

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
THE HUSBAND IN THE MIRROR – YOU DON'T LOVE ME!
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We are doing a series on marriage called The Husband in the Mirror. We've been away for a couple of weeks, and this morning I'm going to give a message on unconditional love. The title of this message for all who ever heard, "You don't love me!"

The statement we're going to look at is, "You don't love me!" You've all heard this. If you haven't heard this, you will. I am dedicating this to my son, John, and my new son-in-law, Jay. John, Jay, if you haven't heard this already, you certainly will hear it before the year is out. So I want to look at a few questions this morning. Why do they say that, what do they mean, how does it happen, and what can you do about it? I think those are probably good, organizing ideas for the message this morning. Why does she say that, what does she mean, pray tell, how does it happen, and what can we do about that? That's kind of the ma of where we're going to go.

Now, when she says, "You don't love me," how many of you know what she means? How many of you know why she says that? None of us do, right? However, I have run across a picture that gives a fairly good explanation, and I'd like to show this to you at this time. You'll notice that the man has a single switch "on" and "off." You notice, on the bottom, the woman is a complexity of dials and gadgets, big and small, different colors, some turning left, some turning right, some not turning at all, some not knowing which way they want to turn, some not caring which way they go because it doesn't matter. Anyway you turn it, turns it off. Amen? What I want to do this morning is give you a little course in dial management.

The first thing, I suppose we should say is that dial management occurs in phases. Phase 1 is, "You mean she has a dial not a switch? What's that? More than one dial?" So there's the epiphany of realizing that, "yes," men and women are different. That's Phase 1.

Phase 2 is, "Well, I finally know which dials do what, but I can't figure out which way I'm supposed to turn them."

Phase 3 is, "Okay, I turn the dial to the left, and I'm right. Tomorrow I turn the dial the same way, and I'm wrong." She says, "What, you should have known!" Then the first phase in dial management is, "Since it doesn't seem that it makes any difference which way I turn the dial, I'm just going to forget that I ever saw the picture so turn the picture off." Ha, ha, ha...

Okay, let me give you a quick review of where we've been in this series. Then I want to jump into dial management. Week 1, we talked about "What Makes Her Tick." The big idea was that after God, but before all others, I will make my wife my top priority. Repeat after me, "After God, but before all others, I will make my wife my top priority." You don't need to know where the dials are if you can do that.

Week 2, we talked about the seasons of marriage, and the big idea was that our relationship is the task; our marriage is my mission. Then in Week 3, we talked about responsibility, and we said that my highest duty as a husband is to be to my wife a prophet, a priest and a king. We looked at how Jesus was a prophet, how Jesus was a priest, and how Jesus was a king, and threw some applications out.

Last time we were together on marriage, we talked about being best friends and lovers. We said we should love our wives as our own bodies. Then we looked at a number of different deposits that we can make into the emotional bank accounts of our wives. Now, today, we want to give a message for all who have heard, or will hear, those famous words, "You don't love me!" How does it happen?

1st Corinthians: Chapter 13 is, of course, the great chapter on love. Jesus says that we should love our wives as he has loved the church. 1st Corinthians:13 gives us some advice on what that love looks like. Chapter 13: 4 – I want to read this sort of contra and see if this doesn't make sense. We want to ask the question, "How does it happen?" First of all, "Why does she say this?" Well, she says this because she is wired to express emotions and words. For us, it's not a rational statement based upon what we understand about the relationship, but she's not trying to express a rational thought. She's trying to express a feeling. She's talking with her feeler, we talk with our thinker, usually, right? What is she trying to say? She's trying to say she doesn't feel like she's getting enough emotional love like the deposits are far in excess of the withdrawals. That's what she's trying to get across to you.

Now we want to look at how this happens. 1st Corinthians 13: 4, "Love is not patient." My love is not patient. There is one way it happens. When my love is not patient, when my love is not kind, when my love envies, when my love is boastful, when my love is proud, when my love is rude, when my love is self-seeking (has to have it's own way), and when my love is easily angered. She's going to say, "You don't love me!" When my love keeps a record of wrongs, little grudges, when my love revels in things that are bad, delights in evil. When my love does not take pleasure in the truth, when my love does not protect, when my love does not trust her, when my love does not hope or think the best for her, when my love doesn't persevere, or when I make it conditional. When my love fails. That's how it happens.

Practically speaking, I'm going to give you Pat's Thoroughly Field-tested Tips on How to Drive A Woman Away here. A few examples of how this works out. These are just the ways it has worked out for me. You can come up with your own list, I'm sure. I'm sure some of you will want to co-op off of my list, too.

Tip No. 1: Work. Try to make her understand how hard you are working, and that you are doing it for her. She's logical; she's rational, right? She's not going to be buying that one at least that's what I've figured out.

Tip No. 2: Stress. Ask her to be more understanding about the pressure that you are under. In fact, if you tell her, "Honey, you have no idea how much stress I'm under." This really goes over big with a woman.

Tip No. 3: Logic. Present to her all the reasons that she shouldn't feel this way. "Honey, look at all these different reasons, logically, this is just an illogical conclusion. Very helpful idea!

This actually has to do with my daughter, and I haven't told this story in a long time, and Patsy, my wife, and I were talking about it this week. It's a great story that illustrates this point. At the office, on the job, one of my strengths is that I'm a decision-maker. If you want a quick decision, I will give it to you. So, if someone brings me a problem, just boom, boom, boom, I can make staff decisions, people have problems, just do this, this, this, and everything will be all right. Usually it works out because I have some pretty good experience in the areas where I'm advising. So the problem is when we get home, that's not what they're looking for.

One day, I came home and our daughter, Jenn, had had a little spat with another child in the neighborhood. She was very upset about this, and she wanted to talk, so I sat down with her. She said, "Oh, Dad, it was so terrible. Oh, Dad, I don't know what to do." That was my cue, "I don't know what to do," so I said, "Well, Jenn, I said it's not a problem, just do this, this, this, and everything will be all right. She just started boo-hooing louder. I said, "Jenn, what's wrong?" She said, "Dad, from now on when I'm crying like this, would you please try not to say anything that's logical?" Is that it? Is that it?

Tip No. 4: Punctuality. My wife is usually on time, but one out of ten times, she's not. When there are occasions that I feel like you need to be on time, I'm very particular about it. Some social things, I don't really care so much, but there are certain things, and being on time to church is one of them. The devil knows this – he loves this. You would think I was trying to try a case before the Supreme Court. I mean I go crazy sometimes on punctuality. Well, okay, you all know that one.

Another Thoroughly Field-tested Tip on how to drive a woman away is to try to fix her. Let her know how much you appreciate her. “You know I would really appreciate you more, honey, if you would just lose 20 pounds.” That’s one you only try once.

I have four more here that I can just put into one category – temper, pouty, touchy, harping. You know what I mean? Here’s how this happens. As men, we are actually all considerably more sensitive than we want to let on. Yes, we do get our feelings hurt at work. Yes, I am very studied in my work demeanor. You would think that I had crocodile skin. You would think leviathan skin. I am so thick-skinned on the job, but the reality is that I am faking it. We’re faking it, right? Those things that people say to us really do hurt. Those rejections really do hurt. We really are a lot more sensitive than we let on.

Here’s the problem guys. For me, again this is another, here is another tested tip on how to drive a woman away. I tend to bring 100% of my sensitivity into 20% of my relationships. So, all of these little pent up slights, perceived or real, these little hurts since I’m not going to honestly deal with those with the people that I’m really having the problems, I accumulate these sensitivities, then I bring 100% of my sensitivity into 20% of my relationships. We go into overload, and she’s thinking, “You don’t love me!” Well, enough on all those, let’s move on.

I was talking to a young woman, one day. We were actually doing nursery duty at our church together, and she figured out what I did for a vocation. She wanted to talk. She said, “You know, I’ve just broken up with a man. We were engaged. We hadn’t been engaged that long, and had been dating for several years. I just got cold feet, and I broke off the engagement three weeks ago. Now I’m starting to have second thoughts.” I said, “Well, tell me about him, tell me about your relationship, tell me what are the reasons you broke it off.” She went on to describe a number of very minor concerns, a number of small issues that had much more to do with quirks of personality. There were no character issues, she loved him deeply, he loved her deeply, but he had just a few personality quirks. I said something to her that I believe can help you and I solve a lot of problems. I said, “You know, to me it seems that you need to make a decision about whether you want to be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy.”

That’s the big idea this morning. You have to decide whether you want to be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy. If you want to fix her, if you want all of these things to be just exactly the way you want them to be, you want to change her, you want to put conditions on the relationship, you can do that, but you’re going to be perfectly unhappy. The kind of love that we call unconditional is the love of Jesus Christ. It’s a love that is unrepenting; it’s unrepented love. It’s overlooking love. It’s filled with grace.

You have to decide whether you want to be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy. If you want to be perfectly unhappy, then I would suggest that you take Pat’s Thoroughly Field-tested Tips on How to Drive A Woman Away, and you excel on that list. I know, because I have done that. I have excelled on that list. Now I’m trying to go a different way. I did. Let’s be honest, I’m still, by degrees, trying to do it, right? I’m still trying to figure out how to be perfectly happy and, by degrees, I’m working toward being imperfectly happy but, by degrees, I’m still perfectly unhappy. So, it’s a little bit of each. But I tell you, after 30 years of marriage, I’m a pretty happy guy, imperfectly. After a while you either start either letting up on her, or she takes this to the next level, and she’s out of here. This is the way it works, right?

So John and Jay, and those of you here who are not married right now, and will be, those of you who are early on, those of you in the middle, or those of you way down there, you know you have to decide whether you want to be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy. That’s the deal.

Let’s go back to our passage this morning, and look a little bit of what we can do here. Let me read to you the charge that I gave to my son and my daughter-in-law when I was part of the wedding ceremony in June. I was invited to do the charge and the closing prayer. This is the charge I gave to John and Christie.

“What a day, a day of destiny. You met when you were 11. You became best friends. You fell in love with Jesus. Then you fell in love with each other. John, Christie, people are watching you. You have taken a bold stand for Jesus Christ. You represent, for many of us, our hope for the future. It is now my privilege John and Christie to charge you to give each other the kind of unconditional, sacrificial love ordained by God and recorded in 1st Corinthians: Chapter 13, Verses 4 – 8. Read along with me. ‘Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.’” Then I said to them, “If you ever want to diagnose how you are doing in love, go to this passage in humility and read it putting your name wherever there is love. John is patient, John is kind, Christie perseveres, Christie never fails and so on.”

This would be the charge I would give to you this morning. We know why she says this, and what she means. She means she’s not getting enough unconditional love. We’re not putting enough emotional love into the relationship. We’re not making enough deposits. We know how it happens. It happens by trying to fix her, trying to change her, trying to perfect her by being petty, by following Pat’s Thoroughly Field-tested Tips For How to Drive a Woman Away, or your own list. What we do about it is really quite simple. We have to make a decision, once and for all, that we are willing to be imperfectly happy and that we will stop trying to be perfectly happy.

My charge to you the way to pull this off is when you hear this, or you may not hear it right, you may just see it, you might feel it, my charge to you is to go to this passage. It’s only five verses, and read it this way. I am patient, “yes” or “no.” I am kind, “yes” or “no.” I do not envy, “yes” or “no,” and so on. You will have a perfect diagnostic to make your love into the kind of Jesus love, the kind of unconditional love and, who knows, maybe someday you’ll be perfectly happy.

Let’s pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the differences. That’s I guess what we find so attractive about women, our wives, that they are very intriguing. Lord, I pray you would help each of us to be men who are able to express unconditional love to our spouses. That we would understand when we try to be perfectly happy that we are going to be very unhappy, and that we need to have this unconditional grace in the relationship. And, Lord, if there is a man here this morning who is even now trying to figure out how he’s going to give back into the relationship, I really pray you would help him use this dial management stuff we’ve been talking about this morning. To adjust the right dials, Lord, and to really express this unconditional love. I pray you would give him the moral courage to go through this passage honestly, and make the proper adjustments he needs to make

If you need to do that, you might want to take a moment right now, privately with your own thoughts maybe say a prayer asking God for the strength and the courage to do that which ought to be done. We make this prayer, Jesus, in your name. Amen.

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