A VICTORIOUS MARRIAGE

THE KINGDOM FAMILY series

Tony Evans



Tony EVANS
THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE

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Kingdom Family Series

The Kingdom Family Ebook series is uniquely designed to reveal timeless biblical principles that can greatly impact your life.

When questions are available, we encourage you to print out the EBook and answer them within each section thus giving you a greater benefit of engagement with the material.

This series closely follows the recorded teaching of Dr. Tony Evans on The Christian Family. Dr. Evans' series of messages on The Christian Family is available on both CD and DVD. To request yours, contact The Urban Alternative at1-800-800-3222 or visit us online at TonyEvans.org.

Victory Over Marital Strongholds

THE STRONGHOLD

For many couples it looks like instead of having been married by the justice of the peace, they were married by the secretary of war. Rather than their relationship being a mutual admiration society, it has become a mutual extermination society. Divorce rates soar high not only in the secular society, but also in the body of Christ. Our nation is caught in a divorce epidemic as more and more couples decide to call it quits than ever before.

We know that marriage strongholds exist when married couples return home every day to miserable homes. It is a stronghold to get up in the morning and argue from the time you wake up until the time you fall back to sleep. It is a stronghold to look at each other after so many years, or decades, have passed and see a stranger looking back at you. It is a stronghold when two people who have committed their lives to one another cannot even stand each other. This goes much deeper than merely being personality differences. Differences existed when the two first met. They didn't simply come about after the marriage. These differences were just worked around and overcome beforehand because the goal – marriage – made it important enough to do so.

Divorces frequently occur as a result of the stronghold in the way marriage is viewed. Most people look at marriage as a way of finding love, happiness, and companionship. While those things are good, they are secondary to the primary purpose of marriage. Overcoming marriage strongholds begins by understanding the purpose of marriage. God didn't simply institute marriage because He was looking for another thing to do. God created marriage as one of the primary tools through which He fulfills His destiny for you while advancing His kingdom.

Satan was the cause of the first marital conflict in history when he deceived Adam and Eve to rebel against God's Word.[1] This led to blame, pain, the battle between the sexes and sibling rivalry between the children. Marital conflict is indeed a spiritual issue.

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GOD'S VIEWPOINT

Marriage is a covenantal union designed to enhance and strengthen the capacity of each partner to carry out God's plan in their lives. We read about this covenant in the book of Malachi,

[1] *Genesis 3:1-6*

> "This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."[2]

Strongholds show up in our marriages when we no longer realize that marriage is a covenant, nor do we understand what a covenant is. In order to break those strongholds, we need to realign our thoughts underneath God's viewpoint of a covenantal marriage.

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GOD'S SOLUTION

Biblical covenants are spiritually binding legal arrangements that God makes between Himself and His people. Each covenant involves three facets: transcendence (the rulership of God), hierarchy (the alignment established by God), and ethics (the rules, sanctions and continuity set in place by God.)

This being so, covenants can never function as they were intended to function without the overarching governance of God. When God's viewpoint and authority is dismissed from the marital covenantal relationship, it becomes an open door for Satan to bring destruction into the home. Marriage is a sacred covenant, and not just a social contract.

One of the rules for understanding the Bible is called the Law of First Mention. This means that if you want to know what God says about something, study the first time He brings it up. Everything else will either build or expand on this original mention. So to go deeper into God's viewpoint on marriage as well as His solution for overcoming martial strongholds, we need to look at the book of Genesis when God initiated it.



First, God created mankind in His image, and then said, "Let them rule." In that declaration, God released the exercise of dominion and authority to humanity on earth so that mankind could manage His creation. That doesn't mean that God has relinquished His sovereignty. He has maintained a base of sovereign boundaries across which humanity cannot tread, but He has likewise opened up an arena where you and I get to call the plays, and live by the resultant consequences of either the wisdom or foolishness of those plays.

You can have a satisfying or an unsatisfying marriage based on whether or not your rule reflects the image of God that you were made in. The health of the home is determined by whether or not the man is reflecting God, and His character, accurately in His role, or whether or not the woman is reflecting God, and His character, accurately in her role. Every time there is a marital breakdown, one or both partners

[2] *Malachi 2:13,14*

is no longer living a life that reflects the rulership of God through them.



What Satan attempts to get us to do is turn our rule over to him, or rule poorly based on our viewpoints. One reason he does this is because the breakdown of the home then leads to the breakdown of society. Most of the negative realities present in our society today can be directly tied to the failure of marriages and families to authentically reflect God's rule. The rebellion which was first introduced in the garden has led to chaos replacing calm, death replacing life, and pressure replacing peace not only in our homes but in our communities as well. The purpose of marriage extends much further than simply a relationship between two people.

In a covenantal marriage, the first truth to recognize is that there are more than just two individuals entering the covenant. A husband and a wife enter into a covenant when they get married, but they enter into it along with God. The key to overcoming marital strongholds is recognizing the presence of and functioning in light of God's involvement. It is in the connection of spirit to spirit through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit that enables couples to gain victory in their marriage.

As we have seen, we are made up of body, soul and spirit. The physical attraction – our bodies – that may have been the initial element to draw two people together - if it hasn't done so already … will ultimately fade. Our souls, due to their distortion from sin and circumstance, often lead to conflict or mere attempts at managing the relationship, but not unity. Victory over marital strongholds is located in the spirit. As the Holy Spirit unites with our spirits and we, as individuals, draw closer to God – God brings us together as one. You cannot leave God at the altar and expect to have a healthy marriage.

Many people are married today in the body (physical attraction), or they are married in the soul (personality companionship), but few are married in the spirit (oneness). If you ever live your marriage as spiritmates, you will be able to tackle any problem that comes at you in the body or the soul.

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One reason so many strongholds show up in marriages today and so many people want to divorce is because they never got married correctly, in spiritual oneness, to begin with. They have failed to understand a foundational truth which is, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become *one flesh*."[3] The problem arises in that two people often do not want to become one flesh. They want to remain as two flesh in one home.

In fact, when asked about the issue of divorce, Jesus referenced this "one flesh" principle in his response. The interesting point is that His answer didn't directly connect with the question, on the surface. This is because the question had been whether or not it was

[3] *Genesis 2:24*

okay to get a divorce. We read, "Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife."[4] In other words, if someone thinks they have reason enough to divorce, Jesus – than do they have a reason? If they want to call it quits, can they?

Jesus didn't give a yes or no answer, rather He simply said that they were asking the wrong question. Because if you understand the nature, purpose and covenant of marriage – and function accordingly – then that question will have no need for discussion. In becoming "one flesh," the two are to compliment each other so deeply and intimately that they become one without losing their personal identity.

There is one word I want to give you that can restore life to your marriage, if you both do it. When you simply live out this one word, I guarantee you by the authority of God's word that you will overcome your marital strongholds. That word is grace. Most marriages today operate by law – you are supposed to do this, or you are supposed to do that. But the law kills. For a marriage to flourish, it must live by grace. Ephesians 5 gives us this truth, where we read,

> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her … So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body … Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."[5]

This truth will change everything: *Men, you are to die for your wives in a spirit of grace, and women, you are to live for your husbands in the same.* When this principle is carried out, there will be a dynamic experience in your marriage. It won't be a perfect, problem-less experience, but it will be an authentic, progressive and complete union.

So men, what does it mean to "die" for your wife as Christ "gave Himself up" for the church? It means allowing your dreams, will, desires, and choices to come second to a true love for your wife. Biblical love can be defined as seeking the well being of another, even at your own expense. This kind of love places the well being of your wife above your own. It involves viewing her through the same lens of love that God views her. If all you see her as is someone to raise your kids, wash your clothes, organize your life, and cook your meals – than what you are seeing is a maid. God has uniquely designed a woman with the skills and abilities that are to be utilized to complete and enhance your own. When she trusts and experiences that you value her, she will respond to your



[4] Mark 10:2, [5] Ephesians 5:25,28,33

needs without any need for a law, rule or requirement to do so. Women have been fashioned to respond – it is up to you to set the tone of the home through leadership that demonstrates sacrificial love in order for her to do so.

Now, I know that you know how to do it, men, because you did it when you were dating. The problem is that most men date to marry, rather than marry to date. That's called Backwards Christian Soldiers. When was the last time you took your wife in your arms and simply told her, "The best thing I did in life was marry you"? When was the last time you cupped her face in your hands and said, "You are my life"? When was the last time you sent a Valentine's card and it wasn't Valentine's Day? Or you watched the kids, listened when she talked, took on her pain, or validated her – her skills, her dreams, her hurts and her life?

When was the last time you truly sacrificed something for her? A man once told me, "Tony, my wife is killing me." I replied, "Well, you said you wanted to be more like Jesus, didn't you?" Loving your wife as Christ loved the church is the key ingredient to overcoming marital strongholds.

And ladies, your part is just as powerful. Keep in mind that nowhere in the Bible is a woman commanded to love her husband. God expects you to love your husband, but it is never commanded like a man is commanded to love his wife. Why? Because that is not what your husband needs the most. What your husband needs the most is respect. Your husband ought to feel like a King around you, on top of the world. He should hear you call him your strong tower. He is your head, and your role is to submit to him as your head. That doesn't mean that you are to be walked on, or that you have to agree with everything that he does. Submission means that even if you disagree with his point, you will respect his position.

Granted, you are never to submit to something that contradicts God's revealed will in His word, but frequently that is not the case. When your husband seeks to align himself under God and His rulership, then regardless of differences in education, abilities, and preferences – he is your head, and should be the recipient of your highest respect.

Love and respect, offered in grace. When both parties abide by these principles, the marriage will no longer be under the influence of a stronghold because the two will now hold up each other in mutual strength.



Click here to watch a video to encourage you in your marriage.

Putting on the Armor of Christ

In this next section, you will find a daily meditation and prayer guide to help you as you replace God's truths of victory with the strongholds that have kept you bound. These daily guides are broken down into four sections:

WEAR IT – Introduces the spiritual truth behind the victory through a specific verse related to the piece of armor chosen for that day, as well as a verse reflecting Christ's sufficiency to overcome this stronghold

OWN IT – Positions the truth into language that will enable you to personally apply these principles to your life

USE IT – Relays the truth to Satan and his demonic realm

DRAW IT DOWN – Reaches into heaven with the truth to access God's response to this particular situation

Because we have been instructed to do more than wear the armor of God, but to also, "PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH IN REGARD TO ITS LUSTS,[6]" these daily meditations are called Putting on the Armor of Christ.

Think on these truths, memorize them, repeat them, speak them to yourself, speak them to Satan, pray them to God, copy them and place them in areas where you will be reminded of them all day long, and let these truths become the dominant thought-pattern governing your life. As you operate within the full armor of God, you will discover both the freedom and the victory which is rightfully yours as a child of the King.

Here's to your victory!

1 DAY

WEAR IT

The Belt of Truth: Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.[7]

Putting on Christ: For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.[8]

STAND IN IT

The Word of God says that when I became married, I no longer should consider myself as solely on my own, but rather I have now joined with my mate and the two of us have become one flesh together. As a result, Jesus Christ is present in the midst of us when we operate and function out of one flesh together in His name.

USE IT

Satan, I have left my father and my mother and I hold fast to my spouse. I am no longer functioning as an individual but rather am one flesh with my spouse. Because my spouse and I are together in Christ's name, when you attack us – you are attacking Him because He is in the midst of us, and He has already defeated you. We stand secure in His victory over you.

[6] *Romans 13:14,* [7] *Genesis 2:24,* [8] *Matthew 18:20*

DRAW IT DOWN

Father in heaven, You say that when we became married, we were no longer two individuals but are now one flesh. Let the power of our one flesh abiding together in the name of Jesus Christ manifest itself in how we think, behave, and treat each other so that You may be glorified in this union.

2 DAY

WEAR IT

The Breastplate of Righteousness: Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.[9] And, Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church … In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.[10]

Putting on Christ: Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.[11]

STAND IN IT

As a wife, I am to be subject to my own husband, so that even if he does not obey the word, he may be won without a word by my conduct, when he sees my respectful and pure conduct. As a husband, I am to love my wife, as Christ loved the church and even as I love my own body. I am to nourish and cherish her, just as Christ does the church so that she might be sanctified, having been cleansed by the washing of water with the word, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

USE IT

Satan, you do not have the authority to influence my decisions because as a wife, I am to be subject to my own husband, so that even if he does not obey the word, he may be won without a word by my conduct, when he sees my respectful and pure conduct. Satan, you do not have the authority to distract me from my role as a husband to love my wife, as Christ loved the church and even as I love my own body. In God's strength, I will nourish and cherish her, just as Christ does the church so that she might be sanctified, having been cleansed by the washing of water with the word, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

DRAW IT DOWN

Father in heaven, help me as a wife to be subject to my own husband, so that even if he does not obey the word, he may be won without a word by my conduct, when he sees my respectful and pure conduct. And Father, help me as a husband to love my wife, as Christ loved the church and even as I love my own body. Help me to nourish and cherish her, just as Christ does the church so that she might be sanctified, having been cleansed by the washing of water with the word, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

3 DAY

WEAR IT

The Shoes of Peace: Enjoy life with

[9] *1 Peter 3:1,2,* [10] *Ephesians 5:24-30* [11] *Ephesians 5:25-27*

the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.[12]

Putting on Christ: Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.[13]

STAND IN IT

I will enjoy life with my spouse whom I love, all the days of my life under the sun, because that is my portion in life. And I will let my gentleness be evident to all because the Lord is near.

USE IT

Satan, you have no authority to distract me from enjoying life with my spouse whom I love, all the days of my life under the sun, because that is my portion in life, and I rebuke any attempts you make to do so in Jesus' name. My gentleness will be evident to all because the Lord is near.

DRAW IT DOWN

Father in heaven, give me wisdom on how I can enjoy life with my spouse whom I love to the fullest potential because You say that this is my portion in life. Show us how to maximize that enjoyment in ways we have not yet even considered. Let gentleness be the standard by which we relate to each other because You are near to us.

4 DAY

WEAR IT

The Shield of Faith: For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.[14]

Putting on Christ: He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.[15]

STAND IN IT

As a wife, I will hope in God and adorn myself through being submissive to my husband, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and I have become her child when I do what is right without being afraid. As a husband, I will make every effort to live with my wife in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and I will show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, and in this way my prayers will not be hindered. Jesus Christ has brought us to His banquet hall and His banner over our marriage is one of love.

USE IT

Satan, in Jesus Christ we have a banner over us of love. In this love, I choose as a wife to hope in God rather than listen to you and submit to my husband as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, without fear. And I choose as a husband to show my wife patience and understanding since she is weaker as a woman. Your attempts to get me to dishonor my wife in my thoughts or actions will not work because in Christ, I will honor my wife as a fellow heir of the grace of life. And because of that, my prayers will not be hindered.

[12] *Ecclesiastes 9:9,* [13] *Philippians 4:5,* [14] *1 Peter 3:5-7,*
[15] *Song of Solomon 2:4*

DRAW IT DOWN

Father in heaven, as a couple we ask that you will reveal to us the abundance of your love that you have given us in your banquet hall. Let the love found in your banner over us flow from each of us toward each other. As a wife, I ask that you will remove any fear that I have in submitting to my husband so that I will be like Sarah who obeyed Abraham without fear, calling him lord. And as a husband, I thank You for giving me the wisdom to live with my in an understanding way. Help me to see her as You see her that I might show her honor in Your name.

5 DAY

WEAR IT

The Helmet of Salvation: An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.[16] And, To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.[17]

Putting on Christ: Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.[18]

STAND IN IT

In my marriage I am to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for I am called for the very purpose that I might inherit a blessing. Because greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his spouse.

USE IT

Satan, an excellent wife is the crown of her husband. And, I am to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for I am called for the very purpose that I might inherit a blessing.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

DRAW IT DOWN

Father in heaven, your Word tells me that an excellent wife is the crown of her husband. And that we are to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead in our marriage; for we were called for the very purpose that we might inherit a blessing. Help me to show this greater love that no one has than this, that he lay down his life for his spouse.

6 DAY WEEKEND

WEAR IT

The Sword of the Spirit: And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'[19]

Putting on Christ: But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.[20]

STAND IN IT

God has blessed our marriage, instructing us to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it

[16] *Proverbs 12:4,* [17] *1 Peter 3:8,9* [18] *John 15:13,* [19] *Genesis 1:28,* [20] *2 Corinthians 3:14*

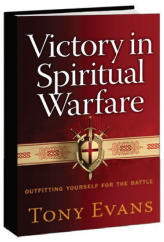
and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Through whatever means He will provide, we trust that He will supply an increase to our family, giving us wisdom on how to exercise the dominion He has given to us in this realm – not with minds that have been made dull, but with minds that have been made alive in Christ.

USE IT

Satan, we resist any attempts that you make to bring brokenness into our marriage because God has declared that He has blessed our marriage, instructing us to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Jesus Christ has removed the dominion from your hands and will now give us wisdom on how to exercise the dominion He has given to us to use in this realm – not with minds that have been made dull, but with minds that have been made alive in Him.

DRAW IT DOWN

Father in heaven, thank you for blessing our marriage. Thank you for the assurance that if you have given the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over it, then You will supply the wisdom and capacity to do that. We praise You that you have not allowed our minds to remain dull, but have renewed and restored them in Christ Jesus our Lord.



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