

Walls in Marriage that Affect Everything

Welcome back to the pastoral care and marriage class. Today, we're going to talk about walls in marriage that affect everything. You'll find that people will come to you as a pastor and a lot of these walls are the walls that come again and again and again. These are just a few and you'll find many more. But here, I've noticed that these are some of the biggies. Now, the walls that affect marriage a lot of times that there will be spiritual walls. You'll be trying to help a couple read the Bible and pray together and you'll find they don't have time or they're not prioritizing or their life is so out of balance. When are they going to read and pray when he's playing baseball, softball four nights a week?

The spiritual discipleship, home discipleship walls of actually having time to read the Bible and pray. One of the things that I'll ask the couple. I'll say, "What do you really want? Do you really want to have God in your marriage and in terms of your relationship or your time of prayer together?" I'll encourage couples to go to bed at the same time and going to bed at the same time and reading the Bible and praying and talking a little bit. If they don't go to bed at the same time, to at least tuck each other in if one goes to bed first. If they have different shifts and they can't get together, how can they find time every day and ask them what time could work. Maybe that time can only be once a week or twice a week. But there's a wall there and to face it.

There are emotional walls. I would encourage the women specifically to pray for help. One is intense emotions first go to God then husband. Let your love for the Lord push you to Christ and then that love for him and the need for that emotion to be encouraged and comforted by Christ. Bring that into your marriage. Sometimes what happens is a woman—and God made the woman usually intensely emotional in terms of the expression of the emotion. A guy might have five emotions or six or seven or ten if he's lucky. But a woman would have thousands it seems like. To just sort of not let emotions just characterize every part of a woman's existence in a relationship to her husband.

Another thing a wife can do is to tell her husband your emotional temperature if you're a woman and encourage the wives to do that because a lot of times, husbands are just not connecting to how you're really feeling right now and to share that temperature. There's the old phrase, "Happy wife, happy life." Somehow or other, if a woman communicates and gives clues into her emotional temperature, that can help them over several walls.

The other thing too is take care of yourself. Encourage the women to do that or take a nap. Or find a way—especially you find that when there are children at home—find a way to rest when you can. Sometimes that doesn't always happen. There's nothing wrong with resting.

Now, here are some walls that men have. Sometimes men just don't share their emotions. They lock it in, lock it up, and go into the cave. That contrasted with women who just let control of their emotions go. They just fly up the handle. Notice there's two walls there. The guy can learn how to share what he feels. The woman can learn to be a little more modest in how she expresses all of her emotions. Somehow what you're going for is that communication and to see those walls and not let emotional walls destroy the relationship.

Men specifically can pray for help and a: don't over-react to the emotions of your wife. A woman has a lot of emotions. Let's say she is just sharing all the emotions. Maybe she's not being modest about that. She just let them fly. What often happens is the first thing they want to do is just fix the woman. Instead, listen. Don't fix. Ask your wife to help you with expressing your feelings. Beyond a sad, glad, mad... A lot of times what happens is right at your very disposal, there's a great opportunity for man and woman to learn more about overcoming emotional walls and marriage is the perfect place for that playground.

There are other general emotional walls that you often have to face like previous relationships. Some women feel they cannot trust men now. There are some people who've had emotional negative experiences because of their parents or because of their children. All of those walls can be there to hurt a marriage. Sometimes, I'll tell you. You, as a pastor, maybe can't help everything. Maybe they need to see some counseling. Maybe there is a form of abuse going on or a form of abuse that has gone on in the past. All of those issues, those walls, if you just suppress them and don't talk about them, they often create a problem in the marriage.

Let's also talk about sexual walls. These are attitudes that hinder a healthy sexual relationship. In today's world, there are things like shame, porn, past sexual abuse, and the list goes on. In the area of shame, to be able to help someone to understand that their bodies were made by God, they're image bearers and that unnecessary shame only takes away from the marriage. You can actually do as a pastor get passages about God's creation. Song of Songs is a great book that talks about how sexuality is good and created by God.

There's porn walls. What to do about that? In this class, we've talked about that in the past. Unlike the various habits and the temptations and so forth but to be able to not let porn be that which takes down and dirties a marriage or a relationship. There's past sexual abuse. A lot of that, even the past sexual abuse, through prayer and through talking can be moved on in a very awesome way in a marriage.

But there are times when that past sexual abuse is serious and it's to the point where more counseling is needed. I would not suggest that you as a pastor ordinarily you're going to be the one that does that. There are actually in your area people that might be able to help in a very special way. If you have to do that, be very cautious not to fall into any temptation. Remember to keep very good boundaries at all times.

Let's talk about these walls in more specifics. Let's talk about shame itself. Kevin Leman in *Making Sense Out of the Men in Your Life* writes, "Your husband's mother might have made him feel ashamed, and as a consequence, your husband may have learned how to hide his sexuality from his mom. Just as your husband might be well be holding the depth and frequency of his sexual interest today because he has similar fears that he will be ridiculed or that you will shame him for being sexual. He thinks that's just the way women are." That would be an example of how men—men often don't to really let on that they think about sex as much as they do, so they feel ashamed about it because basically they were raised sort of like "Oh, you can't think like that. That must be perverted."

Shame walls for women. Sex is dirty, lower. Anytime my husband thinks that way about sexual thoughts, he's perverted or dirty. Maybe there is abuse issues; therefore sex is emotionally painful. These walls are there, and if a couple faces them, they really do need to face these walls and even at times get outside help. On the other hand, just talking about these things can be such a healing place, a healing perspective.

Let's talk about the question. I hear this as a pastor all the time. What's okay to do in the marriage bed? Well, really that is a private decision between the husband and the wife. The Bible doesn't condemn for instance oral sex. In fact, in the Song of Songs, it looks many times like they're talking about oral sex there, sexual creativity, fantasy. But here's the key issue, the boundary between husband and wife exclusively. Abuse of forms of sexual expression are out. Dr. Kevin Leman really seriously questions anal sex mainly because he questions it out of the hygiene of it and the hurt that can bring to certain parts of the body over time.

In general, between a man and a woman, that creativity, those bounds, it's pretty much an adventure, a playground that they can enjoy and there is not a lot of things that will hold them back but in marriage, exclusive husband and wife. I want to end the presentation just by—Gary Smalley has a great book, *The Love Languages*. Just want to remind everybody to think about that, and as a pastor you might even read up on this book on your own some time.

In Gary Smalley's book, he talks about affirmation, quality time, physical affection, gifts, and service. You can do this at a seminar so it's like a little added extra for you. You can even have everybody

express how they most feel loved, what's their love language whether it's affirmation, quality time, physical affection, gifts, or service. When a couple finds out where they're at, it helps a lot in overcoming a lot of their walls.

For instance, if somebody's love language is affirmation and what is given all the time is physical affection, what can happen is the other spouse can feel like "You're just not loving me. You're just not pushing the right buttons, dear." But if you can sort of know where your spouse is in and at, you can all the more effectively get over some of those walls in marriage that hurt so much.

As a pastor, people come with all sorts of questions. You graciously and encouragingly can go about just sharing and giving permission for people to be who God made them to be all within the biblical guidelines. So don't be afraid of walls. Talk about them and you'll find that God can help most couples over most of those obstacles even when you find some failures here and there. These principles are the biblical principles that if hearts who are obedient and loving to God followed what the Word of God said, you'll find that these walls are definitely surmountable. God bless you and have a great day.