

Marriage: Removing Destructive Influences

by Shane Idleman

The sermon calls for the removal of destructive influences in marriages through humility, obedience, and reliance on God's power for restoration.

Duration: 57:21

Scripture: Proverbs 6:32, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 18:21-22, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 5:16

Topics: "Marriage Restoration", "The Cross"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God, addressing the need for restoration in marriages, radical life changes, and the repair of broken homes. It delves into the significance of the cross as the pivotal point in history where humanity's sins were paid for, highlighting the need for full surrender, confession, forgiveness, and the removal of destructive influences to strengthen marriages and relationships.

Transcript

Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we pray that you would visit us tonight, Lord. I pray that marriages, Lord, will be restored. We need you, dear Heavenly Father, more than ever before.

Lord, I pray that lives will be radically changed tonight, Lord, that they would come to know you in a mighty way. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we pray for the children, Lord, of the result of broken homes. Lord, begin to repair those lives.

Lord, begin to give them strength and encouragement, Lord. Bring the prodigal son home. Lord, give fathers the desire to serve you and to lead their families.

Lord, give women the hope and the support they need, Lord, to continue. Lord, we pray that you bless this service. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

You know, I can sit and sing about the cross all night long. I could come and talk about the cross all night long, because that cross represents a place of death that gave life. It represents a place of life that gave death.

Do you realize that all of humanity, everything rests upon that point in history on the cross? And I would encourage you that that is the only hope for our nation. It's the only hope for our marriages, to look at that cross. Look what happened on that cross.

Even we look back from creation with Adam, and through his lineage of Seth, and then down to Noah, and Shem, and to Terah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to bring forth the Messiah to die upon a cross. And I think sometimes we take it too lightly. We forget what happened on that day.

The sin of humanity fell upon Christ on that day. And that's when he cried out, my God, you've forsaken me. And sin once and for all was paid on the cross.

That's why we meet. That's why we're born again. That's why the church is the church.

It's why it's known as the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ. It was paid for by the blood of Christ. And I think sometimes we just come and we forget that.

We forget Calvary. We forget Golgotha, the place of the skull, where the Roman soldiers drove the nails into his hand, and as his mother watched in terror as her son died upon a cross. And I would submit to you that that is the only hope for our marriages.

If you're dating, you're single, divorced, separated, that is our only hope. Because you see, the cross brings redemption. The cross brings salvation.

The cross brings restoration. It brings forgiveness. Everything culminates at that point in history on the cross, the cross of Christ.

On that note, let me get into the marriage series really quick. There's some new people tonight. And we're actually on message three.

Message two was last weekend. The message before that was the introduction to the whole marriage series. And I talked about God, wilt thou not revive us again? We need revival.

We need revival in our churches. We need revival in our marriages. And I said last week, there's many coming in, even tonight, or they're gonna hear this online that their marriage is hanging by a thread.

Or they're divorced, or they're separated, and there's no hope. There's just anguish. They know the person next to them in the room, but they've lost that, what they call leaving love, or I fell in love, I don't love them anymore.

My marriage is on the rocks. We're separated. We're aiming, we're heading towards divorce.

Little children are wanting their mom and dads to hold on to it, and then we've got groups of singles in here, and those dating, and it's trying to find that middle ground of how can I help relate to all situations? And that's why we look to the word of God, because it speaks boldly into all areas of our lives. And last week, we talked about tilling up the fallow ground. And the fallow ground is the hardness of our hearts, the hardness that can take place in our marriage.

And I gave the analogy, you remember, of that big bulldozer, a D-10 dozer, sticking its big teeth into the dirt, and actually just ripping the dirt apart, tearing it up, breaking up that fallow ground, because we can give principles here, and we can do this, and your love languages, and you like gifts, or you like to be built up, and those are great things. But at the core, the heart's gotta be broken, and rent, that's why God would often tell the Old Testament, rent your hearts, not your garments. Stop coming and giving me an outward sign of worship, but rent your hearts.

So we talked about marriages to be rebuilt, to be restored, divorced or single, that fallow ground has gotta be broken and ripped up. And we talked about you have to come and say, Lord, will you not help me? Lord, I need your help more than ever before. Lord, I need you.

That's where it starts. Lord, I need you. Lord, unless you move, our marriage is destined to fail.

Lord, you need to guide me, you need to direct me. And then we also talked about removing pride, empty me of me. That's what pride is.

Do you realize that? It's empty me of me. And we hear that word a lot in the Bible, filled with the Spirit, the filling of the Spirit, and Peter being filled with the Spirit, Paul being filled with the Spirit, and there's lots of different views from Pentecostal and charismatic to Baptist, Southern Baptist, Reformed. The bottom line is when you empty yourself of yourself, you're filled with the Spirit of God.

He can't go and fill somebody that's already full of themselves. That's what humility is, it's saying, Lord, empty me of me. And I talked last week about briefly, and I'll go into this more detail, maybe me and Morgan will give a testimony type thing of my past and our relationship at some point.

But I spoke about that I was actually the victim, and I'm not going to use that word, but well, hear me, I was the recipient of going through an affair. I was on the receiving end. But I want to make it crystal clear that I was not the victim, I was the cause.

You see, being an angry prideful man, chasing money and status and recognition, and the whole marriage came crumbling down. Now, it doesn't excuse the other person. It doesn't excuse it, but it gives a reason for what happened in 1998 when my ex-wife filed for divorce, and I ended up finding out she was having an affair.

And the piercing, I mean, people don't understand what a person goes through. That is, there's nothing like it. It's almost like death in a way.

It's death to yourself. But God used that to humble me and to break me and to get me back on track. And as funny as it sounds, I thank God that all that happened to me.

I don't think He caused my divorce, but I believe He allowed that to happen. And there are some denominations that say, I could never pastor with that in my past, and with a big D on your forehead. And really, Morgan, how could you marry a divorced man? I mean, so I carry around all this baggage, but it's through that brokenness and through that broken, independent relationship that He took the chisel out and began to chip away all these things of pride and arrogance.

And I don't get up here in humility, I mean, we're all working on that. But it takes broken men to break men. So what He's called me to do, I could not do unless I went through the furnace of affliction.

So as a word of hope and encouragement, if God is molding you and shaping you, and there's challenges there, that's how you draw closer to the Father. When things are going great, and money's good, and there's no need for God, that's why it's hard for a rich man to enter heaven, Jesus would say, because that riches, that complacency contends with our heart. So I wanted to clarify that.

I was not a victim, no, poor Shane, I caused it. I allowed it. Anger, and I tell men with a type A personality, there's three things you've got to watch out for.

Anger, attitude, and addiction. They come in like a flood. Anger, attitude, and addiction.

Bad combination. And it's that pride when God finally breaks a person. Now you can minister, and I look for people, when we look for leadership, I look for broken people.

I don't need a PhD and a master's degree in church history, I need somebody who's been through the furnace of affliction. I don't need another plaque on the wall, I need somebody that can minister and talk to a divorced, somebody who's lost a child to leukemia, or has just had an affair. How do you relate to that person? That's where leadership comes from, is going through.

Moses couldn't lead the people until he spent 40 years on the backside of the desert. Jesus himself was led into the wilderness, 40 days of fasting, so he came out of there filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Paul said he spent years on the Arabian desert.

He said, I conferred not with flesh and blood, but with the Spirit of God. So it's through that relationship, it's through that brokenness, a broken and contrite heart, I will not cast away, but a proud and arrogant heart, I will, sayeth the Lord. Pride comes before a fall, pride comes before destruction, a proud man is haughty, there are seven things the Lord hates, they are an abomination to Him, at the top of the list is a proud look.

And I can't stress that enough, empty ourselves of ourselves. That's what pride is, thinking of ourselves more highly than we should. And if you didn't get last week's message, go online or ask one of the ushers for a CD.

But I want to get that point across that pride is at the root of all division. Pride is at the root of all sin. The Puritans used to say it was a sin, the root on which all other trees would grow.

Sin, all other sin would grow from the root of pride. Because pride does not allow repentance to take place. A prideful man, a prideful woman will not repent, will not admit mistakes because they are prideful.

And so as God began to crush me and break me, I was getting demoted from jobs, my financial state, this, everything was just crushed me. But it took all that to finally get on my knees and worship Him, be filled with the Spirit of God. And that's why I know what the filling of the Holy Spirit is.

I can be driving down Rancho Vista Boulevard just finding out my ex had an affair, but still have this peace and joy that surpasses all understanding. Where's that come from? It comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit. So people, you can mock raising your hands and worshiping God because it's because He's delivered me from a lifestyle of destruction.

I should be on my fourth marriage or buried in Lancaster. I say that often. That's where I should be.

So I have to worship Him. Be careful when you begin to critique those who worship God and raise their hands. You would too if you just got delivered off a crystal myth after a 10-year addiction.

If God just rebuilt and restored your marriage and healed your son of cancer, you would be up here at the altar thanking God. The problem is many have never experienced God. That's why during worship they're looking at their phones, they're looking at their bulletins, they're wondering what's for dinner, they're chatting.

Because if you're here for true worship, you'll be broken and humble. That's what breaks my heart. We should be worshipping the Father, not in some weirdness, but in brokenness.

Too many people aren't worshipping. So they come in, they hear a message, wasn't that great? And they go home and nothing changes. And it's hard on me because they say, oh that was good, I can't wait till last week.

I'm like, I have no idea even what I'm going to say next week. The pressure to perform. So I have to say, Lord, unless you do it, unless you speak to me and give me the template, I cannot come up here.

I cannot come up here and play church and tickle the ears and try to, wasn't that great? No, it's not great. Come Sunday morning, I have no idea what I'm going to say until I just begin to pray and open up and put on worship and the Lord begins to pour into my heart. And that's what I want for you.

But a broken worship heart doesn't do this, lead me to the cross, you know. And I don't know, it's no big deal. It's because you haven't experienced the radical power of God in your life.

And I want God to revive us, revive this congregation because there's nothing like it. Brokenness, true humility, and at the root of that, I believe, is pride. I don't want to worship.

I don't want to this. I don't know the words. I don't know half the words either.

It's not about knowing the words. I don't care if there's a PowerPoint, but we're worshipping God. I can have my head down worshipping, pleading the blood, asking for forgiveness, confessing.

That's what the time of worship's for. It's not a prelude to the message. It is the message.

The worship is the message. I just come up and compliment the worship. But we've got to remove that pride in our hearts.

Especially for men, it is preventing your marriage from being restored. It's preventing you from being whole and knowing God intimately because we don't want to become some weird Jesus freak, fanatical, narrow-minded, conservative Christian that we see on TV. That's what a lot of men are worried.

I don't want to be that. Well, I don't either. That's not what it is.

Being filled with the Spirit of God is being filled with love, joy, peace, contentment, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, and self-control. You don't think that would be a benefit to our life? Self-control would be nice in and of itself, let alone love and peace and joy and contentment. None of this is in my notes.

I haven't even started yet. I'm just hoping this is relevant. But how can I explain this? I have a lot of conversations with, well, how do you explain this? Let's say, again, I'm not putting anything down.

I'm just saying this. Joel Osteen is going to attract a different listener than I might, okay? The type of listeners I sometimes attract online in this, yeah, go get them, Shane. Go tell them off.

You're preaching the truth. Yeah, you go let them have it. But you've got to weep before you pull out the whip, Leonard Ravenhill would say.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem before he went and brought in the whip and drove the many changers out. There's not enough weeping. And because of these hard messages, it's like a magnet to modern-day Pharisees.

I'm so sick of modern-day Phariseeism. Go get them, Shane. Go tell them off.

Yeah, what about all these people? Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, it should be brokenness. In our heart, we shouldn't delight in pointing out false doctrine.

We should be sad about it. Do we have a critical, angry spirit? And at the root of all that is pride. Don't I know so much? Can I tell all these people off? And I'm just tired of it in the church.

We're seeing too much of that, too much pride, too much arrogance, too much denominationalism. Well, we're the only true church because we do this and we do that. Pride is killing our nation.

It's killing the church and it's killing families. And you've got to empty yourself of you. That's what pride is.

Emptying yourself. Me included. Emptying ourselves of me.

So that when we go into worship again at the end of the service, think about that. Lord, just empty me, Lord. Empty me.

You come in and fill me. Because God will not cast away a contrite and broken heart. He doesn't want to touch a lukewarm heart.

Jesus vomits that out of his mouth. But it's that broken heart and that contrite heart. You might say, Shane, why do you stress this so much? Because that is the secret to the victorious Christian faith.

That is why many are depressed, angry, upset, irritable, have no relationship with God. The Bible is boring, barely get to church because they're not filled with the Spirit of God. They have a form of godliness.

They'll come and play church or they'll go to church from time to time. They might turn on that TV channel and watch certain people. But at the heart of all that is pride.

And that's what we discovered last week. We also talked about removing disobedience. And the key is, especially in marriage, and a lot of you saw fireproof, that guy at the end did what was right regardless of what he saw in his wife.

While I'm waiting was their theme song. While I'm waiting, I'll serve you. While I'm waiting, I'll do all these things.

While I'm waiting, I'll go to church and I don't expect you to change, but let me change myself. If we would just be obedient to the Word of God, regardless of what we see in our spouse, regardless of what we see in our kids, God would begin to move because it's in that waiting time. Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up wings like eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint.

Waiting upon the Lord builds patience and character and fortitude, and it checks your heart. Anybody can be nice for a day if they're wanting something or a couple days, but it's in that I'm going to serve you, Lord, no matter what my spouse does. And the problem with many marriages, dating, courting, single, separate, whatever it is, they're waiting for the other person to change.

I know I've got stuff to work on, but I'm waiting for you to change. You need to change. Yes, I know I need to work on that, but you need to change.

We have to be obedient to the Word of God, even when we don't see the immediate results, because you know what God's doing in the background? He's breaking that other person. He's humbling them. How do you stay mad at somebody who's serving you? Oh, it's hard at first, but it gets better.

It gets easier. And then I'm going to go into now tonight's message, after a 20-minute introduction. Removing the destructive influences.

And you might say, Shane, what in the world are you talking about? Well, I'm glad you asked. We can do all these things. We can pray, Lord, I need you.

We can remove pride. We can remove wrong attitudes. We can remove disobedience.

And before I forget, let me, I wrote this down with a pen, so I wouldn't forget. I just saw it this morning. We need to be patient with our spouse, because Jesus is patient with His bride.

We are the bride of Christ, and He puts up with the cheating, restless, resentful, bitter, backbiting spouse. Christ does. We reject Him.

We walk away. We leave our first love, and He sits there and knocks at the door. I knock at the door.

Let me into your church. Look how Christ handles us, and look at how we handle our spouse. That's why He says, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Not that He gave Himself up for her, but that He actually loves the church. He puts up with these things. Now, there's a spouse that has a history of affair and adultery, and they're just not changing.

Absolutely, there's biblical grounds. I understand that. But we also have to contend for our marriages, because they are under attack like never before.

But my point is, we can do all of that, pray, and remove pride, and wrong attitudes, and remove disobedience. But we can do all that, but if you do not remove destructive influences from your marriage, it will slowly pull your marriage apart. It's the little foxes that spoil the vine.

It's these little destructive influences that come in, because when you end up in divorce court, either God influenced you, or the world did. When you move to separation, or something sexual misconduct happens, somebody was influenced in the wrong direction. The destructive influence is coming against our house.

And need I remind everybody in this room, the devil does not control you. He does not control me. He does not control our marriage like a little puppet, but he darn well influenced it.

He is the author of confusion, and of lies, and deception. He'll come in, and he'll influence your marriage. Can't control you.

Romans, I believe it's in 7, 8, 9, talks about that we are dead to sin. Well, if I'm dead to sin, why is it still alive in me? It's alive in me because whatever I choose to obey, becomes my master, according to Paul. And the devil, he influences us through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life.

He comes in, and he's a deceiver. So that's what, when you strengthen your marriage, and strengthen the foundation, what you're doing is you're strengthening it from incoming attacks and influences. But many couples, many couples do not protect their marriage by removing destructive influences.

They'll come to church on Sunday, but allow destructive influences in Sunday night or Monday. Perfect example of this. I know Christian couples, who go and watch The Bachelor all the time.

Wake up, call wife. The husband's dreaming about somebody other than you at night. And the wife is dreaming about somebody other than you.

And I had one person actually tell me, Shane, you shouldn't get specific on these things. You should just talk about entertainment in general. Don't get specific, people get offended.

The problem is when you don't get specific, nobody thinks it applies to them. Oh yeah, entertainment. Let me tell you about my friend next door.

He watches pornography. And R. Ray on this guy, boy, oh yeah, you tell him Shane. No, we gotta get specific.

These things that we're allowing into our homes, and I don't just mean TV media, it's all kinds of influences, these destructive influences. For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. That's how God created us.

Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed, how Paul? By the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. I will submit to everyone in this room that the battlefield is the mind. The battle for your marriage, right here.

Right here. Before that affair happened, it was going on right here for months and months and months. Before that husband or wife walked out, never to return, guess what? Right here, right here, the thought life.

That's why Paul says, be not conformed. First he says, I beseech you brethren, that you present yourselves as living sacrifices, holy unto God, which is your reasonable service. And then he says, be not conformed.

And we've talked about that before, but I want to bring it home to what it means with marriage. Paul's saying, do not be conformed to this world. It's like having a lump of clay right here, and I'm conforming it.

I'm fashioning it, I'm shaping it, I'm developing it, and I'm going to make it what I want it to become. Paul's saying, do not be conformed, do not be fashioned or shaped to this world, but be renewed, or actually by the renewing of your mind. Let me read exactly.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed. In other words, you're renewing your mind, you're being transformed by the renewing of your mind. That's how you prove what is the good and perfect will of God.

I'm amazed at how many people I talk with that want to know the will of God for their life, but they're being conformed to the world. You will never know the will of God for your life until you get into His Word, get in worship, remove all these destructive influences that are pulling you down. I mean, the worst thing a young couple dating could watch would be MTV, and just filling their mind with that garbage, that junk,

because it's pulling them away from God.

Bottom line, straight up. There's stuff on there that would have been pornography 30 years ago. There's things on there that we just laugh at.

Haha, isn't that great? No, it's an abomination. These things are perverted at its core. We're pulling young adults in that direction.

So Paul's saying, and in marriage, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And I would say that most people we talk to, that are definite marriage difficulties, I'm sure there's a couple in Utah somewhere that this doesn't apply to, but for the most part, I ask one or two simple questions. Tell me about your prayer time in the morning, your devotional life, and seeking God, non-existent, non-existent.

They say, well, I know I need to really get, I know that's what I need to be doing. Well, that's where it starts, that influence. Now, I'm sure their spouse is reading the Word of God, praying for things, and their spouse chose to make a mistake or chose to leave.

Absolutely. But for the most part, the core of what's going on in our marriages is influence. Influence.

I mean, we had one couple come over, stayed at our house many, I don't know, it was last year, I think, and hooked up Netflix. And Morgan came in and said, even after like, what, a week? Like, we got to turn that thing off. I am just drawn to these things that, what, you know, these series and movies that are on at night, and it begins, she could see it's pulling away from the marriage.

Thinking about all the things, things change should be. Right? Listening for two hours. Date nights, three days a week.

Dishes done, trashed out, hugs. And I don't even want to have intimacy, I just want to hold you. And all these guys are so great.

If it's so great, why is Hollywood falling apart? Because it's an act. It's an act. Actors.

Actresses acting out. Married one day, divorced the next. Be not conformed to this world.

And that's why a lot of people say, why are you so beat up on media and stuff? I don't really beat up on it. I don't care what a person does, but you have to understand that it influences the mind. As a man thinks, so is he.

What you put into your mind is what you'll get out into your actions. The Bible is crystal clear on this. As a man thinks, be not conformed.

Paul says in Philippians, finally brethren, whatever things are pure, whatever things are noble, whatever things are upright, meditate on these things. Why, Paul? Because those other things are destructive and they pull you away. So the media, I wrote down three things here I want to talk to you about real quick.

And I went online, I actually did a survey of marriage killers. What kills marriages? They talked about finances, stress, adultery, lack of communication. But I thought about this, at the root of all that is influence.

At the root of all that is influence. Why are finances a difficulty? Because of influence. Oh, look, the TV says I should be keeping up with the Joneses.

We're kind of, you know, you're spending too much money. We should have this, we should have that. Instead of coming together, the two shall become one flesh.

So the next time, husband, you get mad at your wife, it's supposed to be one flesh. Deciding, making a decision as a team. When you get into a financial crisis, and we've been through a few, when construction fell, the market, it was not good, or plummeted.

But you go through it together. You budget together. You buy together.

So there shouldn't be financial, even though there's financial stress, it shouldn't be dividing you guys, or ourselves. But influence comes in there. Well, you should be making this.

You should be doing this. You need to get back to work. We need to find babysitters.

And it just comes in the influence, the power of influence. Don't even get me started on relationships. The power of destructive relationships.

Usually, if women have other friends in their life that are speaking death into that marriage, it'll pull that wife apart. Well, I wouldn't take that from him. Oh my gosh, you should be doing that.

I can't believe you go through, blah, blah, blah. And relationships pull us away. You say, Shane, I don't know what, I don't know if it's a good or bad one.

Let me ask you this. What direction is that relationship pulling you? Is it pulling you in the right direction? Or is it pulling you in the wrong direction? Very simple. And I tell dating couples, it's what me and Morgan did.

When you're dating, or you're single, you follow wholeheartedly after Christ and see who catches up. Oh, they don't believe, but I think God brought me into my life, you know, brought them into my life so I could help them. Maybe, but that's unequally yoked.

You're going against God's Word. Yeah, but we just need to try it out and see if it works before we... No, no, no. No, follow wholeheartedly after Christ and see who catches up.

See if they stay with you. Because a destructive influence, I've seen it hurt many, many young couples. They go into it, the woman goes into it thinking, I'll change him.

And what if the guy goes into it thinking, I hope she never changes. And both happen. She changes and he doesn't.

And destructive influences, they pull you down. I could have a little boy right up here and it would be almost as easy for him to pull me down than me to pull him up to me. Because people can pull you down much easily in relationships.

You as married couples protecting your marriage, if there's what I call cancerous relationships, you've got to cut them out. You don't play with them. You don't dabble with them.

You cut them out of your relationship. Is it building your marriage up? Now, of course, there's mature couples who have people that they're ministering to and all that. I understand that.

But what direction is that relationship pulling you in? Because a small fox has come in and spoiled the vine. And what happens in marriage is called implosion. You know what explosion is, right? Say dynamite.

It explodes. Implosion is when the pressure on the outside is greater than the strength on the inside. So it implodes.

And that's what happens in marriages. You've got to gird up the loins of your understanding, Paul would say. Put on the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation.

Fill your mind with the Word of God. Be sold out to Him so when the pressure on the outside comes, the pressure on the inside can withstand it. It's called implosion.

All the pressure. In-laws and family and relatives. And I've got great in-laws, so I'm not saying that.

Thank God for that. But the pressures on the outside, when they're greater than the pressure and the strength in the inside, the whole marriage implodes and falls apart. And we didn't see it coming because we didn't strengthen the foundation.

That's why I could preach Christ and the cross and full surrender and the broken, humble life day in and day out because that is the foundation that's going to weather the storm. When the pressure comes, it's what's inside. Like I said before, when a vessel is struck, what's inside spills out.

Adversity reveals character or the lack thereof. So when you're going through, and when we're struck with adversity, what comes out is simply what's already in us. And the devil doesn't show us, the devil does not show us the end result.

He shows us the temporary pleasure. That's all we think about, the temporary pleasure. And just like a fish, we don't see that hook until you take the bait.

The power of influence. When I fly fish, I try to hide that hook as well as I can. Get that fly all nice and have it float on the river.

Have it look just like a fly. You've got to match it. Just throw it right out of there.

Just let it go and just play with that. Bam! He's done. I got him.

And that's what the enemy does. He don't see that hook. The power of worldly influence.

You must understand that Satan is the prince of this world. He is literally, even though he's underneath the sovereign control of God, he influences the world system. He influences our world system.

But God also can influence through His Word, through brokenness in prayer, through worship. That's why the mind gate is so important. And I can't stress that enough.

It's not just thinking positive thoughts. It's thinking God thoughts. And let me show you something.

I actually have, if you guys, when you leave, you can take them. They're free. I'll bring more if I need to.

But I wrote a book with Morgan and my mom on this topic of what works for singles and relationships and marriage and life. So those dating, those divorce, those separate grab copies, I wrote that as I was going through everything. Hope to get rid of them so I can put a nicer cover on it.

But that's there for you. It goes into a lot more detail on what I can do here. And I thought, I think this is either in that one or the young adults book.

But I want to talk to you briefly about, because I have an obligation. As much as we want to avoid this topic, I want to talk to you about the culture, the media and what the truth is. Because they are polar opposites.

And the problem is the church is so busy being entertained that they have no more power of God in their life. The old cross used to slay men. As A.W. Tozer said, the new cross entertains them.

Everybody wants to be entertained. That's why you see a lot of these guys on TV, big names, millions of people, because they're entertaining. They're not going to talk about sin.

And they're not going to talk about the judgment of God. They're not going to talk about repentance. They're not going to talk about the blood of Christ.

They're not going to talk about the absolute truth of God's Word. They're not going to talk about hell. And they're not going to talk about judgment because they'll lose half their audience.

Culture, conforming ourselves to the culture, not the world. God's Word says, let's see, the media says, cheat on your spouse. Everyone is doing it.

The truth is, Proverbs 6.32, whoever commits adultery destroys his own soul. The media says, have sex before marriage. Experiment with same-sex partners.

Everybody's doing it. The truth is, marriage is honorable among all in the bed undefiled, but fornicators God will judge. Why can't we say that? The Bible says it.

Not in a spirit of anger, Bible thumping, but guys, fornicators, pornea, it's where we get our word pornography from in the Greek, pornea. It means any type of illicit sex or sex outside of marriage, period. That just covered everything.

And I get some people say, but Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. Oh, He didn't either about bestiality or pedophilia or necrophilia. He didn't have to.

This one word includes all of that. There's your proof text. Mr. Bill O'Reilly or Sean Hattie, whoever says there, you know what I mean? God doesn't say anything.

Absolutely. We can turn to Leviticus. We can turn to all different passages, but we don't say it in a spirit of anger.

We say it in a spirit of love. God's Word says this. If the Word of God be true, then every man is a liar.

If we have a problem with these things, then we have a problem with the Word of God. And we want to, that's a whole different debate on inerrancy and inspiration and consistency. We can talk about that sometime too, but God's Word goes against the culture.

The media says, abort your mistake. After all, it's only a fetus, not a baby. What does God's Word say? Before I formed you in the womb, Jeremiah, I knew you.

Psalms says, I knit you together in your mother's womb. It begins at conception. Life begins at conception when God breathes into the breath of life.

Who do you listen to? The culture or the Word of God. The media says, party, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. The truth is, take heed to yourself.

Let your hearts be weighed down, and that day come upon you unexpectedly, Jesus' return. You see the difference? Where do you stay anchored? Who's influencing you? One or the other is influencing you. Many of you have heard of Francis Schaeffer, who died many years ago.

He said, culture is religion externalized. What the heck does that mean? Culture is religion externalized. Our culture simply reflects our religion.

Our lifestyle simply reflects our religion. Your lifestyle reflects either the world or the things of God. Are you cherishing the world? Are you cherishing the things of God? Culture reflects it.

Your lifestyle reflects it. Your home life reflects your heart. What we watch, what we view, who we associate with, how we spend our time, how we spend our money, all reflect the heart.

It's like one big mirror saying, look at my heart. Here it is. And the church is being entertained to death, and it's pulling marriages away.

And I believe that, I mean, if you look at the 1940's, one in seven I think ended in divorce. 1960's, one in five. And you start getting up to now, it's one in two, half.

What's happening? What's happening there? Marriage isn't becoming more difficult. The foundation is weakening. The influence of the enemy is getting stronger and pulling the power of influence.

I mean, I'm just susceptible. I've told you guys when I gave my testimony, I mean, you start putting George Strait on, I'm driving around, I might want to grab a 12-pack and hop on a train. Amarillo by morning, up from Santa.

I mean, I love all that stuff, but I gotta, it's not good to, I mean, it's wonderful, but it pulls me. I can start thinking, oh, I remember those days. I remember those days in Bakersfield, Las Vegas.

I remember those days, Schooner's first opened. I remember that country music takes me right back. And he shows me the pleasure of that.

Never the days hung over, not knowing how I got home. Never do I remember those. It's always enticed by the temporary satisfaction.

I remember one guy told me, he even questioned my salvation. Probably, oh gosh, six years now. For him, thank God, God took as conversion done.

His alcohol, drug, nothing is done with it. And he was surprised when I said, nice cold beer still looks good. It does.

It wasn't just taken away from me. It looks good. It's less of the flesh.

It looks good to me. So I have to avoid those things and I have to fight that. So it doesn't mean at conversion, this is all taken away.

Sometimes there's battles. That's why Paul says, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust thereof. Provision is pronia or pornia, actually, I'm sorry, I'm getting pornia, pronia, P-R-O-N-E-I-A.

Pronia means make no forethought, nor foreplanning, nor concession for the flesh. Don't plan ahead to satisfy the flesh. Don't make concessions for the flesh, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

Because that's how the enemy comes in and influences us. Destructive relationships, destructive thoughts, and destructive media. I don't even know if I have time to go into this, probably not.

I was going to talk to you about the doctrine of Balaam, which I did before in the book of Revelation, where Jesus says, you have some in your church that still hold to the doctrine of Balaam. And basically, in Numbers 22, Balak hired Balaam to come and curse the children of Israel. He tried to curse them, and curse them, and curse them.

And this is what's happening in our homes. The prophet Balaam said, I cannot curse what God has blessed. I can't do it.

Same thing with our homes. The enemy cannot come in and curse what God has blessed. The sanctity of a man and woman married together, putting God first.

Christ as a foundation. The enemy cannot come in and curse that. The same thing with the doctrine of Balaam, what Jesus was talking about.

The prophet said, I cannot curse the children of Israel, but I'll tell you what you can do. You can get them to curse themselves. Here's what you do.

Have the woman of the Lamb go down there and lead them away in sexual immorality. Have them be led away by the worship of idols, and they'll curse themselves. The power of influence.

He could not curse the children of God. He couldn't. But I'll influence them.

And it drove them away, and thousands died. Jesus says the doctrine of Balaam, you still hold some Pergamos in your church that hold to this doctrine. The power of influence.

They were a blessed nation, a blessed people going through the land of Canaan, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perzites, all these different things, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, all influenced the children of Israel. They were supposed to come out from among them and be separate, be a separate, distinct people, holy and set apart for God. But the power of influence kept influencing the people away from God.

That's why God would have to bring in the prophets from Isaiah and Jeremiah primarily and call those people back. Call the wayward people back because of the power of influence. They would have not left their first love had there not been the power of influence.

The heart is desperately wicked and sinful, Jeremiah said. So it is influenced easily. So you've got to put up strength and you've got to put up foundation.

And you can laugh at me all you want if we're selective on what we watch and what we view, but I'm not going to divorce court. And I'm not lusting after women other than my wife on a continual basis because it's up on a big screen. For Jesus said, if you even look at a woman to lust at her in your heart, you've committed adultery.

People are coming home at night committing adultery, sleeping in the bed wondering, where's the passion? Where's the power? Where's the anointing? Where's my marriage at? It's because you're sleeping with people mentally. That's what Jesus said. Get mad at him.

If you even look at a woman to lust for her, you've committed adultery with her in your heart. And that's the power of media. I talk to sometimes guys that are in the grips of pornography daily.

And they say, I don't even want to touch my wife anymore. I don't love her anymore. I don't this.

I don't even want to be around her anymore. We've fallen out of love. No, it's because you've been committing adultery in your heart.

And it's driving you away from that marriage. That's just the truth. That's why pornography is so dangerous.

You give yourself to something that is not yours. It entices. It pulls you in.

Stolen water is sweet. And bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But the Bible goes on to say, but he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell.

It kills marriage at its core because what is meant to be with the husband and wife comes in and begins to break that union. And that's why the media is so destructive. When you can have these commercials, commercials at Super Bowl that would make a Playboy model blush in the 1950s, we're in trouble.

We're in trouble, folks. And it entertains the church. That perversion entertains the church.

I can see it entertaining the world. But the church many years ago put Desperate Housewives on the number one list. The church put all these shows on the number one list.

The church, the church that is a bride of Christ is watching filth in their homes because it's pulling you away and we don't even notice it until it's too late often. I remember one lady, Morgan, I remember this got upset at us in a Bible study about eight years ago. I said, man, you better be careful letting your kid watch all that stuff.

Oh yeah, you bunch of legalistic. What'd she say three years ago? With tears, with tears because her son was walked away from Christ. She said, I allow too much junk in our home to influence him.

We didn't say, ha ha, we were right. We cried with her, we prayed. Now, thank God that young man is serving God.

But it is the destructive nature of our hearts that we want to be entertained by these things. And I'm just being honest with you, that I believe is one of the roots of the problems. The church of Jesus Christ that should be set apart and distinct and filling their mind with the things of God and worship and movies and programs that build up and edify and encourage.

We're watching things that God calls an abomination. And we wonder why we're dying spiritually because we are being conformed by the things of this world. We are not being transformed by the word of God.

Paul said, do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You've got to do that. It all starts here.

It all starts here. When you see yourself starting to slip, get into the word of God, repent of this and get back on track. The power of influence.

You might say, Shane, what does this have to do with marriage? It has everything to do with marriage and single and dating. Who's influencing you? Either God or the world. Do you realize there's no middle ground? If there's a middle ground, the world's influencing you.

It's not like some gauge where it just stays in the middle. It's either sin either grows or it withers depending on whether your feet are starving. There's no middle ground here.

I'm not talking about perfection. Sometimes we rent stuff that say, oh, I don't know what we were thinking there. It's not a good idea.

I don't know why somebody recommended that. But see, acknowledging that these things aren't right versus going into the system of the world. And again, I don't want to beat this subject up, but it's vitally important because we're seeing things in our culture today that what we're seeing in our culture and what's happening in our homes is just a result of what we're viewing.

And somebody got on me, I think five or six years ago, and said, Shane, come on, the media just reflects what's going on in the culture. Yeah, it reflects it, but it also influences it. Because see, once you influence, then you reflect.

And then as you're reflecting, you influence. It's like a big circle that keeps going. So you have to strengthen your marriage with putting the things of God on.

I mean, just think about it. Turn off the bachelor and turn on praise and worship or get a good movie or something that's building you up and not pulling you down. What voice do you follow? And I'll leave on that point.

What voice do you follow? God's voice stills you. It does not rush you. It leads you.

It doesn't push you. It doesn't bring up all these things against your spouse. If there's something welling up inside of you that's not of God, the Holy Spirit should put a checks and balance system on that.

And as I close, I'm going to talk about one other point, confession. And I wish I had more time on this, and I don't know how this happens. We need longer services.

Or I need shorter notes. And I think most will agree, shorter notes. No? All right.

Confession. I have to talk about this because this has been huge in our marriage. I just want to read James chapter 5. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another.

Do you realize that most psychological problems, most psychiatrists even say, and I don't quote psychologists and psychiatrists very often, but they say that guilt is the number one contributor to many of

the disorders that people have. Guilt. That's why when a lot of people finally give their life to Christ, surrender everything, the guilt is gone, the shame is gone, and they're freed of many of these things.

But in marriage, you can't hold on to all these little secret sins. You've got to confess things to your spouse. Well, they might leave me.

Well, what's better? What's better? Hiding all this sin inside or a husband? Wives struggle with lust too. So as do men. Some women struggle with lust and confessing that to your spouse, saying, listen, I struggle with these areas.

Can you help me as a friend? And you become closer as a friend. Now you're on the same page. You're not hiding all these little things.

Oh, they think I'm a super Christian. No, they should know where your struggles are in confessing these things to one another. I struggle in this area.

Can you help me? And it brings communication. It fosters relationship. Instead of living two different lives, hiding all these little secret things, we come and we say, I'm struggling with this.

Can you help me with this area? The power of confession. Morgan's helped us out greatly. She would acknowledge that as well.

That is confessing and being on the same page and helping each other, talking, building up the relationship and taking full responsibility, not partial responsibility, taking full responsibility of your actions, not blaming the other person, taking full responsibility. And I must leave on this note, unforgiveness. When a spouse does this and they confess, or you're going through challenges right now, I know there's many people that I know, unforgiveness comes in.

And I talked about last week, we build walls to protect us and these walls eventually imprison us. We build walls to protect us. I'm not letting anybody in like that.

I'm not sharing, I'm not opening up and we build these walls to protect us and eventually they become our prison. And unforgiveness, unforgiveness is one of the bricks that builds that wall. Spouses have got to let that go.

Forgiving somebody, here's where we make the mistake, forgiving somebody does not mean I'm wrong, you're right. It means you're still wrong, but I release you. I release you of what you did.

I'm not going to hold it in. I forgive you. That's what Christ did on the cross.

God forgave us of the sin. It doesn't mean God was wrong and we were right, does it? It says I release you from that. I'm not going to hold that against you.

And that's what I put in your notes there. Unforgiveness in the church is like a bullet left in the body. It's going to begin to fester and corrode and the whole body is going to become sick because of this unforgiveness.

If God and Christ forgave you, how much more ought you to forgive others? And unforgiveness comes in and begins to destroy the marriage and begins to break it up because at the root of that is pride. I'm not going to get into that whole thing again because I just did, but forgiveness again never means that you're

wrong. It means you're releasing the other person and the problem is many of us are waiting for the other person to change.

We're waiting for the other person to change. I'm going to hold on to this as long as I can. And it begins to control you.

It begins to dominate your life. And as Jordan comes up and Chelsea comes up, I think we're going to also do lead me to the cross again, which is what I did before I came up here. And I want to use this time to think about the cross and the forgiveness of Christ on the cross and the unforgiveness we might be holding in our hearts.

And Isaiah says, Isaiah 57, 15, that God has come to revive the spirit of the humble. Revival of the heart changes everything. Revival of the heart changes everything.

I told you last week when I finally forgave the guy who had an affair with my ex-wife, it released me of so much bitterness and anger and resentment. I was free now. It was still wrong, but now I'm free because I'm not holding it in.

I'm acting like Christ and forgiving those who have wronged me. And then you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. But some of you need to know God's forgiveness tonight.

Some of you have been holding on to guilt and shame and ridicule and trying to do life on your own, but you've got to let that go at the foot of the cross. The biggest price ever paid was paid on the cross. Do you realize that all the sin of humanity fell upon the cross? That was why it was bloody.

Because without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Christ has paid the price once and for all. And I remember I just read a while back the story of C.H. Spurgeon.

Many of you know who he is. If you don't, go online, get some of his books. He was a great Baptist preacher 150 years ago.

He was 16, 17 years old walking into a country church. Didn't know the Lord. Snowing out, maybe eight or nine people there.

And the pastor, the minister looked at him and said, from Isaiah, Look to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other. That's all it took. He said, look to me and be saved, young man.

That's what God's saying. I don't need some polished sermon with 14 points and two points of application and with a nice little poem and working into emotional frenzy. Look to Christ.

Look to God and God alone. Repent of your sin. Confess.

That is the secret. Folks, it's not difficult. He paved the way.

He said, there is no other way. I have to give my only son. And I think of my four-year-old.

I would never give him up for the sin of humanity. But God allowed his son to be bruised and beaten and whipped in all manner of torture for the sin of the world, for our sin. All you have to do is look to be saved.

It's amazing. Young adult, old young, look to him and be saved. Confess.

Lord, I need you. That's it. It's not reading your Bible and learning systematic theology.

It's not not going to the movies or the media. God will change all that. It's looking to him and being saved.

At the core of everything I have to say, I have failed if I do not preach the cross. You've got the wrong guy if I'm just going to come in here and get sermonettes and seven points of happiness. Because it's a cross that breaks men.

It's a cross that breaks women. It's a cross that is the only hope for our nation. Everything must come back to the cross.

It was said of Spurgeon, every single sermon will come back to the cross. I've got 14 volumes of it. And every sermon I read, it's back to the cross because he looked to God and was saved.

And he has to get that out. I have to get that out. Christ got that out.

For this reason, I have been called, Jesus said. Jesus said, I have been called for this reason to preach and then to go die for the sins of the world. Amazing.

Amazing. So as we go into a time of worship, let me just pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, there's something that needs you here tonight.

Lord, desperately, I believe that you begin to crush pride right now. Break the hardest heart. Lord, break that hardness that's preventing them from turning to you.

Lord, have them cry out, Lord, I need you. I can't do this alone. I need you tonight.

I need the cross. Lord, I need your redemption. I need your salvation.

I need your guidance. I need your direction. Lord, our marriage will not make it unless you revive me.

You don't have to raise your hand. You don't have to come forward. You just have to say, Lord, I need you.

I give my life to you. Lead me to that cross. And he will.

He will.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Xz18VgwH9zk.mp4>

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