

Commit to Protect Your Marriage

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[0:00] Well, the bookmark is just, I give you that as a bookmark. Maybe you want to stick that in your Bible for a while! And let it be a reminder of the things that we've been studying.

There are six commitments that Tripp and his book, *What Did You Expect*, lays out things that make for a thriving and God-honoring marriage relationship.

There are six, that means there's enough for one for every day. And then you can focus on your great bridegroom, Jesus, on the Sabbath day.

As you can see there, we're jumping over number five on those daily commitments. We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.

Mr. Tripp spent a significant amount of time on that in his DVD, so we're not going to take the time to go over that material in the book.

[1:03] Just to remind you that the very differences that perhaps once attracted us in marriage can sometimes irritate us. And we need to come to appreciate what of those differences is of God's making and of his providence in our lives.

So we pass on then to the sixth and final commitment. We will work to protect our marriage. Now, the operative word in this sentence is work.

We will work to protect our marriage. It's the daily commitment to give ourselves to the work involved in protecting our marriage.

We've already seen one way that we work to protect it. Two weeks ago, Pastor Jason showed us.

We pray together. And that's one way we protect our marriages.

We put up that hedge of prayer. And I trust that we're committed to that and we're growing in appreciation for that means of protecting our marriages.

[2:14] But there's other work needed besides prayer to protect your marriage. We're familiar with Jesus' words to the sleepy disciples in Gethsemane when in Matthew 26 and verse 41, he told them, Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Watch and pray. Notice he says praying is not enough.

Yes, that's important work to protect you and to protect your marriage.

But there's more to do. Watch. That means set a guard. That means be vigilant. Stay alert against the dangers.

Now, what's the implication that Jesus makes there? Watch and pray so that. The implication is, is if you don't watch and if you don't pray, you'll fall into temptation, isn't it?

That's why he's telling us that. Peter slept instead of prayed, didn't he? And what happened?

[3:28] He fell into temptation and he denied the Lord three times. So prayer is critical to protecting our marriage, but it's not enough alone. There's other work involved.

And so this commitment reminds us of that. We will work to protect our marriage. In a rather enigmatic way, Tripp warns us, beware of a good marriage.

Beware of a good marriage. Now, he's seen it over and over in counseling. Couples who had a good marriage, who then grew comfortable with it and quit doing the things that made it a good marriage in the first place.

They took each other for granted. They got to a point in their marriage where they quit watching and they quit praying. They quit working on their marriage. They thought they could coast, just sit back and enjoy the ride of a good marriage.

And when they quit working on the things that made for a good marriage, it didn't take long before their marriage was in trouble. And so Tripp says, perhaps the greatest danger to a good marriage is a good marriage.

[4:43] Because when things are good, we can easily be tempted to coast and just relax, to get sloppy with the disciplines and work that, by God's grace, have made our marriages what they are.

So the temptation to coast must be firmly resisted. Now, when biking in Indiana, you can coast and continue moving right along for quite a long time, can't you?

But I've seen them biking up mountains in Switzerland. And they've got gears that I've never seen on our bicycles here, where they maybe have three revolutions to get a foot as they're making their way up the steeps of the mountain.

And so it is as biking up the mountain. What would happen if you stopped pedaling and just coasted?

It wouldn't be long at all before you'd be going backwards down the mountain and in a heap of trouble. And that's the way marriage is. The terrain is not like Indiana.

[5:58] It's rather like Switzerland. And to coast is perilous. There's a lot of work involved in a good marriage.

That's been the reality, hasn't it, of this study. We haven't been just given an easy pill to take and you just come to the altar and commit yourself to the Lord and everything's fine.

No, this is this is daily work. And that can make us grow weary in well-doing. We can easily get tired of it. So this is something we need to come to terms with as we conclude this study.

Your marriage may be great, but it's never safe. It's never safe. It's never to the point where you can coast. Daily temptations will threaten your marriage to the end.

You've got the world outside, the devil outside you, and the flesh inside you all combining to work together to do you in.

[7:05] And so that means if for no other reason, then there's daily work to be done. So what does coasting look like?

Well, he defines it. We get we get sloppy on our daily commitments. We we get inconsistent. We get busy and we all are. And we we we start to neglect some of these things.

And we're no longer praying together as much. Well, today was a busy day. We don't have time to pray together. And we start to cut corners on meaningful conversation. And it's been days since we've we've sat down and and had a good talk.

And we start cutting giving up the hard work of quick conflict resolution. And we allow ourselves to go to bed for a night without resolving the problem.

We're not seeking forgiveness as often as we used to. After all, that was just a little thing. And so it won't make a difference. And so these little things get overlooked and.

[8:13] We're no longer going out of our way to serve our spouse, to be kind to them, to speak with kindness, to be thoughtful in our deeds.

We're no longer studying them and what their needs and desires are. And so Tripp says often it's just this.

It comes down to laziness and there's lots of lazy marriages. And that's not a small thing in the Proverbs, is it? It's something that comes constantly under review in the Proverbs because laziness leads to destruction.

And that's true in our marriages. And so Tripp says many, many couples say they want a good marriage. And they come to me in the counseling rooms. We want a good marriage.

But he says they don't really. They don't want it bad enough to do the work that's involved to have a good marriage. So Tripp tells of a couple who came for help in marriage and in their marriage.

[9:16] And instead of knuckling down to the hard work involved in working on their problems, they were had just learned to work around their problems just to avoid them.

And in this way, the problems just continued to grow until it was impossible to work around them. They were so big and the marriage was suffocating.

They quit working. He likened it to a leaky roof. And rather than getting up on the roof and doing the hard work of repairing it, they just throw tarps over it.

Well, that only lasts so long. And pretty soon you've got water coming through. So there's this work involved.

There's a lazy flesh within. And it's easy to begin to slacken in that work. Now, a good marriage then.

[10:15] This is what he says. A good marriage is a good marriage because the people in that marriage work to make it good. So there's no magic button to push. There's no secret to success.

It doesn't just happen. It takes work. And so that's the six daily commitments. There you have them. And as you have them, work and pray.

Take one of those and pray over it in the morning. Work on it that day. The next day, pray and work. Watch and pray. And as we do so, we'll find that the work more and more becomes a work of love. A labor of love. The more our love grows, the less we mind the work involved in marriage.

There's that peculiar statement in Genesis 29, 20. That Jacob served seven years to get Rachel.

[11 : 25] But they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Seven years to get her.

Just seemed like yesterday, a few days ago. What made, what compressed all those years? Seven years. And let's think about those seven years for a moment.

What was Jacob's job? What was he doing working? You remember? Herding sheep. That's right. He was a shepherd, wasn't he?

And I don't know how shepherds work today. But in that day, you just read a little bit further in Genesis. And you find out what a shepherd did in that day.

Jacob was reviewing his work. And he said, the heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night. So he had the worst of both.

[12 : 28] The heat of the day, the cold consuming him at night. And sleep. What's that? Sleep fled from my eyes. The hardship and toil of my hands.

So it was work. It was hard work to be a shepherd in those days. And who was his boss? Who was he working for? Laban.

His uncle Laban. That's right. Wasn't he a good guy to work for? Changed his wages ten times. So that's the kind of thing that makes work really difficult, doesn't it?

I mean, work's hard enough. But to have an employer changing your wages ten times. So you've got seven years of that. And Jacob says, you know, it just seemed like a few days.

Because of his love for Rachel. Because of the prize. And I say, the more we love our spouses, the more the work that's involved will be a labor of love.

[13 : 35] And we'll say, that's our best work. That's work not to be begrudged. It's enjoyable work. It's work. But it's, we don't mind the labor.

And so may the Lord teach us that. Well, Tripp concludes his book then, having reminded us of work. He doesn't end on work. He ends on worship.

The very last chapter is chapter 17 on worship. Remember, he started this series by reminding us that a marriage of love and understanding is not based upon romance, but upon worship.

And so that's where he concludes. Worship is the only foundation strong enough for a marriage of unity, understanding, and love. When it comes to marriage struggles, worship is the problem, and worship is the cure.

When God is in his rightful place, then other things will be in their rightful place. But if God is not in his rightful place in my heart, then the rest of my life will not be in its rightful place.

[14 : 51] See, their troubled marriages must be repaired vertically before they can be repaired horizontally. If love for God is not the driving force of my life, what will be?

This is just a review. If love for God is not the driving force of my life, what will fill that vacuum? Love for self. And that doesn't make for a healthy marriage, does it?

That's what we've seen in this study. And if God's will is not my non-negotiable priority, what will dominate the scene in my home? If not God's will, my will, right?

And if God's kingdom is not sought first, then my kingdom will be. And if I'm not daily seeking grace from God, will I be likely to be giving grace to my spouse?

Not likely. If I'm not putting God at the center of my life, I will constantly be putting myself at the center.

[15 : 58] And if I'm not worshiping God, then I'll be worshiping myself. So that's the foundation. And he returns to it as we conclude. The foundation is God must have his rightful place in our hearts.

So the flesh is ever suggesting self-worship to us, isn't it? We talked about why we can't rest. It's because my flesh keeps saying, John, you're worthy of having your will done, your desires met. So because of that, there's a battle to worship God. And only the worship of God is powerful enough and big enough to replace self-worship.

So if I'm not loving Jose as I should, it's because I'm not loving God as I should. Because if I'm loving him, what does he do?

He sends me home to love my wife, doesn't he? And if you're loving him, he'll send you home to love your spouse too. If you love me, he says, as I come to him and tell him I love you, Lord.

[17:05] And he says, well, then obey my commandments. Love your wife as I have loved the church. So when this relationship is right, we have a foundation upon which we can finally build and see our marriages thrive.

When the worship of God is central to our lives, then we start living for his desires and purposes. And so we will then approach our marriage with the attitude, not what do I want out of this marriage, but what does God want out of this marriage?

And that's a whole different orientation to marriage. It's God-centered, God-focused, rather than me-centered and me-focused. And my aim is the disciplined pursuit of his will in my marriage, where selfish demands are replaced by joyful serving and discontentment gives way to gratitude. We can be fixers in our marriage, can't we? And very often that happens early in marriage relationships, where we try to fix our spouse. Ann Tripp reminds us of this.

When your life is shaped by the worship of God, you don't try to do God's work. You don't try to do his job and change your spouse. Because when we try to change our spouse, the tools that we use are often tools of manipulation.

[18:32] So if we're not getting our way and we want to change them, we may argue with them or quarrel with them or go silent toward them, make them feel guilty, threaten them with something negative if they don't change.

We don't have the ability to change our spouse. And when we try, we often permit ourselves to be hypercritical, judgmental, harsh and condemning and focus more on what's wrong with them rather than on encouraging what is right.

And these human tools lead to frustration, exhaustion, discontentment, anger, bitterness, and finally apathy. And then he says, well, what do you feel like when somebody's trying to fix you?

When you're the one being fixed? He says, the person being crammed into your mold usually doesn't feel loved and respected. By your attempts to change them.

And that is when these tools that we're using are manipulation and fleshly. And when we abandon that and worship God and put him in this place and seek him to come and to help us, then we start using his weapons.

[19:56] We start praying together and we start giving grace to one another and we start, yes, lovingly and humbly confronting one another marked by humility and patience and kindness and forgiveness and tenderness.

We become an agent of God in this process of change. Rather than taking it on board ourselves and saying, I'm out to change you. We say, no, God, you must change him or her and make me an instrument of that process in my spouse's life.

So what's your hope in marriage? Tripp says it's not found in you. It's not found in your spouse. It's not found in this book, this study that we've been through, but it's God's grace.

Tripp says that God's grace is the warranty on your marriage. If you're a Christian, the grace of God is the warranty. It's the guarantee on your marriage. because he promises to give you everything you need to be the kind of husband, the kind of wife that you need to be, to make a marriage work his way.

He promises you the grace. So what do you need as a husband? To have a good relationship, one that's enjoyable to the both of you and to God as he looks on.

[21:20] Well, whatever it is you need as a husband, God promises to give it. That's the warranty. The grace of God is his promise to supply you with whatever you need.

The supply is always there. He never fails. But you must lay hold of that grace. You must watch and pray.

God's grace gives you what you need to humbly ask for forgiveness. You say, that's hard. That's hard work to ask for forgiveness when I've just sinned against my wife and what I said or did.

It is hard, but God's grace gives you what you need. It gives you the humility to say, what I did was wrong. Please forgive me. And the grace of God gives you what you need to not keep a record of wrongs.

And it gives you what you need to empower you to overlook minor offenses and to target what is really important and to speak with love when you address it.

[22:27] In God, we find strength to continue when we are tired and we feel like quitting in marriage. We feel like running away. There's grace to enable you to resist the temptation to get even in marriage and rather to overcome evil with good.

There's grace to rescue you from self-love and to help you love with cruciform love that denies yourself. That grace is there and that's the warranty on your marriage.

The wisdom you need when you don't know what to do next. We've tried everything. What do we do? There's wisdom. And God's grace gives you hope even when there's little reason for hope as for the circumstances that you're in and that you see.

And God's grace brings into our marriages power and patience and love that we don't possess so that we can never blame God for not having what we need in marriage.

Always the blame is on us for not doing what He tells us to do. for as we go we would meet the promised grace. Now it's hard to say I'm sorry and yet I hear you speaking words.

[23:44] You can form your mouth to say those words I'm sorry. Now you say I don't but I can't form my heart that way. That's right but you can go and do the things that God tells you to do seeking Him and in the going He meets you with grace.

That's what He's telling us so that we can never say well I guess God just doesn't hasn't given me grace. No the grace is promised to us the promise is our warranty.

Philippians 2:12 and 13 you're to be working out your salvation with fear and trembling. Why?

Because He is working in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

So there's our warranty and there's our there's the reason we have hope there's the reason why we never give up in our marriages this is there's more here than just two people two sinful people there there's the omnipotent grace and power and love of God.

So God brings us into difficulties in our marriages why does He do that? Well He brings us there to show us how weak we are how needy we are where we see we can't fix this we can't fix it in Him can't fix it in myself and we quit trusting in ourselves and we look instead to Him and so the Israelites find themselves with the Red Sea in front of them why are they there?

[25:14] Why are they in that situation where Pharaoh's army is pursuing and there's this huge obstacle in the way are they there by accident?

No God led them there as Tripp says they're not there because Moses had a faulty GPS yes no God's intention was to take them right there well then then what was His purpose?

I thought He was wanting to lead them out of bondage to get them to escape the Israelites why does He then stick them right between Egypt and the Red Sea?

well He wants to teach them something obviously doesn't He? He wants to teach them that this deliverance will be supernatural it won't be them there won't be anything they can take credit for and say wow didn't we do well at the Red Sea?

no they can do nothing but look to God and God opens the way before them but say now that that was still a bit scary wouldn't it be for you and me?

[26:16] you got water standing up and you know water doesn't stand up very long like that are you ready to walk? you see it's in stepping out in obedience and faith that grace met them and grace kept pushing on the walls and helped them to go through on dry land and then closed up their enemies and so why is that obstacle in your marriage?

why is that sticky knotty problem that keeps coming up keeps surfacing? well it's not there by accident God has a lesson to teach us show us our weakness show us our inability get us looking to Christ crying for grace watching praying and it's in doing by faith what he tells us to do that we find all the help we need to do it but you must do it you must walk through the walls of water on either side trusting in him to get you to the other side trip concludes do you want the kind of marriage that God has designed for us?

then keep the worship of God central to your entire life two do the hard work of love to which he's called you and three trust in the powerful presence and grace of God who's with you with you as you walk through the water so in the end he gets all the glory and we get the joy of marriages that work God's way well let's commit ourselves again to the grace of God thank you Lord for this study we thank you for our brother Paul Tripp for the grace of God that saved him and put him in a marriage and set before him obstacles that he could not fix and taught him to look to you and to find

in you every grace promised so that he might then in turn minister to others who are meeting up with the same difficulties and needs continue to use him and that ministry and may it be that you would use it to bring glory to yourself in many marriages all across the land and even around the world

Lord use this study then in our lives and don't let it be wasted upon us just to go on to the next thing but Lord follow us with these principles of scripture with these verses in mind with with these daily commitments and may it be that you find us next year with stronger marriages with with more glory coming to you and greater happiness be enjoyed by us as we glory in Christ the great redeemer of sin and marriage we pray in his name amen we're dismissed may it may may it may may may may may