

I. Introduction to 1 Corinthians and the Ministry Series

If you have your Bibles this morning, let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 7. If you are visiting this morning, I always try to give a little idea where we are at. I think one of the hardest things is to go into a church as a visitor when they are in the middle of a series, and you are not sure where it is all coming from or what their purpose is, because they just jump into the middle of something. We have been coming through the Bible, and we have been kind of laying out each book of the Bible from an aspect of how Christ is portrayed in each book. The Bible is such an amazing book that when God put it together, He put it together around His Son. Having a relationship with Christ, one of the components of that is to understand all of the attributes of Christ and then to try to incorporate them in our lives. Nothing that I know of does that better than just taking a brief study of each book of the Bible. You do not have to get really down into it deep, but just see how Christ is portrayed in every book of the Bible.

In the book of 1 Corinthians, we have been working our way through. We are in 1 Corinthians, and we know now that in the book of 1 Corinthians, the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed as Christ and our Lord. We also know that the church at Corinth is a church that, we talked about this, has got a lot of spiritual issues. They mirror the church today. They are just about messed up on about everything that they could hope to get messed up on. We have talked and paralleled that to the churches today. We know we are in the Laodicean church period, and we know that churches today really have lost a lot of the definitions that the Bible once puts out that we need to have to really understand how to function.

We have been coming through these books, and some of these books, we have been majoring on more important things necessarily than others, spending a little bit more time. But when I got into 1 Corinthians, I told you that I want to spend a little more time here. When we get finished with all of the books of the Bible, and we are just working our way through the New Testament, we want to come back and take an in-depth study of the book of 2 Corinthians. For where our church is at and what we are trying to accomplish, we want to really be able to have you understand some of the basic things about the ministry. I do not know of a better book than the book of 2 Corinthians that really, I call it the handbook of ministry in the Bible.

I think the thing that makes it so important is the great contrast between the book of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians, they are messed up on just about everything. In fact, we are studying chapter 7 in-depth here because here they are messed up on the aspect of marriage. But they are messed up on everything. Chapter by chapter, sometimes in multiple cases, he deals with them on issues that they are messed up on. Somewhere along the line, the church at Corinth says, "Hey, look, we want to get our act together, and we want to start doing what needs to be done." So then he writes them 2 Corinthians. Where the great contrast is, where 1 Corinthians really lays out all the things that are wrong and he tries to get them straightened out, once they want to get straightened out, he writes them 2 Corinthians, which really forms for us in the Bible the handbook of ministry. Because now, just like chapter by chapter, he corrected

them, now chapter by chapter, he is showing them how to take what they already have and how to minister to others. It formed for us the greatest book.

Right now, where we are at, many of you are growing to the point in the Bible where many of you are coming to the place in your life that you are reaching out to people, and God is putting you in places where you really have an impact, where you have now the ability to change somebody's life. I told you a couple of weeks ago about Roy and Rob, how they are out traveling all the time, and we put some little packets together that when they witnessed to people, I have gotten phone calls from people that they have talked to. So we put some little packets together, and he has already told me in the morning that he passed all those out and needed some more. So that is what it is all about.

Where you work today, your neighborhood, I think one of the greatest avenues that some of you ladies have that probably you do not even recognize is in your own public school. If you have little kids that are in school someplace and you get involved with the things that go on in that school, you are a magnet for women who have problems. It is an incredible opportunity. I remember just a couple of months ago, or maybe a month ago, where my grandkids go to school, they had a carnival night. Four or five of you guys went up, and you had the time of your life. You got to run the food table, and you just had fun. It was a fun time. You do not know what an impact you have made on the people in that school. It was the talk of the school. The lady said, "We cannot even get volunteers," and yet here is a thing where people from your church come out. To me, it was nothing. To me, it was, "We are just having, you guys were having a fun time." I went, "Next year, I am going to come and work with you." I did not even think about it, but after the fact, I saw it; it was an impact on our lives.

I asked you to go over and cut down Crystal's tree over there last week. It was Memorial Day weekend, was it not? You guys went over there? She had a, I thought it was a little tree. I guess it was a sequoia. It was a big tree, man. That was a big tree. That fell and blocked her front door. I do not know if it blocked her front door, but it really got you guys over there thinking that they were trapped going out, in and out the window. But afterwards, the neighbors were amazed at who came over and did that on Memorial Day weekend. She proudly said, "This was people from my church." They could not believe that. She is witnessing to them and telling them about, "Come to our church, you have got to try it out. It is a great place," and all those things. She has only been coming herself for about a month and a half, maybe two months. There are all kinds of opportunities around us, 24 hours, seven days a week. We fail to see them because we are not dialed into it.

One of the things that we are talking about in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 is the aspect where he starts to talk about marriage and divorce and the issue of remarriage. I told you in our introductory message that I do not know of a worse problem in America today. I do not know of a worse problem that has broken up so many homes and cost so many heartaches. The churches have failed in meeting this need, just like they failed in meeting every other need. The church today should be a Red Cross Center. It should not be a church that is judgmental in any way, shape, or form about a person's where they come from. It needs to be like a Red Cross. It does not take sides; it just doles out medicine. Our medicine is the Word of God. It ought to be a relief

place where people can come that have problems and issues. If they want to do what is right, then they find a haven to be able to get what they need to get their lives back on track. I do not know what is so hard about that concept. That is what this church has to be. It will only be that way if the people in the church are that way. I am thankful today for so many of you, most of you, who really, really, really take what you have and do something with it.

We have been coming through 1 Corinthians chapter 7, and we have been learning this for the very fact that many of you find yourselves at work, in your neighborhood, with your friends who have issues that you can help them. Because that is the goal. We want to take the stigma off of so many people that so many of God's people have put on them. It does not mean we do not deal with it. It does not mean they are not issues we do not have to deal with biblically, but it means that your life is not over.

II. The Core Principle: God Hath Called Us to Peace

I am going to begin reading again today. We are going to pick it up basically where we, the last two points we stopped last week, so we have some continuity to it. You have now been following it through. So if you are a visitor today, you understand now why we are doing what we are doing and the way we are doing it because it gives you a better understanding. So we will pick it up in verse 10 where it says:

1 Corinthians 7:10-15

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We ask You now to meet with us. Help us to glean the great principles that You have in here. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for His sake. We ask it. Amen.

Before we start taking this passage apart and looking at all these, and there are a lot of things you are going to learn today, a lot of things that will help you personally, and a lot of things that will help you when you are dealing with other people. But I want to draw your attention to verse 15

and the last thing that he says there after the colon. He says, "but God hath called us to peace." That is the single statement that says everything about God.

If you are here this morning and you are an unsaved man, you are an unsaved woman, and you have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, the Bible says that you are alienated from God. The Bible says that in essence, you are God's enemy because of the fact that we are sinners and God is holy. But God does not want it to stay that way. So God made a way that you can be at peace with God. There are two concepts of peace in the Bible: there is the peace of God, and then there is a peace with God. Most people do not even know that. When you are unsaved and you get saved, you make peace with God. When you get saved and after you are saved, you have peace, you have the peace of God. See how it works? Most people look at those two things and do not think there is any difference in it at all. That is the difference in knowing how to read the Bible and not knowing how to read the Bible.

The day you got saved, you made peace with God. You know what that means? That means that God reconciled His differences with you through the death of His Son on Calvary's Cross. When you accepted Christ as your own personal Savior, God took His death on the cross and He applied it to your sin debt. From that point on, you have made your peace with God. From that point on, now as you grow and learn, you have the peace of God. But you made peace with God. Why? Because God hath called us to peace. God wants to reconcile every man and woman. God is not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance. God died for everybody, and that verse, that last part of that verse, says it all to me. It simply says that God hath called us to peace.

We can take that one step further. If you are here this morning and you are a saved person and you are out of fellowship with God, or you are in a situation like a bad marriage, a bad relationship, or just in a bad state, whatever the case, God wants to bring peace into your heart, into your life. People get into problems for two basic reasons. This was your psychology 101 class. You can drop a check for \$100 on the way out the door, and you can get your degree when you go up the steps. This is why people have problems. It is very simple. Psychologists want to make it very complicated. Of course, they get \$200 an hour. Your therapist wants to extend it out as long as you can, or at least until your insurance benefits run out, and then you are cured, they say.

People have problems. It is a very basic format. If a person is unsaved, they have problems in their life because you were created by God, and God created you to have fellowship with Him. Your continuance to live your life and not recognize what Christ did for you on the cross, and to live your life the way you want and go after the things of the world, is going to build up in your life. Everything that is bad for you and for me is a matter of build-up. Do you know that? Do you know why your dentist pulls your teeth? Because you did not brush them, and gunky stuff built up in your mouth. Do you know why you are going to die before you are supposed to die? Because you have a build-up of cholesterol in your blood, clogs your veins, clogs your whatever, and your pipes. Everything in life that builds up in our life is not good. Somebody says, "Oh, I know one thing that is good that builds up." "What is that?" "Money in the bank." Really? You know what? If you and I had a million dollars today, you know what probably would happen?

We probably would have had a fellowship by the end of the week. Now, I do not preach that you should buy lottery tickets, but I will accept the tithe if you do win it. I mean, that would be un-Christian. I mean, I am a fair man, but I am not stupid.

Your life and my life need to be at peace. The things of the world do not bring peace. They never have. So an unsaved man, an unsaved woman, they grow up in high school, they get into drinking and smoking and drugs, and why do they do that? Because somebody told them, "This will make you really complete. You are not a real man or a real woman if you do not do it like this and do this and do that." So the peer pressure, everybody goes along with the crowd. The bottom line is, we think this is what is going to satisfy us. But the problem is, the one beer did not satisfy you, so you had to have more, and then you wind up an alcoholic. The one cigarette gave you a buzz for a minute, but then it did not, and then you start smoking four packs a day, and then it does not do for you anymore. So you go to marijuana, and then you go to something stronger, and it is always a quest for something that is going to, do you not know that you have a desire inside of you that you want to feed and satisfy? The problem is an unsaved man or woman satisfies it with the wrong things or tries to. The issue with that is, that will never satisfy. It builds up.

So you come to the place where we have this thing now called midlife crisis, had it for years. I have already passed mine. It was not worth the time. You know what midlife crisis is? Midlife crisis in the psychology world is a thing where a man will get to the point in his life where he is midlife, and he starts to feel like he is no longer young anymore, he is losing his edge, and he is not real old. He is caught in that limbo between the two. So he tries to regain his youth by doing really stupid things. That is not the case. The case is that God made you by His design, and He designed you to be fulfilled with His plan. You have hell to look for at the end. You may not know that, but your soul knows that. Your flesh knows that. That is why it resists everything that God wants to give you, including this message this morning. So you fight all of your life to do your own thing, and you get to the point where you are midlife, you have nothing now that satisfies. All of the things that you thought and were told are really going to make you happy have not made you happy. You have worked your rear end off to get this, get that car, get this big house, get all this stuff. That has not made you happy. When you get depressed, the first thing we think, "Well, if I go out and buy something, I will feel better." That is true. You feel better for a while. Then when it is old, you wash it two or three times, or you put it on, and it does not fit quite the same way because you popped up a few pounds. Then what happens? You are depressed again. There have got to be more things in life that give you that peace than just the things of life. That is why people go through it.

Now, for a saved man, same thing. If you are saved, God saved you for a purpose. This is what we are going to get to here. If you are saved this morning, God saved you for a purpose. When you do not fulfill that, then the Bible says you grieve the Holy Spirit of God who lives inside you, and it has a physiological effect on you. I would dare some to say that, and this is not a criticism, or it is not a condemnation. I am here to help you. He has called us to peace. But I would dare say this morning that if you are saved this morning and you are not on top of the world, and you are not happy, and you do not have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in your life, and

you are truly saved, I would say that there is something wrong in the process of God fulfilling you. I do not know of anybody in all of the world and all of the Bible that went through more bad things than the Apostle Paul. He never had a midlife crisis. I do not ever know where he was depressed. He looked at every downturn in life that met him, even his death, the biblical way because he was focused on what God wanted him to do. That is the key. If you are saved this morning and you are in a mess, you have got problems in your life, no matter what it may be. We are talking about marital things here, but I am talking about whatever it may be. The key, the key, the only key is to get that fulfillment that brings that peace. If you are an unsaved man or woman, get saved. Make peace with God. If you are already saved, get the peace of God. It passes all understanding and it keeps your heart and minds. So I want to start this morning with that thought: God hath called us to peace. We are going to weave that in everything we talk about today because that is really the bottom line in marital breakups, marital relationships. God does not want a war. God has called us to peace.

III. Foundations for Understanding Marriage and Ministry

As a church, that is our goal. My goal is to reconcile every issue with every problem that everybody has. The Bible can do that. It is like somebody said one time, "There is nothing really wrong with the world; it is the people that are in it." That is why the more you are around people, the better. I like dogs. It is just the way that it is. But you are going to realize that there are some things that you have to do because whatever situation you are in, God has called us to peace. The bottom line of the church is to reconcile, to get two opposing parties together through the Word of God. The Word of God can do that. We have seen enough now and talked enough now that we know that the reason why we cannot do that is because people will not do what is right.

So far, we have defined the major issues that help us better put all this chapter together.

- We now know that God has established three institutions, and we have defined those: marriage, civil government, and the church.
- We now know and understand that the standard operational procedure of most Baptist churches are totally out of line with the Word of God because when they come to divorce and remarriage, they will go back to the Old Testament in Matthew chapter 5, chapter 19, Leviticus chapter 24. We now know that that is not where the church gets its instruction from. We know it comes from 1 Corinthians chapter 7, which was written by Paul, the apostle to the church, for church instruction, just like everything else.
- Last week, we now defined what fornication is and what adultery is. People always want to throw those terms around and use them interchangeably, but they do not really understand what they mean. They are not the same. They are connected together, but now we know the difference. Fornication has to do with your physical body. Adultery has to do with your attitude of heart. We saw how key the attitude of heart was.
- Last week, we also defined, now we got down into the nitty-gritty, and now we know what marriage is. Marriage by God's viewpoint is flesh joining flesh. We also defined what divorce was in the Bible, and that is flesh leaving flesh. How the attitude of heart will drive what your flesh does.

Somebody said years and years ago, and this brings up another great process in dealing with people, that the attitude of heart is everything. There is a thing in the Bible that is a concept in the Bible called attitude and action. Our actions are what we do. Our attitude is what we put in our heart. Somebody said years and years ago, I cannot remember who it was, but it was a true statement that if you think about something long enough, you will do it. That is so true because that is the process of attitude and action. You think about and lust after a woman all the time, committing adultery in your heart, you will do it in the flesh. The two are connected. It is a thing where whatever our attitude is that we dwell on, it produces the action. That is why the Bible says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." That is why you get the right attitude of God's Word, you produce the right actions of God's Word. See how simple it is? I mean, this is not hard. Well, it is not hard to say; it is hard to do. But anyway, that is what you have got. Basically, if you think about it long enough, you will do it. Attitude of heart is key.

Now we see in getting all this stuff together, we now see, we have got a good foundation and understanding through these definitions; it helps us begin to lay down the rules. I told you that there are 20 rules in this chapter about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We have got four down so far.

- Rule number one: In the Old Testament, there were grounds for divorce. Moses gave them for the hardness of their people's hearts. But in the New Testament, there are no grounds for divorce. But now we also know that there may be no biblical grounds, but there are reasons why people get divorced. We will get into that again in a minute.
- Rule number two: Paul said that it is a gift God gives some people, the gift of celibacy, to be able to stay single. We talked about that.
- Last week, we got to the third and the fourth rule. The third one was that the saved person is never to depart.
- The fourth rule was the concept of the biblical separation. We never really got into those last two in depth. We are going to do that today, but you do have them on your paper.

Basically, with all the definitions that we have, we have come down now, and this is why I have taken so much time, because without the real Bible definitions, this chapter goes nowhere. You have to be able to define things when you get into this chapter, and you have got to have the tools to do it. So now we have that, and we can move on here and begin to knock some of these rules out, and now you will have a place to put them, a context to put them in based on what we have already defined.

Again, my overall goal for this is for you who are sitting here today to learn this material that you might be able to help other people. But in learning this material, you need to know two things. I follow a very simple rule where I say, I try to follow a very simple rule in everything I do. To me, it is one of the most important things that anybody can do. We have talked a lot about the prepared sinner and the prepared servant in Acts chapter 8. How that while you are sitting here today preparing your heart to do what God wants you to do, God has got some sinner out here that is preparing his heart. He wants to match the two of you up together. Acts chapter 8, Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch are an example of that. We talk a lot about that.

Learning how to help others. In our own church, there will be people that come in that are hurting. Our co-workers, people that you work with, people that you bring to softball. Not everybody has issues. Some of them are just great people that like to come play softball. But some of them have issues. Our Memorial Day picnic. One of the reasons, I have a method to everything I do. When you have everybody around that coming in, and we had more people at this picnic last year, this last week, than we have ever had before. I almost ran out of ribs. I was sweating it toward the end. But one of the things that I do, and I have a reason for everything I do, there is no way that I can get around and get everybody that is out there. So, my mindset is, let those people come to me. So, what do I do? I pass out the ribs. Everybody is going to walk right by me. So, I get a chance in doing that to meet all the new people. I know that if you ever get saved because you came to Memorial Day, it will not be because you have got God's gospel in your heart. It will be because you have got God's big rib on your plate before he ever got the gospel in your heart. I know the way to everybody is through your stomach. I just know that.

You are laughing about that, but people have an attitude about most churches. It is a true attitude. They think most churches are stingy, cheap. They want everything from everybody, never want to do anything for anybody. "I want everything from you, but do not ask nothing from me." That is the idea of most churches. Sadly, that is where most churches are. You come to a thing and you charge somebody \$6 for a ticket, and you come to get a barbecue or come to the thing, and you get a skinny, little weenie. Looked like it died about six years ago and put on somebody's refrigerator. It is a psychological thing, but there is just something about, you know, you are in a better. It is true of all of us. You can have the worst day of your life and go out and have a really good meal, and suddenly for whatever reason, life is better. Life is better. That is the way we are made. We can be down. A woman has to go buy something. A guy just has to eat something. That is just the way it is. That matters. I go to a Royals game, and I will be having a tough day. I could care little about baseball. You give me one of them big old shalaska weenies or things out there that they have. Man, I am in heaven. That is all I can do, man. Put everything on it. Give me a forklift to carry it back. I am going to eat it here. But that is the way we are, and there is something about when you know that you, if you, and I guess that is why they give you a nice meal before they execute you. Never thought about that, but that is probably why, put you in a good frame of mind.

I am telling you, people come out there, and they get something to eat, and you get to talk with them, and they do not get, I mean, most of them did not pay anything. Everybody that paid anything paid a dollar, and they come in there, and they get a big old rib, couple of ribs on there. You know how it is. I know how it is with me. You go to a restaurant, and you and your wife order the same thing. I do not know who does it, but her steak is always bigger than mine. It is the way it works. There is somebody who follows you around and makes sure that your wife gets the bigger steak, and she is not going to eat all of that. Then what do you do? "Trade me?" I am telling you. It is a state where, so I do not even eat out anymore. I just cook my own food on my own grill, and that way I know how big that steak is because I hand-chose it for myself. So that is the way it works. But there is something, so you expect that. You expect to get short-changed. So you expect our ribs. So he is going to put one little rib on there. You dump four or five on there, and they are looking at him, and they have got to take two hands. I love it when you do this. I

love it when a big guy comes up, and he is a really nice guy. You want to impress him. He is holding his plate with one hand, and you put the biggest rib you can find on his plate, and the plates are cheap paper plates. He almost, he has got to grab it with both hands. See, I won. I won. I won. I won, big guy. I won. You thought you could one-hand me, did you not? That I was going to give you some burnt little hot dog or some little chicken wing that looked like it was off a scrawny chicken. I beat you. I won. I made you drop whatever you had in the other hand and grab that because you did not want to drop that salacious big old rib that was on your plate. I got you. I got you, and you will be forever grateful for me. That is the way you have got to get to people. Human nature is a strange thing. It is a strange thing.

It is something that I follow a basic simple rule, and when you want to reach people, it may be people like I said that Memorial Day. It may be people that you know. It is wherever God is going to use you, and I find that the thing that most people do not do is they fail to use the material that God gives them. In the Bible, it is just a simple little format, and I think about it. I like breaking things down. Remember, I give you a faith fact. I give you all those little things. Well, here is another one, and I follow this all the time. Whatever you get, whatever you have with God, whatever you are going to do with it, you want to get somewhere, just follow this little plan:

1. God word
2. Inward
3. Outward

The first thing you have got to do to be used of God is you have got to get your life where it needs to be. You have got to change your attitude. That is how you think. So you put God first in your life, you change your attitude about some things, and that is how you think. Then the second thing, you take what He gives you, and you take it inward. The first thing, it changes your attitude. The second thing, when you take it inward, it changes you, what you do, where you go. Then when you get the first one down, that it changes how you think, and you take it inward, and it changes what you do, then you let it go outward, and through you, let it change others. That is how God does it. But my point is, you have got to let the material change you first before you try to change somebody else. It is like trying to teach the Bible before you really know it. It just leads to problems. The key to teaching people is to thoroughly understand it first yourself and have applied it to yourself and know that it works on you, and it is just the way it has to be.

Now, let us look here and begin to work through these verses, and you remember now, God has called us to peace. Remember, you want to let it change your own life first, then you want it to change you, and then you want it to change others. As we come through here, I said this Thursday night, I am going to give you the textbook version of this. I am going to walk you through and show you how the standard format works. In reality, there are many combinations of Bible principles. Somebody asked a question Thursday night about 1 Corinthians chapter, it was Missy asked the question, and she said, "How would you explain 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and some of these issues to people that you are dealing with?" I explained to her that that is not the way you want to do it. There may be a time when I am working with that person for a while that I will show them that foundational deal, but that is not where to start because they cannot grasp

that. They cannot understand that at this point. You have got to be able to, I told her, like I use the example of salvation. In the Bible, there are 12 doctrines of salvation: doctrine of propitiation, doctrine of glorification, doctrine of redemption, all those 12 different doctrines in the Bible. But when I win somebody to Christ, I do not sit down and go through the 12 doctrines. You would never get them saved that way. What I do is take a little simple Romans Road. In other words, I take the Bible principles that are built off the doctrinal foundation, and that is how I win them to Christ. When you start to deal with people on marriage or divorce or remarriage, you do the same thing. You do not get them into 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and trying to grasp all these principles. You find the principles that build on this. In other words, 1 Corinthians chapter 7 is your baseline. It is your foundation. You take the principles that come off of that, just like the principles off the 12 doctrines of salvation, and then you work with them along those lines.

I remember I gave you the illustration Thursday night, and I know it is repertory, but it is good for you to understand it again, and not everybody was there. I use the example of a lawyer. If a lawyer has a case that he has to defend, what he is going to do if he is a good lawyer is he is going to sit down. He is going to go to either his own law library or another law library, and he is going to pick out all the books that have to do with all the statutes that have to do with the case that he is going to defend. He may wind up with 20 books on his desk. Some of them will deal with case law. Some of them will deal with state statutes, federal statutes. He has to find everything out about the case that he is about to deal with, and he does not retain that all up here. So he has got to go to a library, and if you would look at his shelf of books, you would see about 9 or 10, 15 or 20 blank spots where books have been taken out. He lays them out. He goes through everything, and then he builds his defense for that case off of that case law. That is what you ought to do with Bible principles. You ought to build a library in your mind, in your Bible, of Bible principles. I lay them out to you all the time, and just like a lawyer when he sits down and he has to do a case, he has to pull the books off the shelf that have the principles of law. You ought to, in any given situation, anybody you deal with, you ought to just go to your law library on the Bible, and you ought to pull out biblical principles, lay them on the table, and then when you start to talk to that person, that is what you start with.

When somebody comes into my home or I meet with somebody, they have got issues in their life. I do not just hit hard right off into the sunset and tell them what I think the best thing they ought to do. While they are telling me their issues and they are telling me their problems, I am pulling out biblical principles to get ready that when I do speak after they tell me what is going on, then I can take them to the Bible and lay out a systematic way to deal with the issue and the problems that they have. This is what the job of the church is. I do not understand why people do not like going to church. I mean, I do, but I do not. One of the greatest TV formats on television right now is reality TV. I am not sure what reality TV is all about, but it has to do with this is not a stage thing. This is dealing with real-life people, and this is reality TV, and yet people love that. It is one of the most popular kind of programs that you are going to find today. I do not understand why the world would be so happy about reality TV and then be so unhappy about reality Church. Because that is what the church does. That is the job of the church.

You live in a fairy tale world. You know that? You live in a world that everything out there tries to get you to believe something untrue. You do. You live in a fantasy world that not much of anything in it has anything to do with reality, and everything that you are told, everything you are led to believe, is not based on truth. It is based on, "I wish it was true." So that is how people get into problems. That is how marriages get messed up. You have this idea that because you watch television and you watch all these love stories and you watch these pictures, things how man and woman meet, and how they find each other, and all the struggle, but their love prevails, and all this thing. You get this idea in your mind that you saw a couple of years ago on the field that a man and woman holding hands leaping through the dandelions of a big mountain field, with the wind blowing her hair, and free, carefree, laughing, and having a great time. "This is life. This is what it is." Everybody thinks, "Wow, I want to have that. I want to find me somebody to leap through the thing." Yeah, there is a cliff on the other side, and they both fell off and got killed. They do not show you that part of the commercial. That is not life. If you want a real picture of life, get you some of them helmets with pugil sticks, body armor, when two people are slugging it out. That is life. It is a battle all your life, but it is an illusion.

Church is supposed to bring things back to reality. Church brings things to the point where you realize that what you are thinking is the way it is. You come to church, you ought to hear the truth. You ought not to hear somebody tell you how good you are. You already are convinced how good you are. We already get our minds made up all through the week. We live in this world. It does not exist. We get into relationships that really do not exist. We get all these things going in our mind. We go to a football game, and we watch some guy make a touchdown. We go to this, and we watch some movie, and we see some superhero, and then what do we do? We are driving down the road, and we are that superhero. We fantasize about winning ballgames, catching the biggest fish, bagging the biggest deer. It is reality. I mean, it is not reality. That is where we go in our minds. We want, and we think life the same way. We do not realize that life and the reality of life, it just does not work out that way. You better realize that the greatest friend that you have on this planet, brother, no matter who it may be, the greatest friend you have on this planet is the friend or the person that will tell you the truth about situations. There are enough people, everybody will lie to you because they want something from you. I never met somebody that told somebody the truth that ever wanted anything from them because there is no shame in the truth. There is no angle in the truth. Your only aspect of the truth is that God has called us to peace, and that is a good angle.

He comes down here and he says in life, when you start dealing with people, no two problems are going to be the same. No two people will require the same exact principles. You have to be able, like a lawyer that deals with different cases. Every case is different. The process of learning how to use all of this and to take the principles is basically you learn that by getting the biblical principles down, building your own principle library, having it in a notebook someplace or in your Bible, by this time 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 200 principles that dictate how you deal with scenarios in your own life first, then to somebody else. Of course, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 5, you accomplish this by reason of use, and it exercises your spiritual, your senses, it exercises you and gives you the ability to discern both good and evil. I always thought it was interesting that that verse does not say it discern between good and evil. It does not say that. It

says, "gives you the ability to discern good and evil." You understand them both because in the contrast of the two is the reality.

It is an incredible concept that this is why I encourage you to get involved with people. Why I encourage you to disciple somebody. Why I encourage you to get into one of the prayer groups, to take a prayer group. Why I encourage you to start working with people on whatever level, the lowest level, and then moving your way up. There is nothing that exercises your senses more and gives you spiritual discernment. I do not know what anything else does than taking what you have, what you have taken internally, and then put it out to other people. I told them Thursday night, or maybe it was yesterday morning in the prayer group, I said, "It is just like driver's ed." You know, it is a thing where you can take all the driver's ed classes you want, but until you get behind the wheel, put the key in the ignition, turn it on, put it in drive, and start to drive, nothing really changes. You can get all the Bible knowledge you want. You can have a Bible full of notes, but until you change about you first inwardly, and then you let God take what you have, and you get involved with somebody else, but you have got to do it by the book. Nothing really changes. That is the key.

IV. Rules for Unequally Yoked Marriages

Last week in our recap, let us look at verse 10 here a second, and we will kick through here very quickly.

1 Corinthians 7:10

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

We looked at this last week. The wife is told not to depart from her husband. We talked about that. We also talked about how there is no mention of the man departing from the wife, and the reason for that is because God never intended for the man ever to leave because in the type, he is Christ, and Christ never leaves His bride. I may leave Christ, but Christ will never leave me. We put that back into the concept of the model that nobody really understands today, but we saw how that works, and we know that in a perfect world, this is the way it should run. But we do not live in a perfect world, and we have a lot of bad definitions. We have women who are the weaker vessel, who get their spirits, their emotions crushed because those needs are not met, and we know what happened.

So in verse 10, he says, "Let not the wife depart from her husband," but then in verse 11, he reverses it and he says:

1 Corinthians 7:11

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

We talked about how that this is the next one, which is a biblical separation. Sometimes in a situation, the marriage gets so bad, it gets so volatile. There is nothing that can be accomplished.

It has gone too long, too bad, and if somebody does not get in and try to work through it, it is going to self-destruct itself. Many times by the time I get to them, they are already dead, and there is nothing, I cannot breathe life back into a dead person. But the Bible says if she departs, she stays single and not to get hooked up with somebody else, to give it a chance to reconcile, or if she cannot reconcile, it was impossible, then she does not get hooked up in another rebound relationship until she solves the problems or he solves the problems that they have that led them to what it was. Everybody has issues, and getting into another relationship before you have solved the problems that you have in your own personal life that broke down the last one, it is just going to lead to multiple breakdowns in relationships and possibly multiple divorces, and this is what happens.

I told you how all this needs to be done within the structure of the New Testament local church. Why? Because God has called us to peace. The church's job is to reconcile. The church's job, when they are members of a church, is to get in the middle of the thing, hold each person accountable, get the biblical principles in there, and try to get the thing worked out the way the Bible says it needs to be worked out. Now, maybe it cannot be worked out, but you have got to start somewhere, and you have got to take it as you can. Over the years, I have seen so many of these where the church is not involved. It is not under the structure. Two people separate because they cannot get along, and they decide they are going to get a divorce, which may or may not be the case, but many times they do. What happens is, as one or the other will get hooked up right back into another relationship again, and it just causes all kinds of problems. It is just because it just, it does, does the games God's people play. I mean, it is a thing where I do not know how many times I have dealt with after the fact where when a person has got remarried, that they told the person they were dating or marrying that their reason why their marriage was bad was because of their last wife or their last husband, and the person they are courting or trying to get into a relationship with actually believes them. They actually think, "Well, this person, boy, hey, she is wonderful. She is beautiful. He is the most gorgeous guy I ever met in my life. He does everything. He opens a door." Yeah, and after you are married, he will slam your fingers in it. So what is your point? Do you not know, are you not smart enough to know that when somebody wants something, they will put on their best face? Do you not know that if Joe Slob is going to look like the knight in shining armor, and then once he gets you, he is going to go back to Joe Slob? It is a thing where you have got to know that that is human nature. I am not saying that is necessarily a bad thing. We all do that. You know how I know that? Because you all look better here than you did when you got up this morning. You do not want me to see what you really look like. Why, if some of you women were forced to come to church the way you got out of bed this morning, I mean, put some clothes on, but come to church, not fix your hair, not put your makeup on, why, you would have a bag over your head. We would have a "Who is in the Bag" contest this morning. Guys the same way. The idea, guys getting their hair done today, get it cut. Guys that, "I am going to get my hair done." Get it cut. "Get your hair done." You know, a guy one time, he says, "I like to get my eyebrows waxed." "Do not touch me, man." I go up there, Jamie cuts my hair. She said, "Let me wax your eyebrows." "Get away from me. You are not going to wax my eyebrows. My luck, you would have that stuff on my eyes, be ripping it off." One of my deacons walked down the thing and leave the church. You have got to know that. You have got to know those things.

A woman separates from her husband, and many times, it is unfixable. They get separated from whatever, and then you get a real issue. I had a lady one time years ago, human nature, I mean, it is absolutely incredible. She says, I said, "Look," I said, "Hey, look, we have got an issue here. You are, I know you are separated from your husband, and he is an idiot, but, and I know we have tried to work this thing out. It is not possible, but," I said, "Hey, man, you are dating this guy, and you are still married." She says, "Oh, human nature." She says, "Oh, no, no, no, we are not dating." I said, "What do you mean you are not dating? I saw you guys out." She said, "Well, we are pre-dating." I said, "Okay, well then that makes me feel better. You are not really sinning; you are just pre-sinning." Human is stupid. Human nature will do whatever it takes to justify its action. We do not like reality church, but we like reality TV. Listen, if you do not follow the book, you will do over and over what has gotten you in the situation you are in, and that is follow your feelings. People with relationship issues, people with sin issues, and we all have sin issues. I am talking about repetitive sin issues. You know what you have got to do? You have got to break that cycle.

I watch it in families. I watch this guy raise these kids. These kids, this guy is bad. These kids are worse. They grow up. They have kids. They are worse than the last one and worse than the first one, and the generational cycle just keeps going, producing kids that do not do anything for God, hate God, and they get worse as the time goes on. How do you fix that? Somebody, some dad, some mom, somebody has got to stand up and break the cycle and say, "We are not going to do that anymore." Until that happens, it does not change. I mean, one of the things that never ceases to amaze me about God's people, I have seen this all my life. I stand in awe of it sometimes. Their life is an absolute disaster. They have got a bad relationship, lost marriage, lost kids. Nothing goes right for them. They have lost their job, lost their house. They have lost everything they have got, and they have everything going downside for them. I mean, it is everything, and it is all because of bad choices. It is all because of bad decisions, bad definitions. All based on they have operated on their emotions and their flesh and never put one principle of the Word of God in their lives, and they ask for help. So what do you do? God has called us to peace. So you go, you get them the help, you start working with them, and what do they do? They go right back to telling you what they are going to do and what they are not going to do. Well, listen, kid, if you make such good choices in life, why do you need me? The reason why you need a church in your life is to get a dose of reality as a decision that you have made have to stop. You have got to start making them right.

I had a couple in our church, they are gone. You do not even know who they are. Do not even think you know who they are because they were so minuscule when they came in. They only came for a short time, but I have known them for years, and this wife has got some serious emotional problems. I mean, she really does. I bless her heart. My heart goes out to her, but she has got some really problems, really emotional, deep emotional problems, and the husband got his own issues. His biggest issue is he is a wimp. I do not know what else to tell you. Nice guy, but a wimp. He cannot control his wife, and I am not sure you would want to control her, but anyway, you can control him, and it is a situation where my heart goes out to him. She told me the story how that all of her, and I knew the story because I have known him for years. So I say, "Hey, look. We will help you." So I took two or three of my choicest ladies. Put them with this

gal. And so about six or eight weeks into this, this girl calls me, the woman calls me, and she says, "I do not like so and so." I said, "Well, you know what? I do not know what to tell you. I mean, she will do you a good job." "Well, I just do not, she does not relate to where I am at." I said, "Okay." So I talked to my person and said, "This is not your deal. This is what it is. Let us just play this thing out." Well, I got her somebody else. Two, three months later, another phone call. "I do not like this one. She does not understand where I am at at all." I said, "Okay. She is really a good one. She worked with a lot of people." "No, she does not relate to me." "Okay, okay, okay, okay." So I told this person, "Hey, it is a learning experience. You know what? If you want to understand what the ministry is, get a weekend pass to the zoo. It will help you figure it all out." Okay, no problem. So I got her another person. Six weeks later, three months later, I do not know what it was. "I do not want this person to disciple me. It just, she is not fitting in where I am at. She does not even understand where I am coming from." I said, "Okay." This time her husband is mad. He is not mad at her. He is mad at us. So they call for a meeting. I know what is going to happen. They are mad now. They are going to leave the church. Thank God. So they come over. I knew I was in trouble because she was, she wanted to help in ministry. You know me, I will let you do anything as long as you are not going to kill somebody. So I had all this stuff that I was trying to get typed out and everything. She liked to type. I said, "Good. Give her some, give her something to do. Get her mind off herself because this woman has got some baggage." Okay. So, but I know I am in trouble because I am looking out my little windows on the side of the door there, and I see him carrying boxes of stuff, and I know what that is. They are bringing my stuff back. So I am prepared for the worst. I am thinking maybe it is money, but probably not. Maybe they won the lottery, and they are going to bring the title. Probably not. Probably not. So we go upstairs in my office, and you could tell. I mean, I have been in funeral homes where there has been a sweeter spirit. I am sitting there, and he is, I can see he is visibly shaken. I am saying, and he said, "Well," he says, "I just feel like we have been betrayed." I said, "Okay, I am really sorry. How have we betrayed you?" He said, "My wife needs help." My flesh is getting in it just a little bit now. You know, "What would Jesus do?" Jesus would call down lightning and kill them both. I do not have that ability. "Have you ever met my dog, Buddy? Go on downstairs and say hi to him." So I am sitting there, and I am seething inside because I know what this issue is. I know what this problem is. She does not want to do what the Bible says. I know the ladies I put with her, the best ladies I have. I said, "I do not have any better ladies than it. If these ladies cannot do it," and she has not had one. She has now had three or four. She does not like any of them. She keeps jumping. You know why she keeps going? Because she does not want to hear what they are telling her. She wants to work through my church to find somebody to tell her what she wants to hear. In our church, that is probably a rough thing for you to find unless you get some new person that does not know anything. But that is kind of a tough thing to find in this church if you have been around for a while because everybody is on the same page. Some of you are worse than I am. I mean, you know. So I, and I am really seething. I want to say something. And they said, "So we are going to leave the church." I said, "Well, I really hate to see that." I said, "No." "What are you talking about?" At this point, I am trying to, "God has called us to peace, man. What is the matter with you?" But I am going to get my end. And I said, "Well, I really hate to see that, but," I said, "I think that is probably the best thing for you." And she looks at me and she says, "Oh, why is that?" And I said, "Because I am out of people." I said,

"You have had everybody I have got." I said, "I do not have everybody left. You, you wore them all out." I mean, they are all, you know what. But she did not want to do. This is the problem you find. This is the problem you find. It never ceases to amaze me. People will come in with problems, got mega problems, but then they want to take charge, and they want to tell you, "Well, if you know how to fix it, why are you even asking me?" I do not, you like reality church. I think it is a good thing.

V. Rules for Unequally Yoked Marriages (Continued)

I look at verse 12. Here it comes.

1 Corinthians 7:12

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

This is rule number five. Now notice, this is based on verse 12, the first part, "the rest I speak, not the Lord." This is stuff added to the church that was not given in the Old Testament that is given to the church. So he tells you that, "but the rest speak I, not the Lord." In other words, there is no Old Testament commandment on this. This is something given to the church under New Testament revelation, under grace. Now in this case, you have a saved man married to an unsaved woman. That in itself, a saved person married to an unsaved person, is a violation of biblical principles.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

You do not have a right to marry whoever you just want to marry. For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

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

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

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and they shall be my God, and I will be their people.

Now, want to learn cause and effect? Here it is. Five things here that your marriage is or should be:

- A marriage should be fellowship.
- A marriage should be a communion.
- A marriage should be a concord.
- A marriage should be an agreement.
- A marriage should be a part. In other words, two parts making a whole.

I gave you a while back, a couple of weeks ago, one of the great principles, how that men and women have three basic needs. Those needs are the same, but they are not met the same. Every woman and every man has physical needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs. I took a long time and I showed you that, and this is the downfall of marriage when men and women do not know how to meet these needs. But I will tell you something else. Based on these five things right here, marriage in a concept of biblical marriage is three things in God's sight. This is different than the need. This is what a marriage is in God's sight:

4. Lordship. You have got to have a personal one-on-one relationship with God because your marriage will only be as strong together as your individual relationship is with God. You do not have that, you are not fixing anything.
5. Fellowship. Right lordship leads to the right fellowship. Fellowship between you and God. Fellowship between you and your mate.
6. Relationship. Right lordship, right fellowship means right relationship.

Your marriage now is biblical. It does not mean you will not have problems. It does not mean you will not have a relationship. But it means you have the wherewithal, just like a church. There is no perfect church. This church is not perfect. But within this church, we have the ability because God has called us to peace to solve any problem that comes up. The problem is some people do not want to solve their problems. I cannot help that. In marriages, some people do not want to solve their marriage problem. I cannot help that. But this is what you have got.

It happens all the time. Again, this is not a judgment on anybody. I am teaching you so you understand. How many times have I seen in my life, you have got a guy or a gal who is saved, but they get out of fellowship. Then they get hooked up with an unsaved guy or unsaved person, and they get married. Later they get right with God. Now what do they do? Now they realize that what they did was wrong. They made a bad choice. But what are they supposed to do? Are you supposed now to go divorce that person because you are now right with God and they are unsaved? I do not think so. Then you have the situation where you have, where sometimes they are both unsaved, and a man will get saved or the woman will get saved, and then the other person remains unsaved. What do you do with that? Now that you were both unsaved, and one or the other got saved, and the other person is unsaved, do you leave them now and say, "Well, I cannot be married to you anymore because the Bible says I am not to be unequally yoked, and so I am going to divorce you"? No, those principles were given for you to do before you got married, not after you got married. So in a perfect world, this is supposed to work, but we do not live in a perfect world. So this is where you have got to come back and understand what he is saying.

Now rule number six, verse 13. Here we reverse the situation.

1 Corinthians 7:13

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

Now it is the same deal. So verse 5, verse 6, basically say, "Stay with your unsaved mate if that is what you find yourself in, as you two agree and you can get along, even though you know, if she is pleased to dwell with you, stay with them." Why? Why is that? This is a great concept I am about to give you. I do not care what situation you are in. I do not care what situation you find yourself in. God will always make a way for you to deal with the circumstances you are in. He will always make a way for you to get out of it, fix it, and get their honor and glory to Him. He will always do that. Every situation, sometimes because there has been a lot of time passed, it is not an easy thing. But He will do it. He will do it. The reason why He says, "Stay with your unsaved partner," is because very frankly, ladies and gentlemen, you are now the key to winning them to Christ.

You give me any situation. You give me any person. I do not care who you give me, a man or a wife, and one of them gets saved, one of them, any situation where you have got one saved and one lost. If I can get one or the other to get into the Bible, change their life, start doing what is right, in time, almost a hundred percent of the time, that unsaved person will get saved. You know why? Because God takes in that situation, God takes the saved person. He reaches down through that saved person's life when they do what is right. The only avenue He has is to reach down through the saved person and reach out to the lost person and win them to Christ. You give me a husband or a wife in that kind of scenario who will do what is right, balance it out, use the Bible, get their own life going, and I guarantee you that person will get saved. We have an example of, they are not here today, and I am kind of glad they are not. I can use them and not embarrass them. But Eve and her husband. He came to church and got saved. Her husband was not saved. Eve is a little typical, cut a little higher than everybody else, and she went out of here. She told everybody, I think she read it on that big Goodyear blimp, "I am saved now. My name is Eve. Come to church." Praise the Lord. God bless her. It was not two weeks later, her husband came, and then he got saved. It is just the way it works. I do not care what, listen to me. I do not care what your circumstances are. I do not care that you have made a mistake and got yourself in a situation maybe you should not have. Whoever is here has not done that. My point is, God will take you where you are at, and if you will do what is right in this given scenario, stay with that lost person, recognize that you are the key to winning them, and then let God change you, reach down through you. You win that partner. When the guy gets saved and he has an unsaved wife, it can be a little more complicated when it is reversed, but not a big deal. The big deal is finding people who do what is right because God will always work through the saved person in any circumstance. I do not know how many times in my life, in my ministry, I have had people, couples, that the girl was saved or vice versa, and it took some time. It took a process of things, but in time, that person got saved if the one that is saved stays faithful with it.

VI. The Sanctification of Marriage and God's Covering Grace

Now look at verse 14. Here comes another one.

1 Corinthians 7:14

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Another great word shows up here in relationship to your marriage that we have not seen before. It is the word "sanctified." Sanctified. That word means to be set apart from something to something. When you got saved, God sanctified you. What do you mean? He sets you apart from the world. Hence the doctrine of sanctification. That is what 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 2 Corinthians 7:14-16 is all about, the world. But now we see that God not only sanctified you as an individual, but when you get married, God sets your marriage apart and sanctifies your marriage for something that He wants you to do as a couple. We have not seen that before. So I want you to understand that.

Along with that comes the next great concept that you need to understand. This is the fact that God does not recognize the marriage of two unsaved people. That is a very important thing that you understand. Marriage is something that illustrates Christ and a church that two unsaved people could never have any kind of spiritual union with God. They may go to a church. They may go through with a service. But I do not mean to be blunt today. But as far as God is concerned, two unsaved people getting married is just like barnyard animals mating. God does not see anything in it in any way, shape, or form that relates back to His concept of marriage because His concept of marriage is about God's Son and God's bride, which neither are part of. That is why He talks about being unequally yoked.

That is a good phrase. Here is a case where we talked about that, that unequally yoked means one married lost and one married, one saved, unequal. They are unequal because one is in Christ, the other one is not. That is why you go back in the Old Testament, and in Deuteronomy 22:10, you will find that under the law, it was a violation of the Old Testament law that when a man plowed the field, that he yoked up an ox and an ass. They could not plow together. You know why? Because an ox is a picture of a saved man in the Bible, and the ass is a picture of an unsaved man in the Bible. So there again, all the way back in the Old Testament under the law, we see the foreshadowing of what the New Testament was going to be, that it is a violation for a man to plow, which is what you do in ministry. You plow the field, you sow in the morning, sowing in an evening, sowing, bringing in the sheaves, you plow the field for Jesus Christ with your mate equally yoked. So when you have an ass and an ox, they are unequal in the Old Testament because of what they represent. That is why it is a violation of the law because he says, "You cannot be unequally yoked."

Then you find in Numbers 19:13 another great concept. It talks about how that the nation of Israel could not touch dead people. They could not be in the presence of dead people. If they touched a dead person, they had to be outside of camp for a couple of days to get clean and go to the priest. Why? Because dead people in the Old Testament are a picture, physical dead people are a picture of spiritually dead people in the New Testament who are dead in trespasses of sin. A saved Jew or Jew in the Old Testament could not touch a dead person. The reason for that is

because it pictures that a saved person should not be touching dead people in Christ, without Christ. That is the concept. That is why he says, "What fellowship has righteousness?" There is a saved person. "Without righteousness? What communion?" That is togetherness. "Has light with darkness? What concord has Christ with Belial?" Belial is the Old Testament name for the devil. "What part has he that believeth?" There is the saved person. "With an infidel? What agreement hath the temple of God?" There is a saved person. "With idols?" You see, there is nothing that connects. So as far as two unsaved people are concerned, God does not recognize the marriage.

Now you understand the importance of why a saved person should not marry an unsaved person. But it happens. When it does happen, then God recognizes the marriage. He sanctifies the marriage. Even though it is a violation of what He wanted, He does it. Not because you now and your unsaved spouse can go out and serve God together. No. But for the children's sake, else they would be considered in God's sight like illegitimate, bastard children, if we may use the word. Of course, now let me explain this. This has nothing to do with your children's salvation. I know there is a lot of heresy out there right now. I know one guy teaches that if you are lost and your kid dies, baby dies, and you are in an unsaved marriage situation, and you have a baby, and that baby gets to be two or three, and God forbid, dies, that that baby goes to hell. I know another guy down in the South in Peculiar someplace out there that he teaches this. Then he wonders why he has a church of six people and four of them his family. He teaches that if the rapture comes and your children are at any age of accountability, that you go in the rapture, and your little kid is staying to go through the tribulation period. Now, how do you build a church on that? If I thought that was true in the Bible, you would never hear that out of my mouth. You imagine trying to build a church with a couple saying, "You know what, boy, hope the tribulation does not come till that kid gets saved." Why? "Because he is going to go through the tribulation." "Well, you mean God is going to take my kid and leave him down here, and we are going to go up to heaven?" "Yep." Would you go to a church like that? I would like to preach the funeral of a little baby that just died, and the mom and dad are unsaved. You probably have got the greatest opportunity to reach out to them and win them to Christ at that terrible time in their life. And you are going to tell them that their baby is lost because they are lost? You are an idiot, man. I will tell you what, you have got to be taken out to shop. This has nothing to do with salvation.

Let me just make a blanket statement. I do not know what the age of accountability is. It is different with every kid. I mean, some kids get saved when they are nine. There are some here that are in your 30s. I do not think you hit the age of accountability yet. So I mean, everybody is different. Nobody is the same. But I will tell you this. That baby has got no sin imputed to them before they hit that age of accountability. If a baby dies, they go to heaven just like a heartbeat. I do not care what it is. There are no parameters given to it. This is not talking about their soul. This here, "your children would be unclean," does not mean they are going to die and go to hell. It means the context, how God is looking at marriage as being legitimate or illegitimate. Nothing about the kid's soul. I thought this was the great. Whatever heresy you get linked up to, no matter how good it looks, there is always some place that the Bible just breaks your back. You know this thing about Calvinism, the greatest downfall of Calvinism is this concept right here. You know what you have got to believe if you are a Calvinist? You cannot say that all babies are under the blood before they hit the age of accountability. Because if that baby was chosen before

the foundation of the world, being under the blood of Christ has nothing to do with it. He did not put him under the blood. He did not put him under, he does not choose him under the blood and then unchoose him after they hit the accountability. If you are a Calvinist, you have got to believe when a baby dies, you have got to roll the dice. Was that baby chosen or not? Try to tell that to a family, a little casket. "Oh, I am so sorry for you." "Well, tell me, can you give me anything at all? Can you? My little baby. We love them. We want, we are going to see him in heaven." And the father gets up there and says, "Well, you know what," tears run down his face, "I just had the baby, my little baby. We wanted a baby so long, and he died today. But we know, we know that we are going to see him in heaven. Amen. Praise God. We know that we are going to be with him. And right now, God just came down and took a little flower out of our garden and put it in His garden. We are going to see him again." And then the pastor gets up and says, "Well, that is not necessarily true." You are out of your mind. Feel how stupid something is when you get out of the Bible. That Bible makes it clear when a baby dies, there is no sin imputed to him. When there was no novel. Oh my God, back in the Old Testament, when God killed everybody, made them wander for 40 years. You know what He said? He said, "Your little ones get to go into the land because they did not know right and wrong in the day their parents did." How do you miss that? Oh, I know how you miss it. You are stupid. Pray about it. You will get it.

What I am trying to say is this. I do not care what situation you find yourself in today. I did not say all this to make you feel bad if you find yourself in this scenario. That is not my purpose at all. But my purpose was to understand that God has called us to peace. God has called us to peace. In doing that, the thing that if you ever grasp this principle, the thing that will make you love God more than anything else on this planet, is the fact that when you understand the greatest concept of God is God always covers our bases when we fail. I think the number one thing I love about God more than anything else, that my failures, even though I may have to pay the consequences for it, my failures, God always makes a way. That is what He does. You know why? Because God follows His own principles. He is called us to peace. He may have to come down and take you to the woodshed. He had to make her through some tough time because there are physical consequences with everything. But I am telling you, God always covers our weaknesses, does He not? You know why He does? Figured it out yet? I will tell you why. Because He follows His own principles. I guess He just shows us that He honors us as the weaker vessel when we do not honor Him.

I mean, where do you go? Adam and Eve. God put them down in a perfect garden, put them in a perfect place, gave them everything. Did not have to work. Perfect weather. Everything. Adam and Eve are the two happiest people in the world. When Eve looked at Adam, she says, "Adam, do you love me more than anybody else?" He says, "Honey, I love you more than anybody else in the whole world." She says, "We are the only two in the whole world, Adam." They had everything. God met with them. Did you ever have a friend that was a close friend, and little kids have this problem all the time when they get to school? Because friends change. You ever notice how a kid will have friends or you will have friends, and suddenly something will happen, and they do not want to be your friend anymore? You will go up and talk to him, and you say, "Come to church," say, "Hey, how you doing?" You will get this. You just say, "Hey, how you doing?" "I am talking to you." "I will not talk to you anymore." That cuts in your heart, does it not? It

bothers you when your little kids come home, and you say, "Well, Nick, what are you crying for, honey?" "Well, Susie was my friend, and now she does not want to be my friend no more." Well, you know, what do you do? How do you explain to a nine-year-old that Susie is demon-possessed, and you do not even want to be with her? I explained that to a nine-year-old. You get that. I mean, how do you get those things? You have got to sit down, and you have got to say, "Well," but she is crying. "Well, I want my Susie to be my friend." "Well, you know, Susie's dad is a drug dealer. You do not want to have a friend." Think of anything, you know. It is tough.

I wonder how God felt. I wonder how God felt. He met with Adam and Eve in a garden, had fellowship together. He walked them, watched down on those golden sunsets, hand in hand, God walking with them, and God let Adam name everything, and He brought, gave him the woman and all the things, and he did not have to work, and the food was right there, and everything he had, and they had fellowship together. I wonder how God felt the day that He came down to that garden, and they were hiding from Him. I wonder how He feels the day you wake up, me and you hide from Him. I wonder what was in God's heart when He walked through that garden, and the animals were still there, it was still a beautiful place, but the desire of God's heart was running from Him. And God cries out, "Adam, where art thou?" Like God did not know where he was. God knew exactly what fig tree he was hiding under. That is another great principle in God. God knew where he was, just like God knows where you are at today. But sometimes God will ask you even when He knows where you are at because God wants to see if you are really honest and you really tell Him where you are at. He knew where Adam was. Why? He could have had four angels come down there and flush him out of there like a covey of quail, and God would have got Adam, get, He flushed her out of there. He knew where he was. You know what He did? The Bible says He made him garments of salvation. You know why? Because God always covers our weakness. I do not care what situation you are in today, how weak you were, how dumb you were when you made it. The Bible says that the greatest characteristic of God is He covers our weakness, and when Adam brought the world into sin and transgression passed upon all men through Adam, God made garments of salvation.

I look down there, and I think of Abraham. God said, "Abraham, you are going to be My, you are going to be My nation. Out of your loins is going to come the great nation. I am going to call you out of the Ur of the Chaldees, and I want you to go. But Adam, Abraham, you have got to forsake everything. You have got to leave everything behind because I am going to sanctify you and set you apart." Abraham said, "That sounds good, Lord." Left her, did not obey God, took Lot with him. Anybody that knows the story knows that Lot was a thorn in everybody's side. He was the cause of, it was a fly in the orchard, and he caused problems all the way through the thing, all because Abraham disobeyed what God directly told him. But you know what God did? All through the book of Genesis, He makes a way around the difficulties, does He not? God always covers our weaknesses. He always does.

I think of Moses. I think of Moses when he went out there, and God and people were thirsty in the wilderness of Sin, and they did not have anything to drink. About 15 years earlier, God had him go out and take a big old stick that he had brought the plague down in Egypt, and he stuck that rock, and that water came out, and the people drank. Now they are in a similar situation.

Some 15 years later, this time he does not have the rod of judgment. He has Aaron's priestly rod, and this time God gives him instructions, and He says, "No. You do not smack the rock this time. You just tell the rock, speak to the rock, and it will bring forth water." I look at that story, and I think I see myself so many times how I disobeyed what God said. You see the type in there is the fact that the first time that rock was smitten or hit, it was with the rod of judgment because that rock was the type of Jesus Christ, and the first time Moses was told to strike the rock, it is a picture of Christ being crucified. Second time, some 15 years later, he does not have the rod of judgment now. He has Aaron's rod, which is the priestly rod, and he is supposed to speak to the rock because it shows that you and I now have access to God. We do not have to crucify Jesus Christ to get access to Him anymore. We just speak to Him now because He was crucified back here. See the type? But Moses failed, did he not? Moses is human. He is angry at the people because they are complaining about everything, and his anger gets control of him, and he gets his emotions control, and he takes that rod of Aaron, and he walks over instead of speaking to that rock, he smites the rock. He failed God, did he not? Yes, he did. But you know what? The water came out anyhow. God always covers our weaknesses. Always covers our weaknesses.

I think of David and Bathsheba. Here is a man that violated the two Old Testament principles that there is no sacrifice for. By all rights, he failed God in every way, shape, or form, and yet God did what? He gives him the sure mercies of David. You see, it does not matter what situation you find yourself in today. It does not matter. God will always take care of the person or persons who wants to do what is right. It does not matter. God does not look back and see all the things that we did and kind of keep score against us. He does not do it that way. We do it that way. He does not do it that way. No, no. God has called us to peace, and one of the great concepts of God that you will learn that I want to close out with this morning is this right here. Every one of those people failed God. The list is endless in the Bible, and yet God keeps coming through because the greatest character or characteristic of God for you and for me is He will come through in our failure. He will take you where you are at, no matter what you have done.

VII. Conclusion: God's Faithfulness and Our Responsibility

But I have got to tell you, each one of these stories had some physical consequences with it, did it not? David lost all four of his boys. Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael is Israel's enemy to this day. Moses did not get into the promised land because he disobeyed God. You see, God may give the blessings, but I am telling you, the more mistakes you and I make till we get the Bible in our lives and start doing what we do, we live our lives and start doing what is right, the more consequences we have to deal with. Sin never leaves a man or a woman any better than it finds them, and God may make a way for you. But I am not saying He is going to take away the alimony checks. I am not going to say He is going to take away this or He is going to take away that. Those are consequences. But I am telling you, it does not matter what situation you find yourself in today. If you want to get into the Bible and quit playing games, God will take you where you are at.

These things in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 are written to the church so that a body of Christ can still function even though it fails. He is. You know what He does? He does what I tell you all the time we ought to do because He is the epitome of Romans 15:1.

Romans 15:1

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

You know what God does? He bears my infirmity because I am weak. He will bear your infirmity and your weakness if you will let Him. You are not a bad person. We do not have any bad people in this church. I do not even know all you visitors or the visitors of the last whatever, but you are not bad people. Bad people do not even come to places like this. But I am telling you that God will take you where you are at, and God will help you. He will give you what you need. He will give you because God's business is being strong for us that are weak. He comes through when we fail. Not saying there will be some consequences, but He will even work you through those. He will not take them away necessarily, but He will walk you through them. Because like the great husband that He is and the great model for us, He will never desert His bride. He will never depart from the weaker vessel because He knows that He has her strength. He knows that He needs to be the strong one in that relationship. There lies the concept and the breakdown of marriage. You see, the real issue is God will always be there to fix whatever we break. My advice to you is, do not break too much for too long before you go to get it fixed. But you know what the real issue is? I see it all the time. We just really do not want to fix it. We do not want to give up control. We do not want to fix about us what needs to be fixed to get where we need to get. Because all of our life, it has been about us and what we want. We may give lip service to God or how much we love Him, but we do not love Him near as much as we love ourselves. There becomes the problem.

Every head bowed and every eye closed.