



FIREPROOF

YOUR MARRIAGE

NEVER LEAVE YOUR PARTNER BEHIND

FIREPROOF © 2008 Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

“He Said, She Said”



He Said/She Said
Fireproof Your Relationships: Sermon One
Genesis 2:19-25; Ephesians 5:21-33

Ryan read: Genesis 2:19-25

Last Sunday night we watched a film called ***“FIREPROOF”***. It moved me deeply and made me want to be a better husband.

According to the dictionary, ***“FIREPROOF”*** means, ***“CAPABLE OF WITHSTANDING OR PREVENTING DAMAGE BY FIRE.”***

I’ve eaten Mexican food that barely qualified for that definition, but over the next six weeks, I will be giving you principles and practices from the Bible that will fireproof your marriage.

I hope many of you have seen this movie. It’s the story of a couple – Caleb and Catherine - whose marriage is breaking up. They’ve been together for seven years, but they’ve lost that lovin’ feeling, and things are going south quickly.

Fireproof is the story of how this couple, with the help of God, put their marriage and their lives back together again. They struggle through the issues of forgiving, rekindling feelings for each other, breaking free of addictions and things that hold us back, and finding the love of God.

Although this is a series on marriage we are going to discover that many of the things that we will be looking at speak to all of us, whether we are married or not.

Today, we’re going to look at how to get along with members of the opposite sex. You probably have noticed that men and women are different.

In the film, one of the first cracks that develops in Caleb and Catherine’s relationship comes from a challenge all men and women face, which is, “How do I relate to someone who is so different than me?”

In this clip we’re about to show, watch what can happen if you expect your partner to be just like you. (Play the Session One clip from your *Fireproof Your Marriage DVD*. Total length = 1:33. PLAY CLIP)

I thought about putting all the men on one side of the room this morning, and all the women on the other so you could all elbow and agree about the superiority of your gender and the strangeness of the opposite sex.

But, since our assignment today is to learn to live together, stay where you are and ***OPEN A BIBLE TO EPHESIANS 5:21-33.***

I want to show you something very interesting and very practical in this context. And to help me do that I have asked my wife Linda to assist me.

Linda read: Ephesians 5:21-24

Roger read: Ephesians 5:25-33

In the wisdom of God, the Apostle Paul says in this context that men and women should be treated differently.

Why? Because we are different. (remember Genesis 2:19-25).

There are three truths in this context that, if you practice them, will go a long way to fireproofing your marriage.

First, Ephesians 5:21 gives the over-all governing thought for what is to follow.

Paul says, in v. 21, ***SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER OUT OF REVERENCE FOR CHRIST.***

That verb, “submit,” is the word, *hupotassomenoi* in Greek.

It means, ***TO LINE YOURSELF UP UNDER***, or, ***TO GIVE UP YOUR RIGHTS.***

The word only appears here in v. 21. But, it’s implied in both of the next two paragraphs.

So, when we read in v. 22, “Wives, submit to your husbands...” that verb “submit,” isn’t actually in the sentence. It’s understood from v. 21 that that’s what Paul is talking about.

Likewise, when you get to v. 25, the same verb, “submit,” applies from v. 21.

Here’s what the Bible is saying: Men and women are to line themselves up under their mates in order to make the marriage work. Each one is to give up their rights and look out for the best interests of their partner.

Do this and the marriage will work well. Line yourself up on top of or refuse to give up your rights, and the marriage won’t work well.

Why? Because giving up our rights is an essential part of meeting each other’s needs.

Mutual submission is one of the keys to a great marriage.

So, fireproofing principle number 1 is...

1. MARRIAGE WORKS BEST WHEN BOTH HUSBAND AND WIFE GIVE UP THEIR RIGHTS FOR THE SAKE OF THE OTHER.

Women, that doesn't mean that he has to rub your feet every time you ask him to. And men, it doesn't mean that she has to run to Starbucks every time you have a craving.

Here's what it means. ***1 PETER 3:7,***

"HUSBANDS, BE CONSIDERATE AS YOU LIVE WITH YOUR WIFE."

Consider her needs. Consider her personality. Study your wife and figure out what enables her to grow and what brings out the best in her and when you've figured that out, do it.

That's principle number one. The principle of submission. Give up your rights.

Men, imagine what would happen if your wife sat you down at a table tomorrow and said, "Honey, I've been making some demands of you, and I'm giving those up. I'm lining up under you. I'm giving up my rights to expect you to be who I think you should be."

Women, imagine what would happen if your husband sat you down at a table tomorrow and said, "Babe, I know there are some things you've needed from me and I haven't been willing to line up with them. But starting today, I'm going to do my best to meet your needs, as I understand them."

Question: Would doing this change the dynamics of your relationship?

Husbands, submit to your wife. Wives, submit to your husband. That's principle #1 of a fireproof marriage.

The second fireproofing principle is summarized in Ephesians 5:33.

“EACH OF YOU ALSO MUST LOVE HIS WIFE AS HE LOVES HIMSELF, AND THE WIFE MUST RESPECT HER HUSBAND.”

I want to spend some time here because this is so important.

Look at this verse for a minute... from what you find here, are husbands and wives given the same command? (No.)

What are husbands supposed to do? – Love their wives.

What are wives supposed to do? – Respect their husbands.

Does that mean that husbands don't have to respect their wives? (No.)

Does it mean that wives don't have to love their husbands? (No.)

Because you can't love without respecting, and you can't respect without loving.

But because we are different, we have different ways of receiving what we need.

And while men want to be loved, at the core of their being, we need to be respected by the one that matters most to us.

Likewise, while women want to be respected, they have a hard time fulfilling their life's purpose unless they feel loved by the one who matters most to them.

Here's the core principle:

2. MARRIAGE WORKS BEST WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES AND TREAT EACH OTHER ACCORDINGLY.

Author Gary Smalley wrote about his personal experiences with the gender differences. He said:

“Several years ago, after going through the section in Ephesians on husband-wife relationships, I decided I was going to commit myself to my wife. But how could I demonstrate my willingness to build our relationship?

Suddenly the idea hit me – shopping! My wife loves to shop. I could show her how much I care for her by getting a babysitter and going with her to the mall.

As we walked around the shopping center, I got a real-life lesson in some of the common differences between men and women. What I learned that night began to change the way I related to my wife, and it's continued to be one of the most enriching concepts we've ever applied in our marriage.

Norma told me she needed to look for a new summer blouse. After walking into the nearest women's clothing store, she held up a blouse and asked, “What do you think of this one?”

“Great,” I said, “let’s get it.”

Then she picked up another blouse and said, “What do you think about this one?”

It’s great too.” I said. “Get either one of them.” But after looking at a number of other blouses, we walked out of the store without getting *any* of them!

Then we went into another store where she did the same thing, and then another and another. All the time we were going into and out of all those shops, I was getting more and more anxious. Then, after looking at what seemed like hundreds of blouses, she held up a dress that was our daughter’s size and said, “What do you think about this dress for Kari?”

I couldn’t take it any longer. I blurted out, “What do you mean, a dress for Kari? We’re here shopping for blouses for you, not dresses for Kari!” And if that wasn’t bad enough, after we left that store without buying anything, she asked if we could stop, sit down and talk, and have coffee!

Do you know what I learned that night? I wasn’t at the mall shopping for blouses with my wife. I was *hunting* for blouses. I wanted to conquer the blouse and then get back into the car and head home. My wife, however, looked at shopping from a very different angle. For her it... it was a way to spend time communicating and sharing together.¹

There are some very obvious differences between men and women. Men have thicker skulls, thicker skin, more red blood cells and more muscle tissue. Women tend to be more resistant to heat and cold and outlive men by several years.

From the first moment of birth, little girls have more lip and mouth movement than boys. In a Harvard study of hundreds of preschoolers, researchers found that 100% of the sounds coming from little girls’ mouths were words, whereas only 60% of sounds coming from preschool boys were words. The other 40% were yells and sound effects like, “Vrrooom!” “Aaaaagh!” and “Toot, toot!”

Smalley points out, “This difference persists into adulthood. Communication experts say that the average woman speaks over 25,000 words a day, while the average man speaks only a little over 10,000. What does this mean in marital terms? Very often a man has already used up his 10,000 words at work... while his wife is just warming up!”

“I have asked several thousand women how much time they need to spend with their husbands in meaningful conversation. A wife will say 45 minutes to an hour each day. What do their husbands sitting next to them say is enough? Fifteen to 20 minutes – once or twice a week!”

These differences are what make marriage challenging – but they’re also what make life wonderful!

¹ Hendricks: *Husbands and Wives*, Victor Books, p. 186.

We could create a long, long list of ways in which we're different. But for now, for fireproofing purposes, let's just start with one, because it will take us 90% of the way down the field to a good marriage.

Women, you've never been a man (I hope), so take this on faith: while we can be tough and sometimes rude on the outside, on the inside, there's a puppy dog side to us that needs the one who matters most to us to believe in us. If we're not the heroes of our homes, then we're not going to be heroes anywhere else.

If you've stopped respecting your man, think about what first attracted you to him, pray about how you can regain that sense of respect, make a list of things you need to do if it will help you, but decide that you are going to respect your husband once again and then get about showing it to him.

Phrases like these will really help:

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU

I BELIEVE IN YOU

YOU DO THAT SO WELL

Men, that would feel really good to hear every day, wouldn't it?

Guys, I must tell you that your challenge is bigger than the one I've just given to your wives. Because God says that she needs love, and that your job isn't just to give her spoonfuls of it.

This passage says,

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, JUST AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR HER. – EPHESIANS 5:25

Men, you've never been and will never be a woman. You'll never go through monthly cycles or menopause. You'll never have to – or get to – carry a baby around inside of you, or do any of those things that make women women. So, you'll never really understand what it's like to be a woman.

Take this by faith: your wife needs to know that you love her. She needs to hear it from you, see it from you, feel it from you, receive it from you. And the way she receives it best will probably be a way that you have never studied or trained or prepared for.

Because the way she receives love best is to have you listen to her. – Listen to her dreams and her feelings and her fears and her thoughts. If you will sit and listen, with full eye contact, and as much emotional engagement as possible, for 5 to 10 minutes at a time, it will fill her more than you can know and reap more benefits for you than you can imagine.

But, when you listen to her, she does not want you to fix her. The way she gets fixed is to be empathized with. Men tend to listen for the problem to be solved. Your woman doesn't want you to solve her problem, she wants you to care about her.

So, while she's talking, as best you can, try to listen for and understand what she's feeling. Then say something like, "That must have felt terrible." or, "That must have felt great."

If you get it wrong, she'll let you know and you may need to start over, but take your best shot at it.

Listen to her, pay attention to her. Then, say it to her. "Honey, I love you. Of all the women in the world, I choose you, and I'm so glad I did." "Honey, you are the woman of my dreams."

Guys, write this down: If you want to fill her tank tomorrow, pick up the phone and call. Say, "I just wanted you to know I was thinking about you and I love you." Then, don't ask her for anything, to remind her of anything, don't plan or solve anything. Just listen and when she's through, go back to work and see what happens.

Let's look at our assignments again:

EACH ONE OF YOU ALSO MUST LOVE HIS WIFE AS HE LOVES HIMSELF, AND THE WIFE MUST RESPECT HER HUSBAND. – EPHESIANS 5:33

A. MEN NEED RESPECT.

B. WOMEN NEED LOVE.

If you had to take the second principle by faith, this third principle may require even more faith. It comes out of v. 32. ***"THIS IS A PROFOUND MYSTERY, BUT I AM TALKING ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH."*** – EPHESIANS 5:25

Third principle:

3. MARRIAGE WORKS BEST WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND AND REMEMBER THAT SOMETHING MORE THAN MARRIAGE IS TAKING PLACE – YOU ARE LIVING OUT A PREVIEW OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS IN HEAVEN.

On a very deep level, marriage is a mystery. A mystery is something you cannot understand unless it is explained or revealed to you.

See, long, long ago, something took place in the heart of God that you could not have known about unless He explained it.

God, who had always existed in relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, loved relationships. He loved them so much that He wanted more relationships. So He created us. He placed us on this planet and said, "grow." But instead, our first parents, Adam and Eve, turned their backs on God. They ate what they shouldn't have, and that caused a barrier in their relationship with God, since they'd rejected Him.

God still wanted the relationship to work, so He decided to do the work necessary to restore it. He sent His one and only Son, so that whoever would believe in Him, whoever would be willing, could have eternal life, with God, forever.

Jesus was that Son. He came, lived among us, showing us God's love, and then died on our behalf, to pay for the sins we'd committed.

His hope is that we'll receive His dying act of love on our behalf, accept the forgiveness He offers, and come back into relationship with Him. If we'll do that, the Bible says that we will not only live closely with Him for the rest of our lives here on earth, but we'll be united with Him one day in heaven.

United with him, like a bride to her groom.

If we'll receive God's love, one day we'll become the Bride of Christ.

Here's the mystery. What you and I experience in marriage here on earth is somehow a reflection, a preparation, and a foreshadowing of our relationship with Christ forever in heaven.

“THIS IS A PROFOUND MYSTERY, BUT I AM TALKING ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.” – EPHESIANS 5:25

Marriage is a profound mystery, because it's a reflection of Christ and His people, the church.

So if you are married, or plan to be married, treat your marriage carefully, sacredly. Give up your rights. Build it with fireproof materials like love and respect.

What we do with marriage matters because it is in some mysterious way a rehearsal for what God's Son will do one day with all who call on His name.

So I want to issue you all an assignment today. In the movie, Caleb is about to give up on his marriage, when his dad hands him a special little hand-written book. The book is called the ***LOVE DARE***. In it is 40 days' worth of practical ways for Caleb to demonstrate his love to Catherine.

Caleb's dad challenges him to do one of these love dares every day for the next 40 days and see if it doesn't change his attitude and his marriage. Caleb takes the challenge, and the dares do their work. At the end of the 40 days, he really is a different man, just like we will be 40 days from now, if we take this series seriously.

Over these next six weeks we are going to have our own Love Dare Challenges. They'll be practical assignments designed to raise the level of your relationships.

Here's your first one:

***WIVES: WHAT MAKES YOUR HUSBAND FEEL RESPECTED BY YOU?
WHAT WILL YOU DO THIS WEEK TO MAKE HIM FEEL RESPECTED BY YOU?***

***HUSBANDS: WHAT MAKES YOUR WIFE FEEL LOVED?
WHAT WILL YOU DO THIS WEEK TO MAKE HER FEEL LOVED BY YOU?***

***SINGLES:
IN YOUR WORK, SCHOOL, OR HOME ENVIRONMENT, WHOSE LIFE WOULD YOU
LIKE TO ADD VALUE TO BY GIVING THEM GREATER LOVE OR RESPECT?
WHAT CAN YOU DO THIS WEEK TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN?***