**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**8/15/2021**

**Help For Troubled Marriages**

God ordained marriage and He ordained it for our good. Marriages are designed by God to be a blessing. Proverbs 18:22 says, *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD.”*

Many marriages start out with the promise of joy and happiness. But things begin to happen. The man who once was the knight in shining armor no longer looks that way to her. The man doesn’t see in her the beauty and the charm he once saw. Things are not going well. The marriage deteriorates into that which brings great misery. What was designed to be a blessing is the source of a lot of heartaches.

Some will say marriage is the problem. They will speak despairingly of marriage, encouraging others to never get married. “If you want a lot of heartaches then get married,” they say.

However, marriage is not the problem. It is the people in the marriage that is the problem. If the people in an unhappy marriage will change, then the marriage will change for the better.

All marriages have problems. I would like to tell you that my wife and I never have any arguments. I would like to tell you that, but it is not true. The reality is troubles will arise in your marriage. The question is how should we act when the problems arise? There are Biblical principles to keep in mind that will help us through the difficult times so that our marriages will not deteriorate into that which bring great misery, but will be the source of joy that God intended? The title of the lesson today is “Help For Troubled Marriages.” We want to look at some Biblical principles that will help us when our marriages are in trouble. And let me say, the problem is not whether these principles will work -- they are from God -- but whether or not we will implement them.

The first principle to remember when your marriage is in trouble is Focus On YOUR Role. Notice I emphasized YOUR role.

Many times when I have counseled others who are having troubles in their marriage, in more cases than not, each will tell me what the other person is doing wrong. The finger is always pointing at the other person. Most of the time, we don’t see ourselves as the problem in our troubled marriages, do we? When problems arise we view the other person as the one around whom all the problems center. The question we need to ask is, “What am **I** doing?” “Am I meeting MY responsibilities in the relationship?” Wife, are you the loving, submissive wife God commands you to be? Titus 2:4-5 says that the older women are to admonish the younger women *“to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”* These are commands of God. Wife, are you meeting these responsibilities? And husband, are you the godly husband God wants you to be? Do you put God first in your life? Do you love your wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25)? Do you strive to dwell with her with understanding and give honor to her as to the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7)? In Matthew 7:3-5 Jesus tells us to FIRST get the plank out of our own eye before we try to get the speck our of our brother’s eye. This would have applications to our marriages, don’t you think? I must first make sure I am correcting my faults before I try to correct my mates? And this passage is not just saying that I must first admit I have a problem before I address the problem of my mate, it is saying I must first correct that problem before I address the problem of my mate. Jesus says, *“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”* I must CHANGE my bad behavior before I address my mate’s problems. And so before you begin to point the finger toward the other person, ask yourself, “Have I FIRST removed the plank from my own eye?”

In 1 Peter 3:1-4 Peter talks about a wife who has an unbelieving husband, that is, a husband who is not a Christian. Obviously, in this situation her husband needs to change. But what does Peter tell the wife to do? He tells her to focus on HER behavior. Notice what he says, *“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word,* [that is, they do not obey the gospel] *they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.* Notice, without the wife continuing to nag her husband to do right, Peter says, she can win him by him observing her good behavior. While she focuses on her role to be the loving, submissive wife, she is providing the means by which she can change her husband’s behavior. One way to change other people is to lead the way by setting a good example.

In Matthew 7:12 Jesus said, *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”* How do I want my wife to treat me? Well, that’s how I should treat her. Jesus didn’t say “do to the other AS he or she is doing to you.” He said “do to others as you would WANT them to act toward you.” I must act toward them as I would want to be treated. Focus on YOUR role in the marriage. Make the decision now to act toward your mate as you would want him or her to act toward you. If we are consistent in practicing this principle we will be pleasing to the Lord and our troubled marriages will change for the better.

The second Biblical principle to keep in mind when your marriage is in trouble is to Focus on GOD.

Question: “When everything in your marriage seems all to be going wrong is it enough for you to have a relationship with God?” If your mate never changed, could you still find joy in life, fulfillment in life in your relationship with God? When Paul wrote the book of 2 Timothy he was in prison. There were those of his brethren who forsook him. Notice what he says in chapter 4, verses 16-18, *“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”* One thing Paul was assured of, even though his brethren forsook him, he knew the Lord would never forsake him. He found consolation in the Lord when others turned against him. Paul said in Philippians 4:4, *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”* No matter what our circumstances are in life, the Christian can always rejoice in the Lord. In verse 13 Paul said, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

And also when you focus on God you will be focused on pleasing Him and so you will be focused on fulfilling your God given role in the marriage. If you are not focused on pleasing God you will not give the proper energy and effort to save your marriage. Unfortunately, many times when our marriages are in trouble God is the last One we want to think about. You know why? It is because we know what HE expects of us. We know He wants this marriage to stay together, He wants us to act right, He wants us to fulfill our roles, but that is not what WE want, because we are hurting, we are angry, we are bitter. We want to hurt our mate. We want out of the marriage. But what does the Christian want in every situation of his life? When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to pray *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matt. 6:10)

The Christian wants God’s will to be done. Therefore, when his marriage is in trouble He focuses in on doing God’s will in that marriage. What does God want from you when you and your mate are having an argument? Look with me in 1 Peter 3:8-12: *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For ‘He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.’”* It doesn’t matter how painful it is, or how emotional it is, we are first and foremost children of God. Our first priority is to please Him. When your marriage is in trouble, focus on GOD.

Thirdly, Focus on Your SPOUSE. Now, I didn’t say focus on the role of your spouse, but focus on your SPOUSE. Focus on serving him/her. The life of a Christian is a life that is focused on serving others. Jesus is our example. He said in Matthew 20:27-28, *“And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* Paul said to Christians in Philippians 2:3-4, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* Who do we think about when we read these passages? We think about how we are to act toward our fellow Christians, and these passages do apply to how we should act toward our fellow Christians in the church. But, I’m afraid that we are careful about serving our fellow Christians in the church, and then we neglect serving our closest companion, our spouse. If you want to overcome the troubles in your marriage you have to give yourself to serving your mate. Stop thinking about your own needs and how your spouse should serve you, but rather start giving yourself over to serving his/her needs. Someone says, “I’m doing all I can, but he doesn’t give me the time of day. I think about what I can do to serve him, but he doesn’t seem to care. I’m being exploited. I’m being used. No one is taking care of me.” I’m reminded of what the Lord says to those who were slaves in the first century. He said to them, *“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”* (Col. 3:22-25) In other words, you keep serving no matter what, you keep serving because you are a servant of the Lord, keep serving as to the Lord, and the Lord will reward you. As you serve the Lord by serving your spouse, and you are consistent in that service, you are providing an atmosphere in the marriage that will change it for the better.

Marriage was designed by God to be a blessing to mankind. The only reason marriages are not blessings is because the people in the marriages have failed to follow the instructions of the Designer. When there are troubles in your marriage, Focus on YOUR role, Focus on GOD, and Focus on your SPOUSE. The problem is not whether these Biblical principles will work, but whether or not we will implement them.

We want to invite you to check out our web site. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of topics, and you also are able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts. The web address is sjchurchofchrist.com.