

From the Family Room

*The Church of Christ at Creekwood
Mobile, AL*

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Erosion of Marriage



“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” Matthew 7:24-27

I'm sure most of us have seen the video of the swiftly flowing flash flood waters that claimed several lives in Utah within the past week. That is a spectacular and very tragic story. A story that is equally tragic but much less spectacular is the slow daily erosion of the foundation of a marriage that can be occurring each day mostly unnoticed.

In their book, *Fighting for Your Marriage* (Jossey-Bass, Howard J. Markham, Scott M. Stanley, Susan L. Blumberg, 2010), the authors identify several destructive patterns that are signs of danger in your marriage. Listed below are four warning signs that could indicate the erosion of a relationship. If left unattended, they could destroy a marriage. Listed below is an explanation of warning signs reprinted from *FamilyShare.com*.

- **1. Escalation**

When a conversation about doing the dishes ends with the topic of divorce, you experience escalation. Escalation creates an environment that feeds criticism and complaint. Escalation can happen quickly or over a period of time. If you find yourself entangled in rising tensions with your spouse, acknowledge that you need to put your conversation on pause and set up a time later in the day to discuss the issue. Repeat this process until you can have a conversation that you do not have to reschedule because of escalation.

- **2. Invalidation**

When you never feel good enough, and your spouse does not seem to understand you, it may be because of invalidation. Invalidation manifests itself when you feel like you never get to explain yourself, when you are constantly cut off and when you feel like your opinion does not matter. This is a dangerous path because we all want to feel understood. If you constantly invalidate your spouse, he may be tempted to find someone who values and respects him, which in turn will lead to a host of other sins not discussed here.

- **3. Negative interpretation**

You call your spouse at lunch and he doesn't answer, so you immediately begin to think that he is having lunch with another woman. A deployed soldier calls home and his wife doesn't answer the phone; he immediately thinks that she is cheating on him. When neutral or even positive things are said or done and a spouse quickly interprets the action as negative, a feeling of fear can permeate your home. Your spouse may be afraid to say or do anything kind or loving out of fear that the action will be taken as an act of war. A relationship where a spouse is guilty of negative interpretation will not last long. To overcome this, always assume that each word and action of your spouse has the best of intentions.

- **4. Withdrawal**

Traditionally, guys are most guilty of withdrawal. Avoiding your spouse or a certain conversation with your spouse can become a permanent problem. Your desire to withdraw and avoid your spouse may be because you are trying to avoid another ugly argument that is painful and can damage your marriage.

Jesus tells us at the close of the Sermon on the Mount that building a life (marriage, home, family) on the rock solid foundation of His words is wise. Then when the storms of life hit with spectacular fury or when daily problems gnaw away quietly and unnoticed at our relationship, we can stand firm. All of us should be attentive to these warning signs of erosion in our marriage and apply the words of Jesus so our marriage can stand firm to God's glory.

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