

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-25

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Have you learned how to “heel” for your spouse? Amos 3:3 asks the question “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” If you are going to walk together in the journey of this life, one of you has to heel to the other. You can’t both go your own way and still walk together!

When my dog, Bandit, was alive, he loved to go for walks but I hated taking him for walks. Why? Because he would always try to head off on his own. I had to put a leash on him, because he would not listen or obey. Even with the leash he would fight me the entire time. He would constantly be pulling against me instead of walking with me. I wanted to walk my dog, but it wasn’t worth the battle.

Perhaps your spouse is tired of fighting with you. Every time you start down a path together it ends up in a battle between you. You’re pulling one-way and they are pulling the other and neither will submit or listen to the other. Like me, your spouse doesn’t want to fight you so they have stopped walking together with you through this journey of life and now you both just go it alone or not at all.

One of you is going to have to humble yourself and be willing to submit to the other in meekness. Meekness is power under control. It was used to describe a thoroughbred horse that has been broken to the bridle, willing to submit his power to the one in control. The other day I watched a young girl walking a huge dog. I’m not sure what kind of dog it was, but it was twice the size of the girl. That dog could have walked that girl, but he didn’t. In meekness he submitted to her control and they spent an enjoyable time together in the park.

Most wives are thinking, “Here we go again. Another lesson about how I need to submit to my husband and let him lead me around. It doesn’t matter what I think or what I want because he’s the leader and I have to submit! Yes, the Bible does teach “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22), but it also teaches “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:21).

When I walked my other dogs that knew how to heel, we enjoyed the journey together. Most of the time I would lead, but sometimes I would allow my dog to lead and I would follow him. **I am not** comparing my wife to a dog (I don’t want to end up in the dog house), but Jesus compared Himself and us to a yoke of oxen and challenged us to take on the yoke (the leash) of submission. Can we not do the same with our spouse?

If you find that you and your spouse argue and fight often, try meekness. Humbly submit your will and your way to God and each other.

Meditation: What areas do you need to meekly and humbly submit to God? To your spouse?

Assignment: Make a list of three things that you and your spouse fight over. What are some ways that you can meekly submit in those areas to your spouse? What steps can you take in their direction?

Just for Fun: Buy a leash. Don’t put a collar on your spouse and take them for a walk with it. Use it as a reminder to be meek. When you are having a disagreement hand your spouse the leash. Let them lead the discussion. When they are done, they can hand it back and allow you to take the lead.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-25

Memory Verse: II Peter 1:6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness.

My wife is a nut! Not because she is crazy (well, maybe she is a little crazy – after all she married me!), but because she has a hard outer shell that it is not always easy to crack. Not only is she skeptical by personality, but like most women she has been hurt in the past by other men and sadly even by me. She has naturally built a shell around her heart to protect herself from being hurt again.

Men can build up the same shell around their heart. Popular opinion is that men aren't emotional and that don't get hurt easily. That is not true! Men have very fragile egos and they can be bruised and beaten just as much as a woman's heart. A man will do what he has to protect his ego.

The shell of a nut is put there by God to protect the heart of the fruit. If we want to enjoy the fruit, we have to figure out how we can remove the shell without damaging what is inside. That is not easy to do. It takes work and patience to remove the shell before you can enjoy the fruit.

Temperance means, "power under control". One example of power under control is a nutcracker. A nutcracker uses the power of a fulcrum or a leverage point to crack the hard outer shell. Learn to use leverage to break the shells that your spouse has built up over the years.

The first fulcrum is understanding. When you feel your spouse is closed to you, take the time to try to understand why. Is it just part of their personality or because of their gender or upbringing? Is it something you did or something that was done to them before you even met? Understanding the source will help you to crack through that shell. Let me give you an example:

Often when counseling with a couple, I will find out that there are problems in the bedroom. He will complain that she is holding back in some way and that hurts his ego and he shuts her out emotionally. Our first goal is to understand why she is holding back. It might be her personality. Beavers are less spontaneous in the bedroom and tend to be more regimented. Women, as a gender, tend to be less adventurous than men or perhaps she was taught that "good girls" don't enjoy sex. Perhaps it is because someone sexually abused her in the past. Many women have and it can affect them years later through no fault of their husband. It often is because their husband did something early on in their marriage and they are afraid he will do it again.

Once you know the reason your spouse is holding back you can use that understanding to help you to crack open that shell. It takes patient understanding to work through some of these issues. Instead of being hurt by rejection, you can be empowered by knowledge and begin healing those hurts and working through those issues whatever they are.

Meditation: In what ways does our personality and our past experiences affect our relationship with God and our spouse?

Assignment: Is there an area where you feel your spouse has closed themselves off to you. Discuss it with them and determine why they are protecting themselves and how you work through it together.

Just for Fun: Have a Nut Party! Get a bag of your favorite nuts (or candy, if you have a nut allergy) and have a party together. Catch them in your mouth. Eat some off of your spouse's tummy. See how many hidden nuts you can find. Share some through a kiss. Use your imagination!

Scripture: Galatians 5:2-25

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

I grew up in the days of the hippies back in the 60's & 70's. One of the popular sayings of that time period was "I can dig it!" which meant "I understand" or "I agree". In Luke 13:6-9 the dresser of the vineyard told Jesus that he could dig it: *"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."*

The farmer knew that the only way to get that tree to start producing fruit was to dig down to the root of the problem and to fertilize the tree. At this point in the Marriage Class you need to start doing whatever needs to be done to fix your problems. Your spouse wants to know that you "Dig it!" That you understand what the problems are and that you agree things need to change.

Dig deeper into the lessons. Talk about what you are learning. Don't just read the devotions. Meditate upon them. Go deeper into the Word and talk about application in your life. You need to dig up the roots of bitterness and both ask for and give forgiveness. Stop mowing the weeds. Dig them up and cast them out.

The farmer also told Jesus that he would "dung it". For those of you that did not grow up near a farm or a ranch, dung is manure. When I lived in Minnesota I would help a friend on his farm. One of the nastiest jobs was to shovel all of the manure from the barn into the "Honeywagon". We would hitch that wagon up to the tractor and drive it out to the fields. We would then spread the manure onto to the plants to help them grow.

There is dung in every relationship. We need to learn how to take the nasty byproducts of our marriage and use them to fertilize and grow our love. We did not just throw the manure at the plants. We cultivated it into the ground to improve the soil. No one wins a manure fight. When we start casting accusations and hurtful words at each other, we both lose. Learn how to grow through the bad things in life. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ." (Philippians 3:7-8)

Meditation: Is Christ satisfied with the fruit I am producing in my life and marriage? What are the things that I need to dig & dung?

Assignment: What is one thing that you have done in the past that you need to dig up and ask your spouse to forgive you for? What is one bad thing that has happened that you can use to help you to grow a better marriage? How?

Just for Fun: Buy two identical plants. Do nothing to one of them. With the other, put it into some good soil and fertilize it and watch the difference. Talk about what the "miracle grow" for your marriage would be.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-25

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

This will be the last devotion from the Fruit of the Spirit series! I hope that you have read the verses from Galatians each time. By now, you should have them almost memorized! Are you beginning to see fruit in your life and in your marriage? In order for a tree to produce fruit it must grow. Focus on growing as a Christian and in your marriage and the fruit will come naturally. Hanging an orange on a tree does not make it an orange tree. You can do the all of the right things and still not be the right person, but you cannot be the right person and not do the right things. Focus on being the husband or wife God wants you to be.

Yesterday we talked about how important it is to “dig and dung” the tree. Today our devotion is about how we need to provide a consistent source of water in order to flourish. Psalm 1:3 says, *“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”* Plant your marriage in the Word of God! The greatest source of nourishment is the Bible. Doing these devotions and the class are a good start, but you need to continue to grow together in the Word. Memorize Scripture verses together. Meditate on the Scripture individually and talk about what you are learning and how it applies to you.

One of the best places to plant yourselves as a couple is in church. Psalm 92:13 tells us that *“Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.”* Plant your marriage in church. Be there for all of the services. Fellowship with other Christian couples. Church is God’s greenhouse of growth!

Psalm 92:12 tells us what kind of trees we need to be; *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”* If you want to grow palm trees don’t live in Minnesota. If you want to grow a great marriage, don’t live in the world – plant yourself in God’s house. Palm trees are one of the few things that can survive a hurricane. The reason is because they are flexible. They bend instead of break. Learn to be flexible and to bend a little in your marriage.

The second tree is the cedar tree. This tree will survive in even harsh environments and grow stronger. Cedars never stop growing. It was also the wood that was used to build the House of God. The best way to build your marriage is to help build the church. Become involved and active in your local church.

Meditation: Think about your spiritual growth as an individual and in your marriage: What can you do to nurture that growth and grow stronger?

Assignment: Talk about some of the hardest times in your marriage. How did those times help you to grow stronger as a couple? What are some of the areas that you need to learn to be more flexible?

Just for Fun: Song of Solomon describes the husband to be like an apple tree (Song of Solomon 2:3) and the wife to be like a palm tree (Song of Solomon 7:7-8) Talk about the picture God is giving us here. Why these trees? What tree would you pick for your spouse and why?

Scripture: John 2:1-11

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Ephesians 5:22 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

It is interesting that Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding. Perhaps this is God's way of endorsing the concept of marriage and how it is foundational to His plan. Did you invite Jesus to your wedding? I have done renewal vows for many couples over the years that were not saved or living for Christ when they originally got married. They wanted to renew their vows in Christ. I think that is a good thing to do.

As a Pastor, I encourage engaged couples to include Christ in their wedding plans. For some, their wedding will be the only opportunity to present the Gospel to family and friends. Ephesians 5 speaks to the marriage relationship, but at the end God reminds us that marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Everything a couple does in their wedding ought to glorify God and present Christ.

I love to do weddings but there are certain things that I won't do. I won't marry a couple if either of them is unsaved. The Bible is clear in II Corinthians 6:14 - *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* I also insist that their vows have to contain Biblical words like love, honor, and obey. And I won't do a wedding if alcohol is going to be served. Wait a minute, you may say, "Didn't Jesus turn the water into wine at a wedding?" Wine yes, alcohol no!

Wine in the Bible can refer to both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drink. The Bible is clear that God does not want us to drink (Don't argue with me until you have done a complete study on this topic and especially don't try to quote I Timothy 5:23 to justify your case!). John 2:10 makes it clear that the guests at the wedding party had already "well drunk" when they served the wine Jesus made. If that is the case and that wine contained alcohol then Jesus contributed to their sin of drunkenness and Habakkuk 2:15 clearly states *"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also"*. Jesus would not and could not violate God's Word and cause people to sin.

Alcohol does nothing to enhance your marriage and has the power to destroy your marriage. Drinking is one of the greatest contributors to divorce and marriage problems. It can lead to abuse, is often connected with adultery, leads to neglect and arguments, creates emotional strain, and magnifies conflict. I have heard all of the arguments for drinking: It relaxes you. Doctor's say it is good to have a glass of wine. It improves our sex life by removing inhibitions. They all may sound good but the potential for disaster far outweighs the so-called benefits. For every one marriage where they were able to handle their drinking, I can show you five that could not! *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."* (Proverbs 19:28)

In the following devotions we will share things that the Bible says are better than wine.

Meditation: How does your marriage reflect that love of Jesus Christ for the church?

Assignment: Do a study on what the Bible says about drinking. You can download a Bible Study lesson here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ek4328rptncddcj/Alcohol%20Filled%20in.pdf?dl=0>

Just for Fun: Look through your wedding pictures and reminisce about how special the day was. Talk about what made it special, what you can laugh at now, how about the honeymoon?