

Pastor Mark: Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor. All your heart, emotional, soul, spiritual, mind, mental. So let's talk. Make this episode three. Loving God and loving your spouse with your mind. So first to love God with all your mind, you've got to unlearn some things, especially when it comes to of gender, sex and marriage. Maybe talk about some of the major things going into marriage that we had to unlearn. We learned some things, but they were not right.

Grace: About gender or just-

Pastor Mark: Gender, sex, marriage.

Grace: ... Yeah. Coming into marriage. I grew up in the church, so a lot of people that open the church or Christianity or some sort of religion often think that sex is either just for procreation or just for the man, that the woman's not supposed to enjoy it. That it's a sin to enjoy it. There's a lot of myths out there.

Pastor Mark: I always used to say that the message in church to kids is sex is dirty, nasty, violent, wrong. Save it for the one you love., which is a very conflicted message. Right?

Grace: Exactly. Yeah. So we had to unlearn-

Pastor Mark: I didn't grow up in that environment. I grew up down the street from a strip club next to an airport.

Grace: ... Yeah.

Pastor Mark: So we had different-

Grace: Yeah. We talk about this in the book too. Sex is gross, god or a gift. I saw sex as gross. You saw it as God. And we needed to learn that sex was a gift created by God, for us to enjoy. And if we weren't enjoying it, we needed to figure out how to get to that place because he intended for us to enjoy it.

Pastor Mark: ... So for those who maybe get saved later in life, or don't know what the Bible says, I mean, how much unlearning do you need to do to love God with all your mind going into your marriage?

Grace: I mean, a lot. This culture is so... it violates everything the Bible tells us about sex being a gift. And it's images and it's perfection and airbrush and certain levels of standards that just aren't even real for a marriage and a real relationship. And so for me, I had to unlearn all the sex is gross stuff and realize, like I said, that it's a gift. And really ask the Lord to rewire my brain in that area.

Pastor Mark: Well, and I didn't help because when we started dating, we were sleeping together. And then I became a Christian and I realized, "Oh, that's wrong." So we stopped. And here's what I thought, I don't know if you guys can identify with this, I thought we're doing something wrong. We stopped. That's okay. We just hit pause. We're going to get married. We're going to hit play. We're going to pick up where we left off. And we didn't, we hit rewind. I was very disappointed

in that. Because for me, as a non-Christian, I didn't have any guilt or conviction about being sexually active before marriage.

Grace: Because you, yeah, you weren't a Christian.

Pastor Mark: I didn't know. I didn't have the Holy Spirit or know the scriptures. You did, and you were violating the spirit of God in you and your conscience and what you knew to be true. And so I had, because of my disobedience and my sin against you and the Lord, it created shame and guilt that you were experiencing that I didn't even understand. And when we got married, the intimacy was connected with shame and guilt. And so even though it wasn't a sin, it was still present with shame and guilt. So we had to relearn a lot. In regards to loving God with all of your mind, why do you think it is super important that a husband and wife come under the authority of God's word rather than coming under the authority of the husband or wife?

Grace: Because he gives us all the direction of how to renew our minds. And if we're not renewing our minds, then we're living by the culture or whatever someone's telling us, and it's not going to be healing. It's not going to provide hope for our marriage. It's not going to give us unity.

Pastor Mark: And the one thing I always like to say is, God, doesn't bless people, God blesses his word. And so Pastor Jimmy Evans, whom we love and appreciate, one of our overseers, he says, "Marriage has 100% success rate, if you both do it God's way." And I've always felt that was just a great summary of it. If the husband and the wife will do what God says, then God will bless that marriage and it will succeed. The problem becomes in marriage, if you don't come under the authority of God's word, usually then it's whoever has the loudest, most dramatic domineering or stubborn personality-

Grace: Or manipulative.

Pastor Mark: ... or manipulative, wins. And that leads to a very unhealthy marriage and relationship. So practically, how important is it that the husband and the wife are in and under God's word to learn how to love God with all their mind?

Grace: Because that's our ultimate submission is to God. And that's where a wife feels safest, is if she knows that her husband is submitting to God, then she can feel safe submitting to him.

Pastor Mark: Just, see as men, you think of it in this way, think about a woman who is under a man and his leadership and authority, but he's under no leadership or authority. That means she is in a dangerous and vulnerable position. I never want my daughter in a position like that. That means that the man has really put himself in the spot of God, that he has sovereign, highest authority and he answers to no one.

And many men architect their lives in such a way that this is how they live and operate. And if you do confront one of these guys, the first thing they do is leave the church because the last thing they're going to do is take a rebuke. And the

Bible says, "Rebuke a fool and he will hate you. Rebuke a wise man and he'll love you." Sometimes you don't know if the guy is evil or wise until you rebuke him. You rebuke him and then you to figure out who he truly is. If he's wise, he's like, "Thank you. I want to do better." If he's evil and foolish, he's going to hate you. He's going to fight you. He's going to leave. He doesn't take any... And for a woman that becomes very hard, because usually those guys, they want to peace out of the church and they want to drag the wife and the kids. And then they're just living under the authority of a man who's under no authority. It's not under God's authority, leadership, Bible teaching, or any of that.

Grace: I'm guessing there's some men like that here, but I'm hoping that they're listening because if you are here and your wives have brought you here and you didn't want to come, she loves you enough to bring you to a place where she wants to feel secure with you, she wants to be loved by you, she wants your marriage to work. And so I would encourage you to ask the Lord how to become a spiritual head that is loving and kind. And it doesn't mean you're a wimp. It means that you're like Jesus and that's super strong.

Pastor Mark: So within that, where do you think our marriage would be? If we didn't agree on what God says about marriage, sex, family, if we didn't agree on the architecting plan that God gives, where do you think we would've defaulted to?

Grace: I mean, I think we've always had to appeal to that and go back to that. And if things feel chaotic in our marriage, or divided, that's where we go back to, "Okay, how are we out of alignment with what God intended?" And so we can always go back to that biblical truth and the order of how God created things. And so for us, it's been helpful. I mean, there's so many turns in our marriage where if we had not gone back to the scripture or gone back to what is going on, Lord help us, we would've been divorced so many times. We would've had what we felt like were valid reasons, but God had other things in store. He had healing and wholeness and unity for us. And so we had to push toward that and go back and say, "There's no back door, no matter how hard it gets."

Pastor Mark: When we got married, we said, "We're going to be happily married or unhappily married." Those were our options.

Grace: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And I'll just tell you, being unhappily married is as much work as being happily married. You can either pay for date night or therapy, either way, it cost the same. And so we just decided we're not going to get divorced, we're never going to say the word divorce. That's the grenade we're never going to pull the pin on.

Within that as well, I just feel inclined to say this. Maybe it's the Spirit, you guys can discern. Abuse happens when only one of the spouses is submitting to God's authority. If the wife only always hears all the submission, respect, honor verses, and the husband isn't doing the love cherish, don't be harsh, serve your wife as Christ serves the church, then it's an abusive relationship. And then the Bible's been weaponized to dominate and to harm the wife.

Similarly, if the wife skips everything in Proverbs about the nagging, overbearing, dripping faucet, REI gear, sleeping on the roof wife, or the crazy, flirtatious, adulterous gal. And then the husband's just told, "You're supposed to love means Christ loved the church and pay the bills." Then that's an abusive relationship because what she's saying is, "You need to do everything that God says. And I don't." Again, that's weaponizing the Bible. And so for a marriage to work, to renew your mind and to worship God and to worship with your spouse with all your mind, you both need to hear what God says. And God has very specific things to say to wives and husbands. God seems to be very binary in his gender and in this category. And if only one of you is being told to do what God said, I think that's very abusive. And that's where the Bible becomes a weapon to dominate somebody in a relationship. And that's spiritual abuse. That's spiritual abuse.

Grace: And oftentimes, men have father wounds or other things they need to sort through because they don't even realize they're behaving this way. And so there's healing. Just like if a woman goes through trauma, a husband can possibly need counseling as well to work through whatever hurt he's dealing with.

Pastor Mark: And this is where too, we think it's so important for you as a couple to be in church, under the authority of God's word, and hearing God's word together so that you can process together. This is a philosophy of ministry conviction, I don't want to be legalistic about, but sometimes the wife goes to women's ministry, the man doesn't go to anything, the kids go to student or kids. They're all learning different things.

The way we've architected the church is I preach fairly long sermons, and... I say fairly long, because they're going to get longer. But this is where we're at now. But then the husband and the wife go together. And then we do sermon based small groups for the students, for the couples, for the husband and the wife, so that they can, as a family say, "Hey, we're in the Book of Romans, what are you learning? What is God showing you?" We're trying to put the Bible into the middle of the marriage and family so that everybody's working from the same place and having the same conversation. Otherwise, the husband feels left out. The wife is doing the Bible study and the kids are going to youth group and he is going to work. And he is like, "I don't know all of that. I can't enter into that conversation." So we're trying to architecturally set up a church philosophy of ministry that puts the Bible for everyone. The kids, mom, dad, everybody. So you can learn together and discuss together and even study it together.

That being said, I wanted to close with one thing from the clinical side, what happens to the brain. So we're talking about loving God with all your mind. What happens to the brain is if you will take what God says in his word, and that is to practice chastity before marriage. Which we did not, we had to repent on. Fidelity in marriage, which by God's grace, we have, and to do what Job 31:1 says, he says, "I made a covenant with my eyes, not to look upon someone lustfully." But to have your desires, according to God's word, go toward your spouse. Like the model of a ministry leader is to be a one woman man, says the

husband of one wife in the New Testament. And what that means is your desires, your longings, your pursuit, they go just toward your spouse. If you will obey what God says, what happens, it literally re-hardwires the human brain.

So there is a Christian bio psychologist, his name is William Struthers. He wrote a book called *Wired for Intimacy*. And what he discovered, and this is the latest brain science, it's quite fascinating, they say that there's a pleasure path. And so you venture down a path and there's pleasure at the end. This can be drugs, alcohol, sex, prayer, whatever it is. There's a path that leads to the pleasure. That path, it becomes deepened and widened through habituation. Meaning the more you do it... think of going for a walk in the woods. If you went for a hike, that'd be one thing. If you hike that same path every day for five years, pretty soon you'd have a well worn path and your body would just long that path, almost unconsciously. Like driving home. Have you ever driven home from work and you don't even remember the drive? It's because you've made that drive so many times, you've habituated your body down that path and it becomes second nature to you.

And what he says is that the pleasure path and this building of a pathway in the brain, the pleasure literally hardwires a path in the brain. And they show that brain science, you actually alter your brain by who you have sex with and what you think of sexually. And it talks about mirror neurons, and they say that sex and the intimacy that happens in the sexual activity, it affects the same part of the brain as heroin and cocaine. Have you ever seen somebody on heroin or cocaine? They're into it. They're into it. Okay? The point is, not to be into heroin or cocaine. That's the first point.

The second point is if your desires and your pleasure path way is just toward your spouse, you will be literally physiologically hardwired to desire and pursue them. And the more you're faithful to one another, the deeper that connection becomes and the deeper that pathway is formed. So if you've been into sexual sin or pornography or other things, the key is to stay off of those paths and no longer build those neural pathways, but then to repent and to be faithful to your spouse and to build new neural pathways that continue to get strengthened through your intimacy together. They will call this a chemical high or a biochemical love potion.

And literally, if you will do what the Bible says, and that is don't look at everybody, don't lust after everybody, don't covet somebody you're not married to and don't sleep around. Be devoted to your spouse. Then literally it will bio physically re-hardwire the brain and connect you at the level of the brain. And the result will be, as you are married, the longer you are together and the more you're intimate and the longer you build that faithful pathway, the longer you're married, the more pleasure you have through your sexual relationship. And the big lie in our culture is the more people you sleep with, the more pleasure you have. The truth is the more you're faithful to one person, the deeper the connection goes and the more the habituation is reinforced. And so what the brain science is telling us is this, God was right, that the couples who get married, stay married, fight against the lust of pornography and don't commit

adultery, they have the highest marital satisfaction rates. They have the highest frequency of sexual activity. And the wife statistically have the highest number of orgasms of any one surveyed. Okay? And so again, loving God, and your neighbor, which your first neighbor's spouse, with all your heart emotionally, all your soul spiritually and all your mind mentally, it then starts to habituate the pathway to loving one another with your body physically.