

# Taking Marriage Up a Tree

Psalm 1

## Introduction

Three weeks after her wedding day, Joanna called her pastor. She was absolutely hysterical; she was crying. “Pastor,” she said, “Bill and I have had our first fight and it was absolutely awful; it was terrible. What am I going to do?”

The pastor responded, “Now calm down, Joanna, it isn’t nearly as bad as you think. Every marriage has to have its first argument; it’s all part of the picture.”

Joanna said, “Well, I know, I know . . . but what do I do with the body?”

Maybe you have gone to a marriage conference because you had one of two options in mind:

1. how to help your marriage, or
2. what to do with the body!

Perhaps you realize you are in need of some self improvement. Maybe you went to a marriage conference because your wife said to – and you wanted to live!

I recently read about the construction of a town hall building in a small northern Pennsylvania town. The citizens of this town were quite proud of their little red brick building. It represented a long-awaited dream for them.

However, a few weeks after moving into the building, strange things began to occur. Several doors failed to shut completely and windows were not opening or closing smoothly. After a

few more months, the front door would not shut at all and the roof had begun to leak.

An intense investigation was launched to try to determine what was causing the problems with this little town hall building. It revealed that deep, underground blasts at a mine several miles away were sending shock waves that were weakening the earth beneath the building. It was almost imperceptible, but it was slowly happening – one little shudder after another.

The theme of this talk focuses on what we could call “underground issues,” and I am glad to be addressing the underground issues of marriage. The theme text, in fact, points our attention to the roots of a tree that are clutching good soil hidden deep underground. Frankly, marriage has to do with soil – issues that are hidden away and out of sight.

The average person thinks marriage has to do with everything above ground – working on a window on the second floor, or fixing something in the plumbing, or perhaps changing the color of the front door. In fact, most marriage counseling today begins and ends with the visible. In other words, what we see – fix this or that, get your spouse to do this for you, cook that, wear this, or whatever. It becomes an exercise in self-focus. It merely makes a husband and wife even more self-absorbed and more self-centered than they might have been before marriage.

One recent survey that I read, in fact, said that by a margin of nearly three-to-one, Americans said the main purpose of marriage was personal fulfillment.<sup>i</sup>

Marriage, in other words, had nothing to do with serving another. It had nothing to do with demonstrating the mystery of Christ and His relationship with the church. It had nothing to do with the desire to bring glory to the Creator of life and the Creator of marriage. It had nothing to do with being raised in a godly heritage. It had nothing to do with living out the character of Christ. It was simply all about us.

In other words, “I married him because I believed that he would meet my needs and fulfill my life.” Or, “I married her because I thought she’d make me happy and she seemed dedicated to meeting all of my needs.”

Is this not the foundation and purpose of a good marriage?

I have read that 85% of marriage counseling is initiated because either the husband or the wife, or sometimes both, believes their spouse is not meeting their needs.

One counselor whose words I read was rather bold and quite funny when he wrote that most men who come to see him to complain about their wives and describe what they want out of marriage do not really need a wife. What they really need is a Golden Retriever. This is really the relationship they are describing – someone to live for them.<sup>ii</sup>

This kind of attitude causes us to try to fix our marriages by dealing with symptoms. Governed by our own feelings, bound by our own hurts, we depend upon our spouse’s behavior, and when they do not come through, the marriage fails.

The problem is that when we focus only on one another; when we only look at the visible – and certainly visible things are worth looking at – we never go underground. What makes a marriage is not so much related to the visible, but to the invisible – like the roots of a tree.

Let us look at Psalm chapter 1. And let us put on our head lamps and get our miners gear

on. We will dig into the soil of what God, through the Psalmist in this chapter, says makes a good relationship – certainly in marriage and throughout all of life.

Psalm 1 is six verses long. If this were Sunday morning, we would get through it in about four sermons! However, I only have one shot at this, so I am going to simply expound on a few key words.

Let me begin by reading a few of the beginning verses; verses 1-4.

***How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!***

***But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.***

***He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.***

***The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.***

We can easily outline this Psalm:

- Verse 1: Refusing the counsel of the world;
- Verse 2: Loving the counsel of the word;
- Verse 3 and forward: The results in life based on whatever counsel we choose to follow.

## **Refusing the Counsel of the World**

The Psalmist first tells us, in verse 1, what not to do if we wish to destroy life – and we can certainly put in the word “marriage” or “relationships”. He begins with the words:

***How blessed is the man . . .***

In other words, “Everything I am going to tell you brings true fulfillment and true joy.”

The Hebrew word for “blessed” means “joyous” or “happy”. However, it has a deeper meaning. The root meaning of this word refers to someone who is actually moving forward; someone who is advancing. We could even

relate it to someone who is leading the way. This Hebrew word actually paints a picture of a person who is pressing forward in life with clearly set goals and godly pursuits.

This is the same concept that was in the mind of the apostle Paul when he wrote that he was going to...

*... press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)*

So the blessed person in this Psalm is someone who is advancing in the right direction.

Notice that there is a potential progression of this person's movement. In fact, note three key words in verse 1: walk, stand, and sit.

**1. The first step of the progression, in verse 1, is the word walk.**

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...*

The word "walk" suggests that a person is listening, at this point, to the counsel of the ungodly. It is a casual nuance; he is not serious, but the ungodly have gained his ear. He is listening. He is on his way, but some ungodly person is saddled up next to him.

The implication is that this individual is a believer, and he is listening. This is not saying that he is agreeing with the ungodly person, but he is flirting with it; he is just listening.

**2. The Psalmist takes us to the next step in this spiral downward, which is the word stand.**

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners...*

At first this person is listening. Now they are agreeing.

The word "stand," in this verse, is another key word. It carries the idea of taking one's place with the unbeliever.

The words, by the way, for the unbeliever in this verse are referring to people who are determined to live life on a horizontal plane. There is no vertical relationship with God. In other words, these people might not be cursing

God, but they are simply ignoring Him. They are, as one author called them, "practical atheists". They say there is a God, but they live as if there is not.

You might work around people like this. You might go to church with people like this. God really does not matter to them; He really does not factor in. Decisions are made without Him. Life is lived with no connection to Him, except maybe an hour or two on Sunday.

So this is the warning in Psalm 1. The advice of the ungodly, the Psalmist is saying, is like undertow – it can be fatal. He is effectively saying, "Don't slow down as you press on. Don't get sidetracked. Don't invite their counsel into your life. It's the worst thing you could ever do because you just might buy it. And what you buy or believe, you just might act upon."

The voices of unbelievers are heard everywhere, are they not?

*ABC News*, a few months ago, carried the story of a law firm that created a billboard in the Chicago area targeting the young, wealthy, Gold Coast clientele. The billboard read, "Life's Short. Get a Divorce." This is all it said. On either side of the words, and I researched this and saw the billboard, were sensual photographs – one of a man and one of a woman.<sup>iii</sup>

Within a week the city took this billboard down, citing "technical difficulty". The truth was that some people complained.<sup>iv</sup>

The legal firm defended the billboard. By the way, it was an all-female legal firm. They said, "We find the advertisement refreshingly honest and insightful. It is true that people are unhappy. There are plenty of options out there. Get a divorce and get on with life."<sup>v</sup>

Now if the primary purpose of marriage is self-fulfillment, this ad makes absolutely perfect sense. It could be praised as honest and maybe even insightful because if marriage is slowing down your party, get rid of it and move on.

One writer to the editor of this news program said in response, "For those who think this is insight, how about placing a five-year-old girl

and an eight-year-old boy in the background, clutching Daddy or Mommy as they leave the house for someone else. *That would be honest.*”<sup>vi</sup>

The danger of the progression in this verse is this: listening to them leads to standing alongside them and eventually settling in with them. We might begin by listening, then agreeing, and then becoming settled, making ungodly counsel part of our own personal conviction. This is why the Psalmist gives us one more word.

**3. The last step of this dangerous progression, at the end of verse 1, is the word sit.**

*. . . nor sit in the seat of scoffers.*

Now you are seated; you are sitting down. You are now entrenched; you are deceived by it all.

Notice again the progression from walking by to settling down and basically moving in. What began with a casual conversation becomes a walk, which becomes a way of life, which becomes companionship, which now leads to personal compromise that ultimately becomes personal conviction.

When the path of blessedness in this progression is abandoned, self now rules all relationships, and certainly invades marriages, activities and pursuits. People, especially spouses, only matter for whatever they can give you and however they can serve you. This is death to the joy of marriage. This is the loss of blessedness in the marital union.

This person now sits in the seat of scoffers. The Hebrew word for “scoffers,” which is “leysim,” means “those who mock God”. What began with, “We’re just going to ignore God,” moves to, “We hate God. We will not follow God.”

One book that made headlines about a year and a half ago that is selling well and already in its second printing is simply entitled, *Affair!*, with the subtitle, *How to Manage Every Aspect of Your Extramarital Relationship with Passion, Discretion and Dignity*. Now we might think this is a comic book or perhaps it contains tongue-in-cheek humor, but that is not the case. The author is serious, deadly serious. On the back cover it reads:

*In the face of near-universal disapproval, between one quarter and one half of all married Americans . . . will, at some point, engage in an extramarital affair. They will have either an enriching experience or the sad, destructive, ugly mess for which affairs are far better known. . . . [In this book] many of the major pitfalls are avoidable and an extramarital relationship can bring a person greater happiness and personal growth if properly managed . . .*

Chapter titles inside this book range from “Getting Ready to Meet That Special Someone,” to “Tending Your Spouse,” and “Graceful Good-byes”.<sup>vii</sup>

You might say, “Stephen, we’re not doing any of that! We’re in church, for heaven’s sake, at a marriage conference.”

The truth is that no one gets married with a copy of this book on the nightstand. This is a warning for us, though, that even as we are pressing on, even as we are moving forward, we are not to give the world’s counsel even a casual hearing.

Think about this. What about the co-worker who tells you how great their life is now that they have dumped their spouse? Should you not find someone else to eat lunch with?

What about the friend who tells you, “You really ought to do whatever you want. Forget about the restrictions and responsibilities of your marriage and family. You are the most important thing to you.”? Should you not find another friend?

What about the movies and television shows that glorify fornication and adultery? How many

movies have you gotten up and walked out on? Are we giving a casual hearing to the world's counsel?

What about the books you are reading? What about the music you are listening to?

The average Christian, at this point, would say, "Man, you need to loosen up!"

The Psalmist would say, "You need to look out! Be careful. I want you to be blessed. This is God's design. In all of your relationships, and certainly your marital relationship, I want you to be truly happy. Watch out for the progression."

Reality is much closer to home than we would like to imagine. In 2008, the Barna Group asked adults, predominately evangelicals, which of any of seven behaviors with moral overtones they had engaged in during the past week. The results:

- 28% had used profanity;
- 20% had gambled;
- 19% had viewed pornography;
- 12% had gossiped;
- 12% had gotten drunk;
- 11% had lied;
- 9% had been sexually active with someone other than their spouse.<sup>viii</sup>

This was all in the past week.

I say all this to simply point out that the believer is surrounded by the sights and sounds of ungodly living and ungodly counsel, and if you want to find true fulfillment, certainly in marriage, press on. And while you are pressing on, do not stop to listen; do not just stand there, move on. Whatever you do, do not pull up a chair. Do not let the roots of your life go down into the counsel of the ungodly – it will affect the leaves of your life. It will impact your mind, and then it will impact your marriage.

Now, telling us what not to do is really not enough, is it? Verse 1 tells us what *not* to do. It is all there. Verse 2 tells us what *to* do. The first verse in this Psalm is negative, the second and third verses are positive.

## Loving the Counsel of the Word

Notice verse 2 of Psalm 1 again. This is in contrast to verse 1.

### 1. The first key word in verse 2 is **delight**.

***But his delight is in the law of the Lord..***

In other words, right at the outset we are told the answer to the world's seductions, the pride of life, the lusts of the flesh, the materialism of our culture, and every vice included with its persistent advertisement and call to "I, me, and mine," is the law of the Lord. The answer is revelation from God.

This is the message in *Pilgrim's Progress*. If you have read this book, you may remember that Pilgrim is running away from temptation, clutching the Bible, and shouting, "Life! Life! . . . life!"<sup>ix</sup>

The Bible is the counsel of life, and any counsel that opposes it is death – death to relationships, death to marriage, death to purpose, death to true happiness.

This is the reason verse 2 turns everything upside-down, but in reality turns it right-side-up. Notice the delight of the blessed believer is in the law of the Lord.

Now, in the Psalms the "law" is a reference to the expression of divine will. It is the compass which is able to direct the believer under the providential reign of God. This means the Psalmist is not referring to one part of God's revelation, but all of it.

The apostle Paul will say this same thing to Timothy.

***All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;***

***so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.***

***(II Timothy 3:16-17)***

This is all about God's revealed truth. Some people will take a verse or two and twist it so they can get their way. However, this is a

reference to a balanced interpretation of the whole counsel of God, not a favorite verse.

I read a funny story about a man who got a favorite verse or two from a book entitled, *You Can Be THE Man of Your House*. He thought it was time to introduce this to his wife. Now certainly we believe in headship and submission, but this man had a verse and he was ready to go. He went to the kitchen and announced to his wife, "From now on, you need to know that I am the man of this house . . . You will prepare me a gourmet meal tonight, and when I'm finished eating my meal, you will serve me a decadent dessert. . . . Afterwards, you are going to draw me a bath so I can relax. . . . Then . . . guess who's going to dress me and comb my hair?"

His wife replied, "The funeral director would be my first guess."<sup>x</sup>

Good for her!

The Psalmist does not say, "We delight in the word because that is the way we get *our* way." No. He is implying that we delight in the word because that is the way God has *His* way in our lives.

**2. Another key word in verse 2 is the word meditate.**

*. . . in His law he meditates day and night.*

The Hebrew word for "meditate" literally means "to sound it out". Often it is accompanied by another word that means "to call to remembrance". The nuance of this could woodenly be captured with the idea of mumbling under one's breath the truth of God's word. Meditation refers to the mouth.

Psalm 143:5, in fact, perfectly defines meditation. David writes,

*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands.*

This is the command to Joshua to not let the book of the law depart from his what? His mouth.

Meditation is the repetition of what we know to be true.

Now, this is kind of a side trail, but I thought about this as I looked at this word. I am concerned that the newest fad in the evangelical church regarding contemplative prayer is gaining more and more popularity. This is the practice of simply remaining silent and waiting to hear the voice of God.

This is actually a practice that tracks back to the medieval church and the solitude of the monastery. It led to mysticism and confusion, not certainty.

We do not wait to hear God speak – God has spoken. The idea of biblical meditation is not sitting in silence, but recalling, ruminating, going over in our minds, and even speaking the truth of what God has already said.

This has the attitude of obeying – and this is the challenge. Our problem is not so much that God has said something; our problem is that we really want Him to say something else because we do not like what He said. True meditation ruminates on what God has already said, and therein lies the challenge to obey.

Erwin Lutzer told the story of a couple who came to their pastor and the man said he wanted a divorce because he did not have any feelings for his wife. The pastor would not give in easily and reminded the man that loving his wife is a command, not a feeling. He said to him, "The Bible says you're to love your wife as Jesus Christ loved the church."

The man said, "I can't do that."

The pastor then said, "If you can't begin at that level, then begin on a lower lever. You're supposed to love your neighbor as yourself. Can you at least love her as you'd love a neighbor?"

The man said, "No. That's still too high a level."

The pastor said, "The Bible says, 'Love your enemies.' Begin there."<sup>xi</sup>

We sink the roots of our lives into the soil of the written word and the living Word with an attitude of surrender and obedience, and notice what happens next. We do not get to verse 3 without getting through verses 1 and 2, but now we are where we want to be.

## Results Based On the Counsel

Notice verse 3 again.

*He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

Three words characterize this individual's life, his relationships, and certainly his marriage. These are tree-like characteristics.

**1. The first word that comes to my mind, as I read verse 3, is the word stability.**

*He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water . . .*

Do not miss the fact, by the way, that this has an implication of having been transplanted. The individual is *transplanted* from a dry and barren place and *planted* by the river. The illustration is of a tree now firmly rooted. It is healthy. Why? Because it is able to draw from the water nearby and it grows strong and stable.

The river is effectively the written word of God and the living Word of God; Christ Himself. In fact, Paul wrote to the Colossians to be rooted in Christ. The river is Christ and the wisdom of Christ. Paul wrote,

*Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,*

*having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith...*

*(Colossians 2:6-7a)*

So this person has said, "No," to the barren, dry counsel of the world, and "Yes," to the counsel of God and His word.

In his commentary on Psalm 1, Chuck Swindoll writes, "Let me encourage you to maintain a pure, uncompromising walk with God; delight yourself in His word, and you will grow into a stable, reliable, 'spiritual tree'. There is no shortcut . . . Like physical growth, it occurs on a daily basis with the right kind of spiritual diet and climate. You can experience blessedness many times over. And best of all, the daily grind of compromise and its erosive effects can be checked."<sup>xii</sup>

So the first word is stability.

**2. The second characteristic of someone who is tree-like, in verse 3, is the word fruitfulness.**

*He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season . . .*

These are roots that pull up and, in divine truth, result in fruit that is spiritual. And what is spiritual fruit? Is it not the fruit of the Spirit?

We are given further revelation as Paul writes of the fruits of the Spirit to the Galatians. This is the fruitful life that is a blessing to a spouse; that is really a blessing to everyone. It is a life of:

*. . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

*gentleness, self-control . . .*

*(Galatians 5:22-23)*

You might say, "Well, I've been trying. You have no idea how long I've been trying."

Maybe you have been trying for 5, 10, 20, 30, 40 or more years. Consider the fact that Adam and Eve may well have been married for 900 years! Are you feeling better now? You may be thinking, "I don't have it so bad after all!" He lived to be 930, so maybe they were married 900 years, we are not told.

The issue, however, is not to try to drum up kindness. In other words, "My goal for today is patience." But then, your husband wakes up!

The issue is to have your roots go down into the word of Christ and into the character of Christ, and then the fruits of the Spirit, such as patience, show their fruit. It is the character of the Spirit of God that every once in a while shows up.

So there is stability and fruitfulness. Let us look at one more word.

**3. The third characteristic of someone who is tree-like, in verse 3, is endurance.**

*... and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

In other words, when tough times come, he or she is an evergreen tree. It does not dry up and blow away like the chaff of ungodly lives – here today, there tomorrow, gone the next day. It is rooted in the enduring wisdom and character of Christ.

A survey taken a little over a year ago by the United States Census Bureau found that a couple's odds of reaching their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary are now, in America, below 50%. Multiple spouses have now become the norm in the Western world.<sup>xiii</sup>

I read, in fact, that one of Germany's lawmakers, about a year and a half ago, actually proposed legislation that would legally terminate marriages at the end of seven years. The legislation would allow couples to either legally extend their marriages or terminate them automatically, without any legal wrangling, after the seventh year.<sup>xiv</sup>

This kind of redefines the "seven-year itch," does it not? I do not know why they pick seven.

This is the dry, barren counsel of the ungodly. These people believe it will bring them happiness, but it only brings them lives like chaff – dried up and blown away. Their unstable, unfulfilled lives are tossed by the winds of life. They do not find stability. They do not find fruitfulness. They do not have endurance. Their lives never take root.

Let me illustrate a difference. In his wonderful book, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, Kent Hughes writes of his friendship with Robertson McQuilkin, the former president of Columbia International University. Robertson's wife Muriel was in the late stages of Alzheimer's disease when Dr. McQuilkin resigned his presidency to take care of her. Let me read what he read to the faculty, the staff, and the student body in his resignation letter, which traveled around the globe.

*My dear wife Muriel has been in failing mental health for about eight years. So far I have been able to care for both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibilities at Columbia. Recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me, and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just discontent; she is filled with fear, even terror that she has lost me, and she always goes in search of me when I leave home. It is clear that she needs me now and she needs me full-time. This decision was made, in a way, forty-two years ago when I promised to care for her "in sickness and in health, till death do us part". So, as a man of my word, I will do it. She has cared for me fully all these years. If I cared for her for the next forty years I would not be out of debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. There is more – I love her. I do not have to care for her – I get to.<sup>xv</sup>*

Isn't that good? "I don't have to take care of her, I get to."

This kind of decision is the fruit of a life of which the roots have burrowed into the character of Christ – who came not to be served, but to serve. This is much more than temporary infatuation when everything goes your way. This is the endurance of a man and a woman who chose the blessed pathway, not the easiest pathway, not the most comfortable pathway, and certainly not the simplest.

This is the path marked by the will of God, promised to have the nourishment of God. It is a path that runs alongside a river, and we are invited to sink our roots into the soil of the ground near this river to find the way to that which ultimately satisfies, and then bears fruit.

Now I remember that when I was a child, there was a tree in our back yard. This was not the one near the kitchen that my mom would send me and my brothers to for switches. I usually had to get those for my brothers when they misbehaved! This tree was further back in the yard and was a solid Oak tree. The branches



were perfect for four boys and for a mom who desperately needed us out of the house! We built a tree house up in the limbs of that tree. It was not much to look at because we nailed boards going every which way! We used a *lot* of nails – that was fun! We loved that tree and we loved that little tree house. What made that tree house capable of staying up in the tree was not so much our skill, although we had to apply ourselves with what little we knew, but it was the strength of the tree to carry the weight.

I could not help but think, as I went to this first chapter in Psalms, the best place to build a marriage is up a tree – with solid, stable, committed-for-life men and women nestled in the branches. These are men and women who are rooted, tree-like by conviction to the river of God’s truth. Their hearts and ears are open only to the wisdom of Christ. And if they are told anything other than the wisdom of Christ, their ears are closed and their hearts are closed.

These are men and women who are then nourished, strengthened, stabilized, and who ultimately, over the years, bear some of the fruit of the Spirit of God and long to bear it all. This fruit is not for their benefit, not so they can go around admiring each other’s fruit. It does benefit, though – it plays out in marriages that are stable and progressing, although not perfect.

Ultimately, these marriages and homes bring honor to God’s name, honor to His reputation, honor to His kingdom and to His purposes. And at the end of the day when we pillow our heads, what really matters and what affects everything else is the answer to the question, “Did we, in walking this blessed path, bring honor and glory to God.”

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<sup>i</sup> <http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/526/marriage-parenthood>.

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[http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache:CdtvEpZrc7YJ:davidgudgel.com/guidepdfs/Class\\_or\\_Session2-Teacher\\_or\\_Counselor\\_notes.pdf+marriage+counselor+%22golden+retriever%22&hl=en&gl=us](http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache:CdtvEpZrc7YJ:davidgudgel.com/guidepdfs/Class_or_Session2-Teacher_or_Counselor_notes.pdf+marriage+counselor+%22golden+retriever%22&hl=en&gl=us).

<sup>iii</sup>

<http://abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/LegalCenter/story?id=3154874>, May 9, 2007.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.msnbc.com/id/18578890>, May 9, 2007.

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<http://abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/LegalCenter/story?id=3147979&page=1>.

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[http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/article\\_print.html?id=46140](http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/article_print.html?id=46140).

<sup>vii</sup> H. Cameron Barnes, *Affair! How to Manage Every Aspect of Your Extramarital Relationship with Passion, Discretion and Dignity*, (Universal Publishers, 2001 ed.).

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<http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/weekly/08-10-06/7100608.html>.

<sup>ix</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Barbour and Company), p. 4.

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.silverplanet.com/entertainment/comedy/man-house/54194>.

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<http://www.christianitytoday.com/moi/2000/002/april/12.12.html>.

<sup>xii</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind* (World Publishing, Aug. 8, 2005).

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p70-97.pdf>.

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[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/article2500361.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article2500361.ece).

<sup>xv</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Crossway Books, 2001).