

The Lord's Building Code

Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31

Introduction: Most every city has a building code, and what you build has to meet code or you can't get a certificate of occupancy. So today I want to talk to you about God's building code requirement.

I am reminded of a pastor who went to speak to a group of 4th graders on the topic of marriage, and he asked the question: "Does anyone of you know what God has to say about marriage?" Immediately one little boy threw his hand up and said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Someone has observed

- Man is incomplete until he's married, then he's really finished.
- Someone else has said, "If love is a dream, marriage is an alarm clock."

- One man said, "I never knew what real happiness was until I got married - and then it was too late."

- Married life is very frustrating. In the first year of marriage the man speaks and the woman listens; in the second year the woman speaks and the man listens; in the third year they both speak and the neighbors listen.

The true story is told of German poet Heinrich Heine. He left his entire estate to his wife with a condition that she must remarry. When he was asked why, he said, "I want to know that at least one other man will regret my death."

In spite of all that, marriage is still a good idea. How do I know? Because it's God's idea, and He never had a bad idea.

But there is one essential in making marriage work that is not optional. It is the one building code where no variance or leeway is allowed and that is commitment.

Dr. Nick Stinnett, chairman of the Department of Human Development and the Family at the University of Nebraska, did a very intensive study that included black families as well as white, and involved families in South America, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, South Africa, as well as the United States. The study was not limited to Christian families. Altogether, 3,000

families were studied. When all the information was analyzed, he found six main qualities in strong families.

He found that strong families:

1. Spend time together
2. Have good family communication
3. Express appreciation to each other
4. Have a spiritual commitment
5. Are able to solve problems in a crisis
6. And are committed to the family.

What is the one building code that must be adhered to if you will have a strong marriage and family? **Commitment!**

Without commitment, there will be never be real satisfaction in your home. A husband and wife must be committed to each other and their family if that family and marriage will survive.

Now there are two texts I want to share with you today, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New, that give us the ideal of commitment.

Genesis 2:24

Ephesians 5:31

In the Genesis passage we find two key words: "*leaving*" and "*cleaving*."

The decision has been made to leave father and mother and the commitment has been made to become either a husband or wife. The decision has been made to leave one relationship (parent/child) and the commitment is made to begin a new relationship (husband/wife).

The word "cleave" means, "to be cemented together." In Ephesians 5:31 the word "joined" means "to be glued together." Both carry the same ideal. Two people, a man and a woman, enter into a relationship called marriage, and thus become husband and wife.

This glue is not the fast-drying kind of glue. As we all know, a couple can have a wedding and say their vows, but not be cemented or glued together. This "cleaving" and being "joined together" is a process. It is a process achieved because a couple is committed to having this extraordinary bond between them.

As someone has said, "It is much easier to be pronounced husband and wife than to become husband and wife. The pronouncement takes only minutes; the "becoming" take years."

James Dobson said, "Married life is a marathon...It is not enough to make a great start toward long-term marriage.

Now let me share with you three particulars of God's Building Code.

1. A Commitment to a Loving Marriage!

In our Ephesians 5 passage, verse 25 says, "*Husbands, love your wives.*" Also, verse 33 says, "*let everyone of you in particular so love his wife.*"

Someone has said that wives are the opposite of fishermen. They brag about the ones that got away and complain about the ones they caught.

But marriage is to be filled with the kind of love, a caring love and sharing love, that makes us grateful for our spouse and so happy with them that there is no thought of another.

Now you know as well as I there are times when love grows a little cold in a marriage. Those "feelings" are not as strong and intense as before.

C.S. Lewis said, "Every marriage seems to have its periods of "death" as well as "resurrection." He attributed so much divorce among Christians to their not waiting out that deadly period-the winter months of marriage-until the spring, or resurrection, arrives."

I ran across what is called "Before and After Falling In Love." It goes:

Before - You take my breath away

After - I feel like I'm suffocating

Before - She says she loves the way I take control of the situation

After - She called me a controlling, manipulative egomaniac

Before - Saturday Night Fever

After - Monday Night Football

Before - He makes me feel like a million dollars

After - If I had a dime for every stupid thing he's done...

Before - Charming and Noble

After - Chernobyl

Before - I can hardly believe we found each other

After - I can't believe I ended up with someone like you

Marriage does not have to be a "Before and After." It can be a growing love that gets deeper and more meaningful as the years pass by.

2. A Commitment to a Lasting Marriage!

Again, the words "cleave" and "joined together" speak of a relationship so bonded together that it is inseparable. Having this thought in mind, Jesus said in Matthew 19:6, "*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

Jesus was saying that no one or no thing should be able to divide the marriage relationship. A couple should enter marriage with the attitude that this is for the rest of our lives. You that are married ought to say, "We are going to make this marriage last." For you that had a bad marriage, and are in a second marriage or third, you ought to say, "This marriage is not going to be like the last one. We are going to make this one work."

Don't be like the old widower had just married a young bride. It was back in the 1800's and they left the church for home in a wagon pulled by a mule. Within a couple of minutes, the mule stumbled. "That's once," said the groom. His bride didn't understand what he meant, but being young and shy she did not ask about it.

A few minutes later, the mule stumbled again. "That's twice," the old man said. His new wife was even more curious than before, but she still held her tongue. Just as they pulled to within view of the old farmhouse that would become their home, the mule stumbled again. "That's three times," the farmer said. He reached under the seat and pulled out a shotgun. He then climbed down from the wagon and shot the mule dead.

Horrified, his wife could no longer stay quiet. "What in the world are you doing? Why would you shoot that poor mule just for stumbling?" The old man looked at his bride and said. "That's once."

Marriage is a relationship where you make no plans for separation but make a commitment to have a lasting marriage.

Now as you all know; such a commitment will face its challenges during the course of a marriage and at times face serious tests. There will be times when a commitment to stay together will be strained and stretched to its limits.

All marriages will experience those times. Yet, if there is a commitment for a lasting marriage, you can survive the stages and the result will be an even more satisfying and gratifying relationship.

I think of a man that was walking along a California beach deep in prayer. All of a sudden, he said out loud, "Lord, grant me one wish." The sky clouded above his head and in a booming voice the Lord said, "Because you have tried to be faithful to me in all ways, I will grant you one wish. What is your wish?"

The man said, "Build a bridge to Hawaii, so I can drive over anytime I want to." The Lord said, "Your request is very materialistic. Think of the logistics of that kind of undertaking; the supports required to reach the bottom of the Pacific, the concrete and steel it would take! I can do it, but it is hard for me to justify your desire for worldly things. Take a little more time and think of another wish, a wish you think would honor and glorify Me."

The man thought for a long time. Finally, he said, "Lord, my wife says I don't understand her and that I am insensitive to her needs and uncaring. I wish I could understand women. I want to know how they feel inside, what they are thinking when they give me the silent treatment, why they cry, what they mean when they say nothing and how I can make a woman truly happy?"

After a few minutes the Lord said, "You want two lanes or four on that bridge?"

Now it may seem impossible in some situations and you may feel hopeless, but if there is a commitment to a lasting marriage, you can make it!

3. A Commitment to a Loyal Marriage!

Behind the ideal of a man cleaving to his wife is a loyal marriage. It is a matter of cleaving only to one's wife and husband. There is faithfulness, loyalty, and fidelity in the relationship.

Many researchers are now claiming that as many as half of all wives have affairs. One study suggests that three-fourths of all wives married more than five years have affairs.

However, a study done by the National Opinion Research center at the University of Chicago offers more encouraging news. In five studies done from 1988 to the present, researchers at the institute found that only 15 per cent of Americans have ever cheated on a spouse. They further discovered that, in a given year, only 3 to 4 per cent of husbands and wives are unfaithful.

Whatever the correct figures, one commitment every married person should make is to be loyal. Nothing can be more devastating to a marriage than an unfaithful spouse.

I heard Fred Lowery, a pastor in Alabama, tell about preaching in Oklahoma and the pastor shared with him a story that happened in his church. He told of this couple in his church who were very faithful church members, but their marriage had begun to deteriorate, and they hadn't worked on it and this lady made a bad choice. She decided to meet a man in a motel and before she went, she took off her wedding ring and left it on the sink in the kitchen of her home.

She went off to meet this man at the motel. The amazing and sad thing is that she died in that motel room of a heart attack and her husband had to go and claim her body.

That pastor did the funeral and he said at the close of that service when the family came and said their last goodbyes that husband bent over that casket to his wife, he, with tears, told her how much he loved her and he said "I forgive you and I love you with all of my heart and look forward one day to be with you again."

Then he reached in his pocket and took out that wedding ring that she left at home and he placed it on her finger and said again, "You are my wife. I love you."

I read about Grandpa Cartnell that was celebrating his 100th birthday. Everyone complimented him on how athletic and well preserved he appeared. Someone asked him what the secret to his success was. He said, "My wife and I were married 75 years ago. On our wedding night we made a solemn pledge. Whenever she had anything bothering her, she would just tell me and get it off her chest.

And if anything was bothering me, I would just go outside and take a long brisk walk and cool off. He said, the key to the longevity of my life is I've largely lived an outdoor life.

However you choose to work it out, for God's sake and the sake of your marriage, work it out!

Make some commitments. Make the commitment to have a loving, lasting, and loyal marriage.

If all of us as husbands and wives will seek to improve our commitment, we will be well on the way to meeting God's Building Code, and be more than fit for occupancy.