

Harris Creek Church

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Series: Ephesians

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The Truth About Marriage

Ephesians 5:21-33

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ 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. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

Hey, it's great. How we doing? Hey, stop praying for rain. Okay. Like chill with that. I want to take you guys back to anatomy and physiology class. My junior year, Ms. Peruthi is the teacher. I am failing. And she has forecasted a big project that's a significant part of our grade. And she says, "Hey, this is coming."

So I'm like, alright, I really need a good grade on this project. But the problem is, my junior year, I had a crush on this young woman in the class. We'll call her Kelly Kapowski. She is in the class, and I have not been paying attention, and my grade reflects it. Ms. Peruthi says that she's going to partner us up, a guy and a girl, a guy and a girl. This is where I go to praying, and I'm like, "Lord, please put me with Kelly. Please put me with Kelly." As she starts saying a guy's name and a girl's name, a guy's name and a girl's name, I'm like, "Jonathan and Kelly, Lord, Jonathan and Kelly." And she says, "Jonathan," and I'm like, "Please God, Kelly," and she says, "Kelly." I'm like, "Yes, absolutely. This is amazing. This is great."

So we get partnered together. Now, here lies the problem. I had not given any consideration to what the assignment was, the project, what we were going to be doing together. I just knew that I wanted to be partnered with Kelly. Ms. Peruthi then rolls out the project: we're going to dissect a frog. This is where I learn all kinds of important things about Kelly because our grade is going to be contingent upon mutual participation. I learned Kelly doesn't like frogs. She doesn't want to touch the frog or get any frog juice on her. It's not looking good for my grade in anatomy and physiology.

I start there to make this point. I think that so many of us, when we approach marriage, choose someone based on how we feel and all the intangibles, but we give very little consideration to the project, to the assignment. What I know about all of us this morning is whether you desire marriage, have been married, or are married right now, we've all been impacted by marriage. Every single one of us has been formed and shaped by a marriage or even the lack thereof. As it relates to marriage, every single one of us is dealing with missed expectations. We have been informed as to what marriage is more from the world than we have from the Word. The biggest influences in our lives pertaining to marriage are both the marriage example we've had and Hollywood. Hollywood has the highest divorce rate of any geography on the planet Earth, and yet they get to tell you what marriage should look like.

Today is going to be a massive reset. We're going to look at God's Word and let that inform our view of marriage. If you've been with us, we've been studying the book of Ephesians. If you haven't, we're going verse by verse, chapter by chapter, through the book of Ephesians. Today is on marriage expectations. Paul is going to talk about what to look for, what marriage is, to align our expectations. By way of reminder and review, the first three chapters of Ephesians are all theology, all doctrine. This is who God is. This is who you are in Christ. Not a single imperative command in the first three chapters, except for the word "remember." It's all about filling your mind with the truth. Chapter four makes a sharp turn into application. Here in chapter five, where we'll be today, Paul is talking about the God-ordained institution of the household. He's going to begin to talk about the roles of a husband and a wife.

I'll say this in an effort to align our expectations. I didn't marry Kelly, didn't even date her, praise God. Later in life, I married Monica. My wife is beautiful. I am physically attracted to her. What I want you to know is my physical attraction to her did not help at all this week when I'm at a staff retreat and the stomach bug moves through our home. Those are the things you don't really talk about in premarital counseling. When she's trying to help one of our children stop throwing up and get their fever down, right? This is the assignment. This is the project. So when you're choosing someone, when you're considering who you want to do that with, men, you're not looking for a trophy wife, you're looking for someone to go to war with you.

Happy Mother's Day to all the moms here. We should absolutely applaud you. I know that this day is a painful reminder to many of you. Some of you have babies in heaven, some of you have mamas in heaven, some of you have less-than-ideal circumstances that this day serves as a reminder of. You want to be a mom, and you're not. As a representative of the local expression of the church, Harris Creek, we see you, we love you, we're here for you. We're going to come around you and support you and care for you. You're not alone. I don't want that apology to steal from the gratitude we feel toward moms. You don't just get a day. I believe you have the hardest job on the planet Earth. It's not just trite, not cliché, not just words. I truly think I've had the opportunity to have a front-row seat for two moms in my life, and I believe that your job is extremely difficult. We're really thankful for you.

I'll dive back into where we're going to be today. In Genesis 2:15, it says, "**For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.**" This is my favorite picture. It's oil and water. It's a picture of two selfish people coming together, agreeing to be unselfish toward one another. The only kinds of marriages that have ever happened on the planet Earth are two selfish people coming together, saying promises like "for richer, poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part," and then typically consummating the marriage and becoming one flesh. It is a mystery. That's what the Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit tell us today, that two people become one flesh, learning to be selfless toward one another.

I've had the privilege of doing 12 years of singles ministry, which involves lots of weddings and premarital counseling. I would take people through an assessment. Monica and I, when they were going to get married, would take an engaged couple through an assessment. These are some of the questions we would ask them. They are true or false questions, and they would often get

them wrong. For example: "My partner will meet all my needs for companionship." They would say true; it's false. "My partner's interest in sex will be the same as mine." They say true; they are in for a disappointment. "Nothing could cause us to question our love for one another." They would always answer that true. I would always say, "You're going to question your love for one another before you leave the honeymoon." Another one: "I believe I know everything there is to know about my partner." They would say true; the correct answer is false.

I think the church has to do a better job of equipping singles for marriage and making sure we understand what marriage is, and candidly, equipping married people for marriage. I also think the church globally has missed it in the way we've elevated marriage above singleness. That's not a biblical idea. One is not JV to varsity. One is not a waiting season for the next season. There are two different seasons, and they both serve a purpose in God's kingdom. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 7, the Apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, says, "I wish you were as I am," which is single. He says it is a gift. Jesus also says in Matthew 19 that it is great to be single for the kingdom of God. So today, as I teach the next section of scripture, I don't want to undervalue what it means to be single.

I'll be in chapter 5, verse 22. We're going to look at the mindset of marriage, the mission of marriage, and before you leave here this morning, the mystery of marriage. As a reminder, he said last week, he wrapped up in verse 21, **"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."** This is often roped into the marriage section, but I think it stands alone. He's talking to the church: submit to one another, give deference toward one another, set your preferences aside as you do life group, as you go there, put your preferences aside and use your life to serve each other. Then he's going to zero in and say, **"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."**

Happy Mother's Day.

Shirk coincidence, i.e. sovereignty, that this is where we're at today. It was not planned. Feeling really challenged by this, and I know we don't like that word "submit." You're taught all these ideas: "Hey, that's an old way of thinking. That's not what we do anymore." There's a lot of overcorrection in our culture. The way you deal with difficult passages is not with overcorrection

but with right teaching and understanding. This is not a rogue idea. This is not a one-off. Here it is. Paul taught this in Ephesians 5. Peter and Paul disagreed on a lot of things, but this is one thing they agreed on. 1 Peter 3:1, "**Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands.**" And then again in Colossians 3, "**Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord.**" I know, ladies, that's a challenging group of three scriptures.

Here's what I want you to know. There's going to be seven scriptures toward the men—very difficult scriptures toward the men. So hang in there. Hang in there for a second. No need to leave right now. But it's Mother's Day. I know it's Mother's Day. I'm sorry. I'm grateful that it's Mother's Day. Sorry we're talking about submission. It's going to be okay.

It says this in verse 25: Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In the first century, this would have been a radical turn. Everybody's nodding their head in Paul's letter at the wives submit to their husband's part. Everybody's saying, "Oh yeah, wives submit," because the husband is the dictator. He calls the shots. He is an authoritarian. He flexes his authority. And then Paul turns to this, and he's going to go seven verses here, which would have been mind-blowing to the people who originally read this letter. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

So if the wife's call is submission, what's the husband's call in one word that starts with an 'S'? Sacrifice. Can we agree that's a really big calling? Sacrifice. So when your husband elbows you and says, "The preacher said you're to submit to me," look him dead in his eyes and say, "The preacher said you're to die." That will put that to bed right there.

Because I think there's a lot of confusion happening here. You're to set aside your preferences and prerogatives and use them to serve. Here's what I want you to know: Being a good mom, being a good dad, if given the opportunity, starts with being a great husband and a great wife. Because I'm telling you, in pastoral ministries, we're getting our tail kicked because the kids leave the house. They go off, and then you're left as roommates, and it's like, "Oh, we've forgotten how to love each other." This happens over and over and over, and it's happening in a concentrated fashion right now. I'm telling you, you want to be good parents? You've got to prioritize the marriage. It's biblical, it's godly, and it's what God desires for us.

1. The mindset of marriage is sacrifice and submission.

These are the two words that come from this text—sacrifice and submission. There's something bigger happening here that Paul is nodding his head at right out of the gate. I'm teasing to close right now. He's talking about something that's bigger than just husbands and wives. He's nodding his head at the relationship that the Trinity has. Philippians 2 says this: Christ, who being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. There's something to be taught to us about God through this relationship as the world sees it function properly.

We believe that husband and wife, men and women, are equal in value and rank, created equal in worth but created to play different roles. Now, some of you are hearing that and you don't like it. You think, "No, that's not my theology." I want to tell you that you're wrong in saying that you don't like it because you actually do like it. I'll effort to prove it to you. Everybody somewhere in their hearts agrees with this reality.

In 2012, there was a cruise ship, the Costa Concordia, and due to human error of the captain, it capsized. Men were caught on film throwing women out of the way to get to the lifeboats. In fact, they said that some of the early lifeboats that showed up to safety were filled entirely with men, and the world was appropriately outraged. "No, that's not right." That same year, 2012, there was a mass shooting in a theater in Aurora, Colorado. A gunman burst in with an assault rifle and went on a killing spree. There were three guys on a date that evening with their girlfriends. They threw their girlfriends to the floor and used their own bodies as shields. All three guys were shot and killed. All three of their girlfriends lived, and the world appropriately applauded them as heroes. Why?

It's in our hearts. You can try to say, "We're the same. We're the same. We're the same. Anything you can do, I can..." No. We are not the same. We were not meant to be the same. God made us different. Anything you can do, I can't do. There are things that you can do that are beautiful things I can't do. You can grow a human inside your body, and I can't do that. Your body then can feed that human being in a way that I should never be able to do. And it goes both ways. There are things that God made us to do that we can't do. Are there exceptions to the rules? Yes! Are there feminine men? Are there masculine females? Yes! Is there a spectrum? Sure! Should

you allow the exceptions in a spirit of compassion to redefine the rules and the system that God placed us in? By no means. By no means.

By no means. We can't leave logic at the door. You have to understand how we were created by God. Men, the calling on your life is to use your strength to sacrifice and to serve. That's the truth. Imagine if someone breaks into our home tonight. We're all snuggled up in bed, sound asleep, and someone kicks in the front door. I'm not going to be like, "Hey babe, why don't you go check that out?" No, we're equal in every way. We can play the same roles. "You got this. I'll give you a bat." Of course, it is funny. It is silly. You might think, "What if you're married to Ronda Rousey or someone like that?" It's like, "No, you don't like to work out, JP." Sure, are there exceptions? Sure. Can you overgeneralize? Sure. But that doesn't mean you should leave the generalization behind you. That's where I think we get really weird today. We're not sure how to navigate that. It's okay to turn back to the word and acknowledge God made us different. We're different. There is a role for me to play. You can over-index on that. You can certainly take it too far. Absolutely. No need to do that, but let God define the rules.

The ideal is a man setting aside his safety, his preferences, his desires to serve his wife. As she witnesses that over and over, she responds with, "I will follow you. I will follow you anywhere. I will go where you go, and your people will be my people, and your God, my God." It's really the only right response to someone saying, "I'm going to use everything I have, everything at my disposal to serve you and to follow you." When you see that, it is beauty. You're like, "That's otherworldly."

Those people must know something. I don't know. They must have a relationship with the creator of the heavens and the earth. There's something different there. So if you don't want to sacrifice, if submission sounds like a bad word, you're not going to like marriage. And if you don't want to be married, you can certainly be single for the sake of the kingdom.

Marriage does teach us about the sacrifice and submission that we see in the gospel, but singleness teaches us about the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ. It's beautiful when someone says, Jesus is enough. My life is complete in my relationship with him. I have everything I need. And they walk in that confidence that ministers to the church body. But marriage also teaches us something. And at the center of that something is sacrifice and

submission. What I want you to know is I can do anything for a season, but to do this with long obedience in the same direction is challenging, difficult, impossible without the Spirit of God.

So when I met Monica Rubin, a Baylor bear from Robinson, Texas, she worked at the salon at Ridgewood Village and I became a student of her. The salon at Ridgewood Village is at the end of the Valley Mills area, a part of town I had never been to before, but all of a sudden I found myself there all the time, just like getting lost. What am I doing here? I learned that she liked frozen yogurt from TCBY, white chocolate mousse with Heath bar toppings. So I would just show up to that salon that I had never been to before. Hey, look, they gave me two. You want one? And I learned that her favorite flower at the time was Gerber daisies. It's no longer Gerber daisies; there's no cruise control in this deal. You gotta stay on your toes. It's peonies today. I don't even know how to say that word. I think I'm saying it right.

But I learned what it looked like to pursue her. I would leave her these voicemails, the very first time. And I don't think she liked them, but I would leave them. It's just, it's the pursuit. This week, she wanted me to go and grab a prescription for our daughter from the pharmacy. And I was like, oh, babe, but I just got home, but I just sat down. What happened? What happened? Something happened. And we're all going to drift apart, right? We repel one another. We move back to selfishness. This is what naturally happens. And so it says in verse 25, "Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." That's what he's read. Now it says to make her holy. What is it? What is a word to make holy? Can you think of a word? Sanctify is the word I heard, and that's the correct answer. To make her holy. Sanctify. 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. You read that and you're like, what does that mean? Is it baptism? Not baptism. It's highlighting the fact that husbands are to, in their household, hold up the word of God at all times. That this is to set the precedent for what we do in this home, which means to my single friends, you gotta know the word of God. To my married husbands, you gotta know the word of God. It's never too late to prioritize knowing and understanding what the word says, and holding it in.

I remember in our home we were like little house on the prairie. We'd have breakfast and dinners together every day. And my mom would push the Devo across the table to my dad. "Hey, here, read this," and I could tell he didn't really want to, but he would. And that's an effort of saying,

"Hey, you need to take the lead on making sure everything we do is consistent with what this word says, including the way you love and serve me. So that I would one day be presented before Christ, pure." In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church, for we are members of His body. See, the men don't get off easy. They have all of these: to make her holy, verse 26, which is sanctification. And to serve her as you serve yourself, just like Christ serves the church. So you have sanctification and service. That's what we see in this section. That's the mission of marriage. My second point,

2. *The mission of marriage is sanctification through service.*

Sanctification means change. It's you being conformed to the image and the character of Jesus Christ. It's not re-parenting, men. That's not what you're doing. This is not your opportunity to parent someone. This is not iron sharpens iron, Proverbs 27:17, "**So one man sharpens another.**" That's not a marriage verse. This is, "Hey guys, let me take the lead on holding out the word of God before our family so that the Spirit of God makes known to us the things of God through the word of God, us being conformed to the image and the character of the Son of God through the reading of the word of God." This is what we're doing. "Hey, I want everyone in the home to understand what the word of God says so that the Spirit of God would make us more like the Son of God." In all that we do, we would process decisions with his word. "Hey, do you have, listen, that's great advice that your friend gave you. Do you have scriptures?" You're not using that manipulatively. You're not doing that to try to win the sword drill, if you will, the Bible trivia. But you are saying, "Hey, we want to prioritize as our family to do what God's word says for us to do. It says husbands."

And then it goes, it says husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. I think there are some disparities a lot of times in marriages. My friend was telling me this weekend he would sell vacuum cleaners door to door. His first job was selling vacuum cleaners door to door. Anybody ever buy a vacuum door to door? Okay. Yeah. And so he would go and it was often talking to the wife. And she would say, "I need to talk to my husband." And he would say, he had this line. He was like, "Man, I understand. Hey, that's an amazing bass boat out there. Whose is that?" And she was like, "Oh, that's my husband's." And he would say, "Did he talk to you before he bought

that?" I told him, I said, "You're making my job really hard because then they end up in our office at the church and he's just pitting them against each other." But I do think you see this gap often in relationships that men tend to run off and leave someone behind. And it can go both ways. There are exceptions, right? There are exceptions. Neither is right. What does it look like for us as a team to make decisions together, to trust that we each have the Holy Spirit and that God speaks to the wife, as God speaks to the husband, he speaks to both of them as they yield themselves to him. And that you're listening, that you're listening to what the word of God says.

The way I teach this, I'm to love my wife, even as I love my own body. And so I love sleep and I will get in my bed and all snuggly up with the thermostat down and I can go out like that. I'm sleeping like boom. And I hear, "Hey babe, are you awake?" Not anymore. What's up? "I'm thirsty." That's interesting. Or this one, "Did you lock the door?" That's not a real question, by the way. That's not it. You think yes or no is an okay answer. That's a, "I need you to go check and make sure you lock the door." Okay. You can say yes, but that's not going to... or "I'm thirsty." That's code for, "Would you please get up and get me something to drink?" Because you know what I do when I'm thirsty? I get something to drink. So if I'm to love my wife, as I love my own body, I'm to anticipate her needs and to meet those needs. And that's my lot in life. That's what the scripture calls me to anticipate her needs and to look for opportunities to meet those needs. And she's shouting amen right now. And she would want me to tell you, she hasn't done the thirsty thing in a long time. Here's a question for you. How are you doing at prioritizing God's word in your home and being sanctified by it? And how are you doing at serving each other? And if the answer to those questions is not well, you need to change. What are you going to do to make that shift before the sun sets tonight? So that next time we talk about this, you're like, "Hey, we're actually doing well at those things. We're doing well at serving each other. We're doing well at prioritizing the word of God." Because selfishness is the number one killer of healthy marriages. Let's dive back in 31. I'll just say, if you don't like serving each other and you don't want to change, you're going to hate marriage. To my single friends here, if you don't like serving people and you're like, "I don't want to change. I'm pretty set in my ways." Yeah. Don't get married. Okay? You won't be good at it. It won't go well.

“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” It's Genesis 2:24. And then he says this, okay, listen to this. This is

a profound mystery. Wait, what is a profound mystery? What? Like he stopped for a second. This is a profound mystery.

I'm about to put on you. Listen, lean in. Everybody pay attention because I'm talking about Christ and the church. Wait, hold on. I thought you were talking about husbands and wives, wives and husbands, marriage. No, I'm talking about Jesus and the church. That needs to be a hold on. Don't just move past that and keep reading and, oh, that was interesting about it.

No, he's like, I'm not talking about marriage. I'm talking about Jesus and the church. However, each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. He starts out talking about the intimacy of marriage, the two becoming one flesh. This is nodding its head at sex.

Intimacy, that experience. Now, this is fascinating because written in Genesis chapter 2 today in the 21st century, what psychiatry and psychology have taught us is that when we experience intimacy, our brain creates this synapse, bonding ourselves through our five senses to our surroundings. Some psychologists call it sex glue. There's a bonding that happens there. Now, intimacy is a gift from God to us for two reasons. One, procreation creates life. This is God's idea, His genius invention. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, here's what we're going to do. Hey, I got an idea. They're going to be able to procreate. Wow. This is the first great commission: be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. You would raise children in a God-fearing home with a husband and a wife, a mom and a dad who would raise those children to know the one true God.

The second reason that God has gifted us sex is bonding. As we experience intimacy, the relationship is protected from all of the other options that are out there. I'll say it in a different way, a better way this time: she and he would remain the epitome of attraction to each other rather than anyone else. Why? Because they're bonding to each other, and the brain is creating these muscles that say, you are the only one for me, and I am the only one for you. It's like our science, the greatest science we have, is catching up with what the scripture said thousands and thousands of years ago. It's fascinating to me. You can imagine the tragedy that happens when you introduce pornography into this equation. You train your brain not to bond. You rewire your brain. You're addicted to variety. There's no hope for monogamy. And there is hope because of grace, but it's really difficult. It's very difficult. This is what Tim Chester said: you can no more

try out sex than you can try out birth. The very act of sex produces a new reality that cannot be undone.

Now, I stand before you as a man who's done a lot of things wrong, particularly on this topic, and I have experienced the grace of God. Now, 20 years with three children, and praise God for grace. So if you're here and you're like, I've ruined it, there's hope. And there is design, and there is the will of God. And there are principles to live by that you want to begin to apply to your life today. And then he ends with this love and respect verse: each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Men, here's what I want you to know. Men, lean in. It's important. You will not, under any circumstance, have a happy, healthy marriage unless your wife feels loved. There is no exception. If she does not feel loved, your marriage is not happy nor healthy. She gets to decide if she feels loved. It's not the time for you to build your case as to why she should feel loved or all the things that you did to make her feel loved. And if it feels like that target is moving, it's because it is and there's no cruise control. You got to continue to be a student as to how in this season you make your wife feel loved because you will not succeed in marriage without doing so. Ladies, women, you need to know that you will not, under any circumstance, have a happy, healthy marriage unless your husband feels respected. Thank you. It will not happen. You will not be the first person in history to achieve it. And he gets to decide if he feels respected or not. You cannot build your case as to why he should feel respected. You will not have a happy, healthy marriage unless he feels respected. The word of God is brilliant. It is 10 for 10. It is unmatched. These ancient truths ring true today.

The mystery of marriage, my third and final point,

3. The mystery of marriage is that it showcases our savior.

Listen, guys, there's something weird happening here. He says, husband, wife, Christ, Church; husband, wife, Christ, Church; husband, wife, Christ, Church. He said, listen, the whole purpose of marriage is it points to another marriage. No one is married in heaven. That's what the scripture says. You and your wife, you and your husband, will not be spouses in heaven. Why? Why is that important? Here's why: because we're all married to Jesus in heaven. We collectively make the bride of Christ. If you've ever been to a wedding, you got the groom at the front with the pastor, and the doors swing open in the back, and everybody wants to know how the groom responds as he patiently waits to see his wife in her dress in the back. And that's our role. We are

waiting for our groom to return for us at any moment, to take us home into a kingdom that he's prepared for us. It could happen right now. Maybe that rain, maybe the sound of the weather in the distance, is preparing a place for Jesus to rip open the clouds and show up and say, you ready? And my question for you is, are you ready? This whole thing is about another relationship, much more important than any love you've ever felt under the sun. Love for a child, love for a spouse, love for a parent, any love you've ever experienced. There is a greater love, and it's God's love for you. And he's coming for you. This is what the apostle Paul is telling the church in Ephesus so that the Holy Spirit would preserve it and tell the church at Harris Creek. There's this other relationship. In fact, just to show you this, and I've said this before, the culture that this is written into is the way that marriage would happen is a Hebrew boy would leave his father's house, go into a foreign land, looking for a wife. When he would find a wife in another land, his father would pay a dowry. He would pay a price for his right to marry her. They would drink from the same cup, create a toast, and then he would leave. He would go back to his father's house, which wasn't just like a tiny journey, days and days, sometimes weeks of travel. He would get back to his dad's house, and he would begin to build a bridal chamber, a room on his dad's house that they're going to live in. And then an hour and a day that she does not know, he would return for her in hopes of finding her again so that he can then take her home to his father's house. They would go in that bridal chamber, be in there for seven days, where we get a seven-day honeymoon. It's where we get a toast. All of these traditions that we experience today are rooted in this principle. After being in that room for seven days, he would then present her to his family. This is why Jesus says to Thomas in John 14, **“my father's house has many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back for you.”** This is the story that your tiny little story was written into. And it's a much bigger story. It's the greatest story that's ever told. God's saving the world through his son, God getting his children back. Your marriage is vanity unless it points to that. Futile, unless it points to that. God invented marriage. Steve Jobs to the iPhone, God is to marriage. Elon Musk is to Tesla, God is to marriage. He invented it. He's telling you what it's for. And what he's saying is it's to point others to Jesus.

John Piper said this: marriage is temporary and it will finally give way to the relationship to which it has been pointing to all along, Christ in the church, the way a picture is no longer needed when you see face to face. That's what's coming. We've got to know that. We have to be

soberly aware of that. In summary, the mindset of marriage is sacrifice and submission. The mission of marriage is sanctification through service. And the mystery of marriage showcases the Savior, points others to Jesus. Monica and I, we dated for three years, which I don't recommend. Lots of things we did I don't recommend, but when we became Christians, when we surrendered our lives to Christ in dating, it was like, we should get married. We started premarital counseling with this pastor, and we would fight, man, manic highs and manic lows. Like we had no idea how to love each other. We'd pursue each other. He was listening. He was so patient with us. And he drew this on a piece of paper. He grabbed a marker and drew these two stick figures and said, hey, I feel like you guys are pursuing each other; and sometimes it hits and sometimes it misses. And it's like these manic highs and manic lows. And he drew this on the piece of paper. He said, "Y'all are just pursuing each other." And he said, "What you need to do, you have this new faith, you believe God, you believe His word is true. You need to pursue a relationship with Him together," and he drew these two arrows pointing to the cross.

He says, "As you continue to pursue Jesus together, you're gonna grow closer and closer and closer." We get married. Year one is the honeymoon. Year two, the wheels fell off. We have no idea how to love each other. We don't want to stay married. I would tell you that she lost her mind. She would tell you that I was incredibly selfish. She was correct. I was incredibly selfish. To make matters more complicated, we threw a child into the mix at that point. Had our first, and it was a really dark time. We didn't sleep for nine months. We certainly didn't love each other. There were seasons where I would wake up and just be like, "Where am I?" and panic. "Who is this? Wait, what?"

And I remember what that guy said. Stop pursuing each other. Start pursuing Christ together. And by the grace of God, we had a life group around us. And they challenged us and pointed us to the word of God. "Here's what the scripture says. You can do what you want, or you can do what God's word says. You can do what you feel, or you can do what God's word says. You can do all of your preferences and all of the things that you think are right or you can surrender your life to the Word of God by the Spirit of God and you will have no hope unless you say, 'I'm done. I give up. God, you drive.'"

Two selfish people repel. It's like oil and water. The irony between oil and water is that it's in so much of what you eat. It's in so many manufactured foods, most sauces, oil, and water. And yet

the only way you can get oil and water to bond is through an emulsifier. You got to have an emulsifier. That's an agent that takes a water molecule and a molecule from the oil and bonds them together and sticks it and makes these two blend. And what I'm telling you is Jesus is the emulsifier. You cannot have a God-fearing, godly, biblical marriage unless Jesus is at the center of it. Which changes things for my single friends because I know you've got your list. He's got to be tall. She's got to look like this. They have to make this much money. Number one on the list: Are they utterly, totally, completely, radically surrendered to the Spirit of God in God's Word? If they have Jesus, you have that, it's going to cover over a multitude of things. You find the person who has the most Jesus and you surrender your life, you commit your life to them. That's a marriage I've got hope in. Just about any of the other things can create all kinds of issues, but that one is there. I've got hope in that marriage.

The only way these two can bond is with Christ at the center. Let me pray. Father, would you create marriages here where Christ is at the center? It's our only hope. I pray for single friends, that Christ will be at the center. I pray for married friends, that Christ will be at the center. I pray for the church of Harris Creek, that Christ will be at the center. Father, I thank you for the moms in the room and the moms listening from afar. I pray that you would bless them, that this would be a great day. I pray for those that are experiencing sorrow and pain today, Father, that you would move close to them as their comfort and that they would lean on the church for such a time as this. We're so thankful for your word that does not return void. Would you give us a fresh understanding of the role that you want us to play? And we just acknowledge that we cannot play it without your help. Lord, would you help us? In Jesus' name, Amen.