

Protect The House – 1 Peter 5:6-11

1 Peter 5:6-11. We're taking a break this weekend from our study of the Gospel of John to finish our marriage conference. *Fan The Flame*. We started Friday night with *Build The Fire*, the fire of your marriage; because without it you *have* no flame. Then, Saturday morning we talked about *how* to fan the flame; 8 principles to go from glowing embers to throwing off sparks. And today we're wrapping up with *Protect The House*; concurrent with a panel discussion elsewhere in the building. It's been a great weekend.

And let me just say from the top, there's application here for everyone. Married *and* single. These things apply to *any* house. Any home. Any relationship or family. But I'm going to focus on marriage because that's the topic at hand, and it's desperately needed.

Intro

A few years ago I saw a video of a rancher shoot a coyote at long range, through a thermal imaging scope. The coyote had one of his sheep by the neck, and it was only a matter of time before he was wrestled to the ground and killed.

So as they were going round and round several hundred yards away, the rancher was having trouble getting a clear shot. Until all of a sudden the coyote turned broadside and stood still for a second, allowing the rancher to line up the crosshairs and squeeze a round off. That, in and of itself, was awesome.

But the best part was the rancher's response. Still looking through the scope and breathing heavily, he said, "Let's go, baby. Protect this house. Save the sheep, coyote down." I love that.

That's the image I have in mind with the title and point of this sermon. Protect the house; the house of your marriage. Be sober. Be vigilant. *Because your adversary, the devil, prowls around* [not like a coyote, but] *like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour*. That's how the Apostle Peter puts it (1 Pet 5:8).

1 Peter 5:6 – *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God* [because he gives *grace* to the humble and *opposes* the proud] *so that at the proper time he may exalt you*, [7] *casting all your anxieties on him* [so key], *because he cares for you*. [8] *Be sober-minded* [because the battle is real]; *be watchful* [alert and protective]. *Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*. (ESV) Seeking a husband to ruin; a wife to devastate; a marriage to destroy.

Because . . .

Satan hates God-honoring marriages as much as he hates God-honoring people (1 Pet 5:8)

It's true. Not only do you glorify God as an *individual* follower of Christ, but your Christ-centered *marriage* glorifies him. Especially so, because it pictures the Gospel. The good news that Jesus loves the church like a good husband loves his wife; and the joy of the church following Christ like a good wife follows her husband. Good marriages portray the Gospel and glorify God.

Which means Satan hates everything about you. Your heart, your marriage, your home, all of it. And he'll use everything in his power to *ruin* your home, *ruin* your marriage, and ruin you.

So Peter says in v9 – *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world* [we're not alone in this]. [10] *And after you have suffered a little while* [implying that none of us are exempt; even in marriage], *the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*. [11] *To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen*.

We don't normally associate this passage with marriage, but it fits. And the injunction, the command, is to be sober-minded and watchful. Resistant and persevering. *Protective* of your life and marriage. *Protective* of your soul and soulmate.

Hence the application to protect your *house*. To do everything you can to shield it. Defend it. Guard it. Keep it.

The question is, from what? Threats. Protect the house of your marriage against threats. Of which there are a lot. But I'm going to focus on four, that I think are indicative of most. Four threats to the house of your marriage, that you must resist.

The first is infidelity. Satan hates God-honoring marriages . . .

So Protect The House . . .

From Infidelity

Infidelity, as in unfaithfulness. Adultery. Cheating. Affairs. Engaging sexually, or even emotionally, with someone other than your spouse. Be sober. Be vigilant. Be wary.

First . . .

By guarding your heart

If you find yourself entertaining thoughts of what it might be like to have sex with someone other than your spouse, you're not protecting the house. Instead of holding the enemy at bay, you've let them in. And you're one spark away from burning *down* the house. One spark away from actually *indulging* in infidelity; taking a *flame* thrower to your home.

Hebrews 13:4 says – *Let the marriage bed be undefiled*. Untainted. Unblemished. Which of all things, includes infidelity. And that starts by guarding your heart.

But steeling yourself against such a threat, even taking your thoughts captive, isn't enough. We're *far* too weak for just that. You also have to protect the house . . .

• By establishing hedges

Hedges of protection. Hedges are physical and emotional guidelines, or fences, that you and your spouse agree to, in order to protect your marriage and home from even the *possibility* of infidelity. The *possibility* of acting on your desires. The *possibility* of a convenient situation or moment of weakness.

Because none of us are immune. If you think infidelity is the furthest thing from a possibility in your life, you're the one most at risk. And you're just the opposite of sober-minded and watchful. You have to establish hedges. Both for yourself *and* your spouse. To protect yourself against yourself, and to protect your spouse against yourself.

To help with that, I thought I'd give you **mine and Becky's hedges**. We put them in place about 20 years ago and continue to follow them. Even reviewing them from time to time.

They start with an explanation.

In order to avoid all appearances of evil, live above reproach, refrain from things that threaten the security of the other, protect our marriage, strengthen our trust, increase our intimacy, and guard our ministry, we agree to live by the following commitments and hedges:

- 1. We will never be alone with someone of the opposite sex, other than a family member.*
- 2. We will never travel overnight without an agreed upon companion or host at the destination.*
- 3. We will not have any kind of interaction or contact with past boyfriends or girlfriends.*
- 4. We will not flirt with anyone; always being aware of the length and content of our conversations, our body language and distance, and what each other might think of the interaction.*
- 5. Rob will not counsel a woman alone, and never in an office that can't be observed.*
- 6. We will not complement the appearance of someone of the opposite sex.*
- 7. We will always be willing to endure an uncomfortable moment or situation to avoid a questionable interaction.*

If you're going to protect your marriage from the destruction of infidelity, you have to establish hedges. Hedges to protect yourself, your spouse, and your house.

And one more thing here. Be just as sober, just as vigilant, about protecting your house from *imaginary* infidelity.

• Even imaginary infidelity

Like pornography; and the self-gratification that usually follows. It's not eye-candy, it's poison. It's not harmless, it's sin. Every bit as unfaithful as real infidelity. True.

Your body doesn't even belong to you. It first belongs to Christ, 1 Corinthians 6 (19-20); and second to your spouse, 1 Corinthians 7 (3-4). Your body is not your own, to do with as you please. Which makes sexual self-gratification sinful. Plus, Jesus said that lusting after someone is the same as committing adultery with them (Mt 5:27-28). Which means imaginary infidelity, is infidelity.

And here again it's important to establish hedges. In addition to constantly and continually drawing to near to Christ, so that your taste for him creates a distaste for sin; you have to put *tangible* things in place to deny yourself. Especially in this day and age of smart phones, computers, and tablets. Think parental controls. Every red-blooded man should have "parental controls" on his devices. And every *woman* if there's a desire for porn.

And if you don't think you need them, one of three things is true of you. (A) You're already indulging. (B) You want to keep the option open. Or (C) You're a fool; thinking more highly of your self-control than you ought; or full of pride because you don't want someone to think *less* of you with the need for such controls.

My websites and searches are restricted on both my phone and my iPad, and Becky's the only one with the code. Not only that, but I can't delete any of my history. Which not only

hems me in when I'm weak, but helps me to live above reproach and avoid all appearances of evil.

Part of fighting the good fight is doing everything you can to fortify your defenses. Everything. The result of which is a lack of struggle and a heap of joy. An abundance of blessing and a fulfilling marriage. So whatever you do, establish hedges and protect the house from infidelity. That's the first threat.

The second is complacency. Protect the house of your marriage . . .

From Complacency

We don't often *think* of this as a threat because it's so subtle. It creeps in ever so slowly, and sets in ever so easily, that some couples aren't even aware of its presence. Until you wake up one morning and realize you've lost that lovin' feeling. And can't get the song out of your head.

Complacency is the assumption that everything is fine, without ever thinking about it. It's taking your spouse for granted and never acting otherwise. "They've *always* been there, and always will be. *Always* loved you and always will." That's complacency.

It's failing to do the things you did at the start of your relationship, because you don't think they're necessary. No pursuit, no flowers, no cards, no dates, no calls, no planning, no hugs, no kisses, no gratitude, no interest, no nothing. Just a subconscious assumption that the inertia of your early years will carry you forever. It's a threat.

When Becky and I planted the church, we were tested in our marriage more in that *first* year, than all the *previous* years combined. And that's saying something. Because in the *first* year of our marriage Becky was praying that one of us would die. She didn't care *which* one, she just wanted out. It was bad.

But 2005, year 17 of our marriage, was worse. And one of the reasons for that, was my complacency. I was so busy with the church that I didn't give her a second thought. I assumed she was good.

Meanwhile, she thought she was second fiddle to the church. And had to be. "That's just the way it is when you plant a church," she thought. Which I had no idea about, and certainly didn't tell her otherwise. Until it all came to a head and nearly broke us.

And during that time, I made a comment in the heat of a discussion, that changed everything; without even knowing it. I told her that, "I could care less if the church fails miserably and falls into a hole; if I have *you* to come home to, that's all that matters." And she was like, "What? I thought the church was more important." And I was like, "What? Never! No marriage, no ministry. Piddly marriage, piddly ministry. I don't even want to be a pastor without you."

That's what complacency will do. And worse. And if you don't wake up and protect the house, it will wreck the house.

So pay attention to each other. *Invest* in your relationship. Hold hands. Be present. Sit *next* to each other on the couch from time to time. Go on dates. Ask about her day. Ask about

his. Talk. Be quiet. Hug. Kiss. Thank God for each other. And above all, stop taking each other for granted. Protect the house from complacency.

Third, protect it . . .

From Selfishness

Another insidious threat. Another silent killer. Another tool that Satan uses to devour your marriage.

Selfishness, of course, is making your marriage all about you; intentionally or not. It's expecting your spouse to cater to your every whim. It's demanding your wife submit when you're a terrible leader; or playing his lack of love like a trump card every time you get into an argument.

Selfishness is complaining to him about a lack of money to keep up with the Jones'. Or acting like you're a king and deserve to be served. A queen, and deserve to be pampered.

Don't get me wrong. I love treating Becky like a queen. I love blessing her. I love going above and beyond. But she doesn't expect it. She doesn't demand it. There's not a selfish bone in her body.

In fact, I think this particular threat lies more with husbands than it does wives. "I make the money, so I *deserve* your servanthood. I'm in charge around here and you best not forget it. This is my castle." Oh, we don't say those things, at least most of the time; but they're there. Stemming from an ugly root of selfishness. Self-centeredness. Self-absorption.

That's why it's so amazing to see a man live and think otherwise. And many of you do. Serving your wife and kids non-stop. It's extraordinary. Making *their* joy and *their* life, the greatest calling of yours.

And the fact is, that's the *only* way to protect against selfishness. Humble servanthood. *Constant* servanthood. Servanthood in the strength God supplies, for God's glory and her joy. *Thinking* about servanthood won't cut it. *Thinking* about selfishness won't kill it. Only *doing* something will protect your house against the threat.

And last, protect the house . . .

From Busyness

Good things become bad things when they force out the best things. Good things like sports and music for your kids. Golf and hunting for husbands. Hobbies and shopping for wives. Even extra time at work. To a *certain* extent they're all good.

But too *much* of good thing is a bad thing. Especially when it displaces the best thing. When it takes you out of your home and away from your spouse on a regular basis. Replacing your oneness with busyness. Your unity with activity. Your love with fatigue. Your marriage with coexistence.

We saw it all the time when our girls played sports. Couple after couple had absolutely nothing between them except the kids; the kids and their extracurricular activities. They were living separate lives under the same roof. Consumed by the busyness of it all. Some still are. Others are divorced.

Protect yourselves from that. *Protect* the house of your marriage. Prioritize it. Set boundaries. Fix a start and end time for your workday. *Limit* the activities of your kids. Preserve certain nights of the week just to be together. Make church sacred; hold the line. Otherwise, good things will displace the best things, and burn your house down.

Summary

Four threats. Infidelity, complacency, selfishness, and busyness. Threats from without, and threats from within. Because Satan hates God-honoring marriages, and prowls around seeking some to devour. Protect the house.

Prayer – Father, first of all, forgive us of our sin. Forgive us of our failure in marriage. We want to do better; maybe even start anew. So help us identify the threats. And give us the desire, fortitude, and strength to protect the house. To protect the marriage you've so graciously given us. For your glory and our joy, we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

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