

# Marriage and the Man in the Mirror

## Love on the Rocks: Navigating Struggles and Conflicts

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning. How are we doing? I really want to encourage you guys, if you don't have anything to do next Saturday, go to the ... You might want to grab some friends and go to the Better Man event. Pat Leopold still has some tickets left. You can see Pat. Darryl Strawberry's going to be there, and Dennis Rainy, and Brad Stine, who's hilarious, and Kakà is going to be there, and some other folks. There's going to be about 4,000 men there meeting down at First Baptist Church from all around Orlando, so check that out.

Well, it's great to be with you guys this morning. We've got, as you know, I don't know if you guys know this, but there are now approximately every week about 6,000 downloads of the Bible study. Of those 6,000, some of those are group leaders, so we could have anywhere from 7,000 or 8,000, or 9,000 guys. You guys are here in this room, 100, 125 guys on Friday morning, but you're part of something that's even much bigger than that, so it's great to have guys from around the country. One group that we have from around the country is this group Jars of Clay at Living Water Church. These are 25 guys that meet at 8:30 in the morning on Saturdays, and David Banks is their leader. It's really cool to have those guys. They're at Living Water Church in North Arlington, New Jersey. If you're watching this online, we're looking for a guy in North Arlington, New Jersey, or in that area, who could be our field staff member there, field rep, or area director there. Come onboard. If you're interested in that, look at [maninthemirror.org](http://maninthemirror.org), and check out our field staff. Let's give these guys a round of applause. Great to have them with us this morning.

I'm sorry. Ready? One, two, three ... [Hoo-rah] For those of you that just have to do it that way. Gotcha. Hey, you know we've been talking about marriage. Two weeks ago, David talked about the role of a husband. Right? He talked about stepping up, stepping into it, and Pat last week talked about I Married a Woman That I Couldn't Change. Most of you that ... All of you that are married also married women that you couldn't change. A little flash: She married a man she couldn't change too, so it goes both ways. This week, we're going to talk about when struggles occur, love on the rocks, navigating struggles and conflict.

One of the things that I know for sure is that the writer of Proverbs was married, because Proverbs 21:9 says, "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife." That just drips of experience, doesn't it? I'd rather live on the roof than with a wife who's unhappy with me. We've all been there. You know, how many of you guys are married or have been married? How many of you guys had absolutely no conflict or struggle in your marriage? One. Liar. Right? There's conflict ... He just didn't get his hand down fast enough is what happened. There's conflict and struggle in every marriage? Isn't there? There's conflict and struggle in every relationship. A lot of the stuff that

we've been talking about the last two sessions, and that we'll talk about today, these are really truths that will help you in any relationship, and we're sort of putting them in the context of marriage, pretty much because marriage is ... When we talk to guys, marriage, the issues of marriage, are things that we hear over and over again. We hear as many problems with marriage, as many issues with marriage, as we hear about just about everything else put together. We're going to talk about marriage.

Last week, some of you remember, we had our annual fuel conference. My wife and I did a workshop on this topic, on resolving conflict in your marriage. There's nothing like doing a workshop on marriage to reveal all of the conflict in your marriage. She told this story, and I knew this story. I'll tell you another story that I didn't know about later. My wife's birthday is Christmas day. Her and Jesus, same day. We've had a tradition that I've had ever since we started dating, is that Christmas ends at 2:00, and after 2:00, it's Kimberley's birthday. She shared her birthday all growing up. She never really got her own birthday. That was a big deal for me to make sure that she has a birthday. I feel very good about this, that I've done this. I feel very proud of myself, honestly, if I'm going to be honest with myself, I feel very proud that I have instituted this tradition in our family that mom gets her birthday, just like everybody else gets a birthday.

We also have a tradition on Christmas Eve that started years, and years ago, where we invite folks over to our house either that are in struggles themselves, maybe they don't have family to spend the day with, or just ... It sort of grew from there. Now, all of a sudden, we have this ... Years later, we have this open house on Christmas Eve, and we have all of these folks come over from church. Then we have another tradition in my house. It's called wait until Christmas Eve to finish your Christmas shopping, and birthday shopping for your wife. That's another tradition that we have in my house. Then I have two kids. Dads, what do you have to do with your kids for your wife's birthday, and your wife's Christmas day present? You have to help them take care of that, right?

All of this is going on, so my wife has been saying for the last couple years, "I'm not really sure I want to do the Christmas Eve thing." The kids and I are all like, "No, the Christmas Eve thing is great. We have all these people over. Everybody brings food. It's fantastic." We don't do Christmas dinner in my house, we do Christmas Eve dinner, and then we serve leftovers on Christmas Day. Why? Because it's Kimberley's birthday, so she doesn't have to cook on her birthday. We've kind of got all this worked out, I thought.

Christmas Eve comes, and she's a little bit stressed out about the people coming over, and my wife runs a home business. She refinishes furniture, so my house is decorated in early American garage sale. There's always projects in various stages around the house, and whenever we have a lot of people over, all that has to be cleaned up. It's a little bit stressful. It's not stressful for me, because I'm Christmas shopping. It's Christmas Eve. I did not realize that this was a conflict in my marriage until I got home that afternoon, late in the afternoon, about an hour, hour and a half before people were supposed to start getting there, and the last thing that I did ... It took me like an extra 15 minutes to do this, is I ran by the store and I got her a dozen roses for her birthday.

I walked into the house, and have you ever walked into the house, and you know something's wrong, but you can't figure out what it is? You're thinking, "Maybe I should go back and buy something else at the store." Anything else, just something to have to go get? I knew there was something wrong, and I walked in, so I put the roses on the counter, and I walked into the family room, and she's standing there, and I go, "Hey, baby. What's up?" She explodes. "I had to do all this work today, all by myself, and I knew it was going to be like this! You promised you'd help me, and you didn't help me, and I had to put everything away! I had to do all this food!" It was wild. I just went Christmas shopping for her. I just

went birthday present shopping for her. Why is she yelling at me? I got nice stuff for her. The discussion, lecture, because that's when one person's talking, right? Yeah. The lecture moved into the kitchen, and there, sitting on the counter is what? A dozen roses. She picks them up, and she shakes them at me, and she goes, "Then I feel guilty. This is exactly what I'm talking about."

I was Christmas shopping and birthday shopping for my wife. Doesn't that sound nice of me? What I was not doing was actually doing what she needed me to do, so we had a conflict. Now, she has told me that our marriage ... It will be 25 years this August, so she's told me that our marriage has really progressed a long way because my normal response to that would have been an incredibly adept defense of my actions and motivations. For some reason, I think the Holy Spirit was in back of me, flicking my ear. I didn't say anything. I just gave her a hug and said, "I'm so sorry." I really meant it, which was also surprising. I kind of felt justified with what I had been doing. We were getting ready to do this marriage workshop, and she's like, "I think I should tell this story, but I don't know if I should or not." A friend of hers, actually Ruthie Delk said, "No, you have to tell the story!" So she told the story.

You know, you have these conflicts, right? Sometimes they come out of the blue. Sometimes they ... You don't expect them. Sometimes you think you're doing exactly what you're supposed to be doing, and you have a conflict anyway. You have a struggle anyway. They come down and they just hammer you, right? I was preparing for today, and I was looking through different scriptures that have to do with marriage, and I was reading what Pat and David said in the past two weeks, so I'm not going to do Ephesians 5:25 again. I know they both did that, but I did find this. I call it the marriage imperative. Colossians 3:19, Paul says, "Husbands love your wives, and do not be harsh with them." It would have been easy for me to sort of justify my behavior, and to put a defense on, but that would have been harsh. That would have been harsh for me to do that. I'd like to say that I was standing there thinking this. "Kimberly's upset. I've got to remember Colossians 3:19." I wish I could tell you that's what was going through my mind, but it wasn't. I was in survival mode. Anybody been there? Yeah. Survival mode. God just sort of saw us through that situation. I think this is a huge thing. If you don't get anything else, just memorize this verse. "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

Here's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about ... First of all, we're going to talk about marriage is hard. Why is marriage so hard? Then we're going to talk about what to do if you're in a conflict right now. Then finally, we're going to talk about safeguarding your marriage, or preparing your marriage for the conflicts that inevitably come in every marriage, in every relationship. I know everybody here may not be married. Some of you may have been married and are not married now. Maybe God will bring another woman into your life, and this will be good stuff for there. Some of you will find that a lot of the things that we talk about here will work in other relationships too, but marriage ... We're going to talk about this in the context of marriage.

Why is marriage so hard? The thing we have to think about is where do conflicts come from? There's lots of ways to categorize this, but I've sort of categorized it two ways. There's conflicts that you have some kind of control over, and then there's conflicts that come from outside of your control. The conflict I had with my wife, I had control over. I could have listened better. I could have realized that she was stressed out. I could have done my Christmas shopping, birthday shopping earlier than Christmas Eve, even if the best deals are Christmas Eve. Right? That's like a self-inflicted conflict. I created it.

What are some other self-inflicted conflicts? Things like when you make poor decisions financially, and then that causes stress in your marriage. When you look at your job as being more important than your relationship with your kids and with your wife, when your job becomes your mistress. When you

disagree about child-rearing practices. That's one that I hear a lot. What it really comes down to is money, time, and kids. Those are three things that you just got to talk about with your wife so that you have those things figured out so that you can decrease the amount of conflict that you have.

There's things that are out of your control too. You walk in one day and you lose your job. That creates stress in your marriage, and that can create conflict. Here's conflict for you because a lot of times us guys have identities wrapped up in our job. Certainly our ability to provide is based on our job. It creates stress for our wives, because our wives like security and stability, and now all of a sudden everything feels very insecure, and very unstable. Then that can raise up other issues that are going on in your marriage. Somebody gets sick. Now, there's two kinds of sick. There's like the normal kind of guy sick. My wife likes it when I'm sick if I just go in a room and don't talk to her, because apparently I whine. I don't know what she's talking about. I just want somebody to take care of me. Is that so wrong? That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about when somebody gets long-term illness, and somebody has a heart issue, cancer, something like that. Those things can bring conflict into a marriage. Probably the biggest conflict I've ever seen in a marriage, and again, totally outside of your control, is the death of a child. Marriages often will break up over the stress that's brought about from the death of a child, or the long-term illness of a child.

This is why marriage is hard. We need to prepare for these things. We're going to talk about this.

When we have friends that are getting married, we give them the same piece of advice every time. I tell them this: The first year of marriage is terrible. Every couple that are going to get married, I'm like, "Look, the first year of marriage just stinks. You have your life. They have their life. You try to put that together, and it's terrible." Here's the good deal. If their first year of marriage is like mediocre, well, it's way better than I told them it was going to be. Right? If it is terrible, and I've talked to a lot of couples four, five, six years into it, and they're like, "Oh my gosh that first year was horrible, and nobody told me." I tell people the first year of marriage is hard. There's so much adjustment to make. There's so much that brings about conflict in your marriage.

One of the things that we noticed is that every family is dysfunctional when looked at through the eyes of your spouse. You grew up in a family, and you thought it was normal, the way that your family treated you, the way that your family dynamics worked, the role that you played in your family. You're like, "That's just how families are, right?" Your spouse tells you your family is crazy, and you're looking at your wife's family, and you're like, "How did you grow up in this? This is nuts." How did you do this? Every family is dysfunctional. Guess what? You bring all that dysfunction with you into your new family. I see couples years and years down the line. They still don't recognize that the frustration and the conflict that they have is from these expectations that they brought into the marriage because that's the way their marriage was. The biggest place you see it is the dumb guy that says something about his wife's cooking is different than his mom's cooking. Don't ever do that. One time. I did it one time. Mashed potatoes. Ask my wife. Just stupid, right? That's just a little picture of what it can be like when you bring that, your old family into your new family.

How do we as men often respond to conflict? David talked last week about Genesis 3, and he talked about Adam standing there while Eve as dealing with the serpent. He didn't go into what happens in the rest of the chapter because the rest of the chapter also shows how we tend to handle conflict. What does Adam do when he realizes he's messed up? He hides. That's what we often do as men. We withdraw. We isolate. Then when God finds him, he blames God and Eve. "That woman that you gave me." She made me do it, and you gave her to me, therefore it's your fault, God. We blame, and often

then we get angry. Why are we angry? We're trying to sort of deflect the responsibility. We're trying to not have to really talk about the real issues. Our anger is a way of sort of pushing this away.

All these contribute to making marriage very difficult. Especially in times of conflict. We have conflicts that we inflict on ourselves, conflict that we have no control over, we bring all of our baggage into it from our families before we got married, and then we have our own sinful nature, the way that we typically handle a conflict is to withdraw, blame, and get mad. Awesome, huh? Where's the good news? Well, let's talk about a couple things.

First of all, let's talk about if you're in a conflict right now. The first thing that I want to tell you is that you really need to check your heart. If you're in a conflict right now, I want you to think about, "I need to check my heart." Now, I'm going to give you some scripture. I'm going to give you actually a fair amount of scripture, and we're not going to turn to it. I've got it all written down, but I really want you to write these references down, and I'm going to give you enough references that you could probably do a personal devotion time most of next week just on these verses.

Here's the first one. James 4:1-2 says this: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire, but you do not have, so you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God." What's James saying here? He's saying that we act like the quarrels and conflicts that we have are because of an external reason. "If my wife would just ... We wouldn't have this conflict." What he's saying is that's not really the source of conflict. The source of conflict is your own desires. What desires do we have? The desire to be right. The desire to be comfortable. The desire to not sacrifice. Because we don't have what we want, we kill. I've seen a lot of wives spirits crushed and killed by husbands who can't get what they want, and so they defeat their wives, like we talked about in the first session. We covet. Can't get what we want, so we fight about it.

I remember my wife and I, I love traditions, and the family, so the day after Thanksgiving, typically we drive down to Park Avenue and we walk up and down Park Avenue, because all the Christmas stuff is going up. That's a tradition that she had with her family up in Connecticut, and I love that tradition, so we try to extend that into our family. We live up in Casselberry, so we drive down ... You guys that will understand this, we drive down 17-92, we take a left on Park Avenue at the very north side of Park Avenue. Well, do you know what's on the north side of Park Avenue, north of the shopping district? All those houses that none of us can afford to live in. Big, huge mansions, brick driveways.

I couldn't figure out why we used to get in these rip-roaring fights on the day after Thanksgiving, or the two days after Thanksgiving. I realized what it was. It's that a little bit of my wife's heart, but certainly in my heart, as I'm driving down that street, I'm thinking, "I want a house like that. That's the life I want." What happened was that covetousness took root in my heart, and then when I'm frustrated with how my life is, because it's not the way that I think it should be, then I start doing what? I start nit-picking. I start looking for all the other things that aren't right in my life. Our wives are easy targets when we get in that kind of a mood, when we start thinking, "If only, if only, if only." We don't want to look in the mirror, for sure, so we pick on the closest thing we can get.

Guys, check your hearts. Is there something that you're realizing that your life isn't turning out the way that you wanted it to? Maybe your life is turning out perfectly. "I'm perfectly happy, I don't need a big house like that. Do you know what the property taxes are on those houses? I don't want to pay that. Do you know what the upkeep is on a house like that? I don't really want that." I just have this picture in my

mind of what that would be like. Satan takes hold of that. The world, the flesh, and the devil come together, conspire against us to pull us away from God. That's a great example of how that happens. Check your heart.

Another way you can check your heart is to think about how do I respond to conflict? Do I get angry? Do I withdraw? Do I love my wife? Do I intentionally not be harsh with her? Do I express understanding and love? Are you more committed to being right or to loving your wife? Are you more committed to being justified in your actions, or to loving your wife? Just about every fiber in my being wanted to defend myself when my wife was standing there stressed out, frustrated, upset, shaking roses in my face, I wanted to be justified. I wanted to be right. This happens to me all throughout my marriage, when my wife brings something to my attention that's frustrating her, my initial reaction often is to go, "Well, I can't be wrong." I try to justify myself. I try to ... Here's what I try to do. I try to prove my own righteousness. What this is, guys, is this is the gospel playing out in this relationship. I want to prove my righteousness to my wife in the midst of this conflict, so that I can feel better about myself.

This is the same thing that we do with God. You know the verse in Isaiah 64:6, if you don't know the reference, you know the verse. God looks at our righteousness, and it's like filthy rags. My righteousness will never be enough anyway. I just need to put that aside, and instead of focusing on my righteousness, I need to focus on loving my wife. If you're in the middle of a conflict, and you feel like you're right, maybe you are. It's just not the point. It's just not the point.

1 Peter 3:7-12 says this, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner, and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers." That's the part that we always hear about with husbands, but listen to the rest of this, because this applies to all of our relationships. It certainly should apply to our marriages. Verse 8, "Finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble, do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing, for whoever would love life, and see good days must keep their tongue from evil, and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Luke 6:45, Jesus is talking and he says, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks."

Ephesians 4:31-32 says this, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawl, and slander, and every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you." Let's say you are right. Let's say your wife is wrong. What does forgiveness look like? It looks like moving on. It looks like loving your wife well, and not being harsh with her, and moving on, and not reminding her that you're right and she's wrong, if you are in fact right. Look at your heart, examine your heart, check your heart, make sure that you are letting the gospel infiltrate the way that you think about your wife, and as importantly, the way that you think about yourself.

Second thing is, I want you to think about counseling. If you are in a conflict that you cannot resolve with your spouse, I really want you to think about counseling. My wife and I went to counseling. It was fantastic. It was scary as anything, let me tell you, but it was really, really good. I'm going to let you in on

a secret, here's the best thing that happened in counseling. You know what I found out? It really wasn't all my fault. Now, she didn't believe me when I said that, but she believed the counselor when he said that. Think about going to counseling. A lot of times, we try to think of conflict, or we think of relationship issues in like a disease model. Like we just need to cure it. We need to cure the conflict. We need to take a pill, or take a treatment, and that will make the conflict go away. Unfortunately, guys, that's not how it works.

The issues that are causing your conflict, they don't go away, you just learn how to deal with them in a more healthy way. Counseling is not about solving a problem, necessarily. It's about helping you learn how to deal with that problem. Sometimes problems don't go away. If your child is sick, your child is sick. If you lost your job, you lost your job. You can't just, "I'm going to go to counseling and cure that." You can't wave a magic wand, but you can learn how to cope with it better. If you're in the midst of a conflict that you don't see a way out of, I want you to think about going to counseling.

The other thing is, remember, we talked about we all bring the dysfunction of our former life into our marriage, so maybe you'll have issues that you need to deal with from your issues before. I can't tell you the number of guys that I run into that have issues with their dads. You can't hear this on the tape, but I'll tell you that. A lot of guys just went mm-hmm (affirmative). You know. You bring issues with your dad into your marriage. Guys, if your dad ... If you didn't get what you needed from your dad as far as affirmation, and vision, and values, and integrity, you're making it up as you go along, and you may need someone to help you figure that stuff out. Go talk to somebody, at least get a friend, a brother who's more mature than you in Christ that you can talk through those things with.

Last thing I want to say about counseling, I don't care what it costs. Just go. It's worth the investment. Trust me, you'll make it up in the long run. Divorce is way more expensive than a couple of counseling sessions, or a couple of months of counseling sessions. One of the deals with counseling, one of the deals with checking your heart, is it just helps us to learn how to communicate more clearly with our spouse, more healthfully with our spouse, which kind of brings us to our Big Idea. That's this, that **Communication will not resolve every conflict, but no conflict can be resolved without communication.** Communication will not resolve every conflict, but every conflict requires communication to resolve it. How then do we safeguard our marriage, or prepare our marriage for those inevitable conflicts that come?

We handed out marriage prayer cards a couple of weeks ago, and you remember the last part of that prayer is this: "I want to hear her, cherish her, serve her, so that she would love you more, and we could bring you glory." I've asked Kimberly the last three or four years to do a workshop with me at our annual conference, at Fuel, on marriage. The last two, three times that I've asked her, she's always had the same reaction, which is something approaching gales of laughter. "I'm not going to do that. Are you kidding? I'm not getting up in front of those people." Now, for several years, I thought that what she meant was, "I'm not a public speaker. I'm not comfortable standing up in front of a group of people and sharing things. That's not my skill set."

This year, she said yes. I thought, "I wonder what got better?" We were talking about the workshop, and she said to me, "You know, you've asked me this for several years." I'm like, "Yeah, I've asked you this over and over again. You always say no. Why did you say yes this time?" She said, "It's not about saying yes this time. It's about saying no the last few years you've asked me." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I didn't think our marriage was that good. Why would I do a marriage workshop with you." What? I'm in ministry. Of course I have a good marriage. Right? I was like, "What are you talking about?" We

had this amazing set, trust me, set of conversations talking through, and talking through about my desire to feel justified in my defensiveness when she brings up stuff that's not right, and some issues she realized that she had, and man, we had an amazing conversation about it. It's ongoing, trust me. It's ongoing.

You're going to have some conflicts that you didn't even know were going on. That's literally a years-long conflict where our marriage was like a C-, and I thought it was maybe an A-. I just wasn't ready for it, I didn't realize it. I wasn't aware. I don't know if I wasn't paying attention, or if we were just at a place where we couldn't get there, and that's okay. We both stuck with it. We both stuck through it. How do you safeguard your marriage to get through those times?

The first thing I would say is you need to decide to love your wife. In our culture today, love is often described as a feeling. That is not love. That's affection, infatuation, lust, all different aspects. Love is not a feeling, guys. Love is a choice. Love is an action. Paul describes love this way in 1 Corinthians 13, "Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." That's mine. I love to keep a record of wrongs. That way, when I do something wrong, I can put it on the score sheet, and still be ahead. "Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Those things are choices. Those aren't things that happen, some emotional response. You have to decide to do those things. 1 Corinthians 13:4-6, if you didn't write that down. We have to decide to love our wives.

Secondly, we have to do some communication basics, all right? First of all, engage with your wife. Don't withdraw. Step up. Share regularly. Don't store it all in and then explode when you can't take it anymore. Listen to her. Don't criticize her. Don't be her consultant. My wife, early in our marriage would tell me about something going on, some relationship struggle that she was having, and I would listen until I figured out what she needed to do, and then I would commence to telling her what to do. After a couple times of this, she looked at me one day, and she goes, "Do you think I'm stupid?" "What are you talking about? We're talking about ..." "I know what to do. I just need someone to talk to about it." I know, it's weird. A lot of our wives, they know what to do. We kind of have a deal. I don't tell her what to do unless she asks me. If she just wants to talk, I wait for the question.

You want to know if you do this or not? When you go home tonight, look at your wife and say, "Hey, honey, tell me about your day. How was your day? Anything happen today?" She's going to say two or three sentences, and then she's going to pause. She's going to stop. That's the point that you always interrupt her. You've just conditioned her. Here's what I want you to do. You ready? Look deeply into her eyes and say, "Go on." Let's all try that together. All right? You ready? "Blah blah blah blah blah. Blah blah blah blah blah." Go on. Then get the smelling salts out, because she will have fainted that you actually expressed interest in actually hearing everything that she had to say.

Don't cut your wife off. This is her ... Every wife has this love language of wanting to share with you, share the experience, not get your advice, or consultation, but share with you. That means you have to go along with her, and that may not be how you're wired. You may not like that. You may be like, "A plus B plus C equals D." Every time. That's not how they are. A, Q, M, B, Z, 3. Goes everywhere. That's just how they are. There's nothing wrong with it.

Crying is okay for her. I have a phrase for you to write down, "Don't fear the tears." If you have a wife that's like mine, I've gone in ... Sometimes I'll go talk to my wife and she'll be crying. I'll be like, "Are you



okay?" She'll be like, "Yeah, I just need to cry." I'm like, "I don't have any idea what you're talking about, but okay." Then I had a daughter. "Are you okay, honey?" 16, 17 years old, teenage years. "Yeah, daddy. I just need to cry." This is weird. But, us getting mad, and throwing stuff across the room, that's weird to them. Tears are fine. Let your wife cry. When your wife cries, again, don't solve the problem. She just wants you to be there for her. Give her a hug. Let her cry.

Finally, humor is critical. You will not probably survive a lot of conflicts over time unless you're able to laugh at it. It's good to laugh at yourself especially. There's studies about all the stuff that happens in your body when you laugh. It makes you live longer. It makes you feel better. Here's what I would say about this, sort of a corollary to this. Choose to take things the best way that they could be taken. Sometimes my wife will say something to me, and it'll raise my hackles, because I take it the most negative way I could possibly take it. Instead, guys, when your wife says something to you, choose to take it the best way it could be taken. Tone of voice is a killer, right? My parents used to say, "It's not what you say, it's how you say it." They're right, but give your wife a pass sometimes. The tone may have nothing to do with you. Just listen to the words, and take things the best way that you could possibly take them.

Finally, think about this, be more committed to the institution of marriage than you are to your marriage. What do I mean by that? Well, who created the institution of marriage? God did, right? If you are committed to the institution of marriage, you're saying, "I'm going to be committed to this gift that God gave me, this set-up that God made." If you're focusing on your marriage, there's only one person that can make you happy, and it's your spouse. Let me tell you what, guys. If you're focused on your spouse making you happy, she will disappoint you. She will disappoint you, just like if she's relying on you for her happiness, you're going to disappoint her. Don't make your marriage into something it can't be. Your marriage will not make you happy. It will give you happy times, but your marriage will not make you happy. God makes you happy. God brings you fulfillment through things like your marriage. When you make marriage your God, it's going to disappoint you, so instead be focused on the institution of marriage.

One of the things my wife said to me when we were talking about the struggles that we had been through in the last few years, that I apparently was unaware of, I kind of knew, was that she's like, "I knew we would get to the other end of it because I'm committed to being married to you." We've been through some tough times, my wife and I, before I came to Man in the Mirror, and what got us through those times was not the fact that Brett's so handsome, or Kimberly's so beautiful, or he makes so much money. It wasn't any of that. We were just committed to being married to each other. Come hell or high water, we were going to stay married. The world wasn't going to tear us apart, and Satan wasn't going to tear us apart, and our sin wasn't going to tear us apart. Darn it, we were going to stay married. That got us through those difficult times.

Mark 10, Jesus says, "At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, so they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Love the King James. "Let no one put asunder." Let no one separate. Be more committed to the institution of marriage than you are to your own marriage and your marriage will survive. Your spouse will let you down. Rely on God.

Last thing I want to say is this. The end game is to bring glory to God. Just a reminder of the marriage prayer again. "I want to hear her, cherish her, serve her, so that she would love you more, and we can

bring you glory." The Big Idea, **communication will not resolve every conflict, but no conflict can be resolved without communication.**

Let's pray.

Father, you know this institution of marriage that you've created that unites two fallible, sinful creatures, Lord, is bound to be filled with conflict and struggles. Lord, you've given us the mandate to make it work. You've given us the mandate to love each other. To choose to love each other. You've given us the mandate to stay together if it's at all possible. Lord, I pray for every marriage that's represented in this room. Father, that you would give us the desire in our hearts to figure out how to get through conflicts in a way that honors you, and honors our spouses. Lord, for guys that may be on the other side of that, where it didn't work out, Lord I pray that you would bring comfort and peace. Father, that you would bring the lessons learned into every relationship that they have, so that they can preach the gospel to people with their very lives. Father, safeguard our marriages. Bind us together with our spouses, Lord, as long as we live. Lord, I lift these guys up to you, asking that you would use us to bring you glory. In Jesus's name, amen.

Hey guys! If you have been doing the discussions questions that came along with the Bible Study, you had a question that talked about praying with your wife and praying for your wife. So here's my challenge for you in the coming week. I want to challenge you every day to take a minute or two and pray for your wife. You can use the "Marriage Prayer" or just say a quick prayer for your wife. Think about the things that she's going through, maybe her job or issues with your kids, issues with her family, just take a minute and pray for her every day this week. And then I really want to challenge you also to pray WITH her every day this week. Now I know that this can be hard. It's kind of weird praying for your wife, or with your wife, every day but just take a minute, maybe you're.. just grab her on your way out the door in the morning and say, "Honey, can I pray for you really quick?". And take 30 seconds and pray for her day. Pray that she would see God work in her life that day and that He would be everything she needs. All right, guys? That's my challenge, pray with your wife everyday!