

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-25

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verses: Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

North Korea is very much in the news today! The Korean War ended 64 years ago with an armistice. Technically the United States is still at war with North Korea. Although North and South Korea have been at peace for all of these years, it has not been very peaceful. Unfortunately there are a lot of marriages that have détente, but do not have peace. Japan was a greater enemy than Korea and yet we live in peace together. We can learn some important lessons about our marriage relationship from world politics.

First, we have peace with Japan because we ended the war with unconditional surrender from Japan. Peace will start in your marriage when you both are ready to surrender to God and to each other unconditionally. Surrender your will, your rights, and yourself. There just comes a point when continuing the battle doesn't make sense for either side.

Second, when the war ended the United States stopped fighting Japan and started rebuilding the country. The US and her allies invested billions of dollars and countless man-hours into the country and people of Japan. At some point you have to choose to end hostilities and start building your relationship and each other. Stop attacking each other and start rebuilding the infrastructure of your marriage.

Third, you have to forgive. Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting. We have a memorial right here in Hawaii that reminds us every day of the dastardly attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor. You may never forget the terrible things that your spouse has done to you. I don't suggest building a memorial to those hurts, but there are things that will always remind you of what happened and how much it hurt. When I see a Japanese person I don't think of them as being someone who bombed Pearl Harbor or committed so many atrocities against American soldiers. I think of them as our ally and friend. If Woody Williams, WWII Medal of Honor recipient from Iwo Jima can forgive his enemies how much more can you forgive your spouse?

Finally, Japan is our ally because we have built a mutually beneficial relationship. We both understand that we need each other for mutual defense and economic purposes. When Japan hurts it affects us and vice-versa. When a couple begins to understand how their lives are interconnected and how much they need each other then peace becomes a natural by-product. When you live separate lives financially, emotionally, and even physically it causes more strife in your relationship and does not make for peace.

Meditation: Think about the peace that God brings into your life and how you can find peace in your relationship with your spouse.

Assignment: Make a memorial of forgiveness for your spouse. Use it as a reminder that despite past hurts you have chosen peace and unity.

Just for Fun: Build something together as a couple. It can be as simple as a puzzle or as complex as a home-improvement project.

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Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.

If you have been around Ohana very long, you have heard me use some of my illustrations more than once. Perhaps there are some that you are just plain bored with after the third or fourth time. The problem with good illustrations is that they are too good not to use more than once! Besides, I am in good company! Jesus used some of the same object lessons or parables more than one time.

If there is anyone you should feel sorry for, it is my wife. She has been listening to me preach for 39 years. Imagine how many times she has heard the soda illustration or seen me use my wallet to represent sin! She has heard all of my jokes, seen all of my object lessons, and listened to my stories more times than any sane person should have to. I should get her a t-shirt that says, "Been there, seen that, heard the story!"

Part of marriage is repetition. It is both good and bad. After living together for so many years we learn how the other person is going to respond and what they are going to do in most situations. That repetition, besides being annoying at times, creates familiarity, which is a source of comfort. Knowing how my wife will respond in certain situations provides me comfort and drives me insane!

The comfort comes from knowing what to expect. Knowing how she will react and what she will do makes my life easier in many ways. I don't have to guess or wonder if I am doing the right thing and what the results of my actions will be. On the other side of the coin, there are certain actions that she does that I have come to expect and to dread. She does it every time and every time it irritates me! Familiarity can breed both contempt and contentment!

That is why in Galatians 5 and in I Corinthians 13 God tells us to be longsuffering. The word longsuffering means patience. It comes from a compound Greek word, Makrothumia. Makro means long and thumia means to burn. Makrothumia means to burn long. Here is where some of you will have to hear the illustration again: Longsuffering is like one of those trick birthday candles. You blow it out and it lights back up again. You need to keep the candle of your love burning for your spouse no matter what they do or say. Don't let them blow it out!

So the next time you hear the same joke for the umpteenth time or she gives you that same look or he does "it" again, thank God for the familiarity you have built together over your years of marriage and patiently laugh at the dumb joke or give her a loving look back or just put up with "it" because if you have to suffer with someone it might as well be the one you love!

Meditation: Meditate on how often God is longsuffering to us. And think about how you can show more longsuffering to your spouse and others.

Assignment: Talk about how familiarity breeds both contempt and contentment. What are some of the things that your spouse does that brings you contentment? What are the ones that irritate them that you can work on?

Just for Fun: Tell each other the jokes, sayings, and stories that you have heard over and over again either from each other, your parents, or someone else. Laugh with and at yourselves.

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Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

"May I borrow a cup of gentleness?" You can borrow a cup of sugar or a car or money, but how do you borrow gentleness? The root word for gentleness in the Greek means "to receive a loan or to borrow". When I borrow something it is because I don't have any or enough of my own. My wife needs my gentleness when she doesn't have enough of her own to give!

Luke 6:35 admonishes us to "love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind (same word as gentleness) unto the unthankful and *to* the evil." Most loans are predicated on the basis of, "I will give this to you, but I expect it back with interest." Gentleness is what we give expecting nothing in return, not even a "Thank-you."

We think of gentleness as being careful in how you treat something or someone. We are gentle when we are holding a baby. We tell our children to be gentle when petting an animal. We like our doctor or nurse to have a gentle touch. I certainly want my spouse to be gentle with me both verbally and physically. I am thankful for a soft touch or a soft answer from her. This word, gentleness, carries all of that and more.

The Greek word for gentle is more often translated as kindness or goodness. It literally means, "to be fit for use or useful". In other words gentleness is giving the other person what they need most at the moment. If my wife is using harsh words then she obviously needs some kind and gentle words from me. If I am acting harsh towards my wife and family, I don't need it back in kind; I need kindness!

Proverbs 15:1 tells us that "A soft (gentle) answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Gentleness is often its own reward, in that when you give gentleness to your spouse they now have it to give back to you. But, God's promise is that when you are gentle "your reward shall be great". God's rewards are even better than my spouse's reward! "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38)

Meditation: How is God gentle towards us? What are some ways that I can give gentleness to my spouse?

Assignment: Talk about what would be the most useful thing your spouse could do for you when you are upset or angry. What should you say or not say? How and when should you say it? What can you do or not do physically? What can you say differently with your "body language"?

Just for Fun: Have a "gentle" fight! Instead of yelling mean things at each other, speak soft kind words to one another. Gently touch your spouse in different places with soft caressing strokes using your hands and your lips. See who can be the kindest to the other!

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Memory Verse: Proverbs 31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

The root word for goodness means, “to employ”. If you have a job, you were employed to produce a product or a service. The word goodness literally means, “to make good”. Our #1 job as a husband or wife is to make good for our family. I was in a store the other day and the clerk was wearing a badge that said, “How may I help you?” I thought, “Maybe I should get one of those for my wife”, but God says that I am the one who needs to wear it! In the store the customer must come first. In our homes our spouse and our children need to come first.

What makes for a good product or service that you purchase? First, I want to know that I am getting the best buy for my dollar. There may be more expensive products out there, but I want to know that for what I have paid, I am getting the best value. Goodness is giving my spouse the best value from my life. I shouldn’t take shortcuts or cut corners in whatever I am doing for them.

Second, I want to know that it is going to accomplish what is promised. I hate it when I purchase something only to get it home and find out it didn’t live up to its advertisement. You promised to love, cherish, and honor your spouse in sickness and in health, for better or for worse. They have every right to expect that you will make good on your promises!

Stop and think about how you like to be treated as a customer and treat your spouse the same way. He or she is the customer for your merchandise. Proverbs 31:18 tells us that the virtuous woman “perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good.” And verse 12 says “She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

When I walk in the store I want them to treat me right. Good customer service is friendly, helpful, and attentive. Greet me with a smile on your face and in your voice. Listen to my needs and find out what is going to make me happy and solve my problem. If you don’t have what I need, help me to find out how I can get it. The simple rule of the marketplace is “Customer First!”. The simple rule of marriage is to put your spouse first!

If your husband or wife were to rate your service for them, how good would it be? Would you get five stars?

Meditation: Think about the goodness of the Lord in your life. Are you a good Christian? Do you do good in your life? Have you been a good husband or wife?

Assignment: Think of ways that you can produce a better “product” for your spouse. How can you provide better service? Come up with a list of five practical things you can do this week.

Just for Fun: Make up some badges that say “How can I serve you?” and wear it for your spouse.

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Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Have you ever watched a courtroom drama on TV? Maybe you are old enough to remember the Perry Mason show when you were a kid or perhaps you have watched an episode of Law & Order or even a real life court case like the OJ Simpson trial. Perhaps you have even been a defendant in your own trial (I hope not!) or testified in someone else's trial. Every trial is based upon evidence that will either prove the defendant innocent or guilty.

If your marriage were on trial today, would there be enough evidence to convict you of loving your spouse? Is there proof beyond a reasonable doubt or a preponderance of evidence that could convince a jury of your love and commitment? As your lawyer what evidence could you give me to present to the jury to prove your love for your husband or wife? There are basically three types of evidence that are presented in a court of law: Hard evidence – based on hard facts that can be shown to the jury. Eyewitness testimony – based on what others have seen and heard. Circumstantial evidence – Evidence that permits the jury to come to a judgment based on a logical conclusion.

The hard evidence of love is proven through your actions during the hard times of your relationship. This kind of evidence is based upon facts that can be clearly presented. When it comes to your marriage what are the hard facts that prove your love? Is there clear physical, tangible evidence of your love for each other? Do you have a consistent physical relationship both in public and private? What gifts have you given to one another that could be produced in your trial? What would your calendar show the jury about how much time you spend together?

Could friends and family testify about hearing you say "I love you." and other terms of endearment? If you played back recordings of "discussions" you have had when upset or mad what conclusion would we have to make about your relationship? What if your children were put on the stand to tell about how you speak to and about each other?

Finally, what about the circumstantial evidence? This is the "evidence not seen"! Your love for your spouse is really based on the faith that you have in them and that is built upon evidence not seen. I cannot "see" my wife's love but I can see it in the way she looks at me, the words that she speaks and her tone of voice, and the things that she does for me everyday. Her love is like the wind. I cannot see the wind, but I can see the evidence of it blowing. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

Meditation: Look for the evidence of God's love in your life today. Find ways to prove your love towards God and your spouse.

Assignment: List five tangible proofs of your spouses love for you.

Just for Fun: Build a "case" against your spouse proving their love for you. Gather evidence throughout the week and put him or her on trial. Present your evidence; call witnesses (children, friends, etc.), even cross-exam them. Pronounce judgment and sentence them to time spent with you on a date and in the bedroom!