

## Our Marriage is Not Going Well

### Sermon 2

Can a marriage that is not going well get back on track? I say yes emphatically. Marriage is not always easy. Marriage does not always go well like in the romance films. But a rough marriage can change and you can have bright days full of love with your spouse. Generally for a tough marriage to go well it requires changes for both parties. Most of the time we consider our spouse the wrong party because we don't see our own lacking points and mistakes. But if we put our behavior under the lens in a humble way we will see that there needs to be changes. Don't give up! There are good days ahead.

We spoke last time about divorce. If two believers divorce they cannot remarry. Otherwise they commit adultery and are guilty before the Lord. Don't do it. If there is not adultery or fornication a believer cannot divorce an unbeliever. The Lord recognizes that marriage as a legal marriage. If the unbeliever abandons the believer the believer can most likely remarry. The text is not 100% clear but generally we understand it that way. In any case, if the believer is abandoned it is not necessary to try to live with the unbeliever. Be at peace.

If violence is in the picture you don't have to stay there, for your safety you can divorce but it doesn't mean you can remarry. If there is no adultery or fornication they the one who is violent is still your spouse. Marriage is a life-long covenant before the Lord. Choose well. Unless there is death, adultery, fornication or abandonment you cannot marry someone else.

We have an acquaintance in the United States. She is a woman faithful to the Lord. But in her youth she fell in love with an unbeliever. The man was a world-class scientist. The young woman thought thus: Our faith is so logical, certainly one day he will see it and become a believer. The man never became a believer. Faith is not an intellectual issue. It is a spiritual issue. No matter how intelligent someone is, if their heart is not open to the Holy Spirit they will never come to faith.

Last time we spoke mostly concerning the women. Yes, men want love but for men the thing that carries great importance is respect. Thus the Bible says:

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In spite of this, how many times have David and I seen a believing woman putting down her husband in front of everyone? How many times have we see a believing woman scold her husband like a child in front of everyone? How many times has an unbelieving husband learned

that his wife is complaining about him to all the women in the church? Countless times! After this the same woman comes to prayer meeting and wants everyone to pray that their unbelieving spouse will become a believer! It doesn't go like that! It will never go like that! If you want to win your unbelieving husband to Jesus you will show respect to your husband.

Creating an environment full of strife destroys a marriage. Some women are constantly complaining and nagging. What does the Bible say?

Proverbs 21:19 Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.

There is one verse in the Bible which openly talks about what a believing woman must do to win an unbelieving husband. Let's look at it.

1 Peter 3:1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,<sup>2</sup> when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.<sup>3</sup> Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel --<sup>4</sup> rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.<sup>5</sup> For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,<sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

If you want to win your unbelieving husband to the faith, you need to live a clean life. Don't wear ornaments. Dress plainly. Show respect to your husband like Sarah. But being subject to your husband doesn't mean that you violate principles of faith. Just the opposite. Your husband must know something. Your loyalty is first to the Lord. You will not win your husband by compromising the Lord's commands because your husband will understand that the principles are not very important. Stay faithful to the Lord. Your husband may fight with you on some subjects but in the long run when he sees that you have principles that are not to be compromised he will feel respect for it.

In the Bible one of the brightest examples of a woman in a tough marriage is Abigail. Abigail was the wife of a man named Nabal. The Bible says the following regarding him:

1 Samuel 25:2 Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.<sup>3</sup> The name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings. And he was of the house of Caleb.

Because the man was an Israelite we can say that he was a believer, a church member. But as we see he was not a true believer. When the prophet David was in that region with his men, they protected Nabal's shepherds from thieves and bandits. They didn't steal any animal to meet their own needs. The story tells us what kind of man Nabal was.

1 Samuel 25:4 When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep,<sup>5</sup> David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name."<sup>6</sup> "And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: 'Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have!'<sup>7</sup> 'Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel.'<sup>8</sup> 'Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.'<sup>9</sup> So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.<sup>10</sup> Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master."<sup>11</sup> "Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?"

The time of sheep shearing was a time of hospitality. David and his friends had need of food and according to the custom of the times David sent 10 young men to receive a kindness from Nabal. But Nabal belittled David and turned the men away empty handed. David got really mad and he was about to do something very evil. To restrain David from doing evil the Lord did a special thing. The Lord sent a woman to him.

1 Samuel 25:12 So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words.<sup>13</sup> Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.<sup>14</sup> Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them."<sup>15</sup> "But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields."<sup>16</sup> "They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep."<sup>17</sup> "Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him."<sup>18</sup> Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.<sup>19</sup> And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.<sup>20</sup> So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them.<sup>21</sup> Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good."<sup>22</sup> "May God do so,

and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light." <sup>23</sup> Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. <sup>24</sup> So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. <sup>25</sup> "Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. <sup>26</sup> "Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, since the LORD has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. <sup>27</sup> "And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. <sup>28</sup> "Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. <sup>29</sup> "Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling. <sup>30</sup> "And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, <sup>31</sup> "that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

Abigail was the wife of a rich man. Who did she bow in front of? But in an emergency, without hesitation she bowed before someone and begged him. She didn't come empty handed. Abigail was an intelligent woman. She also correctly evaluated the action David was about to take from a spiritual standpoint and gave advice to David. What kind of response did David give to this woman?

1 Samuel 25:32 Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! <sup>33</sup> "And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. <sup>34</sup> "For indeed, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hastened and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!" <sup>35</sup> So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person."

Abigail's humble behavior saved herself and her whole family from the death that would have resulted from her husband's unthankful behavior. But Abigail's virtues were going to be shown even more.

1 Samuel 25:36 Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.

Abigail understood the prophet Solomon's words very well. Keep your finger here and let's go to Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;

Abigail held her tongue to find a better time to speak.

1 Samuel 25:37 So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone.  
<sup>38</sup> Then it came about, after about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

If you are saying in your heart, "I wish the Lord would strike my husband dead" your heart is not right. You vowed before the Lord to love your husband all your life. There needs to be a change in you. If you don't have love, ask it from the Lord.

In a tough marriage, Abigail's respect, patience, common sense and intelligence are a good example to us. You can reach a high ideal. By prayer, examine your character closely. What changes would be beneficial for your marriage?