

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
The Marriage Prayer: Finishing Strong
Patrick Morley & David Delk
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Good Morning, Men and Women! It is nice to have some ladies with us this morning.

Grab your bible and turn to Mark 10, and turn your chairs to the front as we welcome Pat Morley and David Delk.

Pat: We are going to talk about finishing strong this morning. This is the last of six messages on the six aspects of the Marriage Prayer. Sixty-eight words that capture the essence of what the Bible teaches about marriage.

One of our table leaders is 90 years old, Ken Moore, and has been ill for the last several months. What an example of finishing strong. He was out mowing his front lawn when a lady drove by and saw him, pulled over and asked how much he charged to mow lawns. He said "I am doing this one for free, but the lady inside lets me sleep with her from time to time."

The ultimate purpose of this prayer is to help us finish strong and bring us into a closer relationship with our wives. Some of you are not married and some of you are divorced; regardless these are life principles and there is something for everyone.

David is going to come up and take the wheel.

David: Good morning it is great to be with you. As we talk about the last phrase of the Marriage Prayer, it seg-ways back to the beginning – the last phrase and big idea for this morning is: **SO SHE WOULD LOVE YOU MORE AND WE CAN BRING YOU GLORY.**

When we started this series we talked about the fact that many times in America in marriages we tend to have a set of reduced expectations about what marriage is all about. One of the things we were hoping is that this prayer is lifting our eyes to help us see marriage as something bigger than a typical cultural expression of that relationship we see around us.

Certainly in the Bible we see that this is so important. You may be wondering what that means. I know you want my spouse to love you more to bring you glory, but why is that such a big deal?

If we look in the scriptures, Psalm 78, I want to read a couple of verses.

- 1. O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.*
- 2. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old--*
- 3. what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us.*
- 4. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.*

5. *He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children,*

6. *so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.*

If you continue to read this passage, it recounts the history of God's working in Israel, but that entire story is in the context of passing that down generationally within families. If you read the scriptures you cannot miss how important a family is to God's plan. It started with a marriage, Adam and Eve. It goes through Noah – a family – and down to Abraham saying 'you are going to be a blessing to all the nations – a family. It goes down through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and down to King David and the promise that one day a son of David would reign on the throne forever.

Families are so important to God's salvation plan, the plan he has of redeeming the world. That knowledge alone should show us that our marriage must be about something more than just coexisting and taking care of someone.

Jesus echoes this in Mark 10:6-9, when he talks about the sacred nature of marriage.

6. *"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'*

7. *'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,*

8. *and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one.*

9. *Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

Jesus is asking us to see that sacred nature of the union that God creates in a marriage. The idea of finishing strong, keeping the goal in front of us and lift our eyes to see that it is not just about my happiness or serving my wife so she is happy – it is about helping her love God more and us together bringing God glory; to have the marriage that people look at and say 'God has really done something in their life'.

It is so important that we remember how to finish strong, because the enemy is out there and he is trying to get us off track. Most of the ways he will try to get you off track are not huge overnight momentous decision where you will change your personality and do something crazy in one moment; it will be a slow insidious process.

I need someone to help me out with an illustration. I am going to toss you a ball and I just want you to catch it. (David threw all the balls at once.) Now I am going to just have you catch this one ball the spotted one. (All the balls were thrown at the same time, but he only had one to catch.)

Did you see the difference? He was focused on one of the options. What happens in our lives is we have all these things coming at us – careers, stress, hobbies, choices, friendships, and church – all these things coming at us and if we are not careful we are trying to look at all of them and we are missing that central goal that God has for us. In our marriage that goal is to help our spouse love God more and for us to bring Him glory.

If we keep our eye on this things can remain pretty simple, but when we get off track things can get out of hand and out of control. You don't notice that in the short run. We use an illustration; if you are one degree off on a compass heading you go a hundred yards you are five feet from where you were trying to get. Some of us are like that you are only off for a little while it's no problem, but if we are not careful we may go a long time and you will end up very lost. If you took a trip from Orlando to San Diego and are off one degree you will end up in Tijuana. If you do that you will end up in two countries speaking two languages and will be separated by border guards. Some of you may feel like that is where you are in your marriage right now. You have been off track for a while and haven't been communicating and you find yourself in a place you don't really want to be.

This morning we are saying you don't want to get to that place in your marriage; and one way to avoid this is to pray the marriage prayer everyday. Another really big idea: because I want to finish strong I will pray the marriage prayer everyday.

Pat: Awesome. If you would turn to Malachi 2:13 and let's talk about why this matters.

13. Another thing you do:(this is a list of complaints that the prophet is lodging against the people) You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

-He is not answering the prayers of the people. A good cross reference to that is I Peter 3:7.-

14. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

You ask why? That is a pretty good start cause a lot of people are not even asking why. It is a good start to inquire of the Lord. If your marriage is not working well, one thing to do is to ask why. This could be one answer, that you have broken faith with her. There may be other reasons as well, so ask the question why.

It says the wife of your youth; it is interesting to note that in the Jewish culture it is pretty common for men to get married at the age of 13. It was not uncommon for the women to be even younger than that.

If you have broken faith with her, what does that mean? We have talked about marital unfaithfulness, obviously the first thing to pop in our minds has to do with fidelity, but that is far and away not the only way to be unfaithful to your wife, right? You can cheat her in many ways, so the idea is that this man being addressed has stopped receiving the blessing of God because they have been unfaithful to their wives. They are not finishing strong.

Then it says the wife of your marriage covenant, that would be like our marriage ceremony and the vows we take.

15. Has not [the LORD] made them one? (We have spent a lot of time talking about oneness in this series) In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.

There is an insight into what it means to be one; you are talking about two people that have separate parts that fit together. Men and women fit together physically and literally that is part of what it means to be one.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

16. "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence (this word should be taken as putting away your wife an Old Testament practice) as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

That is why we have this prayer, 68 words, to help you guard your spirit so you won't break faith with your spouse. In looking at this it is pretty clear to me that God takes marital unfaithfulness very personally.

What does marital faithfulness look like in action? The Seibert's, Jim and Ginny, are a fantastic example of marital faithfulness in action. In fact they are like a couple of love birds. People will see them at church or around town and will come up to them and comment on their love for each other. It is because they have put their love for each other in motion and are spending the time with each other.

The perfect example of marital faithfulness is Jesus Christ. He is completely faithful, sacrificial and loving to his bride in every way and every time. He is the best example we have, but if you can't follow Jesus follow Jim.

I said it last time and it is worth repeating because it is a fantastic and simple analogy to get a hold of this idea; it is like the game of football. Which team are you on? You are either on the same team or two teams competing against each other. Marital faithfulness in action would look like two people on the same team. You know what it looks like when a team starts to compete against each other, right? You see the break down that takes place.

The space shuttle, one of the most intricate and innovative pieces of technological hardware ever invented; did you know that the space shuttle is trying to veer off course about 90% of the time. They have mounted all kinds of thrusters and rockets all over the space shuttle that are constantly firing to keep the shuttle on course. That is what the marriage prayer is all about. It is like a thruster or rocket here and there to help keep your marriage from veering off course.

The big idea today is: in this marriage prayer is **TO HELP HER LOVE YOU MORE AND FOR US TO BRING YOU GLORY**. That is the essence of what it means to be faithful.

David is going to come up and give us a practical illustration.

David: How can you get on the same team? How can you make sure you stay on the same team? Some practical ideas; one of the things about this project is we wanted it to be concrete and practical. If you look at the book there are a lot of these things in there. I want to mention just a couple.

The first one is to have a sense of humor together. Couples that last are able to laugh together. The reason for that is if someone is laughing at you it is hard to feel like you are on the same

team. When someone is laughing at you or you are not laughing at all it is something very different.

I was reminded of this the other day; I had a printer that is giving us some problems, so I was on the phone with the manufacturer early in the morning. After what seems forever on hold or on the voicemail system I am transferred to someone who asks for the serial number on the part that is giving the trouble. I gave him every number I found on the part. He says no, it's a ten digit number and it will be on the label, the top, the bottom or one of the sides –literally this is what he says to me after about 35 minutes –literally.

I think maybe this is fake or pirated, so I get the old part that I am replacing and I'll find the number on that one and might be able to find it on the new one. There is no serial number on the old one either. Is there someone there that knows where the serial number is? He says to me where did you buy it? I said I bought it on Amazon. He said why don't you call Amazon and have them tell you where the serial number is. It was unbelievable. By this time you either get angry or go a different direction.

At this point Ruthie is walking around the house and every time she looks at me she is giggling. She was helping me to make the right choice, which was to realize how absurd the situation was. You can find humor even in things that seem so stressful or irritating. That humor is part of what lubricates our relationship.

Some of you say I am just not that funny or maybe my spouse is not that funny. Here is what you want to do, you want to find a funny friend call them up and tell them you were at the bible study, they said my wife and I need to laugh more and you are funny, so can we come over for dinner?

Pat: Or you can come to the Man in the Mirror Bible Study and listen to David Delk. The other application I will mention is the idea of being intentional and focusing around the marriage prayer. I want to encourage you to pray this prayer.

The reason for it is we don't need to tell you to do anything. You don't need to make a long list, but if you would bring yourself into the presence of the real Jesus he will show you what you need to do by praying the prayer.

This is a grace based approach. I have mentioned many times how this is working in my life. My wife gives me lists on post-its. She has tracked my routes around the house so I am bound to find a post-it around the house about something she would like me to do. Like many men I recoil when someone tells me what to do, so I put it off. I have done that for many years. Since praying the marriage prayer my heart has been transformed and the thought came to my mind a few weeks ago that I am going to end up doing these chores anyway, why not make a deposit into my wife's emotional bank account and pick up the post-it as soon as I see it and go do it.

I have started doing that and it is fantastic. First of all it makes me feel good about me and it makes her feel good about me, together it makes us feel good about what the Lord is doing in our marriage.

The day before yesterday I am sitting in my office (over the garage) Patsy comes in and I yell down if there is anything I can help with. No thank you. I realized it was the marriage prayer.

Practical idea number one: Be intentional. Pray the Marriage Prayer: So she would love you more and we can bring you glory.

Let's pray together:

Let me encourage you to pray this daily.

Father I said til death do us part, I want to mean it.

Help me love you more than her and her more than anyone or anything else.

Help me bring her into your presence today.

Make us one like you are three in one.

I want to hear her, cherish her and serve her; so she would love you more and we can bring you glory. AMEN.