



# 2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: September 8<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>

Sermon: September 7<sup>th</sup>





September 8

**Ephesians 5:22-27 & Matthew 19:4-6**

This week's devotions will be dedicated to the topic of marriage. Frankly, I believe they are going to cover a wide range of topics, constituting somewhat of a smorgasbord for our study and, hopefully, enjoyment! I want to begin by talking about an admittedly weighty, but important, topic... divorce.

Divorce is an all too common occurrence in our world. My parents were divorced, and I am not in the statistical minority! In fact, over the past several decades the majority of marriages have ended in divorce which means that I am, most likely, writing to numerous people who have been involved in divorce at some time in their lives.

To be clear, divorce is not the unpardonable sin. The grace of God in Christ is sufficient. Furthermore, there are limited, biblical grounds for the pursuit of divorce but none of these caveats change the fact that divorce is an unfortunate and ugly reality in our world. What I want to do today is try to answer the question why?

The answer is grounded in the imagery that we studied yesterday as presented to us by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5. The reason why divorce is such a blight is precisely because of the purpose of marriage! Marriage has been designed by God to reflect the relationship that Christ has with His church. This means that when a marriage is dissolved, the picture that is being painted is the dissolution of not just a marriage but an even more enduring covenant.

It is unthinkable that the Lord Jesus would choose another bride or not provide for His bride, and it is a biblical impossibility that Christ's true church would ever fully abandon Him entirely for another groom. In like manner, there will never be a time in which our groom (Christ) will not forgive and restore us from our sinful wanderings precisely because He is committed to us through all seasons.

Folks, the idea that supposedly Christian marriages are so flippantly dissolved through things like no fault divorce and "irreconcilable differences" doesn't simply reflect a culture that has lost the understanding of commitment, it actually demonstrates that the church has either lost or ignored the true meaning behind marriage in the first place.

I realize that this has many implications and that some of the ramifications of our beliefs in this regard entail suffering. I know that some folks struggle, that there is real pain and difficulty in many marriages, but these realities do not diminish our responsibility before God to be faithful to Him in honoring the covenant that He designed for His glory and an accurate representation to the world of Christ's love for His bride.

September 9

### **Genesis 1:28 & Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

Yesterday we mentioned that a primary purpose of marriage is to reflect the covenant relationship between Christ and His church. Today, we will see that another purpose of marriage is procreation. The order is incredibly instructive in Genesis as it relates to this topic.

One of the primary questions we must answer in our world today has to do with the issue of procreation and whether that should be restricted to a marriage relationship. Many of the sexual perversions and sinful practices (broadly speaking this would encompass everything from homosexuality to pre-marital sexual relationships) misunderstands the design of sexuality. While it is true that sex has been given to us by God for our enjoyment, it is just a valid to note that sex was designed for more than a good time! In fact, God created Adam and Eve, placed them in paradise, chose to negate the necessity of clothing, joined them together as man and wife and then commanded them to be fruitful and multiply!

The goal of this multiplication, however, was not simply more bodies. Instead, Adam and Eve's responsibility was to both have children and disciple them to be faithful to the task ahead of them. They were to procreate so they could multiply the bodies of individuals who would seek to obey the Lord's instructions to exercise dominion in the land. Stated differently, Adam and Eve were to have children for the purpose of raising faithful disciples.

This is the significance of a passage like Deuteronomy 6. Notice in that text that God assumes a functioning household as the setting for making disciples. God's people were to raise their children in the faith, and they were to do so in the context of their homes and this begs a very important question. Whose home is in view in this passage? The answer, of course, is mom and dad! The assumption here is that a family is living their lives together and that sons and daughters are learning of the faith that their parents hold dear as they live their daily lives together.

God designed His covenant people to function in such a way that their spiritual wellbeing and growth would be accomplished through the nuclear family. Each unit was to marry, have children and raise them in the faith and in this committed, faithful relationship, the next generation of believers were to be cultivated. To be clear, some of the lessons that needed to be taught would come from mom and others from dad. Sons would need different instruction (at various points and on varying topics) than daughters but both parties within the marriage had a role to play and the result of this kind of unified home was to be rooted and fruitful children.

Folks, one of the primary threats to our thriving as a faith family is busyness and splintering. We must realize that God has joined us together for the reason of instilling the truths of the faith in those who have come behind us. We cannot do this nearly as effectively if we are separate and, therefore, marriage is a sacred building block of the Kingdom of God.

September 10

**Genesis 2:23-24**

When I was a kid, my grandmother had a famous phrase that came out when she felt like someone was prying too deeply into personal matters. We all knew that she was getting a bit frustrated when we would hear her say, “Ok, now you’re meddling”. I realize that I am going to do a bit of “meddling” today, but I hope you know that my heart is for your good!

As we continue to think about the topic of marriage, we have already discussed two truths that should inform us of the way we live and relate to our spouses. First, we noted that divorce is particularly gruesome because it divides a covenant relationship that is meant to picture the relationship between Christ and His church which is never divided.

Second, we talked yesterday about a stated purpose of the covenant relationship which is procreation and discipleship (in that order). The reason why marriage is central to our good as a faith family is because marriage is the means by which people should be conceived and raised for the purpose of multiplying disciples who will expand the Kingdom in the faith that was instilled upon them by their parents.

Today, I want us to consider, for a moment, the primacy of the marriage relationship. When I was a kid, the most important and influential people in my life were my parents. My parents were central to me, and this is by God’s design. I needed them for my daily requirements (food, shelter, clothing, etc.), I needed their wisdom and guidance and, frankly, I needed their maturity to help guide me through the early stages of life. While that relationship is still important to me, my mom and dad are no longer the most important people in my life. Now, the person that is my highest priority is my wife, and this is by God’s design.

Marriage is to be a committed, lifelong, enduring and central reality in the lives of all who enter into the covenant. Just as Christ is most committed to His bride and His bride is to be faithful and attentive to Him above all things, so a man is to make his wife a priority and his wife is to be most concerned with her husband.

The implication of the above statement is massive and clearly articulated for us in Genesis 2. When the Lord states that man should “leave his father and mother” what he means is that he is to separate from their umbrella and form a new, enduring and prioritized bond with his wife. Obviously, the rest of Scripture teaches us that we are still to have a relationship with our parents. There is a responsibility to care for them and honor them, even into adulthood, but this responsibility does not trump our commission to create and nurture our marriages above all things.

Folks, one of the great traps we can fall into is never “leaving and cleaving”. Marriages go off the rails when a husband or wife cares more about what their parents say than their spouse. Marriages are not properly nourished when there is no separation precisely because the marriage relationship cannot function properly with competition. Some of us need to be reminded that space is a good thing, that we have raised our kids in order to shoot them out and that we will not always be their priority. This is God’s design, and it is a sign of success not a demonstration of failure.

September 11

**Matthew 22:37-39**

Several months ago, I was privileged to be able to lead a marriage retreat. In thinking about what to discuss, it hit me that Jesus' Words as recorded in Matthew 22 have great significance for married couples. Those of you who have already read today's passage have been reminded of what we know as the "greatest commandment". Jesus was asked to identify the most significant command given in Scripture and His response was twofold, first we are to love the Lord our God and second (in chronology and importance) we are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The thesis behind my entire teaching at the marriage retreat is that we are to love our neighbors (plural) but our most important neighbor is our spouse. While it is true that we are to care for all men, it is just as valid to state that our concern should be chiefly demonstrated towards the one that we have covenanted to live with before God!

Now, what I want to deal with today is the order of this commandment. You will notice that Jesus begins with love for God and leads to love for neighbor... why? One answer is that God is worthy of our love above all else. That is true and we would give a hearty "amen" to anyone who stands on this ground. There is however a secondary truth that must be mentioned and that is that love of neighbor must flow from a love of God.

Paul David Tripp writes these words, "Lasting, persevering, other-centered living does not flow out of romantic attraction, personality coalescence, or lifestyle similarity. It is only when I live in a celebratory and restful worship of God that I can serve and love another." The point, dear brother and sister, is that loving God is the key to loving our spouse!

If we are dependent upon our feelings or personal attraction or some kind of affinity, we will be disappointed because all of those things are insufficient. Feelings change (often in the scope of seconds), appearances are fleeting, and personalities are complicated! The only enduring foundation for a healthy marriage is a healthy, loving relationship with the Lord. When I am walking with Him, I am more likely to show grace and understanding. I'm more given to righteous living, thereby producing peace and joy. I am more discerning and wiser as to how I interact with others, and I am more desirous of the good of those I love for the precise reason that the God I love and serve cares more about my loved ones than I do!

The point I am making today is simple, if our marriage is struggling it may well be because our relationship with the Lord is unhealthy. When we return to our first love (Christ) our second love (our spouse) often benefits greatly. How's your walk today? Are you thinking God's thoughts? Are you desirous of giving Him glory? Are you aware of the grace He has bestowed upon you? If so, you are set up to be a faithful and joyous spouse!

September 12

**James 4:6**

I want to let you in on a little secret as it relates to marriage issues and counseling. Almost always, when someone comes to seek counseling for marital strife, there is at least one party (often two) that are convinced that the real, and single, problem in the relationship rests on the other spouse! This means that the goal of counseling is not “help us” it is instead “fix him or her”.

You know what happens when we begin to get into the weeds of the relationship and one individual feels this way? They are incensed and offended when their own struggles come to light. What I am trying to say is that many marriages suffer due to a prideful view that essentially posits all of the responsibility and challenges on the other party while thinking that there is no possible way that I could be the one who shoulders some of the blame.

When pride creeps in, grace quickly vanishes and when grace vanishes then all that is left is score keeping and justification. If we don't understand our own need for grace, we will be quick to attribute all issues to other people who are imperfect and we will often do so with a haughtiness that makes us impervious to forgiveness and restoration and when we become unwilling to admit our own faults and forgive the faults of others, we have no path forward save the other person testifying to a falsehood which is, essentially, that every problem within the relationship is due to one person's failures.

Folks, the Gospel should remind us that none of us is even close to perfect and when we remember that we are not perfect, we are more likely to extend grace and, therefore, institute the process of reconciliation with our spouse. Think about it this way, isn't it easier to sympathize with those who struggle the way you do? I have far more compassion on individuals who are mired in the same sins that often grab me!

Piper helps us immensely here by reminding us that our recognition of our own need for grace is central to a vibrant relationship. He writes, “when you celebrate God as Savior, you are confronted with the reality of how much you are in desperate need of his grace. This makes it impossible for you to look at your spouse as the only sinner in the room or more of a sinner than you are. The fact is that no one gives grace better than someone who is convinced that he needs it as well.”

Are you convinced that you need grace today? If so, you have a perspective that should enable you to see your spouse's imperfections as cause for your compassion and not judgment. Perhaps the problem is not their sin, perhaps the issue may well be your forgetfulness of your own.

September 13

**Psalm 119:30**

I love the 119<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Psalms. Its length can be intimidating to some but the beauty and worth of this majestic chapter is apparent to me each time I read it. Today, I want to draw on one concept from this precious chapter and relate it to marriage and our task to daily nurture our relationship with our spouse.

Psalm 119:30 says, “I have chosen (past tense) the way of faithfulness...” What does this mean? It means that the author has already decided that he would be faithful in his future! He has committed, before God, to be obedient in each moment and, in so doing, he trusts that the Lord would bless him.

What does this have to do with marriage? The answer is that most marriages are afflicted by daily decisions to walk in disobedience. Most of the problems that arise in our marriages are not immediately catastrophic. This is not to say that catastrophes don’t happen, it is to say that they typically are preceded by years of neglect. Affairs occur because the marriage bed is ignored or a spouse is unwilling for some time. Divorces over finances happen because financial priorities were not set and aligned with God’s Word for years prior. Children abandon their parents’ faith because the faith was assumed and diminished while they were being raised. In each case, the problem is not really the momentary event, it is rather the duration of unfaithful living.

We must realize that our call to steward our relationship with our spouse well requires that we choose (in the moment and forever) to walk in the way of faithfulness and what we will find is that our decision (by God’s grace and in the power of His Spirit) to walk in truth will lead us to an ever-deepening, healthier marriage by the day.

Folks, what troubles many of you is not the event of this past week, it is the habitual unfaithfulness and lackadaisical attitude you have taken for years. Tripp expresses this idea very well saying, “Things in a marriage go bad progressively. Things become sweet and beautiful progressively as well. The development and deepening of the love in a marriage happens by things that are done daily; this is also true with the sad deterioration of a marriage. The problem is that we simply don’t pay attention, and because of this we allow ourselves to think, desire, say and do things we shouldn’t.”

The health of your marriage will largely be decided by your daily walk before the Lord. While the results may not be immediate, we must trust that our holiness and faithfulness will result in health. In the same way that we don’t go to the gym for the first time in years and expect to leave as a fitness model, we ought not expect one day of holiness to fix years of neglect. Nevertheless, if we resolve to walk in the way of faithfulness, we should pray and believe that, over time, we will be brought back to health in the same way that faithful exercise leads to physical fitness.



September 14

**Galatians 6:7**

I certainly pray that today's passage is familiar to many as we just completed a journey through the book of Galatians a few weeks ago. Today's devotion is based on one simple verse that reminds us of a basic, but very important, point. Specifically, what God's Word tells us here is that there is a relationship between the kind of seeds (actions, words, etc.) that we sow and the harvest we reap.

In our marriages this means that we must sow seeds of faithfulness, holiness, commitment and love if we are going to reap joy, love and unity. We cannot expect to sow seeds of sin and reap the benefits of righteousness! If we desire a home that is marked by communion and tranquility, we cannot sow seeds of division and antagonism. We will never get to the harvest of joy if we sow seeds that yield turmoil and pain.

How many of you are investing in your marriage today for fruit tomorrow? Yesterday's devotion talked about the commitment to faithfulness but how many of us are even aware of what faithfulness looks like? Are you growing in your knowledge of the word so that you can be better equipped to follow the Lord and reap the harvest that obedience yields? How many of us desire to live in peace with our spouse but we are sowing seeds of contention all over the place? Is your home marked by tension? It is most likely embroiled in such disharmony because your actions have led you to this place. If we are always looking for a fight, we should never wonder why a peace treaty isn't readily available to us!

Folks, you reap what you sow. One author put it this way, "there will be organic consistency between the seeds of words and actions that you plant in your marriage and the harvest of a certain quality of relationship that you will experience as you live with one another. Every day you harvest relational plants that have come from the seeds of words and actions that you previously planted. And every day you plant seeds of words and actions that you will one day harvest."

What seeds are you planting today? Are you sowing the seeds of faith in your kids? If so, you can joyfully pray for a harvest of mature disciples that will bring you and your spouse joy in your later years. Are you planting seeds of fidelity today? If so, you can expect to harvest trust and affection in the future. These daily actions of sowing seed will multiply and bless those who are faithful in the years to come!