

Bond Together

Series: 5 Words --- Week 4

Genesis 2:24

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- September 12, 2021

We're looking at our 5 Words series and we're continuing on our second word. I'm wearing the suit I wore last week, the suit I marry people in. And if you change the shirt [*Matt is wearing a black shirt*], it's the same suit I wear to bury people. I know, is that a coincidence? I don't know. It's my funeral suit as well.

And like I said last week, it is honestly surreal—the experiences I've had by being a pastor in the same church, a great church like this, over the years—transcendent moments—baby dedications and marriages and funerals and baptisms. I'm blessed.

At funerals, sometimes I'll participate in them, and people will say, "Wow, that was a beautiful service." Or "That was a beautiful sermon you gave." And I say, "Well, you live a beautiful life, you get a beautiful sermon. You get a beautiful service. That's how it works. That's that way things are."

And no lie, I love, love, love being part of a service where somebody has passed, and their relationship with their wife or their husband—let's just say for forty years—four decades of love—and they were still looking at each other like brand-new lovers, young lovers. They just were able to exemplify all that marriage was supposed to be—at great cost, because when you love someone and you know that someone's going to have to pass first, you go out and you love that way. You love recklessly and deeply and painfully. And to love that way is one of the great adventures of what it means to be a human being.

I can't express that as well as some poets. And so, I brought a poem to you from a man at a graveside for his wife. He wrote this:

*'Tis a fearful thing
to love what death can touch.*

*A fearful thing
to love, to hope, to dream, to be—
to be, and oh! to lose.*

*A thing for fools, this,
and a holy thing,
a holy thing to love.*

*For your life has lived in me,
your laugh once lifted me,
your word was gift to me.*

To remember this brings painful joy.

*'Tis a human thing, love,
a holy thing, to love
what death has touched.*

“’Tis a Fearful Thing” by Rabbi Chaim Stern

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a man break from his father and his mother, and shall bond to his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

You have to choose to love that deeply, knowing that death will touch it. And how does one experience this fullness of human experience? Well, maybe I would suggest that we consult what God’s Word says in a chapter of His holy revelation to us. In His explanation of who He is and how to live, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 24. This is the blueprint for marriage. It says, “Therefore shall a man break from his father and his mother, and he shall bond to his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

This passage is what’s called a passage of primary reference because this single sentence will be used all the way into eternity to define what exactly marriage is, what it’s supposed to look like. And when we talk about our five words, we’re looking at our second word. And today that word is “bond.”

We have a very simple outline. What does “bond” mean and how do we bond?

What Does “Bond” Mean?

What does bond mean? It means to unite, it means to cleave, it means to glue, it means to weld. It means to secure to each other in a way that’s inseparable. If it’s glued together like this and it’s broken somewhere, it won’t break where it was bound.



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Here's a great example of it. It's a weld point. If you know anything about this product, JB Weld, that's the biblical definition of "bond." JB Weld is something that, honestly, you should have to have a license to use. It's a crazy thing. It comes in two little tubes and the gray goo can't even hold paper together. The black goo can't do much either. But when you mix these two together there is literally a chemical reaction taking place, and the gray goo loses itself and the black goo is no more. And then it adheres itself to something. And I've got to tell you, this is how it works. What JB Weld hath joined together, no man can separate. That's it. It's done. It's one. That's how it works.

And my point is, in the marriage template here, in the blueprint, it says that the son and daughter are supposed to break away from their fathers and mothers and they're to bond with each other in a JB Weld kind of way. It's a mysterious event that takes place. When vows are said, a sacrament takes place, according to some denominations. They say baptism and communion and marriage vows are sacramental, because a spiritual, chemical reaction is happening. And the husband in his identity and the wife in her identity are alternately changed in this event by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they become one. It's activated.

Metaphysics enters the physical world and alters it. It's a sacred thing. It's planned for a purpose. You're making a covenant with God, and the purpose of the covenant with God is that you could bond with one another in such a way that you'd be in a safe and protective place, so that you might become one in body and in soul and in spirit.

Bound In Trust

Bonding takes place in many different attributes and aspects, but certainly these three. When you're bound to one another, it is in trust. You are vulnerable at progressive levels. Here's the words: defenseless, weak, susceptible. You're exposed. There's no one on earth that you should show yourself this way to. There are no secrets in this kind of a marriage.

Bound In Forgiveness

Forgiveness—it's trust and forgiveness—forgiveness in marriage when you're bound to one another. You are going to forgive each other more than you're going to forgive anyone else on the planet. It is quantitatively different. And sometimes you're going to forgive your mate in a qualitative way, in a deeper way than you'll have to forgive anyone else.

The Bible says you should forgive seventy times seven. And it's like, *Sure—the first year of marriage—got through those*. Because it happens all the time. And in those acts of forgiveness you're actually bonding to one another. You actually grow closer to each other.

Bound In Love

Love, trust, and forgiveness—like the song says, “This is no ordinary love.” It is a reckless love at depths and scopes that you can't have in any other relationships. If you're loving each other, the harshest, the meanest, the most cutting truths that you'll ever hear will come from your mate, because they love you that much and can love you that much.

If what we call love doesn't take us beyond ourselves, it is not really love. If we have the idea that love is characterized as cautious, wise, sensible, shrewd, and never taken to extremes, we have missed the true meaning. This may describe affection and it may bring us a warm feeling, but it is not a true and accurate description of love.

--- Oswald Chambers

Oswald Chambers writes this about this kind of love. He says, “If what we call love doesn't take us beyond ourselves, it is not really love. If we have the idea that love is characterized as cautious, wise, sensible, shrewd, and never taken to extremes, we have missed the true meaning. This may describe affection and it may bring us a warm feeling, but it is not a true and accurate description of what real love is.”

This bonding that we're talking about, this metaphysical, supernatural attaching to one another, how does that happen? How could a person enter into that kind of danger and afford that kind of risk? Where does a person find that kind of courage? That's where we're moving to how we can bond.

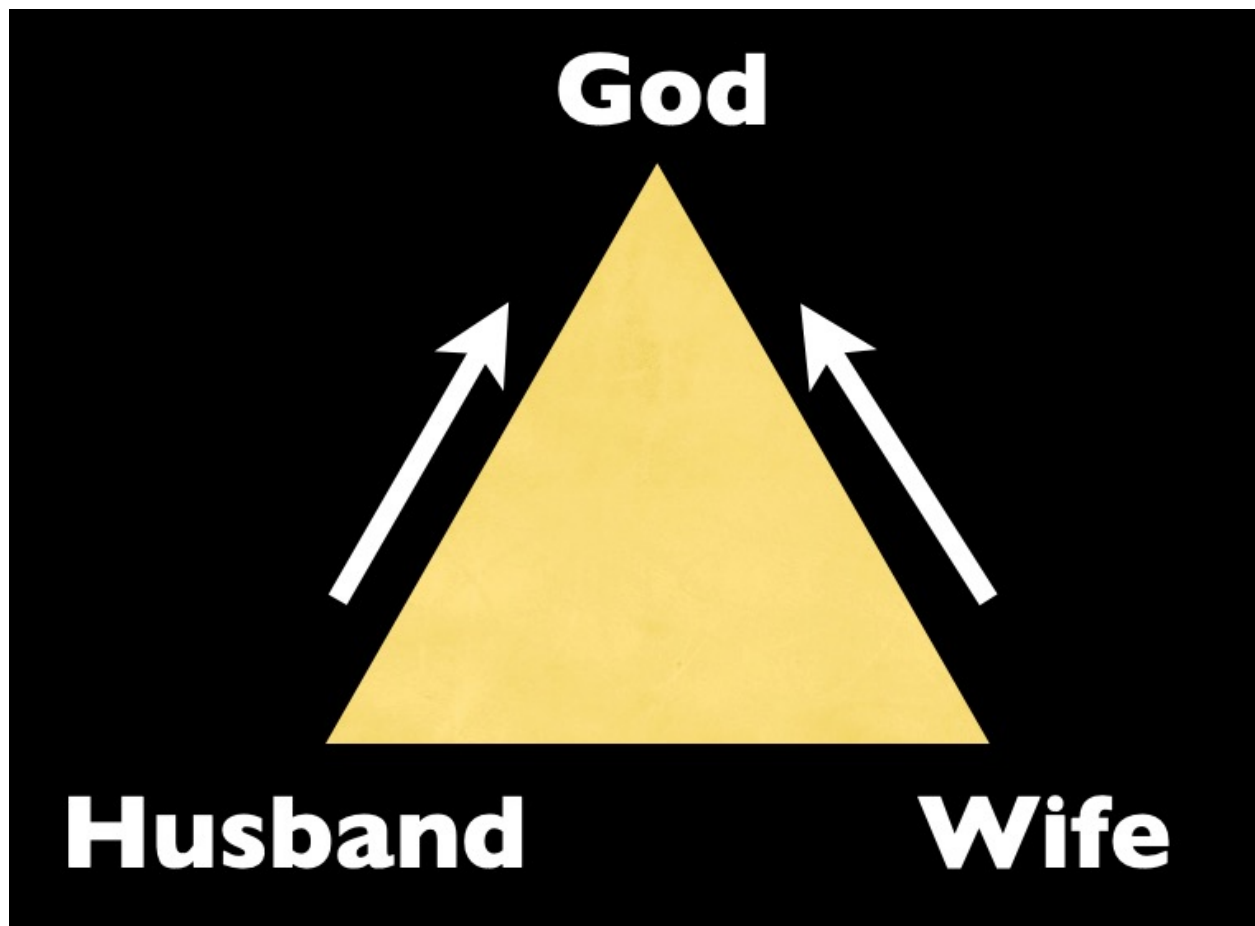
How We Can Bond

How can we bond? As one author calls this bonding, this vulnerability, it's the unzipping of your soul to another person. You cannot do that unless you can have safety from another source. You can't give the love that we're talking about to the person you say you love—you

can't give that kind of love or that kind of forgiveness—unless you receive it from another source.

And so, the only way a person can really experience the bonding that the Bible talks about in “break and then bond” is when a person has set their safety and their security based entirely on the promises of God and His attributes and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The only way you can do this is if you find your contentment, your rest, in knowing that God knows you. And you're at peace with His love for you. And that's the foundation that you build on. And it's from that that you're able to trust and forgive and love.



The key to bonding in marriage is illustrated in—it's crude, but—God's love triangle. Just humor me on this. This is God's love triangle. And the idea here is that God's at the top, clearly, because He's God. And then there's the husband and the wife on each side. But for them to get closer together, they can't pursue each other for love and acceptance and affirmation. That doesn't work. It kind of runs flat pretty quick. What they need to do is both pursue intimacy with

God, and as they work their way up in becoming like Christ in all of life, guess what? They become close to one another. That's where they become bound to one another. The closer they get to God, the closer they get to each other.

And what's really great about the picture here is that in a marriage relationship, not only is the husband working on his life becoming like Christ in all of life, but he's helping, coaching, cheerleading, disciplining his wife to become like Christ in all of life. And while she's working on her way up to becoming like Christ in all of life, her pursuit of knowing God, she's helping her husband, encouraging and cheerleading and disciplining to become like Christ. And so, the means participates in the bonding experience itself.

Marriage bonding takes place when the process itself is two people in a covenant relationship becoming like Christ in all of life. The point is, it's not pursuing each other; it's pursuing God.

Why Pursue God First and Foremost?

Why do you have to pursue God first? Why is it absolutely essential and fundamental to a marriage relationship that you pursue God first and foremost? I can think of two simple reasons.

One is that God is the source of all things good. And when we talk about all things good, we're talking about trust and love and forgiveness. And you're going to need to be able to give at levels of trust and love and forgiveness in a soul that's broken and doesn't have those kinds of assets.

David Wilcox is a folk singer and is very insightful in his writing. He says this about his relationship with his wife and his love for his wife. He's desperately trying to love her. But he says:

*But I cannot make you happy
Even though our love is true
For there's a break in the cup that holds love
Inside of you.*

It keeps leaking out. And then he says:

*I guess you cannot make me happy
No matter how hard you try
And that break in the cup that holds love,
Inside of me.*

And so, what we're doing here is we have "empty for empty."

And the only way we're going to be able to love each other is, he says:

*We cannot trade empty for empty
We must go to the waterfall*

And now this overflowing love that comes from God—that's the metaphor—this overflowing love from God, and trust, and forgiveness—now we can fill each other's cups.

In a book called *Marriage Builder*, Larry Crabb puts it this way: "I see so many marriages that are like two ticks on each other, just sucking the life out of each other. Instead they should pursue getting their life requirements from a dog and then giving to each other."

Which picture do you like better? The one from the folk singer/poet or the from the counselor? Argh ... I can't get it out of my head. The point is that you have to go to another source for truth, love, and forgiveness.

The second reason that you have to pursue God, not your mate, is because that's where safety and healing come from. If you're going to be trusting in vulnerable ways—let me read it again—defenseless, susceptible, weak, unzipping your soul to someone else, especially when it's early on—boy, it's like monkeys with machetes. You just hurt each other. You open yourself up and then someone stumbles on you, or vindictively pounces. How do you recover from that? Only God can put that back together again. Only God can do that.

When Melinda and I had been married about ten years, boy, we did what you needed to do to be healthy and happy in a marriage. We read at least one book a year, we went to a marriage conference about every two years. And after ten years we plateaued, and it was mostly my fault... well, it was all my fault. And it was because I had some secrets in my life that I was fearfully ashamed of. And I'd made a vow to myself that no one would ever know these things.

Well, it's like "The Tell-Tale Heart." It's found out. The heartbeat keeps getting louder, and this was where we were going to be. And I actually said, "This is it, baby. This is as far as I'm going to go. I won't do this."

We had a marriage counselor fly in to do one of our marriage conferences and he was over at our house for dinner. And we got to talk about that, and he just said, "Yeah. This secret that you can't trust your wife with—this is rock bottom, and the root system for your marriage can't grow past this. You can't grow any deeper than your skeletons. And so, let me ask you,

Matt—you've been married ten years—what kind of person is Melinda? Can you trust her? Will she forgive you? Will you be safe?"

And Melinda was going to need to find forgiveness and love from another source—a waterfall. And I was going to be out there without a net, and I was going to have to trust God to save me if I'm broken. So, we went home, and that night I told her everything. You know what I told her? I'm never going to tell you—are you crazy? *[Laughter]* You can ask Melinda and wild horses won't drag it out of her, because she probably already forgot.

But the point of that story is that it's like we were both climbing. I had to become more like Christ in all of life, and she was going to be the person to help me get to that next step, because only she could do that.

There are two steps in bonding, like the Bible talks about—two steps to bond to one another. That's what we're going to look at today. But before we look at the two steps to bond to one another, I need to remind you and review what we've studied already so you can see how that all contributes to that storyline. You'll see how that logically makes sense. Here's how you bond together.

The first thing you need to remember is this: that it is the Holy Father, Yahweh God, who has predestined you to become like Christ in all of life. God has predestined every believer to be conformed to the image of Christ. It is God's plan for your life to be a disciple, to obey all that He's commanded.

Second: marriage is a means of becoming like Christ. We talked about that two weeks ago.

Now watch this. How do you become a disciple? How do you become holy? How do you become like Christ in all of life? How do become mature, complete in all things? We have a formula at Grace. It's sloppy, but it works. It's this: Truth + Spirit + Relationships. Those are the three major elements that make you become like Christ: a disciple, holy, perfect, complete.

What's the relationship? The mate, primarily. The mate is the person that God has arranged before time, that you chose to enter your life, to be that person that encourages, coaches, loves, teaches, disciplines you, by bringing and reminding you of the truths of the Bible, the character nature of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit that lives inside you if you're a believer. The husband, the wife, is the voice, the ears, the hands of Yahweh God to remind and bring in the promises and the remembrance of the Holy Spirit in your lives.

It was rather beautiful: the way he put her insecurities to sleep. The way he dove into her eyes and starved all the fears and tasted all the dreams she kept coiled beneath her bones.

---Christopher Poindexter

There's a beautiful quote about the power of this. This is the story that Melinda did for me. "It was rather beautiful: the way he put her insecurities to sleep. The way he dove into her eyes and starved all the fears and tasted all the dreams she kept coiled beneath her bones." That's the kind of love.

Step One: Name the Part of Life to Become Like Christ

So, what are the two steps, knowing that this is our destiny? Step number one: you have to name the part of your life that needs to become like Christ. You cannot defeat what you refuse to face. You have to be able to name the issue so that you can apply the promises of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. And if you don't do that, what can the other person do with that? I don't know—it's frustrating. As a matter of fact, here's a video that illustrates how that can look.

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"It's Not About the Nail" Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=->

[Partial head shot of woman speaking.]

Wife: It's just ... There's all this pressure, you know? And sometimes it feels like it's right up on me. And—I can just feel it—like literally feel it in my head. And it's relentless, and ... I don't know if it's going to stop. I mean, that's the thing that scares me the most, is that I don't know if it's ever going to stop.

[Camera moves to a full profile of the woman and reveals a nail sticking out of the middle of her forehead.]

[Camera shows husband sitting beside the woman on a couch and staring at the nail.]

Husband: Yeah ... well, you do have a nail ... in your head. *[He points at the nail.]*

Wife: It is not about the nail.

Husband: Are you sure? Because, I mean, I'll bet, if we got that out of there ...

Wife: Stop trying to fix it!

Husband: No, I'm not trying to fix it, I'm just pointing out that maybe the nail is causing—

Wife: You always do this! You always try to fix things when I really need for you to just listen!

Husband: See, I don't think that is what you need. I think what you need is to get the nail out—

Wife: See, you're not even listening now!

Husband: Okay, fine. I will listen. Fine.

Wife: It's just—sometime, it's—like, there's this achy ... *[Woman puts up one hand towards her forehead.]* I don't know what it is.

[Husband's eyes shift to the left as if at a total loss as to what to say.]

Wife: And I'm not sleeping very well at all. And all my sweaters are snagged. I mean, all of them.

Husband: *[Struggling for words]* Yeah... that sounds ... really hard.

Wife: It is. *[Places her hand on his and smiles.]* Thank you.

[They both lean forward to kiss, but the nail bumps into him before their lips touch.]

Wife: Oww! *[They both pull back.]*

Husband: Oh, come ON! If you would just— *[He slaps the sofa in frustration.]*

Wife: *[She raises a finger in warning.]* Don't ...

[Camera cuts to credits. Music plays Beatles song, "Try to see things my way. Do I have to keep on talking 'til I can't go on? We can work it out, we can work it out.]

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Just call it out so that you can apply the promises of God, the attributes of God, and the power of the Spirit of God. That's how. You've got to name that. You've got to have an argument about that nail.

A marriage is only as good as a couple's ability to argue. A husband and wife who fail to have hard, painful conversations are not alive or honest.

Dan Allender, a famous writer on marriage and family, says, "A marriage is only as good as a couple's ability to argue"—to talk about the nail. "A husband and wife who fail to have hard, painful conversations are not alive or honest."

You cannot defeat what you will not name or you will not admit to.

Yogi Berra, the great philosopher, right?—said, "Wherever you go ... there you are." You can't run from the nail in your life. You say, *I'm going to move to a small town—then it'll be different.* No, because when you get there, you're there. *I'm going to change jobs—that's the problem.* And then you get a new job and you show up. *I'll just get a new husband.* Okay, right, so there's that nail again.

A lot of times we're having arguments, not because of what we're arguing about, but because of what is fueling underneath that issue. And sometimes the real issue is that we have built our significance and our security on a foundation that is not on the promises of God nor on the power of the Holy Spirit. We have a bad foundation. And how we identify the nail is to find

what's energizing this anxiety. What's the force behind it? What are you allowing to define you that might be getting threatened, that's other than the way the Bible is defining you? What kind of injury have you had in the past that you simply do not acknowledge so that God's Spirit can't help cure that?

You have to find the nail. If you want to go on a nail hunt, sometimes our Couples Checkup—you can try that. It's by Prepare/Enrich, it's an international marriage ministry. We've been using it here for thirty-five years. You go to our website and drop down on the front page and it will send you their eight core topics that couples have to find out where they might be having a conversation about how to apply the power of God's Spirit and where to apply God's promises.

There are some examples of nails: perfectionism. You probably had it when you were growing up and it shows up in being judgmental towards others and sometimes yourself, being self-righteous and condescending. It's not going away. It's going to snag a lot of sweaters. Why not have that conversation?

Being a people pleaser—boy! I mean, that goes all the way back. And it shows up sometimes by giving everybody else your best. And the people that love you get what's left over. You do something for your child's class because you're the PTA mom or dad, and you decorate the room and you make it flamboyant, and everybody's talking about it. *No one's ever done it this way before—this is amazing!* But when you go home, your house is a wreck, your kids don't even like you, and it's cereal again for dinner. Why? Why would you do that? Because you want people, strangers, and even people you don't like to like you. That's why.

Sometimes again, it's not the symptom; it's what's underneath it.

Sometimes people give in to various vices and peer pressure, not because of the attraction of the vice itself—and generally, vices are attractive. *But it's because I want to belong. They're all doing it. I don't want to be alone. I have this fear of loneliness and I like the approval of other people.* That's the nail.

But you can't defeat what you refuse to face. And that's the first step in this. You have to name the nail.

You can get nails from various places. You can inherit nails. *The guy didn't fall far from the tree.* What tree? *She's a chip off the old block.* What block? Name the block. Sometimes

we're given nails, consequences of actions or events in our lives, and we say, *Never again.*
Never, never again.

And sometimes we inflict nails on ourselves, because we're that way. That's the nature of man.

So, application one is built on step one on how to bond to one another. It's this: Name the nail. Name the part of your life that needs to become like Christ to your mate this week, so that the two of you can become like Christ in all of life and apply the truth and the Spirit in relationship.

Step Two: Apply the Truth of God and the Power of the Spirit

Here's part two. The husband and the wife apply the truth of God and power of the Spirit to change you from the inside out.

Let me just review. We don't get closer to each other, we don't bond to each other by bonding to each other; we get closer to each other by getting closer to God. And as we are on this journey of responding, of becoming more like Christ in all of life, and we are the spiritual coaches for each other, we're pulling each other up this pyramid together. That's when the bonding takes place. That is the means and the end.

So, how do you become bonded? You are collectively becoming like Christ in all of life, through truth and spirit and relationship. And you are that relationship. It's the power of the original word—Adam needed a helpmate. *I need a helpmate suitable for him.* Eve was custom-designed for Adam, because Eve was the one to say, *Adam, no, these are the promises of God. These are the attributes of God that you need to memorize. I don't have problems with that. You do, though. Here's how the power of God and Spirit of His resurrection can change that in your soul.* That's the roles we play with each other.

Because, listen—God is not out to make you nice. He's out to make you new. It is God's ambition, it is our pre-destiny, not to be happy—He doesn't care. (I know, you came to the wrong church, didn't you? Right?) His ambition for you is to be holy. That's what He's working towards. You're going to love you when you're holy. In between, you and I are like the extreme makeovers, soul edition. And He's going to make it right. He's going to make us like Christ in all of our life. And there will be some sledgehammering and other stuff going on, but you want your little two-bedroom chateau looking pretty? He's going to build an estate there. Not ...

anyway. And how's He going to do that? He's going to use this relationship, your mate, using the power of the Spirit and the truth of the Word.

So, what needs to be done so that we can bond? One, name the nail. You have to name the nail. And then, two, with our helpmate, that person brings in the promises of God, the attributes of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Applying God's Truth

Let's take the first one: the promises of God. Here's how you can do this for your mate. It kind of works around our house. People-pleaser: let's just pretend that I've had that in my life—from kindergarten, I think, is my first memory of that. I always wanted people to like me. Just invite me to the party. I'm not going to come, but I just want to be invited. Everything. And I've made very poor choices based on that. And so, Melinda sees that that's the nail, and I don't know how to get over this, and it's more powerful that I am.

Apply Bible passages. Rewrite the Bible, customizing it to my soul. Psalm 73 looks like this: "Who does Matt have in heaven but You, O Lord? And on earth Matt has nothing he desires but You. Matt's flesh and Matt's heart may fail, but God is the strength of Matt's heart and Matt's portion forever." Baby, these things are true. Memorize that, commit to that, until your mind believes that. And then you couldn't care less what other people think. Now your performance is for an audience of one. Apply the power of God's truth and His attributes to your mate's life.

Applying the Power of the Holy Spirit

The second one is bringing the power of the Holy Spirit. I mean, just to remind you, God had Jesus ascend into heaven, leaving people behind, so He could send a helper, the Holy Spirit. And do you know why He sent the Holy Spirit? Not to make you feel warm and fuzzy, okay? He sent the Spirit for the same reason He sent the Spirit to Egypt 3,500 years ago. This is what He does. He brings out names, humiliates, and destroys false gods that are killing people. He's still doing it today. He just needs access to the idols in your life. These nails become idols. And it's like the nature of the idols—it's the same pattern every time.

Like, your ego could be your idol. It's very easy for that to happen. And it serves you in the early days. Look at you! You became the top of the ladder, you're competitive, you're

winning because of your ego, and you're feeding that thing. Then you serve that idol. And then, the idol eats you. It happens every time. The next thing you know, you're sacrificing in ways you can't afford. That's how idol worship works. So, then the mate comes in and says, *Whoa, whoa! We've got to get on this before all is lost. We've got to get the power of the Holy Spirit in here. We've named this thing. We're calling it an idol for what it is, and let's get Him at work.*

How does the Spirit work? We don't have a lot of time, but let me just kind of make it somewhat simple. Did you ever read the story, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves"? He would go to the cave and he'd say the secret phrase and open up the secret door, and all of these jewels were there. And the secret phrase was? Come on ... "Open sesame." Right? You know that one.

The Holy Spirit is like that, but not so comical. He's waiting there with all the power of the resurrection, and the secret phrase is "Thy will be done." "I surrender all." *No agenda, don't care, do whatever you want with my life.* And He says, *Watch me work.*

And who can get me to do that in my life? I can think of one person, and it's attached to that ring. "Thy will be done."

Let me say another thing about the Spirit in your marriage. I wish I would have said this thirty years ago, twenty years ago, and ten years ago. There's a war in your living room and you're having an argument, and you think it's the two of you. There are demons in your arguments. Because the devil loves to divide what is sacred. It's a simply military plan—divide and conquer. And if I would have acknowledged that earlier in our marriage, we would have had much shorter arguments. And here's what we do now. We say these two phrases all the time:

"The devil's in this argument."

"What? You're right! I can't even remember what the topic was. The devil's in this argument. Let's stop arguing and talk it out."

Another one, not so clever: "Same team!"

"I know, same team—oh, that's right, we absolutely love each other."

"Oh yeah, that's right."

Because the devil has separated us, and we're thinking that we're at odds with one another. "Same team." "The devil's in the argument." There a spiritual war going on for your marriage, and the Spirit of God wants to get in there, and every time you're about to say "Thy will be done" or "I surrender all", he's going to step in there and make things messy.

Here's the two-step process. Name the nail. And you and your mate are working on each other's nails, working to become closer and closer to being like Christ in all of life. You're applying the Spirit of God and His power, the power of the word and the truths of God and the attributes of God. And as you grow to become more like Christ—holy, perfect, complete, lacking in nothing, “teaching them to obey all that I've commanded you”—all that—you're working your way up, and that's where marriage harmony takes place.

In our marriage—I'll tell you a little story. When we started having children—actually, I think we were doing it before that—but we kind of had this motto in the family: “Never make a decision based on fear. We will not make fear-based decisions.” And I have to tell you, when the kids were in elementary school, it wasn't all that hard. *We're going to let the kids ride the bus. We're going to let him ride his bike to school. Woo-hoo! We are living on the edge.*

And then when our oldest was going into junior high, I started quivering. And it was showing up in arguments, I was short of temper all the time on various topics, and I honestly didn't know what it was that was upsetting me. But what it came down to, I started realizing, was that when I went into junior high, that's when I left the rails. And most of my life went to a completely different trajectory that I still have a considerable amount of embarrassment and regrets about. It started there. And I just thought, *I am not going to let that happen to my child. And I'll do whatever it takes.* And it didn't matter if we were talking about toast that might have been overcooked or someone coming home late, it just went straight to an eleven and we had an argument.

And Melinda finally sat me down and said, “What's going on?”

And I said, “I'm afraid. And I'm going to start making decisions on where our kids go to school, because I'm afraid that what they're going to go through is what I went through.”

And here's what she did. This is what my helpmate said. She reminded me of the promise that we made that we would not make decisions based on fear. She brought up Bible passages about how much God loves our children—more than we could ever hope to. And then she said—the Spirit came in and spoke through her--“Matt, your parents didn't raise that child. We did. We're not sending *you* to school; we're sending *our son* to school, and he's going to be just fine.” She found the nail, she pulled the nail, killed the nail.

And guess what happened to us? We bonded like we had never done before.

Your homework is to name the nail. And then find ways to apply God's truth and God's Holy Spirit so that you can both become like Christ in all of life in both of your journeys.

I wore my funeral suit because I think about fifteen years ago I did a funeral and it changed my life. It was a beautiful funeral, because if you live a beautiful life, you get a beautiful funeral. That's how it works. And this man was everything that I'm not. He was intelligent and humble. He was gentle and courageous. He was so quiet and loving in the way he treated his wife and his daughters. He was everything I ever wanted to be. And I think when he died a large oak tree rattled. He was a person of consequence.

And I had a tender moment with his widow. I don't remember where we were in the funeral service—before or after—but I just looked at her and said, "You cannot remarry." And I thought, *Oh, what did I just say? Oh no.* So, I had to explain myself, because I didn't want her to think I was saying that the Bible says you cannot remarry or for some other reason. I just said, "Look, your husband was exceptional. And I don't know if there's anyone in the world that can fill his shoes. And I just think—it's your only marriage—I don't think you can remarry."

And she was grateful for that careless saying and knew it was meant well and that sort of thing. And when I got in my car, before I even started it, I said, *Oh, that's what I want. When I'm in this suit but I'm in the box in this suit, I want someone to say to my wife, "Melinda, you can't remarry. Because the way you guys bonded, the ways you guys pursued becoming like Christ in all of life, the way he was your cheerleader and coach and encourager, the way you fed him and loved him—no. You can't remarry."*

I hope I'm that good of a husband one day. That's what bonding means. It means if you break, it's not where the weld was. It means it's where God has brought you together in a supernatural way. It is forever.

Let's pray that we can do what's necessary so that we might bond in the way that God would have us.

Oh, Lord, that journey—that dangerous path of loving what can be lost, loving what will be lost—love. And Lord, we don't walk it alone. We walk it with You. And I'd ask that You would help us have confidence in the safety and the security we have with You loving us, so that we might be bold lovers and bold forgivers and bold trust-ers of our mate and loved ones.

And if we're not married, I pray we can learn how to practice that before that.

Lord, I'd ask that we can exemplify what it means to be married by leaving, and now by bonding; by being so connected that we sometimes lose ourselves in the "us." And in that, that we see You in ways we could only see You, because we've risked so much to love. We love what could be lost. I ask that we would be a whole church like that. I'd ask that we could love the world like that. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.