twice as son of hell as you. Jesus said that. Yeah, get in the Word of God.

He says a lot of things to prideful, arrogant people. That is mainly most of his rebukes were towards pride and arrogant people. He rebuked them, but the woman caught in the act of adultery, go and sin no more.

I forgive you. Jesus, my son, I heal him. My daughter, Jairus' daughter, I will heal her.

The woman with issue of blood just reached out and grabbed the hem of his garment. You're healed. The blind man healed because they sought him.

Those who came in pride and arrogance and renounced him, he rebuked them. He would reprimand entire cities because of their pride and arrogance. If the good works that were done in you were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes, but your pride has blinded you.

Your pride has deceived you. Let me submit to you that marriages are falling apart because pride has deceived us. We think we are owed something.

We think that the grass is greener, that there's something out there better, that the enemy comes and deceives us with the pride of our hearts. I deserve better. I'm a better person.

I just want to be happy. Remember that? I told this story, I don't know, what was it, six months ago? Morgan got an email from this girl, probably in her mid-20s. She's walking away from her husband, leaving him with her two little boys, I believe, and her excuse to us was, I just want to be happy.

God knows my heart. Hogwash. I'd say something different, but I'm from the pulpit.

That is an outright deception at its core. You're leaving your husband and little kids because you just want to be happy, and God knows my heart. Yeah, but you don't.

You've been deceived. Pride is destroying that marriage and that relationship, and God help us, it's destroying those children. See, there's a wake in our mistakes.

Kids are being trampled upon. Hearts are being broken because of selfishness in the parents. Now, again, I know there's people who've experienced divorce and separation because of no fault of their own.

Please understand, I completely understand that, but for the vast majority of people that we say all kinds of things about abortion, oh, it's so wrong, but what about we're literally killing our children physically, emotionally, and relationally? When we break their heart, they're not built to receive these things. They can't understand. Oh, they'll get over it.

No, they won't. No, they won't. They carry these scars forever.

Trust me. So we as Christians should do all that we can do to contend for our marriage and to contend for our children and contend for our families because little boys are crying, Daddy, show me how to be a man. Little girls are saying, Daddy, hold me.

Love me, Daddy. Show me. Show me what a woman should look for in a man.

Show me, and we are missing in action. If I were to go over the statistics on rape and children going into juvenile detention centers, it's because fathers are missing. Promiscuity, girls at 12, 13, 14, when a daddy

should be holding them and loving them, they look for affections elsewhere, and it is destroying them.

It all rests squarely upon our shoulders, and I'm not scared to call it what it is. It's selfishness at its core. It's men being prideful and arrogant, not leading their families, period, period.

They're more concerned about golf scores than they are their own kids. They get so excited over the World Series while their families are deteriorating, and it breaks my heart because we're going to have to answer to that someday, guys. What God has given us care over, we have to answer to.

If it falls apart, it rests squarely upon our shoulders, and it's pride at its core in many, many cases. Proverbs 13, 10, pride only breeds quarrels. You want to know why most couples fight? Pride.

It breeds quarrels. Now, there's nothing wrong with healthy dialogue, and you didn't really upset me today, of course, but that prideful, arrogant attitude will breed quarrels. Number six, or actually number eight.

Well, you don't have the number, so I'm just going off my list. Trust me, it's number eight. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride goes before destruction. Pride goes before destruction. Let me say that again.

Pride goes before destruction. The higher you think you are, the more you're going to fall. When an affair happens, it's because of pride.

Pride comes before destruction. The sin is found out because of pride and arrogance, and you've got to crush that. I mean, I wish I could plead this case for the next two hours that pride is destroying the church.

It's destroying our marriages. You want to know why? Because when I see men truly repent and women truly repent, humble themselves. Don't cast blame and say, I was wrong.

Lord, please work on me. Spouse, take me back and work on this. Please.

Change happens. Marriages are restored because humility comes in and fixes what pride destroys. I see it all the time.

If we remain arrogant and bitter and upset, and then we just let that fester, we cannot restore our marriages. And you will never be restored as a divorced person or as a single who's maybe had many dating episodes that you regret. We've got to humble ourselves.

James 4, 6, this is an incredible verse. Commit this to memory. God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

God is actually resisting you and resisting me when we are prideful. When we say, I don't want your plan for my marriage, Lord. I'm going to do what I want, how I want, when I want, to who I want.

God will resist you. He resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. We wonder why all hell is breaking loose sometimes.

Why our business isn't flourishing? Why our finances are going down the tubes? Why isn't my marriage working, Lord? What's going on? Because he resists the proud. He will resist you. You're fighting against God.

That's what pride does. We fight against God when we are prideful, but he gives grace to the humble. He gives grace to a marriage.

He gives grace to a situation. He gives grace to a person when they truly seek him. And then finally, of course, as we all know in 1 Corinthians, what is the definition of love? Notice this.

We think of some, like God said before, some doting grandfather, some big cosmic ball of love, and love is just, can't we just love everybody? No, that's the world's definition of love is quite different than the Bibles. Look at how much it goes against pride. Love is patient.

Love is kind. Love does not envy. It doesn't boast.

It's not rude. It's not proud. It's not self-seeking.

Many of those hit right on pride. That's the definition of love. It doesn't keep any record of wrong done against it.

It always loves. It always hopes. It always perseveres.

That's true love. It goes against pride. So you have to say, okay, Lord, I need you.

We need you. God is attracted to weakness. We have to remove pride in all of our relationships.

We have to say, okay, Lord, I'm humbling myself. Show me. The next thing I want to submit to you, number three is wrong attitudes are the weeds that prevent tilling of the soil.

That ground will never become soft. You'll never be able to sow if all these wrong attitudes come up. And we all have them now and then, don't we? Bitterness, envy, jealousy, backbiting with spouses.

And as marriages deteriorate, a lot of that has to do with our attitude. We become bitter. And couples become, they're fighting against each other.

And again, it goes back to pride. Who wants to be right? I'm right, not you. And we get these attitudes coming in.

And that's actually what bitterness is like. It's like this Bible, and you're taking a wedge, and you just take a hammer, and you drive the wedge through it. It divides the couple.

Bitterness, anger, resentment. We've got to begin to remove these things. Ephesians 4, 31, 32.

I'm going to read a verse that many know, many love, but they hate to obey. To one of those verses. We're just, oh, isn't that great? Remember what Ephesians says, but I'm definitely not going to obey it.

Oh, no, sir. Ephesians 4, 31 through 32. Let all, let all, not some, let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God and Christ forgave you. Shane, I wanted some new nuggets of truth. I wanted some new things.

No, no, no. We got to go back and follow the old paths, the Old Testament would say. Follow the old paths.

Go back to what the Word of God says. Go back to genuine, where does genuine change take place? And he goes on, look how he ends. As God and Christ forgave you.

If we really looked at that sentence, as God and Christ forgave us, sinners, under the condemnation and wrath of God, on our way to hell, not metaphorically speaking, literally speaking, Christ, before, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, forgave us. He forgave us, yet we have the audacity not to forgive those who have wronged us. Can you see how absolutely, incredibly twisted that is? Think about that.

Christ forgave us. God forgave us. There's no sin that can compare to that.

Yet we hold people in bondage in our minds of not allowing bitterness and anger and unforgiveness to go. We allow it to fester, we allow it to build. And Christ says, lay all that at the foot of the cross.

If I went upon that cross and I died for the sins of the world, the least you could do is release bitterness and anger from your spirit. Let those things go. Let those things go.

Remember we talked about that last week. Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, weeping, father, take this cup from me. I'm about to endure what Roman soldiers have never unleashed on anybody.

I'm about to be beaten. I'm about to have thorns driven in my skull and nails in my hand. He told his father, father, take away this cup.

And God said, son, there is no other way. There is no other way. You must endure the cross.

And for that time in history on the cross, Christ on the cross gave up his ghost. King James says he gave up his ghost. He gave up the spirit.

And right before that, he cried out, God, why have you forsaken me? Why have you forsaken me? Because a righteous, holy God forsaken the son for one moment history to take on the sins of the world. We were forgiven of all that. Yet we hold on to these little bitteresses and angers and unforgiveness is there.

If there's people in this room, you need to forgive. I would run to them after the service because it will kill you. It will eat away.

It controls you. And we think I'm controlling them. I'm taking it out on them.

You're not, you're dying inside. It is eating away at you, not them, not them. It's been said that bitterness is one of those diseases that that we don't think we have, but it's one of those things that that everybody notices that we have, but we don't notice that we have it.

We have bitterness inside of us and we think we're fine, but people can see it's killing us. It's eating away at our spirit. And we've got to let those things go.

I know it's hard. There's people I need to forgive and move past, but then the whole, but then you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. And you hear that term a lot being filled with the Spirit of God.

A lot of times to be truly filled with the Spirit of God, I'm not talking about weirdness. I'm not talking about acting like animals and running, doing cartwheels down this, down the foyer or out in the foyer here or up at the steps. I'm talking about men and women truly filled with the Spirit of God.

The reason that is not happening is they are too full of themselves, too full of bitterness and anger and resentful. They're not submitting to the Word of God. They're not being filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

So we have couples not filled with the Spirit of God, churches not filled with the Spirit of God. And we wonder what the problem is. The problem is we're holding on to all these things that the Bible says released.

God and Christ forgave you. I mean, if anybody can hold in any bitterness and anger and all these things, there's an apostle Paul. Beaten, stoned, shipwrecked.

People, they left him for dead at one mob did. These men called of God were beaten. Women, great women of God were beaten, stoned to death, killed.

Family members thrown to the lions. Yet they have the love, the true love of Christ in them. And that's what my concern is, that in America we're so blessed that our blessing has become our curse.

All this prosperity, all these things, everything we want, it's all about me, it's all about me. You go to the persecuted church, you'll get a whole different view of Christianity. You won't see the Christianity where you should live in a mansion, drive three different cars, and have a million dollars in your gold account.

You get a persecuted church that's truly following after Christ. You don't see a lot of bitterness and anger and unforgiveness and resentment. You don't see those qualities there.

So we have to begin to remove those things, especially divorce, because you carry with you the weight of that divorce. And the union that was never supposed to be broken has now been broken. Lies have been radically changed.

Lies have been altered. Lies have been destroyed. Dreams have been broken.

We have to live with that, but we have to forgive those who have wronged us. I remember when I had to forgive the man who had an affair with my ex-wife, and when I had to forgive him and give that over to God, oh, that was a tough week. That was a tough week, but something broke, and I just filled the Spirit of God, filled with joy, and I could see I was holding all this in.

I had to let it go. If Christ forgave me, how can I not forgive other people? It's a spiritual principle that allows you to be filled with the Spirit of God. Do not neglect wrong attitudes.

I mean, actually do not allow them to take root, because they will prevent that follow ground from being built up. Number four, then we'll hurry up. I'll probably have to come back to some of these next Saturday.

Number four, remove disobedience. You might say, oh, Shane, where are you going with this one? This is an incredible one, because even though I've spoke on it before, tying it in with marriage, I actually got a voicemail from my mom. You know, she does a lot of counseling and things with people, and I wondered if you could say what is the number one hindrance to restoration? What is that? Disobedience to the Word of God.

Disobedience to the Word of God. Let's just get honest. Let's get real.

This is where the rubber meets the road. We know what to do. We just don't do it.

The funny thing I just realized this week, when I counsel people, I tell them the same exact thing that I'm telling all of you. All counseling is, you're telling them in private what you said and told everybody in public. Of course, you need to get specific in different details, but for the most part, you're saying in private.

Now, you don't obey it in public, but we're going to say it in private. What's the difference here? Disobedience to the Word of God will cause marriages to crumble, because everything is built on obedience. It's not the kind of obedience where God's a mean God up in heaven.

He's saying, listen, I have set parameters within mankind, humankind, within marriage. Follow these parameters and have a blessed, healthy, abundant life. Walk outside of these parameters.

All hell could break loose, because I have set them in motion. He told Malachi, I am the Lord thy God. I change not.

He can't undo things that he's already set in motion. He can't become a liar when he says something is true. He can't pull back things that he's ordained.

He has given us the Word of God in obedience to it, and that's where real transformation takes place. To be quite honest with you, I'm tired of people quoting scripture. I want to see people start living it.

I'm tired of hearing about how much you know about the Bible and start living it. Remember, the Pharisees knew the Bible inside and out. They memorized it, entire chapters, books of the Bible, but they did not obey the knowledge they possessed, and that's the difference between knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge is knowing what to do. Wisdom is doing it, and you have to. I know I've stressed this point before, but a lot of you that are here, that are new, have not heard me talk about this before, but again, it goes back to what Jesus said.

When he talks about the foundation, a man built his house upon the rock. Before that, he says, those who hear my word and do them, I will liken him to a man who built his house upon the rock, and when the rains came, the floods came, it did not fall because it was founded upon the rock. It was founded upon obedience to God's Word.

Obedience is the key. I'm going to ask Jordan actually to come up, and we're going to conclude with a few songs of worship, and then I'll have to go into some of these points next week, but I want to take time. One thing I don't want to do, I don't want to rush into these things and hurry up and get this over with in three weeks or four weeks.

You know, I want to make sure we're taking time, and we're looking at things. We're looking at Scripture, because there's people in this room, their lives are falling apart. Marriages are broken, and we must take time.

We must address these issues. Next week, I'm going to talk about destructive influences that are influencing your homes and my homes. It will destroy your homes if you allow these destructive influences.

I'm also going to talk about confession. I'm going to probably reiterate what I iterated a few weeks ago, something where me and Morgan got together, and we were confronting, we confessed certain things to each other, and it's really helped our marriage grow substantially. I mean, it's incredible what just admitting that our challenges are, but as we close, and Jordan and Chelsea can start, I want to go back.

When we talk about the foundation, when Jesus said, you know, building your house upon that foundation, what we often forget, we go right to there, or right to obeying God's Word, but when He goes back even before that, in context, because you got to put these Scriptures in context, He says that many will come to Him in that day and say, Lord, Lord, we did all these things in your name, and Jesus will say to them, depart from me, I don't know you. Jesus will say to them, depart from me, I don't know you, and then He goes on to say, whoever hears my word and does it, I will liken you to a man who built this house, but you have to go back and put it in context. Many people in churches today, many people who maybe raised a hand or said a little prayer, are not in right relationship with Christ.

Jesus is going to stand, you're going to stand in front of Christ, and He's going to say, depart from me, I don't know you, or well done, thou good and faithful servant. Many will come to me in that day and say, Lord, Lord, we did all these things in your name. He'll say, depart from me, I don't even know you.

Of course, He knows them as a person, He knows that they've existed, but He had no intimate relationship with them. Relationships must be pursued. If you do not have a relationship with Christ, or you've backslidden, and you don't know where you're at with Him, you need to take this time and come back to the foot of the cross.

Give your life over to Him again. Say, Lord, I've left my first love, I need you, I don't have a genuine relationship, I repent to my sin, I confess Christ as Lord. Listen, I could speak about this all night.

Many people, many people profess Christ with their lips, but deny Him by their actions. A. W. Tozer said many people speak as if Christ were real, but act as if He were not. And our actual position is to be discovered by the way we act.

I'm not talking about works and all these earning our way to heaven, I'm talking about, do you truly have a relationship with Christ? Because you might be fooling people, but you're not fooling God. You're not fooling God. So I must start this series with this foundational truth.

Many think that they're on the narrow road, but they're on the broad road of destruction. So we're going to go into a time of prayer. And this is a time where you guys, you cry out to God, you say, Lord, I need you.

You pray with your spouse, you pray for change. This isn't a time just to watch the worship team and wonder what time we get out of here. This is a time to implement what has been said in the message.

Lord, I need to work on these areas. Lord, rebuild me. Lord, I need to give my life truly to you.

I need to put my trust in you. So that's what this time is. It's a time of prayer and seeking hard after God, because putting a message together and speaking, it's one thing.

But if you don't rent your hearts, if you don't respond to the message and submit to Christ, it's pointless. I just came up here and wasted an hour of everybody's time if nothing changes. Do you realize that? The whole point is to convict the heart.

And then this is a time where the heart breaks. It comes back to Christ. This is the time we do that.

We're just going to, you guys can all stand. We're actually going to also be available for prayer. We're going to be available for prayer on the side of the church here and there.

Morgan, Yvette, myself, Mom, Randy, if you want, we'll be back in this back corner over here, some of us. And we'll be here available for prayer. And if you need anything, pray with us or just come to the altar and pray or turn to your spouse and pray.

And I've said many times before, you know, we want to become a praying church. We don't want to leave at this time of the service. This is the most important part of the service, because this is when we're getting our hearts right.

So Lord, I just give you this time right now, dear Heavenly Father, during this time of worship, Lord, begin to rent our hearts and not our garments, Lord. Please, Lord, call us back to you, Lord. Break the hardest heart, Lord.

Even soften my own heart, Lord. Give me eyes to see how you see everybody, Lord. Give us a forgiving spirit, Lord.

If there's people who've wronged us, Lord, if we can just allow forgiveness to come in and restore those relationships, Lord. We pray for restoration tonight. We pray for revival within our own homes and our own hearts.

We just ask this in Jesus' name.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/e6uzVFfT73E.mp4>

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