


Global University of Theological Studies

Family Life

Lesson 18: Bolting the Door

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*“He saith unto them.
Moses because of the
hardness of your hearts
suffered you to put away
your wives: but from the
beginning it was not so”
(Matthew 19:8)*



In *What My Parents Did Right* (compiled and edited by Gloria Gaither), Jill Briscoe (British author and speaker) tells of a well-known saying in her parents' home: "When the doors on a marriage are shut and bolted and a fire breaks out, all your time and energy goes to putting out the flames."

Her parents did not view divorce as an option—that door was bolted—so when there was a problem in the home, they spent all their efforts correcting the problem and preserving the marriage. When a couple enters marriage with this type of commitment, there is a much greater chance that their family will survive.


This will obviously take work on *both sides* of the marriage partnership. As we have seen in previous lessons, God's Word agrees with this plan and gives us many weapons and methods to use to "bolt the door" against divorce and stay inside the marriage, working to do away with any destructive force.



God's family plan will work. Since marriage is the beginning of the family unit, its failure must be considered the root cause of the destruction of families everywhere. How can we "save the marriage"?

The first step is a determination to obey God's Word. We cannot look at marriage as anything other than God's special design for the beginning of the family—a commitment and vow for the rest of our lives.

"And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Matthew 19:4-5).



We need to understand that God's will and purpose for marriage is for our benefit and pleasure. He never intended us to suffer and struggle alone but to share the joys and sorrows of life with our spouse.

(Genesis 2: 18, 22-25)


Always keep in mind that we are made in the image and likeness of God. A daily reminder that marriage is supposed to be a model of Christ will help keep the focus on the priority of making the marriage work. Our goal is to be a reflection of His relationship with His church.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

One of marriage's greatest blessings is a result of keeping yourself pure in body.

Many children are not taught by example to keep themselves for their future spouse. We have to begin training our small children to assure that they follow this practice all the days of their life.

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).



It is vital to the building of a strong marriage to know your duties and obligations. Enter marriage with an understanding of the role you should play. God has given us specific jobs as men and women, and if the marriage is going to work, we must live out these roles.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18).

Many principles in God's Word will help a marriage succeed, but these last two points cover them all.

Always walk with
the Master.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7).

Invite Jesus into your marriage. A lot of the things we say and do would change if we practiced His presence. Jesus' first miracle was performed at a wedding. He wants to perform a lot more miracles by saving marriages everywhere.

Pray together. One of the best ways to walk with the Master in your marriage is by praying with your spouse. This may take time and patience to get started, but it will work. There are many passages of Scripture that support this statement.

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19-20).

Never give up—keep working on the marriage.

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

Dr. Nathaniel Branden in “Advice That Could Save Your Marriage” (*Reader’s Digest*) suggests several ways to show affection to a marriage companion:

- Tell each other “I love you” often.
- Be physically affectionate (hold hands, hug each other, or sit close together when talking).
- Express your love sexually.
- Mention the things you admire and appreciate about your spouse.
- Share thoughts and feelings, talk about what is on your mind and heart, and confide in each other.
- Express love by giving gifts or doing little acts of kindness for each other.
- Find time to be alone together with your spouse.

These Scripture references (taken from the article “How Do We Fight Fairly?” in *Preserving Christian Homes*) will help you when you have a conflict with your spouse:

1. Be patient.

“A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense” (Proverbs 19:11, NIV).

2. Stay calm.

*“If a ruler’s anger rises
against you, do not leave
your post; calmness can lay
great errors to
rest” (Ecclesiastes 10: 4, NIV).*

3. Listen carefully.

*“He that answereth a matter
before he heareth it, it is folly
and shame unto
him” (Proverbs 18:13).*

4. Do not answer too quickly.

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19, NIV).

5. Speak gently.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1, NIV).

6. Be very careful
when you do speak.

*“He who guards his lips
guards his life, but he who
speaks rashly will come to
ruin” (Proverbs 13:3, NIV).*

7. Be careful not to
cause the problem
to get any worse.

*“He who covers over an offense
promotes love, but whoever
repeats the matter separates close
friends” (Proverbs 17:9, NIV).*

8. Do not
seek revenge.

*“Do not say, ‘I’ ll do to him
as he has done to me; I’ ll
pay that man back for what
he did’ ” (Proverbs 24:29,
NIV).*

9. Do not say
everything that
comes to mind.

*“Without wood a fire goes
out; without gossip a quarrel
dies down ” (Proverbs 26:20,*

10. Trust the Lord to solve your conflicts.

“Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you” (Proverbs 20:22, NIV).

11. Make sure everything is settled peacefully before you rest at night.

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26).

One basic commandment of Jesus will help preserve the family more than anything else we can do. In human relationships, this is one of the most difficult commandments ever given. Peter came asking Jesus how many times he was supposed to forgive a brother (or sister) who had wronged him. Jesus' answer is one we need to remember and obey prayerfully.

“Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22).

Jesus explained what He meant with a parable about an unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35). This man had been forgiven a great debt, but he refused to forgive the man who owed him a very small amount. His punishment was severe and a lesson to us all. Matthew 6:14-15 explains why:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”