

# Fighting for a Wife: Lessons from Othniel

*Joshua: A Time to Conquer*

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**Bible Text:** Joshua 15:13-17; Judges 3:7-11

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Joshua 15. Look at the text with me: there are 63 verses in that chapter and nearly every single verse has a word that I can't pronounce. It's unbelievable. I don't know how he gets so many words in one book, much less in one chapter. From verses 20-63 are just a list of cities, one right after another that are allocated to the tribe of Judah. In verses 1-12, is the allocation. It provides by way of reference points, all that allows us to do is to get to this map. The reason we're able to chart out these boundaries for Judah along the coast of the Mediterranean and to come across and come down by the Dead Sea and go around is because of all these boundary identifications in this chapter.

Tucked away in these 63 verses in chapter 15 is this great little story from verses 13-19 that I intend to make much of this morning. I want to make much of this great little story and it's really awesome. The story is incredible and it goes something like this: Caleb had quite the daughter, evidently, her name was Achsah and this is what he said, "You want to marry my daughter? Would you like for her to be your wife? Take down that city." That's the idea.

Here's our sermon title this morning: Fighting for a Wife: Lessons from Othniel. Let's stand for the reading of God's Word and let's see if we can enjoy this text this morning.

"And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak." So, sons in this sense are clans or tribes and then you see the names, "Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak. And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher. And Caleb said, He that smites Kirjathsepher, and takes it, to him will I give," and there it is, "Achsah my daughter to wife."

That's it, that's what we're focused on right there. I want to draw to your attention that Caleb said the man that takes down this city gets my daughter for his wife.

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, a simple thought from a story that I hope will drive us this morning to get a better appreciation for what the Word of God has to say collectively to us and really, Lord, probably one of the most important messages America needs to hear today. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

So, here's our sermon outline and for those of you that take notes and I wish you would this morning, on the back of your bulletin you'll see a little section there to take notes. Here's our sermon outline, six points about marriage: what to fight for, what about singleness, Pastor Paul mentioned something in 1 Corinthians 7 about singles; what to fight against; and then I want to drive us to four signs of a healthy church. So, six points: what to fight for; what to fight against; and then we'll conclude with four signs of a healthy church.

Here's where we open our narrative, with verse 13. You will recall that Caleb said give me that mountain and the fortified cities. We looked at that last week, remember? Give me that mountain; give me the fighting hills. I want the tough part and Caleb got the tough part. And the city area was Hebron and Caleb, himself, led the fight against three particular clans, Anak's three sons, three clans, three tribes and drove them out. Then we get to this city Debir and he said the man that takes that city down, the man that gets that city, he'll get my daughter to be his bride. That's the idea. To him will I give my daughter to wed. That's what I want to draw to your attention.

Here's the first point, real simple, but we've almost lost it: a father should always have a significant role in whom his daughter will marry. Real simple, but almost gone. I mean, fewer and fewer young men are asking for the father's permission before they ask to marry the woman, but yet it is the father's prerogative. Oh, I know that sounds very old-fashioned but I'm not taking you to tradition, I'm taking you to the Word of God and the Word of God over and over and over again makes it abundantly clear that it is the father that has this tremendous role in whom his daughter marries.

Do you remember the traditional words? We asked them Friday at the wedding that I was able to conduct for Colton Johnson and Janet Kamenski, and we asked, "Who gives this bride to be married?" We asked that question. We asked it to the father who escorted the bride to the potential husband. We said, "Who gives this bride to be married?" That very question acknowledges the father's role in caring for his daughter. In fact, the father says, "I have cared for this daughter all the days of my life and now I expect you to do the same." That's what he's doing. He's moving it from himself to the husband. And when the husband says, "I do," he's committing to take care of her like the father has taken care of her, to provide for her and to protect her. That's the transition that's happening.

In most cases, it is most appropriate for a godly father who is seeking only the Lord's will for his daughter, to have the veto power in whom she marries. The veto power and let me just tell you something right now: if you're a godly girl and you've got a godly father, you shouldn't want to marry anyone that your father objects to. You should not want to

marry anyone that your father objects. If you don't have your father's blessing, don't court them. Don't even go down that road. Don't do it. Likewise, a son should not marry a woman for whom his parents have significant reservations. Same thing. If parents have significant reservations about her, that should be enough for you. "I'll wait." What is that? It's called respect. It's called respect for the role that Mom and Dad have in my life.

Let's look back at Genesis 2 for the first reference to a helpmate. Let's look back in the Word of God. Take your Bibles and flip those pages back to Genesis 2 and let's look at verse 18. It's an important verse. I would encourage you to take a pen like I've done in my Bible and would you take the time to pull it out of the pew right now and take the time to underline these words in verse 18 of chapter 2 and it goes something like this: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Do you see it in your own Bible? A wife is a husband's God-ordained helper. A wife is a God-ordained helper for a husband. The Bible says it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate.

So, this is what we want to say to you this morning and we want to say it loud and clear. Females are especially and specifically designed by God as the most suitable helper for males. Females. Let's say it another way: males do better with a wife. Let's make sure that we're abundantly clear this morning and, may I say it a little bit louder, PS3 is not a substitute for a wife. X-box 360 won't compare. You say, "Why are you going here?" I'll tell you why I'm going here: because statistically men are getting married later, less, waiting longer and having fewer children. Less males are getting married, less females are getting married, they are waiting longer than ever before and they're having fewer children. I'm going to show you where all three of those need to change. I'm going to attack all three of those. More men need to get married, more men and women need to get married sooner and they need to have more children. We're going to look at all three of those this morning.

Never forget, it is God who gave Adam a wife and the wife, the female, Eve. Let's make it abundantly clear this morning: it wasn't two amoebas that crawled out of the ocean and decided to be husband and wife. That's not how it happened. They didn't move from gills to lungs and say, "Hey, you look pretty good, let's join." That's not what happened. God created Adam and God created Eve and God pronounced the first wedding in the Garden of Eden and God said, "This is a good thing." Oh, I know right now there are some of you that are just way uncomfortable. You can't believe that we're going down this path. Do you know why you're uncomfortable? Because so many churches have abandoned preaching on this godly institution called marriage. They have just utterly abandoned it. Do you know why? Because somebody might get offended and we're more concerned about being seeker sensitive than preaching the Word of God.

So, this is what Caleb said, he said, "He that smiteth and taketh." That is King James language for "destroys and captures." There is a city over there and there's a prize right here to be won and, by the way, she's a babe. Oh, I know I'm reading into the text. And he said, "You want her? Go capture that city." And Othniel said, "I'll do it." So

obviously, however she was as a babe, was babe enough for him because he went for it when others didn't.

So, lesson #2, real simple, real practical: Caleb knew his daughter needed a husband and he knew he needed a wife. Got it? The father knew, "My daughter needs a husband." Do you know why he knew that? Because he wasn't going to live forever, he was going to die and he wanted to make sure his daughter was taken care of and provided for and the way you do that according to God's plan is not to rely on the federal government. God's plan is for husbands and wives to get married and they have children and their children take care of them when they're old. That's God's plan. That's the plan that doesn't bankrupt America. That's the plan that doesn't require trillions of dollars dedicated to Medicare, Medicaid and all those institutions. That's God's plan.

According to Harvard Men's Health Watch, which is not a biblical organization, this is what they say: 127,000 American adults found that married men are healthier than men who never marry or whose marriage has ended in divorce. Let me make something abundantly clear to everyone this morning: if I didn't have my beautiful wife I would never eat a piece of broccoli ever again in my entire life. Never. There's no way I'm going to come home and say, "Broccoli for dinner. Let's steam some." Are you kidding? I would never buy broccoli if it wasn't on the list to buy. Never. That's a simple little illustration, but actually it's a picture of how a wife makes a husband better.

Number 2, let's go to the ladies: 90% of single parent families are headed by females, 90%. So, we talked about something fun with broccoli, now we're turning to something very serious with single Moms. In Cumberland County, 62% of the households are single parents, 62%. Let me show you. Not surprisingly, single mothers with dependent children have the highest rate of poverty across all demographics. Approximately 60% of US children living in mother only families are impoverished. Do you see that? 60% If there's only a mother in the house, there is 6 out of 10 chance that they're impoverished. When you add a father to the mix, the number drops all the way to 11%.

Listen to me this morning, everyone listen to me: the solution to America's poverty problems is not more entitlements, it's something called marriage. It's something called marriage. I'm not here to pick political sides, I'm not here to offend anybody. We're preaching the Bible this morning and God's solution to poverty in America is something called marriage. It's where one male and one female unite in holy matrimony and they live together all the days of their life. And they share all things and have all things in common and that joint effort working together is where you find the least poverty. The least poverty. You got it? It's startling. So, Christians can say all they want about being concerned for the poor but if you're not preaching about marriage, you're not really concerned for the poor because another entitlement won't solve the problem. The problem is solved through men and women uniting in holy matrimony and then working together as best they can. That's the solution.

Let's continue reading the text. "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.." Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Here's what I want to tell you: long before Matthew 28:19-20 when Christ gave the church a Great Commission, God gave the family a mission.

Let me show you the mission, here it is, #3: God gave males and females the mission to procreate within the bounds of marriage. Turn back to Genesis 1:26-28 for the family's mission. Maybe you could write that on the margin of your Bible right there. Maybe you could write right along there "the family's mission." We know what the Great Commission is for the church, it's to make disciples, it's to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That's the church's Great Commission but what is the mission of the family? Let's look at it in the Word of God. The mission of the family begins in verse 26 when "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them," the family, "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them," here's the mission statement, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Do you see it? There's the mission statement right there, "Be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth," and do what? "subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." There's the mission statement. We've almost lost it today.

There is a tremendous initiative to reduce CO2 emissions. So much so, that we as a world are willing to leave impoverished people in poverty to cut down on emissions to go to a cloud. And the only reason Americans are okay with that is because they're not the ones having to cut down. "What are you talking about?" I'm talking about those greenhouse gases. You've heard about it, greenhouse gases. We've got too many greenhouse gases. We need to reduce the greenhouse gases. How do we do that? No more power plants. Now, in America, we keep our power plants but in the impoverished parts of the world, we want them not to have what we enjoy. Do you understand how unbiblical that is? No, most people don't. Most Christians sitting in a pew in a typical church do not understand that God made the earth for humanity, that the trees were created to make paper out of them and to burn them for heat. Those trees were not to be worshipped, they were not to be preserved indefinitely. This whole idea of being completely upside-down with these environmental priorities is unbiblical. It goes something like this: be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and then notice what it says, subdue it and have dominion over it.

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul makes it abundantly clear that widows who are young are to remarry. Paul says in the ESV, "So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households and give the adversary no occasion to slander." So, here's my opinion, just my opinion, every pastor is welcome to disagree with me, I have no problems with that but this is my opinion: I think when a woman is abandoned by her husband, abandoned, I'm talking about deadbeat dads and they are out there. It's

unfortunate, sometimes it happens. You follow up with one of these losers. I know, nobody's a loser, everyone's a winner. Who's kidding who? Honestly, who's kidding who?

We had the privilege, Pam and I, of driving to Ashville and marrying Janet Kamenski and Colton Johnson. It was a beautiful wedding. Solid couple. Both of them love the Lord. She finished high school, went to four years of undergraduate school, four more years to become a veterinarian, had been serving as a veterinarian and fell in love, proper courtship, tremendous wedding and her father abandoned her at 13 years old and has had nothing to do with her that entire time. So, don't tell me there aren't deadbeat Dads out there because anybody that would abandon their child at 13 years old is a loser. Bottom line, I don't care what you say about that, I don't care who says it, I'll stand behind that remark.

So, sometimes a male or female will marry somebody like that and that person abandons them. I believe that when that person remarries, she is now the equivalent of a widow and should be open to the Lord bringing a godly man into her life. That's my opinion. You can argue with me all you want, "Where do you get that from, Pastor?" I'll show you where I get it from. Write this down so you can study it for yourselves. Paul says that, "if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved." That's all he says. You study for yourself and see what you think. I believe that that lack of enslavement means that she or he is free to remarry. That's just my idea.

But what is not my opinion this morning, is that it is an unequivocal fact that children do better in a home where there is both a father and a mother. That's not up for discussion this morning. That's a fact: children do best in homes where there is a male called a father and a female called a mother. And I grew up in a home with a step-mother and I was so thankful that I had a step-mother. She was a wonderful step-mother that did the best she could with four children and I thank God for my step-mother. Some of you out there are doing that. Some of you are out there doing that in the body of Christ and you just keep doing it. You just keep doing it well. Thank you so much for raising children that are either not yours by way of marriage. Thank you for your service to those children. They may not thank you but they will later when they realize how privileged they were to have a father and a mother in that home.

So, we get to verse 17 and it goes something like this: he took it, he won, he captured the city. It's real simple. We don't hear how he did it, what he did, the significance, it's just really simple: he took it. So, here we are at point #4 and I love it, it's my favorite one, it's where the sermon title came from: Othniel fought for a wife. He fought for her. He wanted a wife. He wanted a wife so bad, so much, he wanted to marry her so much that he was willing to risk his life to get that prize. Now, I recognize this morning that the very idea of a male fighting to win the right to marry a particular woman seems repulsive in our post-modern, progressive, secular society. I know that, that we've completely abandoned the idea of a male pursuing a woman such so that she would fall in love with him, that we've completely abandoned that.

How many men this morning are too lazy to do the hard work of winning a woman's heart? The hard work? Do you know how much easier it is to flip the switch on and get the controller out and win another victory in a notional world with notional men, notional points, notional ammunition? Nonsense! Turn the box off and go ask somebody, "Can I take you to dinner?" Stop. Fix it. How many men are too lazy to do the hard work of winning a woman's heart? Turn them off. If you have children, like I do, create all kinds of criteria that have to be done before they can touch them. Homework, teeth brush, make beds, get the laundry list out. Grass has got to be cut, yard has got to be raked, closet's got to be organized. Get as much as you can and put that at the bottom of the list. "I can do that?" Yeah, you can do that.

So, I say to you, verse 17, evidently she was a prize worth fighting for. Did you read it yet or are you waiting for me to say it? I want you to get into your head. What you have to realize, ladies, is you are a prize worth fighting for and you don't get any of this until you marry me. None. You must marry me. You see, nobody says, "let's cohabitate," that's not how it happens. It happens one night. They don't say, "Would you like to cohabitate with me?" No, no, no, they spend the night and then one night becomes two nights and two nights become seven nights and seven nights become a month and next think you know, you've been cohabitating for a year and he still has not married you and he's enjoying all the privileges of marriage without an ounce of commitment. Would you like to stop that? It goes something like this: this is the line you cannot cross until you say, "I do, I will," and a ring is on my finger. When that happens, you will force him to become a man because men are willing to make the commitment to a wife.

Jacob, the son of Isaac, worked for 14 years for the right to marry the woman of his dreams, 14 years. Seven years he was tricked. He had to work seven more years to get the babe. Unbelievable! David took down Goliath, do you remember that? Saul said, "To the man who takes down Goliath, you can marry my daughter." Solomon said, "Whosoever finds a wife finds a good thing." How many guys can say "Amen" to that? I found a good thing 24 years ago, to the glory of God, and she's made my life better every single day. Houses and riches are an inheritance of a father but a prudent wife, a shrewd wife, a wise wife is a gift from God.

Let me remind you this morning that Christ gave his life for a bride. Christ gave his life for a bride. So when you think that Pastor is talking about tradition, I'm talking about the gospel. It goes something like this: "Wives submit yourselves to your husbands as unto the Lord for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church and is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject unto their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." So, when you are fighting for a woman's heart, you're following the example of our Savior. Maybe you didn't get that. When you are fighting for a woman's heart, you are following the example of our Savior who gave his life for a bride.

"Where are you getting that from, Pastor?" Revelation 21:9, John was called up hither and was told, "Come here and I'll show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." So, here's what

I've got for you this morning: the Bible opens with the first Adam getting a wife and the Bible closes with the second Adam getting a bride. I said the Bible opens with the first Adam getting a wife and the Bible closes with the second Adam getting a bride. Do you think marriage is important? You'd better believe it's important. It's the first organization and institution that God ordained even before the church.

"So, how do I fight for a wife today, Pastor? How do I fight for a wife? I haven't heard of any fathers offering up their daughters for the capture of a city lately, so where is the application today?" Let's get into it, let's give you some application. Number one, fight for a walk with the Lord. You, right now, fight for a walk with the Lord. Fight for a walk with the Lord. I want to have a walk with the Lord. If I'm supposed to be the spiritual leader of a family, I'd better have a walk with the Lord right now. So, fight for a walk with the Lord.

Number two: fight for the blessing of her earthly father. Don't avoid the earthly father, get to know the earthly father. Contact the earthly father. Find out what he's looking for in his daughter. Seek the blessing of the earthly father.

Number three: fight for an education or a trade. Fight for an education or a trade. No father in the world wants to give his daughter to a deadbeat. Not at all. How are you going to provide for my daughter should be one of the first questions that comes out of your mouth. How are you going to provide for my daughter? What are you equipped with? What education do you have? What skills do you have? What resources do you have? How will you provide for my daughter? How will I not know that my daughter is going to be living in poverty because you're going to spend all day playing stupid video games instead of working? A very practical sermon this morning. Very applicable for the church.

So, we transition to fight for integrity in a work ethic. Who in the world in their right mind would let you marry my daughter if I had a doubt about your integrity? Who? You are stupid if you let somebody marry your daughter who you question their integrity. Integrity is absolutely paramount. Is he a hard worker? Is he a hard worker? Has there been evidence that you've seen already that this man is a hard worker?

Fight for a pleasing appearance and personality. I was going to say "shave" but you can't say that now. It's just the opposite, grow it out. But fight for a pleasing appearance and a personality. Fight for it. Make yourself pleasing. "What do you mean? I'm not an outgoing person." Make yourself an outgoing person. Change. "If she don't marry me the way I am, then she's not going to marry me." You'll be just stuck with nothing. Really. Make yourself pleasing. Figure out what she likes and like the same stuff.

Number six: fight for her respect, love and affection. Fight for it.

Number seven: fight for skills to be an excellent husband and father.



Number five: nothing in the text indicates that the daughter had any issues with becoming his wife. Nothing. She didn't fight her Dad on it, she didn't refuse it. She accepted it. Ladies, for some of you, Superman in all his glory couldn't win your heart. Your standards are so high that it wouldn't matter who came into this church, you wouldn't marry them. I don't understand that. Your standards are so high that there isn't a guy on the planet that could meet everything that you're expecting. Can I remind you that you should look in the mirror? You're a sinner too. You're a sinner too. Hey, do you know what we've got happening? Two sinners say "I do." If you put that same kind of standard that you expect on everyone else, don't be surprised if no one is asking you out.

I'm not trying to be mean right now. I'm trying to bring to your attention that you are created in the image of God and he is created in the image of God and you may raise your standards so high that you're going to be 65 years old wondering how am I 65 and still not married? We're laughing and I don't mind that, but I want to bring to your attention right now, I'm being serious. And the reason I'm being serious is because I'm a Pastor and I care about a congregation of people and I know that when husbands and wives are living together at 60 and 62 and 65 and 70, that they do better. I'm not trying to be funny this morning right now. I'm bringing to your attention something that I've seen up front and in my face for the last seven years. In those households where God preserves them both alive and they take care of each other in their older years, it works really well. It works really well. In those cases where there are widows and there's an absence, we need as a church to rally around them. We do. We need to rally around them but for the most part, the very best plan is to get married.

"What about singleness, Pastor. I know in 1 Corinthians 7 there's an exception clause for singleness." That's true. In that chapter there is an exception clause. Sometimes God gives to a particular person the gift of celibacy and they're okay with being single and they can serve the body of Christ better single but in most cases, it's better for them to marry. Look what the Scripture says, "But if they cannot contain themselves, let them marry for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." Paul says it like this, let me show you one more time, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband." Nothing wrong with saying, "You know why we're going to get married early? Because we want to stay morally pure." There's nothing wrong with that. We don't need ten year engagements. We don't need five year engagements. If you sense there is a courtship happening and you guys are getting too close and you know you're going to cross a line that you shouldn't, get married. Get married, there's nothing wrong with that.

You say, "Wait a minute, Pastor, most of us this morning are already married. Why are you talking to us?" Listen please: we need to create a culture in the church where the right things are affirmed and the wrong things are criticized. Stop, listen to me very closely. I want you to connect with me right now, please: I'm talking to you as a shepherd who cares about you. I'm not delivering a sermon right now. I'm talking to you about a Pastor who prays for you, thinks about you and wants nothing but God's best for you. So, please listen: when we hear about somebody moving a date up, what's our reaction? Because there are two choices: 1. be happy for them; 2. talk behind their backs

about it. “You know why they’re doing that, right? She’s probably pregnant.” Wait a minute, are we creating a culture in the church that affirms what God affirms and criticizes what God criticizes or are we gossiping when we shouldn’t?

Notice the daughter fully embraces her role as the helpmate. In verse 18 and 19 she asks for a piece of land and then she says land without water is useless so she goes to her Dad and she says we need some water and he gives her the upper and the lower springs. And suddenly I realized that Caleb had raised a Proverbs 31 woman who can buy a piece of land and sell it at a profit, who knows that she has a responsibility to care for that household and is more than capable of doing something like that. And suddenly, what Othniel realizes is that to his marriage he has received a bride, a piece of land, a source of water and a father-in-law that cares for him. That’s a pretty good deal, isn’t it?

Let me just tell you something right now: 25 years ago, I met my father-in-law and for 25 years he’s cared for us. Awesome. God gave me a great father-in-law, an affirming father-in-law, a wise, capable, prudent, caring, concerned father-in-law. “Why are you saying that?” Because every now and then we crack mother-in-law jokes and what we need to be doing instead is affirming the role of the extended family that you are receiving. Do you hear what I’m saying? Stop thinking about this as a sermon and start thinking about a shepherd who cares for you. My father has been dead for many years. I’m so thankful that God gave me an awesome father-in-law and obviously Othniel received a great father-in-law because he gave him a chunk of land and land without water is useless and so he gave him the upper and the lower springs.

Turn over to Judges 3, please. I’m going to keep you just a little bit longer this morning. I hope you’ll be patient with me but I want to drive to the end of the sermon so I hope you’ll just hang on. Thank all the nursery workers in advance who are having to endure just a little bit more this morning but I’d like to bring the sermon to a close. Judges 3, please. Simple, little idea, just a simple idea but I want to connect it for you. In Judges 3 we find Othniel, Caleb’s son-in-law, becoming the first judge of Israel. Now, how cool is that? And if you look down at verse 9,

“And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even,” who?  
“Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim. And the land had rest forty years.”

“What’s your point, Pastor?” Here it is right here, number six: the fight for your family doesn’t end once you’re married, it only begins. The fight for your family. Can I remind you that our adversary, the devil, is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour? You, Dads, this morning are the protector of your family and you, Dad, this morning have a responsibility to fight for your wife. “She’s my wife. I love her. I’ll provide for her. I’ll

protect her. I'll be the father and the husband that she needs. She'll have no need to look otherwise because I'm there providing, protecting, meeting her needs, caring for her."

So, let's wrap it up right now: some of you have given up on marriage. Please listen to me: some of you, I've watched this now for seven years, some of you have given up on marriage. What's happened to you in the past has hurt you so bad that you're paralyzed. You're paralyzed. Let me talk to you for a moment: would you please fight against the fear of rejection? Ladies, listen to me very closely right now, please. I want to explain something to you: the reason he isn't asking you out and the reason he keeps going back to the Playstation is because of the fear of rejection. You see, the Playstation never rejects him. The Xbox 360 never rejects him. The basketball never rejects him. The court never rejects him. But he might ask you that dreaded question, "Can I take you to dinner?" and then he's waiting and waiting and waiting for that answer. Guys: fight against the fear of rejection. If she says "no," there's somebody out there behind her that'll say "yes." You've got to keep asking. You've got to keep asking.

Number two: fight against depression. You're depressed that there's no one asking you. It affects your countenance. You're depressed and it affects your countenance. You're no longer a bubbly, joyful person because you're depressed about the fact that there is no one asking you and no one would ask you in the state that you're at in this depression so fight against depression.

Number three: fight against low self-esteem. There are some of you this morning saying, "I'm not worthy for anyone to marry me," and so you're so down on yourself that you've got to fight against that.

Number four: fight against past memories of hurt and abuse. Yes, you married a deadbeat. Yes, you married a loser but there are winners out there. You've got to be willing to take the chance to find a winner.

Number five: fight the fear of vulnerability. Yes, you may fall in love and get your heart broken again. Some of you are guarding against that so badly that you refuse to date and court anyone because of the fear of vulnerability. Feelings of unworthiness tied to bitterness and unforgiveness. Fight against that. Open yourself up. Enough of that.

Here are my signs of a healthy church and we're done. 1. I would tell you that in a healthy church men are fighting to win the hearts of future wives. In a healthy church, men are fighting to win the hearts of future wives. 2. In a healthy church serious sanctified courtship is happening. Notice I did not say "dating." We're not playing the dating game. We're not bouncing from person to person to person and setting the conditions for divorce, divorce, divorce. No. Serious sanctified courtship. Don't say "yes" to a date if you know you'd never marry him. Don't say "yes" to a date. Don't give him the false impression. If you know, "I would never marry that person," then don't date them. You only date people you would consider marrying. It's called courtship. Why did we put the word "sanctified" there? Because in sanctified courtship it's a holy event, under God.

Number three: in a healthy church couples are frequently getting married. But wait a minute, not just getting married. We could've said that but we said getting married under God before the body of Christ. Under God before the body of Christ. They're not running to a courthouse, they're not running to a Justice of the Peace. They believe that marriage has been ordained by God and as such it is the institution where you get married.

Number four: in a healthy church children are being born and adopted. In a healthy church children are being born and adopted.

Four signs of a healthy church: 1. men are fighting to win the hearts of future wives; 2. serious sanctified courtship is happening; 3. couples are frequently getting married under God and before the church; 4. the nursery is full.

Let's pray.

*Father, help us to grasp the seriousness of this topic, this institution, this thing we call marriage and family. Help us as a church to recognize that this is critical to your heart, that this captures your heart outside of the gospel and is a gospel issue. I pray God that we would do it in Jesus' name. Amen.*