

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Scott Kedersha
Series: Uncommon Family
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Uncommon Marriage

Well, let's go! Good morning, Harris Creek. My name is Scott Kedersha. I get to serve on staff here as our pastor of marriage ministry. And so glad to get to share with you today. So, I married my wife, Kristen, on September 15, 2001. So, we just celebrated 20 years of marriage in the fall, 21 coming up (crowd applauds). We've got twin boys who were born on May 26, 2004. Two other boys, but they're not part of this story, so they don't count right now. But twins were born on May 26 in 2004. And if you know my boys, they're radically different from one another, always have been, even from the womb. And so, when they're born, one of them comes out, well they're both screaming because they're babies, but Drew, who was born second, he was one minute after Duncan... Drew screamed for about the first six months of life (crowd laughs). He was a colicky baby, you're laughing but it's absolutely true. Like he's a colicky baby and nothing made the kid comfortable. You'd burp him, you'd feed him, you'd change his diaper, you'd put him on his tummy, you'd put him on his back, you'd put him over your shoulder, and this kid would just scream constantly. And I always say, you know, all babies are created equal in God's eyes. All babies are not created equal when it comes to looks and Drew was not a good looking baby. Okay, he's a great looking kid now, but he was skinny and all the crying and screaming like ribs sticking out, two long hairs coming from the top of his head. If you've ever seen Gollum or Smeagol, from Lord of the Rings (crowd laughs), that's a little bit of what he looked like, as a baby. Now his twin brother Duncan, had a lot more hair, and that's pretty much all we remember about Duncan. Like we don't remember him at all. Drew took all of our attention. Duncan, he's a great kid, just don't remember him as a baby. (crowd laughs) And so this is a really stressful season for us as a couple.

Almost 21 years of marriage, and it's been a great marriage. But this is by far the hardest season. We're just stressed, and we're tired, and we've got no money. And we've got no family in town. And we had community, but they lived on the other side of Dallas. And if you know Dallas, it takes like four hours to travel a mile because of all the traffic and so we felt all alone with these screaming babies and had no idea what to do with them. And so, one day, Kristen and I are arguing, we have no idea what it was over; it was probably three or four months after the twins are born and it starts going back and forth. She's level headed and I'm a drama queen, up and down, I'm all over the place. She's very constant and very calm. And even she starts to get animated in this fight. And so, we're yelling and the volume gets higher, and the intensity gets higher. And then before you know it, I'm using bad words, which I'm like, at the time I was working part time at a church. I'm only a part time pastor. So maybe that makes it okay, which is totally stupid. But I'm yelling, I'm cussing. And it ends with me, we have this window that went from our living room/family room into the kitchen, Kristen's behind me with screaming Drew, as always, and it ends with me banging my hands on this counter and I start screaming over and over, "My life is over! My life is over! My life is over! My life is over!" Banging my hands up and down, like a two-year-old child throwing a temper tantrum. And it just goes on and on and on. And I have no idea how the fight ended. I have no idea how I finally calmed down, I

probably just got tired or my voice gave out or my hands were bleeding from banging the counter. I don't remember how it ended. But when I look back on that moment, it's probably the worst moment of my life, candidly. I look back and that's the time I realize: I am so selfish. I'm the most selfish person I know. And when I think back, I think of my amazing wife who worked full time as a physical therapist and was excellent at what she did. And then we've got these twin boys, and she can't get one of them to calm down. And so, she goes from being an expert at what she does to being at home and just being lost. Like I don't know what to do with this baby. I can't get him to stop crying. I have no idea what to do. But it wasn't that Kristen's life was over, it was that my life was over. And then I think this makes me feel so bad, but like baby Drew, all he could do as a three- or four-month-old child is scream. He can't get comfortable, that's all his body knows how to do, and Drew's life wasn't over, it was all about my life being over.

The reason I tell you that story is because today we are going to talk about selfishness. That selfishness is something that affects every single one of us. It does not matter how old we are, doesn't matter our gender, doesn't matter our marital status. We are all people who are selfish. Specifically, we're going to spend a lot of time talking about how selfishness affects marriage. But this is an all-play message, whether you are married or single, this is for you. It's not the message to elbow the person next to you, or make a mental note, "This would be a great message for my child, or my spouse, or my parent to hear". This is for every single one of us.

And I've done marriage ministry for 16+ years. I've met with hundreds of couples, thousands of couples. And I get one shot with you, to talk to you about what makes a marriage uncommon. We've got 30 minutes. And this is the thing that I believe differentiates the common marriage from the uncommon marriage. And I want us to be uncommon in our marriages. This is what distinguishes, I believe, an unhealthy couple from a healthy couple. Is when you learn to deal with selfishness. And so it is for everyone, but we're going to focus a little bit more on marriage. I'm not going to go to the typical marriage passage. You might think I'm going to go to Ephesians 5 or Genesis 2, Song of Solomon, I Peter 3; I'm going to go to the book of James. We're going to discover what differentiates a healthy from an unhealthy couple. And that really, like I said, that applies to every one of us whether we are married or not.

And so if you're wondering, 'what does it mean to be selfish?' Here's a few little definitions. It means you're consumed about yourself. You just think about yourself all the time, where you sit, where you park, what do people think of me? What did they think about what I said? What do they think about the way I look? You don't really consider others; you're putting your needs first. It's just like 'my life, everything in life, is about me'. I'm entitled to get what I want. I deserve whatever I want, and it's something that affects every single one of us. The challenge with selfishness is that often, we're really good at spotting it in others, but really bad at telling when we're selfish. And so, many husbands are experts in selfishness. They're experts in selfishness of their wives, not wives, they've only got one, of their wife. Okay, and wives are experts at selfishness because they see it in their husband, but not in themselves. There's a great song I was going to share with you by Bruno Mars, it's the song 'Brene' that illustrates this point perfectly. You can look it up. I was going to share it but then I remembered we don't talk about Bruno, so I can't share that one with you. (crowd laughs)

We're in part five of the series on the uncommon family. Week one, Nate talked about uncommon moms on Mother's Day. Week two my friend Wes talked about the differences: what does the Bible say about being a man or a woman? What does the Bible say about gender? Week three JP talked about the negative baggage that is passed on from one generation to the next and how to deal with our baggage. Last week, Dale spoke on an uncommon legacy, which is actually the good things that we can pass on from one generation to the next. And as today we talk about the uncommon marriage, we're going to see a few things we're going to see one: that we fight with each other. We fight with our spouse because we're selfish. We fight with God because we're selfish. And we fight selfishness with humility.

Go ahead and open up your Bibles to James chapter four. Open your phone. It's the New Testament almost all the way to the end. If you've gotten to Revelation, you've gone too far. Just turn back a few pages from that. We're going to be in James 4: 1-10. James is the half brother of Jesus. It's an epistle that's written to deal with just Christians who are being persecuted. If you look at most of the epistles in the New Testament, most of them are written by Paul and he writes them to a specific church, a church in Corinth, he writes them to a specific person, Timothy or Titus. James has written to the church at large to all followers of Jesus Christ. And it's an incredibly practical book that tells us how we live out our faith. And so let me start with verse one.

James says, What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but you do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

So James starts off right from the start. He says, "Hey, rhetorical question, I see you fighting. Married couples, I see you fighting. Life group, I see you fighting. Mom, dad, kids, I see you arguing with one another. What causes these fights and quarrels among you? What is it? Is it money? Is it sex? Is it a lack of time? Is it in laws? What causes you to fight with one another? I'm watching these external battles among you, and what causes them?" He says the answer is it's an internal problem that causes an external conflict. He says you fight, and you quarrel because there's something wrong inside of you. That something wrong inside of you are called desires. And a better rendering of that word from the Greek text would be a selfish desire, a selfish pleasure. That there's something that I want, I'm not getting it, and so then I fight with others, because they're not giving me what I want to get. Point number one is that we fight with each other because we're selfish.

1. We fight with each other because we're selfish

We are selfish, every single one of us from the womb, right? So like our kids, 18, graduated high school, they're working at Pine Cove this summer, they're going off to college in the fall, really excited for them. We had to teach them a lot of things along the way to get them ready to leave the house. Okay, we taught them as babies, you know, we taught them how to talk. We taught them, as boys, four boys, we have to teach them to aim for the toilet, like get inside the bowl, not outside the bowl. So we had to teach them how to go to the bathroom, we had to teach them how

to write, how to read, how to be kind to each other, how to pray. We had to teach them how to drive with great fear and trepidation. We got in the passenger seat where we taught them how to drive. We taught them a lot of things. But there are some things that I never had to teach my kids. I never had to teach them to put a pile of toys between them, and to fight over the toys. I never had to teach them the word mine. I never had to teach them, “Okay, Drew when Duncan takes one of your stuffed animals, here's what you do is you take your fist, and you slap them across the face”. Like I never had to instruct my kids how to be selfish and how to fight over their stuff. In the same way, I've sat down with hundreds and hundreds of couples over the years. I've never had to sit a healthy couple down who doesn't argue, and I've never had to say to them, “Hey, let me teach you how to be selfish. Let me teach you how to put your desires before your spouse”. I've never had to do that. We don't have to teach people how to be selfish. It's part of our sin nature. Let me give you a couple more examples of what it looks like to be selfish. It might be that you are, and this is the end for married or single, it doesn't matter season of life, if you are lacking money, but there's a lot of stuff you want you just continually buy. Amazon is your favorite website and the UPS and FedEx and all the stores stopped by everyday to drop off stuff.

It might be that you struggle with your health, but yet you continue to binge on food that's not good for you. It might be that you have a drinking problem, but you continue to choose to give in to those desires. It might be, this might be the worst one, honestly, is you look at porn. And so porn might be the most selfish thing that exists on our planet. It degrades women, it degrades men, it's a horrible industry. And yet we know how bad it is, but we still want to give into our desires. And it might be that when you communicate with someone, this is something we're all guilty of at times, like we just want to get our point across. We don't really want to listen to the other person. So we're selfish when we care more about what we have to say than about the other. Proverbs 18:2 says, **A fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing their opinion.**

There's some of you with babies in the room. You got a brand new baby at home, I got to see a couple of you in here. Love it. Babies are a great gift. But it might be something like this: it's Sunday night, 2:42 in the morning, you're fast asleep. A baby starts screaming. Your spouse turns to you and says, “Are you awake?” And you slow your breathing down even further. (crowd laughs) Purely hypothetical, okay. Never happened.

It's just constantly putting our needs and our desires before our spouse. And that leads to conflict in marriage. When we think more about ourselves, our selfishness leads us to fight. It's not the kids. It's not a lack of money. It's not your job. It's not your in-laws. It's selfish desires that wage war within you. You are not getting what you want and so you fight. So, James goes on to say that we're so selfish, we don't even know how to pray. When we pray, we usually don't, he says, but when we do pray, all we're praying about are the things that we want. Our selfish desires guide our prayers. There's nothing wrong with praying for things you want. There's nothing wrong with desiring food or stuff. The desire is not there, it's the acting on the stuff that's the problem. And we're so messed up, we can't even pray right. Because our selfish desires taint everything in our lives. James continues in verses four and five, it says, “**You adulterous people . . .**” You know what an adulterer is? Adulterer is somebody who's married, who sleeps with somebody who's not their spouse. And I'm like, man, James is coming right after us and like, I'm not an adulterer, and maybe this doesn't apply to me. But he goes on to explain what that really

means. It means we're cheating on God. [James] says, “. . .**don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?**”

See James says we are adulterers. It may be not because we're having an affair, but because we're choosing to place the world and our desires over God. He uses the word ‘choice’ in verse four very clearly, because we have an option. We choose as individuals, are we going to worship God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength? Or are we going to choose to become a friend of the world? And when we're a friend of the world, it's because our choices lead us to choose something that's different than the Lord. It's like having an affair because we're cheating on God. Point number two is we fight with God because we're selfish.

2. We fight with God because we're selfish

He uses a few words that really, candidly, are a little bit scary to me. He says, that when we choose the world, when we're a friend of the world, we have an enmity, it's a hard word to say, e-n-m-i-t-y. It means a deep seated hostility. It means that we're choosing something that's opposed to God. And there's this hostility that exists towards God, because we're not choosing Him. He says that we become an enemy of God, when we choose the things of the world, instead of choosing Him. And our selfishness ruins our relationship with God, instead of being a friend of God. Instead of being in a relationship with God, whenever we choose the world over Him, we are opposed to Him. And that terrifies me, because I know that my desires often lead me away from a relationship with the Lord. We're designed for Him, but instead we try to fill ourselves up with what the world has to offer.

Six or seven years ago, my family and I were all, we lived in Dallas at the time, and four kids drive a minivan, not a flex, okay, but it is what it is. We got a minivan, we're going to a friend's house in Red River, they generously allowed us to use their home for the week. And so, we can't fit all of our stuff in the minivan. We don't want to put all the miles on it. So, we decided to rent a Suburban. It was an extra-large Suburban. We got all of our stuff in it. It's fun to drive. It felt powerful. We go out there, we have a good week, by the end of the week, we're starting to get tired of one another, it's time to go back home. So we pile the stuff back in the car, we go to a gas station to fill up in Red River before we head back to Dallas. And I go to the pump and I'm you know, I'm not paying attention, I think there's a green pump and a green handle and a black handle and I just grabbed one of them and start filling the car with gas. And then you know, put it back and my wife starts screaming, “I think you just put diesel in the car!” And she's the smart one in the marriage, like she knows what that means. I'm like, “It's gas. Gas is gas is gas. What's the big deal, you know? Might have even been cheaper, “good stewardship”. You know, that's what I'm thinking in my mind. And she's like, “No, that's a really, really, really big deal. When you put diesel fuel in a regular car.” A regular car is designed for regular gas and a diesel car is designed for diesel gas. And so, she starts explaining it to me, it goes way above my head. I looked it up on the Googles to confirm what she said, recently. And so, when you put diesel fuel in a regular car, the viscosity of the diesel fuel is greater, which means that it's thicker, which means it clogs up the fuel line. No idea what that means, but it sounds really bad. Okay, then it also causes your engine to break. Okay, that's bad. That's bad to happen in our own minivan. It's

really bad to happen in Hertz's Suburban. And so, I start panicking, you know, and as I think about that, it's just wrong to put the wrong fuel in a car that's designed for something else.

The reason I tell you that is, it's a similar analogy that we fill ourselves with the wrong fuel. God wants us to fill up with Him, with things of His Word, His Spirit, His people, but instead we fill up our cars, we fill up our tanks, with the world. And when we keep putting the world in our tank, our car starts to break down. The engine breaks, our relationship with God is destroyed when we put the wrong thing in our lives.

And so, selfishness leads us to break our relationship with our spouse. It leads to brokenness in our relationship with the Lord. By the way, I did fill it with regular gas, so all good, thankfully, alright. I don't want to know how much it would have cost. But point three, let's continue on in the text, here comes the good news. Okay, James 4:6-10, "**But He gives us more grace. . .**" You know what grace is? Grace is getting something we don't deserve. If we deserve because of giving into our selfish desires we deserve brokenness with our spouse, we deserve a broken relationship with the Lord, we deserve eternal separation from Him. But grace is getting something we don't deserve. JP often says, "Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense". That Jesus took our sin upon himself, died on the cross for you and for me, and all we have to do is believe in what he did. That's called grace. And in spite of all the bad we have done, and in spite of all the bad that we choose, God chooses to give us more grace. "**That is why Scripture says: God opposes the proud but shows favor [or gives grace] to the humble.**" And then he goes on to list 10 things that we do, 10 imperatives that can help guide us in being more selfless people. "**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.**" Point number three is that we fight selfishness, with humility.

3. We fight selfishness with humility

As he tells us again, I'm going to read through these quickly.

1. You submit yourself to the Lord
2. You resist the devil,
3. You come near to God
4. You wash your hands
5. You purify your hearts
6. You grieve
7. You mourn
8. You wail
9. You change your laughter into mourning and joy to gloom
10. You humble yourself before the Lord

So, let's talk real practically, what does this look like? What does it look like to resist the devil? So, JP just did a series called 'Unseen Battles' where we talked a lot about the enemy, and about spiritual warfare and the devil hates followers of Christ. He sees a good Christian marriage, and he wants to take that thing down. To do anything he can to destroy it. There're targets on our

backs as followers of Christ, and Satan gets in our lives and he whispers garbage in our ears. He tells us things like, “you never should have married that person, so you're free to divorce them and move on. You deserve to be happy.” I hate that line. “You deserve to be happy,” we hear it over and over and over again. And so, you know, just do whatever you want. Look at porn, if you want to be happy, look at porn, have an affair, get divorced. The grass is greener, on the other side. The enemy whispers lies in our ears, and we've got to fight back against them. We fight lies with truth.

And then he goes on to say, that “we humble ourselves before the Lord”, and what does that look like? That's a word, humble, humility. It's a word we hear all the time, but what does it really mean? And so, we have no greater example of what it means that to look at the Son of God, to look at Jesus. And so, we're going to look at Philippians 2:3-8. Paul writes, “**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit**”. So right away, Paul says, you don't do anything that is fueled by selfish desires, selfish ambition. “**Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves**”. Man, that's hard to do. Right? To not put our desires first, but in humility we put the needs and the desires of others before our own. We look, not looking to our own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others. That you would look not just to your interests, but to the interests of your spouse, your roommate, your kids. And your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. That your mind would become the mind of Christ. “**Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage**” When we use things to our own advantage, it's selfishness. And we're instead to be like Jesus who did not use whatever he had to his own advantage, he used it to our advantage. “**He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death- even death on a cross!**”

And so, you and I do not need to die on a cross like Jesus did. It is finished, it is paid. But the way that He lived his life, the way that He died is to be our example of how we're to live. To selflessly put the needs of others before ourselves. Highly recommend this in marriage. See, I'm very grateful. I think I'm married to the most selfless and humble person on this planet. The way that my wife Kristen selflessly serves me, our kids, those around us; it's pretty incredible. And when I watch her, I'm like, ‘How does she get to do that? Like, how does she do that?’ It's because she wants to be like Jesus. And so, the way that I get to see her live that out every single day, I choose my words carefully. I can't remember a night when she did not at the end of the night, go into our kids' bedrooms, engage them at a heart level and pray with them, all four of them. She's got 4,000 things to do every night. But the way that she selflessly serves those boys, the way that she encourages, and cares for me and others, it's the best picture of the selfless, humbled marriage I've seen and not because of me, but because my wife does it so well. It's truly uncommon when we see someone live it out. We're used to people being selfish and self-centered, and miserable and it's beautiful when we get to see people live it out, selflessly.

So, as we wrap up, a couple of things I want you to think through. Where in your life are you selfish? It would be great life group discussion, a great marriage discussion, a great family discussion. Where are you selfish? How does that affect your relationship with the most important people in your life? And I'm not just saying this for the fun of it, okay? I'm asking you to do some work here. How does your selfishness affect your relationship with your spouse, your

kids, your life group, your roommates? How does it affect your relationship with the Lord? We fight with others because we're selfish, we fight with God because we're selfish, and we fight selfishness with humility.

One of the best examples I've ever heard of what this looks like, of a truly uncommon marriage, comes from a guy named Lars Gren. Anyone know who Lars Gren is? If you will raise your hands real high. Shout out. Anyone in the room know Lars Gren? (no one in the audience raises their hand) Amazing, literally no one. You're just bad as the first service, they didn't either, and I didn't either until recently. So, Lars Gren is Elizabeth Elliot's third husband. Who's Elizabeth Elliot? Elizabeth Elliot was married to Jim Elliot. Jim and Elizabeth Elliott, married couple, they had kids. Jim traveled to Ecuador to share the gospel with the Auca tribe. He goes down there with four other teammates. All five of them are speared to death by the Auca tribe. That leaves his wife, Elizabeth, at home with kids and no husband. Elizabeth, so impacted by what happened to her husband, decides that she's going to risk her life as well and goes back to Ecuador to share the same gospel with the same Auca tribe. And now she doesn't just share the gospel with them, and just share scripture, she says, "I choose to forgive you for killing my husband". It's unbelievable. And they respond, they trust in the Lord.

And so, Elizabeth comes back home and she starts a speaking ministry, a writing ministry. She has written so many books, she spoke all over the country. And she becomes more and more and more renowned as this single mother who shared the gospel and risked her life, and her husband passed away sharing the gospel in Ecuador. She marries again to a guy named Addison. Addison dies after four years of his cancer, he passes away. She meets Lars, they start dating and moving towards marriage. Lars with great trepidation says, 'Everyone you marry dies, do I really want to marry you?', but he marries her. And they get married, and this is one of the first thing Lars does: is in their home after they get married, he puts a picture of Jim Elliot on the mantel and he puts a picture of Addison on the mantel. He wants to honor the legacy of his wife's deceased husbands.

And Elizabeth's ministry continues, she continues to share the gospel, she continues to tell the story, place after place, and everyone knows who Elizabeth Elliott is. Nobody knows who Lars is. You know who Lars is? Lars is the guy who stands in the back of the room when Elizabeth speaks on the stage, and he sits in the back in front of a table, and he sells his wife's books. With stories of her deceased, first husband.

And we often want the story, we want to be Jim Elliot, I died for sharing my faith. We want to be Elizabeth Elliott, I risked my life to share the gospel. And we want the platform that she has to tell stories, and you know, sell books and all that. And I'm like I think, I really just want to be like Lars. Like, I want to be the guy in the back of the room, nobody knows my name. But I'm pointing people to Jesus. I'm allowing my spouse to point people to Jesus. So, we're not all going to have the opportunity like Lars. We're not going to stand in the back of the room and sell books.

But I think we can all look for those opportunities to be uncommon in our marriage. What would it look like to put our spouse's gifts on display? To free them up to do the work that God has called them to do? In a world that is absolutely marked by selfish marriages and selfish

relationships, we have the opportunity to be extremely uncommon for the good of others and for the glory of God. And I pray that we would be all about that in this church.

Let me, pray that you would, and that I would. God, first, we just thank you for the story of Lars. We thank you for the story of Jim and Elizabeth, and we thank you for the way that you use their lives for Your glory and for the good of others. Thank you for their courage. Thank you for the picture of Lars who humbly served his wife so well. And God I confess deep selfishness in me. God, we're selfish people. And so I pray that you would help us, that our selfish desires don't cause broken marriages and broken relationships with You. And God I pray that you would humbly help us to be people who fight selfishness with humility. Help us to resist the devil, help us to draw near to You. Thank you that You so clearly lay out in your Word what it looks like to love You and to follow You. And I thank you most of all just for grace. God, that you would choose to send Jesus for us, thank you for the way that He spent His years on this planet, pointing us to you and for dying for our sins on the cross. I pray we never ever ever get over that or get used to it or think we deserved it. And so thank you that you choose to give us more grace. In Your name we pray. Amen.