

Jack, Jill and the Hill
“The Challenge of Intimacy”
Blake Bergstrom

Selected Verses

Hi there Chase Oaks! My name is Blake Bergstrom and I am honored and humbled to be asked to speak today! I’ve been a pastor for 18 years; I have 4 daughters who are all teenagers this year:

13, 15, 17 & 19 and a smoking hot wife!

I like to tell people that God looked down on my house and saw that there was plenty of man there and so he gave me all women. I didn’t know that I needed a *women’s ministry*...but apparently God thought that I did!

Man I love your pastor...he’s such a good dude...do you realize how blessed you are to have such a humble leader and teacher like Jeff? Listen, *being a pastor can be lonely and overwhelming* and I just want to challenge you to love him and his family well... (that’s true for every pastoral staff here....encourage them, pray for them, send them notes, make them their favorite pie, and if you have a *boat* and you have not invited your campus pastor out on the water ...then you’re living in sin!!!

We are in a series right now called, “**Jack and Jill and the Hill**” and the heart of this series is to help us navigate relationships and **the HILL** represents the challenges that come along with intimacy.

Have you ever made the statement...”man I am in way over my head! Like...I don’t think I can do this thing!” Maybe you felt like this...

Slide _____) (baby with weights pic)

Or this:

Slide _____) (overloaded donkey pic)

I think many of us feel that way when it comes to the *monumental task of loving people well and experiencing real intimacy in relationships*. In this series, **Jan** taught what it means to be a *woman* in America and a lot of the challenges that come with that, then **Jack** helped explain what it means to be a *man* in our culture & last week **Jeff** did a great job at explaining how much it means to the heart of God that “we as men” treat women with respect! *If you’ve missed...go online and watch*...there’s a lot more than just that in a discussion panel of some brilliant minds that you don’t want to miss! Today I’d like to talk about summiting “the hill of intimacy”, especially in a marriage.

Slide _____) (Giraffe pic)

In 2010 I climbed a stupid-big **hill** called Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa that's 19,340 ft tall...9 day climb and if you know anything about this climb...you know that everyone talks about Summit day. Its on day 7, you make camp at Barafu Camp, which means "Ice" in Swahili, you're at 15,000 ft. elevation and the plan is to go from 15 to 19 and then back down to 12 in one day. So you leave at 3 am and usually arrive at 7 pm to your camp at 12,000 ft. We had great anticipation as we talked about our strategy to summit the following day!! We had planned and prepared for almost a year. That night a lot went wrong for me... I had a splitting headache...my asthma was acting up, my entire body was aching, I had what I will affectionately refer to as Code Brown...and to make matters worse, when you're climbing and its that cold...you don't get out of your tent...so, it's not unusual to have a pee bag...well, mine got a hole in it and leaked throughout my entire tent, but luckily my sleeping bag soaked it up...so you zip yourself into your sleeping bag and so I slept in my own awful odor--***it was not ideal.*** - little sleep w/ a hard one of the hardest days of my life ahead of me... I get up at 3 am and left at 3:45 w/ 5 layers of clothing on..it was 10 below zero and the air was thinner than I'd ever experienced. **Every 5 min.** someone was coming down the mountain that couldn't make it because of Acute Mountain Sickness called (ACS) I remember thinking...*I'm so cold, I can't feel my extremities, my camelback is frozen...its so dark and I'm so alone and I'm not sure I can make it up this hill...*

Are you there today? *-fragile and weak*, facing one of the hardest challenges of your life and life is not going the way you had planned. –maybe **bills** piling up... maybe your kids are out of control – or maybe it's a relationship that you don't know how to restore – considering separation or divorce, you don't know how to move forward and every-time you try...**it just gets messier.** Some of you feel **like I did**...*like you don't have what it takes*, you're *tired*, you want to *give up*, you're *scared* of what the future looks like and you ***feel powerless to go another step.***

Frederick Douglas said:

Slide _____) ***"If there is no struggle, there is no progress." --Frederick Douglas***

To really have intimacy in your life...*it's an uphill climb!* I sometimes think we have Weddings and Funerals backwards...because like when we die...we are finally done...we are invited to the wedding banquet with God—we're partying! But when you get married...make no mistake – YOU DIE! *Really!* ...you lay your life down for the other and place them before yourself. When I do weddings...I love to use this verse because I think it's an honest look at what being married really requires:

Slide _____) **Colossians 3:12-15 (NIV)**

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in

your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Slide _____) We were made for intimacy!! But it's filthy, nasty work!

If you think about it...in Genesis it says that God created for seven days, he created vegetation, animals, all of creation and over and over it says, that “**God saw that it was GOOD!**” but there was one thing that was BAD...he said it is not good for man to be **alone!** We were hard wired to have intimacy with other people. But we aren't good at it...the first two humans ever born...Cain and Able...he killed his brother...*talk about a **dysfunctional family***...In fact, the majority of the pastoral counseling that I have done... usually has something to do with a *broken relationship*. You know why...because *Its hard to live at peace with people—we're awful at **intimacy!***

Illus. 2 weeks from now, I'm celebrating my 20 year anniversary! I tell her all the time, “*Ally, I'm going to battle with somebody the rest of my life...it might as well be with you!*” When we got married, I didn't have the tools in my bag to love a woman, so when it came to *Intimacy*-man, I was clueless. I had no idea how to.. like, **talk!** I thought you were supposed to yell..its all I knew. I had a very real battle with **ANGER!** To be clear, Anger was an old friend of mine...he had taken residence in my heart and I knew him very well. My dad was a good man, but he was a strict Nazarene disciplinarian and a Drill Sergeant in the Marines and he was very hard on me as a child. So, from a young age, I was plagued with self-doubt and insecurity and had an enormous amount of **ANGER** because I didn't feel like I could live up to the expectations of man. So...my exceptionally patient wife inherited a big pile of nastiness when she got me. Early in our marriage, I would **explode** at her and yell and degrade her and make her feel so intimidated. I'll never forget one day when I slapped the **wall** in our bathroom, and I screamed at her..and I saw in her **eyes**.. the same scared little boy that I was as a child and I realized that I had become the monster that I'd been running from. In that moment...its like I woke up from a bad dream...I said, “baby...you're the only one in this world that gives a rats butt about me...I don't ever want to yell at you again...be honest with me...on a scale of 1 to 10 where are we at...she said, maybe a 4 and I said maybe...we had to change! So, we went downstairs and she prayed over me...and we aren't like “charismatic” people...but she prayed that I'd be delivered from my old friend named, “anger” and that day something amazing happened. I was set free. I could breathe. I told her we have to learn how to talk. We don't know how to communicate. I don't ever want to yell at you again...how can we do that? We were in a really bad cycle—she would really want to tell me something that I needed to work on but before she could finish, in the heat of the moment...I was defensive, **pride** so I'd get mad and yell! **WASN'T WORKING!** So our counselor suggested that we walk away in the moment and write down what we needed to work on and talk about it later...so I started taking her on a date every Thursday night--to a public place, to pull out our list and talk about them..and they were usually just silly! When we gave it time...and actually wrote out what we wanted to say...it was usually like silly stuff, mine especially, they were dumb-laundry or being late...**BUT hers** were usually legitimate like, “why weren't you home when you said you'd come home from work?” or... “while I was talking you cut me off like 8 times this week, when you do that, you're saying to me that you wish that I'd shut up and what I have to say isn't valuable at all!” Id be like, yeah I did that! So we did the exhausting work of listening...then recommunicating what she said back to her! I started asking her 3 questions-- that I still ask her 15 years later: **1. How am I doing**

as a father?—usually safe, she thought I was doing great with the kids **2. How am I doing as a husband?** That was typically awful—I wish you'd serve more around the house—you know, that kinda nonsense! And **3. How can I pray for you?** That question alone changes everything!

A recent study shows that 8% of Christian couples pray with each other. That's not okay! ...listen, Its really hard to stay in a fight and stay mad when you are regularly asking the question, "HOW CAN I PRAY FOR YOU?" **Men:** Pray for your wife! You might not know how to be a spiritual leader...that term might scare you...just be a spiritual initiator. Ask your family if you can pray for them at least once a week-start there! Every person in your house...I challenge you, pray over your wife and kids!

Those 3 questions: 1. Father 2. Husband 3. Pray saved our marriage. But I had to be willing to REALLY LISTEN. Not just listen but actually make sure my wife felt heard! I had to stop cutting her off and speaking over her only to be right...it was **exhausting!** **But...**for us it worked... my children would tell you that they can't remember 1 time that they've seen their dad yell at their mom. I didn't have the tools...all I knew was to yell...but just because that's how I was taught doesn't mean that's who I had to become! You can change...but you both have to be willing to climb the hill together!

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A perfect marriage is just two imperfect people who refuse to give up on each other! What if marriage actually exists so we can have more intimacy with God?

That changes everything doesn't it!! The way that Gary Chapman says that in a great book called, "Sacred Marriage" is that :

Slide: _____)

*"What if God designed marriage to make us **Holy** more than to make us **Happy**?"*

Real Talk...when I'm walking in the flesh...the first person to know is my bride. When I'm off...or living in sin...my wife is always the first to *feel the funk in my life*. Listen...being married is looking your Husband and Wife in the eye and saying... *"I've seen the crazy and I'm in."* I'm not going anywhere. We need to stop saying things like, "he's not meeting my needs..you made a covenant with God...there wasn't an IF in your wedding vows...was ther? You didn't say, For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health until we're separated by death if they meet my needs? Marriage says, "I'm willing to spend the rest of my life helping illuminate truth in your heart if you'll do the amazing work of doing the same in mine. Our goal in life is to help gently push one another to the arms of Jesus. Men, when you're married...your heart no longer belongs to you...you give every chamber of your heart to your bride...including the password to your facebook and cell phone...don't keep anything hidden. Ally has permission to have access into every chamber of my heart so that we might help each other become the child of God we are called to be. *Come on somebody!* I'm gonna be honest though...I hate it when my wife is the voice of the Holy Ghost in my life. I'll be like minding my own business...watching TV shoving chips in my face and she'll be like, *"is that really what*

you want to eat?” and I’m like... “Yes, Actually yes!”

It’s an interesting thought isn’t it... what if being married is really to help me become Holy and love God more? I take Ephesians 5 seriously when Paul talks to husbands about washing our wives in the word:

Slide: _____) Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Jesus died to help cleanse the bride with the washing of the word and we as husbands are asked to do the same thing. What? That’s huge...listen, listen... Christ was murdered on a cross so we could be “Set Apart” and made HOLY so we could be PRESENTED before him without blemish, without stain...completely washed pure! That’s why a bride walks down the aisle on her wedding in all white...being presented to her groom!

I really believe that our jobs as a spouse is to wash each other in the word...so that we can become HOLY!! Holiness is really rare these days! Holiness is Cool. I dare say... *Holiness is sexy!* -that’d be a great t-shirt by the way! For my teenage girls... they want to find a man and I am praying for a man..who is crazy in love with God... someone that is obsessed with being light in the darkness, someone that they can be on mission with... but like Jeff said last week...*why is it so hard to find that guy?* Where’d all the good guys go? You know how awesome it would be if when I was asked by some young man for my daughters hand...if he said to me, *“Mr. Bergstrom, I would like to commit to washing your daughter in the word the rest of her life to present her as Holy before God ...may I have her hand in marriage?”* You know what I’d say... *“Wait...you’re committed to dealing with my daughters sin and I don’t have to anymore...yes please...take her!”*

Slide: _____) Psalm 1:1-3 (NASB)

...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.

Do you delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night? Who actually does that? We know the Ten commandments, right? Don’t steal, Don’t commit adultery...but what God is saying here is not just “don’t do them”...but to actually **delight** in *not doing them!* Jesus helped dive deeper into this thought by saying, “You say, don’t commit adultery, I say.. **don’t lust...**” See, *What love compels of us the Law could never demand of us!*” When we do things out of love for God...then we easily meditate on doing what is good and what is pleasing to him. When we are living from a place of LOVE instead of rules...everything changes. Do you see that...*it flips the script!!!* See...when your wife asks you to be home early...it’s not met with **drudgery**...instead...you start to think of *surprising her* and bringing a *gift* because *you delight*

in the law and you were meditating on ways to obey that law in a creative way!!!

When we love, serve and obey God from a grateful and thankful heart...that's what it looks like to delight in His law. And I might add that this is where you'll find your greatest intimacy in every relationship...when you both delight in pleasing each other. Some of you are dating and have no intention of giving yourself to that person...you're delighting in them for your own pleasures! Please hear me: **Love without sacrifice is a lie!** ...when we Love sacrificially we find intimacy...no woman will place her trust in you if you aren't willing to commit to her and sacrifice....that's where the **key** to vulnerability and honesty starts to flourish!

Slide: _____) **1 John 4:7-12 (NIV)**

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

The greatest human need is to be loved...we know that...but for a lot of us...we don't actually make the time to be vulnerable enough to allow ourselves to be loved or to love without reservation. You are loved by God...you are adored by God...**receive** that...**believe** that so that you might be able to **give** that! We've got to stop pretending like we don't need each other...**we do!**

Slide: _____) **Intimacy with God and with People is all we really have!**

(Go stand on Ladder and teach the challenge of spiritual health!)

We don't naturally drift towards health! Finances-**debt**, personal health-**fat**, and especially in relationships...We drift towards **individualism**, **self-reliance** and **selfishness!** Individualism always leads to being **disconnected** and **detached**.

Slide: _____)

Detachment will always lead to being lonely and deflated, while intimacy will always lead to belonging and being filled up with love!

So...why would we choose loneliness and seclusion...it's dangerous up here...you make yourself vulnerable for an attack from the enemy! Some of you have found yourself on this top rung and you're not sure how you got here. You've been given warning signs and you blazed right past them! What brought you here? Your spouse is asking you why you're so distant...your co-workers might be asking you, man, are you okay? Your friends have tried to help...what things in your life are you choosing that are causing you to walk away from what matters the most? Is your job causing you to detach...is it another person that isn't supposed to have your affections? What's causing you to drift towards your own interests?

Marriages either get BETTER & BETTER or they get WORSE & WORSE! You can usually tell when you meet a couple in their old age if they've tended to one another...can't you...you can see in their countenance if they've taken care of each other...but you can also see if they've destroyed each other! Which one are you drifting towards...are the relationships around you getting better or are they getting worse?

Illus. ...it was **dark** and **cold** and I couldn't feel my toes. I kept trying to move them to keep blood flowing! I said, "*Elias, my feet hurt so bad...they are killin me!*" Elias replied back to me, "*Do not pay attention to the cold, the cold is nothing, pay attention to your breathing, the Sun will rise in one hour!*" I was like, "*What do you mean-- the cold is nothing?? It's the coldest I've ever been in my entire life!*" But you know what...he was right --I could feel the power of God encouraging me. His presence and intimacy was right beside me! Don't be lost in this circumstance...it won't be cold forever and as I watched the Sun come over the horizon... Here's the picture I turned and captured at 17000 ft:

Slide: _____) (pic at 17,000 ft)

I was lost in the wonder and awe of my Creator. I could finally see the top of the mountain...the glaciers were in clear site, and I knew I was going to make it! Here's me at the top:

Slide: _____) (pic at Summit)

We were only there for 15 min and then we headed back down. As I was coming down...I looked over **at where I had quit** and it was as if God said to me...

Slide: _____) **Embrace the Process!**

stop complaining. Climbing a mountain is not near as sacred as building a relationship and its much easier to climb a mountain than to *love well*... ***At the end of our lives, you wont want to talk about the mountains you've climbed or your great achievements...they won't matter...but when you are on your death bed all you'll really want is to be surrounded by the people that you loved and those that love you!***

The greatest tool you have against the enemy of darkness is intimacy with God and intimacy with his people! When I am praying and I'm seeking the heart of God...my marriage is always stronger...but when I'm drifting away from intimacy there's usually a distance and ...there is a distance...usually because I'm placing my affections and desires away from her and away from God and I'm distracted with stuff that doesn't matter and won't last! My grandpa was a wheat farmer from Kansas and he used to always say to me, "Son, what comes easy won't last...but what lasts won't come easy!!"

When everything is going wrong with your family and friends...remember something...try not to be too lost in the argument or the circumstance that you give up on the people around you!

People are never worth giving up on...I praise God that He has not given up on me...DON'T QUIT!!! -- "the cold is nothing...the Sun will rise in one hour!" My prayer is that Chase Oaks

would be a church that fights for intimacy with God and with his people and that LOVE BIG and LOVE WELL!

Lets Pray!

FEMVAL