

See Clearly, Change Quickly

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 November 2013

[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. All right, how many of us here this evening are married?

If you could raise your hand, please. Hey, everyone that's married, I'm looking out here. Now, some of you raised it excitingly and kept it up. How many of you are married? Raise your hand again so I can...

All right, I feel like I'm good. Miss Bay back there, she's dancing. And so she's like, you know, reminds me of Kenya back there and getting into the service. Praise the Lord. Brother Gardner's not here and I think she's excited about it.

I don't know. All right, we'll talk about that later. And how many of you here in the month of November, the married people? All right, how many of you aren't married but you hope maybe one day to be married?

Raise your hand. All right, there's some guys. Look around. All right, good. There's some hands up. That's exciting. All right, how many of you in the month of November, at some point in time, you've had an argument with your spouse?

[1 : 01] All right, sometimes... We're in church, you know, we're supposed to be honest all the time, but we're supposed to be like extra honest when we're in church. So how many of you in the month of November have had an argument with your spouse?

Raise your hand, please. All right, here's the majority of our hands going up. Some are like looking at each other like, you know, all right. Now, how many of you that just raised your hand, the majority of the arguments, maybe it was just one, but it was probably a few more than one, or maybe I'm the only one that had more than one.

How many of you would say the majority of the arguments, they were not your fault? Raise your hand. All right. Good. My wife and I both have our hands up.

That's what I expected. Good. So how many would say the majority were your fault? Raise your hand. All right. Now, look, we're like a spiritual group here this evening, aren't we? You know, people trying to score some brownie points with their spouse, and they haven't been your fault, honey.

They've been my fault. But, you know, we see this going on from the beginning of time, and it continues on through today.

[2 : 09] You know, where we're trying to figure out whose fault it is, and blaming other people for our errors, blaming other people for our problems. And there's a passage of Scripture that talks about temptation, and talks about the Word of God, and talks about how they work together in our lives.

And I think there's a lot of principles that we can apply to our marriage. And I want to look there together with you all this evening in the book of James, chapter number one. James, chapter number one.

And this passage, I think, will help us to see more clearly some things in our marriage, and help us to change more quickly some things that we need to change.

And I think if we can see the truth, then we can make some changes, Lord willing, in our relationships. Things that will help us to honor the Lord in our marriage, honor the Lord in our relationships.

And let's get started here this evening reading in verse number 13. James 1.13. The Bible says, Let's pray together.

[3 : 43] Father, we thank you so much for the opportunity to be here in your house this evening. And we know that this subject that we're speaking on this evening is such an important thing. We know that marriage is founded by you, established by you, your plan.

And I know there's also many enemies to marriage that creep into our own hearts and our own lives. And no doubt many that are even here today might be struggling in some aspect of their marriage and their relationship.

And I pray that you would strengthen us, help us to grow, help us to make a commitment to re-engage in our relationship, to re-engage in our commitment to you and to our spouse.

And I pray your name will be honored through it all. I pray that you speak to our hearts this evening through your word. Change us by the power of your spirit. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're talking about temptation here in this passage in verse number 13.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. You know, so many times when we're tempted, whenever there's an opportunity to do something that we know we shouldn't do, and we're looking at that temptation, and we know that it's not a sin to be tempted because even Jesus was tempted.

[5 : 01] Temptation is not the sin. It's just the offer to act on a desire, an emotion, a craving, something inside of us that is incorrect.

And whether we do that or not, that constitutes whether it's sin or not. But let no man say when he's tempted, whenever that opportunity is there before you, don't say it's from God.

What's God doing tempting me? Because God can't tempt anybody. You know, so many times even in our marriage, we want to blame others for things that are going on in our marriage, and other people, and other circumstances, and sometimes even God.

God, it's your fault. If we go back to the beginning, back to Adam and Eve there in the garden, we know that when sin came, and they both sinned, Adam sinned, Eve sinned, and all that, God came and looked for them there in the garden, and he gets them together, and he asks Adam, you know, what happened, what's going on?

And Adam said, well, you know, Eve, it's her fault. And then Eve said, well, it's really the serpent's fault. But, you know, Adam, his accusation was more than just saying that it was Eve's fault, because he says, it's the woman that you gave me indirectly, or maybe directly, saying, God, it's your fault because you gave me this before I was alone, but now with her I'm in a bigger mess, and it's really your fault, and he blames God.

[6 : 27] And many times in our own lives, the same thing happens when we're trying to figure out where we're at, and how we can move forward, and how we can grow, and maybe some temptation has come into our marriage temptation, not to be thankful, not to be loving, to be caring, not to develop that relationship, and many times we can blame the problems that we're living on someone else.

So this evening, let's really just dive into this passage, thinking about marriage, understanding the context is about temptation, and about God's Word, and let's try to find out whose fault is it really.

Is it really your husband's fault? Is it really, I know my wife would say, no, not at all, even though she raised her hand early, I'm a little concerned about that. We're going to have to talk about that when we get back in the car. I think she should have been dancing like Miss Betty whenever I ask the first question about who's married here, and getting all excited about it.

But, you know, the truth is, whose fault is it really? And how can we understand this, and how can we see it a little more clearly? How many of you have children? Raise your hand, please.

All right. How many of your kids, sometime during the last week, we won't even cover the last month, we'll just do the last week, sometime in the last week, they've had some kind of argument or some kind of fight? Raise your hand.

[7 : 48] All right, good. I'm looking for the older parents to see if there's any that have kids that are 25, and they're raising their hand and trying to figure out what's going on there. And good. Kids all the time argue, especially if you have smaller children.

I know my kids, I think that today we've probably broken up maybe six or seven or 16 or 17 arguments at some point in time. There's six, eight, and ten.

And so many times when you ask them whose fault is it, the fingers go every direction. But I don't know that I've ever had one of my kids. I'm just going to be honest here, and I'm sure that you guys maybe are in the same thing.

I don't know that they've ever looked at me and said, Dad, it was my fault. I'm the one that walk in, three of them are fighting. Hey, what's going on here? It's my fault, Dad. I started it. I was unkind. I used an inappropriate word.

And, Father, I ask you to forgive me. No, it's never that. It's always their fault. And if they're caught red-handed, what are you doing? And usually the answer is, I don't know. I'm not sure.

[8 : 49] I don't know. They're blaming it on ignorance. But they're always blaming it on something. And here in the passage, going into temptation, it talks about how sometimes even we want to blame it on God, but we can't blame it on God.

But whose fault is it really? If we're in the middle of problems, if we're in the middle of sin, if we're in the middle of marital problems in our own relationship, well, we need to understand that it's not time that we keep pointing to someone else and saying that, well, it's my parents' fault, or it's the circumstances that we live in, or it's the lack of finances that we're struggling with, or it's really because of my children, and it's because of, you know, maybe some other family member or some other person.

No, we really need to take some time, and if we're going to build our relationship and not focus on the other person, but focus on ourselves. Look what the Bible says here in verse number 14.

But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of whose lust, his own lust, and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. You know, the truth is, this evening, if there are some things in your marriage that you're not very happy with, if you're in a stage where you would like to see things move forward and grow and have more love and respect and harmony and all these kinds of things that no doubt many would love to have or desire to have, or maybe if you're at a stage in your life and you're looking back and you're thinking, I wish we had what we had two years ago or five years ago or 25 years ago.

[10 : 35] It's time that we quit pointing the finger at someone else and saying it's someone else's fault. And it's time that we realize that if sin is happening in the marriage, if unkind words and actions, if lack of concern and care, lack of attention, lack of cultivating that relationship is happening in the marriage, you know what the Bible says here, that every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

But it talks about there being drawn away. It's literally talking about being drug away. That inside of us, although we are new creatures, although we are believers, sometimes there can be desires, there can be thoughts, there can be things that come in.

And selfishness, where we think, you know, my rights and my time and what I want and what I need and it's really about me and I'm not getting my needs met and all these kinds of selfish things come in into our heart and we begin to think about that.

And the next thing you know, that desire is like pulling us toward a reaction that is not a correct reaction. It's not a spiritual reaction. It's more of a selfish, carnal reaction.

And the Bible says here, every man is tempted. Every man, you know, it's not something that just happens to some people, but every man is tempted. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10, 13, there hath no temptation taken you, but such is common to man.

[12 : 06] But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted. Above that, ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it.

So it talks there about no temptation hath taken you, but such is common to man. You know, temptations and all of that in the marriage relationship, it's not something that's just happening to, you know, to you.

Robert, he was confessing when we were there in Kenya. I remember just talking and he was, we were, you know, two or three days traveling, a little bit of jet lag going in, hadn't slept for a while.

And he gets real emotional in those kind of times and really shares a lot. You ought to travel with him. It's a great thing. And so he was telling us about how at least 98 to 99% of their marriage problems are always his fault.

And Kelly's nearly perfect. And I don't know that any of us would argue with that. And Brother Gardner and I, we kind of look up from our computers. We're like, yeah, tell us something we don't already know. Like, you know, keep going on.

[13 : 10] But, you know, the temptations that happen, they're common to every man, to Robert, the buffalo. You guys heard about the story, right? So to all of us, no matter our circumstances or what's going on, every man can be tempted.

All of us face these difficulties. But it's important to learn how we can see clearly who's at fault and how we can change quickly our reaction to these things that happen in our marriage.

All right. Well, here in this passage, look what it says. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away, when he's drug away, when that desire is very strong of his own lust.

There are lusts that belong to him, that desire for more, that unruly desire. And look what it says there in verse number 14. And in tithe. So not only is he being drug away, or not only are you being drug away, or not only am I being drug away in this desire that's in our hearts and this thought that's in our mind, but it's enticing.

It's alluring. It seduces us into thinking that this is the right way to think and this is the right way to see things. And I'm right and they're wrong.

[14 : 23] And this problem that's happening here, if he would just change or if she would just change, everything would be all right. The truth is, if we were to ask tonight, and no one could see the reactions of others.

I know we're in church, so everyone, you know, wants to play the spiritual card. But if we were to really see what the majority of us think, if I could, if you all could see, man, that would be a scary thing.

If you guys could see what really, you know, most of the time we think, it's not my fault. I'm not the one that's the most responsible here for these problems.

If there's a lack of communication, if there's a lack of love, if there's a lack of investment in this relationship, well, if my spouse, some of you maybe even came this evening thinking, I really hope my wife is listening tonight.

I really hope my husband will take heed to whatever's going to be taught. Because, you know, we need a little bit of help in our relationship. And I want to honor the Lord and I want to grow spiritually. And if he or her can learn, then things would be so much better.

[15 : 26] And I believe that's the way so many of us think. But you know what? There's a book that they're going to give out tonight. A fantastic book. I encourage all of you to read it. I encourage all of you to start an intense, on-purpose journey to grow in your relationship over these next few weeks.

Next week they'll be teaching about it. You can read the book together over the next few weeks, maybe before the end of the year. But you know what? Don't focus on the other person. Start focusing on yourself.

And those desires in your own heart that God wants to change, that he wants to bring you to a point of change in your own spiritual life.

The Bible says here in verse number 14 that every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.

So lust gives birth and his son's name sin. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. And so the product there of that sin is just going to be death in our own lives.

[16 : 32] You know, the Bible tells us so much about how we shouldn't trust ourselves. We shouldn't place confidence in our flesh. Philippians chapter number 3 is a great passage where Paul talks about, you know, if anybody has bragging rights, if anyone can say that they've done a lot, that they've seen a lot, that they've learned a lot, that they've accomplished a lot, if anyone has the credentials to brag about, it would be Paul.

But there in that passage, he talks about, if you want to read it later, Philippians 3, 4 through 8, he talks about how he can't trust his own flesh.

He can't place any confidence in his own flesh. Jeremiah 17, 9, the Bible says, The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? You know, we might look at our spouse and we might think, you know, the truth is, the heart of my husband or the heart of my wife, yeah, I understand. It can sometimes be desperately wicked.

I've heard my wife at night, sometimes she speaks in her sleep and she talks about these kinds of things. She says, Lord, I know the heart of my husband is desperately wicked. And I'm over there taking sermon notes and trying to figure out what I can preach whenever it's family night at Vision.

[17 : 47] But our hearts are desperately wicked. And it's time in our own marriages that we become responsible for our own actions and our own relationship.

And we decide that the change that needs to happen is not the change maybe on the other side. That could be the case to some extent. And I'm sure all of us need to grow some. But you know what?

Focus on yourself. Focus on growing. Focus on learning. Focus on letting the Lord change you and mold you into His image. Quit having so much confidence in your own flesh, in your own heart.

Proverbs 3, 5, and 6 says, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. That's in verse number 5. We shouldn't lean into our own understanding.

How many times do we think, I got all this figured out? I really understand what's going on. You know, I'm still a young guy. I've been married now. In December will be 12 years.

[18 : 49] We have three kids. And it feels like every year that go by, you know, you should become better at these things and know more about these things. But I'm not sure if anybody else has had the same experience.

I'm really hoping you guys support me by saying yes. But I'm not sure if anybody else has had the same kind of experience. It seems like sometimes, whether it's in family or ministry or raising kids, each year that go by, you think, I'm just not really sure that I really know what I'm doing.

And I'm not really sure that I know as much now as I thought I did just a few years ago. And the truth is, as we grow and as we understand more of God's word, then we understand more of how sinful we are.

And of how much more we need to be changed and molded into Christ's image. And how much more he wants to purify from us and change from us. And wouldn't it be an exciting thing tonight if all of us, speaking to the married people specifically, or those that someday would hope to be married as well, that we would make a decision that we're going to draw close to the Lord.

We're going to renew our commitment to him again, to draw close to his word, to read, to be submitted to what he has for us, to learn, to be changed, to have an open heart so that he can really work in our lives where we pray like the scripture talks about, about search me, oh Lord, know me, show me where I need to grow and change.

[20 : 19] That would be an exciting thing. And no doubt, if we take those first steps, God will begin to do great things in our marriages. And that's why we all desire no doubt about it.

Alright, so we're seeing there in that first part of this passage here, it's talking about temptation, it's talking about how temptation, don't try to blame it on God, don't try to blame shift, don't try to put it off on somebody else.

It's not God's fault, but it's really your fault, because temptation comes from your own lust and your own desires. And all of a sudden you begin to be drug along by those desires.

As you think about them and you're not controlling your mind and you're not focusing on pure things and correct things, and you allow your mind to dwell on all the things that you think you deserve and that you really should have and how the other person should really treat you.

Alright, so we're seeing now that if we talk about whose fault is it really, if we're going to see this clearly, whose fault is it really? Well, it's probably not good to point our fingers out, but better to point our fingers in.

[21 : 23] Amen? And wouldn't it be a good thing tonight if we all just start off by saying, you know what God, I'm going to quit looking at the other person on the other side of the table, and I'm going to quit praying so much that you would change them, although you should still pray for your spouse, but maybe over the next few days, maybe over the next few minutes, you can really pray about, God, show me what I need to change, and where are the points in my own relationship where I'm being led along by deceiving desires and deceiving thought processes that aren't honoring you, that aren't honoring my marriage, and help me to understand these things so that I can change.

Okay, so we're talking about whose fault it is. We need to take responsibility. And as we learn these things, we need to change quickly. We need to change quickly.

Look what the Bible says here in verse number 16. Do not err, my beloved brother. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.

God's not the one giving us temptations. Actually, He's the one that's giving us every good gift that comes from Him, that comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Of His own will will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. There is no changing in Him.

[22 : 48] He's perfect. He doesn't tempt us. He does what's right. We're the ones that do not do what's right. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

Understanding that God's perfect. Understanding that He doesn't tempt you. Understanding that temptation is born in your heart as you begin to give ear and you begin to think on things that are not Christ-honoring.

Understanding those things, we need to be quick to hear, quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to wrath. Look what the Bible says in verse 20.

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls.

So here in this passage, it starts off saying, all right, temptation, where does it come from? Comes from God, the answer is no. All right, good. There's like three of you that are awake. Appreciate the support.

[23 : 50] Might have to help me out a little bit before the night's over. All right, so temptation. It comes from God, yes or no? No. And can we blame? Oh, there's a step-off right there. You've got to be careful. I've got to learn the pulpit before I start trying to walk around, trying to keep eye contact, and that's always a good thing.

But whenever you step and fall off the platform, it might not be a good thing. But so, can I blame that on God? No. It's just what it is, all right? It's a step.

But sometimes in our own hearts, we want to blame it on God or blame it on someone else. We realize that the truth is, if we sin, we can't blame it on others. But it's our own decision, our conscious decision of following after a desire or a thought, a mental process, a thought process, something that we're thinking about.

The Bible tells us to control our thoughts, right? So, as we're realizing all these things, the Bible tells us that we need to, in verse number 21, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word.

How can we change the way we think about marriage? How can we change the way we think about whose fault it is? How can we quit blaming others?

[25 : 02] How can we take personal responsibility? Well, I'm glad that you all asked those questions, right? Because here in the passage, it talks about how we need to take all the junk out of our mind, take all these ideas and these preconceived notions that we have about what marriage is.

I know many times as young people, I won't talk in first person because it's a little more uncomfortable. I'll talk in third person. I know many young people go into marriage and they're thinking, this is going to be great.

You know, I'll get married and I'll have a wife to cook food and she'll be there to, you know, keep things straight and we'll be able to spend time together, enjoy each other, have fun.

It'll be fantastic. Been living all these years with mom and dad, maybe a few brothers and sisters that are kind of a little bit difficult and we're always blaming each other for everything and I'm going to get married and everybody talks about how marriage is sometimes a little more difficult than you anticipate and the preacher talks about it and the church, they talk about it and Sunday school teachers talk about it and I don't know what's wrong with all of them because I'm different and our marriage is going to be fantastic and I really don't anticipate us having any arguments and if there are arguments, I'm sure it'll be something very small and something that we can fix very quickly.

How many of you went into marriage like that? All right, raise your hand up here. Come on now. Don't be honest. All right. Trent and I, we were the only ones. All right. Well, our wives, man, we thought we were getting, they were just going to be everything perfect and they were, we weren't and so we've really dropped the ball.

[26 : 34] Afterwards, I'll meet you in the altar. We'll pray together and you pray for me, I'll pray for you and maybe we'll die and our wives can marry a second husband that'll be somebody that will help them out and you guys pray for that.

Stephanie and Lori are both back there doing the Miss Betty dance right now. They're both excited thinking about that. All right. So, the way we have to change, the way we can change this mindset in our mind is by renewing our minds with the truth of God's Word.

It's by being quick to hear God's Word, quick to listen to God's Word and throwing out all these ideas that the culture teaches us or that maybe you're in the fairy tales and maybe in the TV shows and the movies and you're cuddled up there in the couch and you got your blanket and you're in your tissue and you're crying as you're watching the movie and your wife's like eating popcorn and looking at you like, what's going on?

You know, all those ideas, I know how it is, Trent, right? And so, all those ideas, you know what? We need to get back to a biblical mindset about what marriage is all about.

Re-engage with what God's Word says about marriage. Take personal responsibility and understand that God needs to help us grow up in so many ways and that happens as we begin to hear God's Word and as we begin to grow.

[27 : 58] You know, growth is change. Change is growth. No change is comfortable. Change is actually very uncomfortable. We asked Peyton today as he got out of his car.

You know, he's got the baby there and he's got the car seat and he's walking just getting out of his car and Lori and I, first time we had seen him, I think since we've been in, right? And I said, hey, how's it going?

How's, you know, being parents? And both of them were like, ah, ah, ah, ah. Didn't even say anything. It was like this moan. Ah, ah, ah, ah.

You sleeping any? Nope. Hadn't slept in a while. You know, it's a change when you bring that baby home and it's fantastic to have kids, but wow, it's a little uncomfortable at times as well as you begin to change.

But you know what? God wants to change us as we begin to lay aside some things and we begin to put on some other things and God's word is engrafted into our hearts and we begin to live the principles that we find in God's word for our marriage, then those are the times when really we can see great advances in our relationship, in our marriage.

[29 : 12] Starts by taking personal responsibility, responsibility to listen and to grow. Look what the Bible says here in verse 21. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with, what's the Bible say there?

Meekness. Man, you guys are like so much energy and zeal. You know, when you say that, I can feel the vibrations up here in the back from all the loud noise here. All right? So receive with meekness the engrafted word.

Meekness is the opposite of pride. It's the opposite of a haughty spirit. It's the opposite of, I've got it all under control.

I've got it all figured out. I really understand these kinds of things. I'm, you know, I'm right. You're wrong. I've got it figured out. And I'm really hoping you'll catch up to where I am real soon.

The Bible says that if we're going to grow in the Lord and have that word engrafted into our heart, then we have to receive it with a humble attitude, saying, Lord, I know that I'm wrong.

[30 : 14] I know that I'm weak. I know that I'm sinful. I know that I can't trust me. I know that in my heart, there's all kinds of thoughts and tendencies that don't please you.

And yes, I am a new creature. And yes, everything is new in you. But as I'm growing in you and as I'm going through the process of sanctification, you know, there's some struggles in there.

And God, meekly and humbly, I understand that I've got a long way to go. And I know that there's so much more that I need to learn and I need to put into practice.

And I ask you to teach me and show me and help me to... When we have those kinds of attitudes, that's when God can really work in our hearts. You know, this first message is more like an introduction into the idea if we can get the right mindset about marriage and the right mindset about learning and the right mindset about blame shifting and the right mindset about God's word being the source of what can change us and what can make us into the image of a husband that honors God and a wife that honors God.

If we can get that right mindset, then God can do great things in our life. And I pray this evening that he would help all of us to do that. Look what the Bible says in verse 22. But be you doers of the word and not hearers only.

[31 : 31] It's really not that good to know a lot of information and not to apply it. At that point, you're deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is likened to a man beholding his natural face in the glass.

For he beholdeth himself and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. The biblical illustration there is of a mirror. You know, you behold yourself in a mirror.

How many of you looked in the mirror today, fixed your hair or maybe did something before you left? As I say that, my eyes glance over and I see Brother Cook over there shaking his head.

And I'm not really sure if he heard the hair part or not. But anyway, it looks nice, brother. I really like what you're doing. And I'm glad you looked in the mirror today. And maybe, you know, when you get to a certain age, I won't say this where he can hear it.

When you get to a certain age, you have hair coming out of other places. Maybe he was getting the trimmer out. I don't know. All right, so back to the passage here. And the Bible is like a mirror that in order to understand ourselves well, we take the Bible, we look into God's Word.

[32 : 41] God's Word shows us who we are. It shows us the things that need to be changed. But so many times we see ourselves as the Scripture shows us who we are and we walk away the same way without changing anything.

And the Bible says it's time to not shift blame or say, you know, it's your fault, God. And it's time to realize that God, that He just gives His perfect gifts and everything good comes from Him.

And if there's sin that's going on that's producing death, that's producing pain, that's producing bitterness in your heart, that that comes from your own lust and your own desires.

And you are the one making the conscious decision to say yes to that temptation. But there's hope because God can change us as we receive humbly the engrafted Word into our heart.

And we decide we want to obey and we want to look into that mirror of God's Word and understand who we are, understand how our marriage should function. And we decide that I won't just understand it intellectually, but I want to live it.

[33 : 47] I want my life to be changed. I want to quit blaming others. I want to quit living in bitterness. And I want to start growing. I want to start applying God's Word. I want to understand the truths of the Bible.

And I want to live the truths of the Bible. And I'm humbly recognizing that I have so much to learn. And God, please teach me. Man, if a husband and wife can get to that point, if they can be on that same page, if they can make a conscious effort to work with the Lord and together to grow and to have a marriage that can honor Him as both go into a conscious decision to be sanctified by God's Word and purified.

And that would be an incredible thing if that were to happen in our lives. Amen? Here's the good thing. The decision is yours. It's not some outside force that's acting upon us.

And man, I'm where I am because, I don't know, I just said I do. And things happen. Kids came. Bills came. Difficulties came. And where we're at now. And there's nothing I can do about it.

No, the good news is there is. Because we have a God that is all-powerful. Amen? There's nothing impossible for Him. And the hardest cases are not hard for Him.

[35 : 03] And God uses His Word and His Spirit to change us. And tonight we can make a decision. And let's make it even a little bit clearer. Because maybe your spouse is not going to jump on board too quickly.

Or maybe they're not even here tonight. And maybe they're not even a Christian. But you can make the decision. No matter what the decision of your spouse is. That you will submit yourself to the Lord humbly.

And give yourself to Him. And say, God, change me. It's not the fault of others. But it's my fault. Because I am not who I need to be. And I want to humbly ask you to change me.

And I want to change quickly. And I want to be used by you. And honor you. And not blame others. And not live in bitterness. But be changed by your Word.

And have your Word engrafted into my heart tonight. That would be a great thing if that were our prayer this evening. And I invite you to make that decision. I invite you maybe even to find a place in the altar.

[36 : 00] Maybe there in your seat. Where you can say, Lord, that's the way I want to live. That's the way I want my marriage to be. And I want to start in these next few days. And next few weeks leading up to the end of the year.

To consciously and on purpose work toward growing in my relationship with my husband or my wife. Let's pray together as Trent comes forward to close the service. Lord, I thank you for the opportunity to be here.

Thank you for the opportunity to be married. A plan that you came up with. And what a privilege it is. And I pray that you would help us not to be satisfied where we are.

But that we'll continue to grow in you. Continue to grow together in our relationship, in our marriage. And I pray that you would encourage people that maybe came in tonight thinking there's no way.

There's no way to change. There's no way to have anything different. Help them to know that your word can change hearts and change lives. And I pray that we will seek you this evening. Submit ourselves. And that you would do a great work in our lives.

[37 : 00] We ask this in Jesus' name. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com.

Where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.