

Rekindle

Ecclesiastes 9:9; Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:12-13; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Delivered by Dr. Daniel Kitinoja at Calvary Baptist Church, Tilton, IL

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So as I was sitting in the front thinking about my sermon, I realized I didn't have an opening illustration like I like to do. And the Lord reminded me of something, and now I'm afraid to say it, because I don't know if I'll make it through without blubbing like a baby.

This morning, we'll be talking about rekindling our relationship with our spouse. As I was sitting there, I thought about one of my favorite things at weddings, particularly my nieces' and nephews' weddings. Since I've got a little more time under my belt, I have a better understanding of what marriage is like. It's not so much the wedding itself that stands out to me—it's actually seeing my mom and dad dance together.

I thought about that. Fifty-four years of marriage. They never shared their struggles, but if there were problems, I certainly didn't know about them. Yet I've been around long enough to know that after 54 years of marriage, they probably had to rekindle that romance from time to time.

As I reflected on this, I didn't ask their permission, and I know they'll watch this later, so I have to be careful. But when I thought about how their marriage started, I realized I didn't really know much. So I finally asked my mom and dad, "What was your wedding like?" They told me, "Well, we actually went to a justice of the peace."

Afterward, my Aunt Gail was one of the witnesses, along with, I think, her boyfriend at the time. Then, instead of a honeymoon, they went straight to the hospital to visit my grandpa, who had just had a heart attack. They told him, "Dad, we got married." My grandpa was okay with it because he liked my dad.

That's not exactly a fairy tale beginning to their life together. And yet, here they are, 54 years later, still dancing, still obviously in love. That kind of wisdom—our world could use more of that. And I asked myself, "Where did Mom and Dad get that wisdom?"

I would tell you that, whether they put it together in their heads this way or not, they have spent a lot of time reading this book—the Bible. The scriptures contain so much that we need: wisdom for salvation, for godliness, for keeping things together, and so much more.

This morning, we are beginning in Ecclesiastes. So go ahead and turn there. Ecclesiastes contains a great deal of wisdom. It is characterized as a type of book called wisdom literature, filled with insights from King Solomon—a man who had sort of been there and done that. He was rich, wise, and famous.

One of our students once described Ecclesiastes this way: "It's kind of like a wise grandpa telling us the things we need to know to make life work." And that's exactly what Ecclesiastes is. Solomon was well known for his unmatched wisdom, which was given to him as a grace from God. His wisdom was so well known that a queen traveled a great distance just to hear him speak

and learn from him. After hearing him, she said, “I haven’t heard the half of how smart you are.” Even Jesus himself spoke of Solomon’s wisdom.

However, as you go through Ecclesiastes in our Sunday school hour with the students, you might notice that at times, it can feel like a bit of a downer. It’s filled with disappointments and some discouraging statements. But woven throughout this book is a great deal of wisdom from a man who learned from God. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write down what he had observed—lessons learned from the successes and failures of others, as well as lessons learned the hard way.

Even though Solomon was wise, he often made foolish choices, and he had to live with the scars from them. That’s why, when we reach Ecclesiastes 9:1-18, we find an unbelievable gift—Solomon gives us a perspective on life. And basically, what he says is this: None of us has an unlimited supply of time. We all have an expiration date. Since that’s true, we should live each day to the best of our ability, making the most of the time we have.

And then, sandwiched right there in the middle, in verse 9, we are given God’s will for our marriages. He wants us to enjoy our life with our spouse. Let’s read Ecclesiastes 9. I’m reading it first here from the King James Version, just because I thought it sounded poetic:

"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy life, of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity, for that is thy portion in this life and in thy labor, which thou takest under the sun."

Let’s pray.

Father in heaven, I thank You for the reminder You gave me this morning of how You have blessed my family, my parents, and how faithful You have been to the Kittanoia clan. I praise You for that. I thank You for reminding me yesterday what the Scripture teaches, that those who love Your Word are blessed by You. I pray that today, as we look at what the Scripture says, we’d be blessed. I pray that You’d help me to teach the Word in a way that helps us to, as the psalmist says, delight in it. Stir our hearts to receive what Your Word has to say. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

If you’ve been around Baptists any length of time, you might be aware that we are strongly in favor of enduring marriages. We don’t think they should end, and that’s true. However, I want you to know that while this belief is built on biblical teaching, there’s another aspect that maybe we don’t give enough attention to. That’s the kind of thing Ecclesiastes 9:9 highlights.

God doesn’t just want our marriages to last long—He wants them to be joyful. The problem, however, is that as we settle into married life, sometimes the thrill fades. Sometimes it gets harder. So this morning, we’re going to look at some principles from various passages of Scripture that are not only helpful for marriage but also beneficial for all relationships.

Since Valentine’s Day is coming up—and I want you to have a wonderful Valentine’s Day—that’s Friday, guys, in case you haven’t gotten a gift. You know what to say: *Chris, can you remind me about Valentine’s Day?*

We're focusing on married life. We're going to begin with Ecclesiastes 9:9. This morning, I'm doing something simple that can ensure your time studying the Word of God is fruitful. It's very simple, but very powerful. In fact, I've been using it with the students. When I preached at chapel last Monday at First Baptist, I did exactly this.

When you read a passage of Scripture, make observations about what the text is actually saying. So I put some simple notes up from Ecclesiastes 9:9:

1. God wants us to live joyfully with our wife and to love her.
2. Flip side, ladies: God wants you to enjoy life with your husband whom you love.
3. God gave us a spouse as a portion—a gift.

When we think about that, it means marriage is a gift from God's grace. It's not something we earn. We don't work enough and then God says, *Okay, you've earned it. Here's your bride. Here's your husband.* It's a gift from God's grace.

And what does the word *grace* mean? It means you got something you didn't deserve. Ladies, that means the *Baptist stud* sitting next to you—you don't deserve him. But men, you don't deserve that wife you've got either.

Now, how would that affect—now we're getting into application—how would that affect the way we assess our spouse? And how we think about ourselves?

There's great wisdom in this. That lady that you've got, that man that you've got—what a gift from God! But sometimes we forget that. We start thinking, *Is there a receipt so I can exchange this? Or return it? Or just leave it somewhere?*

If you've ever read the Bible, I'm pretty sure you know the answer is no. But God does not want your marriage to feel like a death sentence. He wants it to be joyful.

So as we continue, we're going to look at biblical principles that can help us rekindle that relationship—to see that flame come back to life. Another thing we need to consider is that as we experience both the trials and triumphs of life, as we labor together under the sun, we should live joyfully with our spouse.

Furthermore, life is brief. Life is brief. That is what it means when it says, *all the days of thy vanity or thy vain life or your vain life*, depending on the translation. The idea is that life is short. It means that, in the scheme of things, your life is really short.

We are, as Kansas said, *dust in the wind*. So make the most of every day, especially in the time you have with your spouse. Ecclesiastes 9:9 shows us that God wants us to enjoy life with our spouse. But sometimes, couples lose that loving feeling and need to rekindle their relationship—but they don't know how.

My mental jukebox is going off because it seems like 90% of all the songs in America are about love, good or bad. It's *good love gone bad*, or it's *thank God for Mom and Dad for sticking two*

together, 'cause we don't know how. Well, God's Word gives us wisdom for how to do that, and so we're going to look at it.

The same God who graciously gave us our spouse also gave us instructions for how to rekindle our relationship. We're going to start in Philippians 4:8. We see our first rekindle step: **Rekindle your relationship with your mate by focusing on the good things about them instead of the bad things.**

As you're turning there, we're going to be bouncing around. The Scriptures will be up on the screen, but as some of you are turning there, I want to mention one of the few things about the counseling world that I've really come to appreciate: a thing called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The principle is this—if we can change the way we think, we can change the way we act.

So if you think that your spouse is a gift that you don't deserve, how might that change the way you act? Or if you choose to focus on what's good about them instead of what you don't like, how might that change the way you act?

Philippians 4 says:

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable..."

If that man will get up and go to work every day, that's honorable. If you're pretty sure that if an intruder broke into your house, he would get up and fight to protect you and the kids, that's honorable.

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Think about these things.

When we focus on the things about our mate that annoy, irritate, and infuriate us, we can forget why we fell in love in the first place. So there's a choice—a crossroads moment.

Am I going to continue to focus on his tendency to not be home exactly when he said he would be? Am I going to focus on his tendency to leave the toilet seat up? I mean, I was shocked when somebody told me they knew a couple who literally got divorced because the husband kept forgetting to put the toilet seat down.

Lady, you're not that special, OK? Endure.

Is that *literally* the reason?

When we focus on what's not good about our mate, two things happen:

1. They're going to start seeming like garbage to us.
2. There's a good chance we'll start treating them like garbage.

I know that's right.

When we focus on the good and lovely things about our mate, we will be able to speak and act more lovingly. This will make your relationship healthier.

Now, I'm just talking here about the interaction between husbands and wives, but thinking about romantic relationships in general, someone once said—and I didn't get to chase down the quote, but this sounds like an Adrian Rogers-ism—*The devil will do everything he can to get two people together before they get married... and everything he can to keep them apart once they are married.*

One of the things he does is get you to focus on the thing about your wife that you don't like—the thing about your husband that doesn't seem to add up for you. And that starts to hinder romance.

See, one of the things I've come to know is that before people get married, romance seems to happen very easily. But romance in marriage is the **byproduct of a healthy relationship.**

And so, listen—this rekindling of the relationship affects *every* area of the relationship.

And I want you to know that **you can fall in love again** if you choose to focus on the good things about your mate. In America, we talk about *falling* in love, and then people say that we *fall out* of love. I get why you'd say falling in love just sort of happens. But staying in love—and falling back in love—is actually a choice.

You're not powerless. We hear so much about empowerment in our world, but understand this: **You are not powerless to fall back in love with your husband or wife.**

So, **thinking about the good things is a choice.** That's number one. We must think good thoughts if we are going to speak good words instead of words that cut like a knife.

Ephesians 4:29 brings us to our next Rekindle step:

Rekindle your relationship with your mate by speaking good things to and about them.

Ephesians 4:29 says:

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for building up, as it fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

"Let no corrupting talk." That's a choice.

I know I've said things I really wish I could take back, and sometimes words just come out. But the decision to speak edifying words—words that build up, kind words, loving words—that's a choice.

When we speak loving words that build up our spouse rather than tear them down, it rekindles our relationship with them. So **choose to think and speak good things to and about your mate.**

If you're trashing your husband or wife to your friends or coworkers, do you think that helps rekindle the relationship? Or does it just further solidify your negative thoughts about them?

I would suggest to you that it **solidifies those negative thoughts** and harms your relationship.

When you speak cutting words to and about your husband, he will feel disrespected and will often respond in unloving ways. And when we act or speak in unloving ways toward our spouse, she will feel unloved and respond with disrespect.

The "Crazy Cycle"

This leads us into something that Dr. Emerson Eggerichs calls **the Crazy Cycle**. It goes something like this:

- When we as men speak unlovingly, our wife reacts with disrespect.
- Then we respond without love because we're irritated, annoyed, or infuriated.
- Then she responds with more disrespect.
- Then we react without love again.
- And now we're trapped in this thing called the *Crazy Cycle*—and we don't know how to get off of it.

Dr. Eggerichs says that **one of the couple must choose to break the cycle.**

What Does That Look Like?

You know what? It's something like this:

Men, I'm going to talk to us first. Yes, it takes two to tango, that's absolutely true. But **God has made us the leader in our home.** And so we **ought to be the first** to say, *I'm going to break the cycle.*

Next time she is disrespectful, **I'm going to respond with patience and love.** Not because she deserves it, but because it's necessary. And because **Christ loved me.**

But even if you have a husband who's not going to do that, **ladies, decide that you will act respectfully anyway.**

As I thought about this sermon, I imagined a husband or wife sitting out there saying, *Yeah, well, what about this scenario? What about that scenario?*

I get it. There are lots of scenarios. But the vast majority of marital problems **could be fixed** if people simply learned to **think and speak better of their spouse** and **choose not to keep the Crazy Cycle going**.

Love Is a Choice

This is a **choice**.

Love is a choice.

Falling in love again is a decision—not a feeling.

Some of you, when you hear that *falling in love again is a choice*, might be thinking, *Is that really possible?*

I've got news for you. **Yes.**

Yes, we can all point to examples of relationships where it didn't work out. But I can also tell you about examples where **God stepped in and held together marriages that were falling apart**. Not only that, but those marriages thrived.

So yes, you can fall in love again. But it usually requires a choice.

Once you have fallen in love and then *seem* to have fallen out of love, it's a choice. And you **can** choose to rekindle that relationship.

The Next Step: Having a Good Attitude

The next step to rekindle the relationship requires having **a good attitude**.

Colossians 3:12-13 is our text:

Rekindle your relationship with your mate by deciding to have a good attitude towards them.

Colossians 3:12-13 says:

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

You want to talk about an example? You're saying, *Listen, your spouse is annoying you, your friend is annoying you, that person is annoying you—*forgive them. And if you're struggling to do that, remember **how much Christ Jesus forgave you.**

At the end of the day, **Christ Jesus is the example.** He's the one we follow—not our feelings, not worldly examples.

Oh yeah, I'm reminded—on your screens there, I highlighted some things. Because when you study a passage, one good thing to do is **highlight verbs.**

"Put on." That's a choice.

This morning, Chrissie put—well, I didn't have much of a choice—but I put on **Chiefs colors.** We are a **Chiefs family.** (*The refs are too? Untold. Preach it.*) But this morning, I put on a **Chiefs shirt**—well, it's a red shirt, but it's a Chiefs shirt—and a suit.

In the same way, **you can choose to put on a certain attitude toward your spouse.**

What difference would it make tomorrow if—when frustration comes—you had already chosen, *I woke up this morning, and I have decided I will have the right attitude. I'm going to do my best. Yeah, they're probably going to say or do something, but I am choosing today to put on the right attitude.*

That is a command. That is a verb. It's saying, **Do this as God's chosen ones.**

You **are** one of God's children. He's talking about your **salvation**—a thing you didn't deserve or earn. Because this is the case, **choose to put this on. Put on the right attitude.**

Years ago, I didn't fully understand this—I sort of did, but not exactly.

My friend Brandon, who went to school for a counseling degree and then went on to seminary, once said, *Well, when I'm having a bad day, I put on my awesome.*

"What are you talking about? Put on my awesome?"

What I think he meant was this—when things start going bad, when the wheels start falling off, I can make a decision:

"You know what? I'm just going to put on my awesome. My attitude is going to be great. No matter what comes my way, I'm going to respond the right way. I'm going to do the best I can with the circumstances that I have."

Guess what? **That was an act and a choice.** He was choosing to put on the right mindset. *Come what may, I'm plowing forward, doing the very best I can with the circumstances at hand.*

You know, I get it. **Chrissie has to put on her awesome frequently with me.** And sometimes we have to do that with our spouse.

When We Don't Have a Good Attitude, Communication Breaks Down

Here's the thing, though—**when we don't have a good attitude toward our spouse, they often become very defensive.**

And when your spouse is defensive, **communication is very difficult.** Right?

When we are **not compassionate, not kind, not humble or meek** toward our mate—**especially when we have a complaint**—they will learn to **become defensive.**

So what do we do?

When our mate is defensive, and it's making communication difficult, there are **a couple of things we can do.**

You ready?

Because **you're not powerless.**

Step One: Ask If Something You Said or Did Hurt Them

It could be that **something you said or did hurt them.** And every time the same situation comes up, they immediately go into **defensive mode.**

For example:

Your husband calls the house or texts and says, *What time do you think dinner will be ready?*

You **immediately** assume he's mad at you and you get defensive:

"Well, it'll be ready when it's ready! I'm doing my best here!"

Meanwhile, in his head, he's thinking, *I've got X, Y, and Z to do, and I just need to know what time would be a good stopping point.*

Or maybe it's the other way around—maybe your wife is getting defensive about something. And it could be because, **in the past, you were irritable.** Now, anytime you ask *What time is dinner going to be ready?* she's already on edge.

"Okay, just make your own dinner. It will be ready when it's ready!"

And you're just thinking, *I was just trying to be productive!*

Ever had a conversation where you're wondering, *Why is she mad at me?* Or, *Why is he mad at me?*

"I was just asking a question!"

And then all of a sudden, they're attacking—but it's really a **defensive posture** because that's how they've learned to protect themselves from further insults and injury.

Another thing is, **maybe it's not you at all.**

Here's something I've come to understand—**when we get married, our spouse brings their whole family with them.** Figuratively *and* literally at times.

In fact, if you were to come to me and say, *I want to get married six months from now*, I'd say, *Great, let's do some premarital counseling.* Because **I won't marry you if you don't do premarital counseling.**

And one of the things I'm going to talk to you about is **family dynamics.**

- What did they see growing up?
- What was normal for them?

Now, that **doesn't mean you shouldn't marry them**—it just means **you need to walk into this with your eyes wide open.**

You need to know:

- *Hey, my mom and dad fought like cats and dogs. In my family, we raise our voices.*
- *Chrissie's family never did.*

So I had to learn to back it off.

There are **certain words I can't say.** I have to say *"bottom out."*

In my family, even when we're **excited**, we sometimes **sound angry.**

(Like right now, I probably sound angry to some of you—but I'm not. I'm just excited about this topic. GO CHIEFS!)

That's my family. Not so much Chrissie's.

I'm told her dad was very **intimidating.** And I don't know how you do that while staying **calm.** Well, actually, I *do* know how that works.

Know Who You're Marrying

Here's my point—**know who you're marrying.**

But listen, maybe when you got married, you didn't do that.

- Maybe the pastor didn't require premarital counseling.
- Maybe you went to the justice of the peace.

I don't know.

But **here's what I want you to know**—if your spouse grew up in a home where:

- Mom and dad fought all the time, and they were always defensive,
- Or they could never please their parents no matter what they did,
- Or if their mom was always **critical** and cutting them down...

Then **they likely learned to be defensive.**

And that **has nothing to do with what you're doing**—but it *does* impact your marriage.

What Do You Do When You Discover These Things?

Forgive as Christ forgave you.

Choose to put on an attitude.

Tell yourself, *My wife doesn't hate me. Sometimes it feels like she's mad at me, but this is just how she has learned to respond.*

Am I **minimizing** that? No.

But you have two choices:

- You can lose your mind and get mad every time it happens.
- Or you can **choose** to remember, *This is what she has learned.*

And then you **pray that God gives you the strength to keep putting on your awesome.**

Now, **is this an excuse for bad behavior?** No.

Some of those behaviors **need to be addressed.**

But if we can't address them without **getting angry**, the likelihood of success is **small.**

When Communication Feels Impossible

When your mate is defensive, when **you** are defensive—communication is difficult.

And right now, maybe you're thinking, *It seems impossible to think good things about my spouse.*

And since **that** seems impossible, it feels like we're not going to have good, kind words toward each other.

Right about now, you might be wondering:

"How can I have a good attitude toward them?"

If It Feels Impossible—Seek Help.

If you get to the place where it seems like you **can't** think, act, or feel good things about your spouse—**seek help.**

Before I get into the last section, I want to say this:

When married couples are struggling, the men are usually the ones dragging their feet about counseling.

They think, *I can fix it.*

Or they think, *It's a sign of weakness.*

But I'm telling you—it's **not** a sign of weakness.

It's a sign of wisdom.

A Lesson from Mechanics

Over Thanksgiving, I got to catch up with my old friend Tim.

He's my age, and he's been a **mechanic** since we were **sophomores in high school.**

He started out changing **tires and oil**—and **never left the profession.**

And we were talking about how different cars are today.

You ready for this?

- I have a 2004 Silverado. It has one computer in it.
- You buy a 2024 Silverado? It's probably got at least three computers in that car.

And if you want to fix that, and you don't know how to fix the system, they're all connected, and if you don't know what you're doing, you're going to mess the whole system up. Most people who have been mechanics for a while or worked on their own cars will tell you—it's really hard

to work on a new car. So you know what you do? You go to the guy who knows what they're doing.

Let's go one step further. My friend Tim, because he's so good at what he does, was hired by his company to work at a dealership that sold Mercedes-Benz. And here's the thing—even the good mechanics don't always know how to work on a Mercedes-Benz.

Why? Because they're exotic. They're made differently. And so the process of figuring out what's broken and fixing it is very different on an exotic car than on an American car.

Men—now, ladies, you might not get this illustration, but your husband will.

Men, your marriage is like an exotic car.

You don't even know how to fix you.

So why do you think you can fix her by yourself? Got it? Let's roll forward.

Fourth and Final Step: Rekindle Your Relationship with Your Mate by Recruiting Reinforcements

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up."

When you're struggling, and you can't seem to make it work—recruit help.

Recruit friends.

What am I talking about? Well, number one, it doesn't always mean you have to go to a counselor. But sometimes, recruit friends to spend time with.

Get your tank filled up by friends who just have fun with you.

Ladies, you probably instinctively get that. I'm more of a guy who's content to sit in my study—I'm very happy to be alone most of the time.

But still, I like time with the boys.

A couple of weeks back, I had lunch with three or four guys, and I remember thinking, *Man, this feels cool—to just be with the dudes, hanging out.* I hadn't done that in a while.

And you know what happened?

I think, at least for a day, I was a little bit better of a husband and dad when I got home.

Ladies, you sort of instinctively know that time with the girls is usually energizing.

So sometimes, just get together with the girls.

Recruit Reinforcements in Other Ways

If you're really struggling, share with a friend.

But be careful with that.

Find a friend who is mature in the Lord—someone you know won't repeat what they hear.

Sometimes, guys, we're not always looking for someone to fix it for us.

Sometimes, we just need someone to listen.

As a guy, I always feel like *I have to fix it*, right?

Well, a few years back, I went through a very difficult season in ministry. And I have a friend named Doug, who is a pastor.

I knew that what I told Doug wasn't going to get repeated.

And for about eight to ten months, I went to Doug repeatedly—and I just dumped.

Doug didn't "fix" it.

But what he did was listen.

And you know what? That helped.

It got the weight off my back.

I didn't have to dump on Chrissie.

And that alone helped.

After a few years had gone by, after I moved here, I texted Doug and said, *You know, thank you again for just listening, because that was a tough time for me.*

Warning: Be Wise in Who You Choose to Share With

Ladies, I need to warn you on this one.

Be careful going to mom and dad for advice.

They love you. They don't mean to cause harm.

But sometimes, they will take up an offense for you—and stir you up more.

I'm not saying don't talk to them.

I'm saying be wise in who you choose.

Sometimes, someone who loves you but is a little more emotionally disconnected from the situation is actually more helpful.

But what if you don't have anyone like that?

This is one of the reasons why we always say:

Gather for worship. Grow in devotions. Get into groups.

Because when we get together with other Christians—whether it's in a Sunday morning growth group, or a Bible study throughout the week—you know what happens?

We start to find the people that we can trust, and we don't have to go through it alone.

And then finally, **rekindle the relationship by seeking a counselor.**

Listen, that's not weakness, **that's wisdom.** There are times when we can work things out on our own, and everything turns out fine. Or a friend just lets us decompress, and we're fine. Sometimes, I just need to **get the frustration out**, and then I'm fine. But sometimes, you get to where **that's not cutting it anymore.** And so, **you need to go to a counselor.**

What a **good Christian counselor** is going to do—not only will they listen, not only will they pray with you and for you, **but they will also bring biblical principles into the situation.** Because what good biblical counseling does is this—it says, *Okay, I've heard the problem. Now let's be disciples of Christ, let's look at the Word of God, and let's see what it says about how you should act in these situations.*

Start by thinking good thoughts. Can you get there mentally? Okay. Once you have those, **start reminding yourself why you love them**—by speaking good things to them and about them. Sometimes verbally, sometimes just in your head. Then, **begin to cultivate a better attitude.** And when those frustrating moments come—and they *will* keep coming—you'll find yourself **on much better footing to respond appropriately.**

And here's the thing—this counselor **isn't giving you rocket science** that he made up. The reason I would **never** send you to a **non-Christian counselor** is that they're just using **man's**

best wisdom. They aren't using **the wisdom that builds a marriage that lasts 54 years and still dances at weddings.**

Sometimes, man's wisdom works, **but it is not eternal truth.** That is what a **biblical counselor** will give you.

Your husband—he may be a **domestic-made car**, but **he's still a car you don't know how to fix on your own.**

And that wife of yours? **She's a Lamborghini.** And maybe, **you don't know how to fix her.**

So go get help.

But it **starts** with **going to Christ.**

If today, you came to me and said, *In six months, I want to get married*, I'd say, *Great. Let's start talking about X, Y, and Z—about what it means to be Christians who are married.*

One of the things we're going to talk about—in one way, shape, or form—is this:

Make Christ the center of your marriage.

To an outsider who doesn't **know and love Jesus**, that might sound like **a wall of division.**

But **here's what I will tell you:**

If Christ is **at the center of your marriage**, Christ is **the great uniter.**

His **entire ministry on earth** was about **reconciling us to the Father.** And according to Ephesians, **He also reconciles us to each other.**

He is not the cause of division between you two.

When you **learn to follow Christ more perfectly**, you will be **in union more perfectly.**

But I also want you to know this—if you **do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior**, you're **in this marriage without His help.**

We've talked about all these things—**think differently, speak differently, have a better attitude.**

But those things are **hard when the marriage is hard.**

I didn't say that throughout, but **that's the truth.**

But **here's the thing—**

The **Holy Spirit**—who resides **inside of the Christian**, whom you received **as a gift the moment of your salvation**—**He leads you.**

I suspect that as I've been reading these verses, some of you have been thinking, *I know that's right. I'm just not sure I can do it.*

And you're right.

Not in your own strength, you can't.

You **don't** have the right fuel.

But **the Holy Spirit**, who is **leading you to know that this is right**, is also the one who **gives you the strength to do it.**

He is the fuel you need.

If you are **trying to do this without Jesus, without the Holy Spirit**, the results **are not impressive.**

So here's my encouragement to you this morning:

If you are a **Christian couple**—**grow closer to Christ.**

If you are a **person who has not yet come to Jesus for salvation**—**repent of your unbelief and come to Jesus for salvation.**

Not only will **He reconcile you to God the Father**, but as **He works in you**, something amazing happens.

He starts reconciling you with others.

But **it starts with repenting of your unbelief**, so that your **sin debt may be forgiven** and you **can be reconciled to God the Father.**

This morning, as **our praise team comes**, I'm going to lead us in a **very simple prayer.**

Some call it **the sinner's prayer**—whatever you want to call it.

The bottom line with it is this: **if you've come to the point that you know you're a sinner and you've been trying to live life without Jesus**, the Bible says, *"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Number one, **you have to know that you need to be saved.**

Number two, **you have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died on a cross to save you and rose again.**

Let me call for you to respond.

And so this morning, **if you'd like to pray a prayer of faith for salvation, I want to ask you to join me in prayer.**

Everyone bow their heads and close their eyes.

If you want to call on Jesus for salvation, pray with me:

"Dear God, I confess that I'm a sinner. I've broken Your rules. Most importantly, I've been trying to live life without Jesus. I've been in rebellion against Him, trying to do things my way. But I realize, I know that He is the Son of God. I believe this. And so, by faith, I'm calling on Him for salvation, for eternal life. Lord God, save me. I thank You for hearing me. I thank You for saving me. I thank You for sending Jesus. And I thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit to help me to live the Christian life. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

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