

INTRODUCTION

Today I want to speak about “Buy a House–Build a Home.” This is an interesting story about a decision point in the life of the children of God. They were about to go into the Promised Land God had given them. So it became a decision time for the people of God, just like it is a decision time for many of us here in the 21st Century.

This is what the Bible says, beginning in verse 14: “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods of your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

It was Father’s Day and the wife of a very hard to please husband made up her mind that she was going to make it a very special day for him. So while he was shaving, she went back to him and said, “Honey, I’m going to fix breakfast this morning. What would you like to have?” He groaned a bit and finally said, “Well, I’d like to have coffee–don’t make it too strong, a couple of biscuits, two pieces of bacon–fry it crisp, then I’d like to have some grits and cook me two eggs–one scrambled, one over easy.” She said, “That won’t be a problem. I’ll do it.” She went to the kitchen and clattered around a bit. After a while, she came back and said, “Honey, I’ve got it ready.” So he went to the dining area, sat down and looked over the breakfast she elaborately furnished him with and a great frown crossed his face. Shocked and amazed, she asked, “Honey, what is it?” He said, “You scrambled the wrong egg.”

Well you do not have to be a marriage counselor or a sociologist to recognize that in America today there are many unhappy and unhealthy marriages. A reader wrote columnist Ann Landers and asked what request she received most often in her letters. She replied, “Of the 30,000 letters I receive every month, the most frequently request is, ‘What can I do about a rotten marriage?’”

There is a difference between a house and a home. Often when they are planning to purchase a new residence, people say, “I’m going to buy a home.” What they really mean is that they are going to buy a house. Because you buy a house but you build a home. That may have been what Edgar A. Guest was trying to say when he wrote that familiar line, “It takes a heap of living to make a house a home.”

Seven “keys” or principles for building a Christian home

Today I want to share in the conclusion in this series of messages and follow the five previous messages about the home and share with you seven keys or principles that can help us as we attempt to build Christian homes in today’s world. The first key is to

I. FOLLOW GOD’S PLAN

1. The home was one of God’s first creations

When we open the Bible and begin to read the opening pages of Genesis chapters one and two, we discover the remarkable unfolding of how God created all of the universe. In Genesis 2:18, there is a very interesting verse that sort of leaps out of the creation story of God’s creating our universe. Here is that verse: The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” It seems to me there are two words that leap out of that verse that demand our attention this morning as we begin to build on a foundation for having the kind of home that would be pleasing in the sight of God and that would bring joy and happiness in our lives. The first word is “alone.” Whenever you begin to think about the experience of God’s creation, preachers usually begin talking about the original sin or the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. They talk about the great calamity and the lives of Adam and Eve because of their rebellion against God and how the plan of redemption began to unfold in the Word of God. Let me tell you something: Long before God ever had to deal with the problem of sin in our world, he had to deal with the problem of loneliness. There is Adam in the Garden of Eden; he is in paradise. Yet when God looked down, he discovered man was lonely. So in that experience, the Bible says that God began to deal with the problem that something was missing. Something was absent in his life.

Alone is one of the most terrifying and trauma experiences in life. I heard about an old maid schoolteacher who had lived all her life in anticipation of marriage but she never got married. One day she called her pastor and said, “Pastor, I’d like to come and visit with you and discuss my funeral arrangements with you.” He said, “Fine.” They sat down and he began to talk like all of us ought to do about the songs she wanted at her funeral, scriptures that were meaningful in her life, then she said, “I want to make a special request. I want all-women pallbearers.” The minister was shocked and said, “I don’t think we’ve ever had a funeral quite like that. Why in the world would you want to have all-women pallbearers?” She said, “Well, while I was alive, the men didn’t take me out and they’re not going to take me out when I’m dead.”

In life, being alone, being lonely is a horrible experience. Some of the loneliness times I had while serving with our Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention was sitting in airports across America, waiting for an airplane, wanting to be back home with my wife. But there is a second word I want you to discover out of this Bible passage today. It’s the word “helper.” God said, “I will create for him a helper.” That word in Hebrew literally means “to complete.” It literally means “to stand beside you.” I think as we look carefully at what God does in this creation act, look down in Genesis 2:22. It says God took one of man’s ribs and from that rib he created woman. I don’t want to spiritualize on this text, but I do want you to note an important truth: He did not take that bone from out of the man’s head so that she would rule over him. I’m not about to get into today’s issue of wifely submission. I’ll let the SBC worry about that problem. But neither did God take the bone from out of man’s foot that he would trample or tread over her. Instead, he took it out of the side and I think that says to us that He has created us equally.

During the Vietnam War era, I am told that America lost 50,000 military personnel in combat service. But during that same era of time 54,000 women in America were murdered by husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends. There is no place in our society today for abuse of women. A man who says he has had Christ in his heart will treat his wife as Christ treats the church. That’s God’s plan for your life and mine, that marriage becomes a partnership or companionship in life.

I think in marriage what is being proposed here and throughout the New Testament is that man is to give leadership, not dictatorship. God's plan for my life and yours is one man, one wife for life. Yet all of us realize that tragically in life there come those times when things do not work out. It's impossible to describe the agony, anguish and the hurt in a person's life when God's plan is not discovered in that life.

2. Marred marriages can be mended

There is a marvelous truth I want to say to any of you today who may be in the throes of God's plan being detoured and aborted in your life. Let me tell you this: Marred marriages can be mended. If there is any one thing I know about God and I have learned over the last 65 years of my life is that God forgives every wrong in our life. There is not anything in my life when I come and say to God, "I need your forgiveness," that He is willing to forgive. What I believe about God is that He is a God of a second chance. But better than that, he is a third chance and fourth change. He never gives up on us. His love pursues us always.

3. When you mess up, confess up

What I want to say to you today is that regardless of where you are in life, you *can* start over. So when you mess up, you need to confess up. Three things about life I have learned over the years are 1) Learn from the past. Learn from things that have happened in the past. But let them go; get over them. You need to go on. It is like a river that becomes dammed up. If you do not let it flow, it will become stagnant and stale. 2) Look to the future. The future is all we have. We can't go back. We must go ahead. As we learn from the past and look to the future, we learn to live in the present. I think that's God's plan for our lives and for our homes. The home is to be a place where we live life to its fullest. It's okay to have a good time as a Christian and the home is a great place to do it. I think Joshua was right when he said the primary point or key in life is 3) "Who are you going to serve?" God has a plan for us.

II. LEARN TO COMMUNICATE

If there is going to be any sense of joy and compatibility and companionship in a home perhaps between a single parent with the children who are there or between all the children of a traditional family, you've got to learn to communicate. Are you shocked when you realize that

80% of our "waking hours" are spent communicating

Sometimes it is silent; sometimes it's verbal; sometimes is non-verbal. How do we build good skills in communicating?

1. Be a good listener

Guys, we are the worst at being good listeners. Most of us talk too much and listen too little. What I have discovered and you probably have too, it's very difficult to talk and listen at the same time. A lot of people try that. So as you think about communicating, a tremendous problem

all of us, whether we are 80 or 20 years old, in a marriage relationship, you must learn to communicate and be on the same page.

I’m told, I don’t know this for a fact, but Jerry and Janice Yandell were riding in the car and as he looked out the window at a mule in the field, Jerry said, “Janice, is that one of your relatives?” If you know Janice, she is *sharp*. She said, “Why, yes it is, Jerry—by marriage.”
Communication. It is a problem in marriages. Be a good listener.

2. Use three-word expressions

“I love you”

Someone said a man likes to feel he is loved. A woman likes to be told. I said that in a message not long ago and a man came by the door and said, “I heard what you said about me telling my wife that I love her. I told her that 40 years ago. Wasn’t that enough?” No. No enough. You can never say that too much to each other. What we say to each other as parents in the home we need to say that to our kids every day, because if we don’t love them, someone else will pick up that need in their lives. A part of love as described in I Corinthians 13, implies not only *saying* it but *doing* it. When it says “for God so loved the world” it not only meant his nature was to love us but he sent His Son. So when we say we love someone, we ought to express it.

Guys, when was the last time you bought flowers for your wife? You can buy roses in Tyler for \$2 dozen. I do it all the time. When was the last time you opened the door to the car? I bet you did when you were dating her. Man, you couldn’t get out of that car quick enough to run around the car, open the door and say, “Honey, come get in.” Now all you say is, “Hurry up. We’ve gotta go. Get in this car.” Why has that changed? You need to say, “I love you.”

“I am sorry”

Why do men have a problem with that? Why can’t we just come in when we mess up and do some stupid thing and just be honest about it? Stop giving alibis or rationalize your conduct. Just say, “I messed up.” Say, “I’m sorry.” We need to do that with our kids. You don’t have to be a perfect parent, because there aren’t any. They need to understand that they’re okay and hear “I’m sorry.”

“Can I help?”

Too many of our men come in from work and sit down, open the newspaper and start reading. When that paper has been read, they turn the television to ESPN and start watching a ball game. I think in the home relationship, if we’re going to communicate, we need to say, “Can I help?” You say, “Well, I work at the office and when I come home, I’m tired.” Have you ever stayed home and kept kids? We kept our grandchildren recently and boy I was so happy when those little angels came and when they left, I was so glad to see those devils leave. Ann and I were exhausted. Raising a family is hard work. And guys, you need to help, you need to be busy doing that and get off the couch and run the vacuum cleaner and help mom around the house.

“Together we can”

Somehow we need to see whether we’re senior adults or whether we just beginning in a young marriage that if marriage is going to be a companionship, a relationship, it’s *together we can*. Somewhere in life, storms will come that will shake the very foundation of our homes. But when a husband and wife have a commitment, it becomes “together we can.” If you are here today and you are a single mom or dad and you are trying to deal with the family in a constructive way, you have that bond together. “We’re going to make it with God’s help.”

“You are wonderful”

Maybe you want to say “super.” Maybe you want to say “beautiful.” Whatever you want say; everyone needs affirmation. That’s an expression as you communicate and build that bridge in relationship with each other. It builds communication.

“I need you”

The one thing that brings dry rot to marriages is that we begin to take people for granted and that will destroy a marriage. We need to be needed. All these guys walk around macho-like, “I don’t need anybody.” Yeah, you do. That’s a cover up. You’re a phony. Just like I need God, I need relationship with others. One other thing is

“I thank you”

When was the last time you said, “Thank you,” to the members of your family? When was the last time you took a moment to say, “Thank you for all the thousands of things you do that make me what I ought to be?” Do it today.

The third key we need to do is

III. MANAGE YOUR MONEY

There is a lot of fussin’ and cussin’ that goes on in marriages over money and the lack of it or how it’s spent. A guy goes down to WalMart, buys a fancy reel, comes home, his wife says, “What’s this bill at WalMart?”

“Oh, I had to have a fishin’ reel.”

“Yeah...you’ve already got ten.”

How do I make it in life with my money? How do I manage my money? Let me give you a quick couple of thoughts.

1. Develop and stay within your budget (10/10/80 plan)

The simplest way to outline and set up a budget is to give the first 10% to God. The second 10% needs to go into retirement and live off the remaining 80%. But all the financial data that comes from different sources in our society today reveals that many couples spend 110% of their

income. You’re going to have trouble and difficulties in life if you do not develop and live within your means.

2. Watch your credit cards

It’s okay to leave home without them. Steve Blow writes a column for *The Dallas Morning News* and some of you may remember he was a member of Green Acres Baptist Church. Do you remember that? This past Friday he had an article entitled, “Give credit to those who help.” In that article he quoted *Newsweek Magazine* saying that ½ of all baby boomers, that is, couples between 34 and 54 have felt stress at some point in the last five years. You can be a \$30,000 millionaire if you stay within your budget. Then I would amiss if I didn’t say

3. Prepare adequately for retirement

You need to be putting at least 10% aside into some kind of equity market for your retirement. According to Social Security, only 2 out of 100 come to retirement with adequate financial resources. I Timothy 5:8 says, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” What’s worse than unbeliever? What’s worse than a guy who denies the faith? I’ll tell you: It’s a guy who doesn’t take care of his retirement plan.

IV. PRACTICE RESPONSIBLE PARENTING

My wife and I were in British Columbia and I happened to be reading a Toronto newspaper and as I read through it, I came across a little caption that read, “Float like a butterfly—bite like a dog.” I thought, that’s what a parent ought to be. That’s the way we need to act in our homes. We need to

1. Provide a good example

Provide a good example to our children. Children aren’t interested in lectures; they’re interested in what you do and how you do it. So as a parent, set an example.

Have you ever had the experience of your children taking your shoes and walking in them? That’s the way they do. They watch more than they hear what you say. You need to

2. Practice tough love

You need to teach them values. It’s not the function of the school to teach values. Though certainly they teach them there in education. That’s the function of the home. *Here’s* where it starts in America today. If we’re going to change society today, it’s going to have to come back to the home where Christian men and women set a good example and teach good values, right and wrong.

I think what we need in life is to have more of a compass instead of a calendar. Too many of us live by the calendar when in reality we need a compass to steer us. We need a North Star and I’ll tell you where that North Star is: It’s right here in this book.

V. DEAL WITH CONFLICTS

1. Nobody is perfect

There are times in any marriage where there will be disagreement. When I hear of a guy who’s been married 50 years and he begins to brag at his golden anniversary celebration that he’s never had a fuss with his wife, I know one of three things is true about that guy: 1) He has a severe memory loss problem; 2) He just isn’t telling the truth; or else 3) He’s a wet noodle.

There will be times when we’ll disagree. What I’m suggesting to you in our relationships within the home is to talk it out instead of fight it out. Home is a place where there must be cooperation; there must be compromise. Confrontation *is* important. You don’t sweep everything under the rug. Somewhere, sometimes, it has to be addressed. But you need to choose your fights.

2. Resolve disputes wisely

3. When you get hot; cool off

You know a good dog, any day of the week, can whip a skunk. But the stink isn’t worth it. And we don’t have to fight over everything. When we get hot, we need to cool off. Paul writes about that to the church at Ephesus. He said, “Don’t let the sun go down when you become angry.” He said before you sleep, resolve whatever has gotten you all upset. Then you need to

4. Remember the Golden Rule

If you and I would practice within our relationships within the home the Golden Rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, it would solve most of the problems. It’s that simple. Just treat others as you’d like to be treated. And in doing that, we learn to resolve conflict.

VI. BUILD A TEAM SPIRIT

1. No “Lone Rangers” in this house

2. Working together builds a winning team

In your family life, you need to develop a win-win attitude. In sports, particularly football, every person on that team has a responsibility. When the quarterback calls a play to run right, if half the team runs left, like the Dallas Cowboys sometimes did last season, it’s going to be calamity. It’s the same way within the home. Furthermore, hard work is required if we’re going to have a happy home. Superbowls are not won in January, they’re won in July. Today if you’re going to be a winning team as a whole, it’s going to take hard work.

I ran across a quotation from Barbara Johnson who said it so well: "If it was easy to raise kids, it would not have started with something called labor." Pretty good. I remember as a young pastor, fresh out of seminary, I visited a young mother who had just had a baby. I said, "Boy, I know that must have hurt." She looked me straight in the eye and said, "Young man, you don't *know* how it hurt." Ann used to say quite often to me that every man ought to have at least one baby. Hard work.

3. Do little things together

And as we think about our home, spend time with our kids. I heard on a radio station this week that the average father only spends 5 minutes with his kids every day. It's no wonder children become juvenile delinquents. Life was meant to be sipped, not gulped. Take time with your kids.

VII. PUT CHRIST FIRST

1. Take time to pray

2. Listen when God speaks

As Jesus came to that crescendo in the Sermon on the Mount said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." What's number one in your home? Making money? Having a bigger house? Fancier car? No. We need to put Him first and to do that; we must spend time in prayer. We must listen as God speaks to us through His word.

One of the finest men who was ever a member of this church was a man named John Gary. John always sat in the third or fourth pew every Sunday. Every time the door was open, John was always here, he and his wife. One day, we were over in the Family Life Center and he told me he was born out in West Texas. And in his town there was a little village blacksmith. Every morning as a young child, he would go down there. And he said, "I still remember that sign that was there in that blacksmith's office. It said, 'We can mend anything but the break of day and a broken heart.'" With a twinkle in his eye he said, "Curtis, isn't it good that we know Jesus because he can mend a broken heart?"

The greatest gift you can give to your family is your life to Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE

7 “keys” or principles for building a Christian home:

I. FOLLOW GOD’S PLAN

1. The home was one of God’s first creations.
“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”
Genesis 2:18 NIV
2. Marred marriages can be mended
3. When we mess up, confess up

II. LEARN TO COMMUNICATE

80% of our “waking hours” is spent communicating

1. Be a good listener
2. Use three-word expressions
 - a.) I love you
 - b.) I am sorry
 - c.) Can I help?
 - d.) Together we can
 - e.) You are wonderful
 - f.) I need you
 - g.) You are great

III. MANAGE YOUR MONEY

1. Develop and stay in your budget
2. Watch your credit cards

IV. PRACTICE RESPONSIBLE PARENTING

“Float like a butterfly–bite like a dog.”

1. Provide a good example
2. Practice tough love
3. Work on your attitude

V. DEAL WITH CONFLICTS

1. Nobody is perfect
2. Resolve disputes wisely
3. Remember the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31)
4. When you get hot, cool off (Ephesians 4:26-27)

VI. BUILD A TEAM SPIRIT

1. No “lone rangers” in this house
2. Working together builds a winning team
3. Do little things together

VII. PUT CHRIST FIRST

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. *Matthew 6:33*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes