

Pastor Mark: All right. Second issue. So, we're back to our... So second issue, second episode, One Soul Spiritually. So Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." Why is it so important before the sexual? So it's emotional, spiritual, mental, then physical. The sexual is the last. It's the result of the investment in the emotional, spiritual, and mental. Why is it so important that a couple be one spiritually, not at the level of the body, first and foremost, at the level of the soul?

Grace: Well, for us, this was on all the tests that we took. The spiritual was the one area where we actually agreed on.

Pastor Mark: Have you taken those marriage tests. You're taken those, like Women are from Scottsdale. Men are from Mexico. Those tests. We took the test. We have nothing in common.

Grace: Nothing. Literally nothing.

Pastor Mark: Literally nothing.

Grace: I eat the small chips. He eats the big chips

Pastor Mark: Because they're better. Right? So, we're just different on everything.

Grace: Because I'm serving you.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Appreciate that.

She has a spiritual gift of serving. I have the spiritual gift of being served, so the Lord really synced that up for both of us. So within that, I just lost my train of thought. You're so cute telling jokes. I can't remember what we're talking about.

Grace: The spiritual level.

Pastor Mark: Oh yeah. This spiritual. Okay.

What's important here is I've got some notes to make it sound like it's official, but the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, it's what clinicians use to diagnose problems and solutions. It mentions the soul, zero times. What that means is secular psychology, counseling and therapy, it ignores that you have a soul. The question is how can you really help somebody unless you not only address their emotional life, their physical life, maybe their mental life, but also their spiritual life. I mean, most healing happens at the level of the soul.

Grace: We can be really tough and try and grind through life but if we're not dealing with the soul issues and letting God into our souls, to heal us and help us see our sins so that we can repent and serve each other and love each other, I mean, there's no hope in that.

Pastor Mark: For a married couple, how do you cultivate a relationship at the level of the soul? What are some practical things husbands and wives, regular habits, that'll contribute to being one soul?

Grace: A lot of people have said, well, it's easy for you because your husband is always reading the Bible.

Pastor Mark: Does anyone think that it's easy being married to me? I know it's not. If I was married to me, one of us would have to die. Two is far too many. One is more than enough.

Grace: But investing in our own personal relationship with the Lord first, as men and as women, we're accountable for that before the Lord, whether or not our spouse does. And so for us, we had to do that. I think for me, I was dependent on you because you were so strong spiritually that I wasn't always investing in my own relationship with the Lord because I was depending on what he would teach me and show me and point out.

So it's so important that we have that relationship with the Lord and he will reveal to us ways that we can love our spouse, ways that we can work on ourselves and ways that we can love and serve our spouse. So that's... I do. I mean, there's all kinds of ways. But some couples like to do Bible studies together. We tend to read separately, study separately,

Pastor Mark: How many of you can't do a regular organized Bible study with your spouse? Can we just be honest? How many of you can't do it? Don't lie. We're in church. How many of you have tried to do like this architected, organized couples, regular devotional. You're like, yeah, it didn't work. Amen. Be honest. The rest of you were lying. You didn't raise your hand, you're lying. We have tried and we study totally differently.

Grace: He studies with music and I study with silence.

Pastor Mark: Very loud, like HARDY, Jason Alden, Bro-country, so loud that the neighbor's dog is running away from home and I've got Greek word studies open while listening to inappropriate country music. So if some of you have wondered, like it seems like the spirit and the flesh are in the sermon, they may be. So for you, what's your devotional, study, Bible routine life like?

Grace: It changes, but I love using the Bible app and then I love studying, looking through the ESV Study Bible.

Pastor Mark: So, YouVersion?

Grace: Yes. I use the YouVersion Bible app and if you're in the car a lot, it's great because it reads to you. It has audio Bible and it has some audio Bible plans, topically arranged. Or if you like listening to certain people, they have the Pray Like Jesus one on there, like we just did.

Pastor Mark: Nice shout-out. Good job.

Grace: And so you can use that. While you're driving, you can be listening to it.

Pastor Mark: Or doing laundry.

Grace: Or doing laundry.

Pastor Mark: I feel like Priscilla Shire and Jimmy Evans moved into my house. They're always in our laundry. Grace loves Priscilla Shire and Jimmy Evans.

Grace: Yes I do.

Pastor Mark: So I hear them all the time.

Grace: Yes.

Pastor Mark: I won't do an organized plan because I don't like anyone to tell me what to do.

Grace: Except the Lord,

Pastor Mark: Except the Lord and even then we negotiate. So, for me, I don't like regimented plans. I don't like fill in the blanks. I don't like anybody telling me how to. Now, I do study the Bible. At least I did once and it was great.

Grace: Then you have a huge library. You study all the time.

Pastor Mark: I study all the time, but for me, I'm more of a haphazard, got my own way of doing it and you've got your way of doing it, so what we don't do is study the same way, but we share what we're learning. That's the key.

Grace: We like to take walks and share what we're learning and have deeper conversations than can you pick up the kids at baseball?

Pastor Mark: Yep. And so for us holding hands, going for a walk, it's literally, that's one of my favorite times this holding hands going for a walk, is okay, what are you learning? What's the Lord showing you? And those are designated times just to share at the soul level. How can I put pray for you? What is God showing you? What are you learning? What do you think God's doing in this season? What do you think God is saying to you? We have a lot of those deep conversations and it's really coming under the Lordship of Christ and sharing together what it is that we're learning.

I would submit this to you as well. How many of you're single? Okay. Let me give you single guys a secret. Okay. You have to nail the spiritual and if you put the sexual before the spiritual, you will lose all of the moral authority to lead in the relationship.

Grace: That's right.

Pastor Mark: This is where most marriages and relationships, they accelerate the sexual and as a result, you can't, in a dating relationship, have an accelerated sexual

relationship and a healthy, spiritual relationship. You can't say, "Well, let's pray together," while we're sleeping together. You can't say, "Let's do what God says, except for certain things that God says." And what happens for a lot of guys, they want to be the leader in the relationship but if they compromise sexually, they lose the moral authority to lead spiritually. And the truth is, the connection is deeper. This is going to shock you but the connection at the level of the soul is deeper than the connection at the level of the body because you don't just have a soul. You are a soul. And even when your body dies, your soul will continue. The Bible says, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

So, when you connect at the level of the soul, you're connecting with the eternal part of you that will even endure after the body. It's the deepest level of connection and this is why couples will sleep together, that will not pray together, because praying together is too intimate.

So connecting at the level of the soul, once you open the heart, the emotions and then the soul, love God and neighbor with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Once the emotional life is healthy and safe, once you're connected at the level of the soul and the Holy Spirit is in the middle of the relationship, that starts to open up the sexual relationship. But in our culture, we just start with the sexual relationship. We're looking for sexual compatibility and that's not the issue. The issue is really soul compatibility.

What are some of the things that you would recommend in addition, practically for a married couple to do, to connect and cultivate at the level of the soul? How important do you think church, church involvement, and serving is?

Grace: I think serving is a really good way to deepen your spiritual relationship. Working side by side, serving the Lord, serving other people, you just, you connect in ways that you don't when you're doing other things.

Pastor Mark: So my encouragement would be on this point in particular for the men. A lot of you guys will wonder how do I be the head of home, not by quoting versus on being the head of home. Those verses are like soap. The more you use them, the less you have. So be careful with it.

At the end of the day, you lead by spiritually setting the temperature and tone in the house. You're praying over your wife. You're praying with your wife. You're praying for your kids. You're praying with your kids. You're reading the Bible. You have a copy of the Bible on the dining room table and you're just having open conversations. This is what we do all the time. Every Sunday, we get together as a whole family. Usually it's what was your takeaway? What did God say to you from the scriptures this weekend? And we're just inviting these open-ended, spiritual conversations and prayers for one another.

Spiritually, I think my... It's going to sound weird, so I'll just say it publicly. For me, I think the most intimate, sacred moment for me every week is in our church, in the presence of God, with our children, holding your hand and singing in worship together.

Grace: Yeah, absolutely. It's very emotional. It reaches into the soul for sure.

Pastor Mark: We're in the presence of God holding hands together, worshiping God together, inviting God to send the Holy Spirit, to bless our relationship. I would just say, how important is it or how deep is the longing in the wife, that the husband would be this spiritual initiator that he would make that a prior to cultivate his soul, her soul, and the kid's soul?

Grace: Well, the Bible says to wash her with the word and that's a loving term and it's a cleansing. That's not like dumping the word on her or scalding her with the word, or throwing cold water of the word in her face. It's a very tender, sweet. It means you care. It means you want to see her pure and you're a part of that happening. And it purifies her, so it's a beautiful thing.

I think if men take that responsibility on and are willing to, to step out and make a first step, even if you haven't done that at all, God is so good to honor that. He will show you how and the men in whatever church you're in, will help you do that as well. Because if you guys are called to do that, God wants to help you and other men that love God want to help you know how to do that. But just starting by reading the scriptures together and dialoguing it, is a great way to do that.

Pastor Mark: I'll close this section with a statistic that was shared. According to data, it was collected some years ago, by Promise Keepers in the Baptist Press. If a wife regularly attends church, but the husband does not. So wife loves the Lord, goes to church, which 60% of church attenders are female, not male. There's 11 to 13 million more women than men in church. So if the woman loves the Lord, goes to church, takes the kids, but the dad does not go, when the children become adults, they have a 2% chance of regularly attending church.

If you flip it, if mom does not go to church regularly, but dad does, then they have the children, when they grow up and become adults, they will have between a 67 and 75% chance of regularly attending church.

How many women, they love the Lord and they love their kids, love their husband and they're trying to create spiritual momentum in their family but the husband is really the counterbalance. The kids, what's really interesting. We live in this day where everybody's like, men are not the head of the household. That's chauvinistic, patriarchal, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's true. Okay. It's true.

What it means is when the Bible says that the man is the head, the question is not, is he the head? The question is, is he a good head or a bad head? Is he leading his family toward Christ or not? But he is leading. And so if dad's leading toward Christ, the kids follow. And if dad isn't leading toward Christ, the kids follow.

I would just submit to you men, even being here, I want to honor the men. For the men who show up for Real Men. For you men who do pray for your wives, with your wives, for your kids, with your kids. You do read God's word. You do

pray. We all know that we're not perfect men, but if you're God's men, literally just you following God means that two-thirds to three-fourths of your children, and then you start to think about generational impacted legacy. If you don't, if you stay home in the car to watch football while mom goes to worship God, you're taking your odds from as high as 75% to 2% that your adult kids will be faithfully walking with God. This is why we focus so much on the men.

Grace: And like you've said, if the men aren't willing to step up to lead, Satan will.

Pastor Mark: Well, that's what happens in Genesis 3. Adam doesn't lead, so Satan does. I don't about you. I'd rather lead.

Grace: And leading means loving your wife as Christ loved the church.

Pastor Mark: Amen. Okay. Well, we're not going to talk about that. That's very convicting.