



# SONG OF SONGS

*A Biblical Vision for Marriage, Sex, and the Body*

## SONG OF SONGS: GODS GOOD DESIGN FOR SEX AND MARRIAGE

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Eddie Williams

### Song of Songs 7:1-5

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](http://doxa-church.com) to learn more about Doxa, find service times, or support the making of disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

We'll be reading out of Song of Songs chapter seven, verses one through five.

"How Beautiful are your feet in sandals, O noble daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses."

This is the word of the Lord. You can be seated.

Good morning everyone. That was not the book of Mormon you just heard read. That was the Old Testament, buried way deep. If you're new, my name's Eddie. I'm one of the pastors here at the church. I saw an ungodly heresy committed this week when my daughter decided to, in a choice between a Kit Kat and a Reese's, choose the Kit Kat. And I just wanted to warn you of that in case you see her to let her know the shame and trouble she's caused her family from her decision. So I hope that, in the weird irony, I also saw a commercial where the same exact thing happened where a girl was wearing a costume. You see this? Wearing a Kit Kat, Reese's costume, and she, how's that even a choice? Like that's, that's unbelievable.

So in the spirit of, or not spirit, I should say, evil spirit of the holiday, choose wisely friends, okay? But I will say I do recommend most of the books here and we are gonna be talking about one today. Again, I recommended this to you week one in this series, by the way, we're in week eight and this book is "Love Thy Body" by Nancy Pearcy. So I'd recommend this book to you to go purchase. I'm gonna reference it. It's a great book. If you are on social media and you tag us with a story or a post, you'll be entered to get a couple. We're gonna give a couple of these away for free on Instagram or Facebook, so you can do that as well, if you just wanna try to get one for free, you can probably get this one. So that's great. We typically have been doing a Q and R, question and responses around series 'cause we're talking about marriage, we're talking about sex, we're talking about the body, all these things, gender. And so if you have questions that you want answered, we're gonna have a QR code here on the screen. You can you can go ahead and scan that. We're not doing Q and R today, but we are gonna be doing it throughout the rest of the series. And so we would encourage you to scan and ask questions around these subjects, even if it's personal, even if it's, you know, something more broad around the subject. We encourage you to ask anyway. So we'd love to get to that answer for you. Okay? We're gonna be in that chapter we just read, Song of Song, Song of Solomon in your ESV Bible, chapter seven verse one. So if you have it, turn there and I'm gonna pray for us because we're gonna need a lot of prayers as we discuss the intricacies of what we just read.

Well, Lord, I come to you feeling needy in this moment, feeling like I need your presence and power as we communicate what it means to be designed in the way you've made us, Lord God. This is a tall task in a cultural moment like ours. And so I ask for your provision and protection for all my friends, our marriages, our frustrations around body, sex, marriage, gender, I pray that you're kind to all of us as you minister to us with your word. I pray that that there would be clarity for me, that there would be calm for me, that there would be courage for me to communicate your word. And I pray that the pulpit would have, would be a hedge of protection against the enemy, his allies, and works and effects. And that your white throne would yield here by the power of the Holy Spirit. I also pray for my friends and their brains and their hearts and their minds. We know the challenges that the brain presents sometimes in this world, and especially in a fallen world. And so I ask that you be gentle and kind to them as they hear this word. And that ultimately your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Alright, well, as you heard read from Emily there, Song of Songs is semi-erotic love poetry, in the Old Testament as I've been saying. And this week, the emphasis really is on that erotic side

of it, which is why we have programming for those student aged kids. Those of you fifth to 12th grade, if your parents will choose, have you in that programming. But it is, it is a serious call. Now in chapter seven, the man and the woman, they're inviting one another into a serious sexual experience. That's what's happening now. Sex, as we've explored, is a wonderful gift from God to enjoy and to explore ourselves. And we've talked about this really from a multitude of angles. Last week we talked about it from this angle of beauty. And this week we're gonna talk about it and address it through this angle of design. So what's helpful for you to think about is last week and this week being sort of part one and part two of a mini series on this text. Chapter six and seven are sort of interlinked together in this text. And so it's helpful to see sort of week one, week six rather, the section the last week on beauty. Think about that as like the art of the human body. We were talking about beauty and then think about this week really as the science of the body like design. So that's kind of how we're gonna divide it up. But again, the husband and again, is describing his wife and her beauty in great detail. He's talking about the design of her. He moves from her feet up to her head and back down to her midsection. And he's describing her wondrous design that he's absolutely in love with. Let's read a little bit of the passage. Verse one.

"How beautiful are your feet in sandals" like he's describing her feet? "O noble daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine." Now, one thing that's important for us to know before we finish out is that the translators are attempting to be frank and obvious, but not vulgar in their translations. And so, as you can imagine, some of this is challenging, but what we're being seen here described is the private intricate parts of a woman. That's what's being described here. Okay, so let's continue. "Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks towards Damascus." Now, these descriptors can be very erotic, okay? That's, there's no, there's no shying away from that. These are overwhelming images of the design of his wife. This is what the married couple is describing their bodies to one another with passionate intimacy, okay? That's what's taking place here. Now, some artists have set out to sort of personify or give you the vision of what's actually taking place here. I thought it was kind of nice to see as I googled around this week, like, what are people like, how are people drawing something like this? So here's the first one. This is sort of your G rated Disney version of what's taking place here, right? You got the man and the woman, they're coming together. It's beautiful. It's loving. There's a, the vine represents the sort of the vine or the garden that they're in. And then look at the, look at the hearts. It's like a Mickey Mouse cartoon, right? Beautiful. Like <pop sounds>, right? Beautiful. It's cute. But as you look for people trying to draw a more literal, a more literal obvious version of this, look at this next one. It's Halloween time. And so here we have a horrifying monster. And this is the literal depiction of the woman. Look at her teeth are the ears that have come up from washing white as snow, not one is missing. Beautiful. The goats of coming, the flock of Gilead, the goats coming up, that's her hair. The eyes are like doves, obvious weird choice for that. And then the dripping blood, I'm sorry, honey, coming from the woman's mouth. And then there's the neck, the tower. So that's kind of like the, the actual, like if you were to draw this, this is what she looks like. And I hope beyond hope that that's not what he was married to. But

if that wasn't enough for you, I found an even more intense one. And this one's actually literally drawn here it is, it's gonna be hard to see, but I just had to show it to you because this is a, this is, I don't know what church this is, but some church printed this out and gave it to their kids to draw with the description of chapter seven, right along there on the left, if you wanted your kids to not sleep for the next six months, this is how you would do it. And you can see it. Literally, look at the, there's the two fawns, look at the bottom. There's the bowl of what? Mixed wine. Okay? The silver thing. Then there's the heaps of wheat, which is her belly. You've got the two fawns, twins gazelle there. You've got the neck, the tower. And then you've got the man catching the honey dripping from her mouth. There's the, the goats of Gilead, and then there's the nose, the tower that points towards Lebanon. I mean, that thing looks like it's pointed more towards Lebanon, Oregon than it is Lebanon in the Middle East, if we're honest. That is a series of horrifying images to terrify you and send you home on a negative note. Amen. Good grief.

The point is that the body and its design to the man are beautiful. So we gotta have a little fun with it. But he is trying to say, "Hey, listen, I love the way you're made from head to toe and back down to toe again. You are made perfect and I love you." And the point is, the body is clearly meant to be a beautiful and arousal and love inducing element that compels us towards sex and towards marriage. So as we pivot into this idea of the design of the body, it's important to understand for us in our culture today that the body is such a pleasure and a delight, that as a culture, we have decided that we must take it at all costs. Because it's so amazing, because it's so well designed, because it's the apex of creation, because it's made, 'cause it's the only thing that God made in the beginning that was very good. And not just good, we must have it at all costs. Culturally, we feel as if we should have it, that maybe we're, we're entitled to it. That no matter what, from whatever angle we desire, we should have the body, whatever our predispositions are in our sexuality, in our preferences, we believe as a culture that because the body is so wondrous, we should be able to take it from every which way, even outside of God's original design for it. We believe we are entitled to change the body if we desire, increase the number of bodies that we are entitled to and even redefine the body as we see fit in order to indulge in the body. And the question is, how do we justify that? How do we make sense of that? That the body so wondrous and beautiful described here in the Song of Songs, how do we as people and culture decide that it's so beautiful that we should have it no matter how we decide to find it, define it, no matter how we decide to change it, no matter, no matter how we decide how many people, that's rather I should say, we decide we want, like how do we justify this? One of the ways is to take God out of the equation altogether. And here, as we've talked about before in week one, we have the fact value split. This is how we do this, okay? This premise, it's a rabbit hole, but it's gonna be meaningful. This premise comes again from Darwin and evolutionary theory that movement sought to prove that the universe despite appearing designed, was not in fact designed and is actually the result of random cosmic chance. Our existence essentially is an accident. And if the universe sort of fell into existence and was not designed, then any morality or values that you or I could have could not be embedded in nature. If there was no desire, then values and morality are basically created by us, how we wanna craft them, right? There's no innate values coming out of a random chance planet. Couldn't happen. Now, of course, the fact value split has greatly contributed to our

misunderstandings of the body, which leads us following this pattern to the person body split. Now, this idea comes from "Love Thy Body". I just recommended that book to you by Nancy Pearcey. And I highly recommend it. You see the facts of the human being are the body. And this is like the flesh and bone. This is the oxygen, right? This is the water we require, the food we require. Those are the facts of our flesh, sort of our flesh pod, so to speak. But the person, the person who we are, let's say, is the value aspect of the human. This is how culture sees it. This is where our desires, feelings, and hopes come from. And it's really totally distinct from the human body. So the culture is separated body and separated personhood. So how I feel doesn't really necessarily have to rely on anything that's physical. Does that make sense? This has all sorts of ramifications for us today. And a few, I'll point out for us, our context for, since we're talking about design.

First thing, sexuality. This is where in the fact body split, or sorry, the fact value split and the person body split, this is where we say my desires are different and distinct from my biology. Like I know I'm wired to procreate and have sex with a certain sex, let's say the opposite sex. But I am unaligned with my body's biological wiring. Okay? That's the fact value person body split. Another implication, sexual freedom. This is where we think because of the value split, that traditions and religious restraints on sex are essentially arbitrary because values are arbitrary. So I can indulge in my body or the bodies of others as I see fit because facts have no rootedness in design, in creation 'cause remember, the universe is a random accident. And then the third implication, gender identity. This is where I say I am different from my biological sex. I am not a man, I'm a woman, despite what my body and my hormones and even my physical body parts would dictate. I get to dictate my gender based on my feelings and emotions, not on physical biology. Okay? Now I know that's heavy and in this cultural moment, these are things that are challenging for all of us to wrestle with, regardless of where you feel like you may find yourself on this spectrum, I understand that. There are a varying number of ideas about how we should view sex identity in God's design in the body as a result. For one, the gay and lesbian, let's say the entire L-G-B-T-Q-I-A movement comes into play in this element. This is where we say we decide who we can have sex with based on what I feel my predispositions are. And those can change as I change. This also includes things like shifting our gender, changing how we identify because we feel different inside called transgenderism, as you know, and other things, even like polygamy or polyamori. I could have sex or be in relationship with multiple people and I can marry 'em or not marry 'em. It doesn't matter because values are not rooted in anything concrete other than the morality which we determine to live by. It's not rooted from anything more serious like that, like a designer, let's say. And this also includes other more like quote unquote sexual or socially rather acceptable forms of sex in marriage. Like heterosexual sex before marriage. Why do I have to wait to get married? There's no values there. Or even divorce. Why can't I end my marriage and start a new one or extra marital relations like adultery? Why can't I have more? Who cares? I wanna make the case from scripture today that God's good design for men and women and for sex and marriage is what's best over those options. And not only that, God's good design will actually lead to the highest form of satisfaction and flourishing for those who make the decision to live within God's given structure like the married couple we see here in Song of Songs, and I'll say this, with all of the varying forms of sexual exploration and gender identity and all these things, I believe that God

can actually solve what we're really after. Like what's the question beneath the question, God's after that solve. And it by the way, it's not just sexual gratification and it's not even just finding the right sexual partner for us, but something far deeper. So let's explore together today. What's God's design? Why do we mistrust that design and how Jesus helps us find what we're really after? Okay.

Alright, first, what's God's good design? Here it is on the screen. God's good environment for sex is heterosexual, monogamous, covenantal, godly marriage. Remember last week we talked about the art and beauty of design, and this week we're talking about the science of God's design. God's environment for sex is heterosexual, monogamous, covenantal, godly marriage. I know this, I don't know if this comes as a shock to you, but Doxa says we believe the truths of scripture, that all scripture is breathed by God and profitable. We believe in the infallibility of scripture. We believe it's verbally spoken by God, that all scripture plenary, and we believe it's inerrant, that there's without error. That's where we land. That's where traditional historical Christianity has landed. So if that's a shock to you, that's, that's the information you need. The loving sexual intimacy, though that we see in between this marriage I just wanna say is intentionally and mechanically designed to be like the way it's being described in Song of Solomon from Song of Songs, from the very beginning. It's important that you and I were pursuing this ideal marriage in Song of Songs that we've seen laid out. It has love and beauty and sex and it's wonderful, but it also has an intentional biological design that's attached to it as well. Okay? Now, in the beginning, God raised up a man in Genesis chapters one and two, and then he provides him a woman. And what we see in the first two chapters of the Bible, Genesis one and two, is the world's very first marriage. And so what's helpful for us as we explore God's design for a marriage originally, we should explore the very first marriage, right? That's what we've been doing throughout the series. Look at Genesis chapter two with me, verse 18 through 22. And let's make some sense of this.

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.'"

Now, there's a lot going on here. We see Adam is sort of put in charge to sort of name all the animals, which is curious to me, like he's named 'em, he's named a lot. And he's looking at the scope of all animals, and he is seeing the giraffe and he is seeing the water bug, and he's seeing the goats of Gilead and the ewes, and he is going, these all are great, but I don't think these are any, any for me, like not any deeper, right? He's looking around, he's going, I don't think so, right? But then he sees the woman and that God makes the woman for me. He goes, oh my gosh. And he actually in the next verse sings the song of the woman, flesh of my flesh, bone in my bone. She shall be called woman for she was taken, taken out of man, and he sings her a

song. And it's beautiful, all this stuff. But what I wanna do is focus in on a phrase in this section that serves really as a description of the inner workings of how a man, one man, and a woman, one woman, fit together, that's embedded here where God is explaining the design for us. The phrase I wanna fit or explore here is the phrase, I will make him a helper fit for him, or some translations will say, I wanna make him a helper suitable for him. So we're gonna do a little a Hebrew here, but I think it's gonna be helpful. And I just heard that apparently people are falling asleep in the gatherings from Lindsay. So this may be your opportunity but I do think it will be really helpful for us in exploring this design level. Okay, so let's explore this word helper, suitable. Ezer is the Hebrew word here. And this word here is the term used for helper meaning, or un shockingly meaning to assist or to help. Okay? Why does God give the man a woman to help him? Because he needs help. Because he needs a lot of help. And many of you that are married to a husband, you would say, amen. That's very true, right? He needs help. But he needs help to do more than just like a lot of his daily duties. He also needs help because he needs to become everything he was created to be in life. That he has a passion and a purpose God's given him. And the woman is placed there to help him become whom he's supposed to be. And the man in so doing will do the same to the woman. So this includes things like companionship and calling and procreation and sexual enjoyment. We talked about these. The next word, the term used for fit or suitable is this word kenegdo. It's actually a combination of some words. Now, kenegdo is a little more complicated, but the evangelical dictionary of biblical theology defines kenegdo as essentially the corresponding opposite. Okay? Literally meaning like one who is able to stand face to face or shoulder to shoulder, she's the corresponding opposite to the man. Now, maybe complicated, but let's put these two terms together and it'll help us in a sense sort of make sense of all of this in this context, even within the context of the whole Bible. So the two terms together ezer kenegdo. This helps us understand their design. The necessary companion of equal stature that matches together complementarily. The necessary companion of equal stature that matches together complementarily or corresponds. So the necessary companion of equal stature that corresponds to say like a square peg is what? A square hole, right? It's a square hole. The two components then together are necessary, different and equal. Necessary, different and equal. That's how they fit together. They say, it says originally in Genesis, and Jesus repeats that the two shall become one flesh and they fit together with perfection. God's original design for sex and marriage is a man and a woman matching together perfectly in physical intimacy, spiritual equality, and complimentary roles and responsibilities. So it's a mind, body and spirit coming together with cohesion and perfection. So sex between a married man and woman then leads to maximum pleasure and cohesion and leads to children, like be fruitful and multiply. It's beautiful. No other relationship can bring these components together with integrity and with continuity because this is what they were designed for. To put it another way, God designed a man and a woman perfectly that sex made biological and relational sense. Put another way God, was not shocked that Adam and Eve found out how to use their parts. He wouldn't go walking through the garden on a cool day and was like, what is happening here? Like, what are you doing? Stop. Like, wait, I didn't, I guess that does make sense. They do work perfectly together. Like, ah, maybe go for it. Like he wasn't shocked, okay? He knew what he was doing from the beginning, that there would be biological and relational cohesion between the man and the woman. Okay? Beautiful.

Now, one common thought or rebuttal, I should say a around this idea is that hey, Jesus never spoke on some of these seeming contradictions as I'm exploring this. Like there's a lot in the sort of lgbtqia+ spectrum or even with issues of polygamy or something specific where Jesus, I don't know if he's taught about those things. Well, one, I'd say I'd respond and say one, we don't know that, right? Obviously Jesus talked a lot and he said more, far more than he, than is recorded in the scriptures. That's what the Bible actually says. Jesus taught far more than is written in these books. But also we know that Jesus spoke to the challenges that were in front of him in his day. Jesus talked about the things that were happening around him. So he talked a lot about religious phariseeism. He saw that take place. He actually talked a fair amount about the poor widows and orphans that was taking place. He also spoke in agrarian analogies because, well, that's what they did, and we don't do that as much. They might use more software engineer analogies if he was around here in Redmond. But so he talked about and used the language of the place he was right. That's what happened. Second thing I'd say is that Jesus is God. Jesus is the preeminent God of the universe, part of the Trinitarian Council. Father, son, Holy Spirit. If the Bible speaks in the Old Testament about some of these issues or in elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus co-signed it because he's God, right? He is. And so if you say, well, Jesus didn't say this, but this other part does, then your issue is actually with the inerrancy of scripture or maybe the trustworthiness of the translations, which might be the same thing, not with Jesus being against Paul or Jesus being against the Old Testament, okay? But I will say Jesus does appeal to principles that help us understand God's design. He does do that. I'll give you an example. Look, let's go to Matthew 19. If you have that in your Bible or it'll be up here on the screen. We're gonna start in verse three.

"The 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,"' he quotes, ""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.'"

Jesus when he was presented with a modern problem of divorce, appeals back to the creation story to help them understand marriage's original design. So he's presented with a marriage conundrum and he goes, well, let's go back to the beginning. What did God originally intend for us? He says, oh, he made them male and female, okay, and that they should not separate. That when they come together, that's a permanent covenant in union, despite what laws may say. But then they said, well, hold on a second, because Pharisee's being annoying. They are. They go, well, Moses made it legal. And that's, you know, that's in the, the Torah. Like what? Like what to say you around this issue? And Jesus says, ah, yes.

"He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart,'" basically your hardheadedness, your sin, ""Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.'"



I know Moses made divorce legal because he needed to legislate your sin because you were hurting one another and he had to figure out a way to get this under wraps. But God's original intention, it was not so. Culture might allow things that should not happen in God's eyes and things might even be legal, that from the beginning God did not intend. What does this tell us? A few things. One, Jesus gets his ethics not for what people vote for like a democracy or something. He doesn't get his, he doesn't get it from what people think or from what the latest podcast says or what the latest marriage coach says. He gets his ethics from the beginning because Jesus was there in the beginning. It says, let us make man in our image, the Trinitarian Council, Father, Son, and Spirit decreeing how creation should go. Two, this tells us, really, this tells us that Jesus is doing something bigger. He's not just giving ethics for us from the beginning. He's actually trying to get us back to the beginning. You see, Jesus' goal is to restore all things back to the way they originally were intended. His goal is far more than pointing out error and trying to get everyone to behave a certain way. He's trying to tell you that when the kingdom of God comes, it's going to look a particular way and it's gonna look a lot like it was in the beginning before things happened. So we too can draw our ethics for sex and marriage from the same place Jesus draws his from, the beginning. Speaking of some of the, the muck and the sin, what I'm trying not to do here as we get into point 2 is to draw two clear lines. These are good people and these are bad people. That's not what I'm trying to do. I'm not trying to say these are holy people and these are unholy, these are sinners, these are unsinners, these are Christians, these are non-Christians. What I'm trying to tell you is that there are two really big categories, people and Jesus. We all have sinned and fall short of the glory God. So as we get into this next issue, understand that this has implications for everybody. So God's good design, why do we mistrust it? Sin makes us mistrust God's design and make for ourselves a way we feel is better. So everything was perfect in that first marriage. Adam and Eve hanging out bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, they're singing songs to one another. They're not fighting. They're not fighting over the remote. They know exactly what they're watching on tv. This is beautiful. They're all choosing Reese's over Kit Kat. There's no sin that is taking place, right? But then all of the sudden sin enters the world and God says to them, okay, there's this one tree you've been eating of all these trees and that's great. There's this one tree I don't want you to eat from. And they could not help themselves. They felt like with the help of a serpent they needed to have from the tree. And a few things happen, right? The woman originally, she decides with the help of the serpent that she's going to find out for herself the consequences of eating from that tree. God said, if you eat of it, you are gonna die. And she said, well, did God really say here's the devil, here's the serpent. Oh, did God really say I'm gonna find out for myself that that's true. The man, Adam, he obliges. He abdicates and he partakes. And then in the midst of all their sin, shame comes and they become ashamed of their naked bodies. They were naked prior spoiler, and they even hide from God and they distrust God because all of this, all people, all marriages inherit sin. And we all have that in us to this day, right? We are all implicated, we all follow them. And you and I, we rebel against God as a result. So because of sin, all of God's words and rules, kind of like the rule of not eating from that one tree, remember that, becomes skeptical in our eyes. Hmm, did God really say I shouldn't do that? Sin makes us second guess God's word and whether or not it's actually good for us. And even marriages environment for flourishing starts to feel restrictive and oppressive. So then we ask questions, why do I just have to marry one woman? Why not many women? Why do I have to

keep the same spouse? Why not switch 'em out if they're not treating me well? Why does marriage have to be between a man and a woman? Why not two men or two women? Why not multiple people? Why not four people or 12 people? Why should I submit in a marriage? Does Bible say I have to sacrifice and die for my wife? I mean, she's gotta hold up her end of the bargain too. Why can't I marry an animal or a house? Why get married at all? I wanna say this as lovingly as possible, hopefully as respectfully as possible to you. Okay? The Bible teaches that the reason we ask these questions is because sin has come into the world and has disrupted our trust in God, and sin has disrupted our created order. And now the environment that God gave us for relationships to flourish, marriage, feels oppressive and even restrictive to us. The questions are all really the wrong questions because they all presuppose a distrust in God. The right question then is first before you ask those, is why don't you trust God? Why don't you trust his instruction? Why when God says something, you're immediately skeptical. Why if God's book is for us and about us, do we look at the book and say, I don't know if it's really true, I need to explore that for myself. Why? You may have perfectly good reasons to ask those questions, but it is the first question, why don't we trust him? Because of sin, God's environment for sex and marriage is lost to us, and we feel like we need to find out for ourselves what the environment should be. And because of sin, you and I our identities as integrated people, person, body, spirit, all being integrated are lost to remember, you and I were created to be united to God, but sin separates us from God and causes a lot of pain. Isaiah 59 says this,

"But your iniquities," your sin "has made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that you do not hear."

Friends, it is not God playing hide and seek or peekaboo with you that the reason you don't understand or see God, it's our sin that blots him out because of our separation, we set out to make sense of our loneliness. Because again, if we're, if we're made to be in relationship with God and others and we sin, which all of us do, we feel lonely and that's a huge problem. We're all experiencing this lonely and we're try as a result, if we don't feel God to solve our loneliness apart from him. So if we have sexual predispositions that are atypical, this may happen, then in an effort to feel less lonely, we might seek to justify those predispositions. I'm not sure the Bible's really true or Oh, you know, what does this word in Hebrew really mean? Or you know, scholars really are debating this. I don't think any of that could be possibly true. Or you know, Bible's totally made up. It's made up. It's based on origin. Put it together in the third century. Constantine, when the Christian Church, he nationalized it. It's all a bunch, it's all a big scam. Or we might use science to try to figure this out. The person and the body divide is a way to do this. If values again are not rooted in fact, and then there's no objective morality, then traditional, so to speak, stances on sex and marriage, their arbitrary and maybe even invalid. Judith Butler is a gay postmodern gendered theorist and she's actually quoted of in *Love Thy Body*, the book I recommended. And her goal with her research is be, is to quote, undermine any and all moral discourse that would delegitimize her own minority sexual practices. So she's trying to essentially do away with any morality that would be rooted in something greater transcendent moral, because if that doesn't exist, then she's free to live the way she wants, right? That way she can belong in a sense. She's not belonging because if the whole morality

says she's wrong, then she feels disconnected and her feelings can remain detached from her biology as a result.

Now, I don't know where you find yourself on this sort of idea around these, this issue around body, design for the body, gender, what have you, no matter where you find yourself, I think you can agree with me. This is all very sad that someone can feel so alienated from society and so lonely in who they are that they're going to give their life's work to figuring out how to belong to somebody or something so they can feel loved and valued and cared about. That's sad. We want that for everybody, don't we? No matter where we're at. I don't think anyone here is a mustache twirling villain who wants destruction and hatred and evil and loneliness for everybody, right? We all long for that on some sense. But behind all academic rhetoric of gender theorists or even theologians, who are trying to justify a different way instead of God's way are real people with real hurt and real pain. Unfortunately, it doesn't mean that we can affirm everything when people are hurting and sad. In fact, sometimes it's the very affirmations that they're longing for that actually do the most harm. And by the way, I'll tell you just biblically speaking, the affirmation of your sexual or gender identity won't actually help you. The loneliness and separation that they feel or that you and I feel actually isn't solved through affirmation anyway, until you and I live in sync with the way we're designed, we will still feel the same ache. And even if you do live in sync with the way you're designed, you'll still feel it. Just ask anybody. The environment for marriage is actually what makes relationships flourish. And it does give us the best hope at actually trying to feel some measure of joy and some measure of peace in this life. I mean, for instance, take a few examples. As we read about in Song of Songs, we see how they fit together and how they are living within the laws that God has created and now it leads to their flourishing. Think about a plane. A plane doesn't thrive apart from the laws of aerodynamics. It can feel, it wants to thrive apart from them. And he can say, I'm gonna fly however I want. I'm gonna have one engine or one wing or an open door on the side. I don't know how planes work, but you get what I'm saying, right? Some of you pilots are like, wait, hold on a second, right? It's only when the plane obeys the laws of aerodynamics that they can actually truly flourish and fly. A fish doesn't thrive outside of the proper environment of the water. If a fresh water fish goes to salt water, it dies. And vice versa, right? If a fish says, no, I'm free to live outside of these bounds. I'm gonna thrive anywhere, not just this water, but let's say that dock, the fish dies. It can't thrive apart from it. It only flourishes within, it exists within the environment that it was given. A tree from the Amazon rainforest can't thrive in the Sahara desert, even if it wants to. It's only thriving in the environment that it was created for it in which it can thrive. My point is that environment matters, design matters, and living within a set of boundaries and laws is actually helpful.

And yet, I don't know where you're at. Maybe you hear me saying that well, if you just become heterosexual and get into a monogamous covenantal marriage and well, that'll solve all your lgbtqia+ problems. And that's not what I'm saying. The deep ache in your heart cannot likely be solved by even that. And that brings me to our next point. Jesus longs to solve the deep ache we try to solve ourselves. Many of us are saddled with our own identity issues. Or maybe you have family who are gay or transgender or maybe you've been exposed to the pain of people you care about and as they struggle with these things like me, that's my story. I just wanna

acknowledge that it is so sad that you or people you know have to wrestle with feeling alienated and lonely and afraid. Matthew Vines, a self-proclaimed gay Christian, he's tried to reconcile his gay leanings with a creative theology himself, but even in the midst of his theological justifications, there's a deep level of sadness. He said this in one talk. I'm a part of creation too, as he fights back tears, including my sexual orientation. I'm a part of God's design. That God created me, that God loves no more, less valuable than anyone else. But that doesn't mean I need to hate myself. Matthew and all of us are all a part of creation and he, like anyone else, is no less valuable. But we differ in one big aspect. Our sin, no matter how deeply embedded, is actually what keeps us so lonely. Not the lack of acceptance or affirmation. It is what keeps us from living satisfied lives. And there is one big element that he and many of us miss, and that's that your sexual orientation or a different gender identity or even being accepted in any way is not gonna solve your pain any more than a straight Christian getting married will solve their pain.

Marriage, gay or straight or no marriage or kids or job is not the ultimate solve for your deep ache. The deep ache we all experience is us being square pegs trying to fit and shove into round holes. We miss our design. We are living in a way that we're not created for guys and it hurts us and we feel the rub and we feel lonely in the midst of it. We were living in a way we're not created for. And this is really what our sinful nature does to us. We may live on this side of glory with a deep pain in one area or another. We may have maybe lost a family member or seen someone in their family die or been born with some sort of condition or even feel trapped inside of your own body. The only solution for anything like that is for Jesus to come back and to redeem this world, to make this world right, to remove the plights that you and I experience in this world and remove the fog from our eyes so we can see in full. That's what he's trying to do. I do believe God can relieve our pain and if we live the way he's designed, we can achieve greater levels of relief and even joy. But total relief will not come. If you think you're gonna solve the deep ache in your heart as a single person by getting married. I'd hate to break it to you, but that's not coming. That will be nice for you. But the deepest levels of dissatisfaction comes from living alienated from your creator, not from finding a spouse.

This is all very complicated, but what can we do in the meantime? It sounds like we all kind of need to wait for Jesus to solve all of these deepest problems, but there's gotta be something we can do now. And there is, there's a few things. I'll give you a few. For those of us that are Christians, we're seeing friends and we're seeing struggles of people that are feeling alienated, maybe they're lost in the person body to split. Maybe you're lost in it. Christians need to respond with an optimistic biblical worldview that honors and respects the body and its alignment with our soul. We need a theology that shows people that we are integrated and that our bodies matter to God and that they're not terrible the way they're made. This is, this world tells people that we should disagree with our body, even go against it. We should try to change it, manipulate it because it's wrong. And we need a theology that tells our friends and family that their body and their personhood are integrated and made by God himself. Culture wants you to hate your body and it infuriates me. It tells you that you're too fat, that you're too skinny, marketing, politics, government, workplace, all of it. You're too fat, you're too skinny. You need more muscle. You need more hair. You need less hair. You need less muscle. You

need too, you're too short, you're too tall. Your eyes are too close together. Your eyes are too round. I'm not a boy. I need to be a boy. I'm not a girl. I need to be a girl. I'm not dark enough. I need to wear self tanner. I'm not light enough. I need to stay out of the sun. Like these are the things that are being told. And in a sick twist of irony, our sin nature wants you to find identity in the very thing you're not. God says, you are made specifically in my image. You are exactly how I've designed you. You don't need to fight to change to be something more. You don't need to be something you'll never be. I made you exactly and you might not understand right now all the reasons you're struggling. But there is a greater purpose behind what I'm doing and it's so much bigger than your own volition and intention in this very moment. When we begin to live in synchrony with our created self, we recognize our imago dei and then all of a sudden we stop finding identity in things we're not. And instead we can look down the corridor of our lives and say, listen, I don't know what's going on right now. I don't know if I just lost my job. I don't know. I'm struggling with my sexuality. I'm struggling with the fact that I don't have enough money. I'm struggling, I'll never get married. I'm struggling that I'll never lose my virginity to a wife or to a husband. I don't know what's gonna happen. But I do know that if all else fails, I am a child of God and he loves me and he's cared for me and he's preserved me. And one day he's gonna make all of this right. We long to be a son and a daughter made in God's image. Having kids isn't gonna solve it. Getting the job isn't gonna solve it. Switching genders isn't gonna solve it. What we need to do is fight the good fight of faith until God finally redeems and renews and restores this place for good. Second thing, Christians should be on the front lines to support and serve those who feel like they don't connect with people or connect with their biological sex or their sexual predispositions. Many people who are gay or transgender or anything really have seen Christians talk a real big arrogant game and do nothing to help anybody when they're struggling. Many of us, we like to find, I don't wanna paint with a broad brush, but I'll just say a lot of people find, love to find political echo chambers online and then argue about who's right and why and whatever reason. And then turn around and literally do nothing as a response to the hurt and pain and suffering that people experience. And then we retreat into our big church buildings out of culture and society and then go online and then start tweeting and talking about, I'm gonna change the world for Christianity. Repent, you sinner. Change the country? You're gonna change the United States from your desktop in your basement. Change the nation. You can't even change your city. You can't even change your block. You can't even change your cubicle. How are you gonna change the world from your cockpit in front of your laptop when there are hurting people that need help, that are people that are longing for the truth, not just to be using the Bible as a hammer to like hammer them with, but instead open it up and show them the truths of Jesus, that he's come for them, that he loves them. God created men and women, boys and girls on a sliding scale with variances and temperament, predispositions. And we need to fight to make that clear to those who don't fit into traditional roles so they can feel supported instead of ostracized. And we Christians, but certainly Doxa in particular, we need to be ready with long-term support for those struggling with this area and be willing to bear the frustrations and anger that many people experience. Can we be that people? And last point, I read this quote in an old book once it's really powerful, it says this, love thy neighbor as yourself. Just kidding. It's the Bible. His name's Jesus. No matter the cost. Guys, it's not complicated. Short of denying the truths of scripture, which does not help at all or not love at all. We need to love our neighbors. If we as a church are going to

preach repentance, then we have to be willing to model repentance for our own feelings, for the ways we've pushed people away in this area or others. And don't forget, in case you're confused, it isn't because you're straight that you're saved. We are all saved the same way. Being gay does not send you to hell. The same way being straight doesn't send you to heaven. You and I are all saved the same way. Unmerited grace from God through the precious blood of Jesus shed on the cross who died for your sins. We are all saved not because our behavior or because of our upholds to orthodoxy or because of our ethics. We are saved because Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose three days later, we are all saved that way. And yes, as a result of what Jesus did for us, we can live the way he created us to because our sin has been put off and we gain this element of Holy Spirit working in us and all of a sudden the things that are not of God fall off of us. And that is beautiful and we long for that. But it's not. It doesn't happen in reverse. You obey God because he's loved you, not you don't obey God so that he will love you. You understand? So yelling rules at people isn't how anyone's gonna meet Jesus. We show people the love of Jesus. We teach the truths of the scripture and then we love them no matter the cost. That's the goal. When we do this, it frees us up to love our neighbor because you are no more deserving of grace than they are. We just have received it and we must pray that they receive it too.

Close with this. If you are gay or you're transgender or you're sleeping with someone you're not married to, if you are greedy or you're a thief or you've stolen money at your company or you're an addict and you're addicted to alcohol or pornography, or even if you're a staunch atheist who hates Christianity, you are welcome here amongst us sinners. You're welcome. Our hope is that the same power that rose Christ from the dead will minister to your heart the way he has ministered to many of our hearts, and that you might find an ultimate sense of belonging by living by the design he's created us all to live by and understand that the sacrificial blood he shed for us makes us satisfied when we believe in it. And so it is. Let's pray.

Jesus, pray for your presence. I pray for the Holy Spirit to come. I pray that heavy word like this can be hard for many of us, may be motivating for others. Regardless of where we find ourselves, Lord, would you be kind? Would you be open? And would you show us that the safest place to be is not in a place that affirms us? It's not even in a church building. It's in the presence and power of God that we might all enter there and experience peace and joy and see that the best thing we could ever do is believe in the one who sent you. So, Lord, I pray for his power. I pray you'd be kind and I pray that communion today might be transformational and change us. We, there's burdens we can leave at these tables today. May we not go home with a giant burden on our backs. In Jesus' name, amen.

