

Sermon for May 19, 2013

BMZ Church

Series: "As You Wish..."

Text: Proverbs 4:23, Philippians 2:1-8 (11?)

Title: "On Guard!"

Introduction: How we doing, BMZ?!? Glad you are with us! Over the past few weeks, we've said that to FALL in LOVE is EASY; but, to STAY in LOVE was much more difficult! If you have missed any of the messages in this series, "AS YOU WISH..." they are available at [www.bmzchurch.org](http://www.bmzchurch.org). Men, if you missed two weeks ago ... GOT TO GET IT!

Also, we talked about The Princess Bride and how in that movie "AS YOU WISH..." really means, "I LOVE YOU!" AND, our question is ... If Westley says to Buttercup "I WILL ALWAYS COME FOR YOU", in other words, "I will always be here for you and always love you" ... the question is: IS THAT POSSIBLE?!?

Most of us would say, "YES" because we want it for ourselves. BUT, IS THAT NEVER-ENDING, "I can't wait to get home"/ "I can't wait until you get home", NOT just SURVIVAL, BUT, THRIVAL romantic LOVE POSSIBLE LONG-TERM?" Answer: "Ehhhh..."

Our Scripture that we are building this whole series off of comes from Ephesians 5:33. It says, <sup>33</sup> *So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*<sup>1</sup>

WOMEN need UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. MEN need UNCONDITIONAL RESPECT!

The past few weeks, we have talked about how MEN can learn to LOVE UNCONDITIONALLY and how WOMEN can learn to RESPECT UNCONDITIONALLY.

THIS WEEK, we are going to make a little bit of a LEFT TURN. In order to learn to LOVE and RESPECT UNCONDITIONALLY, we might have to DIG a little DEEPER...

Let me ask ... How is it that a man and a woman can stand at an altar and proclaim to the world that they will love each other until death and look at each other with stars in their eyes and know that they can't possibly love anyone more than they love this person they are taking vows with ... AND THEN, 5-10 years later (if that long) ... Those same two people can't stand each other. As a matter of fact, there is no one on the planet they DISLIKE more! They can't stand being near them. They can't stand seeing them. They can't stand the other person's voice. They don't want anything to do with that person ... WHY IS THAT?!?

Today, I want us to try to discover the answer AND what STEPS we can take to PREVENT it from happening to us again ... or, again, again ... or, for a first time!

If you have your Bible with you, turn with me to Proverbs 4 ... if you don't; no worries. All of our Scriptures for today will be up on the screen and much of what we are doing is in your program. If you don't own a Bible and would like one, please stop by Java Jct/Blessed Bean and someone will get you set up with your own Bible. Speaking of which...

*If you haven't already, I invite you to take out your message notes and merge card... On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline walking us through our Scripture. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... I would love to have you take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, take this home and refrigerate it. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you watching on-line, you can hit the button for notes and for MERGE CARD and stick with us. If you are watching/listening later, or IPODing; you can download the outline off of our website so you too can take notes.*

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (3rd ed.) (Eph 5:32-33). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Let's pray and then we will press on with where we are going today... **LET'S PRAY**  
(turn off marked lights during prayer)!

So, how is it that two people who LOVE each other SO MUCH on their WEDDING DAY and make VOWS to, can just hate each other a few years later? AND, how is it that this happens to some people MULTIPLE TIMES??

My experience is that MOST PEOPLE, when they are in the process of separating from their spouse ... if you would ask them if they would consider marrying again, their answer is: "Possibly ... I would certainly consider it... I'm open to that possibility."

Then you ask their EX and they say the same thing ... "Yeah, eventually, I could see myself falling in love again and maybe marrying..."

Okay, so both of you can't stand each other, but both of you are open to the possibility of falling in love again and starting a new relationship, right?!? Answer: "Yeah!"

Well, I have an idea ... if you are going to fall in love with someone again anyway ... why don't you just fall in love with EACH OTHER AGAIN ... you have so much invested and it's going to be expensive to be separate and if there are kids involved ... wouldn't it be easier, if you are going to fall in love anyway; to just fall in love with EACH OTHER?!?! It'd be CHEAPER! Right?!?

And they would look at me like I'm kind of CRAZY ... because it's just not that SIMPLE.

Again, the IDEA behind this SERIES is to answer the QUESTION, "Is it possible to not only FALL in love, but to STAY in love?!?" We all want that, but somehow it doesn't always happen! Even if I told you it wasn't possible ... you would still think it is and try for it! Why? Because deep inside of us is this belief that it IS POSSIBLE and that we will be the ones to experience it!

We all think that somewhere out there is that ONE SPECIAL PERSON ... if I can just find that RIGHT PERSON and fall in love ... happily ever after is MINE! Even with my past and my baggage and what culture shows me and all of the statistical evidence and what we've experienced or seen in other people's relationships; I believe that it can happen for ME!

It's in us to want that one somebody special that I can spend my life with... we think that is something from God to want that kind of intimate relationship with one other person.

Over the past couple of weeks, we've said that in order to have a shot at that kind of relationship, we have to MAKE LOVE ... A VERB! We have to learn to LOVE the way JESUS LOVES. We've given some ideas for women on how to RESPECT their man UNCONDITIONALLY and give some ideas to men on how to LOVE their woman UNCONDITIONALLY ... but some of you have taken that in and are still saying, "Yeah, but it's just NOT that SIMPLE!"

## I. It's Not That SIMPLE

And you're right ... it's NOT that SIMPLE IS IT?! BUT, it WOULD BE THAT SIMPLE ... to keep putting each other first and SUBMITTING to EACH OTHER ... "No, you go first" ... "No, you go first" ... "No, I want to help you enjoy life" ... "No, I want to help you enjoy life" ... "No, I want to make your life better" ... "No, I want to make your life better", etc. ... we could all hold hands and giggle and just enjoy life, IF:

We came into the relationship with HEART that was HEALTHY and FULL of LOVE. IF both you and your spouse / fiancée came into the relationship and in your past, there had been nothing but amazingly wonderful relationships in your past and both of your parents had been there for you in everything ... never missed a game or a concert or an event ... If your parents had modeled for you unconditional love and respect and never had any hard times that were noticeable and they poured love into you and if your friends had always been kind and compassionate and had never hurt you or taken advantage of you or bullied you or no one had ever put you down or called you anything less than wonderful and if your siblings were constantly lifting you up and caring for you and reminding you of your incredible worth ... and you were just full of joy and acceptance and affirmation...

If that was the experience for BOTH PEOPLE in the relationships, there is a chance that LOVING each other, “As You Wish” / and “I Will Always Come For You” and always staying in love ... that would be a distinct PROBABILITY! That would make it SIMPLE to STAY IN LOVE! It would be SIMPLE to keep putting EACH OTHER FIRST ... it would be GREAT!

But, most couples don't come into our relationships with that kind of past. For most couples, each individual comes with their own unique PAST ... sometimes called BAGGAGE. Your Dad didn't come to all of your games and sometimes he didn't even come home. Your Mom tried to be loving but she had her issues and life was often about her. And between your parents there was often arguments and there was some alcohol involved and in some cases drugs and money problems ... Some of us had a parent leave altogether. Some of us had siblings that gained all of the attention because they were so GOOD or they were so BAD that Mom and Dad had to put time into them and they didn't have much time left over for you...

For most of us, these are the things we BRING INTO the RELATIONSHIP! Now, I want to try to ILLUSTRATE that for us (stolen straight from Andy Stanley, because I'm not sure how to do it better...) the best I can. I brought a couple of friends along today ... This is Mr. and Mrs. “MUG”...

## **II. Mr. and Mrs. MUG**

Story = Met at college and when they met they liked each other a lot ... he was smart and had prospects to make good money and she ... well, look at her! She's a knockout! They started dating and when they started dating, they were so CAREFUL. He's working at getting her to like him and she's trying to get him to commit to her and so they are just so careful not to rock the relationship boat! They had a couple of disagreements, but even in those, they were so careful ... right through the engagement.

BUT, then they got MARRIED! About a month into their marriage, they had a problem ... they hit a BUMP ... and STUFF CAME OUT! And he looked at her and said, “Where did that come from??” And she looked at him and said, “I didn't know you had ANGER ISSUES.” He said, “I didn't have ANGER ISSUES until you BUMPED ME!” And then they had another problem and there it was AGAIN ... STUFF keeps COMING OUT!

And SHE went and saw her SISTER! And she said, “I didn't know he was like that!”

And HE went to see ... well, MEN don't really go see ANYONE, so he probably said into the mirror, “Wow! She makes me SO MAD! When she talks to me like that it makes me SO MAD! If she would just quit BUMPING ME, I wouldn't BE LIKE THAT ... MAD! My WIFE really has ISSUES!”

He says, “When we were dating, you didn’t act this way ... where is all that coming from?” She says, “Well, every time we get in an argument, YOU MAKE ME ACT THAT WAY!”

Here’s what I’m trying to say ... MR. MUG thinks that these things (ANGER, etc.) only come out of him because SHE keeps BUMPING HIM. And MRS. MUG thinks that she keeps acting that way because HE keeps BUMPING HER!

HERE’S THE TRUTH: The reason Blue Beads keep coming out of MR. MUG is because that’s what’s IN THERE! And the reason Pink Beads keep coming out of MRS. MUG is because that’s what’s IN THERE!

Here’s the POINT: All of us have STUFF IN US! And we don’t recognize it until we get BUMPED! And most of us don’t get our first REAL, HARD, INTENSE BUMP until we get into a ROMANTIC, INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP that we are COMMITTED TO! There is something about that ROMANTIC, COMMITTED relationship that brings out the BEST and the WORST in us!

Most people don’t really know what’s going on IN THERE until they get into a COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP ... you’re the only one for me (BUMP) ... WHAT WAS THAT?!?

This is why people who make the ULTIMATE COMMITMENT to EACH OTHER end up MADDER at each other than anyone else in the world!!

He’s absolutely sure the reason that the BLUE BEADS come out is because SHE keeps saying that thing and she keeps acting that way and she just gets on his NERVES! BUT, the TRUTH is that the Blue Beads come out because that’s what’s in there.

And SHE’S absolutely sure the reason the PINK BEADS come out is because HE keeps saying that or acting that way! If he would just STOP THAT, and START THAT and DO THAT MORE or LESS and if he’d just be more CAREFUL, the PINK BEADS wouldn’t come out! BUT, the TRUTH is that the Pink Beads come out because that’s what’s in there!

AND ALL OF US have STUFF that’s IN THERE, and all of us BLAME the person we are with for the STUFF that comes OUT OF US. BUT, the only reason stuff comes out of us is because that’s what’s IN THERE! And there is nothing like ROMANTIC relationships to bring stuff OUT OF US!

NOW, the question is: WHAT DO WE DO!?

### III. What Do We DO?

The answer is pretty SIMPLE, but it’s something most of us don’t do ... aren’t aware of doing ... don’t even think about! We have to learn to PAY ATTENTION to what’s going on INSIDE of US!

This shows up in our Bibles in numerous places ... Jesus talked about this in Matthew 15 (NEXT STEPS = READ IT!), but we are going to read the SIMPLE version from Proverbs ... Proverbs 4:23 ... The writer of PROVERBS we believe to be King Solomon who was considered the WISEST MAN in the WORLD! He wrote PROVERBS (talks about money and relationships and wisdom and decision-making and life in general) and ECCLESIASTES (end of life ... a lot seems kind of futile ... what’s important ...) and SONG of SONGS (relationships and intimacy) / SOLOMON. Here’s what he says ... (wisest man to ever live)

Proverbs 4:23 = <sup>23</sup> *Guard your heart above all else*, ... (STOP) This is the wisest man in the world that has said many WISE THINGS ... he says “ABOVE ALL ELSE” ... more important than anything else ... GUARD YOUR HEART!

HEART = Emotional Center of our being... GUARD YOUR HEART = Pay Attention to what is going on ON the INSIDE!! GUARD YOUR HEART = pay attention to it ... keep the bad guys out of there ... protect what is valuable in there... GUARD YOUR HEART!

So, let's talk about our STRATEGY to GUARD OUR HEART ... just turn to the person next to you and tell them YOUR STRATEGY that you have in place right now to make sure you GUARD YOUR HEART ... go ahead! Right!! You're thinking, "WHAT?!?"

Unfortunately, most of us have NEVER THOUGHT of that BEFORE! Most of us didn't know until this morning that was even in the BIBLE. What does that mean!?! If you are asking "What does that mean?" then you are probably not doing it and SOLOMON says that's the MOST IMPORTANT thing you can DO! Guard Your Heart!

If you have been in a relationship, you have experienced how what is in your heart comes out ... and you may have blamed those things on the other person. AND, when you got into another relationship it was so weird because that person brought the same stuff out of you ... four relationships later BLUE BEADS kept coming out of you and you thought, "I have been in four relationships / marriages where all four women figured out how to bring the same BLUE BEADS out of me ... I have to find a woman who will bring something else out of me. When all they are bringing out of you is what's already in you..."

And SOLOMON says, "This is why you must develop a strategy to GUARD YOUR HEART!"

#### **IV. Guard Your Heart**

Now, we are not very good at GUARDING OUR HEART, but what we are good at is MONITORING the OTHER PERSON'S BEHAVIOR! We have no idea how to GUARD OUR HEART, but we know exactly how to MONITOR our SPOUSE'S BEHAVIOR! We are really good at pointing out what they do say and don't say and do and don't do ... should say and shouldn't say ... but, we are poor at MONITORING our HEART.

Both of these things are really important and here's how they are connected ... In your relationship with the person you love the most, you want to FEEL a certain way! We all do. Feel loved ... respected ... pretty ... handsome ... cherished ... honored ... protected ... cared for, etc. You and I count on the person we are in relationship with to make us feel these ways. What they say and do either helps us feel those things or they don't. When we try to get our spouses to stop doing something or start doing something it's because those things are not helping us FEEL the way we want to FEEL! We don't like the way their words or actions make us feel, so we want them to change BEHAVIOR so that we FEEL better!

Remember, we got into this relationship, for the most part, because of emotion ... that person made me FEEL good and good about myself. We FELL in love because we loved how they made us FEEL! Secure ... loved ... special ... We constantly try to get that FEELING back and we think we've been snookered into this relationship ... You don't make me FEEL like you used to! Please understand, this is absolutely NORMAL!

Problem is that we end up depending on our SPOUSE to make us FEEL the way we want to feel. "I'm depending on YOU to make me feel confident ... comfort ... credible ... beautiful ... worthy ... cherished ... loveable ..." Again, this is NORMAL!

This would work fine if we came into the relationship really secure and with no baggage, but there are none of us like that. We all come in with STUFF INSIDE of us and eventually that STUFF COMES OUT! And what do we do?? We blame the person who brought it out of us, even though it's what was in us in the first place!!

I'm not sure I can prove this, but I think we'd all say it's probably true: "YOUR ABILITY TO FEEL CERTAIN THINGS IS DETERMINED BY THE CONDITION OF YOUR HEART!"

## V. What Condition Is Your Heart In?

In other words, at least some of what you are able to feel, no matter what your spouse does or says, depends on the CONDITION OF YOUR HEART! If you came out of a home where you never felt appreciated, it's going to be very hard for your spouse to convince you by their behavior that you are appreciated!! It might never feel like what they say and do is enough!!

Here's what this means: YOUR ABILITY TO STAY IN LOVE HAS AS MUCH TO DO WITH THE CONDITION OF YOUR HEART AS IT DOES THE BEHAVIOR OF YOUR SPOUSE! Understand?!? No matter WHO you are with ... Your ability to stay in love has as much to do with the condition of your heart as it does the behavior of the other person in the relationship! BOTH are vitally IMPORTANT to our RELATIONSHIP, but we do a much better job of MONITORING their BEHAVIOR than we do GUARDING our HEART!

When the BLUE BEADS come out, we want to blame our spouse and tell them that if they'd just quit saying and doing that, these beads wouldn't come out, but the TRUTH IS: You brought those beads with you into the relationship!!

Hear me on this: Without understanding what we are talking about today, no amount of commitment can compensate for this...

You can SURVIVE your marriage, but you won't THRIVE in your marriage unless we understand that the CONDITION of our HEARTS is a big part of STAYING IN LOVE!

Here's how SOLOMON ends this verse ... Proverbs 4:23 = <sup>23</sup> *Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.* <sup>2</sup> In other words, Solomon is saying, "Everything that you do in your life ... relationships, work, life in general, decision-making, etc. ... EVERYTHING YOU DO ... FLOWS FROM OUR HEARTS!! What is in your heart DETERMINES THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE!!

Jesus tells us that all the good things and all the bad things that come out in our words and actions comes directly from our HEARTS. My MOM used to say, "What comes out of your mouth is what's in your heart!" That made us all go ... OH NO!!

Everything you do is the overflow of your heart ... meaning, it's impossible to have healthy relationships without some health in your heart!!

This is easy to see in other people, isn't it! We see other married or dating couples and one of them will come to us and complain about how the other person is acting and you not and smile, but inside you are thinking ... "Yeah, they maybe shouldn't have said that, but your reaction is way over the top ... it might be YOU!" We can see it, but they can't.

That's how it is with us ... other people can see us way better than we can see ourselves ... Monitoring Behavior vs. Guarding our Heart! It is almost impossible to see the issues in the mirror!!

Here's the TRUTH: What's in you is going to come out of you no matter who's with you!

## VI. What's In You Is Going to Come Out of You No Matter Who's With You

<sup>2</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (3rd ed.) (Pr 4:23). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

It Came From Within = Let me just introduce you to an exercise that will help you pay attention to what's happening inside of us ... how to GUARD YOUR HEART. Let me throw you a couple of ideas...

2 Parts =

1) Stop and think about what you are FEELING BEFORE you SPEAK ... Men, I know, because I am one, how we deal with feelings ... positive feelings we do okay with, but when it comes to negative feelings, we hang onto TWO EMOTIONS: Frustrated and Angry! How do you feel? Leave me alone. Why? I'm frustrated. Are you angry? Yeah, a little, but mostly just frustrated!

Listen, this is easier for women. I'm not saying they are emotional, they are just more emotionally intuitive, so men ... we are probably more emotional than they are and scared of our emotions, that this is just hard for us! Let me just help you increase your vocabulary ... the GOAL is to identify exactly what we are feeling ... it's a journey into our hearts ... "IS THAT OKAY?" Yeah! SOLOMON said we need to GUARD OUR HEARTS ... this is part of that ... we have to know how we actually FEEL! Sorry Men!

Again, the FIRST THING is to NAME the ACTUAL EMOTION that you are FEELING! Here's a few to think about ... please write these down...

1. Jealous ...
2. Inadequate ... I'm not good enough. I'm incompetent...
3. Not Good Enough ... I don't measure up. I'm not as good as so-and-so. My wife is always talking about how much her brother makes and how he gets to do stuff and that he is so good at the things that he does. And we ask, "Will I ever measure up to her brother?"
- 4.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part (remember I said that there was two parts?) = Say it OUT LOUD! Just to yourself at first ...

1. I feel like a failure...
2. I feel like I'm invisible...
3. I feel humiliated...
4. I feel like I'll never be good enough...

When you start figuring out what emotions are really in you and you start saying them out loud ... they LOSE their POWER! And here's what happens ... you start to figure out that when your wife talks highly of her brother, it's not so that you will feel bad or less than him ... it's just because she loves her brother and is proud of him!

We start to figure out that it's a ME ISSUE! It's a BLUE BEAD and I have to own this one ... it's not her fault! I might owe her an apology... What she said just brought out what was ALREADY INSIDE OF ME!

If you can't name it and say it out loud, it will keep holding you hostage and your spouse hostage in your relationship! This is HARD, but IT'S THE HARD THAT MAKES IT GREAT! You have to SAY IT OUT LOUD!! As hard as it is ... The reason we don't want to say it out loud is we will also LOSE OUR EXCUSE!

I kind of want to stay mad and I want to blame them and I want to use my outbursts or my pouting to control their behavior and the situation and keep the FOCUS OFF of ME and MY BEADS!

And, at some point ... you NAME IT and SAY IT OUT LOUD ... and sometimes you TELL YOUR SPOUSE! Here's how that goes...

"Mrs. Mug, when you say those things that you say when I have to come home late from work, I have to tell you that I just feel so UNAPPRECIATED. I just have to tell you that ... UNAPPRECIATED is how I FEEL!"

Hear me ... there are NO BAD FEELINGS ... If I say that what you do or say makes me feel a certain way, that's not a criticism of you. It's just how I feel! It's an observation!! When he says how he feels, that's just INFORMATION.

If your response is: "Well, you shouldn't feel that way because..." That's a PINK BEAD problem ... that's what's inside of you!! CRAZY CYCLE IS ON!!

## VII. The Proper Response

When someone opens up to you in that way and shares how they feel when you do whatever ... HERE'S THE PROPER RESPONSE: "I'm so glad you told me." And, then, here's what you say next ... (SILENCE! ... NOT: "That's too bad!") That's it! "I'm so glad you told me." (Then, SILENCE ... let's practice!) Now, you decide how you will respond to that. You decide if you will keep making them feel that way or not! (more on that NEXT WEEK!) Healthy people = THEY QUIT DOING IT!!

If you want to stay in love, you have to PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR HEART! Think about EXACTLY what you are FEELING. SAY it OUT LOUD. Then, you might figure out that it's YOUR HEART and not the BEHAVIOR that is causing the problem. Go to GOD with your HEART PROBLEMS!!

What's in you will come out of you no matter who's with you!! Pay attention to your HEART!

Next Week: As we wrap up this series ... you have to be here next week ... "But, it's Memorial Day Weekend!" I know ... be here anyway! Here's what I want to attempt to do ... I'm going to give the ULTIMATE SECRET to long-lasting, THRIVING, Romantic, relationships when you have two humans trying to be in an intimate relationship. It's from one verse in the BIBLE and it applies to your relationships TODAY!!

Let's Pray!

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

Next Steps: *Read Matthew 15*

*I will work on identifying what's in my heart*

*Start a Bible Reading Program off of [www.bmzchurch.org](http://www.bmzchurch.org)*

*Give My Life to Jesus Christ for the First Time*