

Do Something Great With Your Life

Most Marriage Problems Would Disappear If We Did This

Edited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning men. Please turn in your bibles to James chapter three. So we are doing a four week follow-up series to our John Rivers Outreach Event. This is the third week. We are talking about doing something great with your life. We started by do something great in your what? Work, and then last week do something great in your family, and then this week we're gonna talk about doing something great in your marriage. How many of you are married? How many of you would like not to be married? I'm just kidding on that one. Almost all of you are married. How many of you who are not married would like to be married? Would you raise your hands? And then how many of you who are married, not married, rather not married, and plan to remain a bachelor? Let's see your hands. Okay, so a couple of you too.

So even though we are talking about a marriage principle here, I do think this is also applicable across the board in all relationships, and so let's just keep that in mind as we get going. So the shout outs that we're going to do today, first is to the East Lake Fellowship Men for Christ, 12 to 15 men, they meet with us on Thursday evenings at East Lake Fellowship Church, and Eric Woodrum is their leader. He says that their purpose is to lay a foundation where men of all ages can grow spiritually. They are located in Burnet, Texas and I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to East Lake Fellowship Men for Christ.

One, two, three hurrah. Welcome men, we are really honored to have you as part of our study. Then we're going to do a shout out as well to the Man in the Mirror area director Mike Flinn. Mike Flinn's from Peoria, Illinois. I know a little bit about Peoria, Mike knows, that this is where my grandfather was incarcerated for being a criminal. True. So Mike is a fantastic leader of men. He says that "God placed a burden on my heart to reach and serve the men of central Illinois though Church leaders desiring to establish the discipleship pathways for every man in their Church." So I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm Man in the Mirror welcome to area director Mike Flinn. One, two, three hurrah. Mike thank you for your service to the men of central Illinois.

The title of today's message is "**Most Marriage Problems Would Disappear If We Did This.**" My wife's parents, all kinds of little rumbings around here. All kinds of callous and immature humor. True, but callous and immature humor. My wife's parents moved to Orlando in order to be near two of their daughters. His name was Ed Cole and he was with the Northwestern Mutual Company and he was a bit of a legend inside the company. He was known as the maker of men. He had the South Florida agency from, headquarter in Coral Gables, but ran from Vero Beach all the way down through the Keys. And young men down in South Florida basically beat down his door to have the opportunity to be mentored by my father-in-law.

Among all the men I have ever known, there has never been a greater man in terms of leadership, character and kindness than my father-in-law, Ed Cole. So when he moved here to Orlando, he and I started going out to lunch once a week and for the last seven years of his life we became best friends and lunch buddies.

Not long after they moved to Orlando, his wife, June had to move into the health care facility at their retirement community where she has lived full-time ever since. Ed stayed in their unit, in their apartment, but basically he turned it into a camp site. He slept there, but every possible waking moment of his life that he could, he was over in his wife's room.

For her part, June said, one day, she said, "All I want to do is be with Ed." When the twilight of their lives began to cast long shadows on them, all they wanted was to be together. Let me say that again. As the twilight of their lives began to cast long shadows, all they wanted to do was be together.

You and your wife, if you're married, or the wife you will have, or the social relationships that are close to you, this is what you will think is the most important thing at the end of your life.

The problem is, I have married their daughter, who happens to be, as far as I know the best Christian who ever lived. I'm still waiting for her to sin after all of these years of marriage. Joke. She is the sweetest, kindest, most gentle person that I've ever ... her life word would be kindness. She's kind to everyone. She's a servant, she has a servant's heart. I've never heard her speak an ill word of anyone ever, really even me. Which is very surprising. And yet sometimes she really gets under my skin. And sometimes guys, I have to say, I really get under her skin. Because of the nature of marriage, it is both at once the greatest possible of all relationships and it is also, because of the proximity, there are so many different sources of potential conflict in a marriage.

Our latest thing is that she's been putting ... we've shifted from her doing the trash weekly. You know taking the trash bin out to the street, we've shifted to me doing it. Well, I'm not sure how this happened exactly, but I don't always remember to take it out. My narrative is the reason I don't remember to take it out is because you are micro managing me, every week and putting post its here and post its there and post its everywhere to take out the trash. And so in passive aggressive behavior, I resist that by forgetting where all these post its are. I just don't like to be micro managed. I don't micro manage anybody. If anything I don't manage people well enough. Too much freedom, give me a little space.

All of those thoughts and all of those feelings would not be a problem, except that I say them. I say them out loud. Most of my marriage problems are not because of what I think, they're because of what I say. And they're really not even so much as a result of what I say, but how I say it.

And so today we're gonna talk about a Big Idea that would solve most marriage problems. And I'm gonna give you the Big Idea first which I don't usually do. It's the longest big idea that I've ever been able to think of, but I think this is an idea of such superior practical application that I want to start with it, and then inductively we'll try to break it down. Here's the Big Idea for the day.

Most marriage problems would disappear, and you might want to shoot it with your phone, instead of trying to write it down. **Most marriage problems would disappear if we would simply speak to our wives with the same kindness, courtesy, forethought and respect with which we speak to our co-workers.**

All of the things that my wife does that, because of the proximity of a marriage, well from time to time, bug me. And that works two ways. That's normal. You've heard me say before, the 70% mindset that Edwin Friedman, Family Systems Scholar says that no marriage in reality does better than 70%. So this would be the normal expectation. The difference between being okay in marriage and really being superior in marriage is this idea. It's interesting because I taught the Christian Man Series and then I wrote the book, The Christian Man. But when I wrote The Christian Man, I was sitting there, I was looking at the chapter on marriage and I just said, "What is really" ... okay I've written three books on marriage, chapters on marriage in many, many other books. I said, what's the most practical idea, out of all the hundreds of ideas that I've written down. Could I distill that all down into one mega big idea. And I found, I just sat there and I wrote this sentence out.

And this is the sentence. "Most marriage problems would disappear if we would simply speak to our wives with same K-C-F-R, kindness, courtesy, forethought and respect ... WKCFR coming to you directly from Man in the Mirror Bible study ... with which we speak to our co-workers." Or vendors, or employees, but co-workers, customers. I picked co-workers, just because these are the people ... it is like a marriage working with people everyday in the same space. You have a different way of talking to customers, you have a different way of talking to vendors. But co-workers seems to be very, very similar in many ways.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE AND WHERE OUR WORDS COME FROM

So let's break this down a little bit, let's look at the power of the tongue and where words come from. You should be at James, Chapter ... and by the way, these verses, James, Chapter, what was it, three. James, Chapter three, what verse two? Yeah. So, you have not heard a marriage message like this before, because I'm not using any of the marriage texts, none of them. I'm using general texts from scriptures that we will particularize and apply to marriage, but these texts also apply in many, many other ways, but we're going to apply them to marriage today.

"We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect able to keep their whole body in check." Now, look at the two thoughts in that verse. We all stumble in many ways. It says anyone who is never at fault is perfect. Well since we all stumble in many ways, this idea anyone who is never at fault is perfect. It's not a reality, it's what could be, but we all stumble in many ways. And that's where we get to the idea of no marriage in reality does better than 70%, because we all stumble in many ways. She stumbles and I stumble. I probably stumble more. Okay, I do stumble more.

Verse three, "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal." How many of you have had horses. How many of you have had halters with bits. I grew up with horses and we had one horse in particular, Freckles, our favorite horse, we bought her for \$100. She was a glue factory horse. But she had a mind of her own, so we put a bit in her mouth. It's basically like a piece of metal, like this, that fits up into the back of the mouth, behind their molars, and then you attach that to the harness, and so you guide the horse. When we put bits in the mouths of horses, we make them obey. You can turn the whole animal.

"Or take ships as an example, although they are so large and driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder, wherever the pilot wants to go". How many of you sail? How many of you know what a rudder is? It's that little piece of wood or whatever, fiber glass, that sits down off the back. It's usually really pretty small, maybe a few feet tall and a foot or two wide. And it steers that whole boat wherever it wants to go.

“Likewise”, like the rudder or like the bit, “the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is also a fire. A world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body. Sets the whole course of one's life on fire and it is itself set on fire by hell.” So the tongue ... what this really basically means is that the tongue is very subject to the influence of the Holy Spirit, but it's also very subject to the influence of the sinful nature, the flesh, and the world, and the devil. It can be set on fire by hell, by the devil.

Verse seven. “All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures or all kinds of elephants, parrots, snakes and dolphins are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind. But no human being, no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil. Full of deadly poison.” So will you ever be able to perfect your speech? No. Because we are not writing computer code, we are writing human life and human hearts.

Nine. “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse human beings who have been made in God's likeness.” Sounds like marriage.

Verse ten. “Out of the same mouth come praising and cursing. My brothers and sisters this should not be. Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same spring?” No they can't. So what this means is that when you have this evil poison spewing out of your mouth, the sweet words of your faith cannot at the same time be coming out of your mouth.

Verse 12. “My brothers and sisters can a fig tree bear olives or a grape vine bear figs?” Of course not. When you are in your marriage, when you are bearing figs, you're not going to be bearing olives and vice versa. Then it concludes “neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

So that's the power of the tongue. Now where do our words come from. Turn with me to Matthew, Chapter 15, verse 11. Matthew, Chapter 15, verse 11. Do you like this Bible study? Okay good. Matthew, 15, verse 11. Jesus is talking about, well what he's talking about here is food. It's been defiled, but he uses it as a teaching lesson. “What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them. But what comes out of their mouth that is what defiles them.” Matthew, Chapter 12, verse 34. “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks”. Drop down to verse 17. Don't you see, this is Jesus Christ. “Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body. But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from...” where? Where do they come from? Where do the words come from, the words that we're talking about in James, Chapter three, where do they come from? They come from the heart. “But the things that come out of a person's mouth, come from the heart and these are the things that defile them.”

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false, testimony, slander.” Remember I said these are general verses they talk about a lot of things, but we can also say that in particular they do talk about our speech, slander here, false testimony. These are what defile a person.

The power of the tongue, we see what it is and we see where words come from, where do words come from? They come from the heart. If this is true. Taming the tongue then is essentially what kind of a problem. It's a heart problem. It's a heart problem. And so we're going to turn now to Galatians, Chapter five, verse 15. Galatians, Chapter five, verse 15.

The result of what happens when we don't tutor our heart and tame the tongue, it says in verse 15 of Galatians five. "If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." And in marriage, words kill, words destroy. And we know that the author of lies is the one who wants us to have our marriages destroyed he comes to steal, to kill and destroy, right? So the Big Idea that goes along with this then is this. Most marriage problems would disappear, they would just go away, we would not have them if we have thoughts that we don't say. If we would simply speak to our wives with the same W-KCFR. Kindness, courtesy, forethought and respect with which we speak co-workers. You think about your co-workers, and you think about the forethought you give to ... you have to work with them every day, you think about the forethought that you put into the response that you give them. You think about the way that you try to say in the most acceptable and kind way. The way that you treat your co-workers with ... try to treat them with respect, even when what they said is absolutely the most stupid idea you've ever heard.

Nevertheless, you try to be courteous and then you get home. And you hear the second dumbest idea that's ever been said in the history of the world. But kindness, courtesy, forethought, respect go out the window and you say the first thing that comes into your mind. Because, why? You have a heart problem. You have a heart problem. You don't have a tongue problem. You don't have an anger problem. Well I mean you do have these problems, these are the presenting problems. But the root problem of a poisonous tongue. The root problem is what's in the heart. It's the heart that we need to work on. So how do we do that?

By the way, I thought that some of you might not be able to remember that 28 word, so here's a little alternative if you're interested. Speak to your wife with the same KCFR you would use with a co-worker. Okay, yeah. I just didn't like it. I mean when I got all done, I said no, this is what I wanted to say to these men this morning. Anyway you could use that if you want to.

WHAT KIND OF HELP DOES GOD PROVIDE TO TAME THE TONGUE?

What kind of help does God provide to tame this tongue. To work on this heart. We see it in the next verse in Galatians, Chapter Five. We read verse 15. Verse 16. "So I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh of a sinful nature." Am I in the right version here. Yeah, it says flesh. In the NIV. The sinful nature, the flesh. "For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit. And the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that what? You are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the spirit, you're not under the law. The acts of the flesh says they're obvious. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred." Think marriage discord. Think marriage jealousy. Think marriage fits of rage. Think marriage selfish ambition. Think marriage dissensions. Think marriage factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like.

"I warn you as I did before, that those who live like this," in other words, if this was who you were all the time, which of course, we're not really talking about that with you men, but it's a warning to those who do live like that all the time that they're not going to "inherit the kingdom of God." And then it goes on, "but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience," the things that we want in our marriage. "Kindness, goodness, gentleness, self control, oh faithfulness. Against such things there is no law."

Watch this now. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with it's passions and desires." And where does the poison for the tongue come from? It comes from the flesh, the poisonous tongue comes from the flesh. But we who belong to Christ have crucified that flesh with it's passions and desires. And what are its passions and desires? You are the most stupid woman in the world. I can't

believe I married you. By the way, all this, if you're a psycho this message is really not for you, you need more help than that, if you're a psycho. Okay. If you're like one of those mentally unhinged me who hits his wife, or really does scream at her, like I was just pretending. If you really do that all the time, you're a psycho and you need professional help. This message is not for you.

This is a message for normal people. So we crucify the flesh with it's passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit. Let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not be conceited doing what? Provoking each other. Provoking and envying each other."

Psalm 127. "Unless the Lord builds the house," Unless the Lord builds the house. Unless the Holy Spirit builds the house. "Those who labor, labor in vain." You can't control this passion and this desire of the flesh without the Holy Spirit. You cannot do it. It's hard enough to do it with the Holy Spirit. Sorry Lord.

Second Timothy. We'll do a couple of more verses. Second Timothy, Chapter one, verse 17. Second Timothy, Chapter one, verse 17. First Timothy, I'm totally turned around here, it must be ... oh Second Timothy, one, seven. Hold on, hold on, hold on. Jeez now I'm really turned around here. It's a good thing I've got a lot of self confidence. Yeah. Second Timothy, Chapter one, verse seven. This Holy Spirit. What kind of a spirit is it then that he is giving us? What kind of a spirit is it that you have when you get home from work. Where all day long you've been solving problems and having disagreements and differences of opinion and dealing with all these little quirks that these other people own. But then you get home and oh we start all over again with a woman who has ... she has problems of her own that are unsolved. She has had her own day. She has her own quirks. She, you get it. And we need, and then we're all ready and we're both tired, because it's later in the day, so that complicates everything, because our thresholds are lower. Our tolerances are, you know, are a little more susceptible. Right.

But we have the Holy Spirit. And so, what kind of spirit is this. Second Timothy, Chapter one, verse seven. "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power." Power. We have power. A spirit of power. And of love. And of discipline, or self control. What are the roots of spirit? Love and ... two of them right there. Love and self control. Then, we're out of time for verses. I wish we could do more.

When we do this though, when we take advantage of this help that God has provided for us then we can execute this idea, that most marriage problems would disappear. If we would simply speak to our wives with the same kindness, courtesy, forethought and respect with which we speak to our co-workers. For crying out loud. Honestly, most of these things would go away. If we would allow the Holy Spirit, to change our hearts, to be in control of our hearts, to not respond to the flesh and we have to do this every day, it's not something you do once for all time. It's something you have to do all day long, every day anyway. And let them change your hearts.

WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL STEPS WE CAN TAKE?

Just the practical steps we can take, so there are a lot of different things you could do. You could do the 70% mindset, adjusting your expectations. You could pray the marriage prayer which I strongly urge you to do, that's probably the one practical idea that's most changed my own life. That and the 70% mindset. Those two, we'll just leave it there. Something new though, let's just suppose that your wife says something that makes you bristle. How many of you have had your wife say something that makes you bristle, within the last 24 hours? How many of you are lying right now?

So maybe your wife says something that makes you bristle. Here's what you do, or whatever the thing, here's what I want you to do. I want you to stop at that point, instead of reacting which, if you do, nobody you don't. But if you do have a tendency to react, I want you to stop. This is the practical idea. I want you to stop and I want you to picture your spouse as a co-worker. A real co-worker, an actual co-worker. Somebody that you work with, and then I want you to think, okay if my co-worker that I'm thinking about were to say or do what my wife just did, how would I respond. What would be the kindest, the courtesy, the forethought and the respect that I would show my co-worker, to try to resolve this problem. Or this dispute. Or overcome this conflict or iron out this little verbal mess that we've gotten ourselves into. And then do that. Big idea. Today. Most marriage problems would disappear. They'd just disappear, if we would simply speak to our wives with the same W-KCFR. Kindness, courtesy, forethought and respect with which we speak to our co-workers.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father thank you for these men and where you have all of us on our journeys, Lord we do have this battle going on inside of us, between our flesh and your Spirit, and we want your Spirit to win, that's what we want. But we also need some practical ideas to make that happen. So first of all give us good theology to understand the fire, the deadly poison that is the tongue and how difficult it is to tame, and that it's really a heart problem and that we need to work on our hearts. Let us have a right theology about this, but then also on the practical side, Lord just help us to understand that it's up to us. We have to, we need to pursue the power of your Spirit and we have a very practical idea here to help us do that. To treat our wife with the same kindness, courtesy, forethought and respect that we might treat a co-worker with. So Lord tutor to our hearts what you would have for each of us and let the rest fall away. We ask this in your name Jesus. Amen.