

## I. Introduction to 1 Corinthians and the Church's Spiritual State

I would like to invite you to open your Bibles to the Book of 1 Corinthians. As you know, we have been coming through the Book of 1 Corinthians, and I told you last week, as we have with every book of the Bible, we have been focusing on how Christ is portrayed in each book of the Bible. We know now that in the Book of 1 Corinthians, the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed as Christ our Lord. We have made mention several times that the Church of Corinth had some tremendous spiritual issues. Paul is writing this letter to them to deal with these issues. He wants this church, as we have seen the last couple of weeks, to be a good church, a fruitful church, a church that brings honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. At this stage of the game, they are far from that.

We have been coming through it, and it is obvious at this stage of the game, just in the last couple of weeks, that we see the reason why they are not the functional church that they should be. The obvious reason is that they quit growing spiritually. They either never grew spiritually or they just quit growing spiritually. We see that phenomenon all the way through the Bible. We have been studying in the Old Testament, finishing up those books, and we just looked at Zechariah and Haggai the week before that on Thursday night, giving you the outlines of that. I showed you there again that this is the same problem that we saw in the Old Testament with the Nation of Israel. God sends them back in 70 AD—excuse me, sends them back 70 years after 606 BC, about 520 BC—and they begin to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. We know now from our studies in the Bible that that was the central thing for the Nation of Israel. But then they lost interest, and some 12 years later, God sends them Haggai, then Zechariah, and both of those prophets zero in on the same issue: "Why have you stopped building the temple that God has given you to build?" They were falling again back into disarray, which always happens when we break down and we quit growing spiritually.

This is what happened to the church at Corinth. This is what happens to churches today. I told you how the church at Corinth is nothing more than a mirror image of what churches are like today who have stopped growing spiritually, and they have lost their way on basically all the major issues of the Bible. For us, the book is a gold mine because when he is dealing with these issues, when he is dealing with the problems they have, by God's intention, it really gives us the insight of knowing how to sidestep the problem.

## II. The Danger of Spiritual Stagnation and the Call to Be Prepared Servants

You know the Bible. I sign people's Bibles all the time, and I sign just a few variations of things in it. One of the things I will put in sometimes is, "This Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Bible." That is a basic little thing, but it is true. That is what happens in the

church at Corinth. They got back into the things of the world, and the Bible went, and they lost their spiritual way, much like God's people and churches do today. For us, it is an incredible lesson on how to sidestep, how those things should never happen to us.

There are a lot of good things that happen to you by coming to this church, but let me tell you one major bad thing that happens to you from coming to this church. You are all told at various times, by various people, that a lot of terrible things will happen if you come to this church. Well, I guarantee you, I will tell you one thing that is a danger for you being in this church: the judgment seat of Christ. You will not stand there and say, "Nobody ever told me." You will not stand there and say, "Oops, I didn't know." You will not stand there and say, "Well, you know what, I just... we had a lame-mouthed preacher that just never really got into anything, and I just never..." No, no, no, no, no. The greatest danger for you in this church is sitting here week after week after week and not doing what the Bible says to do. This was the problem of the church of Corinth, hence the title of Christ being portrayed as Christ our Lord.

I told you in Luke chapter 6, verse 46, one of the great principles in the Bible:

*Luke 6:46*

*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

This is the church of Corinth. This is the modern 20th-century church, and this is why the book of 1 Corinthians is such a valuable book to us. It shows us how to sidestep the issues, and it really prepares you and me for what we really need to prepare in ourselves to do what God has called us to do.

Now, in chapter 7, and this is a major chapter here, in chapter 7, we have laid out for us the New Testament teachings for the church on three major issues:

1. The first issue he addresses is marriage.
2. The second issue he addresses is divorce.
3. The third issue he addresses is remarriage.

Obviously, these are pretty serious issues within the church of Corinth. Even though we do not get a lot of dialogue and we do not know exactly what the problem was because he really does not get into it in detail, he spends all of his time laying it out, which is fortunate for us. But he does say in verse 1, and this is what leads us to know for sure that they have some spiritual issues, he says in verse 1, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." He does not really tell us what those things were, but what he does do after verse 1 is spend the next 40 verses in this chapter dealing with the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. So it must have been a major issue that he took that much time to write about it. His answer back to them, these 40 verses, sets up for us how a New Testament church should deal with, and even more important, I think, understand these issues. For what you have in chapter 7 are the rules of conduct, very clearly laid out on what you are to do and how to handle every situation that you are going to come across in this issue.

I am going to take whatever time it takes in this chapter, and we are not even going to get into the chapter today; this is going to be an introduction. But I think you have to have an introduction to understand what we are going to deal with, because I want you to, and I want to take whatever time it takes on this chapter, for I think that where many of you are at with the Bible, and where you want to be with the Bible, understanding all of this will help you not only yourself, but it will help you help other people.

We have talked about it many, many times. God wants you to be a prepared servant. God wants to put you in places where people need to hear the truth that they need to hear. The great example of that in the Bible is obviously Acts chapter 8 with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. This is not new to you; I have told you this many, many times, how that here you have a prepared sinner, an Ethiopian eunuch, that needs to be saved. He needs to hear the truth. God did the work that he needed to do by getting that man a copy of the Old Testament scriptures, Isaiah 53 is what he has. Here is this man, a prepared sinner. God's Spirit has obviously dealt with him in his heart. He has given him the Word of God, which you cannot understand, by the way, and then he has isolated him from all the things in this world, and he is on the backside of the desert simply sitting there trying to figure this thing out. Then God adds the final equation. He has the prepared sinner in his place. Now what God needs is a prepared servant, and we find in a man by the name of Philip, one of the first deacons in the Bible, a man that God chose to take out of a great revival in Samaria and send him to the backside of the desert, which sets up for us a model for you and for me.

There is not a week that goes by that somebody does not talk to me or call me and tell me about or ask advice on some situation that they were put in at work. Christi Christiansen last night at the ballgame, she was telling me about the aspect of where she works. She is a nurse, and she was talking to me about that they had somebody there that was bleeding and speaking in tongues, and all the nurses were in a little nurse cubicle talking about it and giving their various opinions about it, and she got to go in there and lay out for them from the Bible what tongues were and put it into a context for them. I am telling you, it happens all the time. I talked to Roy this week, and Roy and Rob, they travel through many states doing their business and doing what they do and keeping up the maintenance things of businesses, and he asked me, he said, "You know what, you would not believe," and Rob, he said, "You got this too." He said, "There are a lot of opportunities you guys get to talk to people that people talk to you." We talked about it. I put some packets together back there of how to study the Bible, little Bible things. I want you guys to take with you when you go out because people are... God wants to put you in places where you are His shining light. There are people in your world where you work, in your... How many times have I heard some of you tell me about people at school that you get a, teachers that you get a chance to talk to? You work your way into your teacher's class and you try to help them with the kids, and the teacher appreciates it and she sees something different in you. The next thing she does is she spills her guts about her bad marriage or a bad relationship or problems she is having.

God wants you to be a prepared servant. God wants to be able to drop you in any place he needs to for you to give people what they need. I will tell you, every culture has its problems. If you go

down to places in Central America, poverty, Haiti, poverty is just everywhere. Those people, yes, they need Jesus, certainly they do. There is no question about that. But they also need food. They also need clothes. There are places in this world where they need medicine. There are places in this world where they need all kinds of things along with the Lord Jesus Christ. But really the key to penetrating those cultures where you get in to be able to do something in their world is to meet that physical need and then allow God to make that like a conduit by which you can get them to Jesus Christ.

Well, America has its own special brand of problems. It is not food, obviously. No, no. America's number one problem is America is an insane asylum run by the inmates. America is busted families, busted homes, busted relationships, busted marriages, and basically like the book of Judges where God was supreme for so many years, but now no king, and every man doing what is right in his own eyes. That is a bad state of affairs for us to be in in the country. But on the other side, it makes it a ripe situation for being used of the Lord. I can honestly say this today without knowing really anything about any of you, but I know one thing about every one of you that may or may not be true, but God wants to be true: He wants you to become a prepared servant. He wants you to learn everything you can and gain everything you get and put it all together so that God, up through your world, can put you in any scenario where somebody will come and talk to you about their situation in life, and you have the light and the answers that they need.

Of course, I was taught many, many years ago the first thing a pastor does with his people is try to reproduce what he has with those people. That is a scary thought: two hundred Bible examiners running around town. But just simply in the sense of you having Bible truth and having the burden of vision to be able to go out, and God will put them into your life. You do not have to go looking for an opportunity to minister today. Philip did not go looking for it. When you walk with the Holy Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of God and you are in one, He has one direction for your life, and that is for Him to put you in the situations where you can be used of God like Philip was with the Ethiopian eunuch. I think that this is the great aspect, the real missionary endeavor of our church is you. You are a missionary. Your mission field is your neighborhood. Your mission field is where you work. Your mission field is the school your kids go to. Your mission field is where the people that God puts in your life, that if you are doing what needs to be done in your own personal life, God will put the people in your life that have had disasters or are going through some disaster. Broken marriages, busted relationships are the number one issue people have today that leads to all kinds of extenuating circumstances.

### III. Historical Perspective: The Decline of Societal Values and Institutions

I taught you in ministry before that for me, in my own personal world, I understand things better when I get the perspective. I think perspective is really important. I know from just my own life of living on this planet that there usually takes three things to get the right perspective on something. I think people make too many rash decisions. I think pastors make too many rash

decisions without getting all of these three together. I have told you before that the basic three aspects of the dimensions of the ministry are:

- Look behind.
- Look around.
- Look ahead.

You have to see what has been for you to know where you are at. Do not tell me you know where you are going when you do not know where you have been and you do not know where you are at. But that is the way we operate today. I think with this particular study in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, for you to be valuable in helping people, because this chapter is the great chapter. It is the toolbox. In 35, 40 years of ministry, it is the bedrock where you do your work from in dealing with people with bad marriages or concepts of marriage or relationships or divorce. It has to form the basis, the foundation. There are many, many principles in here that it lays itself out. In fact, in the chapter, there are 20 dynamo principles that you operate by and then about 50 sub-principles that tie into those.

But I think that for you to understand it, to understand what you are up against today, the gravity of it, the seriousness of it, how it infects and impacts almost everything in our society, I think you need to understand the historical perspective. I was born in 1950. I remember back in those days, as some of you were born back then. We have a number of people in our church that probably can remember some of the same things that I am going to talk about today. But this is for a historical perspective, because I think you have got to look behind before you can look around. I think you have got to look behind and understand it before you can look around and look ahead. I think for you to be effective in God wanting to put you into this scenario, you have to understand what you are dealing with and where it came from.

When I grew up in the 1950s, people never got divorced. Movie stars got divorced. I remember that two of the greatest fornicating harlots on planet Earth when I was growing up were Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. Marilyn Monroe killed herself right after the CIA killed her, somebody killed her anyway. She died of an overdose of drugs, sleeping pills. Liz Taylor just died here a couple of, about a month ago. I remember my mom was into those, back then, the photo play magazines about the movie stars and all of that. The great scandal, Elizabeth Taylor was married five times. They would critique every one of her. She was married to some guy named Todd who was killed in a plane crash. She married Joe DiMaggio, a great ballplayer. But the great love affair, torrid love affair, her love of her life was Richard Burton. She went through four or five marriages. She, and finally she was married to Richard for quite a long time. Then they got a divorce. That was scandalous back then. It was something that you read about in the tabloids. It is so commonplace today that when you go to the shopping center today, in the fifties it was, "Liz Taylor marries for the fourth time." If you put up on a newsstand today, "So and so married for the fourth time," nobody would even buy it. No, you have got to get "Britney Spears has sex with aliens." You buy that, you see. You have got to get way off the wall today. They are laughing, but boy, did that say where we are at today.

Common people just did not do it. It was something that the rich and famous did. Young couples got married and they stayed married. Older couples, they had their issues, but they stayed and worked them out or they did not work them out. But divorce, what I am saying is divorce was not an option. Now today, the statistics here are from the 1980s. That is 35 plus years ago. In the early 1980s, the national statistics came out that half the adult population of the United States was divorced and half of them were remarried and divorced again. I cannot even imagine what the statistics would be today. I am not even sure you can calculate them.

I want to say this because I grew up in this era, and maybe you grew up in it too, and maybe you were not paying attention, but I remember these things. I remember that in the early 70s, when everything started to fall apart and the fabric of society began to crack, and now the marriages had begun to really, an avalanche had taken place. Nothing made the church, nothing made churches look at themselves more than this avalanche of broken marriages that the church had to face because there was no sweeping under the carpet. It was no longer relegated to movie stars. Now it was the common ordinary people that their marriages were absolutely falling apart. Nothing got swept under the rug more than the issue of divorce, or maybe I should say nothing got dealt with in much more of a terrible way. Churches and pastors at this point in time, they did not have the ability to even deal with it. Many big-time churches saw their deacons, their Sunday school teachers, and many pastors themselves lost their marriages as our whole society back in the 70s and the 80s and even into the 90s. But it started in the 70s, and it began to crack, and everything began to, the fabric of the family began to unravel and rip up as marriage after marriage after marriage failed. It became an epidemic.

Let me say this. This is why you need to know these things to understand the cause and effect. Every problem you are going to deal with people in, and I want to teach this to you today like we are in a classroom setting. I want to teach it to you today as something for you to learn how to deal with this. So I am going to stop from time to time and emphasize a point. The first point I want to emphasize is in dealing with people's problems, you have to understand a basic format. It is simply called cause and effect. For everything in life, there is a cause, the reason why they do it, and then there is an effect, the circumstances that come out of the cause, you see. This is fundamental. I just do not want to preach a sermon to you on divorce and remarriage today. That is not my goal. That is not my goal at all. My goal is to help take the ones who are at that point where you really are being used of God. This is not something that when you are at work someplace and somebody asks you to start pouring out, you do not sit them down and give them this message. This stuff is for you. This stuff forms your concept. This stuff forms your understanding of the cause. You will never deal with the effect of anything until you understand the cause of something. That is why the first time you went into your house with your head all busted up or your knee all skinned up, what did your mother say? Before they put any iodine on it, took it to any hospital, what did they ask you? "What did you do?" Cause, see, cause is number one. You will not affect anything without understanding the cause. This is what I am trying to give you today. I am trying to show you historically how this thing became about so we can better deal with it as we have to help people. That is what we are about.

I do not... my position on these things... I do not care what you have done in life. I really do not. What you have done in the past, what you did yesterday, does not really affect me, does not affect any way I look at you. I am only interested in where you are at today and where you want to go from here. If you do not want to change the way you are, I still love you. You are a nice person, but I cannot help you. My whole world revolves around cause and effect with the Bible and Bible principles. You put those into your life, there is not any problem you cannot fix in life. You do not put those in your life, there is not any problem going to get fixed in your life. It is just that simple.

Now, first of all, the real issue became here, and this is not the order they happened in, but I want to talk about this first because I want you to see this. The first thing that happened was a country, the United States of America, completely departing from the Word of God. There is a reason for that, and we will get to that in a moment. But in 1950 when I was born, up to the last part of the 20th century and into 2012, the first part of the 21st century, we saw the effects of the great apostasy of the Laodicean church. I am not going to take time to go into all of that. You have been around here, you know exactly from our chart and everything we have talked about.

Let me say this, there is a great principle in Matthew chapter 5, verse 13.

*Matthew 5:13*

*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Christianity and the Bible are likened to salt in the Bible. Salt in the Bible is always a preservative. When you salt things, you preserve them. In that great passage there, the great concept that if the salt has lost its savor, obviously what happens is the thing begins to decay and begins to rot. What we began to see in 1950 was the cause and the effect of 50 years from 1900 up to 1950 of this country losing its salt, the Word of God. Our country had been preserved almost 200 years by the Word of God, our value system.

I know most of you, I know last week I was trying to put some humor into the message, and I forget what I asked Zach about. "Zach, why were you not the Oklahoma bomber?" The answer back was, "Because I was not born yet." I slapped him afterwards for that. But the truth of the matter is, most of you, I forget, you were not here. You did not get firsthand. That is older people we know. We have been around a little bit. You have got to listen to it. Your parents know. That is why I listen to them. We have seen some things that you did not see. Most kids today think that manual labor is the president of Mexico. They have no idea how it fits into it. It is a sad state of affairs.

Yet, this country had been preserved. You see, you grow up in a world where mixed marriages, when I say mixed marriages in the sense of same-sex marriages, same-sex marriages are almost an accepted thing of the day. In our world growing up in the 50s, it was not. It was not. Same-sex marriages were unheard of. Homosexuality was unheard of. Lesbianism, it is a common word today, was unheard of. Those things happened, yes, they happened, but they were such a small part of society. We have the big issue on abortions today. Let me tell you something. In the 50s

and the 60s and the 70s, there were not any abortions. Not on the scale today. I am not saying people did not do it, but it is like going out and buying chewing gum today. It is like going out and buying a car. It is like going out and buying clothes. Everybody does it. It shows you the way the society has changed, and it has changed, and now the things that were absolutely against everything in our value system back then, commonplace today. The problem is that you young kids do not know that. You have lost that, or never had the sense of that kind of value system. I feel sorry for you. I do not like when I was born. I would have really been born in the middle of it all in the 17th century or the 19th century where you were really tearing it up. I am about as out of place in 2012 as I know how to be. Nothing makes me happy other than the book and the few friends that I have in my life and people in the church here and what God has given me. But what in this world, what in this world makes anything happy?

I remember when I was growing up, you know who did drugs when I was growing up? A few goofball people in churches. It was not the mainstream. They were football players. They were basketball players. The guys that were drugs, they were a very small group, and they were the outcast. Now if you do not do drugs, you are the outcast. I remember in the 30s, Gene Krupa. I was not born then, but I remember Gene Krupa. You know who Gene Krupa was? He was a drummer, very good drummer. Gene Krupa played with some of the big bands back then. Gene Krupa came to the point where he got messed up on heroin. No. Meth, they had not had the recipe for it back then. He got into marijuana. Now marijuana, there is a big debate about legalizing marijuana today. But back then, when he got on marijuana, and all they found was two cigarettes on him, two marijuana cigarettes. They put him in jail. He bonded out. Not one band would touch him. One band finally did take him, put him on, and brought him up, and the kids stopped dancing and booed him off the stage. Now, how about last night, down at the Rockfest? You could get high from just standing across the street. That cloud over the place was not bug spray to keep the mosquitoes down. The mosquitoes were not flying straight last night. Q worked it. He is a Kansas City cop. He worked it. That is where it is at today. That is how it has changed. That is how it has changed.

When I grew up, compare: Ozzy and Harriet? Sex in the City. June Cleaver? Desperate Housewife. You are getting my point? Now the tragedy is, you do not know who June Cleaver is. She is probably your mother. It is just that way. Back then we had Lawrence Welk. How he got American Idol. Of movies. There was no sex in movies. It was against the law for even to show in a bedroom scene, the man and the woman fully clothed, be in the same bed. They had their own little bed, bungalow bed. How about the Western? How do you think Brokeback Mountain would have worked in 1960? You getting my point here? We have some issues, man. I am telling you. Back then, the only thing the cowboy ever kissed was his horse. You have got to watch that kind of stuff today. Think about that for a while to come and get you.

When I was in grade school, every Easter and every Christmas, there was a preacher who came in and preached salvation about Christ. That is against the law now. They have changed everything about it. You do not even know that. They have changed everything about it. Society has completely lost its value system in everything. Unfortunately, most of you young people are victims of that. Some of the older people are victims of forgetting that or never knowing it to

begin with. Back in my day in school, they passed out Bibles. Now they pass out condoms. Everybody was taught and respected. Remember Happy Days? Everybody was a nice clean-cut kid except one guy. That was the Fonz. The Fonz was cool. He wore another jacket, white T-shirt, mirrored the 50s, wore his cigarette pack up in his short-sleeve T-shirt. He was the oddball, tough guy in a world that was filled with young kids. They were good, wholesome kids. That is the way it was. That is the way it was. This country was still caught, you see, in the ebb tide of the great Philadelphian church.

But as the country and the world in general moved away from the salt preserving of the Word of God, the three institutions that God ordained and put into play became broken and began to unravel. I want to be clear on this. I want you to be able to see the cause and the effect. I think it is very, very, very important. Again, this is a lecture this morning. I am not proposing to preach this to you. I am lecturing this to you, prospective Philips out there.

Now in the Bible, the Bible has a structure to it. In that Bible structure, God ordained three institutions. The first thing I want to do in giving you these three institutions is show you them as they appeared in the Bible. I am going to show you their appearance.

4. The first one was in Genesis chapter 2. The first institution that God ordained was marriage and from that, family. The first marriage in the Bible is found with Adam and Eve. That first marriage in the Bible sets up the model. That is why when you get married, usually the pastor reads a passage out of Ephesians chapter 5, deals with verse 22 through 33 over there, and it has to do with what was taking place back in Genesis. That is your first marriage in the Bible. That marriage was an institution that God set up. Somebody says, "Marriage is a good thing." If you like institutions, yes, it is a great thing.
5. The second thing he established was in Genesis chapter 10. That is civil government. You see, this is why Romans chapter 13 says that you have to follow and obey the laws of the government. God had to enact a structure. In that structure, God put together a cohesiveness, whether they are saved or lost, it does not make any difference. God is the author. The Bible says that the heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord. We have seen down through the Bible. That is why I told you in the Old Testament that the Old Testament is about nations. That is why in the Old Testament, all that God does in the Old Testament revolves around one nation. You know why? Because that nation, the nation of Israel, and that concept of nations and government was established in Genesis chapter 10. That is the second institution.
6. The third institution then is the New Testament local church. We know now from our study in Acts all about that. We know that it comes into play in the book of Acts, and we see how the thing all the way it lays it down.

Now that is the order of their appearance. Now let me give you the order of their disappearance because here comes the cause and effect. Here comes the deal.

7. The first thing that went was the church. When the church lost its Bible, Christianity then lost its salt. The only thing that preserves any nation is the people and the Bible that they have and what they believe about it. This is why our founding fathers, even though many of them were unsaved people, they had a reverence for God and the Word of God. They knew about

eternal judgment. They knew about heaven. They knew about hell. They believed it. There was none of this goofy stuff that goes on today, and they completely understood what the Bible was, who God was, and what the impending judgment and disasters coming their way was. They just rolled the dice. But they had a fear for God. There is no fear for God today. By the way, I am not talking about the world. I am talking about God's people. There is no fear of God in God's people's lives today. Why do you think the world would fear Him? God's people live their lives, do what they want to do, fornicate with who they want to fornicate with, do the drugs, do the scene, do the whole thing, have no fear of God's retribution whatsoever, and then we scratch our head and wonder why the world is the way it is, because the salt has lost its savor, and you and I are the salt. You and I are the salt.

8. When the church failed, marriages failed because you cannot separate church and marriage. We will see that in just a little bit. When the churches went, they lost the Word of God. It was only a matter of time before the families went. You see, families and marriages are the key because churches are made up of married people and single people and married up with families. So when the churches go, obviously the marriages and the family are going to go.
9. Then when the marriages and the families go, the third institution disappears, that is the government. That is why our country is in the shape that it is in. Our country today is being led by the people that back, you were not even born yet, back in the 50s and the 60s were the radical left-wing hippies out there, and now they are in office in Washington.

It all goes back, and I cannot even impress upon you the absolute catastrophe the judgment seat of Christ is going to be for preachers in this country who can blame it on all the Democrats all you want, can blame it on the liberals, can blame it on the communists. That Bible said, Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth, and if the salt loses its savor, that is what happened. We began to see how that thing began to erode. When marriages and families started to fail and this epidemic of divorce through the 70s and the 80s began to overflow, and just like a flood, the church was already departed and gone from the biblical aspect of things. They did not have the means nor did they have the resources to deal with the issues.

#### IV. The Church's Misguided Approach to Divorce

Now let me tell you what they did. I did not get this out of a book. I lived through this. Some of you probably lived through this too. Some of you have been with me for now, you are on to 30 some years now, and you have seen these things because we have been in a lot of the same scenarios together. But when marriages and families started to fail in the 70s and the 80s, this is what the church did. What they did really was much worse than doing nothing because as churches, as the church of Corinth, the churches today have lost their biblical perspective. So they took people who were already hurt and broken. They took people who already were at the weakest part of their life. May I say this to you? The greatest time to be an influence in somebody's life if we are a witness with Christ is not when they are at their strongest, it is when they are at the bottom of their life. I say that because the church of Jesus Christ had what? Three or four generations of people who had hit bottom. They had no place else to look, no place else to go. They had nothing else to do. They were reaching out, and what did the church of Jesus Christ do? Well, they did not do what the Bible says they should have done, and I will tell you

what they did do. They took these people who were already hurting, already broken, and further damaged them by putting them into a non-biblical system or structure that gave them absolutely, guaranteed, absolutely no chance or no hope of ever getting out of it.

The standard teaching back in the 60s and the 70s and the 80s and the 90s and even today in many, many churches is when you start to deal with marriage, divorce, and remarriage, their main text are just basically three passages. In the Old Testament they go to Deuteronomy chapter 24. In the New Testament they go to Matthew chapter 5, verse 31 and Matthew chapter 19, verses 3 through 9. This is where they, and basically Matthew 5 and 19 are based off of Deuteronomy chapter 24. I want you to understand because when you start dealing with some people who are in their 40s and maybe their 50s now and their lives are upside down, I guarantee you in many, many cases the reason why you need to know this instead of just sloughing it off like it is another message you are going to endure is the fact that if you are going to be a prepared servant, you better understand where this person is coming from before you start opening your mouth giving them advice. Look behind, look around, look ahead. Cause and effect.

Now Matthew chapter 5, verse 31, it says this:

*Matthew 5:31-32*

*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:*

*But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

Now we jump over to Matthew chapter 19, verses 3 through 9.

*Matthew 19:3-9*

*The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*

*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*

*And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

*They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

*He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*

Now those become the two verses. With these two verses in hand, the church of Jesus Christ began to deal with what had become now as the unpardonable sin of divorce. By doing so, they destroyed hundreds and thousands of people. These people went to church to get some answers. These church people, for the most case, the ones I have talked to anyhow, they know they made a mistake. They know that what they were caught up in was not right. They wanted to do it. They went to the place that they thought they should go, the church of Jesus Christ. Sounds like a good move, is it not? But what they found there was a little different. What they found there was one of the cruelest, meanest systems that I think is on the par with the Spanish Inquisition. Because now when you went to church, you were automatically branded.

Churches across the country, they did not know how to deal with it. They had no idea about the Bible. The pastor was so inept with the Word of God and had such an inability to understand the scriptures that he could not figure it out. So what they did, what they all did, what they all did: "Well, we want you, we want you, but you are divorced. So we are going to have a special class with only divorced people. Therefore ensuring that you will not mix and mingle and taint the rest of the congregation. We will call it a rediscovery class. We will call it a recovery class." Why do you not just call it what it is, the leper class? Because that is the way they treated it. They were told when they went into these classes that, "We are glad you are here, we love you, God wants you to have a successful life. Do not under any circumstances date anybody in this church." So they isolated them. Not only did they not know anything about the Bible, they did not know any pastors, they did not know anything about the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees. But I do not care. You put any men and women in a room and say, "You cannot be with these people." They will say, "Okay, we will be with these people." No, no. Unless you are going to ensure in your church that you have a personal bodyguard with each person for 24/7. It happens. Love for sale, it happens.

Churches were faced with this dilemma. "Oh, our churches are going to be tainted. Our kids are going to grow up with this kind of model. Oh, what are we going to do? Oh, God forbid we use the Bible and deal with it biblically." You are marked with a stigma that if you were divorced and remarried, other than if the only two references based on these passages were fornication, the other part are committed fornication or death. If your former partner was alive and you remarried somebody else, then you get the next stigma that you are living in adultery for the rest of your life. That is a hard thing to put on somebody. Some pastors went so far to say that if you were divorced and remarried before you were even saved and remarried, you are still living in adultery. That is tough. That is tough.

Now, if you were divorced and you stayed single, you jump through all the hoops. You could come to church, but you could basically do nothing. "I want to work in ministry." "No, you are divorced." "I want to be a Sunday school teacher." "Oh, no, you are divorced." "I want to sing in the choir." "Oh, no, we cannot put you on display in public. You are the divorced person." "Think I can ever be a deacon?" "No way, no way, no way." "How about a Sunday school

superintendent?" "No, no, no, no, no." "Can I be a secretary?" "No, no, no, no." "Well, listen, I want to come to church. I want to serve God. I know I am divorced. I made a mistake. I am trying to do the best. I am staying single. What can I do?" "Let me think. Oh, I know what you will do." In this unbiblical practice, the Church of Jesus Christ destroyed, I mean destroyed, three or four generations of God's people who could have been helped but instead were made castaways by a bunch of pious Christians.

## V. Establishing the Correct Biblical Foundation for Marriage and Divorce

That is the historical perspective. I always think that look behind, let us look around this now for a moment. Let us set a context from the Bible of God's concept of marriage, and I think this will help you now that you know where it came from and many, many people that are older folks that are into that, but the younger folks are just victims of a lawless Christianity where there is nothing, and at least you need to know what the Bible says. I think we talk about laying down a doctrinal foundation to work from. I was a young pastor many, many years ago, and I was in the midst of all of this, and I had seen all of this, and I had seen the goofy things that were happening. I was not in a position at that point to change it or do anything about it. But I made up my mind that I was going to do what I could, and I realized very quickly that 1 Corinthians chapter 7, this has been 35 plus years ago, I recognized that 1 Corinthians chapter 7 was my foundation from which I was going to have to work from. I began to look through and go through those 20 principles and outline them, and I began in basically, you know, my format for dealing with people wherever they come in, wherever they are at for the last 40 years has been based on 1 Corinthians chapter 7. I will tell you why.

The New Testament teachings on divorce and remarriage and marriage and those issues for the church are not found in Matthew chapter 5, verse 31, nor Matthew chapter 19, verses 3 through 9. Certainly not found in Deuteronomy chapter 24. Baptist pastors are so inept, and were inept back then, that when they come to the Bible, they never even thought the fact that it was different dealing with the Jews and the Gentiles and the Old Testament and the body of Christ and the New Testament. Honestly, folks, I do not know of a single issue in the Bible dealing with sin that is not different and dealt with definitely from the Old Testament into the New Testament. I cannot think of one. It is the fact that law versus grace demands that. But we are talking about a group of people that read Genesis chapter 6 and think the sons of God are born again people. So you have got to consider the source. We have kids in the elementary division who are smarter than that. Put them in charge.

The second thing is Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not written to us directly, and this is where the background of books in the Bible come in. I have got some terrible news for you, preacher. There are no Christians in Matthew. They are not first called Christians in Acts chapter 11. That is a little bit of a gap. There is no church in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Paul is the apostle to the church, and he comes in long after that. There is no body of Christ in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Paul reveals the body of Christ in the book of Ephesians. That is Acts chapter 18. That is 57 AD. A little bit of a gap. There is no indwelling Holy Spirit of God in

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. That comes in Acts chapter 1. There is no Jew and Gentile in one body in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In fact, in Matthew chapter 10, they were told to stay away from the Gentiles. You see, the basic fundamental problem is when you throw your Bible away and you lose your Bible, you lose your perspective.

If that was not enough, how could a blind man not see this in Matthew 19? The crowd coming to Jesus is not interested in Bible instruction. The crowd coming to Jesus is not dealing with a lot of people that are divorced and want to have the truth. The Bible tells you in Matthew chapter 19, they are coming tempting him. This is a setup deal. They are not looking for truth. They are looking to entangle him in their talk. No, for the church, the teaching for the church is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. It forms for us the absolute New Testament teaching to the body of Christ what is to be the Bible format in dealing with the issues of marriage, divorce, and remarriage under the New Testament style of grace. It is not the same as the Old Testament.

Now getting somebody to understand that, I do not know how to get you to do that. I mean, gee, I would think that when they died in the Old Testament, they went to Abraham's bosom, and they died in the New Testament, you go to heaven. Let me think, is that a difference? Yeah, I think it is. May I add another thing in here? I do not like to do this, but I think the day and age, and I am not really talking about you guys, this is a lecture. Think of yourself in a Johnson County Community College. But I think a question that we need to decide today, and I have been thinking about this for quite a while now, years, as a matter of fact. I told you, I am born in the wrong time. I am not comfortable with this world at all. I would rather be back there in the old days where you know who was right with God and who was not. I mean, they stood for God or they did not. There was none of this wishy-washy stuff where you played both ends against the middle. I do not like that. I am not good at that. I mean, I think New York people are the nicest people in the world, greatest people in the world, because you always know where they are at. You go up to somebody in New York and you said, "Excuse me, could you tell me how to get to the Empire State Building or should I just go drop dead?" See, you got it right there. It is very black and white. I like that. I like that. But I think the question we have got to ask ourselves today in lieu of Christianity, because I am struggling with this today, is stupidity a spiritual gift?

I do not know why you are laughing at that. At one time, I did not think it was. I am somewhat confused on it today because I see God's people chasing after stupidity. I see them embracing stupidity as it is a virtue. I see them collecting stupidity in their lives. My mother collected salt and pepper shakers. When you went into her house, she had 9,000 cabinets, and she had salt and pepper shakers. Every place we went, she bought a salt and pepper shaker set. We must have had 50,000 of them. We did not have eBay back then. We would all be rich. But she had them everywhere. She had them everywhere, and not today. You walk in people's houses today, and they display articles of stupidity everywhere in the house. We have got to think about this. It is time to consider this. Is stupidity a spiritual gift? I know that sounds stupid, but I am not telling you. I think I missed something someplace.

## VI. Fundamental Causes of Marital Failure

Now, I want to talk to you. Now that we have got a little background in our study, let us talk about and define a few things. So when we get into chapter 7 here next week in these 20 points, we have a very good context. You want to get all this solidified in your mind today because we are going to hit it hard next week. Now, I want to talk to you about reasons for divorce. I had a seminar a number of years ago that I did on divorce issues. I was a panel of four pastors, three other guys and me. The number one question, obviously, they asked, a place was packed with people. The number one question they asked is, they asked each pastor in turn, "Well, what do you think is the reason for divorce?" First pastor gave his canned answer. Second pastor gave his canned answer. Little sprinklies put in, a little different, but same. Third guy gave his. They had to me and they said, "Pastor Alexander, what would your take be? What do you think is the real cause for divorce?" And I answered, "Marriage." They all laughed, just like some of you did. Some of you did not laugh because you heard this six or seven times. I got your name down, who did not laugh? It is not good for you. I want you to know that. But anyway, that sounds stupid, does it not? Sounds funny, but that is the truth.

You see, you know why marriages fail number one? I will tell you why. Because you get into something that God, some people are going to get into something that God ordained. They are going to get into this institution that God set up and structured. They are going to get into an institution called marriage, and they are going to completely deny that God had anything to do with it. Then they are going to take something that God designed and God structured, and they are going to try to run it by another set of standards. Then they actually scratch their head and wonder what went wrong. That is the fundamental problem. People in the world today, because they have no knowledge of God, they care nothing about God, they care nothing about any of it, they do not understand that this is the first institution that God set up.

This guy said one time, "You know, you have been a pastor for a long time." He says, "I have seen you do all kinds of things." He says, "I got a question I want to ask you." I said, "What is that?" He says, "You do marriages." I said, "More than I can even remember." He says, "You do funerals." I said, "More than I can ever remember." He says, "Can I ask you a question? As a pastor, which do you enjoy doing more?" I said, "I enjoy doing funerals." "Really?" He says, "Why is that?" I said, "Well, number one, they are more permanent. I have done a lot of marriage ceremonies where they did not last, but I have never done a funeral that it did not stick." I mean, there is something permanent about that, you see. But the reason for divorce is marriage. People get into a relationship without God that God designed and God ordained, and then they try to run it some other way that God never intended for it to run. Then they actually wonder why it did not work.

We actually think that the world's portrayal of history... You know, go out and rent Mel Brooks' movie, History of the World, Part One. You will get it down very quickly. Man started out as a caveman. He had a big club. He walked down to the thing there, and there were a lot of women washing their clothes. He picked out a pretty one, whapped her on the head, dragged her back by her hair, put her into the cave. She began as what? After about 3,000 or 4,000 years, somebody said, "You know what, we need more sophisticated than that now. I got an idea. Let us call it marriage. Let us get where two men and two women just make up a bunch of things that they

say, and beautiful things that bond themselves to each other that they present to their world out there, and civilized society will now be civilized and will have the act of marriage." No, it did not happen that way. God decided in Genesis chapter 2, the idea of marriage. He put it in play because of what it represents and what it pictures in the Bible. Trying to get into that institution and then running it by a Sears catalog standard will not work. Problem one, that is your number one problem and reason for divorce is people taking something that is God's institution and then trying to run it another way that God never intended it to run.

Now, I am going to give you two great concepts here, two great verses. First of all, I am going along with what I just said. If it starts wrong, it is going to end wrong. You can take that to the bank. If your marriage starts wrong, it is going to end wrong. It just happens that way. I am not saying you cannot get it right in between. I am not saying all that. I am talking about in a lecture format here, cause and effect. I know many of you come into this church with terrible marriage situations, some not so bad, some kind of bad, some really bad, and you made it. But you did not make it because you kept going the same way you were going. You got it done because you stopped and you started looking at it from God's standpoint, and then you did what you needed to do. I am with you on it. But I am telling you, when it starts wrong, you are going to have some problems, and in time, if you do not fix them, it is going to end wrong.

Now, 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 14. Here is the first problem people get into.

*2 Corinthians 6:14-15*

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

*And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*

Basically what he is saying here, we always use this for this, and it is okay that under no circumstances in the Bible, over and over and over and over again, over and over and over again, do you ever, is there any value, any chance, any hope at all in marrying an unsaved person? Now we have lots of people in my life over the years that both were unsaved when they come in and they both get saved, works out great. I understand that. But I am telling you, these are the basic cause and effects. These are the basic fundamental reasons why you have to understand these things. I will tell you what happens. I have seen this more and more and more. You hook up with somebody, you are not sure they are Christian, you get no clear definition, you do not grill them through the word of God, you do not give them the hard line questions, and you know what happens after a relationship when you get your emotions involved? I will tell you what, they become a Christian.

Somebody sent me a joke, it was John Busquette. It is a goofy joke, but John tells goofy jokes. Part of his charm. Anyway, it went like this. I am not going to remember the whole thing, and I probably will not tell it, it will not be funny anyhow, but do not worry about it. This guy was a Baptist. Every Friday night when he got home from work, he got a big old sizzling steak on the grill. His neighbor was Catholic. Obviously Catholics eat fish on Friday. The Catholic was very offended. Went over and talked to the guy. Did nothing. So one Friday night, he got his priest to

come over. The priest came over and talked to the guy and explained to the guy. The guy might have been a Baptist, but he was not much of a Baptist, like most Baptists. The Catholic in time talked to him about it and said, "Why do you not let me convert you to Catholicism?" The guy said, "Well, I do not know. Me and all my mom and dad are Baptists. I was born a Baptist, I was raised a Baptist. I guess I will always be." He said, "You do not have to do that." Guy said, "Okay." He said, "Well, the priest does what he does." He said, "You were born a Baptist, you were raised a Baptist, now you are a Catholic." Guy said, "Thank you very much." Next Friday night, guy is out there cooking a big old steak again. Guy is enraged, calls the priest, priest comes over. I am remembering this joke. It must be a good one. Priest comes over and he says, "You cannot do this. You are now a Catholic." He says, "That is okay." He says, "What do you mean it is okay? You are a Catholic now." Guy said, "No, I took care of it." "What do you mean took care of it?" He said, "I did the same thing you did. I said, 'You were born a steak, you are a steak. Poof, you are a Catholic.'" I mean, "You are a piece of fish." What are you going to laugh at? That is exactly what you do. They are no more saved than a man on the moon. You want them to be saved. You need them to be saved. God forbid you would not fornicate with an unsaved person. You only fornicate with saved people. You need them to be saved. So just like the steak, a piece of fish, poof, my unsaved girlfriend is now saved. That is how it works. We think I am stupid. Do not answer that. They become saved because we need them to become saved. I have got values. So I know that. So you know what? You do not get into their life. You do not ask any questions. You do not really get down and find out where they are at. You just poof, you are a Christian. Why? Because I need you to be one. That is why.

Now I will talk about the second thing. Genesis chapter 24, verses 1 through 67. 19 principles on how to find the right person in your life. Now I know eharmony.com has got 29. There is a new one out there called christianmingle.com. I love that one. I mean this Christian Mingle one is a great one. You see it on TV and I love it. You know what? This is what you do not do with human nature. You put on about two lovely young people running through the daisies of the field, you know? They are happy and they are wholesome looking people. Then you put the guy or the girl on it. She says, "Are you waiting for God to make the next move? Why do you not make the next move and then God will move from there or something like that?" That is the worst piece of advice you could give human nature. That is exactly what got us into the problems. Not waiting on God to make the first move and you get impatient with God. Then what happens? Then you get, what happens after you get impatient with God? Anybody? What happens after you get impatient with God and you do not get what you want? What is the next level? Do it yourself. No, before you get to that point, you get mad at God. Then you do it yourself. Then you go, "Poof, you are a Christian." God goes, "Jemmas, you are going to cry, poof, you are naked." The chess game.

I know the standard thinking, "I am tired of the bar scene. I am going to find a partner in church." You fool. The same people that are in the bar scene on Saturday night are in churches on Sunday morning. Going to church is no guarantee. "Well, I only marry a saved person. It has to be saved." That means absolutely nothing today. That will lead to disaster. Genesis chapter 24 shows you, listen to me, it shows you and people need to understand it. It shows the number one thing you should look for, and if you do not see it, do not even consider it. I am not telling you

what it is. You do not marry the person. You are married to Christ in the person. If that Christ is not in there, do not deceive yourself. Ladies, do not settle for somebody you have got to have, you have got to drag around and train to be your spiritual leader. Guys, do not settle for somebody who will not be pliable to do the things of God. Do not forget the help meet principle in Genesis chapter 2, verse 20. This is what you tell them, see? This is what you have got to know. You have got to understand these things. Not preaching this to you. I am preaching this that you get this because the people you deal with. Listen, the people Christians hook up with will either help garnish you with the judgment of Jesus Christ or strip you naked. Finding a help meet is not like going through the drive-through in order to burger. It is a process. There is a lot that rides on it.

Remember last Thursday night when you did not come? We had one of the greatest concepts. Somebody asked a question about Jethro and those things with Moses. Remember one of the things I told you? Last week you saw Jethro taking care of the little things. Moses, Jethro says, "You should not take care of the little things, you have to take care of the big things," and I showed you the principle. This is the principle here. If God's people in their individual lives and in their relationships would take care of the little things, you would never get to the big things. We do not, we do not take care of anything. I say it again, if it starts wrong, it probably ends wrong.

Now I will tell you a second of things you want to try to get people to see. You cannot really tell them this, but you need to understand this. This is the hardest thing. This is another great principle. Do not get your emotions involved before you completely, and I mean completely, know where they are at with that book. There is absolutely no future in it. One woman said one time, "Well, he deceived me." No, sweetheart, you deceived yourself. Bible principles, you knew them. You knew what they were, and what happens is that it always happens, and 35 years it always happens. It never changes. You will trade God and the book and what you have with God, and you will throw it away for a situation to put you right out of God's will. "I found a man, I found a woman."

You know, I love the internet. I love Googling things. I grew up, there were a lot of movie stars, and I do not know what happened to. I Googled Chuck Connors the other day. He is dead, Rifleman. Johnny Crawford, his little boy. He is still alive. It is amazing, you can just type in anything. Somebody, I just really bothered me the other night, and please do not laugh at this because it was a terrible thing. I am not meaning it to be funny, it just goes to show the power of the internet. I got listened on the news, and somebody talked about killing Obama so loud, and everybody whining for him and not giving him a decent burial, and they made reference to the internet where you got, "What about the people jumping off the World Trade Center on fire? Do they not need to, what do you do about that?" I thought about that, and I thought, "How do you find that?" So I typed in, "People jumping off the World Trade Center." I got sick. Every one fireman talking to another fireman, and you do not see the people falling, but you hear them crashing through the glass ceiling. Incredible. Some power there. There is hardly a sermon you do not put together if you want to know what something is or what it is, you just type it in and up it comes. You get everything you need.

So my weekly thing, I typed up a bunch of them. I like to find out what happened to them. I typed in, I am embarrassed to tell you this, Bozo the Clown. I thought it was quite incredible. Do you realize what came up on Bozo the Clown? Bozo the Clown is the longest running clown in the history of clowns. I think it was 57 years this guy played Bozo the Clown. He is longer than Clarabelle, longer than anybody else. Bozo the Clown survived and was a clown for 57, 58, 60 years. I forget what it was. It was an incredible amount of time. You say, "Now what has that got to do with the message today?" It is a great point. Once Bozo the Clown, always Bozo the Clown. Do not think you can marry Bozo the Clown and then change Bozo the Clown later. I see you and your wife have had this discussion before, Bob. I know how it goes. You meet some gal or some guy, and I do not know how it goes. He or she has no interest. You know what? You get your emotions involved and you make some of the stupidest, dumb mistakes. You will say, "Will you share my life?" "Well, I do not know what I want to share your life." "Well, you share my, we are Christians. Will you share my God?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah." "Will you share my faith?" "I do not really go to church a lot." "Will you share my Bible?" "I do not really read it." "Well, what can we share?" "I will share your bed. How would that be?" That is how it goes. Well, you think I am stupid, but we have got to ask ourselves that question. I think stupidity is a spiritual gift because God's people are pursuing it all over the place. "Oh, that is a wonderful idea. How would you, Jesus love it, to your secret collection?" Yeah, right.

## VII. The Man's Pivotal Role in Marital Success

Now the next section is, this is not pleasant. Like the last one was. But I want to tell you something. Fundamentally, here it is. Now I am going to say this in the light of what you guys have got to learn. But you better learn this if you are going to deal with people because things are always not what they appear. I never listen to what people say. I just watch what people do. Most of the time they do not know I am watching what they do. Because I know you will put on an act for me, but when you are by yourself or with your friends, then you are who you are, see? That is easy. But let me say something to you guys here. Us guys, not you guys, us guys. Like it or not, the failure or success of marriages, 99.999% of the time will be in your hands and my hands. Notice I did not say it was going to be all your fault. Listen to me very carefully. I said, it is in your hands.

Most things, one of the greatest principles that I have never really taught because it is one of those things that I just use and I do not really put it out there, but it is absolutely true. Now it is time for some of you to get this because of where you are at and what you are dealing with. But gentlemen, you realize that your wife does not have the ability to fix a bad marriage? You do know that. Your wife does not have the wherewithal nor the ability to fix a bad marriage anymore than she has the ability to pastor a church. She cannot fix the marriage. The marriage has to be fixed by leadership. She is not a leader or she should not be. Now believe me, I do not like this any more than you do. Do not get mad at me and say, "Well, I have got to pick it up." Hey, listen, I have got to ride home today and hear this thing over and over again. No, maybe not today. I love you. Maybe not today, but at some point, at some point, I mean, you think we do not have our knockdown drag outs? Come on. You think we are Wally Cleaver and June here? We can go, Ward Cleaver, that was not right. Ward Cleaver, yeah, I know. I knew it had a W in it. We

have been married for 38 years. I have got to tell you, we have never, ever, ever, ever talked about divorce. Murder, seven or eight times. My point is simply this. I have got to get it just like you. So this is not all Bob up there climbing on me. No, Bob is going to get it. The next time we have a tiff, she is going to say, "I know here it coming. Oh, is that what you taught on Sunday morning?" No, it was not. Do not look at me like that. I do not like it any more than you. But I am telling you, a woman cannot fix a bad marriage. She cannot. God never intended her to. She cannot fix it anymore than she can fix a church. Now they can both destroy a marriage in a church, but they do not have the wherewithal to fix it. Do you not know that? Do you not understand that? These Bible principles and facts are undeniable.

Now I know there are some really wicked women out there. I have never met any. No, I am telling you, in all my years of ministry, we have got, I have met goofy women, but I have had goofy guys. But I am telling you, Proverbs chapter 5 and Proverbs chapter 7 say and tell you that there are some really, really nasty, wicked women that you want to stay away from. Personally, in my ministry, I have never met any. I just have not. But in most cases, if divorce happened, it is because the man would, listen to me, he would not become the Christ of the Bible. When that happens, it is the exact same thing. Let me ask you a question. What would happen tomorrow if Jesus and God decided to go work for UPS? They stopped being God, they stopped being Jesus, they stopped being the mediator between man and God. What would happen to Bible Christianity? I will tell you what would happen. It would fall apart. When the man who is designed in Ephesians chapter 5 to be everything to that relationship and be the Christ in that relationship does not step up to the plate, it does not have a chance in Hades. That is why they fall apart. Gentlemen, in contemplating marriage, we are faced with a God-ordained spiritual institution that is built on and rises and falls on the man's walk and relationship with God and how he applies it to his wife. I wish I did not have to say that this morning. I am digging my own grave. But I will make it a big hole so you can jump in with me.

Now, you want to kill a verse? I hate this verse. If I could find this verse was not in an NSV, I would take an NIV in this passage. This verse is terrible. Colossians chapter 3, verse 19.

*Colossians 3:19*

*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Now, you stop and think about that. That is from the Bible. That is not some marriage handbook. It says, "Love your wives and be not bitter against them." You know why a husband has no reason to be bitter against his wife? Now, many times they are. I am not saying the wife is always perfect, and she can really add gasoline to the fire. Do not get me. It takes two to tango. But it only takes one to fix it. You know what we used to say in the old days? In the old days when we would go out winning people to Christ and talking to people and talking to families, the old boys used to say, tell us young guys, "You know what? When you go into a home and you get the mom and the kid saved, you only got half a family. You go into a home and the dad gets saved, you got the whole family." You know why? They understood something that we do not understand today. I do not like it any more than you do. I really do not. But guys, I will be honest with you. You tell this and this, and you have got to know this when you deal with people. We all

have a right to be bitter against them. You know why? Because they are exactly what we have led them to be. Bar none. You say, "Well, I did not know that when I married her." Then that is your fault for not finding out before you married her, or vice versa. We do not have an excuse. We do not have an excuse.

In ministry, you know what the number one ingredient in ministry is? Above the Bible, above knowing biblical principles. What is the number one ingredient you have got to have in ministry to be successful in ministry, leaving the Bible out? Anybody want to raise your hand and tell me? What is it? Well, that is true, but even above that, but put that out of the equation. You can have that and still blow it. Being willing or available. Are you preaching tonight for sure? Yes, sir. Well, I hope you do better than that answer you just gave me. What is it? And I know you will. What is it? What is the number? Jan? Well, that is good, but that will not do you any good either if you do not have the bottom of the grill. Oh, you have got to have it. That is a good question. Well, that is close, but not it. That is okay. You are all right, you are just all wrong. Yeah. No, take the word of God out of it. In ministry. Now, I know you have got to know the Bible. I know you have got to have attitude of heart. I know you have got to have Bible principles. I know you have got to have all that stuff. But you can have all that stuff and be an absolute flop if you do not have one thing you have got to have in ministry. Yes, ma'am. That is true, that is true, but that is not it. It is a simple thing. It is patience. It is patience. It is patience. It is patience.

I have had people in my world over the years that took them five, 10, 15, 20, it sounded like we were playing hide and go seek. Five, 10, 15, 20, 20 by 30, 30 by 40. It took them 10, 15 years to get their life right with God and get through that passage and get where they are doing something for the Lord. Then they have somebody else in their life that does not come along as fast, and they want to be judgmental toward that. Give me a break. Are you sure stupidity is not a spiritual gift? Let me tell you something, in marriage relationships, it takes patience. It takes patience. It takes patience.

Then I will tell you another one, boy. 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7.

*1 Peter 3:7*

*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

It tells us as husbands to dwell with our wives according to knowledge. That means the Bible. But then look at this. Then it says, "and honoring her, and honoring her, and honoring her as the weaker vessel." Do you even know what that means? Do you even know what it means to honor your wife as the weaker vessel? It said, "honor her," not belittle her. It said, "honor her," not cuss her out. It said, "honor her," not abuse her. It said, "honor her," not bully her around. It said, "honor her, honor her, honor her," not surrender her. Not surrender her, honor her. Honor her, honor her, not scream at her. Honor her, not yell at her. Honor her, not make fun of her. Do you and I have a clue of what it means for a husband to honor his wife as a weaker vessel? I am telling you. You figure it out on your own. But I am telling you one thing right now, this is the fundamental breakdown. These are the fundamental issues. I do not like it any better than you do.

But gentlemen, you and I are faced, and when you start to deal with married relationships, I know there are problems on both sides. Sometimes women can drive you nuts. I understand that. But I am telling you what, who gave her the car keys to the bus? I mean, you and I are faced with an overwhelming body of evidence. In the book of Ephesians chapter 5, the great chapter on marriage, she gives three verses to the woman and gives nine to the husband. Again, no woman in the New Testament in the gospels ever rejected Christ and left him. They surrounded him. They wanted to be with him. They ministered to him. Why? Because he had the character qualities and the godly qualities that all women want and look for in a man when she is doing what is right. If you have not figured it out, there are eight of them right in your gospels. Eight character qualities of what a man ought to be, that when a woman is drawn to it, not repelled from it. Now, unless you are just one of the most wickedest women in all of planet earth, who wants nothing to do with God, I would say that a major share of my problems lies with me. I am not telling you what they are, but it is the key to honoring her as the weaker vessel.

## VIII. Navigating Rebounding Relationships and Solving Problems Biblically

Now, the next issue is rebounding relationships. I tell young men in learning how to preach, most are not very good. We have a few exceptions when they get on a shot the first time, do pretty good. But most guys, when they begin to preach, they are not very good, I was not very good. But they fall under a delusion that they think that if they get, the way to get to be a better preacher is to preach more often. Of course, that is not true. Giving a bad preacher more opportunities to preach just means he preaches more bad messages. I teach them that you have to analyze every aspect of your preaching. You have to stand in front of a mirror, you have to tape yourself, you have to listen to yourself. Nothing will reveal to you how rotten you sound when you listen to yourself. That is why I do not listen to my tapes. Even though it is hard to find good preaching today. It is one of those things where you have to do that.

After a failed marriage, I am just telling you, people need to analyze every aspect of their relationship process through the word of God. I liken marriage and remarriage the same way. You do not have a better marriage by just going through the process of getting remarried three or four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 times. It just keeps having more bad ones. I will tell you something else, do not blame your failed marriage on the other person. That is another thing that happens. You will find people all the time, I just stop them. That is what happens when you hook up with somebody new. You tell about the other person, you know, and then that person thinks, "Well, you were perfect, it could not be you, well, you just need somebody like me because I am perfect too." You just tell your side of the story. Then six months after you are married, you find out that it was not just all one-sided, you see. I mean, you do not blame your failed marriage on the other person. I mean, they made them a terrible person. But then I asked myself again, why did you not figure that out before you said, "I do"? I guarantee you in any failed marriage, there are problems on both sides. Sometimes they get real lopsided. Sometimes the woman brings the baggage in, sometimes the guy brings it in, but it is baggage, nevertheless baggage. I suggest,

and I would tell people this, you get the help you need to get it fixed, fix your issues, whatever you are doing.

I follow a three-point outline. If you have got a problem in your life, and most of us do from time to time, you have got an issue in your life, I am going to show you a surefire way to fix that issue. You will not do it, but I am going to tell you the process. I probably should not even give you this, but I will go ahead and do it. I just follow in solving spiritual problems, I just follow three simple plans. If you do it, then you will get your problem solved. If you will not do it, then you will not.

10. The first thing I do is I ID, I identify what my real issue is. You say, "What is so hard about that?" Because none of us want to get honest. You ever met an alcoholic that knew he was an alcoholic till he hit skid row bottom bum? All his life when he could have been helped, "No, I am not an alcoholic, I know when to stop, I can quit anytime I want to." Right, you just do not want to. How many times have people I have dealt with over the years, you know, the husband or the wife, got a terrible anger problem. You know what, you could not convince, if they had an anger problem, you know, until it is just on and on, and they blow up at every little thing, and they just, and in them, they do not think they do. You know what, you have got to, first thing you have got to do in solving a problem, you have got to get honest with yourself, and you have got to list down the problems you really have. I am telling you right now, you have got to identify your issue.
11. Once you get honest with yourself, and you identify that issue, then you know what you do the next step, you isolate that issue, or issues. You quit solving the problems that you do not need to solve, so you can avoid the ones you need to solve. Boy, we are famous for that. Say, "How do you know I do that?" Because I do it all the time. That is exactly the way human nature is. Do not work on the stuff that is okay, so you can maintain your image, go after the real issue. Once you identify it, then you isolate it.
12. Then you go to work. You know the third thing you do, you annihilate it. You beat it up with every biblical principle there is. You get you a notebook, you start going over that thing three or four, five times a day. You start reminding yourself, you identify your problem, you tell the other person or other people around you, "I got this issue, when I start to do this, stop me and tell me." You make yourself accountable to the principles of the word of God, and in time, you will stop that problem.

But rebounding relationships is always an issue. Then I will tell you another one you are going to find a lot. Over there in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 28, all of these are found in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. We are going to go through every one of these as we work through, but we need a foundation today.

*1 Corinthians 7:28*

*But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.*

It simply says one little phrase, "such shall have trouble in the flesh." What an understatement that is. This one is getting involved in a relationship and marrying somebody with former kids

from past relationships. Either one has them or both have them. Let me just say something to you. I am not saying it cannot work, but I think people make the biggest mistake in their life thinking that they go into any marriage on a second round or a third round or whatever, and especially if they have other kids involved from the marriages, and you think it is just like the first time you ever got married. You are a fool, you are a fool. It is tough enough to do it without kids. It is tough enough to do it without any baggage at all of being a former married. Adding somebody else's kid to the equation and you have got a potential disaster. I mean, it is just the way it is. It is a big mistake.

I will tell you what happens. This is exactly what happens because I have dealt with it for 40 years, and you are going to find yourself faced with it when you start to talk to people. The guy is going to say to himself, "Well, I will marry the woman and I will not marry the kids. They are her kids." Or the guy will say, "Well, I will marry the guy and those are his kids, I am just going to marry him." That is a recipe for a disaster. Now let me give you a good piece of advice. Now, if you are already in a scenario like that, well, then there is something you can always do. But if you are not in a scenario like that, let me give you an old piece of war advice. In the Army, we had the down man carry. We all paired up, you all picked a partner, and he simulated a wounded man. He had to carry him over your shoulder for a half a mile at a run or a fast walk. Now, it does not take a rocket scientist. When they said line up two lines of two, and we are going to do the wounded man carry, I did not have to think twice about my plan of action. Anybody tell me what the good course of action is in something like that? Yes, Q? Better than that, find the lightest guy out there. In other words, if I have got to run a half mile, I am going to run it with the least baggage I can. Am I coming your way? In the race of life, run it with the less baggage you can. That is a good piece of advice.

Now, I am not saying you cannot make it work. I have had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people in my life make it work. But I do not think that most people ever take marriage seriously enough. They do not see these scenarios, and that is why the church at Corinth had their problems, and the church of Jesus Christ had their problems. The more baggage you bring in a relationship, the more you have got to carry. It is just that simple. I suggest that you better have a plan. Somebody would say, "Well, what would be a plan part of that plan?" Be able to walk on water. Because that is what it is going to take. You better have a detailed plan that both of you agree and follow that is based on the biblical principles, and you sat down and laid that thing out, put it to paper, have an understanding of it, and sit down with the family and the kids or whoever, and have a meeting to see if it will ever work. Know this, it will be one of the hardest things that you ever do in your life, because 24/7. Paul was not just kibitzing when he said, "and such shall have trouble in the flesh." He was not just adding filler. He is making one of the most profound statements in the Bible that when a person gets divorced and then he decides to remarry, with all the things that people bring into it, you better have a biblical plan. It is one of the hardest things you will ever do. I am not saying you cannot work it out, but it will never be like a normal scenario, and you will always have the ex and the kids to remind you of it. You know what you have got? You have got to figure out how that you are not that biological, this is what is tough. You have got to figure out how you are not the biological parent, so you have got to divide what biologically you can do and what you cannot do, then you have got to figure out a plan to be

their spiritual parent, and then always keep it separate. That is tough, that is tough. Saying to yourself, "I am not going to do it," we will see how, as Dr. Phil says, "we will see how that is working for you." It simply is the, completely the hardest, roughest thing, that most people get into marriage like they buy a car, go to the showroom, look it up, kick the tires, take it for a test drive, and then buy it. Yeah, do not tell me about it, pal.

## IX. Conclusion: The Call to Be Prepared Servants

These, and many more, are the issues that are addressed in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. You now have a little bit of insight of the cause and the effect, and this has been a lecture series. Next week will be a lecture series. We start breaking down 20 principles and showing you the cause and the effect of how they work, the ramifications of where to apply them and how to apply them. Nothing else understand that this is the teaching to the New Testament church. I will show you places in here where he cancels out what they said in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19, and says it is no longer in effect, and then he gives them something new. I am saying these are the keys, and the average person could not find these in the Old Testament anywhere, shape, or form.

I am not saying, and I want to say this, and you are dealing with people, I am not saying that all these issues cannot be worked through because they can. You see, the thing I am going to key on next week, and I will just give you this, and then we will come back next week, and we will tree next week. I want to see the most laying down of the house. There are human souls flooding into the Old Testament. In the New Testament in the church, this is where it changes. There is no reason for divorce. There are no stipulations in the New Testament for anybody ever getting a divorce. But there are reasons why people get divorces. With that concept, we are going to pick it up next week because once you learn the biblical principles, you understand that no matter what state you find yourself in, no matter how bad it may be, I tell people all the time, "I do not care what circumstance you are in, maybe it is going to take six months, a year, to fix this totally." But I will tell you what we can do right now that will help this situation a long way, whatever it is. That is simply stop making bad decisions. Stop making bad choices. You can do that today. You may not be able to fix the long range things for a while, but there is something that everybody in this room can fix just like that. That is you get in your mind, you are going to quit making choices that do not line up with that book. You are going to begin to put the principles in. I do not know of a problem that cannot be solved between two Christians. But that is in a perfect world, is it not? We do not live in a perfect world. That is why Christians have problems all the time. But at the end of the day, as far as you are dealing with people, when you find yourself dealing with this situation, you have got to bring them back to the plan of the principles of the Word of God.

If you wanted an extended aspect of this, a while back a number of years ago we did a series called The Marriage Enrichment, which comes through every aspect of not only this, but Genesis, and all of the things that you need to do with. I do not know how many times over the years I have had marriages that were going south, and they come in to see me, and the first thing I did was get them into this and then allow them to digest it, work back with me. It does much more than I could ever do in an hour or even throughout this thing. But it is something that you need to

arm yourself with and have a set with you that if somebody is struggling, you can pass those off to them and give them what they need, and God will open the door for you to get in there.

God wants you to be a prepared servant. He wants you to be his Philip. He wants to put you and train you and to get you into every scenario in that Bible that he can just put you wherever he wants you to be. There is some person out there in your office or in your school or wherever you are at who is really hurting today. God knows and is comfortable with the fact that tomorrow he is going to take that person and you, and he is going to have you cross paths, and he is going to give you the opportunity for that person to throw up all over you, and then you are going to have the wherewithal to open up that Scriptures and help them and give them what they need, and they are so desperately looking for them. Four or five lost generations in Christianity, all because churches would not apply the Bible and do the right thing. We cannot let that happen with the people that we work with. Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the...