



SONG OF SONGS

A Biblical Vision for Marriage, Sex, and the Body

SONG OF SONGS: FIGHTING FOR THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

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Matthew 19: 3-8

Our world has struggled to pinpoint the purpose and meaning of sex and marriage. The sanctity of sex and marriage, sexual fulfillment, and corresponding mental health are all down while promiscuity, divorce, cohabitation, and sexual trauma are all up. Even as cultural rebellion rises against the values of Judeo-Christian marriage, the data continues to show that alleged progress is hollow and rife with problems. Problems that the world does not have the answers to. Our journey through the Song of Songs centers around the love poetry that has given a biblical vision for marriage, sex, and the body for thousands of years. Does it still work? Is it still helpful to us today? Join us and listen in as we study the Song of Songs. Go to doxa-church.com to learn more about Doxa, find service times, or support the making of disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

Today we are in Matthew chapter 19, verses three through eight. I'm reading out of the English Standard Version.

"And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.' They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?' He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not.'"

This is God's word. You may be seated. Alright, so if you're stepping into this, you have walked into an 11 week series on the book of the Song of Songs, and we've categorized that, and I guess that's just what it is, semi-erotic love poetry found in the Old Testament. So luckily for you, we're on week 11 if you're brand new. And we have, have you guys enjoyed the series so far? Has it been helpful talking about marriage, sex, body? Glad, awesome. Some of you are mercifully happy it's over. And some of you are maybe longing for it to be a little bit longer. But either way, we wrap up today and today we're going to, I'm gonna have a shorter sermon, and then we're gonna have an extended question and response time where we're gonna answer some of your lingering questions. If you've been around, you know that we've been asking you to scan a QR code to ask some questions, and we've got a collection of those at the end that I'll have some of my friends join us for. Okay? We've got a lot of ground to cover. And so I wanna pray for us, pray for our time, and we'll dive in.

Well, God, I wanna pray for my friends here as we open up your word and we discuss what it means to be a follower of you in the midst of such an awkward, crazy, but especially complex culture. What does it mean to follow you in our marriages? Follow you in our singleness? I pray for our hearts and minds to be wide open. Will the Spirit penetrate deeply. Would your Spirit work in us, Lord, as we sort of rebel against what you might have for us? And for those of us that are looking for help, would you be a great helper to us as the Spirit, as you call the Spirit the helper, and Lord for those of us that are, are needing healing, Lord, would you be the great healer? Would you be the great physician and heal us? And for those of us that need you in general, Lord, we need you clearly. Would you be the Savior? We love you. We praise you, and it's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Alright, well, lemme tell you a little bit about why we decided as sort of an epilogue sermon, why we decided to land on preaching this book this fall. When I was approached by our teaching team and our, rather, when I approached our teaching team and our elders about this series, I did so as sort of personally experiencing the cultural moment we found ourselves in. We've all been in this moment. I think holding fast to a biblical worldview has always been really, really challenging. And we've always sort of, it's always been challenging, but I think in this moment in particular, it's been even more difficult, in some ways it's unavoidable with these sort of devices we have in our hands, right? It's absolutely unavoidable. The internet, the culture, it can be intrusive. These other worldviews that we experience could be intrusive, opening our phone, right? A fee curated for our consumption. And even if sort of, we are really good at avoiding, maybe we are the master social media expert. You know, when to shut your phone off. Maybe you're a master at navigating the internet or the television. Your friends and families aren't. And so what they do is they love to present you their curated version of what they experience other worldviews and what they have to say about these subjects. And you're left sort of having to navigate what they say, right? And Thanksgiving's coming here it comes right Thursday, lots of conversations on the way, but the internet is instant and it's constant. It's all over us, and it really comes at us at breakneck pace. And even if we're really apt at avoiding it again, sometimes other people aren't and they give it to us anyway, the Internet's got a massive gravitational pull towards it. If we're not holding on to something else, if we're not holding on to something else that's more firm like maybe the scripture we will be sucked down

towards it and we'll begin to believe what it believes. And I think it's helpful for you to understand that everything is preaching at you. Not just the Bible, not just a preacher, but everything is communicating a sort of gospel to you, a functional gospel to you. All of media pop culture is preaching at you, and your job is by the power of the Holy Spirit is to hold fast, what is actually true. But because God's voice on marriage and sex and the body has been, let's be honest, ignored, minimized in culture and ignored and minimized online, the cultural zeitgeist, let's say the spirit of the age has decided to stand in and fill the gap. And you know what? You and I are not so resilient to its allure. We have bit on that. And because everything is preaching, some things are better preachers than others. And I just wanna give you a little bit of glimpse at what the internet says about marriage, sex, the body and identity. Just a little glimpse.

Okay? Here's the first one. Now, I wish I could tell you that this article was from, I don't know, Cosmo or GQ or some other tabloid style magazine, people magazine, but this is the Wall Street Journal. And the Wall Street Journal says that divorce parties are a hot new invite. It sort of ended up as a really fun funeral. Yeah, really fun funeral. That sounds great. Said nobody ever. Once upon a time friends, marriage was an unbreakable covenant. It was the bedrock of a family with a vision to raise children, to build legacy and to enjoy fulfillment. And now marriage is seen by many in culture as sort of a rushed decision. One that we can sort of eject from if we are longer happy, keyword happy, and to soften the blow we throw ourselves parties similar to you what a bachelor, bachelorette party where we can once again celebrate the freedom from of course, monotony of God honoring sacrificial servanthood. Here's another one. When having an affair is an act of self-care. Self-care is important, right? I mean, geez, gotta take care of yourself, your star player. For those without the courage to be forthright in their desire to separate from their spouse, there's always affairs, right? And if you want an affair, never has it been more easy to convince yourself that you're doing the right thing. I think the Bible talks about it in 1 Timothy, I think it's 1 Timothy or is it 2 Timothy. You finding itching ears, you find teachers for yourselves in your itching ears, you can find for yourself and convince yourself of just about anything you want today. Because an affair really, if you think about it, it's really about you being happy at the end of the day, right? And nothing more right? You need to satisfy yourself. And in fact, if we're honest, right, tongue in cheek, if we're honest, the Bible, if anything, has really hurt our innate ability to be happy, especially if you're a woman. Culturally. Here's a quote from that article. It's having an affair is a way for women to take back the patriarchal restrictions that have been put on us. A good wife is a faithful wife. That dates back to the creation of religious ideals in the Bible. Women carving out their own paths, not necessarily living it, having an affair, but having the choice and the ability to have one that is a very feminist act. It's bucking against a huge stigma that having sex outside of marriage is one of the worst sins one could ever commit. So Satan says, I'm sorry and the article says really that marriage is a tool of patriarchal oppression enacted upon women. And that cheating on her spouse is really to, it's not adultery per se, it's more of a way to get back at the Bible as the oppressive tool on womanhood. And besides her husband probably deserved it, or he is too aloof to notice. And of course, marriage should not just be designed for your happiness, but it's also designed to make you feel good. Right? Here's an affair as an act of self-esteem and really quite an interesting title here. Affairs put a spring in your step, boost self-esteem and life

satisfaction, right? It's like drinking enough water in the morning and affairs, two things that'll put a spring in your step in the morning. You could laugh. It's okay, I know it's uncomfortable, it's fine, it's fine. What's important is not that we're just happy that we really need to feel good about ourselves. We need to enjoy what's happening. An affair could actually be good for you. Say many scientists and I would really love to know how they're conducting these studies. The point is divorces, affairs, they've become cool, they're empowering, they're debonair even, or in vogue or even feminist according to one article. Josh Harris, I dunno if you've heard of Josh Harris. He wrote a book called I Kiss Dating Goodbye. That book has largely shaped much of what we called the purity culture in the 1990s. Maybe you've been hurt by purity culture. I think it's curious to know if you've been hurt by impurity culture as many people have. He called this book a quote, abstinence manifesto saying that waiting for marriage was one of the most god-honoring things that anybody could do. Now, over 20 years later, with all of that waiting for marriage, and as much as that book impacted people, Josh and his wife decided to end their marriage in 2019. Here you can see through a lens of, through a lens of social media that this former couple, they, they took a brave photo standing confidently to demonstrate to the world that not only was his book on marriage wrong, but God's plan and book on marriage is wrong too, if he's even real at all. Now, what's not pictured here in this photo is the tens of thousands of dollars spent on a divorce or the the amount of pain and suffering in tears shed in the coming to this decision, or certainly not the kids. None of them are pictured in this really edgy, cool photo. In this announcement, it takes a lot of courage to do it, but imagine what it must be like to stand on a street corner and ask a person to take your edgy divorce photo and renounce God all on the same day.

Today we use good words for bad things, guys. We call adulteries affairs. Adultery is not an affair. An affair is like what you have going on in your life. I've got many affairs. We call fornication hooking up. And now we don't even want to use the word divorce because even though we wanna divorce more, we know how difficult it actually is. And many of you understand what I'm saying. It is a very hard thing to wrestle with. Josh Harris. He did not use the word divorce in his post to social media, but instead he used the term separate. In 2023, we used the phrase, conscious uncoupling. We did not get divorced. We consciously uncouple. We've made a decision to put the kids first and consciously uncouple. That's good words for rough things. Now many other people are fed up with this nonsense online. And men in particular are rebelling back against the new flack they've taken over the years. And instead of going with the flow with what they're, with what culture is telling them they've decided to take the red pill. That's a phrase given to the new movement of hardened men who wore back against hyper feminism and soft purity culture. Here is a tweet from a recent person named Rollo Tomassi, which unironically is one of the patriarchs of of this movement. This is what hesays, the quickest path to become becoming a high value man, don't get married, which that's awkward for this series, of course. Avoid family creation. Also awkward. Vasectomy in your twenties. Lift consistently. One of the only ones I agree with, I think. Eliminate all sedations. Learning, game and networking. Play to your strengths, build wealth. Resist easing up on your focus. This is sort of the creed of masculine male culture. This is what happens when scripture is removed and this is what we're left with. So the quickest way to become a high value man, unironically also happens to be the quickest way to a poorly attended funeral. No

legacy, no depth of meaning, no children, no purpose other than self-infatuation and self-aggrandizement. Now, I say all this to say that if the Bible is neglected and maligned and put aside, then there is no vacuum left in its place. We find for ourselves, teachers that suit our own passions, as the scripture says. And this is what's happened. Funny enough, all of these themes are oddly familiar, right? I mean, reject one another unless of course they make you happy, right? If you make me happy, then I'll keep 'em, and then I'll reject God if God doesn't make me happy, why? Because don't I know better than anyone else what's best for me? At the heart of, at the heart of it, right? Don't I know the answers to what I need to be successful to be happy? I mean, after all, did God really say that you needed to sacrifice in your marriage? Did God really say that I should submit biblically in a marriage, seriously to that guy? No way. Did God really say that I'm supposed to be fruitful and multiply? Did God really say that sex isn't all there is? I mean, think about it. I mean, it's pretty great. I mean, shouldn't that be the main thing? Did God really say, I'm supposed to be a servant? Shouldn't I be served? What about me? Did God really say you shouldn't eat of any tree of the garden?

Unfortunately, we aren't as edgy or as smart as we think, and we are all following the same pattern humanity has followed from the very beginning, beginning in Genesis chapter three. A path of sin that thinks it knows better than God. But God's design for marriage was never about you only, that was never its design. And it's at its core, the issue with culture's definition for dating and marriage is that they're about you. They're about you and your happiness. Marriage though was designed for much more than that. Marriage was designed to solve our innate need for communion with one another. God said it was not good for a man to be alone and that he would find a helper suitable for him, the man. So he crafted marriage as a place to live out or design for companionship. Marriage was designed to shape us too. When we marry, we come up against one another. And by the way, two sinners when they get married. Sin plus sin doesn't equal less sin, it equals more. And there are challenges, but rather, instead of demanding people change, we conform to one another and we meet each other's needs first before our own. Marriage was designed, I know it's controversial to multiply, God is, marriage is God's chosen vehicle for the flourishing of children. And a husband and a wife who followed Jesus provide a child the best chance to reach their own God-given potential. And finally, marriage was designed to serve God and serve one another. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Bold to say today, marriage is designed for service and sacrifice. When we marry, we have another opportunity to be like our savior Jesus and serve somebody other than ourselves. The calling and desire for marriage really goes far beyond culture's hope that marriage would exist to quote, make you happy. In fact, if marriage was purely designed for that, all of our marriages have already failed. Like can we be honest? Unless you've been married for two minutes, you know you've been unhappy in your marriage because it's, but it's not designed for our happiness. But if we looked at the culture's cue to be happy, we would be really shortsighted. And in fact, Jesus, he does not build his house on culture or on sand as he might say. He builds his structure for marriage on something far more himself, rock. Instead of referring to the latest book or podcast or trend for how to overcome marriage or how to shape a marriage or how to not get married at all. Instead he points to something else. He points to the beginning. Look at Matthew 19 again.

"The Pharisees came up to Jesus and tested him by saying, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female?' He's quoting from Genesis chapter one and two. "'Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.' Then they said to him," of course they ask another question, Pharisees, "'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?' And he said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart,'" because of your sin, because of your brokenness, "'Moses allowed you to divorce your wives.'" He gave you, he litigated your sin. So it wouldn't be worse than it was. But Jesus says, "'From the beginning it was not so.'"

Jesus looks at us and he appeals to creation story, but there was an original design for marriage beyond what we think it might be. And yes, we sin and break it, but God says, yes, marriage is hard. Yes, singleness is hard. But let me tell you from the beginning, it was not designed that way. It was not so. Jesus doesn't play games with the Pharisees. He doesn't look for the latest marriage trends to answer the question either. But instead he looks backward, not forward to a day when there was no such thing as even marital problems in the first place. If you see, God answers our hard questions, not merely with ethical rules to follow, as if rules are what gets us into the kingdom of God, but rather an appeal to God's original intention for what marriage is supposed to be like in the first place. The way to solve marital problems, friends, is not new technique or strategy. The way forward is a way backward. The way forward, the new way is an ancient way. It's the way that existed from the very beginning. So you and I, we must not look forward for strategy and get all geeked up on tips on how to solve our marriage. But look back to what God's design and purpose was for marriage in the first place. You see, as we studied Song of Songs, it's awakened a desire in all of us, I think, to pursue an ideal marriage. That's the goal of the book, right? But sin has tainted our ability to be able to do that well and to be satisfied in a marriage. So that's why often we pull out our phones and sort of look to sort of be satisfied with something right in front of us and get answers from there. And yeah, life is hard. Being single or married, it's hard. It's very difficult. And even if we get most of it right, we'll still be, even if we get most of it right, frustrated, resentful or sad that we will never be totally satisfied in your marriage. If you think that one day you'll reach the apex of marriage and you'll be completely and totally satisfied and it'll persist forever, you're wrong.

Remember though, marriage wasn't designed to give you complete and total satisfaction. It wasn't designed for that. Marriage in its truest and greatest form is not about complete and total satisfaction. It is a window into what you and I might be like in the new creation. Reconnected to Jesus and seeing him face to face. You see, the ideal marriage, if we ever get there, gives us a taste of true satisfaction, gives us a taste that will be possible when Jesus returns. As great as the pleasures and satisfaction of an ideal marriage are. And they're great. They're merely echoes of joy and merely echoes of the peace we'll experience when we are reconciled to God at the end of time in the new creation. See, single or married, marriage was never about you. Everything is telling you your marriage is about you. Marriage isn't about you. And like everything after, I don't know, 0 AD, marriage and like everything is about Jesus, your marriage is about Jesus. See, single or married, your relationship status was actually never the

fix. If you're single and you're thinking, I need to get married, this will solve me. No it won't. I'm married. I need to get divorced. That's not, that will solve me. No it won't. While, single or married are both perfectly fine ways to live, neither solves your deepest need. Neither. Jesus had to come to make all things right and to solve our deepest aches in your soul. He looks us in the eyes at the end of days and says, Hey, you're looking for satisfaction in your marriage. Look this way. I'm your satisfaction. You're looking for peace in your marriage. You think a good marriage will solve all your problems. You need peace. I'm your peace. I you want to be happy. Finally, you don't need happiness. You need joy. I'm your joy. I'm the one that does this for you. And one day I'm gonna come back to redeem, renew, and restore this place, and I'm gonna instill those things and install them on your soul permanently so you don't have to play in the rat race and try to find them yourselves. If you're here and you're not a Christian, I want to read to you a reality that you don't get to participate in without Jesus. Revelation 21.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, For the former things have passed away.'"

If you accept Jesus as your savior, one day you will have access to a world without pain, brokenness, suffering, fractured relationships, divorce, the pain of loneliness, hurt, sadness, guilt, shame. And you'll have that forever. And the deep ache in your heart, the one you try not to think about, will be gone when you look upon the face of Jesus in person, that's what you have to look forward to. Friends, there's nothing in this planet that's gonna solve the deep pain you experience. Not a marriage, not a relationship. Nothing, nothing, nothing will solve it. What you need is someone who looks down in your life and goes, yeah, you're, this is a mess. Let me help you. So Jesus comes down into human history. He says, I'll be your living, perfect example. So perfect that he was killed, executed on the cross by the Roman guard and his own people. But Jesus was so perfect, death cannot hold him. He resurrected from the grave three days later conquering Satan, sin, death, rebellion, hell, all of it. And he said to you, I did it for you. I'm extending this gift to you. If you want it, I'll take your sin on me and I'll give you my perfect righteousness. That way when I come back, when I redeem, renew, and restore this place, all of the things that cause all of the brokenness of your life will be gone forever. Do you want that? The Song of Songs, the book, it holds out hope. That no matter how we struggle single or married, that God's love is bigger and better and stronger. And that it's an ancient love one that will one day transform the entire world and everything we live in. Do you want that reality? You can have it today. And so it is. Let's pray.

God, I pray for our marriages, for those of us that are single. I pray for our singleness. Both are good, both are important. Both can be used, but both are neither, neither of them are sufficient. What the only thing that's sufficient is that we engage you on a deeper level and know you face to face. That we accept your blood shed on our behalf, and we're reconciled to

you. And that way our marriages can be fixed, we can grow in our marriages, we can love in our marriages, we can use our singleness for good. We no longer have to rely on them as the thing that will make us happy. We can rely on you. And that's most important. We love you and praise you. It's in His name we pray. Amen.

All right. Hey, now we get to transition into a little bit of a Q and RQ. So I'm gonna welcome up some of my friends up here. So we'll anyone who's been on stage through this series is gonna join me. So Josh and Crystal Riccardi, would you guys come up? Will you give them a hand as they come up? Pastor Donald, are you around? And then Sarah, come on up. Keep it going guys. Come on. Come on, grab a seat. Now, for those of you that are like totally new to what's going on here, we've been asking questions throughout this series, grab a seat. Go ahead. We've been asking questions throughout the series and you guys have been sending 'em in. And the reason why we haven't answered them like that day is we wanted to make at least, spend a good amount of time mulling over it so we can provide you semblance of a response. So this panel is not gonna be a question and answer, so to speak. Like you're gonna get every answer you need, but rather it's gonna be a Q and R, response. We're gonna respond to you with the wisdom and the scriptures as best we can. Okay? So these are questions you guys have all asked.

[Eddie] So let's start with our first one. I'm gonna throw this one to you, Josh, and then maybe Sarah, I'll have you jump in on this one. How do I begin to have conversations about my past relationships with my spouse if we have not done that yet?

[Josh] Yeah. If as a couple, if you're following Jesus, if you're a disciple, I think any conversation, any heavy conversation should be about the desire to be unified. It should be about the desire to be open-handed about maybe what God's gonna do as you guys talk, as you communicate, as you share. And you know, as we've gone through this series, it's definitely, it's a big deal. What past relationships have you had both sexually, maybe even emotional relationships. Relationships with your family as you've seen how they've had relationships with each other? I think if you're, maybe this series is an opportunity as a couple to say, Hey, you know what, maybe we need to process, share. Think about some of the topics. I think I would use that as a kind of a jump spot to get to say, Hey, how can we talk through this? And whether it's, you know, Hey, maybe you got married and it's like, yeah, we had some history. Okay, we're not gonna talk about it. Let's just move on. Yeah, that's gonna be a big one because both of you may think, okay, cool, that stuff's over. But hopefully you go in with that conversation and you say, Hey, you know what? I have some fear, I have some, maybe some shame and maybe I thought stuff I could just throw in the past. And so that might be a part of that conversation to have. But I think to end with this, I think it's just about, go in knowing that Christ wants you to have unity. He wants you to work through difficult things. And there's hope and there's healing for you only to be better.

[Eddie] That's great. Thank you, man. Wanna give an answer?

[Sarah] I mean, that's great. I think practically I would say scheduling it's okay. It doesn't have to, make sure you're both in a good mood ahead of time. Have something to eat ahead of time.

Just the little things that can make a marriage fight get so much worse for no reason. Yeah. Very practically. And I still feel like I do that just when I'm gonna bring up something heavy in general. Mm-Hmm. And then, you know, jumping off what Josh says, have grace for one another and name your fears out loud as you go. Or if anger starts to arise, realize there might be a deeper emotion underneath that. Anger is kind of a protection of yourself and if you're feeling that anger, especially if you're a spouse that's maybe feeling betrayed during this conversation. There might be something deeper like hurt, loneliness, something else, distrust. And so just watch for anger as well.

[Eddie] That's great.

[Josh] If I can jump in real quick. Don't do it alone. Mm-Hmm. You know, get some help. Get some people in your lives to help you navigate that space.

[Eddie] Absolutely. Thanks guys. Next question. Crystal, this one's coming to you 'cause you have all the answers. Here we go. They call you the answer woman, don't they? Alright, well, here you go. I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. I've heard that it's good to prioritize yourself at times as self-care is important. Where should that case fall amongst the five priorities given: God, spouse, children, work, hobbies. After children, perhaps?

[Crystal] Okay. Well self-care has definitely gotten a bad reputation, really, even within the Christian world of, oh, I, you know, thinking about yourself and self this, self that. I think it is so important to look outside of just that physical self-care as well. But look at the physical, the emotional, the spiritual, being able to work through those three things that are so interconnected. These do not exist alone. And so to really dig deep into yourself, become more self-aware, I think then it really impacts these other things. Becoming more self-aware really allows us to connect to God so much better than if we're not even figuring out who we are as a person and how all those things come in and kind of cloud our vision of who God is that has everything to do with it. Caring for ourselves affects how we relate to other people and especially our spouse. And so really digging into those things and then of course, it affects how we relate to our children and provide an example for our children of how we're caring for ourself and how we you know, perform in the workplace or how we relate to other people in the workplace. How we recreate and enjoy doing these hobbies. Like, everything is so connected. And so you can't really just look at self-care as I'm gonna do my eyelashes, I'm gonna get my my nails done, you know, oh, whatever. No, it is not about that. It's just really digging deep there. And then after children, please don't wait until after children. I feel like I did that. I mean, I have three sons. I waited till, you know, I had my last son to finally start really peeling away those layers and digging deep into that. And, you know even after having just a quick little story of just having my first child, I thought, you know, I'm gonna, I'm gonna make things better than I had as a child. So I'm gonna pull it all together and I'm, I'm gonna be the martyr. I'm going to make the, whoa, that does not work. Okay. So everything just kind of falls then. And so really start to dig deep now. Don't wait until after children. So yeah, self-care is huge. I mean, I'm pretty passionate about self-care, so, yeah.

[Eddie] Good. Thank you. Yeah. I'd add, I feel like that maybe there's a need in all of us to shoehorn in self-care because we live in an overcommitted, over wired, over clocked society. We are not ever disconnected from anything. And I wonder if self-care didn't have to be a checkbox, if we were following the ways of Jesus effectively. Well, here's what I mean. I think there's probably two things that if we did, we might not feel like self-care needed to be added into a list to go done. I think Sabbath, we don't sabbath. If you've got nine baseball games and two soccer games and a dance recital on Saturday, that's work. I mean, I have kids now. It's work. It's work. And so if we don't Sabbath, we might feel the, the overwhelming desire to like, like get in that bubble bath and go, I gotta get out of this. And sort of we're envisioning this, this life of self-care where it's actually escapism where we're going, man, if I could do that, I could finally escape. But what if we designed our lives in such a way where we had everyday contentment and joy with God? The other thing, Sabbath margin, you know, we've talked about this before, but margin is a window, God's window into your soul. And if we don't have margin built in, then what are we, I mean, Jesus Sabbath and he had margin. Jesus didn't necessarily do a bunch of what we consider self-care things, although he's not against those things. But what he did do was he got solitude and he prayed alone and he walked, he hiked and he did things alone and engaged God and he Sabbath well. So I wonder if it wouldn't have to be a checkbox if we had spiritual formation. Spiritual formation doesn't fit in a category. It's not, it bleeds into everything we do. So, alright, let's do the next question. Alright, we'll throw this one to Donald here for the single person. The main message I'm hearing from Doxa in this series is, your destiny is to get married, but wait for the right time. What about 1 Corinthians 7 that speaks about marriage as concession to prevent sexual morality where Paul wishes more people in the church to be single as he is?

[Donald] Yeah, that's great. We, I was honestly a little surprised at the number of questions we got around specifically singleness over the course of the series, which I think is great. Yeah. So the first thing I would say is for singles, particularly here at Doxa, I think it's important for you to hear me say that we know that singles are not this like monolithic group of people. You have singles in a lot of different stages, right? You've got folks that are single and not yet married and intend to. You've got folks that are single again by way of death or divorce, that sort of thing. You've got folks that feel very confident that they want to be single their whole life. In fact, some of our questions on the Q and R time over the series came from those folks. And I would say there's different responses for each of those groups of people. I think the high level things that I would want to include when you read that passage in 1 Corinthians 7, what's abundantly clear is that Paul has a pretty clear picture of the work that is required in marriage. And he makes a case that if you are single, that it is actually a gift. He calls it a gift. And he says that the primary reason he gives is essentially freedom and flexibility to pursue whatever the Lord is calling you to and to serve the Lord. Now, do we believe you cannot serve the Lord as a married person? Of course not. But there is an additional simplicity and freedom and flexibility that a single has to chase that down. If God calls you to move to another country, if God calls you to start something, there's a lot of ways in which those things are going to be, I won't use the word easier, but there is a simplicity to that you do as a single. And so we don't ever want that to feel patronizing or disconnected to talk about that as a gift. Particularly for those that are in the camp where singleness is something that you want and desire to transition out of. Perhaps

it feels like less of a gift, but I'm glad that over the course of this series, I think we've made a pretty strong case for the fact that you need to steward that time. It is a wonderful time in your life. It's not just to hold your breath until what's next. It's funny as much as the culture romanticizes and idolizes romantic connection, there's kind of a churchified Christian version of that that says that your highest and best and most full personhood will be experienced in marriage. And we don't believe that. We believe fundamentally that your greatest need is to be connected to Jesus Christ. Every single person, single or married, is made for companionship. And that starts with your relationship with Jesus. You can have a very full life of chasing after Jesus as a single, and that's a good thing. So yeah, those are a few thoughts.

[Eddie] Those are great thoughts. I don't know what else I'd add to that now. I think that's great. I would just say, I think if you think theologically, I think there's probably a difference between I'm single and I'm called to singleness. So those two things aren't mutually exclusive, but there is a difference, right? And so the people that were called to singleness in scripture did live more extreme lives for the most part. You think Jeremiah, why did the Lord bring me outta my mother's womb to send me trouble and shame all of my days? Paul, stoned, shipwreck, beaten, Jesus. There's, so there are some examples there. There was also the eunuchs Jesus references in Matthew 19. So there's a lot of different examples of being called to singleness. And I think the most important thing is whether you're married or single, you use the gift that God has given you. I was gonna ask you, do you think being married is a burden if being single is is a gift? But I don't want you to answer that with Kelly here, so I'm just kidding.

[Donald] My wife is not in the room and I would be very comfortable saying with or without her here that marriage is very hard. Marriage is very hard and it refines you. There is a sanctification aspect. I mean, again, you've made a very good case biblically for the fact that marriage is so much more as cliché as it is about our holiness than our happiness. And so there are very difficult aspects of that. I know for myself, looking at my early discipleship life, I never had a desire in me to go the distance as a single. And that's, you know, one thing I would say for you, if you were in here and you would say, I have the gift of singleness. This is something I desire. You still need the church family of God to be around you for connection and friendship and speaking over your life. I would say very forwardly. If you struggle deeply with sexual sin as a single and you think you have the gift of singleness, you might not, according to Paul, that marriage might be a really great option for you. And I would be, you know, just curious about your life to know, are you avoiding marriage because of fear, insecurity, previous trauma, et cetera? Or do you feel like this is something the Lord has actually confirmed in your life through not just your own desire, but through the perspective of people who love you and love Jesus?

[Eddie] Good word. Thank you. Sarah, next question. Here it is, how do you pursue someone without awakening love? And when you're done, we'll throw it to Josh as well.

[Sarah] Yeah. First, see if they're also interested in that. Otherwise don't pursue them. Because a one-sided, you know, pursuant, that's not a word, that doesn't work. I think having a standard is okay. I think having conversations right away about that is okay. You can be honest. If you can't have a conversation about your choice to save yourself for marriage and wanna know if

they're interested in that, what their plans are. If you can't have that conversation, then why are you kissing them? Why are you going out with them? Why are you doing whatever you're choosing to do with them? Very practical. A lot of these things can start so practically for me, especially if you're very young, something practical might be actually mind blowing. Yeah. So it would've been for me. So that's good. Just saying, yeah, I'm a Christian too. That's a guy voice. That doesn't mean anything. Let's talk about the details of what that faith looks like for you. That's my very practical first step. And then let's say they say yes, and you're gonna get married, and now you have to have actual boundaries. Now you have to, let's say you could decide to wait till you get married to kiss. Let's say you decide to kiss. Is it, I don't know if this is TMI, but let's talk about what leads to that next step. That's probably the only boundary you can physically like hugging, kissing is probably the only boundary you can really cross before marriage if you're really trying to do it right. And so kissing can be very, something you can do in front of your grandma and it can turn into something a lot more intense. And then I think you have to just keep pursuing honest conversations on boundaries on what you actually can handle and find accountability. It's gonna be hard.

[Eddie] You don't wanna scare gam gam with anything too seriously.

[Sarah] Definitely try to get engaged sooner than later if you're really pursuing this, if you're gonna start awakening like little aspects of love. Like the appropriate ones. Okay.

[Josh] Yeah, that's good. I think, and I'm, I read this as, again, if you're following Jesus and you want to do just live your life for him filled with the Spirit and you're single and you're pursuing I think your pursuit should be about commitment whether it's gonna ultimately end and you're gonna be fully committed in marriage to that person. But you should be challenging yourself. Like, what does this mean for me to be committed? What does this mean for me to be sensitive about this relationship? And so the, it's not about, you know, hey, I wanna look cool and go to go to all the great places to eat and post that. If your focus is anything other than I want to really seek what it means to be committed that's where you can get yourself into trouble. And honestly, like, if you're following Jesus and whether you're engaged or not, I mean, I just completely honest, just don't be stupid, you know? Don't put yourself into situations. Again, doing a lot of premarital mentoring and stuff, I think it's hilarious that like, oh yeah, we're not having sex, but like, you're doing a whole lot of other stuff, all right. And you're just putting yourself into really challenging situations. And so, again, commitment, you know, protect yourself, get accountability. I mean, I'll share, since you did like Crystal and I, we did a whole lot of making out all right. But we, it was, it was, we had people saying, Hey guys, like it's 10 o'clock at night, nothing good happens after 10 o'clock at night. Where you at? And so I'm not saying you have to do that, but you just have to figure out what your accountability is. And then I guess one last thing we noticed with couples, you know, if you're engaged and you're going through the mentoring or counseling process, you want to focus on the questions and the growth opportunities to really challenge yourself as you're getting ready for marriage. And if you're just jumping physically back in with each other in a way that can just say, you know what, it's, I don't want to face these things, we're just gonna go back to each other and be physical.

[Eddie] Yeah, I mean, the principle from Song of Songs is the question is not how far is the line, the question is, when are we allowed to begin? And the time we begin is in covenantal, godly marriage. And if we can follow that principle, I think we can avoid ourselves a heck of a lot of heartache and mistake just like that.

[Sarah] What a beautiful thing, too. Patience and self-control is, that's what it is right there. And you want the person you marry to have that after marriage to, and it's such a beautiful time to practice that together.

[Eddie] Yeah, that's good. Alright, next question. We'll throw this one to Crystal to begin, and it's Crystal and Sarah, you guys both answer this one, how can a husband and a wife find a happy medium when one's sexual needs or desires are stronger than another's? How do they care for one another in the disparity and work towards a healthy and agreeable rhythm?

[Crystal] Sarah, that's you. Not it, I'm it. Okay. So I think it's really about communication. It does take a lot of just talking through these things. Definitely recognizing that when you come together in marriage we bring a lot of different baggage with us. Things that really cloud our view of sex and marriage and relationship. And so really talking through those deep things is super important. But also recognizing too that we all go through different seasons in our marriage too. Definitely, you know, having kids, being pregnant, then our kids make us so busy, and then we go through menopause, andropause, like we go through all these different things that we really have to talk through and understand that our, you know, our bodies change and our minds change and we busy ourselves. So just really taking a step back and talk through those things. And then recognizing too, that intimacy takes place way before the bedroom. And so men, like, look, your wife's in the eye listen to them, talk to them. Do the dishes, take the trash out. Like, these are things that are really important to just kind of create that intimacy. And yeah, I mean there's just, yeah, there are gonna be different rhythms in marriage and yeah, it's gonna be things that you're gonna have to talk through. So, yeah.

[Eddie] Thank you.

[Sarah] Yeah, to jump off that women are complicated. We are more complicated. It's not, but that, that can be true for men as well. And I think, again, communication, it's okay to talk about these things if you're afraid to talk about it with the person you're doing this with, like, that's a sign that something's off. Okay. So you should be able to talk about these things. It should be, it's okay if it's awkward and uncomfortable. Maybe there's something you wanna be doing or not doing that, you know, you just need to have conversations. And then also, are you whole, are you well, as the individual, let's say, that has less of the desire or something. Is there, is it a food thing? Is it a past trauma thing you haven't dealt with or talked to your spouse about or God with? Is it something going on right now? Like, if there's, if you're not whole, and well, that could be a huge impact on this. And it might just be the sign you needed to realize that something isn't whole and well, and that you do need help again, that we're complicated beings. And it's never gonna necessarily be perfect, but we should definitely be striving for

some sort of healthy rhythm. There's some verse about that in Corinthians, 1 Corinthians, one of the pastors up here can maybe quote that.

[Eddie] Yeah. There's do not deprive one another, but for a time in order to give yourself to prayer lest the devil lay between you sort of. And so there, that's a pretty high calling. Is that the verse you were thinking of? 1Corinthians 7. 1Corinthians 7. That's right. So how's your spiritual intimacy? It's not just physical. How's your spiritual intimacy? Do you pray together? Do you read scripture together? Do you pray for one another? These things are co-mingling together. It's not just physical. God created us in his image and we're mind, body, spirit. How is our body? How's our mind? How's our spirit? If we're combining one flesh, we should be fully integrated together. How are we engaging one another with the gospel in between us holding us together, calling each other to repentance, giving grace to one another? And it's important too. Alright, Donald, I'll send this one to you. Why would a woman who was a wall give herself to Solomon, whose lifestyle and marriage choices were clearly a disaster? Wouldn't this be foolish for parents to recommend that man?

[Donald] A hundred percent agree. Next question. I mean, no, you're not wrong. Yeah, for sure. I think it's important to remember one of the hermeneutical or like the study of the scriptures, the tools that we wanna be mindful of constantly. There are different genres of texts in the scripture, so that affects how we read them. We also need to recognize the difference between what is descriptive versus prescriptive. There's a lot of things that happen in the Bible that we are not recommending to any of you. Right? And part of that is because it was cataloged and recorded because to serve the greater purpose of the Bible, which is to tell God's redemptive plan in history. And so that's really important. There's a lot of things, like I said in the Bible, we would not recommend. Solomon made a ton of mistakes, clearly had a huge area of weakness in his godliness and morality in this space. That said, I still think there are things we learned from the life of Solomon. Number one, the power of prayer. That's a big one. Number two, the effects that Godly wisdom can have on a life. Those are really powerful things. That said, we go back to the very, very first message in our series, and Eddie helpfully talked to us about the fact that a lot of scholars do not believe that Solomon was the author of Song of Songs. It's part of why we chose to use the title Song of Songs and not Song of Solomon as some Bible translations use. You can probably say more about that. Yeah.

[Eddie] Yeah. Well the reason why we chose Song of Songs is Song of Solomon first came about in the, in the 16th century, I think maybe it was the 17th century. And we began using it that way. And it comes from that first verse in the, in the, in the poem. So the song of all songs of Solomon, right? And so they, they sort of shorthanded it, Song of Solomon. If you read one of the challenges around the hermeneutics of a book that's just biblical interpretation of a book like this is if you read 15 different commentaries, you'll get 15 different answers on how to approach this. Because it's not a, it's not a, it's not a narrative. It's not a letter like an epistle. It is a poem that has been translated. It's been the literary device is lost, the metaphors are lost in translation, the rhyme scheme is lost. And so you're left with a big giant sort of pile of what do we do with this? And so a walking line by line approach to the Song of Songs would be very ineffective because of that. And so what's, what most scholars would say, and like someone like

Tim Mackey from Bible Project would say is take it concept by concept throughout the text. So you're looking at a big chunk of text and going, what's the primary biblical application out of this section? And then I'm gonna preach that, as opposed to taking the big book and going, you know, the pomegranate this and the nut orchard that, and you're going, well, you know, in 3000 BC nut orchards grew in this region. And so like, trying to do that would be very, very challenging. And that, and then by the way, that's not the intention of the book. In fact, one of my favorite commentators of this book, the very first line of his commentary is preachers should not attempt to preach the Song of Solomon. So because he's like, it's not designed that way, right? But we believe all scriptures breathed by God and profitable for training, correction, reproof and all these things. So we're going to look through it. But all that to say the challenge is, you know, looking at whether or not Solomon's the person, the man in the story, or whether or not he's the foil throughout the text, which is the approach we've taken that that goes a lot of different ways. And so that's why most churches don't attempt to preach a book like the Song of Songs. I think that might be helpful for you. But yes, I wouldn't let my wife, my daughter Mary this guy, yeah, he's crazy.

[Donald] Can I make one auxiliary comment. I know this isn't the question, but sort of coming out of this question. For those of us here that are younger, particularly those still living under the roof of our parents. You need to make sure that you're navigating conversations about who you're attracted to and how that all plays out with your parents and being open and honest in those spaces. I know that can be super scary. Parents, please normalize those conversations. Don't build that up and make it feel like the Super Bowl. Just make it normal. It's okay to talk about that stuff over the dinner table. That's a really good and healthy thing. And if you do that when they're younger, I believe that will pay dividends later on. And to our singles. If you are currently in a relationship that you feel like you have to rebrand or spin or repaint, when you talk about them with your Christian community, that's probably not a great sign. You wanna listen to the council again, of those who love you and love Jesus. And if everybody else is saying the same thing and you are the odd man or odd woman out, there's just a chance you're wrong. And so you need to be open to that and know that it's possible that your community is actually trying to protect you and help you and serve you in something really, really important that could create catastrophic damage if it's chased. Particularly going back to the earlier question about trying to not awaken love too soon. But yeah, if you, enjoy the protection of godly community is what I'm saying. And they'll never know all the facts and a lot of us can hide behind that. Well, they don't get it. They don't know this part or this part or this part. Again, if the consensus is pretty uniform as they watch your relationship, you would be wise to listen to them.

[Eddie] Love that. Yeah. Yeah. Solomon says, ironically, Proverbs, without counsel plans fail, but with many advisors they succeed. And he definitely knew that that was true in his life. Couple more questions here. We're almost at time, but I wanna throw this one to Josh and Crystal. When do I know it's time to end my marriage? If I tried all that I can, but they still are distant relationally, intimately, and emotionally.

[Josh] Yeah. I mean, I think as we've shared even when Jesus has asked like it's never God's intention for that to be broken. And but this is a reality. And I just, I do want to say that a lot of, you know, maybe a number of you sitting right now, you're in that spot where you just don't feel that connection. There's pain. It's, you've been in a season where you just don't know what to do. There's that brokenness, and I just wanna say that kind of against everything that you shared with all the crazy statistics, there's hope and there's power to see those dry times and those very difficult times for God to heal that and for God to bring people together. So don't tap out before God can do that. And don't do it alone. If you're asking that question alone, you don't have other people around you. That's a really hard place to be. And so bring that to the people around you. As Crystal and I were thinking through this there's definitely like, if you don't feel connected or you don't feel present, and then there's abuse on top of that, that's definitely something that you know, seek wisdom, seek the voice of other people. I'm not saying that okay, yeah, divorce, but that's not right. You don't deserve that. But I don't know. I'll let you share.

[Crystal] Yeah. I think you kind of have to take that out of the equation that you can just end the marriage. I think the world is telling us that yes, you get tired, you get fatigued, you're no longer connected. You should go find somebody else that you can connect to. Take that out of your mind and seek accountability. Seek community seek wisdom, biblical wisdom. Really, marriage is hard. We've heard this over and over. Marriage is hard. You're gonna come to those seasons in life when you don't feel relationally connected, spiritually, physically connected. But don't give up. Like you really have to go back to, a lot of times we just kind of go back to when did like thinking and reminiscing of when this whole marriage and love started and kind of go back to that original, like what was it about us that that God, you know, drew together and just working through those things, start dating again, like start talking through these things. And it's easy to just get distracted. And that's what happens a lot of times. We just distract ourselves with life, with work, with kids, and we forget about each other. So putting each other first and coming together in prayer and yeah. Coming before Jesus and saying, we can't do this. And divorce is not an option unless of course there are those circumstances where it is. But really just coming together on your knees. You can't do this alone.

[Josh] Just real quick, I think if you feel that way, you're not the only couple that's going through that. And I think as you break into and you really see community, you're gonna realize like, wow. Like here's a couple that has grown through that, and that there's hope or you can see that there's a whole bunch of others that are really struggling and you can actually help each other. That's right. You're not, you're not the only ones dealing with it. That's good.

[Eddie] Yeah. Will you give our panel a hand? We're gonna end there. Pastor Josh, will you pray for us, close out our time?

[Josh] Father God, I just thank you for this time. Lord, I thank you for these weeks to go through your word. For us it could be difficult. There could be a lot of things we still need to think and pray through, but Lord, we just thank you for your work teaching us, showing us your truth, Lord and I pray for each and every one of us, Lord God, that we not lose sight of maybe some of

the things you've drawn our hearts to Lord. Some of the things that you've encouraged us with, but maybe we've listened to other voices and now we're back to discouragement. And Lord, we just pray that in all of this, we can continue as a community in our missional communities, in our small DNA groups, Lord, to continue to have conversations. And Lord for married couples, I pray for your power. I pray that we can look back months from now and say, this was the time, Lord, that you did the work, this was the time that healing took place so that we can praise you. That it's a reality that you can work in our lives, Lord. So we just thank you in Jesus' name, Lord. Amen. Amen.