

## 2014 OKC Fall Discipleship Conference Workshop

# “Hedges”... Affair Proofing Your Marriage

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Based on the book Hedges by Jerry Jenkins, and my own personal life experiences, I will share practical insights on how to build “hedges” or defensive walls around your marriage to protect it against temptation. I am going to mention some from the book and some of my own, but I encourage you to read the book and come up with some of your own hedges.

Read from Hedges by Jerry Jenkins, pages 21-28

### **So what do you think they could have done to prevent this from happening?**

I would propose to you that hedges or defensive walls are established around your marriage in advance. You have consciously decided well in advance what you will do should a situation like this arise.

Here is a really old statistic from a Pollster George Barna back in 1988 that still holds true today... The major factors leading to illicit relationships surveyed showed 78 percent of respondents citing physical and emotional attraction, while only 41 percent cited marital dissatisfaction.

### THE PRICE

Infidelity. Seems like this is such a simple word for what it truly describes. How about calling it what it is... violating one's trust, breaking one's marriage vows, being unfaithful, sleeping around, fornicating, committing adultery.

Even those with the perfect wife or husband are still capable of lust and senseless seeking of that which would destroy them and their family. We must fear our own potential and plant a hedge around ourselves and our marriage. Otherwise, we are headed for disaster.

Jerry Jenkins asks the question, “Shall we all run scared? Yes! Fear is essential. He goes on to say, “Look around. Let your guard down, don't remind yourself that you made a vow before God and men, don't set up barriers for your eyes, your mind, your hands, your emotions, and see how quickly you become a statistic.”

“Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:22 NIV  
Beware the not-so-youthful lusts as well!







When you first become aware of the impact the other person has on you is the time to move into action! How do you feel when you are around that person? How much eye contact do you have with them? Are you magnetized by them? How much do you look forward to seeing them?

Temptation can overwhelm us before we know it. Our only hope is to get the heck out of dodge and RUN, not Walk...RUN!!! Flee or get away from it. Is this verse possibly an admission on God's part that He did not equip us with the ability to subdue our natures IN THIS AREA? This is a valid question.

In other areas, God grants us victory. We can win over jealousy, a bad temper, greed, and even pride. We can train our consciences to avoid theft, bad-mouthing, and lying. But wouldn't most of us take a peek at pornography if we were convinced no one would find out.

### **Thoughts or comments?**

Only by understanding mutual weaknesses can a husband and wife truly help each other overcome them. Confess to your spouse privately your personal points of temptation. Be blunt about your struggles. Pray together for strength.

So what do we do when we are overwhelmed with temptation? If we are weak and we have not made plans in advance as to what we will do, then we may fall to the temptation. We must anticipate the dangers and the wiles of the devil and figure out what we will do to escape. The time to plant hedges or defensive walls around our marriage is BEFORE the enemy attacks.

### **Hedge: Accountability to close friends of the same sex.**

Ones that we can admit our weaknesses to. Ones that will bust your chops (so to speak) if we ever trample all over our wedding vows.

#### **Example:**

When a young man I know often succumbed to the temptation to get on pornography when his wife left to run errands, I had him think IN ADVANCE of an activity that would automatically be triggered when she said she was leaving the house. Something like a minor project that needed to be done, like cleaning out the garage or fixing the leaky toilet or whatever. Something substantial enough to keep him busy for an extended period of time, if necessary. This way, he knew IN ADVANCE exactly what he would do to FLEE the temptation of getting into trouble while she was gone.

This may not be a temptation for you, but having hedges in place to protect you if it happens is wisdom and assures you will be able to resist.







Maybe, you should have software in place on your technology such as “Covenant Eyes” that record the websites you visit and let the person holding you accountable know when you stumble.

I know it may seem harmless to some, but looking at pornography is a form of unfaithfulness as it causes you to fantasize about someone other than your spouse, even if you never act it out with someone. It is highly addictive, much like cocaine or heroin and very difficult to break free from.

James 1:13-15 – *When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

1 Peter 2:11 – *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

**Hedge:** List 5 reasons you want to experience a life-long marriage and then 5 steps you can take toward marital longevity.

**Hedge:** Recognizing danger keeps you on the path to victory.

E.g. - Acknowledge infatuation for what it is. May occur when you connect with someone you have something in common with.

- 1) Refrain from touching them
- 2) Be careful how you look in their eyes
- 3) Never be alone with them
- 4) Never flirt (even in jest)
- 5) Never say anything you wouldn't say if your spouse was there

What can you do if you feel that surge or charge when you meet someone new? What triggers your interest in someone of the opposite sex?

These hedgies must be planted well in advance of even meeting someone else. Be careful of relationships with members of the opposite sex.

In his book, Jerry Jenkins states, “Women in record numbers are cheating on their husbands. Why? They are often ignored by busy husbands. Many women throw themselves into their work and find companionship with lonely, unattached men... unless well-tended hedgies are in place.







**Hedge:** List common interests that allow you and your spouse to share not only quality time but also quantity time.

Celebrate your differences. Talk and pray with your spouse about the ways you're the same as well as different. Find common ground in interests, likes/dislikes, and dreams for the future.

Even children see a difference in a healthy marriage. Show appropriate amounts of affection so they know you are in love.

**Hedge:** Never be flirtatious.

When someone says something flirtatious, sometimes the temptation is to go along with it and play it out, but we must resist that. It is dangerous. It is also mental and emotional UNFAITHFULNESS. When we do this we are exercising a portion of our brain and soul that should only go to our exclusive lover. We must keep our own relationship vibrant and not diffuse it by flirting with someone else. If you want to flirt, flirt with your spouse! Send her a note. Bring flowers. Wink across the room, blow a kiss, play footsies under the table. You'll be glad you did.

Jerry writes, "I know two men who have left their wives for other men's wives, and it all began with what each party thought was harmless flirting."

Why is it so important that couples avoid adultery?

We must build hedges around our hearts, eyes, hands, spouses, and marriages. The Bible puts adultery in the same class as murder, therefore, it is not only a threat to our marriages, but our very lives as well.

Consider the admonition to walk in love as found in Ephesians 5:1-7.

*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.*







Consider this advice from Proverbs 5:15-20:

*Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.*

*As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?*

**Hedge:** Meetings with the opposite sex should only take place in public or with at least one other person present.

This provides for protection of reputations and protection against temptation for all involved.

Jerry's philosophy is that if you take care of how things look, you take care of how they are. Therefore, if we follow the biblical injunction to abstain from even the appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22 KJV "Abstain from all appearance of evil."), we will also abstain from the evil itself.

E.g. – At one of my former jobs, one of the first things I did was to let the females I worked with know that I wouldn't ride alone with them in a car, etc., IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. I was not arrogant or rude about it, I just wanted them to know I loved and respected my wife enough that I didn't want to put myself in a bad spot or in any kind of temptation.

E.g. – Probably a good idea, if you are not in counseling professionally, that you never give counsel to a member of the opposite sex alone or in private. But if you have to, do it in a public setting and NEVER in private, and preferably refer that person to your spouse for help.

**Hedge:** Never drive anywhere alone with the opposite sex, if at all possible.

If your work demands it and there is not way around it, then call your spouse and let them know before you go and let them know when you get back. They will love you and appreciate you for it, I promise.

**Hedge:** Never dine alone with unrelated members of the opposite sex.

Why? Because there is something personal and intimate about eating with someone. It's a time to relax, to sit close, to open up. If it weren't true, why are so many dates centered on food? A lot of bonding can occur over a meal. There is just something special about breaking bread together. That is why it is so important to do it in our marriage and to do it as a family.







**Hedge:** Never travel alone with members of the opposite sex.

However, if this is outside of your control, do your best to make sure you are not in the same hotel. If that is out of your control, make sure you are not on the same floor and are at different wings of the hotel.

After a business meeting and/or dinner, upon arriving back at the hotel, immediately call your spouse and let them know you are back in the room.

**Hedge:** When checking in at the hotel and before going to the room, ask the front desk to block access to adult movies. Better yet, stay in a hotel that doesn't offer adult movies.

**Hedge:** When using Social Media, never connect with an ex.

For example, if you are struggling in your marriage, this might possibly re-ignite thoughts to wondering what things could have been with that person.

Enough said!

**Hedge:** Be very careful how you touch an unrelated member of the opposite sex

Touching and being touched, embracing and being embraced is as much a matter of common sense and decency as it is of ethnic background and custom. Therefore, we must tread very carefully in this area.

Jerry writes, "If I embrace only dear friends or relatives and only in the presence of others, I am not even tempted to make the embrace longer or more impassioned than is appropriate. But, if I allowed myself to embrace just anyone, even dear friends, IN PRIVATE, I would be less confident of my motives and my subsequent actions."

Maybe it would be helpful to come up with a list of socially appropriate, non-tactile ways to show friendship or affection. In other words, without resorting to hugs or actions that could send mixed messages.

God's expectation for us is shown in Ephesians 5:15-17 which says, "*Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*"

**Hedge:** Pray together daily.

**Hedge:** Have lots of fun together and laugh often!



