

The Big Three: Sex, Finances, Communication

by Shane Idleman

The sermon addresses the critical issues of sex, finances, and communication in marriage, emphasizing the need for biblical guidance and openness to restore relationships.

Duration: 1:02:00

Scripture: Proverbs 28:13, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 5:28, Romans 1:24, 1 Corinthians 7:4, James 5:16

Topics: "Marriage", "Restoration"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the critical issues of sex, finances, and communication in marriage, emphasizing their interconnectedness and the devastating impact of neglecting these areas. He highlights the prevalence of adultery and pornography as major contributors to marital breakdowns, urging couples to allow God's Word to guide their relationships. Idleman stresses the importance of open communication, accountability, and the necessity of giving to foster a healthy marriage. He encourages couples to confront their struggles with sin and temptation, advocating for transparency and prayer as vital tools for healing. Ultimately, he calls for a return to God as the foundation for restoring and revitalizing marriages.

Transcript

Last week, we talked about parenting. I believe this will be the final week of the Marriage Series. I'm still praying about direction on that.

But last week was parenting. And I saw something online that was relevant. It said that a woman is trying to sell her children on eBay.

Have you ever been... I mean, that's kind of a joke, but have you ever felt that way? You know, she said, I'm done with these kids. I'm putting them on eBay. I'm selling them.

And her friend texted her back and said, don't do that. You created them. You made them.

Put them on Etsy. So, now I know what Etsy's for, right? I guess it's stuff you make on your own and things. I want to kind of break the ice this morning because it's an important topic.

I obviously try to avoid it when I can. I mean, who wants to talk about certain things? But it's important, especially in the area of marriage, sex, finances, and communication. They're usually all tied together.

When we do marriage counseling, different things, these three areas are tied together. If you look at the top reasons now within the church for divorce, you will see adultery, pornography are the main killers of marriage. So, it seems a little ironic, not ironic, but it seems a little unwise that we would avoid something that is an epidemic in the church.

And it is. It's destroying families. It's destroying marriages.

And God's Word has plenty to say on that. And I got an email this week just to show you some of the emails we get in from a lot of people, even different countries. And sometimes we can't get back to people.

I usually try to send emails out to different people. So, on that note, I just thought of that at this service. If you're interested in ever doing online counseling and qualified, been a Christian for a while, let us know at the office because we do get correspondences coming in.

You know, my husband's cheating. How did I do? My kids just came to me and they're gay. And I'm the type of person, I don't want to not get back.

You know, just ignore it and hope it goes away. So, we want to try to help people when we can. But this one came in and it's talking about exactly what I'm talking about.

And I asked for permission. They said it was fine. She said, Look at that word, inviting.

There are so many others than just the two of us, yet we both know the cure. Remember, this is from a Christian family. If we would allow God to breathe His word, His plan, and His way back into the marriage, we could avoid the tragic death of it.

And they are, unless something changes, they are headed to divorce. Other couples in here, people I know, are headed to divorce. Got a text from another friend at a different church that, Hey, I just received the papers today.

You know, what am I supposed to do? So, I may be living in a different world. You know, I see the pain that's all around us. But the thing I think that is most upsetting and alarming for me is very few people want to do what it takes to fix it.

I mean, I'll talk to these people. For example, I won't say names or anything else, but I'll talk to the person and they're too busy blaming the other person to hear anything what I said. Or they keep going back to this, or they keep doing this.

But hold on, what about you? See, we can, she said it right here, this is so important. If we would allow God to breathe His way, His word, back into our lives, we could restore this marriage. So let's talk about the first one here on the big three.

And this, the sexuality, and that will be the major part of this sermon because it started to grow all week. And usually when God is putting things in my heart, I don't want to, you know, edit them out. I want to just allow my thoughts to go down, put this down on paper.

But we have to remember this about sex, sexuality, sex and marriage. It's a good thing. Sometimes we, you know, it's turned, what it's turned to at Hollywood, but God created it.

After all, nobody would be here without it. Have you thought about that? You know, it's a good thing. God created it in creation.

He designed, that's what, the male and female to be joined together and let not man separate. So it's God's wonderful design. So when you take that design and you begin to twist it and turn it, contort it into directions it's not supposed to go, do you know what word comes from that? Perversion.

You're perverting the truth. So when we stand for sexuality as God designed it, we're not haters. We're not throwing mud at people or just saying, hey, this is what God's plan is and this is why.

So we have to remember that. In marriage, it's a good thing. It's a God-ordained thing.

It's very healthy. Because I've talked to people on both sides of it. On one hand, you have the people who, you know, we don't do that too often.

You know, it's not, you know, it's not how we were raised. Well, it's okay, right? It's a good thing. That's how God brought marriage together.

And then you have the people on the other side that I've ran into Christians who watch pornography together, their husband and wife. I'm like, wait a minute, hold on. Why? You missed me there on that one.

And then we have this distorted view of sex in this area. But let's look. Instead of turning to your Bible, I have a lot of passages.

I'm going to put them up on the screen. 1 Corinthians 7, 4. You could turn there if you'd like. 1 Corinthians 7, 4. This is coming from the NIV.

Here's how we get a good, healthy view of what God desires. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband. You might say, uh-oh.

Well, keep reading. Keep reading. Here comes a touché.

Right back at you. The husband, in the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but yields it to his wife. So see, that just ruins the whole world's definition of sex.

It's selfishness. It's what can I get rather than what can I give. So God designed it.

It's good within the context of marriage. And then it's the idea of yielding, of giving ourselves over for the other person. Not selfishness, where it's all about me and my ways, my thoughts, my desires.

So we have the foundation. We have this as, okay, it's a yielding. It's a giving up of ourselves to the other.

And this is actually why it's an act of giving, not receiving. We look at it the other way, don't we, sometimes. It's not about us.

It's about them. Now this is why the Bible talks about why fornication is wrong. Fornication is a big word that means sex before marriage.

The reason that that's wrong is it's all about giving. I'm sorry, getting. You know, where's that? I don't want to say some sayings.

I'll be right and it's inappropriate. But that's why, like, when people get out of high school, you know, they just want to just party. And it's all about this.

It's all about getting and getting and getting. That's why God says that's fornication. Because marriage is how I create it.

It's for the husband and the wife to come together to make a covenant before me to say that I will have no other spouse until the day I die. I'm making this covenant before God. God blesses and honors that.

But when we go out and just give and give and give and try to receive and receive and receive, it's fornication. Because we really don't care about that person. It's about pleasing oneself.

And then the other side why adultery is wrong, obviously, is because we're breaking that marriage covenant. We're breaking that vow that we made. We're giving our hearts to somebody else.

And often God would tie idolatry in with adultery. Is that interesting? In the Old Testament, idolatry. Idols.

Putting things in our hearts that shouldn't be there. I know you're going to feel like you can hear a pin drop in these services, but we've got to talk about these things. Pornography is adultery.

Did you know that? Pornography is adultery. Matthew 5:28 in the NIV. But I tell you that anyone, anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Here's where a lot of Christians make a mistake too. We think of the action, right? The action of doing something wrong. Forgetting that the action starts in the mind.

So if a person is lusting and lusting and it's a continual battle and they just keep giving into it, they're committing adultery in their mind. This is why marriages can fall apart without the actual physical act. Because if the mental act is happening, then they won't want to be around their spouse.

They won't love their spouse. It's this get away from me. Get away from me.

I don't want to be with you. I don't want to be around you anymore. Get away from me because I've given my heart and my life and my mind over to another.

See, that's why it doesn't have to be the physical act with someone. If it's happening in the mind, it will still affect the marriage in a deep way. Because if somebody, I don't know if you know this or not, but talking to people, a lot of people over time, adultery, one of the things it does, when a person commits adultery, they go to the person they're committing adultery with and their spouse.

They don't want to be around anymore. They don't love their spouse anymore. They could care less if they get a divorce.

I'm moving on. Same thing happens when pornography comes into the home. Now, it's happening in women too.

Many years ago it didn't, but women are putting Fifty Shades of Grey on the top ten list. It's a universal problem here. And when we allow our minds to go there and we begin to concentrate and focus on that, it becomes a daily habit.

It begins to break down the health of the marriage. So that's why, well, I'm not doing anything. I'm not doing anything.

Oh, yes, you are. Because that's how, didn't the Pharisees say that? That's actually why Jesus quoted this. We're not committing adultery.

Jesus said, you stiff-necked, arrogant people. You're lusting in your hearts. And you're committing adultery in your heart.

See, the action is actually what's already going on in the heart. So it does beg the question this morning, are you opening the door in your home in this area? This is why we are no longer attracted to our spouse. Arguments increase.

Discord in the home. We just aren't getting along. We don't want to be around each other.

Because when you give yourself to someone else, God has designed marriage and the sexual relationship to be the glue that holds the marriage together. The intimacy is what helps hold it together in times of difficulty. But when we give that to somebody else, and we don't want to be around that person anymore, it destroys the marriage.

It also affects the other two areas we're talking about. Financial irresponsibility and communication breakdown. Financial irresponsibility.

You ever hear a guy's name in the news? Harvey something? Weinstein? Harvey Weinstein? No? Come on guys, you know. Yes, yes. What happened with this guy? There we go.

Crash and burn. Because of sexual immorality, perversion, money, irresponsibility. They go together.

I mean, you will not find anybody that is falling in this area and has all these other areas under great control. Yeah, that happens. I've got a strong marriage.

My prayer life is great. I'm in the Word. Church is going good.

My business is going good. It can't. They affect one another.

But here's the encouragement, okay? Maybe that's why these are heavy services. People are kind of, oh, heavy. Temptation is also an opportunity to do what is right.

See, you don't have to view the temptation as, oh, here comes the temptation again. Here comes the temptation again. What's wrong with me? Have you ever said that? What's wrong with me? What's going on here? Lord, what's wrong with me? Nothing's wrong with you.

You're human. Jesus was tempted. The Bible says Jesus was tempted, was tested in all points, yet he was without sin.

So the temptation, when you have a temptation, you might say, well, he wasn't tempted with pornography. Well, not to the degree we are now, but the Bible says the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He was tempted in all three of those areas.

The lust of the flesh turned the stone into bread. The pride of life, let me show you these kingdoms I will give to you. Or the pride of life, cast yourself down from this temple and the angels will save you.

And all these areas of testing the flesh. So temptation, so when the temptation comes, it's also an opportunity to do what is right by turning from it. See, the door of temptation swings both ways.

You can enter or you can exit. So I hope that helps some people because they feel so beat up by temptation. And that in and of itself isn't wrong, it's what you do with it.

But here's a couple things you need to remember. The flesh is never satisfied. The flesh is never satisfied.

Those who have a problem in this area also have problems in other areas. The problem with the flesh is the more you feed it, the more you have to fight it. You can stop and tweet that one.

The more you feed this unhealthy desire, the more you will have to fight it. You are giving fuel to the enemy. Another scripture, Jeremiah 5, 7-9.

He doesn't mince words here. Your children have forsaken me and sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses.

They were like well-fed lusty stallions. Everyone neighed at his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things, says the Lord? When they had fed them to the full.

See, there's something about the flesh being full and being fed. And this giving over to the feeding of the flesh. And when they're full and fed, then those desires are even heightened, even more so.

They committed adultery. They're like well-fed lusty stallions. And that's what was happening there, and that's what's happening even in our nation, in the churches.

That's why I often talk about fasting so often. You want to just side note? Because fasting will starve that flesh that is growing. Because if the flesh is dominating you, right? I mean, if it's just like, okay, I want... What's a good example? Let me think of a few here.

What's that? Oh, Krispy Kreme. Let me get some Krispy Kremes and coffee. I know I shouldn't.

Then after here, let me get something else. I know I shouldn't. Then I go here and I eat too much cake.

I eat too much of this. I shouldn't be watching those things. I am.

I shouldn't be spending this. And we're just feeding the flesh all the day. And then it becomes time to make a difficult decision against pornography or something else.

Do you think you're going to be able to say yes or no? You've been just caving in and feeding it and feeding it and feeding it. That's why people keep falling into it. They keep falling into the lust of the flesh because they're feeding that flesh.

So one of the best ways to starve the flesh is to fast and starve the flesh. And those appetites are decreased because the flesh is no longer strengthened. Now, I don't really like that dynamic.

I would prefer to eat whenever. Right? But there's a lot to this when you're full. When you're full.

People especially go out for big meals. Meat and alcohol. They have no control over their sensuality and different things because they're feeding that lustful desire.

It's interesting. Anything God gives us, that is God-ordained, God-given can be twisted. Sex, twisted.

Food, twisted. The lust of the flesh, twisted. And it becomes problem areas.

And then Romans 1.24 up on the screen through 25. In the lust of their heart. Here's what's happening.

Now let me set the context for this. Romans 1. This is where Paul, I believe midway through, Paul says that his invisible attributes are clearly seen. God's invisible attributes are clearly seen so that we are without excuse.

But people suppress the truth. They suppress the truth. I have this image of pushing a basketball under the swimming pool.

So they're suppressing the truth. And all ungodliness and unrighteousness. And God gives them over to a debased and corrupted mind.

And then he says, in the lust of their hearts, because of this, they dishonor their bodies among themselves. Who exchange the truth of God. There's an exchange takes place in sexual sin.

You exchange the truth for a lie. You're exchanging that. Exchange the truth of God for the lie.

And worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator. So you're exchanging. Now this will actually go on to say, as a result of this, men gave up their natural passions for women.

And women gave up their natural passions for men and began to burn with lust in their hearts for one another. What do you do with that? Oh, that doesn't really mean that, Shane. Really? Well, that's pretty clear.

That's pretty clear. See, here's the thing. I'm hoping to bring this up when I go.

This is key. When I stand before God, I'm going to have to say, Lord. I mean, this probably won't happen because you're on your face.

You probably won't be able to say anything. But hypothetically. Lord, I preached your word to the best that I could.

It was crystal clear in certain areas. Some things weren't. I wanted to hold to your word.

I wanted to hold to your truth the best I could. And this is what we saw. This is what we preached.

The other side is going to have to say, I know that church history. I know that scripture. I know that people throughout the last 2,000 years in Reformation history, different things, cast homosexuality in the wrong light.

But I don't think that's relevant anymore. I don't think that relevant. I think all those scriptures are not applied correctly.

Who's shoes would you rather stand in? Really? I mean, that's what you're going to have to say. That doesn't mean that. See, but that's what happens when we start to worship the creation rather than the creator.

We suppress the truth, and God gives them over to a debased and corrupted mind. Basically, here's what happens. God says, you want it? You got it.

You're going to keep suppressing the truth. You're going to keep suppressing the truth. I give you up to a debased and corrupted mind.

Now, you know what? These types of sermons in Romans 1, they are popular. But they are very powerful. Very powerful, because that's the truth.

Anytime you're confronted with the truth, you have a choice to make. The Bible is so clear on this area. I don't know how people can come to a different understanding of what it means.

But again, next week, and I'm hoping to unpack that a little bit more. When desire is conceived, James talks about when desire is conceived, sin is born. Here's what happens with sin in this area.

You have a temptation, okay? If that temptation is acted upon, then it's conceived. And that conception, when that baby begins to grow, when it's fully grown, it brings forth death. That's why you have to starve sin to death.

You have to bring it to the light. And that's why we had a good prayer time at the first service. I want to encourage you now.

If there's something in your life that you need to bring to the light, bring it to prayer. Expose it, because sin can't grow. Sin cannot grow when it is exposed.

And it's brought to the light. And you continually bring it to the light. What we do is we hide in darkness and we struggle silently.

What do most people say? I'll try better. I'll try better. How is that going to work? How has that been working? That's not even biblical.

I'll try better. I'll try better. Really what we're saying is I don't want anybody to know.

Right? Here's what we're saying. I don't want anybody to know about that. I sure don't want my spouse to know about that.

And God, I am sorry, because I am convicted. Let's try better next time. Move on.

And then fall again. Fall again. Fall.

I mean, I can list six families right now, divorced or going to divorce, where the spouse committed adultery, but it wasn't just the first time. It was a pattern that had been developing. You know, you're not going to usually, I have yet to see a godly spouse on fire for God and like, oh, oops, you know what happened yesterday? I had an affair.

I mean, it's a continual one step at a time. Oh, you may even need an illustration for this. Right? Uh-oh.

I knew I shouldn't be doing this. And this probably isn't good. Maybe God's convicted me and then, oh, maybe I shouldn't talk with them more.

Maybe I shouldn't pursue this. Maybe I shouldn't like them on Facebook and private message them. Well, they want to get together for lunch.

It's been a long time. What harm is that? Oh, gosh, I'm convicted. I'm not in the Word anymore.

I'm not praying. I'm not worshiping. I'm not at church.

But then, and see, it's that continual stepping down. And before you know it, where are you at? You guys want me to walk around and preach and pray for you? But that's what happens. So what I'm trying to do is warn you when you're here, or here, or here, or to not even have you get to that first step.

Because that's what sin, when it's conceived. See, we believe in this kind of abortion. Abort sin.

That's the kind of abortion we promote. As soon as that sin is conceived, you abort it. Take the surgical knife, take the saline abortion, whatever.

You cut that sin out immediately. And you go and you say, hey, I'm struggling in this area. I need help.

You bring it to the light. I'm going to give some scriptural support for this in just a minute. So here's the first step.

If you need help in this area, let me just throw this out there. Most people do. Most people do.

It's a struggle because God designed us to be that way. But the more you feed it, the more you fight it. The more you don't bring it to the light, the more you have to fight it.

And this is what needs to happen. Expose it and repent. Expose it and repent.

See, repentance by itself. Repentance at its core in the Greek language or the Hebrew language, no matter if it's matinee in one of them and then something else in the other. Both of them have to do with turning the mind.

I'm rethinking. And then because I'm rethinking, I'm not going to live that way. So when a person says, I'm repenting, this is not right, but if they continue in it, do they really repent? That's just deciding to do something different.

So repenting is changing course, and then how we get help is to expose it. Do you know what's okay? And I've got in trouble for this, and you've got to use wisdom here, but I'm going to say it again. It's okay to tell your spouse if you're struggling in an area, oh, I could drop a pin.

No way. They think I got it all together. Oh, no, they don't.

No. They're just waiting for that pin to drop. But it's okay to say, you know what, I'm having a hard day today.

I've been struggling, you know, and can you pray for me? Yeah, I mean, you've got to make sure. I don't know, maybe you might have a very jealous spouse, and you've got to use wisdom and find somebody else. But it's very transparent to be open and honest and expose it.

You know, if you tell them that, then they're going to say, well, how's your day going? How did you do? You know somebody's now holding you accountable. You know somebody's going to ask you the hard

questions. And what I've found, once you pray with your spouse, whether it's whatever, I mean, even in our early years of marriage, like, man, I feel like drinking today.

Can we pray? Like, yeah, absolutely. And you bring it to the light. You bring it to the surface.

See, he's exposed it. Now I feel better. But then when you say, oh, no, I'm going to hold this in.

God, you just deal with this. Is that really me wanting help, though? Or is it too embarrassed to admit that we do need help? So I would encourage you to expose it. Proverbs 28, 13, whoever conceals their sin does not prosper.

But the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. See, if you just renounce it in your mind but you don't confess it, we're still holding on to something. So God's mercy is this.

You confess it. You repent it. I'm going to give you grace, and I'm going to give you mercy.

I'm going to help you through this. Because any time you go, God, I need help. I can't handle this anymore.

I need help, Lord. What's he going to do? Nope. I need you to go to church for one month, read your Bible every day for an hour, and then we'll talk.

It's right there. So I encourage the reason many people, well, this is the truth sermon if I've ever heard one. But the reason many people don't want to go to their spouse is because they enjoy their sin.

Oh, now we get some amens. Okay, see? When we don't go to somebody and bring it up, it means because we want to continue in that which we are doing. Those who are serious about sin will do whatever it takes to eradicate it.

They don't want to just hold it in and not tell anybody. James 5.16, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. It's not just physical healing.

It's set free to be healed, body, soul, and spirit. Now we have this image, though, that, oh, I'll never lust again if I'm healed. Well, no, you're supposed to lust for the spouse.

You're supposed to God-given things. But there's a difference between it controlling you and you controlling it. See, when your flesh is controlling you, it's nasty, isn't it? It's difficult because you can't function.

So consider this. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful. We go into this warfare like this. Okay, I'm not going to do that again.

I'm not going to look at my phone. I'm not going to do anything. Versus turning to God, opening ourselves up, exposing it, repenting, having people come alongside and help.

It's just not going to happen unless we make some drastic changes. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, one act of obedience is better than a hundred sermons. Did you catch that? One act of obedience is better than a hundred sermons.

Here's what else needs to happen. Prayer needs to become a lifestyle. See, men, I think it was E.M. Bound said this, men would live better if they prayed better.

Men would live better, women would live better if they prayed better. Now, here's what's happening. In one year and out the next, what's for lunch is what you're thinking.

Here goes Shane again on prayer. But let me tell you that this actually changes your thinking. It changes your mindset.

Before you click on that site, why don't you imagine that there are little girls many years ago who were probably abused by a father, raised by a single mother, and you begin praying. And you begin changing your whole concept and your outlook on life. And then your prayer becomes a part of who you are.

The prayer changes your mind. You start to get the heart of Christ, the heart of God. And those lustful desires are crushed under the weight of God's love and mercy.

See, it's not just a quick little prayer. You're bringing in heaven. You're bringing in the hope and the support and love of God into your heart and into your life.

Prayer is a lifestyle. Praying in the morning. Later on in the day, Lord, help me pray.

It becomes a lifestyle of who you are. And lust can't grow in a praying heart. Now, it'll try to come in, right? It'll kick the dirt over, plant a seed, and begin to water it.

But it can't grow in a praying heart because the prayer just begins to eradicate it and make changes in the life of the person who struggles. I already said this, so I won't go into a lot of detail, but fasting starves the flesh. When the flesh is full and satisfied, it's in control.

I'm going to say something here on something else that will help, too. Boundaries are safeguards. Here's the thing about accountability.

I've said this before. Accountability will not help you in and of itself. In other words, you can't have somebody else hold you accountable.

God needs to hold you accountable. The Holy Spirit needs to hold you accountable. But what accountability does is it adds an extra layer of protection onto a very challenging battle, a very difficult struggle.

Now, when you set up boundaries, you will look different. You know that, right? You might get a little mocking. Your friends might not agree with you.

For example, I've talked about software out there before, Covenant Eyes, that will block websites. It will actually send every single search and every single website you visit to your spouse every week. Morgan gets a report every week of where I search, what I look like.

It's on my phones, on my computers, everything. I want safeguards in place. Is it bulletproof? Is that going to change everything? No.

The heart has to change, right? But it's how bad do you want it? How bad do you want it? You're going to look a little bit different. I told her, call the hotel we're staying at in New York. Tell them to empty the

refrigerator.

I don't want 12 kinds of beers in there. Take the TV out. Take the remote control out with you.

We're going to be a holy sanctuary. And that's a little weird. Yeah, but I don't want to walk into the enemy's camp, right? I don't want to go down with the ship.

Oh, that's a little weird. I went to hotels before. I was like, you can have the remote control or just take the TV.

Well, sir, we have a button here that says adult. I push that button and that's it. You're going to look, how bad do you want it? How bad do you want that relationship with the Lord? Because when God says they want me, they're going to follow me.

I'm going to come alongside that kind of warrior. The eyes of the Lord go to and fro to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to him. So what you do is you position yourself.

You say, enemy, you're not coming in here. You're not coming in here. If you're going to take down the ship, you're going to have to bring the whole iceberg.

So see, that's why boundaries are so important. I mean, this topic, this drives me crazy because I'll tell people, man, you've got to get this hooked up to your phone. I'm not doing that.

Oh, you don't want help. You're just playing games. Well, then she'll see what I view.

Exactly. Because that will help to stop. We've had for two years, this will blow your mind.

We've had, it's called, I don't know, a men's purity group. I put it on Facebook. I put it in the bulletin.

I've told a couple dozens of people. There's about three or four guys that will go to it. And you're telling me that's all of the guys in this church that struggle with that issue.

Are you smoking crack? I mean, I tell people, oh, man, I don't want to get that serious. I say, I'll go. I'll go too.

Who can't benefit from accountability? What the word of God says. It's like alcohol. You know what helps AA every day when they go? They have to give accountability.

It's that safeguard. Now, I think I don't like things about the higher power and things like Christian recovery groups. But it's accountability because if you're not accountable to anybody, you'll do anything.

Because nobody's there. Now, people say, but brother, God should hold you accountable. He sure should.

He sure should. But I know the sinful flesh inside of me. It's not my friend.

So I've referred dozens and dozens of people, and they won't go. Dozens. Hey, you've got to hook this.

They won't do it. So how bad do we want it? Because I'm tired of just preaching to preach. I'm tired of just preaching.

I want to preach to people who want to change. That's who I'm going after. I mean, we've all got better things to do than to hear something that we're not going to change and not change our lives around and

not make these changes.

Now, I know it's a little scary. I know it's a little. But how bad do you want to change? Because to just think you're never going to set something up on your phone, and you'll just do better.

You're already on the way down. That you're already on the way down. Because the pride of your heart has deceived you.

Pride cometh before a fall. Pride cometh before destruction. To say, I don't need that.

And people have told me that. I don't need that. I mean, it's not that bad.

Oh, really? Everyday addiction is not that bad? So you have to get to a point where you say, I'm going to do whatever it takes. Whatever it takes. I know people that have turned in their phones and just got a flip phone for texting and calling because they want it that bad.

Hey, I'm getting rid of my laptop. Let's use the family computer out in the living room. See, who wants it that bad? That's who I'm talking to.

Because you guys who want to just keep playing games, you're just going to keep playing games for the rest of your life. You're never going to be set free unless you take radical steps to break this bondage. You have to drive it out.

Literally. Drive this out. It comes back, drive it out.

Do you have a verse for that? I'm glad you asked. Joshua 17, 12-13. I will be honest with you.

This has nothing to do with the topic. And I'm not just putting a scripture in to put a scripture in. However, look at the principle at the end.

And this is so true throughout the entire Old Testament. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities, but the Canaanites were determined. This people group were determined to dwell in that land.

Just like sin. Sin is determined to dwell in your heart and to get acreage, to take land from you. And it happened when the children of Israel grew strong, that they had put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not utterly drive them out.

God said, utterly drive them out? They said, no, these are good slave laborers for us. We're going to keep them here. And as a result, the children of Israel were led back into the practices of the Canaanites because they didn't drive them out.

Another passage, God said, they are going to be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your flesh because you never drove them out. Have you ever had something stuck in your eye? Tiny? That's what sin is. It's the same thing.

Driving out. Something like this has to be driven out. Yes, it's going to try to come back and get territory.

There's going to be hard times of temptation. Why do you think Morgan's going to New York? Come on, folks. You think I'm stupid? Let's go to New York for a week.

But Pastor, I know what's in here. I'm not saying anything would happen. I pray nothing would.

But when I say I'm paying for a ticket, she's going because safeguards. The enemy's not going to get any type of leverage in there. So these are things you have to watch out for because he's coming.

I know he's got his 30-06 right on my head. As soon as Shane steps out of that window, I'm going to shoot that guy. And you've got to position yourself, boundaries, and accountability.

And I'm just being honest and open and transparent. Most pastors will never tell you what I just told you. I am completely confident I could go there by myself.

Pride says that. I mean, I've traveled. I've been in Texas and Wisconsin.

I've spoken different places. Washington, D.C. I spoke to some Senate helpers there at the Capitol and had to just go for a day trip, turn around. And, you know, I will do that.

But when possible, I want precautions. I want safety. For somebody to say, no, I want you to stay here.

Uh-oh. Uh-oh. I mean, I tell men, they travel a lot.

Why don't you have your wife go with you on this trip? No, she'll just be bored. Or is it that strip club you're planning on going to at midnight? Come on. We've got to talk about the real issues if people are wanting help.

How bad do you want it? You've got to drive this stuff out. So the enemy has to go, I can't even get a foothold in this guy. His door's not even open.

I can't get a foothold in there. He's closed the door. He's got protection on his computer.

He already confessed to his wife that he needs help or vice versa. He's already doing this. There's no way I can get to him, not to mention what the garbage is on Netflix and all the other HBO and Showtime.

My goodness. Have you ever thought about this? They would have never allowed this 50 years ago. The TV, CBS, NBC, whenever there's three stations, right? They're like, we can never allow this on TV.

Now your children can grab the control and see more pornography than I ever saw for years at 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. It wasn't available. So you protect your home.

Now you're called a weirdo. You will never look like the culture if you want to make a difference. You will never look like the world.

Your friends will, oh, man, this guy's so cool. He's a Christian. He's cool.

You'll never hear that in the same sentence. You're going to look. Now you can be a nice person, loving, but he's kind of peculiar, you know? I remember I worked for a water district in town.

They bring pornography magazines all the time, like once a week at lunch, and they know, dude, eventually they knew not to even ask me. Like, I'm not going there. Just don't, okay.

But it's like they'll test you, you know? They'll test your patience. They'll test your everything, and you look different than the world. And you really got to get that point home to young adults because they want to be

cool, right? They want to fit in.

I want to be just like this. And Facebook, they want to look just like, you know, I don't want anybody to know I'm a secret Christian. I don't want to, you know, and it just doesn't work because when you come out from among them and be separate, you look different.

You just will, and it saves your family. It saves your marriage because the power's in the difference. When you come out from among them, you look different.

The last point on that is understand your enemy. This will be helpful as well. In seasons of temptation, that temptation peaks, but then it's gone.

The enemy will come in usually when you're hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. They have that in recovery groups too. It's called the halt principle where most addicts go back to their addiction when they're hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.

Same thing with addicts. Like, nobody's an addict. Most people are addicted to something, right? I've told you this before.

Try stopping sugar and coffee in one day, and you'll just see how addicted you are. We chide the person who's addicted to this, but not the addiction to this thing. So here's what they're saying here.

Temptation peaks. That's why the Bible says, Hold your ground. No temptation has overtaken you, but all is common to man.

And God who is faithful, not you, God who is faithful will allow you to go through the temptation that you may be able to bear it, that you may be able to carry that temptation. So God is faithful. He guarantees that you can get through temptation.

Because I hear this sometimes. I just can't say no. Yes, you can.

No, I cannot say no. As a believer, you can say no. No, I cannot say no.

You don't want to say no. For a believer, I truly believe a believer can say no. Now, unbelievers and bondage, you know, you've got a demonic element working.

You've got your flesh working. You're not right with God. You're a slave to sin.

But as a believer, you can say no. I mean, I've broken powerful addictions in my life over the years, and it is a nightmare sometimes. It's very difficult.

But you can, through God's help, through His strength, through His power. And if you fall, you fall forward. See, we fall, we fall backwards.

Oh, I fell. Forget it. And you go back into it.

Let me just say something to singles, and then I'll move on to finances and communication over the next hour. Don't worry. This part will go really quick.

In 1 Corinthians 7-2, Paul says this. It's not, it, it, Paul says this. It is good to stay single.

Do you know why that is? Well, a couple reasons. Back then, Paul was writing during a difficult time. Christians were being persecuted.

They'd see their spouse get killed, sometimes their kids. Hey, just stay single because of the present distress, he says in another passage. But he's saying stay single because you can care for the things of God, how you might please God.

But he who's married cares for the things of the world, how he might please his spouse. So a single person can, can praise God and please God like married couples cannot. And we have a recent retreat coming up, you know, where the men go, the women go.

And I often tell them, cherish this time. To have three days alone with God, I mean, that just does not come easily these days. That's very hard to come by.

So it's good to stay single. But don't worry, he didn't leave there. But since there is or was so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband because of the present condition.

And then it moves right into finances. This is something, this is interesting. I've noticed this myself.

I've read it in surveys. Most who are having marriage troubles right now, separated, divorced, not all, of course, but most having marriage troubles don't give. Don't give to church or to charities or different things.

They don't have a giving heart. It's a selfish heart. And that selfishness affects other areas.

Think about, do you know people who are divorced or separated, do they give? Are they a giving couple? So this area of finances is pretty huge. It is number, I think on the list around number three or four in regard to marriage problems. Number, it's high up on the list because why? Spending shows where your heart is, right? Where I spend, where my money goes, shows me where my heart is.

And here's where the problems come from, right? Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine. And then somebody else says, no, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine. And then when the month's over, what happened to the money? The checkbook's in the negative.

You, you, you. No. You, you, you.

And the finances become a huge wedge. You're not letting me do what I want to do. Well, you're not letting me do what I want.

And it becomes this wedge because it's a form of idolatry and putting that first before a relationship with God. So here's my advice. Here's biblically speaking as well.

Sit down with one another. Make a list. Pray.

So you sit down, you make a list, you pray, you get on the same page. You pray against selfishness. And also you begin to give if you're not.

Because that's the only way to release that stronghold of money. Is to give. And to give some of it away.

And to live in such a way that giving becomes a priority. A blessed marriage involves compromise and putting others first. So if you want a blessed marriage in this area of finances, or sexuality, or communication, putting others first, the needs of them first.

And this area, more than any other area, will truly reveal your heart. Will it not? If we look at where are we giving. And here's a challenge I have.

And I've shared this before. But so many churches promote giving, right? Pass the plate. We're barely making it this month.

Send us \$1,000. And it's like, my goodness. The church is just in it for the money.

It's always about money. It's always about money. And it can be a dangerous thing.

Some of the guys on TV, right? Send me \$1,000, I'll send you this cloth I prayed over. And you'll be blessed. And it becomes this problem.

And it's always about the money. However, the other side is when, and this is where I'll probably, you know, this is my struggle. Is you don't talk about it.

You don't want people to think anything. We don't pass the plate. We don't mention it.

God's got us. We're doing really well. Like George Mueller.

We just pray. And God answers. We just pray.

And God answers. However, in the middle, as a pastor, as somebody who's, we've been giving ever since we've got married, the enormous benefits, what God's Word says about it, how a person, and here's, you know, I'm going to cross the line for a minute, but here's the context. I believe that God can bless a giving heart.

I'm not a wealth preacher and prosperity gospel, but you'll see that God, you give, God blesses. Malachi tests me in this. If you give, will I not pour out the windows of heaven? Well, that's Old Testament.

We don't have to do that anymore. Well, the principle still applies. God, it's almost like you give away, God entrusts you with more.

We give away, God entrusts you with more. We give away, God entrusts you with more. So I would be irresponsible if I didn't mention the importance of giving.

It really shows where often the heart is at, or giving of time, giving of resources. People give of their energy and their efforts and different things. So you have to take this to the Lord as well.

But I've seen this. I can name, you know, I know of a half dozen marriages right now that are in trouble, not here or anywhere. And I know the majority of them do not give at all.

So you have to wonder if that begins to play into how our heart is conditioned. So a couple thoughts. Are you in a financial rut? Begin giving.

That sounds almost the opposite, right? Well, I'm not going to. If I'm in a financial rut, I'm not going to. That's the reason I'm in a financial rut.

I'm giving. No, it could be that you don't have the blessings of God on your life. Because when a person gives in their lack, that means more to God than a person giving in their abundance.

Jesus said, you see that widow over there? The little mite that she just gave? She actually gave more because she gave it out of her lack. Others are giving it out of their abundance. I mean, think about it.

If a person takes home \$5,000. Here's a \$5,000 check. And they throw \$50 in.

Look at \$50 bill. That's pretty good. I mean, gosh, I can spend that at a restaurant.

You know, it doesn't really affect us. So Jesus is saying, out of their lack, they gave. Are you in a financial rut? Begin giving because God will reward that discipline.

There's so many Bible references to this. And this is testing God in a good way, right? God says, test me in this. I'll show you.

Now, I also don't believe you should give and then say, okay, I'm waiting for my return. I'm waiting. Lord, you're not delivering.

By next week, I want to see what. No, you don't test him that way. You trust.

I mean, what about if the washer and dryer and the cars, the vehicles go longer than we think? What if I hit 300,000 miles on a truck? Or how do we know that God in so many different areas isn't keeping his hand of grace and mercy? And you mean, I know other people that make good money and they're always hurting financially. Like, what's wrong with these guys? Something's always broke. Something's always this.

And they've got to end this. And now the court's after their money. Now the IRS.

I'm like, how do you not make it on 150,000 a year? And you're always in trouble because it's not what we earn. It's what we spend. And if God's hand of blessing is removed, then it doesn't matter how much you make.

There will be difficulties. But then there are other people. Are you doing well financially in your marriage, but you're lacking peace and purpose? Begin giving.

I've also noticed what happens is when you stop giving, you stop that fountain of living water that's flowing out. And you begin to stop the giving and you're stopped up. It's not supposed to flow in and hold it.

So then I'm lacking peace. I'm lacking purpose. I don't know what happened.

The joy of the Lord's gone. I don't know what God wants me to do anymore. And they stopped often giving.

They stopped giving. Usually it's because of this. And I talked about this before.

I remember we were going to buy a house and the real estate agent or the banker said, you guys can qualify for a lot more. You don't need to count your offering. And we sponsor four kids overseas.

You don't count any of that. The bank doesn't care. Oh, so we can get rid of all that and get a nicer, bigger house.

Yeah. No. You see, there's adjustments that have to be made.

And when you live below your means and then that giving becomes a priority. I mean, God opens up tremendous doors. I can't even tell you.

I mean, it's just like one example. I guess I will. We went to buy our home four years ago and it was a short sale.

I mean, you know what that is, right? So I went and I had a real estate license. So I asked the bank if I could just purchase it because they came back with an offer. And they said, yeah, we can do that if you want to purchase it.

Just don't have any commissions, you know, all this. And they gave me a price and they were going off an old appraisal, eight months old. So the house already had \$40,000 in equity right when we bought it.

And they said, and we'll pay your closing costs. So I'm walking in to this already. Now that was four years ago.

And they keep going. So that's what I mean by God having us. But we said, no, we're going to make a decision based on the giving is one of the top bills.

Giving to God. We're not going to give. And I thought about giving up.

You know, we've been sponsoring those four kids for a while. So it's like maybe they're old enough now. I mean, do we have to keep paying for their education? Because you start to think like the world, right? We can upscale you to these homes.

And you go, look, right, the lusts of the eye. Oh my, a shower we can walk into. And like this big and you got spouts on both sides.

And this walk-in closet that could be a room. Let's make some, we don't need to tithe anymore. God's blessed us enough.

See how you started thinking? But then when God says, and I just, I can't, even when I bought my vehicle, the dealership that was, oh, we got this, you know, \$15,000 off and come down if you get. It's like, how does that happen? Well, where? I mean, I've got story after story after story. One is when I started real estate.

Many years ago, people said, oh, it's so hard. You know, nothing was selling. It was 2009.

The economy was down. And I'm just at the front desk. I don't know much at all.

Just standing up there and people walk in. And they said, hey, we want to talk to somebody about selling our land. Everybody, 2009.

Right? Nothing's selling. Not even, definitely not land. It's like, sure, I can help you.

Come to find out they had 25 acres right in the middle of Lancaster by a hospital. And they wanted to list it for \$6 million. So I got the listing.

People are like, that's impossible. Well, it'll never sell. Never sell.

And of course, you know, they negotiated a way down, but it did sell. And that's right when we started the church. I could see, so God was using that, so I could start this.

So you see, who knows what God's in? I mean, people say, that's impossible. How can a guy two months in the business be standing at the front desk and that happen? Then after that, everybody wanted to be at the front desk. But just wherever, and it's not just me.

Many of you can have the same testimony, don't you? Don't you? Do you have the same testimony of God blessing you in so many different areas? So see, we don't see a lot of those things. So it's not like you give and then in a month you get 10 times back. You know, we have this, not the stock market or some pyramid scheme.

It's like, Lord, I'm giving you the first. What do you want to do with it? And then he begins to bless in that area. So to bless marriage, you need to talk to each other as spouses.

And say, where are we going to give if you haven't been? Or God, where do you want us to give? And readjust because it begins to... I will also know this. Me and my wife get on the same page with how we spend. Then God becomes the priority.

Where our money goes becomes the priority together where God wants it. Because if I take the checking account and she takes it, guess what's going to happen? We're going to be deficit by the time the month is over. Because she has to do things and I have to do things.

Now, there are things. I would recommend Dave Ramsey's course or Larry Burkett. He's passed away, but they've got Crown Financial, I think it is.

There's couples. If you want to watch videos, there are so many things we've gleaned from them from this area of finances. One thing we did is we started to pay off credit cards 15 years ago.

We went after the little one. And then once we paid it off, we went after our car. And then once we paid off our car, then you can double up on the other car with that payment.

And you begin to knock down all these things. In your life. And because finances can become a huge stress.

Anyone been there? Done that? There right now? I mean, it's a huge area. So I would say take it to the Lord. And then that leads to the last point, communication.

Communication. This is one of the top areas where marriages fail. Because shutting down is shutting out.

Here's what happens in communication often. You're dating, right? Or courting. Whatever you want to call it.

And communication is wonderful. You can't stop doing what? Two hours on the phone? You're crazy. Now most people haven't talked for two hours if they add up all the time together in two months.

So communicating. You know the heart. You know what they're going through.

You know what they're feeling. That communication. You get married.

And then it begins to, you go your way, she'll go her way. And when communication is stifled, just think of this. What happens when your communication with God is stifled? Same thing happens.

You start drifting. So I hear the same story all the time. We've just drifted apart.

We just don't love each other anymore. We're just not on the same page. It's the same thing.

And never are these people communicating. The devil wants to upset communication, then he can plant divisive thoughts. It has to be fought for.

This is one reason me and my wife, we don't do it every morning, but we shoot for around 7 to 7.30. We pray together. We have a list of things we pray together. What's on your mind? What's on my heart? What are we sensing? And you communicate and then you have the day ahead of you.

Now not everybody can do that, but you can do the evening. But you have to come and communicate and pray together, get back on track. And it helps bring the heart of the family back on track.

But I do have a few suggestions before I close. Communication tips. Respect the way God designed you and them.

I don't remember what the numbers are, but women need to say like 20,000 words a day. And guys like 10. I think I'm down to 5. Right? But respect.

There's going to be the way that God designed us. And also timing is everything. Somebody wants to talk, but the other person's not in a good mood to talk.

And you'll want to keep throwing fuel on that fire. Don't flood them with too much information. Don't revisit past pain.

Don't have the wrong attitude. Seek to listen and understand. But do say, let's revisit this later if need be.

If things aren't working out, hey, let's revisit this later. Let's talk about it later. So you at least give them hope.

Because what happens, a lot of marriages, they just keep stifling it in. They never want to talk. They never want to communicate.

I'm tired of this. And you're just the silent man at home. Right? The man's silent at home.

The woman shuts off, shuts down. And then they begin to suppress this. And then what happens, like a basketball.

You ever push a basketball down in the pool? Keep pushing that basketball down in the pool. What's going to happen? Right in the face. All that pushing it down.

So let me close with what I read at the beginning. Our marriage is very sick. The cause would be neglect and inviting toxic things into the marriage, such as anger, abuse.

You know what abuse is? Abuse can be verbal as well. Beating people up verbally with your words. Saying things you shouldn't say.

Pornography, selfishness, pride, and arrogance. It's been a very slow and sad death. If we would allow God to breathe his word, his plan, and his way back into our marriage, we could avoid the tragic death of our marriage.

That's the key, folks. If I could get you back to that, that is the answer. No matter what you're going through.

I'm talking to the person whose spouse is gone. There's no hope in their mind. Go back to God.

Wilt thou not revive us again so we can rejoice in you? Go back to that relationship with God. I know I went through the hell in my life. But when I went back to God, he began to rebuild and rebuild and rebuild and rebuild.

And then you look back and you say, Thank God that he brought me through that. So look to him. Where does my help come from? Oprah? Dr. Phil? Are they still around? Where does my help come from? My help comes from the hills.

From the Lord, maker of heaven and earth. So if marriages would just get back to him, if they would repent and open their hearts and say, Lord, create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me.

God, I'm all yours. I'm going to seek you with all of my heart. He would begin to rebuild and restore.

Now that marriage might not get back together. That marriage might not get back together. But you can leave.

Or have that person leave you. And divorce you. And get on with their life.

But you can say, Lord, I did all that I could do. I can't control the choices of another. And it's as if God would hold you.

And lead you. And guide you. Too many people are responsible for the choice of the other person.

But that other person. That other person. God says, you, just come back to me.

Come back to me. Let me heal and restore you.

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