

# Romans 8

Sunday 4/5/2009

We have been in the Book of Romans, coming through it almost chapter by chapter and verse by verse. We are getting to Romans chapter 8, which is probably one of the greatest chapters in the New Testament, if not the whole Bible, that really deals with where we are in our relationship with the Lord. I have been telling you all through this study that the Book of Romans is truly the handbook of Christian doctrine for the church. It is the book that Paul wrote to the church that really details what the church is to do, how it is to minister, and all the aspects that go along with that. If you want to understand how the church lays itself out spiritually, you want to go to the Book of Ephesians. But if you want to understand how the church is to operate and the guidelines and principles by which it is to govern itself, then it is the Book of Romans.

We have been focusing on Bible principles, and I have been telling you how absolutely essential it is for a child of God to learn biblical principles. What we started to do about three or four weeks ago is just take a look at them. There is no way I can do it all; there is no way that we could cover them all. That was never really my intention. I told you that we would talk about different principles for different areas of your life. We do not have time to go through all of them the way that we need to, but I have been showing you where they are. We have used Thursday night in conjunction with that. Many of you brought up last Thursday night that our whole night was spent talking about two of the three major principles we discussed last week.

We have been dealing with people in the aspect of ministry—if you are getting into ministry and you have to work with people or help people, whether it is through discipleship or working with them through issues in their life, or just people in general. We all have jobs; we all work; we all come into contact with the public every day in any kind of relationship that you build in any kind of work-related scenario. Sooner or later, if people know that you are a Christian, it is going to come up, and God is going to use you in that scenario, and you need to understand the principles involved. As I said, last week we finished up the principles on dealing with people.

Today, I want to move into the area of relationships. Probably, without a doubt, this is the single most important aspect of your Christian life because we all build relationships. The principles to build relationships by, or the principles to live by, the area that we talked about last week with dealing with people and then this one, they kind of go hand in hand. But I separated them out so that we could better understand them and isolate some great principles. We want to talk about that today. In the area of relationships, I want to talk about probably the single most important aspect of your life. I am going to say a lot of things today that are water under the bridge for many of you. The thing that I want to be careful of today is that I am going to accent my message all the way through here with some points to keep it all in reference to you. I am going to talk today about the most important issue in your life if you are a child of God. That simply is the issue and the principles involved in finding life's partner, finding a spouse, finding someone that you spend the rest of your life with, and understanding the principles that are involved.

I think it would be safe to say, and I have dealt in scenarios for thirty-five, almost forty years now, I do not know how many people over the years that I have married, or people that I have worked through. I cannot even sometimes the faces just get into a blur of how many people over

the years that I have worked with in just about every scenario you can find in marriage, good and bad. I have seen it all; I have dealt with it all. I have experienced it from the great relationships people have and really serve the Lord, to the disasters that we find in so many people's lives today.

Before I get into this, I want to say this: I do not care what scenario or situation you find yourself in this morning. First of all, if you are in a marriage scenario today, or a situation, or a relationship, I want you to know that wherever you are at, there is always something that God can do to make it better. There is never a time in your life, and I do not want to give the impression that if people have made mistakes in their marriage, if they have made mistakes in picking spouses that they married, and you find yourself in a scenario now that I talk about today, the last thing I want to do is add any more burden to the weight that you may already be carrying.

What I want to do is this, and I have a couple of goals I want to accomplish today. I want to begin to lay out the principles about relationships because I think they are vital today. At the same time, I want you to understand that whatever situation you find yourself in, maybe it is through no fault of your own. Maybe you are a person who got into a relationship before you got saved, and maybe you have gotten saved and your spouse has not. Maybe you are in a situation where you married somebody that you were not plugged into the Word of God at that point, and when you got later on, it causes some problems, and there is some scenario. There are absolutely a million different scenarios that we all find ourselves in.

I want to preface everything I say today, and I am going to punctuate my message throughout this whole thing by saying this: I do not care what situation you find yourself in. I do not care what mistakes you have made. I do not care what problems you are facing right now. I do not care if you have made the biggest mess out of your life that the world has ever seen. There will never be a time in your life that you cannot turn it around and be profitable in what God wants you to do. Never a time. I want to preface that by saying this over and over today because in a message like this, I know how people are. People come to the place where they take it personally because they have made some mistakes. Hey, there is never anybody on planet Earth that has not made some major mistakes in their life. The person that tells you that they have not is lying to you, and that is the first mistake they made. We all struggle; we are all in the same boat. There is nobody better than anybody else here. Very frankly, there is probably nobody more spiritual than anybody else here. The real key between some of the people who struggle in relationships and struggle in their own relationship with God versus the ones that do not is simply one little word: the word principle. Using the Bible principles, we already saw what it does in your life, how it clears up the fog in any given situation you have got to deal with, how it simplifies the whole thing, how it takes the emotion out of it. Boy, when you start talking about relationships, let us be honest now, this is where your emotions get involved. This is where many, many people, because they do not have a relationship with God, they cannot leave their emotions out of what they are going through, and they follow their emotions instead of biblical principles.

I want you to understand today that wherever you are at, whatever you are struggling with, there is always something you can do. There will never be a time in your life when God will not take

where you are at, turn it around, and use you the way that He wants to use you. So I want you to understand that. But I would also say this, dealing from my vast reservoir of experience in dealing with people, and my life is filled with people. My life is filled from Monday to Sunday with people coming over and sitting down, and many times they are not people that are connected with this church. Many times there are people that come in that you do not even know, and somebody will send them to me, and I try to help them wherever I can and work through them. But I have come to this conclusion. I think this is probably a safe statement this morning in light of my experience, anyhow. Maybe you do not see it this way, but based on where I have been and who I have dealt with down through the years, I think it is probably, if I was to make one statement, it would be this statement.

A number of years ago, I was asked to sit in on a forum, and it was a forum of pastors that were dealing with the issue because, if you do not know this already, divorce and trouble in marriage and problems are not relegated to the unsaved world. It is what has destroyed Christianity. The devil had a very clear plan, and you see this plan in the Old Testament. The devil knew when he wanted to destroy the plan of God and the nation of Israel from accomplishing that plan. Back in the Old Testament, it was set up in a theocracy, so to speak. They had a literal king, and it was a king that reigned over a nation, but it was in a spiritual sense. The devil wanted to destroy that in your life and my life, just like the temple back there was literal. Today in Christianity, your body is the temple, and it is spiritual. There should be a king reigning over you in your life, but it is not King David, it is not King Solomon, it is not King Saul, it is not one of those kings back there. It ought to be the Lord Jesus Christ being king of your life. It is all similar.

What the devil did, how he destroyed the nation of Israel, is the first thing he went after: he went after the priesthood. When he destroyed the priesthood and the priesthood became corrupt, the nation of Israel had nothing to base itself on. From that corruption, the next corruption sealed the nation of Israel's fate, and it was the breakdown of the families. Did you ever notice in the Old Testament how stringent they are with their children? If you want a child training program, go back to the Old Testament. If you had a rebellious son in the Old Testament, and you are a mom and a dad, and you went to the son, and you said, "Son, take the trash out." The kid said, "I ain't taking it out today." And you said, "Well, it needs to go out today because the trash guys are coming this afternoon." "Why? I ain't doing it." "Now, son, you know, we are all supposed to work together as a team here in the family. Please take it out." And he says, "I ain't taking it out. You cannot make me take it out."

What they did back in the Old Testament is when they had that particular problem, they took it to the elders. The elders were a group of people within the nation of Israel that kind of, not in the same sense, but they acted like they kept everything within confines and nothing got out of control. They are like, I cannot even think of anything in the New Testament. I was going to say like a pastor, but that is not true either. But they are a group of people who basically enforce the law and made sure everything was done right. So they brought the boy into the elders. The elders would say to him, "What is the problem?" And Dad said, "Well, I have a rebellious child here, and we have to do something with him because he is rebellious." Of course, they said, "Well, what is the problem?" And, I am oversimplifying it, he would not take the trash out. The elders

said, "Now, you need to do that because you have got to help your mom and dad." And then he gets really irate with the elders. In other words, his rebellion is widespread. He just simply tells everybody involved, "I ain't doing it."

You know what the next step was? It was not getting him Dr. Spock's book on how to do right and be good. It was not rewarding him some play. You know what the next step was in the Old Testament? It sounds hard, but the next step was take him out, dig a hole, put him in a hole, and all the elders get around with big old rocks. The first rock concert in the Bible started right there. And they killed the kid. Now, that seems harsh. But you know why the law was so tight and stringent on that particular scenario in rebellion? Because the Bible says that the sin of rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. God knew that if Israel was never going to accomplish what it needed to accomplish, the thing that was going to destroy it was the devil was going to attack first the priesthood, which he did. Once the priesthood got attacked, the next unit that broke down was the family structure. That is absolutely why God has such stringent rules between rebellious children in the Old Testament, because God knew that if the family unit fractured and broke down within the Old Testament structure of the nation of Israel, that the whole thing would break down. That is exactly what happened. That is exactly what happened. That is why Christian families today are fractured. That is why Christian marriages today, for the most part, are just...

## I. The Foundation of Marriage: God's Design and Purpose

I am leading up to this statement: I think that it would be safe to say today, looking around Christianity, knowing what we know about the Bible or what we should know about the Bible, I think it would be a pretty safe statement to say that probably 99.999% of all the marriages today, Christian marriages, after inception, after the altar, when they get married, probably start out wrong. I think that marriage is something today that most of God's people have no idea about, from a Bible standpoint. I think the definition of marriage in the Bible has been lost, just like the definition of the rapture, the definition of inspiration, or the definition of worship, or the definition of holiness.

I think the concept that Scott is teaching on Sunday morning, or Saturday morning, he is teaching the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved. Barb taught it to the ladies a while back. You know why we do that? We do that because the average Christian today, if you walked up to them and said, "Are you saved?" "I am." "Are you born again?" "Yes, I am." "Have there been a time in your life that you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior?" "Yes, I have." "Good. What were the seven things that changed inside your body the instant you got saved?" They could not tell you. They could not tell you. And yet your salvation is based, and your walk with God is based on you understanding that. You know why so many people believe you can lose your salvation today? You know why so many of God's people walk around in the fog that they can lose their salvation? Let me tell you why: they think they can lose it because they do not know how they got it. I guarantee you, if you know those seven things that changed about you the day you got saved, you would not waste fifteen seconds on worrying about losing your salvation. The reason why you worry about losing it is because you do not know how you got it from the Bible. You have a system of terms; you have been born again, washed in the blood. You

know all the terms, but you do not know what really transpired in your life that really makes you saved. Well, marriage is the same way. What we have got today is some bad ideas about what marriage is and finding life's partner.

There is a rule that I found to be so true. It is not just true of marriage, but it works in marriage, and it is true of just about everything. It is just a basic, simple little rule. I am sure it is in the Bible someplace; I have just never found it. I mean, you find it in a general sense, but there is a verse in there someplace, but it is so simple. It is simply this: If something starts wrong, it usually ends wrong. That is just the way it is. If people do not understand what marriage is at the beginning, and they enter into something that they call marriage when they do not even understand how God defined marriage and what they are getting into, I guarantee you what starts wrong usually ends wrong. But again, I throw in my disclaimer here that any time you want to wake up and you want to make your marriage, even if you did not know what it was when you got into it, any time you want to turn the corner and make it what it is now and go on, it works. It works.

You add to that the people that get saved after their marriage, and half the family is lost, half the family is saved, a mom and a dad, and it gets in through all those struggles. It is easy to see why the divorce rate in Christianity is absolutely astronomical today. You know what? A lot of people, you will see a couple, they get married, and for two or three years everything looks fine. They come to the point where, two or three years down the line they are fine, and then five or six years later into that thing they are divorced. It is a disaster. People look at that and they are saying, "They were saved, they went to church." See, I am not talking about the world here; I am talking about God's people, saved people. They get married for two or three years, it is fine, they get along great, and then suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, five or six, seven, eight years down the line, their divorce, it is a mess, everything is upside down, and everybody looks at that and says, "Wow, how did that happen?" You know what it does? It scares some people. I have had some people look at circumstances like that or other similar circumstances, and it really shakes them a little bit, because they thought the Bible insulated you against that. They thought going to church was the thing that you could do that preserves you from that. The reality is going to church does not fix anything. The reality is that if it starts wrong, good chance it is going to end wrong.

Stop and look at it this way. Say down the line someplace, God forbid, but God forbid, someplace down the line, you know, you go to the doctor, or somebody you know goes to the doctor, and for the last two or three years, everything was fine. They were getting along in life, full of life, played softball, played basketball, did everything, played golf, did everything that everybody else did. I mean, you were the absolute picture of health. Then one day they go into the doctor, and the doctor says, "Man, you have got cancer. Man, you have got this, or you have got that." Two years before you have any outward signs, two or three years before you have any symptoms, two years before you feel any change, or you lose your strength, or you lose your go-get-them, or you lose this, or you lose that, everything is fine, but slowly inside, it starts with just a little cell that mutates itself, a little cell that begins to kill other cells and affect other cells. Slowly, without notice, it grows into a great disease, that by the time you find it, it is spread

through your body, and the doctor says, "You have got six months to live." That is what happened with marriages. When they start wrong in relationships, they usually end wrong. It is no guarantee of how much you are in love the day you get married. It is no guarantee how much you are in love for the first three or four years you are in marriage. Because just like somebody out there running ten miles a day and playing all kinds of sports, and while he is doing all that, down inside, something is terribly wrong. He does not feel it, so we do not feel it, so we do not think there is anything wrong. Until it is too late. Just as everybody's body in here physically should have a checkup with a doctor every year, every marriage should have a medical checkup.

I listen to the radio when I am driving back and forth, and there is this doctor's group that only does men. I cannot think of them right now, but their line is this: The greatest killer of men is not cancer. The greatest killer of men is not disease, but the greatest killer of men is procrastination. Yet, my friend, that is the greatest killer of marriages. I started to tell you, I was in a little symposium here a while back, and they were talking about what the issues were. Somebody asked a question out of the audience, a lady, and she says, "What do you, I would like to ask each of you a question. What do you believe is the real cause of divorce in Christian life today?" Everybody had their pat answer. Everybody, it was down the room, around the corner, and everybody up there gave their professional opinion on it. I was the last guy. She said to me, "Pastor, I would like to ask you, what do you think is the number one cause of divorce?" I looked at her and I said, "It is real easy. The number one cause of divorce is marriage." The crowd did exactly what you did. They laughed, until I explained it. I said, "I appreciate everybody's opinion here this morning, but the bottom line is this: The greatest cause of divorce is marriage, because when you get into something that God designed and ordained, and you try to run it another way than God designed it, it is going to end in disaster. When it starts wrong, it ends wrong."

I use the example with people that come over, and you all have heard this. But I like to tell it, and you know what, there are people here that have not heard it, but this is how I liken it all and lay it all out. Let us say I come home tomorrow, and Barb says the washing machine is not working. I pick that because we always have, for whatever reason, demon-possessed washing machines that always go up. I come home and the washing machine is just absolutely on the blink. She says, "So I just want to let you know I am going to call the repair guy." I say, "Well, do not do that just yet, because he is going to cost us \$75 just to come out and look at it. It may be something that is just as simple as hitting a reset button, or maybe just, where is the owner's manual?" I mean, you know how they give you an owner's manual, and the back of the owner's manual is all the things that you troubleshoot when it will not come on? See? Now, my house is no different than your house, because your smiles are betraying you already. You know that in your kitchen or in your house somewhere, there is a drawer that you have every owner's manual of everything you ever bought. You have stuff that burned up, blew up, threw away nine years ago. You still have the owner's manual, just in case. You know, your neighbor needs one. I know how it works, you say. So I go into the kitchen and I open the drawer, and I start pouring them out. There is the one for the dishwasher, there is one for the microwave, there is one for the radio, there is one for this, there is one for that, there is one for the cordless phones, there is one for this, there is one for that. I get a stack of them that high, and for the life of me, I cannot find the owner's manual that tells me how to fix the washing machine. Now, I am in a dilemma, but oh, not me. Because I say

to my wife, "Well, no problem. Hand me the book from the cordless phone." Now, what are the chances of fixing what is wrong with the washing machine by the handbook that shows me how to fix the cordless phone when it does not work? Pretty ridiculous, is not it? But that simple little illustration is so absolutely paramount in what we are talking about this morning.

Because God designed marriage. I know we get the idea that marriage is a thing of civilization, you know. Primitive man, when he came out of the cave and put away the club from walking over to the gal that he really wanted and beat her on the head and dragged her by the hair, and brought her out into his cave and says, "Oomgumba, mmm, I got me a woman," you know. We think that when man civilized and he does not come out of the cave anymore, and now he walks upright, and so now that society civilized and they got to the place where people said, "You know what, we should have something called marriage." Marriage was never designed by the world. Marriage was designed by God, and I have some other news for you: God never intended marriage to be for anybody who is not saved. But you know what happens? We live in a world where marriage, I mean, just go on your Sunday paper and look at all the big pictures of all the weddings that are planned. We are coming into that time of year, May and June, look out. The real wedding I am looking for in May and June may come this year, as a matter of fact, that is one I really want to go to. But you look at that and you think to yourself, you know what, because of that, we think that marriage is something that the world designed. The world did not design it. The first marriage is found in the book of Genesis with Adam and Eve. The first marriage is found right there in the Bible, and God never intended marriage to be anything but for two people that are in Christ. You know, the world can do it, and the world can pretend at it, and all of those things, but in reality, when it comes down to the biblical principles, marriage is something that God designed. Trying to run what God designed by another set of standards that God never intended it to run by is why marriage is the number one cause of divorce. Young people get into marriage, not following the biblical principles, and when they get into something that God designed and try to run it another way, what starts wrong will end wrong.

Now, I am putting in my disclaimer again, but any time in the process of that, you say, "Well, I married a woman and I should have never married her. She is the ugliest woman in the world." I cannot help thinking about being ugly, but I can help you working your marriage. She says, "Well, I married this guy and he is the biggest bozo in the world." Well, I do not know what. Clown suits are pretty cheap today. I do not know what we can do about that, but I can fix your marriage because God does not care where you are at with it. The key is, do you want to do what you have to do to make it work? Doing that means that you get back to a biblical marriage. You get back to a biblical relationship. In other words, you learn the principles of dealing with each other and understanding how marriage works.

Let us pray. Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. We thank you today. We pray that you will bless this time as we look at it today and talk about these great principles. We love you, Father, and we thank you for all that you do for us now. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

## II. The Isaac and Rebecca Principle: Finding a Godly Spouse

The first thing I already gave you was that marriage is not man's idea; it was God's idea. It was never intended for unsaved people. When I look at the job of a pastor, when I look at the job of you who work with me in various ministries with people, I think of one word. It is a word we all use today, and you find it in government, you find it in society, you find it in all of the things that go on in the world. It is the word proactive. Proactive means you get ahead of something before you have a problem. I do not think much of the world proactive, but I use it because you will understand it. I like principles. Back in the book of Genesis, there is a great principle that illustrates proactive. You do not have to use the word, but I am going to use the word today in and out of our times because you will know what it is and it will just help you. But I like biblical principles. The biblical principle in the Bible found in Genesis is, do not wait until you run out of water before you start digging your well. Do not wait until you are out of water before you start digging the well. Do not wait until you are out of water before you dig the well, and do not wait until you get married to start to learn the biblical principles. That is called proactive. My job as a pastor is to do preventative maintenance: get you young people to the point, get people to the point, no matter what situation they are in.

The next thing is you need to understand the concept of a help meet versus a help mate. In Genesis chapter 2, when God brought Adam a woman, He did not bring Adam a woman, He did not bring him a help mate. He brought him a help meet, M-E-E-T. Animals have mates because that is their sole purpose in life: big cows produce little cows, they grow up to big cows and they produce little cows, and sheep and lambs, and everybody does the same thing. Animals have mates. You see, the first thing God had in His mind when He comes to produce a marriage was not sex. It was not procreation, though that is very important, or we would not have anybody around to talk to you this morning. But that was not the goal in His life, in His mind. That is not what He was trying to accomplish. That is why He did not call her, I mean, He says, all the other animals, all the animals that God created, they had mates, somebody to mate with. But He says, Adam does not have one, so I am going to create for him a help meet. Not a help mate, because God had a plan for Adam. You see, He did not give Adam a wife just so Adam could have little Adams running around all over the place. I guess if their kids really got out of control, that was really an Adam bomb, was not it? Never mind. That is not the goal. That is not His purpose. Oh, I know He said, "Be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth," but that was part of a bigger scheme of things. God had something that He wanted Adam to accomplish. He had something He wanted Adam to do. He gave Adam a help meet. That woman was a help meet to help meet the needs that Adam had to get done what God called him to do, and God put him together. That is why in Ephesians, when it talks about marriage, he runs it right back to the first marriage in the Bible, which is Adam and Eve.

When you get married, you are not looking for a mate, you see? You do not understand the concept. You are not looking for a mate. You are not looking for a mate. You are looking for a help meet. If you are saved, God has a plan for you. He has something that He wants you to accomplish. The only way you are going to accomplish it is to get the right help meet. You get a

help mate, what starts wrong usually ends wrong. Now, you see how this thing works? Somebody gets into marriage: one, they do not understand what marriage is in the Bible; two, they do not understand it is about a help meet, so they are looking for a help mate. They have no concept that God has a plan for them, something He wants them to do, and God gave you a partner to help meet that demand that you get the job done for God. Can you see how the devil gets no details? Do you have a better appreciation now what marriage is? Marriage is something that God wants you to enter into a union so that you can do the work for Him. When somebody tries to get into a marriage without the principles involved by the manual that God gave, I would have a better chance fixing my washing machine with a handbook for my cordless phone, because it just will not work. God had a plan for Adam. God had a plan for Adam, and of course the devil got into details and destroyed that plan.

God has a plan for every man and every woman, if you are saved, that is in this room this morning. I do not care if you got saved when you are, I do not care if you are 80 and you got saved when you are 60. God still has something He wants you to do. I do not care if you got divorced, you got remarried, you got upside down, I do not care. Wherever you are at, wherever you are at right now, this is my fourth disclaimer, wherever you are at, God will take you and use you no matter what your circumstances are, but God has a plan for you. Now understanding what we just talked about in these great principles brings up absolutely imperative issues that we must consider and that you are faced with, and it underscores the absolute necessity for caution and the use of principles in choosing a spouse or entering into a relationship that would down the line maybe lead to marriage.

Now to the women, here is your principle: The man that you marry, the man that you enter into marriage with, will either make you or break you at the judgment seat of Christ. He will either be the one that cascades you into the glory of everything that God had for you to get, or he will be the one that will rip from you and take from you every reward that God had for you because you did not understand the concept of a help meet versus a help mate.

To the men, I say this, here is your principle: The woman you marry will make or break you at the judgment seat of Christ. You will either get one that will be there and help you and support you and to be in everything that you do and to be your right arm, or you will get a wife like Job had. In the face of adversity, she will be used by the devil and she will look at you in your toughest time instead of being the comfort and support, she will give you the best advice she can:

*Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.*

Your spouse, who you marry, who you link up with. You see, this brings up another problem that we have. Another misconception, if you will. We as God's people, saved and on our way to heaven, we have not yet realized that the number one thing we are to look out for and the number one doctrine for you and for me and the number one principle that everything in my life should go back to is the judgment seat of Christ. The day, I think some of you think it is a fairy tale. I think some of you think that it is not going to happen. I think some of you think that it is just some old story stuck away in the Bible. There will be a day when you stand before God and you realize how little, pettily, small, minuscule your life on planet earth was. You realize that you

were just a drop of sand in God's hourglass that fell through in time through that glass that when the last sand went through, time was over and now what you thought was really life, what you thought was really living, what you thought was really everything. What you cheated for and fought for and worked for and vested your whole life in. Now you realize how foolish and fragile it really was. Now you stand before God at the judgment seat of Christ realizing God had a plan for you. He had something He wanted you to do. He had something that He wanted you to accomplish and because for whatever reason, you did not, would not, could not follow the principles. You stand there when everybody is saying, "Wow, the end of the world," no, it is the beginning of what God is going to do. But you stand there without anything.

Let me tell you something. I have seen so many marriages over the years that when the spouse goes down, you go down. I have seen so many relationships where there is the husband or the wife. When the spouse goes down spiritually, the whole thing goes to pot. I have seen wives that married husbands and when the husband checked out, decided he was not going to do what is right anymore, she is caught. What does she do? She has got kids now. She has got this. She has got that. She has no financial responsibility or to take care of herself. What is she going to do? I have seen the opposite where a guy does what is right and the woman checks out. What does he do? What does he do? Let me just say this. We do not have time to get into this this morning, but there is always something you can do. I do not care what scenario. We are going to get to some of it this morning. There is always something you can do. Always something you can do.

Most kids get married. They never look on the inside. The great principle, 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 7, it says:

*But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

We are so in this world today geared by what we see. We are so geared by our sexual orientation and our motivation. We are so geared by the physical things that we see. We do not even give a second thought of what really counts in a relationship. Most kids that get married today have no idea of God, have no idea of marriage. They have no idea of ministry in marriage. They do not have no idea of the balance it requires. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, they get married. You know what happens to them? They get too married. Did you ever notice that thing in 1 Corinthians chapter 7? That is one of the hardest things to understand and break down. How can two people get too married? You know what Paul says?

*But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;*

Now, is not that a contradiction of terms? Ephesians says when you get married, you are supposed to...

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

And then Paul says, if you have got a wife, act like you do not have one. Well, that will work in hunting season, will not it? How to work when you want to do something you want to do? How

in the world can you get too married? You know what the tragedy is? If you are sitting here this morning and you do not understand that, you probably already violated it.

I want to talk to you about one of the greatest passages in the Bible. I am just preaching the principles. The Bible says he is the love of the honeycomb, even the bitter things are sweet. You probably are not going to like everything I say this morning, but you know what? I do not know what to tell you. You want a mealy-mouthed, mashed-faced pastor, you better go to almost said First Baptist of the Raytown. Boy, I am glad I did not say that. That would have been tough. How to find a... I am just kidding. No personal... I am just kidding. But most of you came from this. Never mind. Just start over again. All right! We are going to open your Bibles today and we are going to get into the Bible here. If you do not mind, I am going to jump right into the middle of my message, because I just made a fool out of myself and I do not want to go back and explain. Anyway, here we go.

This is called the Isaac and the Rebecca Principle, found in Genesis chapter 24. You might know that God would pick a chapter. In this chapter, in the whole chapter, I mean, I think there are 66 verses in this chapter. There are 66 verses in it. You know why? Because there are 66 books in your Bible, that is why. Genesis chapter 24. You do not have to turn to it because I am not going to read it, or tell you about it. Read it on your own time, not mine.

You know what you have in this story? As all stories in the Old Testament, they illustrate great principles. Let me give you the cast of characters.

1. Abraham: Represents God the Father.
2. Isaac: Abraham's son, represents Christ.
3. Rebecca: Represents the Gentile bride that Christ is going to get someday.
4. Eliezer: Represents the Holy Spirit of God.

You know what you have in this passage? What you have in this passage is a picture of God the Father wanting a Gentile bride for His Son, me and you. Then sending the Holy Spirit of God, Eliezer, out in the field, the world, to find a bride for His Son Isaac. What you have here is a picture of what God looks for when He came after you. Every detail, everything that you ever wanted to know, what God thought and was looking for when He found you and touched you on the shoulder and asked you that now famous question in Genesis 24 when the Holy Spirit of God looked in Rebecca's face and told him about the master's son and what a great guy he was. Then the Holy Spirit of God looks right into her face just like the Holy Spirit of God one day looked right into your soul. You know what He asked her? "Wilt thou go with this man?" That is a picture of the day you got saved. She had to leave her family, she had to leave her servants, she had to leave everything, and she said in her heart, "I will go with this man." Of course, that is the beautiful picture of the day you got saved. Bubba sings the song, I just got it off the Internet, that camel train song, "Oh, get ready, the evening shadows fall. As you hear the Eliezer call, There is going to be a wedding, my joy will soon be full. In the evening when the camel train comes in." That song is based out of Genesis 24. It is a picture of the bride of Christ.

At the same time, here is what you have: inspiration. This is the chapter, ladies and gentlemen, for you to find a spouse. Everything in here is detailed out because the same things, the same

things that God looks for in a person when they get saved, ought to be the same things that you look for in a spouse. You know why? Because the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church," and "the wife sees that she reverences her Lord." It is all a picture of the same thing. So in this great chapter, you have everything you need that you follow the principles. I do not have time to go through all of the principles today, but I am going to show you the main principle that is built around and then we are going to work back into it.

eHarmony.com, if you get on that, 28 dimensions of compatibility. Does anybody want to be honest enough to say this morning that you ever surfed or e-dumbed or done it? I mean, we are not against you. I think it is neat. Anybody? Okay. I mean, I would not say. I mean, I am just saying. You know, it is okay. I just thought, anybody here? Well, all right. Genesis chapter 24 has 19 biblical principles to look for, what I call dimensions of compatibility. Except these are infallible. These are principles. Now they work for a guy looking for a wife, they look for a wife looking for a guy. It does not matter. It does not matter.

Let me say this: As a child of God, God wants you to have the very best. God does not want to shortcut you in any way, shape or form. God wants you to have the very best. He wants to give you every tool. He wants to give you everything in your life to make you and help you get everything that God has for you and you can accomplish everything in His plan. He wants you to get everything at the judgment seat of Christ you have coming to you. All your life, He puts things, principles, people in your world to help you accomplish that. All of our lives, the devil puts people, things, and people in our lives to take that from us. See? Just that simple.

As a young lady this morning, let me say this to you: You have an absolute right to demand in the spouse that you find everything that you think you should have in Christ Jesus. You have that absolute right. I am telling you right now, do not settle for second best. Find the man that will be to you what Christ is to the church. Find the man that will do everything that he is supposed to do. Find the man that will be your spiritual leader that you do not have to drag him around by a collar being his spiritual leader. You have a right to that and should demand that simply because for no other reason your judgment seat of Christ depends on it.

As a young man, you have an absolute right to demand a woman in your life that is everything that a help meet should be. That is everything that will be there and accomplish in your life and help you get what God wants you to do in your life. Every right for that. Do not settle for second best. Do not fall in love. Americans are famous for falling in love and in five minutes later falling out of love. American Christianity is built on the touchy-feely things of the world. You do not love God because you know God this morning. I could give you this Bible and ask you to show me the seven things that changed you. Now you got saved. You do not even know what they are. I could ask you a million questions about your relationship with Christ. I could ask you to splay out the book of Song of Solomon, the most intimate book in the Bible that lays out what you should feel toward Him and how He feels toward you, and you could not do it. You have a right in everything in your life. You do not fall in love. You learn to love. You learn to love because you see not on the outward. You see on the inside. You see the biblical principles in a person's life, male and female. That is what you love. You do not fall in love with a body. You do not fall in love with a face. You do not fall in love. You fall in love with what is on the inside. Oh, that is

so foreign today, is not it? God wants the best for you. But we get in a hurry or we rationalize or we justify what we want, then we get a bad deal. We wind up in a situation that two or three years down the line, it did not work out. Follow the principles, ladies and gentlemen. Your millennial inheritance is based on it.

The greatest single principle out of Genesis chapter 24, and I think personally it is the greatest protection you have as a single, whether you are male or female, I do not really care. I think it is the greatest single thing that you have that protects you. It is the thing that is taught all the way through here. It is the fact that if I could give you any biblical principle, if you would come to me and you would say, "I am looking for a spouse, male or female, what is the number one principle that I should look for that I do not mess it up?" Here is what I would tell you: Do not ever marry somebody that is not involved in ministry. Never. Never. Do not ever even consider marrying somebody that is not involved in ministry. Now, in case you have not figured out why, because the Bible says that once you get married, he needs to minister to you. Here is another great principle: If they do not do it before you get married, they are not going to do it after you get married.

Now, my fifth disclaimer. Well, obviously some of you got into marriage before you heard what I just said this morning. Well, right afterward, John Reed, where are you at? You set up a table back here, we are going to have a divorce proceeding, we are going to run you all through it, and then we are going to bring you back up here, and I am going to remarry you now that you know it. Is that how we are going to do it? Come on. John's eyes lit up, man. He thought he thought. We can do a great business, John. I run them out, you run them back. We can do that. No. The bottom line is this: Wherever you are at, start doing what is right. You can turn it around. There is no reason for you not to turn it around. No reason whatsoever. I would suggest to you, do not ever marry anybody that is not involved in ministry. Do not even consider it. Because marriage is the finalization of your ministry. He has to minister to you. I mean, I do not know if you know it or not, whether you are male or you are female, you have spiritual needs, you have emotional needs, and you have physical needs. Those are the same three needs you have in ministry. Sitting here this morning, we all have the same deal. We all have physical needs, we all have emotional needs, and we all have spiritual needs. You work with people, it is nothing more than one of those three, or combinations of those three that have went sideways in their lives. That is all it is. Their emotional needs are overwhelming, their physical needs are overwhelming, and their spiritual needs are lacking. You want to hit all eight cylinders, you want to be pumping and doing something for God, get those three things in your world.

Ladies, let me just tell you something. Your husband hitting on those three cylinders, doing those things in his life, depends on where he is at in ministry. Do not kid yourself that he will not do it in ministry, but he will do it with me. Do not kid yourself that you can work it out in time. The very basic fundamentals of ministry that everybody has in everybody's life are the three basic things you have in ministry. Ladies, your relationship with God, what you get from God, your spiritual relationship with God, all depends on the guy you marry. I mean, I can stand up here and preach and give you everything in the world, and I can lay things out, but at the end of the day, the bottom line, the Bible says it is the husband who has to be the spiritual leader to the

wife. Now, I am not saying that if you are dating somebody this morning, please do not look over at them and say, "Sorry, you are not cutting it yet, you are done." I am not telling you to do that. See why you have got to be careful with this? I mean, when you start preaching something like this, you have got to cover, you have got to cross every T and dot every I, or somebody is going to go out here and say, "Well, I am done with you." That is not my purpose this morning. But I am telling you this, I am giving you the principles. You have been in a relationship for two or three years, and either the male or the female is not following through and growing spiritually, and they are still using the same old procrastination concept that they are, "Oh, I am not ready to do this yet." When are you going to be ready to do it? After you are married? I do not think so.

You know why I say this is so important? You know why I say do not marry somebody that is not involved in ministry? I know some of you just thought that I just said that because I do not like you. Well, you are right. I do not like you, but that is not why I said it. You know why I said it? Do you know why I said it? Going back to the chapter, going back to the principle. You know why I said it? Because when Eliezer found a bride for Isaac, guess where he found her? At the well! The well in the Bible is a picture of the Bible, and you know what she is doing? She is giving out water to anybody who wants a drink. It is a picture of your ministering. I know some of you think you find a Christian spouse in a right-spy for church. Hey, most churches are Christian meat markets. That is all they are. They have their little group of things over there. It is almost like, you know, I mean, you know, there is nothing concerned about anything spiritual. It is a parade and show. Just walk down and in there and look around and do not care about the preaching, do not care about the singing. "I am looking for the most beautiful woman in here and making her day." You do not find... Yeah, well, you better pray about it, buddy. Just kidding. But you know what? You do not find a right spouse in church. You see, that is another thing we get screwed up on, is not it? You do not find them in church. You do not find them, you find them at the well. Find them at the well. You find somebody who ministers at the well with the washing of the water with the word, and you find them in ministry, you have got a lot better chance that they are going to minister to you after you get married because they are ministering now.

The beauty about this, as far as me personally and what I got here, I tried to count them up this morning and I could not think right. But anyway, which is my problem most of the time. The beauty about this, I have so many of you young couples. You know, you are in your late teens and twenties, and you want to get married and you are working toward that line. Some of you have already set dates, but the beautiful part of it is that you and us three are together and we are building this thing together as you grow. Nobody is getting ahead of the other one. We do not have a situation where somebody over here, the guy is much more spiritual than the woman, or the woman is much more spiritual than a guy. We do not have a deal where you have got to put a rope behind him and tie it around her neck and then put it on your belt and pull them along as you walk for Jesus. We are not talking about that. You have the ability now to grow up together and learn these things together. I think that is the greatest, greatest thing that you can do. My week is filled with couples that come over that are, some of them have not even set a date yet. Some of them, the execution, I mean the marriage date is already set. Somebody said, "Can you give me a verse for marriage?" Yes, "As a lamb led before the slaughter, he was dumb and opened not his mouth." But your spiritual relationship with God depends on your husband. I am

telling you, you want another principle? If they will not minister to you before they get married, they are not going to minister to you after they are married.

*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*

See, they are connected. They are connected. They are connected.

### III. Communication and Spiritual Leadership in Marriage

You know what the number one issue is in marriage today? I am going to show you how this thing works. You know what the number one issue in marriage is today? It is communication. Couples do not know how to communicate. I do not know how many times in the last year I have had couples come in, not just from here, but many of you from here. They say, "You know," I listen to them, they have some struggles, they have some issues, and I tell them. I said, "You know what, you guys have a problem communicating. I mean, you are sitting in the same room and you are not hearing what she is saying, you are not seeing what she is saying." I said, "I do not know what reason, but you are not communicating." Here is what I tell them. You know how you learn to communicate in a marriage? I do not know why. I do not understand why this is so hard. I just do not, but it is. Guys, it is the hardest thing you are ever going to have to do in your life. To me, it just blows my mind. I tell couples all the time, I say, "Here is what you need to do. If you want to learn to communicate, learn how to pray together." Set a time three times a week. Set a time every day would be great, but I do not know that you can do that. Set a time, you know, twice a week. Set a time once a week. I do not care. I do not care how infrequent or frequent it is as long as you do it with consistency. Doing without consistency is 10 times worse than not doing it at all. I will tell you that right now. That is true of anything in your life. But I said, "Here is the deal. You kneel down here, you kneel down here. You pray out loud for God to make you a better spouse. You pray out loud for God to make you a better wife. You pray out loud to God to help you. Do not pray to God for His problems." I feel like a dentist that just was drilling through your teeth to hit a nerve. I think I will stay here a while. "Do not pray for God to fix him. Pray for God to fix you." When the husband is kneeling next to you after you are done, let him pray. Do not ask him, and you do not pray for her to fix her. You ask God to fix you.

As you come to the place in your life when you have that time together, let me tell you something. If a couple can get on their knees and they can pray and they can take responsibility, you know what you ought to fight over in a marriage? Who is wrong? I know you do that already. I mean in a different way. You know how you ought to fight? You know what your fight ought to be in a marriage? You do something dumb and you say, "Honey, I am sorry. I was really stupid. I should not have done that." She said, "No, no, no, no. I should not have left it out." And you say, "No, no, no. The fact that you left it out, it was dark and I tripped over. It is your fault." You know what? "I should have had on my X-ray. You know, I have got those night vision goggles downstairs. Why do not I wear them when I get up in the middle of the night?" You know, it is okay. You know, she says, "Oh, no, no, no, no. No, no, it was my fault because I left it out, you know, and I should have told you, honey, I just put chairs sideways all over the floor. So you would trip on them when you get up in the middle of the night. I am so sorry." And you say, "No, no, no, honey. No, it was my fault. You know what? I should have, I should have been

tiptoeing higher, you know, and I would have never stepped on one. It was my fault." She said, "Oh, no, sweetheart. It was my fault." And then that is what you have got to fight over, things like that. See, my point is this. Here is my point. When you can pray on that level of intimacy and pray for yourself and then pray for the other one in the right way and pray back and forth. That is the basis for your communication. You can talk about anything then. Tell me, tell me, tell me what you cannot talk about. Tell me what you will not be able to get through that you cannot communicate with when you can communicate on that intimate level.

You know what? Most guys cannot do that. Girls usually do not have a problem. It is the guys. Now, I do not know why that is: too much football, too much testosterone or whatever that stuff we have got in our bodies is too much, too much ego, too much. "I am the man," too much. "We do not do that. There is too much. We do not cry. We do not do that. We do not do that. We do not wear a man. We do not do that." See, you watch too many John Wayne movies. Well, I will tell you what, you are caught up in it. You know what? For whatever reason, men cannot do that. Then down the line when it all busts up and breaks up, they say, "I wonder what happened." Well, I will tell you what happened. It goes all the way back. It starts wrong and usually ends wrong. Sixth disclaimer: Any time you want to fix it, you can. You can.

I will tell you what, ladies, if you have to constantly, if you know, and here is what happens with guys, I know how it happens. I am just telling you. Here is what happens. You know what? You start doing it for two or three days, maybe a week, and then, you know, four weeks down the line, you know, do not do it anymore. You just, you know, you are standing around saying as a gal, "Well, what happened?" "What happened?" Is that the kind of spiritual leader you want? You always want to go up and knock on his forehead, "Time to pray." Is that a spiritual leader? You always want to be reminding him of the principles? You always want to be bringing along behind you? Now, let me just give you the bottom line here. You know why? You know why they, husbands do not do that? Do not follow through. You know why they forget? You know why they do not stay with it? Here it comes, because they really do not want to do it. Did you ever notice the things that get done in our life that we really want to do? Now, a lot of you like to hunt deer. This is not a slam against hunting or fishing. A lot of you like to hunt deer. A lot of you like to fish. A lot of you like to do whatever you like to do. Everybody has their thing. Somebody likes to play golf. That is fine. Everybody needs an outlet. Everybody needs an outlet. You know, everybody needs something in life. But the bottom line is, you know what? When we have things in our life that we really want to do that mean a lot to us, we never miss it. Could you see a guy who has waited all year to go deer hunting, and then that morning he gets up at 1 o'clock in the afternoon? And he says, "Boy, there is sure a lot of shooting going on this morning." He kept waking me up. "Everybody was getting their deer. Where are you all at?" No, you are out there. You cannot sleep the night before. You are probably just all night long, you are just thinking, "Oh, you are waking up every hour. Is it time we get up yet? Do not want to be late. Oh, man, it is 4:30. I have got to get up at 5. Oh, I cannot go back to sleep. I have got to stay up." You know, because you are so, because that is what you really want to do. Now, why cannot you be like that with the Bible? Why cannot you be, ladies, that is the kind of guy you want. I do not know what to tell you. I do not know what to tell you. You do not want somebody that you have got to always remind them to be the spiritual leader. "Hi, honey, have a good day. Hey, behind you, you

are the spiritual leader." Is that what you want? Really, is that what you want? They are inconsistent before marriage, I guarantee you. If it is not important to them, if it is not the number one thing. If you have got to, if walking with God in a relationship with God and the intimate things of being a spiritual leader is not the number one thing in life before they get married, please, please, please, please, please, please, please. Do not fool yourself into thinking it will be afterwards. It will not. The key is the well. The well. Prove all things.

#### IV. The Purpose of Engagement and Proving All Things

As this church has grown over the last four or five years, this last year I saw the need to establish really two key areas in our church. You know, we have come along now and we are going great and God is, you see, and people saved and people are coming in and all of that stuff. You know, we have gotten to the point now where this last year I saw two areas that this church really needs to begin to develop. One of them was in the youth ministry, which we got up going very well. The other one was in the area of the young marriage because, again, the key word here is proactive. The marriage issue will be the number one problem. This church needs to be proactive not only with kids and their parents, but also in building relationships with the ones that come in who want to get married. The lifeblood of this church and its future will not be us old folks. I am sorry. I am sorry. I am 58. I am 50. I do not know how old I am. I am getting pretty close to 60. I think I am going to be 59. June 14th. Size 15 and a half. 33. This church has to be built on the young blood that is in it. Every young couple that comes in, every young single that comes in, I look at and I think to myself, "Wow, there is the lifeblood of this church." That does not mean that we do not minister to the older folks. The older folks ought to be ministering to the younger folks. They ought to be the examples by which the younger folks look to and say, "Hey, this is what I want to be." But you know what? It does not always work that way, but wherever you are at, you can get in and get going. It is up to you. It does not matter how old you are. It does not matter. For the lifeblood of this church or any church and its future will be the young couples and the young singles that the next three or four years will start to get married and start to get to the place where they begin to build the relationships.

Some of you probably see this now. I do not know. I kind of watch and, you know, I am always looking for leadership. I look for any strain of leadership in somebody that I can develop. I look for everything that I do. I do not always tell you why I do what I do the way I do it because I have learned over the years that the best way to determine leadership is to give somebody a situation and not give them all the answers to it and see how they figure it out. Because that is what a leader does. In our institute, we talk about a three little part phrase which to me sums it all up.

*Look behind, look around, look ahead.*

That is what a leader does. A leader is never looking just where he is at or she is at. A leader never sees the situation as it appears. They always see the situation as it really is. Now, that is what I am looking for in people. I am looking to put you in a scenario where you have to make some determining judgments about the scenario you are in. I want to see if you can look beyond the situation you have. I want to see if you can see what you have got right here. Basically, I am

always looking. I like to have a church filled with leaders. You say you would not have anybody to follow. No, the true leader is a good follower, okay? But developing leadership in people is the key because as this church grows, leadership has to grow. When I look at scenarios and I see people in scenarios, I am always looking for any shred. I am looking for just a minuscule part, a piece of somebody that when you, like a dying fire, when you just wave the fan, you know, you see that little ember down there and it says, "I am a leader, I am a leader." And then you bring that thing back to a forest fire.

Four or five months ago, we had a meeting. I told everybody that wanted to be a part of it, you know, that we were going to start a young marriage ministry. As I said, I do not always say everything that I am going to do. I like to throw things out there and I like to watch how people respond to it. You know, we wanted to start a thing where, you know, Danny and Bubba started a class on marriage tonight. You know, I looked at that and I thought to myself, this is what I want to see. I want to see because out of this, I have got a couple of things we are going to accomplish.

5. There are couples here that need to have that class that have never been through it.
6. Out of this class, I want these guys to develop a set of lessons that can be all the way across the board, down the line, everybody else.
7. I want to take out of that group on Saturday night and build a cadre. I want to take men and women that go through that class that I can take and put into a ministry team that wherever we go, whatever that does with us, that they have the ability to take people and work with them and do everything that needs to be done and helping them build, be proactive in building their marriage.

I do not want anybody to say, "I am going to look the difference between the ones that say, 'Man, I have already been through it, but I want to get it on the bottom floor because I want to learn how to deal with somebody else,'" versus somebody who said, "Yeah, I have already been through it, you know, I was not that good the first time, I am sure it will not be that good the second time." You see, that is the difference. That is the difference. I am looking for people who are looking farther down the line. They want to be part of it. They want to get it on the ground level. They want to say, "Yes, I want to take this. I want to learn it because that is what I want to do in people's lives."

I will give you an example. Last Sunday night, the singles hosted a sing-along. It was a great time. I usually do not go to those things simply because I like to stay out of it. When I put a guy in charge, whoever it may be, whatever he is in, I like him to run it. I do not like the idea that sometimes I am there. If he says something, people look over their shoulder to see if I approve or not. It does not matter whether I do or do not. When you are in command, you command. I follow your lead. If I had enough confidence to put you in charge, then I have enough confidence that you can handle it without me putting my face in it. So I usually do not show up because I just like to stay up in the background and let the leadership develop itself. But I went that night because I was looking for something. Now, I do not know if you know this, but it was a great time. But did you notice, did anybody notice, did anybody see what I saw? Did anybody see what I saw there? You know, as I said, sometimes I just put out an idea and do not give you all the story because I am looking to see how things go. But I will tell you what, I saw three or four

groups of singles that came to that thing that probably two or three or four years down the line are going to get married. I saw people that were single that at some point are going to be in a relationship if they are not already. What I saw there was through just a little thing like that, I saw the basis being built that you folks were reaching out because those same people that right now are not married, but maybe they are dating or they have got a girlfriend or their boyfriend or they really want one and down the line are going to be married. We do not want to wait until they get into a relationship before we have any input in their lives. You were building the basis right there. You were building the foundation in their life right there by shedding the example of what good, godly things are supposed to go like that a little bit farther down the line when they get into a relationship, they will just walk right into the process of learning how to build a marriage. Because the pre-stuff was done right now. Looking around, looking behind, looking ahead, not just looking at it for what it appears to be, looking at it for what it can be, what it should be. Leadership, building relationships, that is what ministry is. It is the ability not just to see a single group or a married class group, it is the ability to look beyond that and look ahead and see the people down the road that you are going to be ministering to. I do not care if they are married for 20 years, 30 years, 40 years or 50 years. I want to develop a team of leaders in this church that will be able to deal with marital problems as wherever they come in, however old they are, that you will be able to take them and mold them and make it happen in their life. The key is at the well. I love the verse, he says down there in Genesis 24:13:

*Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:*

"I am just going to wait. I am going to watch the ladies come in and come out to draw the water. And I will know the right one when she shows up." And boy, when old Rebecca came down there and picked up that thing and brought that water, he says, "That is her. That is her. That is her."

This is why, ladies and gentlemen, and most of you do not even understand the biblical definition of an engagement. You find kids getting married today, they get no engagement, little engagement. Just like they do not understand the Bible definition of marriage, just like they do not understand the Bible definition of finding a spouse and a relationship for the judgment seat of Christ, they do not understand the Bible definition of an engagement. Can anybody stand here and tell me why that in the Bible in the Old Testament when a husband and wife or a spouse are not married yet, can anybody tell me why before while they are still engaged the Bible already calls them husband and wife even though they have not been married or not literally legally husband and wife yet in the Old Testament sense? Well, the answer to that is the importance of a biblical engagement.

Your relationship, any relationship that you are going to base your judgment seat of Christ on, is going to be founded on three things.

8. It is going to be founded on a lordship. That is your own personal relationship with Christ and your own spiritual growth. That lordship is going to lead to when you and your wife both have the lordship and you both have your personal walk with God, your growth process is

kicking in, you are growing, you are in ministry, you are moving towards the Lord. You are moving towards the well, you are getting to the point where you are going to get to that point.

9. Once you get your lordship together, the lordship then brings into the next aspect and that will be your relationship. In other words, any relationship you have will only be based on your lordship and that lordship will only be based on how far you are willing to go.
10. The question that both of you ought to be asking yourself through the relationship, and this is where the Bible says to prove all things. Through the engagement relationship, the engagement relationship, ladies and gentlemen, is a pre-described period of time by which you are proving all things without actually getting into the contract of it.

Now I think very frankly, and this is just me, this is not a biblical principle, but this is just me here, you can take this for what it is worth. I think that if you are actively looking for somebody to get in a relationship with and it is getting serious to the point of marriage or they want to get married, I think you ought to write out a contract, a biblical spiritual contract. I learned one of the greatest things I have ever done in ministry is to document things. I used to think that people understood what you were saying when you had an agreement and then six months down the road suddenly it all changed. You still remember it, but it did not go the way it was supposed to go. So I have learned over the years that what you want to do is you want to document. You want to document. You want to have something in writing so if you have to have an issue you can come back and say, "Okay, here is what we said." Now I think that is perfectly legitimate if you are going to get in a relationship with somebody and you are a young lady and you want some things that you do not screw up your judgment seat of Christ or you are a guy and you want some things that you do not want to mess it up. You sit down and you say, "Okay, here is what I am expecting from you. This is what the Bible says." And the guy says, "Okay, here is what I am expecting for you." Write that thing up.

A couple of years ago now, what three years we put in our first deacons. I followed the same program. I took all of them in a little room back in the old building. We sat down and we talked about some things and I laid some things out for them and I showed them what I expected. I did not bring them in and say, "You are all deacons." I said, "We have been through this thing now for two or three years. I said, you know what, you know me, I know you. Up to this point, I said, I am offering this to you based on our past performance together because I think that you have, up to this point, you have laid yourself out as a leader in this church." I said, "We have come to the place now where we need to put our first deacon in." But remember what I did? I had a whole list of things I went down. I told you that your accountability was going to be higher than somebody else. I laid down a parameter for you being a deacon. I laid down the parameter being an example of being a deacon. I walked through that thing and then, you know what I did at the end? Oh, I remember now, I gave all of you your deacon certificates. No, I did not. I said, "You take it and think about it for a week." I said, "It will be no reflection on you whether you do it or you do not." I said, "If you do not come back to me and you say, 'I am not up to this, I am not ready to do this,' I will say to you, 'God bless you. I appreciate your honesty. You are a good man. We will look at it. You ever feel you are ready to do it? You let me know because you are a good man in my eyes and praise the Lord, I appreciate your honesty.'" You know what else I did? I had them tape it. I gave them each a CD of that meeting. You know why I did that? Because I

know human nature. I know down the line someplace, if I had had an issue with somebody or a problem with somebody, it would have been one of those he-said, she-said things, you know. I wanted to keep that meeting as clean and close and not waste a lot of time for them and for me. So I gave everybody a CD. I told them, I said, "You need to listen to this at least once a month." I said, "Because the bottom line is this, if there is ever an issue, do we have a problem? I am not going to come to you and say, 'Hey, what is your problem? What is the deal?' I am just going to simply look at you and say, 'What part of this did you not understand? What part of this did you not escape to? What part of this did you not figure out at the time we were there that went in a week from point A to point B when you had the chance to get out of it? What point in here did you not get?'" See? You know what that does? That eliminates it. Documentation is the key. I do it. I do it. I mean, you are entering into a marriage contract, are not you? Well, enter into an engagement contract.

You have lordship, which leads to your fellowship. Excuse me, but these are your relationship. When you have the lordship down and the relationship down, that leads to where your fellowship really is. That thing is true in your own personal relationship with Christ. It is also true in your marriage. You have got to have those things operating in your life. You do not get those things by coming to church. You get those things by hanging out at the well. At the well. These three areas ought to be worked out during the engagement. You ought to be asking yourself, if you are the woman in this, you ought to be asking yourself through this time as you are a man in this, being honest with yourself. See the principles, take the emotions out. You ought to simply come to the point and you simply ought to say, "Do I really want to be in this relationship? Is this thing going that is going to protect me at the judgment seat of Christ? Do I have a reason to stay in this?" I mean, in a perfect biblical perspective, up against the judgment seat of Christ, if I continue in this, "Do I really want to be the rest of my life, be the spiritual leader? Do I really want one that always brings up praying, always brings up this? Do I really want to be the one that always has to lead the thing and everybody has done?" If that is, do you really want to do that in your life? Those are the things. That is what the engagement is for. So many times the engagement is never even thought of. You do not even understand how it works in the Bible. You do not even understand how it lays itself out. Therefore, you are in such a big hurry because you want to get married, you just forsake the whole thing. Then five, six years down the line, you will wonder why. It is simple. It is simple. When it starts wrong, it usually ends wrong. It is like trying to fix the washing machine with a handbook from the cordless phone. It just does not work. There lies the problems that we have.

## V. Addressing Complex Marital Scenarios

Now I say that and I say this: No matter where you are at in your relationship, no matter where you are at, whether you are married, not married, whatever the case may be, you could always fix the thing that needs to be fixed. Next week, we are going to enter into the second greatest chapter in the Bible on marriage relationship, and that is 1 Corinthians chapter 7. I am going to talk about every scenario you are ever going to possibly find yourself in. Some of you have never been married, and you are faced with marrying somebody who has been married. Some of you have never been married and the person you are marrying has never been married. Some of you

are getting married, but somebody that has already been married and the person you are married has already been married. You find every scenario in the world, every scenario in the world found in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. After you get saved and you make mistakes in life, you get those mistakes right, brother, and you can do whatever God wants you to do, and you can have everything that God ever had for you, and you can even redeem the time the Bible says. But it all comes down to principles.

In every one of those scenarios, because here is what you deal with. Here is what you deal with. Some of you find yourself in a relationship, and here is the big problem. You are going to get it. You have never been married before, or maybe you have, and the person you are going to marry, he has been married before, or she has been married before, or maybe they have not. Here is the big problem in those kind of scenarios. There is nothing wrong with it. We are going to talk about what the Bible says about divorce, remarriage. We are going to talk about what the Bible says about all the aspects of it. Here is the problem: Somebody goes into that, and they think they are going into it like nobody has ever been married before. It is just like getting started all over again. No, it is not. No, it is not. You can get married. There is nothing wrong with that if you have done what the Bible says you need to do. But, brother, you are entering into a whole other scenario that Paul says, "and such, and such, and such will have trouble in the flesh." It brings a whole different scenario. Does it mean it is unworkable? Absolutely not. Does it mean you cannot work? Absolutely not. In many cases, they do work. In many cases, it adds to that person. It helps that person when they do it by the biblical principles.

I am going to bring you through next week, and I am going to show you every conceivable scenario. I am going to show you what the difference is between a Bible separation and a divorce, who even understands that the Bible has a separation for people. I am going to talk to you about what God calls marriage. There are some of God's people here this morning. Maybe not in here, but there are some of God's people out there in the world today that are married by the state but have been unmarried by God for a long time. Then there are people out there that have never been married by the state and are married in God's sight a long time ago. Understanding the difference between what God looks at as marriage and what God looks at as divorce. Understanding getting all of the getting too married. Understanding that what you do when you find yourself in an abusive situation. Are you stuck there? Are you stuck in a situation where your husband is abusive and maybe brings drugs and alcohol and the children involved? What do you do? Is this Romans 8:28 now? Does that apply here? Do you have any recourse at all? Can you do anything at all? How about if you are married to a deadbeat husband? How about if you are married to a husband and it is just everything he does. Everything you left completely with everything in your own scenario. I mean everything is out of balance. Everything is messed up. Are you just stuck with that? What are the principles in cases like that?

How about this one? I hear this more any other time in any other situation of marriage. Because people get married from other relationships and they have children from the other relationships. Sometimes the husband will be married and he has got a child. The mother has never been married and she has no children and they get married and now there is a child involved. Sometimes they both have kids from previous relationships and they come into the marriage. The

number one problem that parents talk to me about is how do we get along in that scenario? How do I discipline a child that is not my biological child? How do I deal in a situation when we give him the Bible when the other spouse on the other end takes it from him? How do I deal with a situation when I am trying to give him Bible verses and his father or his mother over here giving him a marijuana cigarette? How do I deal in that scenario? Am I just stuck? Do I just say, "Oh God help me?" Do I just say, "Well that is just the way it is?" What are the principles involved in dealing in those kind of relationships? Well, the Bible covers them. You ought to know in every given scenario you are faced with, you ought to understand and know how to deal with it, how to biblically lay it out, what the principle is involved, that when you find yourself in that scenario, and truth of the matter is, if you never find yourself in that scenario, you are going to rub shoulders with people at work, people in your neighborhood, people that God wants to put in your path, that you will be able to help them get through what they are going through. But it all starts with coming back into your own principles.

## VI. Conclusion: God's Redemption and the Call to Ministry

Now I am going to end by saying this. I said a lot of things today, and you may find yourself caught up in one of these scenarios, I do not know. But I am telling you this, I do not care how bad you screwed it up in the past. I do not care how bad, what a mess you have made out of your life, out of your marriage, whatever the case may be. This was not a browbeating session this morning to make you feel bad about your failures in life. Any time you want to list your failures next to my failures, we will have a great time talking about it, get a couple beers and probably get drunk. But the bottom line is this: God will take you wherever you are at. You are never done with God. God is never done with you. God wants to take you no matter where you are at. I do not care what you have done. I do not care where you have been. I do not care what your scenario is. I do not care. There is always time to start until you breathe your last breath. There is always time to start doing what is right and putting your life where God wants it to be. Nobody, I mean absolutely nobody, not around here anyhow, will ever point their finger at you and say, "Well, who do you think you are? Look what you did." I guarantee you nobody around here will. Because the bottom line is this: Everybody gets a chance with God no matter how we screw it up. When you are serious with God, God gets serious with you. He will take you from that point and He will build your life.

There is no reason, and my goal, I have told you this, my goal, my goal is that everybody who is a member of this church, my goal in time for you is that you are all actively involved in dealing with people and their lives and accomplishing what God's plan is for your life. Now will that happen? Absolutely not. But that does not stop me from wanting it for you. That does not stop me from putting the things in play that give you the tools that you need. Because I know this, enough of you will. Enough of you will that will make the difference. That is why God brought you here. That is why God put you in this church. That is why God, God you find your way here because God is going to take you, going to mold you and going to make you. You are going to have to change the things on your end and then God will take care of it on the other end. That is how you become valuable to God in ministry. But it has to be done by the principles. You have to start putting those things into your life. As the Bible says, if you are contemplating a relationship

with somebody and you are contemplating getting married or you are in a relationship, the bottom line is simply this: prove all things. Do not listen to what they say. Watch what they do. They will tell you for the next 35 years, "Well, I am going to do it. I am going to do it. I am going to do it. I am going to do it. I am going to do it." You know what? They will never wind up doing it because we do what we really want to do. That is a terrible, terrible concept to say about anything or anybody. The fact is we think more about fishing. We think more about hunting. We think more about this. We think more about that. We think more about sports. We think more about sports than we do. We will give that more time, more diligence, more time than we will building our own relationship with God. But people do what they really want to do. I had 35, 40 years of ministry. I never met anybody, male or female, that ever got duped out of being the man or the woman God wanted them to be. That is all a conscious choice they make. They look at life. They look at the ministry. They look at this. They look at that. They look at this because there is more fun.

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We thank you for the great concepts on relationships. We ask you, Father, to help these folks this morning look deep inside themselves and no matter what relationship they find themselves in. Father, help them to know that the reality is that the Word of God changes our life. I never met a Christian that was right with God, plugged in with God, doing what God wanted to do, that stayed in the same spiritual state they were in.