

# The One Thing Guaranteed to End All Marriages

by Shane Idleman

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*A hard heart is the one thing guaranteed to end all marriages, but a soft heart can lead to a blessed and fulfilling marriage.*

**Duration:** 49:05

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:24, Jeremiah 18:12, Matthew 13:15, Ephesians 5:25

**Topics:** "Marriage Counseling", "Christian Love"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unconditional love and respect in marriages, focusing on the need for husbands to love their wives sacrificially as Christ loved the church and for wives to respect their husbands. It addresses the destructive nature of a hard heart in relationships, the process of marriage challenges, and the significance of not letting hurt define or harden one's heart.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5.25. The title of the message is The One Thing Guaranteed to End All Marriages. The One Thing Guaranteed to End All Marriages. And if you're not familiar with what we've been doing, we've been going through the book of Acts for quite a while.

And now we're going to do a series on marriage. I don't know how long it's going to be. Maybe four weeks, maybe five or six.

But the series is called The Blessed Marriage. The Blessed Marriage. And I know what you're doing right now if you're not married.

You're tuning me out. But every principle that we're going through benefits you and your spirituality and your walk with God as well. Especially this topic.

So don't tune out, tune in. And we all know marriages that are crumbling right now, don't we? I'm pretty sure most of us do. The idea is we want to get this message out to people in our community or in different states that need to hear what God says about marriage.

So with that said, since we're talking about the blessed marriage, what does the word blessed mean? The Bible dictionary defines it as this. And what I'm trying to do is set the foundation. This morning's message

is the foundation on which everything else will be built.

So a blessing is a public declaration of a favored status with God. In all cases, the blessing served as a guide and motivation to pursue a course of life within the blessing. So blessing isn't a bad word.

We believe that God blesses his people. He blesses us with sometimes prosperity, sometimes good health, sometimes not, sometimes just knowing that God is with us and God has got our back, so to speak, is a blessing. And we believe, I teach, that there's a blessing in marriage.

A God-ordained, biblically-based marriage, God blesses it. And there's a covering, like an umbrella. And you can stay under that covering and be blessed of God.

Receive those blessings. Not that you won't receive challenges, not that life won't be difficult, but there's a blessing to be received. And one thing that's interesting is, what the enemy will try to do is get you out of the blessed place.

And there's a doctrine in the Old Testament called the Doctrine of Balaam. The theologians will call it that. And it's where King Balak hired Prophet Balaam to curse the children of Israel.

So he would go and try to curse the children of Israel, but after three attempts, he said, I can't curse them. And he would start to proclaim blessings upon the people. And the king got upset.

He said, why are you blessing them? You need to curse them. And he said something interesting. He said, you cannot curse what God has blessed.

You can't curse what God has blessed. But he said, but you know, you can have the people remove themselves from the blessed place and curse themselves. And what he did was, the king, the demonic realm of course was working in this whole time.

They got the women from the land, the other nations came and enticed the people to follow after other gods. To follow after sexual immorality and different things. And the people walked out from under God's covering of protection and blessing and cursed themselves.

So practically, there's a lot of truth in that. Because there's a covering that marriage sits under. A covering, it is an institution ordained by God.

Think about that. He has only ordained three institutions. The church is an institution ordained by God.

The marriage, the family unit is an institution ordained by God. And I hope everybody's ready for the third one. The government is an institution ordained by God.

Romans 13. I have put this institution in place to be a terror to those who do evil. So it says, be afraid if you do evil because they do not bear the sword in vain.

So we see those three institutions. And once you stay within God's standards, within His framework, there is a blessing to receive. So it's really about positioning ourselves to receive from God.

And that's what I want to do in this series, is to help marriages position themselves to receive from God. And we are declaring publicly, that's what it says here, it's a public declaration. Others see how we live, right? Do you live in a bubble like me? At all? And people see everything from what you buy at the store.

There's this public declaration that what marriage means to us and what it means to God. And a blessed marriage does not come without a fight. Oh my goodness.

A blessed marriage does not come without a fight. There is warfare in your heart because I shared with somebody recently that I didn't realize how selfish I was until I got married. I was like, wow, I was great as a single.

I mean, I just go to bed when I want. I eat when I want. I do what I want.

I can leave my clothes on the floor if I want for as long as I want. And I can leave them in the dryer for as long as I want until I'm ready to use them. It doesn't matter.

And then you get married. Oh, I'm selfish. Self-focused.

So God will also use the marriage as a wonderful sanctification tool because it will sanctify you in areas you never even thought you needed help in. Sanctification just means becoming more like Christ. Changing and shaping your character to the character of Christ.

So marriage is a wonderful hammer and chisel. Chiseling away those areas in our lives that we need help on. And the next point before I get to the message is this.

We have to say it in this day and age, but what is marriage? What is marriage? I can read to you the biblical definition, but marriage, biblically, is the union of a man and a woman. End of story. It's not hate.

It's not hate. It's love. Now let me read why though.

It's an intimate, complementing union between a man and a woman in which the two become one physically in the whole of life. The purpose of marriage is to reflect the relationship of the Godhead. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It's a mystery. If I try to take you through Scriptures on this, Paul says it's a mystery how it works, but somehow it's a reflection of Christ's love for the church. The church is the bride of Christ.

So you wonder why marriage is being attacked. That's why. God says, let us create man in our image in Genesis.

He created man. Let us create man in our image. And then one of the main purposes of marriage is what? Create life.

To create life. That's why the enemy is going after it so hard. That's why it's under attack.

It creates life in the image of God. See, that's what people don't realize. You know, sometimes we get on this, oh God, you know, is this mean cosmic killjoy, and he's just gonna rain down terror and hell.

But he actually says, you're created in the image of God. Now God's not a person like the Mormons teach. We believe that God is spirit.

Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. But we see the embodiment of God in Christ. The character of God in Christ.

So it's a wonderful reflection. We are made in the image of God. And sometimes you need to be reminded and encouraged.

In the fall of Adam, the image of God is marred. It's damaged. It's been fractured, but it's not erased.

See, that's why there's enormous value in life when we talk about abortion or the marriage issue. So what is the one thing guaranteed to end all marriages? If you have the handout, I found actually an article on Focus on the Family I wanted to share with you by a person by the name of Meg Wallace. And I'm borrowing the title from the article.

It stood out so much. The one thing guaranteed to end all marriages is a hard heart. Ooh, 9am was much more receptive to that.

A hard heart, right? Because it hurts a little bit. The number one thing guaranteed to end all marriage, this is where it will take you down. Single, you better know this now.

Dating, in the process of getting married, this is the one thing that's guaranteed to end all marriages. But instead of talking about a hard heart for a minute, let me talk about a soft heart. Because it's easier sometimes to see, okay, what a hard heart isn't.

And do I reflect these traits in my own life? And I'll just throw it out there for you in case you're thinking we have a perfect marriage. We don't. We have the challenges that many people do.

The same exact challenges face us. And I'm preaching to myself through this. I'm a work in progress.

My wife is a work in progress. We fight arrogance. We fight hard heartedness.

And we work on it on a daily basis, preaching the Gospel to ourselves. It's very important to keep, because that hard heart just loves to... I had a picture this morning of concrete. You know when you lay concrete, and kids like to make little designs in it.

And they actually, in the city and county, they'll put people to guard the concrete when they first pour it on the sidewalk. No kids coming on this and putting their initials. But give it a night, it's as hard as a rock.

Same thing with our hearts. When you see that starting to happen, you better get a bucket full of water and pour it on that, and just allow that concrete to not get hardened. Same thing with your heart.

It'll get harder and harder and harder. So a soft heart produces fruit in keeping with repentance. In other words, if I have a soft heart, when the hardness rises up in me, I repent of it.

I bring it to the light. I say things like, that's not right. I shouldn't have said that.

I shouldn't have done that. And you bring it to the light. So a soft heart is not a perfect heart.

See, that's where we think, oh, I could never do that, Shane. Me neither. But a soft heart is one that is, it doesn't go back to the old self.

A soft heart is teachable and not defensive. How you doing so far? Because we're not teachable by nature, are we? Just criticize me. I'd love to hear it.

Oh, that makes sense. Bring it on. What do I need to work on? I love this.

It's the opposite, right? We're not teachable. We're defensive. And that's why, quite frankly, a lot of people don't change.

Because they're unteachable and they're proud. A soft heart is forgiving and gracious, just like the heart of Christ. But we like to keep track of things, right? And here's why a hard heart is so challenging, is because it will lead to unforgiveness.

It will lead to bitterness. It will lead to anger. The harder the heart becomes, the more the characteristics of the world and the flesh come out of us.

That's why God said, I'm gonna rip out this heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. A heart that's teachable and open and gracious and forgiving. I mean, if you just had those two issues in marriage, forgiving and gracious, you could end half the quarrels.

Because that means you don't get the last word in. Gracious, graceful, showing grace. Letting a person err on the side of making a mistake instead of quick to pointing out the faults and the flaws in our spouse.

I know you don't do it. I'm just talking about what I struggle with, right? A soft heart puts others first. This is where our hardest year was the first year of our marriage.

And finding out how selfish we both were. Things I wrote down like, you take out the trash, you do the laundry, you get a job, you do this, you go to the store, you, you, you, you, you, you, you, right? It's not me. It's self-focus.

So you serve me. See, that's a mistake we go into marriage. They'll serve me.

Warm dinners, right? Every night at a certain time. Back rubs. They'll do all the chores and I'll just sit and relax and work.

And we go into this with the false perception of what marriage is because we also look at the definition from the world. A soft heart doesn't compare. Or excuse things.

It takes responsibility. A soft heart doesn't demand that others change first. This is one of the most difficult challenges in counseling, in marriage counseling, is you're on something, right? Okay, area you need to work on.

Okay, we got, but they do this. Okay, well, hold on, back to you. But it's deflecting, right? I get hit, I'm throwing it.

Throw me the stuff, I'm throwing it. Throw me the stuff, blame deflecting. It sounds like this, yeah, but.

Or yeah, make excuses. So a soft heart, though, doesn't demand that others change first. Actually, if we want to get really technical here, the Bible could care less if the other person changes.

It's always put back on us. Paul doesn't say, well, just hold tight until they change. It's always me.

It's always I'm changing. And then a wonderful principle comes into play called reaping and sowing. You start to treat the other person right.

You start to do things. You start to put them first. Guess what comes back around? The other person's helping you.

And now there's unity in the home instead of division. Now there's praising and complimenting instead of complaining and getting angry. You see how that works? The hard heart.

Now the reason I'm talking about it is because I want to expose this thing. This morning. The hard heart is very destructive.

But here's how it works. Nobody in this room is free of this. It will come in.

Even in my own life, it'll happen frequently. It's starting to get... You start to get rigid and lack of joy. You forget why some of us in ministry, and it becomes a job and a burden.

We start to complain. We start to look at where it's going on with the nation, things in our family, financially, and we begin to turn, we begin to develop a hard heart about things. A hard, cold, calloused approach.

The key is to notice, to realize it, to repent of it. It's a word we don't want to hear sometimes, but it's a very good word. To repent of it, to say this is wrong.

How my heart's feeling is wrong, and I need to repent, and God, you need to change me in this area. Here's what the hard heart does. People ask sometimes about demons.

Right, the demonic realm, and how much will the demons influence us, and can the devil make me do something, and the devil can't make you do anything. Anytime we sin, the Bible always puts the blame back on us. You know, we did it.

Not the devil made me do it. Devil, that little guy got me again. You know, it's like, not my fault.

Devil made me do it. But what he does, is he looks for opportune times. He knows your life, he knows my life, and he looks for opportune times.

So when the heart begins to get cold, and callous, and hard, that's an opportune time. Now he can plant certain things in your thoughts, in your mind. He can bring a person of the opposite sex into now the equation at work, or at different places, and he can begin to work with that hard heart.

He basically says to the hard heart that's developing, let's work together to bring this person down. So you have the demonic realm working against you, the hard heart working against you, and then the world just says, go for it. If it feels good, do it.

We don't need to obey God's Word anymore. Did God really say? That was written 2,000 years ago. That doesn't apply to you guys today.

And he'll begin to taunt in that area. So when the Bible says give no place to the devil, don't give him a foothold. Don't give him a place to begin to set up camp.

And giving him a place is like a place in your house, right? You have open rooms. Hey, let's give him the dining room. Let's give him the, so a hard heart gives place to the devil.

And that scripture I think in context is do not let the sun go down upon your wrath, your anger, you're giving place to the devil. Here's anger in this area is hard too because we use it as an excuse. Many people, they get angry.

Well, I'm just going back down to the liquor store then. Or I'm going back to that person then, or that relationship, or I'm going to, or with pornography, or I'm going, and we use these things as excuses to go back into sin. So the hard heart is a very destructive area.

If you don't humble yourself today and ask God to soften your heart, there's not much hope for your marriage. And I'm not being negative, I'm being real. And see, that was my biggest challenge this week preparing is I want to shoot you straight, straight as a gun barrel.

I want to show you the destructive nature of the hard heart. I want to challenge that area, but I also want to be very encouraging. Because I know if a person's in a difficult marriage, hell on earth, you can't just say get over it.

Read the Bible, get over it, you're fine. It's like telling somebody who deals with clinical depression, just get over it. The joy is in the Lord.

Psalm, just read Psalm, get over it, get over it, come on. It's like you can just change your mind. Same thing with a difficult marriage.

I don't want to minimize that at all. There are people, many of us aren't realizing, but they live in a living hell if a person's so controlling, and manipulating, and dishonest, and they live in this very difficult environment. So I'm not discounting that, but I'm also not going to sit here and placate a hard heart.

I want to show you the destructive area that is destroying marriages. And ironically, it's the people who say, I'm not going to come there and listen to what he has to say about marriage. I don't want to hear him tell me what the Bible says.

The heart's hard. I've had people tell me that. Oh, I know what the Bible says.

I don't need to go there. And we know, we have friends now, or not necessarily friends, all of them, but we know people that they're just leaving their spouse. They're leaving their children.

With no good reason. Why? Because of a hard heart. It's grown and it has developed.

2 Timothy reminds us that in the last days, perilous times will come. Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, and boastful, and proud, and disobedient, and unloving. Do we see that today? That's everywhere.

So the first Scripture I want to put on the screen, Jeremiah 18.12, before I get to Ephesians. Here's the context though. God is saying, return everyone from your evil ways and stop doing evil and start doing good.

If we even go back further, the nation of Israel is being judged. Their blessing has become a curse. Back to what I said earlier.

So God's saying, here's the answer. Return to me. Come back to me.

Stop what you're doing. And here's their answer. But they will say it's hopeless.

For we are going to follow our own plans. Sound familiar? And each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart. That's what the people told God.

So a couple things. Hopelessness often leads to a hard heart. Have you ever been hopeless? Many times, when we're hopeless, we don't say, oh joy, I'm gonna take it to God.

Instead, hopeless often leads to bitterness. And many affairs start because the person is hopeless. I'll never get out of this difficult marriage.

And they meet someone else. And it begins to draw them away from God and their spouse. Hopelessness often leads to a hard heart.

But God says, return and be healed. That's the secret this morning. Return and be healed.

Following our own plans. It's funny, God says, here's the thing. Probably the most frustrating thing about preaching, and you probably are frustrated too in this area, if you share things about the Bible.

You can share it, and you can, all the marriages I just mentioned, I know of a half dozen, well probably a dozen in trouble going to divorce court. And you say, here's the solution. Here's what God's Word says.

Here it is. Nope, we're going in our own direction. We're going to do what we want to do.

And on this issue, don't follow your heart. Don't follow your feelings, because your heart, Jeremiah said, the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? And he's not talking about the new heart and being a born again.

He's talking about the old heart, the old man, the sinful nature that's still inside of us. See, even as a believer in Jesus Christ, you've got the battle within going on. You've got the old nature that is warring against your new nature in Christ.

And we say things like, I just want to be happy. God wants me to be happy. I'm moving on.

I shouldn't have married you. And you leave the spouse with a couple kids. It just makes no sense, because they're getting direction from the world.

So let's ask that question. Why is divorce an epidemic in the church? Why? Well, a couple different reasons, but what I mean by an epidemic is most estimate at 50%. And call me naive, but that's pretty sad.

If you can look at, people say they're Christians, 10 marriages, five wounded in divorce. That's not too encouraging. What do you tell a young couple? Well, whew, that's, oh, darn it.

It's not going to make it, let's try again. You know, but why? Okay, here, I've got the answer. We are embracing the world's mindset, not God's.

The divorce rate among Christians who are spirit-filled believers, what I mean by that is they are filled with the Spirit of God, they pray, they read their Bible, the divorce rate is one in 1,500. So you go from one in 1,500 to one in two. Why is that? Because a spirit-filled believer, they've got the heart of Christ in them.

They're in the Word of God. What does it say? I want to apply it. God, I'm praying, I'm in a difficult marriage, I'm still sticking with it, I want to apply it.

And you're filled with the Spirit of God. The opposite, though, is you're filled with the mindset of the world. If it doesn't work, go get a new one, right? In California, I don't know, older folks will remember this, but you couldn't just go get divorced 60 years ago.

Now you can say, no fault, divorce, I just want out. You know, we've created this culture of, well, try it, number one, number two, number three, and it's the world's mindset. Now, let me bring the heart of compassion in.

I know there are people trapped in difficult marriages. I have nothing but compassion on that. I know you can't just get over it.

And I know you're struggling. I know you sometimes don't want to get out of bed. But I also want to remind you that God makes provision for all of our needs if we look to Him and look to His Word.

Look to Him for the hope. Look for Him for the direction. Because see, you can be broken in your marriage, but filled with the Spirit of God.

You can be broken and I have no hope, but God, I have hope in you. Joy cometh in the morning, even though I weep today. And you can be built up and strengthened again if you look to Him.

But most people aren't. They're getting bitter and they're getting depressed and they get medicated. Self-medication.

That's why all that's on the rise. I mean, just look at the culture around us. It is rapidly falling apart.

The world's view. I came across this from Jennifer Weiner. The world's view.

She said this, Divorce isn't such a tragedy. A tragedy is staying in an unhappy marriage. Teaching your children the wrong things about love.

Nobody ever died of divorce. Well, there you go. Now, again, compassion side.

I don't know what she means by an unhappy marriage, but the secular view of an unhappy marriage is, this isn't fun anymore. I don't love you anymore. We used to do things.

There's irreconcilable differences. And we move on. And here's the kicker.

Most people, I really want to say every marriage, but I don't want to get a lecture. So I'll say 99.9% of marriages, at some point you are unhappy. At some point you are unhappy.

You are miserable. You want out. Ask us the first year.

What happened? I thought this was God's will. This can't be God's will. What happened? So, there's another report I was looking at.

They interviewed couples who were unhappy, unhappily married. They interviewed them five years later, and like 85% were happier, and happy they stayed together, and happier now. The perseverance.

So that's what you need to also understand. It's not this bliss, this knight in a white horse grabbing you off the ground, and riding and doing everything you want to do, and everything he wants to do, and you just get along like Cinderella. Like, look at these stories the kids are watching.

You know, it's difficult. It's challenging. Kids come in the picture selfish.

Okay, it's not about me anymore. I guess I can't, and your whole world collapses when it's selfishness. So, all of us go through stages of being unhappy in our marriage.

But what do you do with that? Do you develop a hard heart, and get bitter, and cold, or callous? You say, Lord, this isn't right. I know you brought me this person. I know this is of you.

God, please help us in this area. And you start to pray, and you start to contend for your family. You start to come to church more.

You worship more. You fight for those things worth having. See, we've lost that.

Remember how, you know why they called the World War II generation the greatest generation that ever lived? Because they worked their butts off, and they were men of courage, and men of honor. It's okay to say that word. It was in the context, right? My, I just get, because they weren't lazy.

They were hard working. They stood by, and now we've generation that just bells out, entitlement mentality. Oh goodness, I'm gonna get started here.

I'm gonna need to stop. Entitlement, right? I deserve, I deserve, I deserve. President Trump says something I don't like, I'm gonna go cry in a room.

I need things to play with. I'm hurt. My feelings are, this is like, what is this? And with the greatest nations to become the wimpiest nation, Iran, North Korea, they're taunting.

They would have never tried this 30 years ago. They would have never tried this 30 years ago, because they'd have about four destroyer ships, and aircrafts, and everything, right on the verge. Now we're just passive, and we're complacent, and we've become, we've just become just a lazy entitlement society and generation.

And I'm not afraid to say that, because you guys have to speak the truth sometimes in love, correct? Now, you be different, right? My dad taught me hard work from the farms of Oklahoma. And it's okay to pick up a shovel, and do things, and be busy, and get working. It's biblical to work.

Actually, it says if you don't work, you don't eat. Well, that's a whole nother, that will not go well if I go down that trail. God's view of marriage.

Michael Reagan, well, God's view is perseverance. And not giving up. There are, I believe, biblical grounds for divorce.

And anytime I talk about this, I get lectured on email by people, and hopefully I can talk about that in the future. But there is a biblical ground, a couple things on that area. I'm not gonna get to that just yet, but Michael Reagan, Ronald Reagan's son, said divorce is where two adults take everything that matters to a child, the child's home, family, security, and sense of being loved and protected, and they smash it to pieces, leave it in ruins on the floor, then walk out and leave the child to clean up the mess.

See, I think that's the thing that's most frustrating, is the damage it's causing. See, what we're seeing in our nation is just what's been happening in the family. The nation is only as strong as the family unit.

You get godly families raising godly children, and putting those children in positions of leadership, and education, and you'll see a different dynamic. So that's why the enemy goes after the family unit. But

people often say, but Shane, I'm trying, I'm trying, I don't know what to do, I'm dead inside.

I'm dead inside. Have you said that? Have you been there? I'm trying, I don't know what else to do. Here's what I'll tell you what to do.

Turn to Him. Turn to Him, not Oprah. Not your hairdresser that says, woman, just go take Him for everything He's worth.

You get out of that relationship, and you head to Vegas tomorrow morning. That's what we're listening to, the world's mindset. When God says, no, come to me in the prayer closet, come and I will show you what a deliverer is.

I will show you what a comforter is. I will be your father. I will be your healer.

I will be your redeemer. You don't have anybody cry to me at night, I'll hear you at two in the morning. I'll hold you and I'll heal you, and I'll bring you back to restoration.

You'll know the scripture that says that peace will come in. Peace that is beyond our human understanding will flood in. How in the midst of tremendous pain do I have tremendous peace? How in the midst of confusion do I have stability? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not struck down.

And we are, I forgot the last verse. Oh, God humbles me sometimes, you know. Hard-pressed on every side.

Persecuted, but not crushed. Not forsaken. Oh, my goodness.

I just feel this topic is so important. I see on Facebook, I see in the face of children, of parents that are separating, divorcing, that the children are damaged. You don't just bounce back like a plastic ball.

They get hurt. And it's the selfishness, and it's the pride, and it's the arrogance, the hard heart that needs to be crushed. I'll put one more up on the screen before Ephesians.

Oh, gosh. I'm not even done with the introduction. I don't know how that happens.

The Lord does, though. He's not concerned with notes and sermon, homiletics and hermeneutics and three points and make sure your application, and you know, sometimes you just gotta preach what's on your heart. And that's where the majority of change comes from in people.

So if I don't finish in the second service, I'll try to do this next week. Matthew 13, 15. For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

And it's interesting. The reason I like to read Scripture, too, and quote it is many times we're hearing from people now all over the world and even different states and people being changed. And they say, I've heard that verse 100 times, but when you read that verse or when you preached on that verse, God just hit me like a sledgehammer.

I had to pull over and I repented. And it's these kind of verses. If a person's open and they hear, for the heart of this people have grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes are closed, lest they

should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and they should understand with their hearts and turn so that I should heal them.

Remember, something I wanted to bring up in a minute. So look, number one, hearts have grown dull. You see, it's a process.

Folks, it's a process. That's why I'm trying to wake you up. It's a process.

See, I'm lacking joy. I'm lacking peace. My heart's growing dull, Shane.

It's growing dull. It's a process. Wake up.

You can return to that. He says here, they don't hear, they don't see. They don't hear, they don't see.

Isn't this true? Do you ever tell somebody, don't you see? Don't you see what you're doing? Don't you see the damage it is causing? Don't you see? No, I don't. Because my eyes are being blinded by sin. My eyes are being blinded by a hard, callous heart.

An arrogant heart. See, the hard heart wants to get the last word in. It wants to fight.

It wants to make excuses. And if you're making excuses in your mind right now, yeah, but he doesn't know my situation. Be careful.

Be careful. Because you don't see, maybe. And then it says, turn and be healed.

Humble yourself today. Humble yourself today. Don't wait until rock bottom.

Don't wait until it's too late. Humble yourself today. We say we are Christians, but where is the fruit? Here's what it looks like, Ephesians 5.25. Husbands.

Okay, what I'm about to read, we've all read, so just don't do the in one, you're out the next, what's for dinner stuff, right? Or what kind of chili am I thinking about right now? Think about this. This would end half of your marriage problems. I'm gonna offer some counseling right now.

People say, when does Pastor Shane counsel? In my sermons. That's all it is. All practical applications.

I'm counseling every Sunday, nine to 11. Here, husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church. Love as Christ loved the church.

And he gave himself for her. That he might be sanctifying, cleanse her with the washing of the water by the word. That he might present her to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Here's the problem with that. Every man in this room is thinking it, and I have too.

That's impossible. Love her like Christ loved the church. And do you know what, it is impossible without the work of God, without the Holy Spirit, with, see, it's a, the Bible never, never lowers the standard.

It always raises the standard and says, I'd rather you try to hit it and miss it than lower it and hit it. So love her as Christ loved the church. That's the example.

But that's my goal. That's the example I'm to follow. But we do this, that's impossible, forget it.

Nobody can do that. If you, see, here's the problem in marriages right now. The man loving the woman what? Say it loud.

There we go. The man loving, the woman respecting. And if you loved, she would respect.

I didn't say it's a first service. I'm gonna say it here. I know people don't like to hear it.

But here we go. I've been known to say things that people don't like to hear. My personal conviction, looking at the Bible, talking, seeing, the man is the primary reason why a marriage will succeed or fail.

They are the leader. They are to guide. They are to go in front.

They are to love. They are to shepherd. They are to pray for.

They are to fast. They are to lead the family spiritually, financially, relationally. They are to be the head of the household.

And the majority of the responsibility will fall upon that person if the marriage is crumbling. Now, the disclaimer. There are men doing a wonderful job and leading their family, but the wife still chooses to lose or leave.

That's the exception, not the rule. See, we like to look at the exception and forget about the rule. The exception just means there's a rule to follow.

So the man, from what I know, I mean, I've only been in this 20 years, right? On all the ones I can list, if he could change the environment of his home, I can list a dozen names right now, a dozen names right now, that he could change the environment of that home. Always the case? No, it's not always the case. But the vast majority.

Who is going to leave a person that loves them unconditionally, puts them first? They're the apple of their eye. Their priorities are. Who's going to leave that? Well, I haven't got to the respect part yet, so I won't say amen just yet.

Well, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. But we have to remember, because that love, that term is used loosely, isn't it? What does love mean? I mean, what's a world say love means? Love means leave me alone, let me continue my sin. See, so whose definition are you? Because I'm known as a hate preacher.

You know that, right? Because I preach what the Bible says. So a message of love has now become a message of hate for those who oppose it. Real love, here's the definition.

Love is patient, love is kind, doesn't envy, doesn't boast, it's not proud, it's not rude, it's not self-seeking, it doesn't keep a record of wrong done against it. It always hopes, it always perseveres, it always believes in the best in others. You can look at 1 Corinthians 13 when you get home.

1 Corinthians 13. How'd you do? Love is patient, love is kind, it doesn't envy, it doesn't boast, it's not proud, I'm like, oh my Lord. You got me at the first two.

Love is patient, right? Patient, kind, gracious. And that's genuine love. So when you start to, see here, you won't do it perfectly, but you aim for it.

Lord, I need your help in this area. So husbands, well, here's the kicker. Most don't truly love their spouse like this.

They love convenience, they love being served. Here's what happens. This is the Be Honest Sermon.

They go into it, they don't love, they lust. And when the lust is no longer fulfilling, and the selfishness is coming out, marriage gets difficult. But if you went in loving unconditionally, I mean, I actually had somebody tell me that they're not fulfilled sexually, so they're leaving their husband.

Well, biblically, that's not gonna fly, sister. Yes, it's challenging. Yes, I got it, I understand.

That would not be good, right? But what do you, I can list Johnny Erickson Tada and all these wonderful, their husbands push them around in wheelchairs, and they can't even move. Unconditional love. See, so we go into it, what can I get? Not what can I give? What can I get from this? And if you go in, what can I get? You will be a miserable wreck.

Angry all the time, bitter, upset. Why did I get stuck into this? Because you're a getter. You have to go into it.

When I say I do, I do die. I'm gonna remember that next wedding I do. I do die.

Yeah. Isn't that true? I do die. Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife? I do die, I will.

Life is, but that's really what it is, because that'll make you rethink marriage. Oh, yeah, you're dating Brad Pitt. You might as well check his character.

I'd rather, well, I won't get in that. But I'd rather take somebody that maybe you're not as attracted to, but they're going to be there for the long haul. They're going, not this eye candy.

That's what young adults, I'm so in love. No, you're in lust. And then you go in, the marriage is the wrong foundation.

It's the wrong foundation. And I said that the first service, I think it's important here, people don't agree with this statement either, but I've counseled people from time to time, if you're in a very difficult situation, it's okay to separate. I didn't say divorce.

You remove yourself from a very toxic, hostile environment, you separate it, and you get help. Sometimes that aloneness, I've seen people, that aloneness about what they're about ready to lose brings them to the cross, brings them back to Calvary. And people say, Shane, nope, they should just stay in the same house all the time.

That's not good advice. Well, I beg to differ with you, because if somebody's getting the snot beat out of them, and the husband's drinking, being belligerent, and puts the kids in danger, yeah, you need to get out. You need to get some help.

You need to not divorce, not go hit the nightclub, not go find plan B, which is eventually gonna lead to plan C and plan D and plan misery, but you can separate for a season of what? Separate to seek God. And I

know it's contrary, I know people, I don't know about that, but from my perspective, what I've seen, again, clarifying, not separate to go other directions, but you can separate to seek God in this manner, to come back, you reduce something down to its lowest common denominator. You separate that in order for healing and restoration to take place.

If you can stay in the home, if you can work it out, that is by far the best course. But sometimes, have you ever been in a hostile environment at home? And it's better to just get out and breathe for a season, and then you actually get along, and you can talk, and you communicate, you can get counseling, you can get help. So that is an issue for many people.

Verse 29, I will conclude soon. So husbands, or actually verse 28, as a result of what Christ did for us, ought to love their wives as their own bodies. Here's an example, I want to sleep, so let her sleep.

I want to take a break from these kids, so instead you watch the kids. See, everything you want to do, you have them do. You'd like an extra \$100, give them an extra \$100.

You'd like to get away from the kids for a while, give them a break for a while. You'd like to go and do something, then let them do something. See, you love them as you would love yourself.

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. Then skipping to verse 33, nevertheless, let each one of you, particular, so love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. What does that mean, Shane? Well, I'm glad you asked.

Here's what it means. I will not diminish or put him down. I will allow him to lead our home.

I will appreciate his strong points and stop criticizing his weak points. I will respect him even if he doesn't respect me. And I don't know why these are challenging issues, but you look at Genesis and we can see that God said, Eve, your desire is to be over your man, but it's not going to happen.

You have to compliment how I've designed you and let him lead. And she's been fighting that for 6,000 years. And we've been fighting the love aspect because we love ourselves.

Men love themselves more than women love themselves, I think, right? The arrogance, we have a hard time loving people because number one, we didn't have a good example. Number two, we listen to the influence and direction of the world, and we're not filled with God's spirit. We're filled with the things of the world.

So I'll close with this. It's a quote from the book Sacred Thirst. The bride and the groom are standing in front of everyone looking better than they are ever going to look again.

I didn't catch that at the first service. Come on, this is a serious quote. Getting so much attention and affirmation.

Oh, look at them. Everybody even stands when they walk in. So it's easy to think this marriage is about them.

It's not. Look at the worn out parents sitting in the first pew. This is not a funny one.

At least I didn't read it funny. They understand this. The only reason these parents are still married is because long ago they learned how to handle the hurt they caused each other.

They know that the last thing you ever want to do with hurt is to let it define you. See, that's the closing point. If you're divorced, don't let that hurt define you.

If you're divorced, do not let that hurt define you. That's not who you are. That has nothing to do with where God's going to take you.

Don't live in those walls. Those walls we built to protect us eventually imprison us. If you're in a difficult situation, maybe separated, don't let that hurt define who you are, how you act, where you live, don't let it be the definition that God has put on you.

Because God calls us back to relationship with Him. They know the last thing they ever want to do is to let hurt define you, and don't let it harden your heart.

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