

**The Vow**  
**Prioritize your Relationships**  
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**January 24, 2010**

We are starting a new series that is very important and I wanted to be here to start it because we're talking about the vow. This is for married people, single people and anybody because it deals with relationship and communication and purity and it has things for everybody so if you're single today don't think you can tune out the next four weeks because it won't be for you. It's very much going to be for you because every relationship in life has commitments tied to it so we're going to talk about those commitments all through the four weeks. For those of you who are married, yes we are concentrating on you. We're focusing on you because marriage is the hardest thing you will ever do. Marriage is tough and we're watching them fall apart year after year after year. Marriages that should be solid are falling apart. When I read the statistics, it is frightening. I am telling you. I read last week that 70% of married men will have an affair. Guys do you realize that's 7 out of 10 and girls, you're not a lot better. It's 60%. 60% of women will have an affair. I look at those statistics and think wow that blows me away. Then I read that over half the marriages will not make it to the 15 year mark. 50% of marriages will fail before the 15 year mark which means they will fail while they have children living at home. Many of you have been affected by divorce in your own family. Many of you have been through divorces and I want you to see the devastation that causes and we want to do something as a church to try to say hey, let's get the odds more in our favor. Let me give you an example of what this is about. Let's say that 50% of marriages don't make it 15 years which means your kids more than likely are going to be affected. The 300 kids we have in this church, over half of them at least will be affected by divorce if we don't change the odds. Divorce is devastating to children and we can pretend like it's not all day long but it's devastating. Let's say we have a 50% chance of that, let's change that. Let's say that tomorrow morning there was a 50% chance that on the way to the school bus your child was going to be mauled by a bear. Now, I said pretend so use your imagination, I know there are not a lot of bears running around Waxahachie. What would you do? Give them a kiss, put their backpack on them and say run fast baby? There's a 50/50 chance I'll see you tonight. No, you're not going to do that. There's no way you're going to do that. You're going to walk your child to the bus with a gun in your hands. You'll drive your kid to school or put them in a suit of armor and send them out. You're not just going to say well, we'll take our chances. How about the other statistics? What if tomorrow there was a 70% chance you were going to be killed in an automobile accident? Ladies 60% chance. Now you still have to go to work but I bet you're going to drive differently. I bet you will be careful and take a safe route. You're going to flip the odds in your favor if you know so that's what we want to do with marriage and relationships. We want to turn the odds more in our favor. We want to get them where we're not in that 50 percentile; we're not in that 60 or 70 percentile. We need to do everything we can to make this the best we can and we need to shift the game to our advantage. There are some ways that we can do that and so today we're going to start with the first step in saving

your marriage and your relationships and that is this....we must prioritize our relationships. In the next four weeks we're going to deal a lot from what's in the bible; we're going to talk about what the bible says about relationships; what the bible says about life and marriage.

The first relationship in your life has to be your relationship with God. You must put God first in your life. Now, I know we say that all the time and I know of you are like, yeah, yeah I got that. But I want you to understand something, putting God first in your life is not easy and so today you're telling me yeah I got that because that's easy, you better determine what you mean by putting God first in your life because to put God first in your life takes a fight. To put God first in your life is everyday waking up and denying yourself and taking the cross and following him and it's a fight because every day is full of temptation and struggle and every day the enemy is after you trying to take you away from your relationship. See, you were created for relationship that's why God created you to bring him glory. I want you to understand, you bring God glory in more than just showing up to church. You bring him glory more than when you pray and read the bible. You bring God glory in everything you do that's not willful sin. But I'm telling you that Satan wants to pull us away with willful sin and all of us get trapped in this relationship with God that's kind of like a head nod to God instead of a relationship with God. It's a yes, I believe in God but I'm not letting God transform my life and a majority of people are in right relationship with God even though they know who God is. What I'm asking for is for you to have the willingness in your heart to fight for your relationship with God. So many of us don't try to fight for our relationship with God, we give up. We say things like because we've failed so many times, well I'm not going to commit to read the bible and have a quiet time because I always fail. I'm not going to commit that because I never can do it. I just give up. I'm going to just live and let live. I want you to fight for your relationship with God because it is a fight every day of your life you have to work to put God first and so I have to ask you, is that relationship right this morning? Are you willing to fight for it? Now guys, we understand the fight thing a little more than woman. Women I want you to pretend that one of your kids has been insulted because then you understand the fight instinct that I'm talking about. I have that fight instinct but I remember one time I was at a football game in Ennis and I'm sitting there and it's a rough game because that's back when they beat us 36 years in a row or whatever it was. But we're at this game and my future son-in-law is the quarterback and the quarterback gets a lot of glory when they're winning and they get a lot of the fault then they're losing so he's out there on the field and he's a sophomore and there are some people behind us about three rows that for some reason lost their minds and you've been to games so you understand that. So my brother and I are sitting in our row and our wives are behind us. There is a big crowd and Bonham's (future son-in-law) parents are sitting with us. My daughters are on the field cheering and so there is a lot going on and these people are just acting like idiots behind us and I'm thinking I can handle that, I don't care but they're getting louder and louder and more obnoxious and they're calling out his name and saying things about him and saying they need to put this other quarterback in and it is out of control. All of a sudden, I knew it was going to happen so I should have been prepared, I hear my wife and she stands up and turns around with the tone that makes me wet myself just a little bit. She let them have it and then I heard the words, why don't you just turn around and shut up. They just told my wife to shut up. I don't know what happened next, the women behind us said that my brother and I rose in unison and turned and before I embarrassed myself and lost my ministry we heard, we're

sorry, we'll be quiet then we sat back down. That fight is in you. The fight to protect, that fight to make something happen. It's inside you and if you don't use that same fight to hold onto your relationship to God then your relationship to God is always going to slip and struggle because it is a fight to stay where you're supposed to be with God because temptation is everywhere and it's so much easier to not live for God than it is to live for God. I want you to know from the very beginning our God created you because of his love for you. It starts in Genesis chapter 2 verse 7, <sup>7</sup> the LORD God formed the man <sup>[a]</sup> from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. He created us for this relationship. He created us so that we could be in relationship with him because he loves us. God didn't need us. I've had people tell me before that God created us because he wanted someone to hang out with and fellowship with him because he was lonely. No he wasn't. God's not lonely; God's the only thing that is complete in him. But he created you to bring him glory and in that glory we find ourselves and listen, we have such a misunderstanding of who God is, we think he's some holy being up there looking down at us and keeping score and looking for us to do wrong and ready to throw down a lightning bolt and punish us. He's up there making rules and thinking oh, that looks fun; that's not our God. Our God loves everything that we do that's not sin and he created us to enjoy live. In verse 15, <sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free, I want you to experience everything I have for you. I want you to run around this garden and I want you to enjoy yourself and I want you to bring me glory because you're my creation and I want to be in relationship with you and you can eat from any tree. You're free to eat; boy isn't that exciting? I love hearing that. "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Folks, Adam died because he crossed that line. Adam would have lived forever but he died because of this. <sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." That brings us to that second relationship because you see God saw that we needed as man, something else. We needed, not just relationship with him, we needed something else to help complete us. Then he gave Adam a job and Adam went about naming all the animals in the world. He went about naming each animal and that was a huge job by the way. I'm sure at the end he got tired, bird, and cat. What kind of bird? Blue. I understand it's a big job but at the end of the job I want you to notice he was not fulfilled and there are way too many of you men today that are trying to find fulfillment in your job. You can look in the book of Genesis and I can tell you from the scripture your job is never going to fulfill you. You're job is never going to make you the man you want to be. You're never going to be successful enough. You're job is secondary to your relationship with God; it's secondary to your relationship with your spouse. God looks down and says I'm going to make woman and he puts Adam to sleep and he takes a rib from Adam and he forms woman. Women, I want you to understand something; you're the only thing not created out of dirt. You were formed and created by God in his hand and that's one of the reasons men have some much trouble with you because you're the very top of creation. You're the greatest thing God has ever created and so men are fascinated and obsessed with you because we always get obsessed with

creation instead of creator. That's part of our problem men and we'll talk about that more in a few weeks. We are worshiping women instead of worshiping God because of the way that women were created but I want you to understand about you being created, you were created out of Adam but God put him to sleep because God wanted a relationship with you before you had a relationship with your husband. Ladies I want you to understand something today; there is not a man in the world that is going to meet your needs. There's not a man in the world that is going to make you feel complete until your relationship with God is the first priority in your life, that man beside you will not make you feel whole. God wanted a personal relationship with you before you met your husband. He wanted that and then he wanted to make it public and that's one of the things you need to know as a church. I hear this all the time; my relationship with God is private. If your relationship with God is private, then you don't have a relationship with God. It can be personal and it has to be personal, but it has to be public. Let me tell you, God sent his son to hang on a cross in public. Jesus died in public for your sin and if you can tell me today that I'm going to have a relationship with God but I'm going to keep it on the down low, I'm going to tell you that you don't have a relationship with God. So understand that today. The second priority in a relationship is priority with your spouse. <sup>23</sup> The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, for she was taken out of man.'" <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> The man and his wife were both naked, (I love that verse) and they felt no shame. We're going to talk about sex in this series. Everybody is saying, oh you can't talk about sex in church. Really...God invented sex. You all know that right? It was God's idea and he said it was good. God invented it. God didn't walk down in the Garden of Eden and say what are they doing?! I can't believe they're doing that, you stop that right now. Throw water on them! He didn't do that. He created it. So yes, we're going to talk about it because it's an important part but I want you to see the way it went. They had a relationship with God individually. God brought them together. They were married and then sex was an incredible gift from God. The problem in our culture is we've got it messed up. We have sex and then we get married, maybe, and then we try to get our relationship with God right. That's reverse order of what God is looking for in our lives and I want you to know something and I have to be careful with this but I want you to understand me, we have a lot of couples here that are just living together. I'm glad you're here and I hope that God is working in your life and I'm excited that you're in this church and feel welcomed at church because you are welcome but cohabitation is not God's plan for your life and I want to challenge you to make a commitment to that relationship. I want to challenge you; I know what I'm going to hear because I hear it all the time. It's more economical that we live together because we can't afford to live separate. Okay then, stop having sex. Let's be honest and men, I want to challenge you to be men. If you're not willing to make a commitment to that woman that you're living with then let her go. If you're not willing to be a man and commit to her then let her go, stop lying to her. She needs that security from a man who is fully committed to her. Anyway, understand it, know it and if you're here today and I've offended you, that's the word of God offending you. You're welcome here, we don't judge you, and I'm just telling you what the word of God says.

The second thing you need to do with your mate once you get into this right relationship is you've got to continue it. I am watching young couples and I have conversations with them and I say when's the last time you and your wife went out together just the two of you? They can't remember. That's not healthy. My wife and I have been married a lot of years. I was a full time student and I had a full time ministry, we had four children. There was so much going on that we really didn't do it right. We didn't concentrate on each other and our marriage nearly fell apart. Fifteen years ago we made a commitment to have a date night. Our kids hate it. Let me tell you something about date night, double dating went out in junior high. Date night is not about a double date. I'm not saying you can't go out with your friends. We have a lot of fun doing that but date night is her and I, just the two of us because we need time to connect each other and talk to each other and be with one another. We have date night every two weeks at least. We get away and we strand Cole with Malachi and we talk off on the motorcycle or something where it's just the two of us alone for an extended period of time. If you have not had a date night, you need to have a date night and guys, let me tell you what date night is not. What do you want to do? Where you wanna eat? You want to watch a movie? That's not a date. Now I understand you can do that every other day of your life just like I do but date night needs to be a plan. Guys, it may need to be something that they like. I've got a great date planned....we're going watch the Mavericks. If she likes the Mavericks, great but you've got to do things, you've got to date your spouse. You've got to continue to build that relationship through those date nights. You've also got to make sure you have romantic getaways. You've got to get away from everything. Well you say I can't afford it; yes you can. You can afford to do everything else you want to do. Get away once every three months. My wife and I go away together overnight and we get away from everything and we just enjoy each other and sometimes we just stay in the room and order pizza. They may be all we do but we're together. Once a year we take a vacation together and we usually leave the country because that's the only way people will leave me alone. We hang out and enjoy each other and that's what we have to have to keep our marriage together and after twenty seven and a half years we're happily married and there are not a lot of people who can say that. We are happily married because we've committed to a few things to keep the romance alive. Communication; we're going to talk about that next week because we still have our fights. I've learned the magic words, yes dear. You're right. If there is no woman around to tell me I'm wrong so I've learned all those things that you need to do. Love and Respect Conference is going to help you a lot with communication but communication for me has been mind blowing because I try to be romantic. Guys I want to challenge you this, ask your wife sometime today, what's the most romantic thing I've ever done for you. Some of you won't ask that question because you're jerks. But, ask your spouse what's the most romantic thing I've ever done for you. Now I've done some things and I'm going to be transparent with you because I've been sick. There was one time, I read this in a book, I'm embarrassed but I'm going to tell you anyway. I took Hersey's Kisses and I made a path from the front door around the house to the back door and I made a big heart with the kisses and I put roses in it then I rang the door bell and Dawn followed the kisses out to the heart where I was waiting to take her on a date. She rounded the corner and her first words to me were, you're so stupid. You know what the most romantic thing I've ever done for my wife is? She came home one day and the whole house was spotless. That was a great night. You mean all I've got to do are the dishes? That's a lot

easier than that other stuff. Hey honey look, I'm loading the dishwasher, I'm sexy. Look at this, I'm mopping. I'm putting the kids to bed. What's the most romantic thing you've ever done? I challenge you to talk and find out and communicate and make your spouse important because guys, you spend way too much time at work and that is not going to do it. Some of you think that you're a good husband because you're providing financially. Women want you to provide emotionally as well. We're going to talk about the women's roll later. I don't know a lot about the woman's roll. I only know one thing and I can't talk about that right now.

Third relationship that you have to get in order is relationship with your kids. We've talked about that the last couple weeks but I want to touch on it again because you need a relationship with your kids and it needs to be right and it continues in chapter 4. Adam <sup>[a]</sup> lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. <sup>[b]</sup> She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth <sup>[c]</sup> a man." <sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. They had a dysfunctional family but I want you to understand that family is part of what God does. When he puts kids in your life, you're responsible for those kids and the first thing I want you to understand with those kids is you need to limit your kid's activities. You're the one in control of your kids and I'm telling you a lot of you are teaching your kids how to be stressed and I hate watching it. I hate watching you run your children from game after game. Listen moms, if you feel like a taxi, that's your fault. Well I want my kid to be well rounded. Listen, your kids are defined by what they do. They're defined by the relationships they have and I see 6 and 7 year olds stressed because they're too busy. Parents it is your job to limit the activities with your kids. I know your kids are going to be pro baseball players and famous dancers, I've met them and they are so many in Waxahachie. I want you to understand priority; God, family, church then activities. I can't tell you the young people that miss spiritual transformations because they had to play summer baseball. I can't tell you how many young people who miss mission trips because they have a cheerleading competition. Those things are gone at about 22 years old but their life in Christ is for eternity. Put a lid on your kid's activities.

Finally, spend time with your kids, quality and quantity. I wish I would have done this more when I was young so I am speaking to you as an old man. I am kind of learning it all over with my grandkids. I'm like a drug to my grandkids. I don't know why but my two grand boys, if I'm around the world disappears and they want me which was really easy when there was only one of them but now there are two of them. I am holding one and playing with this one and this one will cry because he wants my attention and when I give this one attention, that one will cry because he wants my attention and I can't give either one of them my full attention and that's what they crave. I look at that and think, wow, God they need time with me alone and so like this Friday I am planning on picking up the older one and go to Arlington and riding the carousel and spending time with just him. Then I'm going to drop him off and I will take the little one who've I've not got to spend individual time with and I'm going to spend time with that little one because it's that important. It's easier now in my home because Malachi is almost by himself; Cole is almost out of the house. It's up to you to spend that time with your kids and to love on those kids and to not be active and running but just listen to them and talk to them. Once again, I feel like an old man but I want you to understand something, it's going

to be over before you know it so enjoy it. Today I want you to fight for the relationships in your life. I'll close with this verse in Nehemiah <sup>14</sup> After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." I'm asking you through this series from the vow to fight to fight for your relationship with God, to fight for the relationship with your spouse, to fight for your relationship with your kids. To be everything God intended and I want to challenge you to do three things. Number 1, this week I want to spend twenty minutes a day with God, just talking with him, reading his word. Number 2, I want you to go on a date night with your wife and it doesn't count if other people go with you or you take your kids. Guys you plan it. Third, I want you to take some time this week with each child. Just take some time with each one of your children and evaluate what God would have in your life. Listen this series is going to be incredible. If you let it, God will change your life through it. I want you to invite others to be part of it. Let's bow together. Father, thank you for the privilege of being able to talk about you and thank you for the freedom of this church to talk about things that are real and God we pray now you will speak into our hearts and into our lives and help us to hear and know you and God help us to follow you. Today I want you to fight for your relationship with God. If you know that your relationship with God is not where it needs to be this is the moment. You just need to say a prayer to God. God I want to fight for my relationship with you. God I want you to be first in my life with my word and my deed, not just my mouth. Maybe some of you are in a marriage crisis right now and you're miserable. I want you to fight for your relationship. I don't want you to give up and give in and run and do the easy thing. I want you to stand and fight for your marriage right now. For some of you I want you to fight for your kids. Fight for that time. Don't let work take it, don't let the yard take it, don't let the stupid TV take it. Fight to spend time with your kids. We've made a vow and let's be men and women of our word. Let's stand together.