

Weatherproof Your Marriage

Introduction. Someone once said, "Marriages are made in heaven, but then again, so are thunder and lightning." The purpose of this series is not to make the three analogous; the purpose is to take a fresh look at God's plan for a happy, satisfying marriage. Unfortunately, many marriages either suffer or fall apart completely because of the storms that they encounter.

On May 13th, Herbert and Zelmyra Fisher, who live in North Carolina, were married for 86 years. They own the world record for marital longevity. Being married for years requires a lot of patience and love. Only people who really, truly love each other can survive for a long time, and in this self-serving world, we see less and less longevity in anything. Take the job world as an example. In every job I have had I have seen many supervisors and workers come and go. Only a handful of people stay at jobs more than five years anymore. With our jobs being second to our spouses, it is no wonder the ways of society are changing, and our minds are being shaped to accept a world without longevity.

In Matthew 7:24-25, Christ mentioned three aspects of a storm that assail a house: rain, floods, and wind. The rain slowly erodes the paint, shingles, and ground around your house, the floods swiftly hit a house and wash away the foundation, and the winds deliver hard blows which shake the structure. Using these three metaphors, we are going to study three types of marital storms that threaten your relationship and how you should respond to them.

I. **Culture**

- A. Like a long, steady rain, our culture gradually erodes the foundation of your marriage. All you have to do to see this is watch television.
 1. When a group recently surveyed more than 700 hours of network television, they found that 83% of the sexual acts inferred were between two people who were not married to each other. Our culture is bombarding us with an anti-marriage message. It routinely promotes fornication, live-in relationships, pregnancy and subsequent child-bearing outside marriage, and now gay and lesbian marriages.
 2. In 1992, *Time Magazine* had an article entitled, "The Nuclear Family Goes Boom." The author wrote, "Society has lost most of its taboo against divorce. It will take unusual commitment, flexibility, and loyalty fortified by a religious vow to stick it out. Couples who endure to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary will be as rare as those who mastered the cello or violin. Serial monogamy (i.e.,

marriages with sunset clauses that go for a fixed period of time) will become the norm."

B. People may be tempted to think that the first century was not as bad, but Paul wrote three expressions in 2 Timothy 3:1-4 which still exist and sap the strength out of our marriages.

1. They were lovers of themselves.

a) That is nothing more than the modern philosophy of humanism. Humanism is essentially the desire to put "me" first. I have got to do what is best for myself. You can get by with that attitude if you are single, but when you say, "I do," the "me" becomes "we."

b) The bottom line of this humanistic philosophy, which is rampant in our culture, is pure selfishness, and that destroys more marriages than any other problem. Have you ever heard someone going through a divorce say, "We were just incompatible?" That is secret code for "We were both selfish." Someone said, "Marriage is when a man and woman become one. The trouble starts when they try to decide which one" (1 Corinthians 10:24; 2 Corinthians 5:15).

2. They were lovers of money.

a) Our culture tells us it is not the quality of the relationship that is really important, it is all the glitz and glitter with which you surround it. So we spend and borrow to keep up with our neighbors, and that erodes our marriage like a constant rain (Deuteronomy 31:20; 1 Timothy 6:9-11, 17).

b) In this generation, our culture has even embraced an invention that overtly says, "My money means more to me than you do." It is called a prenuptial agreement. In a B.C. cartoon, the stone-age character was holding a dictionary and he was looking up "prenuptial agreement." The definition was, "A pact between two people who love each other almost as much as they love their possessions!"

3. They were lovers of pleasure.

a) Hedonism is defined as "The doctrine that pleasure is the highest good and that moral duty is fulfilled through the pursuit of pleasure." Sound familiar?

b) It goes all the way back to the Greek culture which would say, "Eat, drink, and be merry." Today, our culture would say, "If it feels good, do it." The only rule is enjoyment (Job 21:12-13; Luke 8:14; 1 Timothy 5:6).

c) A recent *Dear Abby* letter said: "Dear Abby, I am in love and having an affair with two different women. I cannot marry them both, please tell me what to do. But don't give me any of that

morality stuff.” Abby wrote back: “Dear Sir, The only difference between humans and animals is that ‘morality stuff.’ Please consult a veterinarian.” That is great advice!

- C. The way you deal with the constant downpour of our culture is to weatherproof your roof (i.e., your mind). The Bible provides us with the greatest protectant ever devised (Romans 12:2; Galatians 6:14; James 4:4). If we will apply a thick coat of God’s sealant to our lives, it can protect us from the constant downpours of our culture.

II. **Crises**

- A. The most devastating form of natural disaster is a flood. The worst natural calamity that has occurred in our world in the last 200 years was in 1887. The Yellow River in China flooded and killed over seven million people. If you have ever been in a flood, you know how devastating they can be. Marital crises, just like flash floods, are inevitable and unexpected. Below are listed the twelve most stressful crises a marriage can experience.
1. Death of a child.
 2. Jail or a prison sentence.
 3. Unfaithful spouse.
 4. Major financial difficulty.
 5. Business failure.
 6. Being fired.
 7. Miscarriage or stillbirth.
 8. Court appearance.
 9. Unwanted pregnancies.
 10. Serious illness in the family.
 11. Unemployment for more than one month.
 12. Death of a close friend.
- B. Any one of these can crash into your life, and if you are not prepared, wash your marriage away (Psalm 69:1-3). Unfortunately, when there is not enough preparation, many people just walk away, but that is not the answer (Isaiah 43:1-3).
- C. In these verses, God gives us three keys to defeating crises.
1. Calm down.
 - a) Isaiah said, “Fear not.” The most reassuring thought in the world is knowing that God’s purposes are bigger than my problems.
 - b) So if a calamity hits my life, God’s purpose for my life will see me through it and I will come out the other side the better for it (Job 23:10; James 1:12).

2. Consider God's presence.
 - a) Think of how many times God has been with you in the past, helping you through the difficult parts of your life (Psalm 3:1-6; 23:4).
 - b) Because of this, you can take refuge in His presence, which is now found in obedience to Jesus Christ (Luke 1:79; 1 Corinthians 15:57).
3. Claim His protection.
 - a) When you go through the floods of a crisis, you may get wet, you may lose the house and everything in it, but you will not drown.
 - b) God has promised to protect His people (2 Chronicles 16:9; Psalm 91:4; Zechariah 2:5).
- D. Several years ago, an article entitled, "Why Marriages Last," surveyed long-lasting marriages and reached the following conclusion: "The key to lasting marriages is a belief that marriage is a long-term commitment to a sacred institution. Many of our respondents thought the current generation takes the vow, 'till death do us part,' too lightly and is unwilling to work through difficult times. Successful couples view marriage as a task that sometimes demands that you grit your teeth and plunge ahead in spite of the differences." There was an old man who was surveyed in that same article who defined it this way, "Commitment means a willingness to be unhappy for a while." That is a profound thought! Marriage is not endless happiness. Instead of walking out or being washed away, commitment means that you grab hold of something that does not move and hang on!

III. **Change**

- A. Everything on the face of this earth changes with time except for God, His word, and His purposes. When you get married, you and your spouse start your life together. Then, in most marriages, comes the child-bearing time, the child-rearing time, the child-launching time, the empty-nest time, and finally, you face the loss of a mate. The winds of change are constantly blowing in your marriage. I must admit it is a little amusing when somebody says, "They are just not the person I married." The normal response from the spouse is, "I know, neither are you." My wife and I are completely different than when we said, "I do." I am not saying that all the changes are good. Some of the changes in personality can be negative, but we are always changing. We are changing spiritually (John 15:5-8), emotionally (John 13:34-35), intellectually (1 Peter 2:2), and physically (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7), as well as our locations and occupations.

- B. Elizabeth Elliott once wrote, "Your knight in shining armor may experience unexpected defeat by losing his job. Your lover may become a sick, helpless patient, needing your presence and care every minute of the day and night. 'This is not the man I married,' you will say and it will be true. But you married him for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, and those tremendous promises take into account the possibility of radical change. That is why the promises were necessary."
- C. When changes come, you have three options.
1. You can reject it and act like it did not happen. You can try to deny change, but it is going to occur anyway.
 2. You can resent it and fight it. It is like the caterpillar who looked up at the butterfly and said, "You will never catch me in one of those things!"
 3. You can relish it. You can make the most of changes and enjoy the beauty of every season of marriage. By relishing changes in your marriage, you weatherproof it from the winds of change.

Conclusion. My ultimate goal in marriage is to live happily and harmoniously, as well as meet my mate's needs and help them go to heaven. Henry Ward Beecher said, "Well-married, a man is winged; ill-matched, he is shackled." I have to dedicate myself to fulfilling that goal as long as I live, and I have to be willing to adjust to any change to meet that goal. The rains of the culture, the floods of the crises, and the winds of change are all going to come.

In Matthew 7:25, the reason the house built upon the rock did not fall is because it had a strong foundation. The secret for a great marriage is to build it on the right foundation. The Bible says there is only one foundation. We sing, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." That phrase is not just part of a song; it is the truth. Spiritual unity with Christ is the strongest cement you will ever find (2 Corinthians 13:11). Dedicate your marriage to the glory of God. Help each other to grow in Christ. That is the way you withstand the storms of life.