



SONG OF SONGS

A Biblical Vision for Marriage, Sex, and the Body

Song of Songs: Do Not Awaken Love Until It's Time

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Scripture Reference: Song of Songs 8:1-4

Good morning, Doxa. Today we, we will be reading Song of Songs, chapter eight verses one through four:

Oh, that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breasts! If I found you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me. I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother -- she who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me! I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

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

Hey, um, it's daylight savings, as you've heard joked a few times and, uh, I've never been a part of a church. I've worked in a lot of different churches. I've never been a part of a church that has a, uh, shoulder to shoulder, 9:00 AM service. Um, and then like not as many come in the the second gathering. Usually it's reversed. Then I realize the Seahawks are playing right now. Um, and we wrestle not against, against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities of the National Football League. And so those of you that are here, probably don't care at all. And you're my favorite type of people. You're here for Jesus, and I'm here for Jesus. And so we're gonna do some good work here this morning for us, okay?

For those of you that are brand new, we are in week nine of an 11 week series in the book of Song of Songs. And this is your first time, you're coming at an odd week as you heard Hilda read. Um, for those of you that are new and don't know what that is, essentially Song of Songs is a semi, a book of semi-erotic love poetry found in the Old Testament, okay? And it's, it gives us essentially a biblical vision for marriage, for sex, for relationships, and for the body. So if you have questions about any of those things, which I imagine you might, uh, we've got a QR code for here for you to scan because we've been doing question and response periods after the --

many of the gatherings. I'm gonna invite my wife up here, Sarah, to do some of those with me. And so if you wanna scan preemptively, you can. Um, but we're also gonna have a, a panel at the end of the series, um, to answer some of those lingering questions as well. So I've got a lot of ground to cover. We've got a lot of ground to cover. Let me pray for us, ask God to be with us and we'll get started.

Well, Lord, I pray for all of us here that showed up on a day where we could easily be doing something else because we want to hear about you. We wanna know your truth, and that's important. Lord God, we've, we know that there's many different things we could be doing, our spending our time on. There's family obligations, there's rest, there's, there's all sorts of stuff. But Lord, we're here with you. I pray for me, um, for calm, for clarity, and for courage that I might accurately, uh, and courageously proclaim what you have for me here and for them today. Um, I pray for a hedge of protection around the stage here, Lord God, that that and around this space, this whole building, Lord God, that um, that your white throne would yield, that the throne of Jesus would yield in all evil. Uh, the enemy, his allies, works and effects, would yield to the presence and power of Jesus. That's important today. And I pray for my friends, their hearts and minds, that they would be more open and receptive than maybe even usual, Lord. Would we be fight back cynicism and frustration as you communicate what you have for us today as we engage what it means to be married and what it means to look for a marriage, or even to be cynical and frustrated about a marriage. What does all those things mean for us? Lord, we pray that you would be clear, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Alright, so this series, if you've been with us, has, we spent a great deal of time talking about the dynamics of marriage, right? We've been talking about sex and beauty in particular. We spent the last couple weeks on those two topics, and we're sort of winding down the book. We're in the last chapter here. And in this section, what we're gonna talk about today, we get essentially what is, can be considered really the foundation of on upon which everything we've talked about so far can be laid.

So, body, gender, uh, marital roles, beauty, friendship, and everything else that we've been talking about is really built upon this one large concept. Okay? And if we don't get this foundational piece from today, I do think it's possible that all the other messages won't fully connect. Like we can take some practical advice from them, but it won't fully actually sink in if we don't get this. Okay? So just as a, a primer, here's, here's the rundown of how this section goes. Okay? So the woman's gonna speak, she speaks first, generally she speaks most and she speaks last, okay? And that's where we're, we're headed here. She is going to essentially recall the wonder of her marriage, how beautiful it's been to her, how romantic and intimate it's been, the encounter she's experienced with her husband. But then she's gonna turn to, uh, the crowd. She's gonna essentially break the fourth wall, as they say, right? She's gonna look into the fourth wall and she's gonna talk to us, and she's gonna talk to the daughters of Jerusalem, the, the single people in the room.

And she's gonna say this, do not awaken love until it's time. Do not awaken love until it's time. Now, as a 19 year old new Christian at the University of Idaho, okay? All the way from California, in the midst of my culture shock of leaving San Francisco and going to Northern Idaho, uh, I might have heard something like this. Do not awaken love until it's time. And I

might've thought, maybe this is your question. Why not? Seriously, why not? Why can't I awaken love now? Why can't I be in a relationship now? Why can't I get intimate now? I mean, we're mature enough. We're, we're mature enough, we're adults. This is the United States. Why can't we awaken love?

And I think the question to the -- or the answer to the question rather is simple. I think it's this awakening love before it's time can be very dangerous. It can be very dangerous because love being the powerful thing that it is can only exist healthily within the context of covenantal, godly marriage. This is sort of the horn we've been tooting for the last nine weeks, okay? It's so powerful that a proper, only a proper environment can adequately steward it. And I've said this before, but love is like fire. And we've said it about sex. Sex is like fire. It's true. Love is itself, is also like fire. It is wondrous. It is beautiful. A fire in a fireplace is mesmerizing, comforting sight.

Now, I wish I could tell you that I'm from the northwest and I'm a lumberjack. And I went out to the trees of Washington and I had my flannel, and I cut down some wonderful firewood and brought it to an awesome fire pit. And I had a mustache and a, and a pipe. And I, and I sat there with my lumberjack hat and I smoked it. And I, and I enjoyed the presence of wilderness in the dark miles away from anybody. But I didn't do that because I'm from a city. So what I do is I go to my living room and I turn the knob on the gas, and then my fire lights and it's beautiful. But I will say fire is no less wondrous in that atmosphere. It is still beautiful because that's also an environment for love. It is fantastic. It is wondrous, it is beautiful. But outside of a fireplace or fire, pit, gas or no gas, although a fire is no less wondrous outside of those contexts, it becomes destructive and it becomes deadly.

Love, then, like fire, requires respect for its danger and for its beauty. You can learn to love and crave it outside of its proper context. You know exactly what I'm talking about. But it's unhealthy and it's destructive for you and for other people. Hear me, even if you think you've got it under control, only a marriage can handle all that love is and all that it's meant for. It's how God's designed us. And a lot like a fireplace has a chimney for ventilation. Its design helps it flourish. The design that God has for marriage helps our love flourish too. You can stoke love, you can cultivate it, you can use it for comfort and for warmth. And all of a sudden, all can be right with the world as you sit in front of it.

The woman in this marriage, as we describe, um, she's gonna offer a piece of advice to you. She's gonna break the fourth wall. So in order to understand why we shouldn't awaken love, or I guess a better way to say it, take love outside of its proper environment. Let's learn what love is and what exactly it is in the context of romance. What is love? Why is it so powerful? Okay?

But first sidebar, sidebar, since we're over here, let's do this. Uh, single people, you've been patient through this series. If you've been a part of Doxa, you've been journeying with us, you've been patient. Yes, I've been, we've been working to drip in moments of teaching for you all series. We have -- but this sermon and this passage, this one right here is for you, okay? 93% of you, of people in the United States, even, uh, are going to marry. And so likely we're all going to marry. This sermon helps you understand why you should wait for love, why you should wait to awaken it until it pleases, until it's time.

And you might learn the tensions that you're probably experiencing and facing in your singleness are meant to shape you into becoming the person you're supposed to be as you enter your marriage. Married people, if you're in a marriage, which you are, if I called you a married person, it is in fact time to awaken love, okay? Till it's time for love to be awakened. Now, may this next several minutes be a reminder to you to embrace that love. Now, some of you may have forgotten if we're honest with ourselves, right? And perhaps I hope this -- these moments shake you awake to the riches that you already actually have in your marriage. You have a pile of lumber that a lumberjack cut down that is just sitting there waiting for you to enjoy, and spoiler for all of us, the love in a marriage, the kind that you offer your spouse or maybe potentially your past spouse or your future spouse closely mirrors another kind of love, a love so strong and so permanent, it might just change your life if you were to embrace it. And really, that's the greatest love you're actually after in any marriage. Even if even more than a marriage or a committed relationship. Okay? So that's where we're going today.

So if you've got your Bible, Song of Songs chapter eight, otherwise it'll be right here on the screen for you. Let's start in verse one. She says, oh, that you were like a brother to me. I I gotta stop. Okay? Before we get going, this is semi erotic love poetry. This is transliterate, okay? That means we're reading it in English. We're not, we're not gonna actually, you know, when, when we're looking at the word studying it, we're seeing the transliteration, we're seeing the, the English sort of the word spelling of a Hebrew word that makes everything really complicated as we try to translate it.

Okay? So we're gonna do our best. I'm gonna do my best. So bear with me, okay? It is interesting, oh, that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breast. If I found you outside, I would kiss you and none would despise me. What she means is I hope, I wish you were familiar. I wish it was okay for me to embrace you publicly, right? I would lead you to bring you into the house of my mother. And she used, she who used to teach me, I would give you spice wine to drink the juice of my pomegranate, his left hand under my head, and his right hand embraces me. We've seen this couple enjoy one another. We've seen them have conflict. We've seen them engage in intimacy. And here we're seeing it again. These, these words, this imagery, this is all about them engaging in a private indulging marital affair with one another.

That's what's happening. And then in the midst of all that, she turns to the audience, she says the, the virgins, or in some translations, the daughters of Jerusalem. These are the single people of the city that are looking and waiting to be married, the younger people potentially. And she says, I adjure you, oh, daughters of Jerusalem, that you do not stir up or awaken love until pleases. She's basically saying this, okay, you see all that? I have see this marriage. We're enjoying it. Okay? It is awesome. We love our marriage together. It is fantastic. It is great. All the waiting, by the way, all the anticipation, all the temptation you're experiencing, all of that is worth it. It's all worth it. My one piece of advice for you is that this is all so worth it that you don't awaken love until it's time for it. Marriage.

There's a problem though, in America, in the West, I should say, most people don't awake -- wait to awaken love, do they? They don't. Most people don't. Most of us sort of ask the question in, in a relationship -- and you know, maybe, maybe many of you are asking the same question as well -- what am I allowed to do as I get into a relationship with somebody? What,

what, what can I do? Can we kiss? How, how physical can I get? How emotionally involved should I become? Now, these questions are good questions and I think they're all fine, but the biggest question isn't what necessarily I'm allowed to do as I'm dating somebody, okay? I think the better question is when is it time to start all of it? Okay? And the time, as she says, is when you enter into a covenantal, Godly marriage.

Now that might taste like soot in your mouth if you're married, if you're a single person, I get that. So in sharing your frustration with you, when one doesn't wait, what do we do instead? Give you a few things. First thing is we dabble, this is when we dip our toe in, right? We dip our toe into sort of the cultural, uh, the cultural stew, and we're, we're partaking of the various, uh, fruits and vegetables and meats. And we're saying, well, what is this place like? We date, we engage in relationships, maybe we cross the line sexually, maybe in -- we get intimate with someone we shouldn't be, maybe, but we're trying to figure that out. Maybe we're mostly bonded with somebody, or we awaken love digitally early, then we're supposed to, um, we're, we're dabbling in society. We're, we're we're trying it, right? Um, you can call it what, whatever we wanna call it, we can call it dabbling. We can call it just, just dating. We can call it tasting, trying things. We can call it cohabitation. We can call it fornication, call it whatever you want.

The Bible calls that sexual sin. Dabbling buys into the culture's lie that you and I, we can have our cake and eat it too. We can have all of the benefits of a marital relationship, the sex, the friendship, the fun, the dating without any of the obligations attached to them. So we're getting all, we're enjoying, we're having our cake. So that way, in case this doesn't work out, I can be obligated to somebody else. We want our cake and eat it too when we dabble.

The big point though is that dabbling, underestimates the power of love. It underestimates it, it, it underestimates how it bonds us to other people and how we bring those bonds into our actual marriage. See, Jesus says, you know, if you commit adultery, if you commit lust in your heart, you've already committed adultery. It's kind of a big thing, right? You're like, well, if I'm lusting after a woman or a man, I'm committing adultery with that person that like, that's Jesus' standard. It's so high that you need forgiveness for that. But maybe single people, you might say, well, I'm not necessarily married, so I mean, who am I really committing adultery against? You're committing adultery, so to speak, against your future spouse. And they're doing the same. Because when you get married, you bring all of that stuff with you and then drop it right into the lap of your, your spouse, your husband or your wife, and then they're left to feel the shrapnel of the blast radius, an explosion of the grenade that went off when you were 19 or 25 or or 41. That's what happens in a marriage. The marriages have to deal with their past partners.

It's all part of the shame and the guilt that we all experience. And so we're frustrated and we have to deal with it. It's, it's on us. It's, it's hard. It's, it's frustrating. That's where dabbling leads. It's like lighting essentially. Mini fires all over your house. We talked about the fire being in the right place. Now, some of those fires are on candles safe, probably okay to have. And some of them are on the floor or on the couch or in the kitchen stove. It's uncontrollable. And we're trying to put it out with grease fire. We're trying to put grease fire out with water. Have you, have you ever, hopefully you've never tried to do that. It's very dangerous, by the way. If you

wanna put out the a grease fire, uh, with water in culture around your relationship, then you just go to like Instagram or TikTok for your marital advice.

That's essentially what you're doing. You're gonna go look at someone who's never done this well and say, take that advice. Do that. Just hate all women. They're all terrible, right? Yeah, you're right. Bad advice. Okay? Go to the scriptures for wisdom, not for your TikTok feed. Okay? I, I feel like I have to say that now. Um, we dabble.

We dabble, we also settle. We settle when we awaken love early when we're waiting for the one to get married to, but we can't find the one who's gonna treat us with honor and respect and who loves Jesus and who stewards our hearts emotionally. We can't find that person. So we end up settling. We settle in an effort to cure our loneliness. Settling isn't necessarily coming from a negative or evil spot. It's, it's an attempt to solve a deep problem of loneliness in us.

Like we want somebody. So we might find someone who has poor character, but hey, I mean, they're attractive. I mean, they're attractive and you know, they don't have a lot, you know, maybe they don't have a lot to say, but they are attractive and they say they're Christian and they're dynamic and people like 'em. So I, I guess I'll take that person. Or maybe we find the person that's perfect in every way, handsome, attractive, tall, whatever it is, great, amazing. Except for one thing. They don't love Jesus yet. 'cause I can change them. I just need a few months and I'll tell you, no you can't. No, you can't. You can't change 'em. Settling friends reduces our value. It reduces our value because men, you are worthy of a wife who will love and respect you enough to submit to you biblically. We've talked about that to your leadership and is willing to point you to Jesus when you swerve inevitably from his teaching and women, you are worthy of a husband who's willing to not just love you like it's February with some candy, but to love you so much that they would sacrifice themselves for you and for your future family as Jesus did for the church, which is to say, to give himself up and die for you.

You are worthy to be sacrificed for when we settle, we deny that. So we settle, we dabble, but then also we get cynical. We can get cynical. Bear with me, cynical people, okay? Men are no good. Women -- there are no good women out there. There are no good Christian men out there. I've been to every church on the eastside. I have seen it. I've been to every college campus. I've been to every Whole Foods. I can't find a Christian man out there, okay? That's what we're saying.

Cynicism really is this idea that nothing good can come from the people we interact with. Like, ah, yeah, I, I doubt that's true. We're always doubting people that people essentially are really motivated by their own self-interest. And so they really probably aren't gonna look out for me. But the problem is cynicism is probably coming from somewhere. It's likely coming from maybe a past hurt you've had, maybe something someone did to you, or it might even come from your own inability to see how you've been playing with fire outside of the fireplace for a long time and that you've been burned. Jesus wants to take that from you. He doesn't want you to be cynical. He wants you to see life with the outlook he has, which is that he has won, and the Kingdom is coming and that shalom will take place on this world, in this world on earth as it is in heaven.

Now you might say, oh, but you don't understand, like, that's it. You're going to, I've been looking for a spouse for how long? I've been looking for a boyfriend or girlfriend for how long and I'm gonna come into church and you're gonna Jesus juke me with just give that to Jesus, bro. That's frustrating. I get it. Does anyone feel that way? Guys? That's cynicism. That's cynicism. The idea, Jesus can't take this from me. I've been looking, I've been working. This is hard. It's impossible. That's cynicism.

We get cynical, but we also get picky. By the way, this is my flinch. I, I go cynical and I go picky, okay? If you're asking like where it hits me, where it hits home for me, I'm not judging, I'm in it with you. This is where it's at. We have, this is where we have such a high standard for ourselves that we lose perspective on what might be realistic in our marriages and in our singleness. This is where we say, come on guys, I know what I want. I've been around the block a few times forgetting that you have blind spots, forgetting you can't see blind spots. You can't go, yeah, I know I've got blind spots. They're right there and right there and right there. You can't do that. You can't do that.

Pickiness often lacks self-awareness on who we really are. Um, because pickiness is about sort of sorting through everyone else's flaws, forgetting that we need to work on our own. Uh, I'll just be gentle and kind when I say this, but if you've been to 12 churches, 16 gyms, 12 pottery classes, 45, uh, Zumba classes, uh, 19 Whole Foods book sections, a few Barnes and Nobles and a Trader Joe's, and by the way, 90 mixers at churches looking for a spouse and you haven't found one. Um, I just want you to remind, remember, with as much gentleness as I can say, uh, you're the common denominator in all of those spaces.

The problem friend might be in the, in the mirror. And this isn't to pick on you, it's to say that perhaps self-work and self-reflection are needed. Um, combat your pickiness by taking a season to, uh, for yourself to make yourself worthy of the person you seek, as opposed to sitting up in pickiness, hoping that that person would make themselves worthy to you.

And then there's the last thing we do. If we awaken love too early, and this is for our married folks and that's that sometimes we forget to start the fire in the first place, right? This is me sitting in my, uh, living room freezing, haven't turned the knob on the gas, right? Sometimes we, because of purity culture may be in church, right? Or for some of us, or, or, or because maybe of awakening love too early in our lives and seeing the ramifications of that. And then overcorrecting, when we finally do arrive in the right environment, we never turn on the gas for love. So as a result, marriage becomes sexless and, and loveless. And we're sort of left with all of this amazing firewood that the lumberjack cut down for us to bond us together, but we never use it 'cause we're overcorrecting.

This is common for many people in a marriage to go dormant, right? Biologically, but also relationally dormant. Would you describe yourself as dormant? Would your spouse describe you as dormant? What's needed in this sense is courage to try something you may have shut down courage to step outta your comfort zone, and perhaps even counseling to work through past hurts so Jesus can come in and bring healing into what's happened to you in your past.

Now, if you've fallen into any of these five categories, um, the wife in Song of Songs is gonna continue her admonitions to us. So that's not the end. She has more to say, thank goodness.

Verse five, she turns then and says, who is that coming from the wilderness leaning on her, on her beloved under the apple tree? I awakened you there. Your mother was in labor with you there. She who bore you was in labor. Now what does that mean? I'll tell you. Here's what she's saying in a nutshell, okay? She's actually recalling the moment that she remembers meeting and being with her, her spouse. Currently, she's remembering that very first moment. She's saying essentially, guys, listen to this verse one, my, my marriage is wonderful. It's ignited. You should want this. But remember, wait until it's time. Gosh, I remember my first time and what that might've been like. And then she describes it, right? So she's helping us recall how important it's to wait by remembering some of the ways she lived in her beginning and how she met. And that helps her see how important love is.

I remember meeting my wife, um, in college. Uh, you know, I'm, I'm from the California, and we move up, my wife's from here, and we meet somehow in the middle of northern Idaho. So, like I said, in the midst of dealing with that culture shock and trying to navigate all of that, I, I meet my wife and I wish I could tell you guys that I met my wife at the foot of the Eiffel Tower. I wish I could tell you that I met my wife on the Golden Gate Bridge as the sun was going down, or we looked up at Mount Rainier and I was standing at the base camp, and then I looked over and saw her and we, we fell in love. Or we were at a Seahawks game and the, the kicker kicks a, a game-winning field goal as time expired. And I go to celebrate and I high five and it's my wife. And we fell in love. Like I wish I could tell you that. But God's great irony in a kid from the bay area's life is that he would meet his spouse in a place called Grangeville, Idaho, which is population 1200, some two hours outside of my small college town, which is a population of 24,000.

And I met her there. And Grangeville has nothing there. You've probably never heard of it. You probably never will again. And that's okay. There's more cows there than people. It's about 1200 people there, there is nothing there except for a bunch of people waiting for God to come back, uh, polishing their guns. That's it. And it's so empty that it makes sense that people from, uh, Washington State University and University of Idaho would go down to Grangeville because they can get a lot of space. You're looking for space in Idaho. There's space. Grangeville has as much space as you could possibly want. And we find ourselves at a camping trip with a few hundred college students down there. And it's there that I, I met my wife and we had known, we knew each other a little bit. We both played sports. And so we'd had some short conversation with each other, but it was there I got to meet her and got to know her, and it was really cool.

That's there where I found out she was funny and she was beautiful, and she was kind. Eventually I found out she loved Jesus. And she would laugh at my jokes, which was news for me. Like, that's something that's going to continue forever, which it will, I promise, if you're not married yet, it's gonna happen. And she didn't look at me in shame when I quoted from movies incessantly that she had never seen. In fact, most of my dialogue was basically movie quotes. I was a robot from watching Billy Madison and Happy Gilmore, whoever know that's, that's basically the extent of my 18 year old brain. But she, she loved me and I got to know her and I got to meet and I was like, this is amazing. And I started thinking, I think I wanna marry her, and what else is there out there though, right? Like, what else is there? And I thought, you know what? I don't care what else is out there, I don't care because she's awesome. She's amazing.

She's the one for me. And I don't think I can picture life without her. And I don't know what it is, but there's something grand I want with her. I want to attack life with her. Sounds romantic. Or maybe it sounds really dumb to you.

But the thing I think I was after, and I think the thing we were after as a married couple, and I think the thing we're all after as human beings is it's no shallow thing. It's no fleeting feeling or emotion that just sort of happens over a weekend where we meet our soulmate or where we're high fiving at a concert or a football game and go, this is true love and this is it. And maybe that can spark it. But there's something bigger and deeper that we're after. It's love. And it leads to this big question. What is marital love? What is it? Now I could do the like Christian thing of going, well, there's four words in the Greek for love, and I could break 'em down, phileo, agape, blah, blah, blah. I could do all that. But we've all heard a lot of that stuff, many of us.

So the bigger question then is like, what is actual marital love? What is the thing that we should not awaken in this point? What is it? The woman in this story, she gives a resounding description. She takes a break from all of these sort of encounters she describes to us, let's be honest. And she says, I think what love you're after and what you should be waiting for comes in four parts.

First thing she says is that love is sustaining. It is sustaining. Verse two, again, I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother, she who used to teach me. And I would give you spiced wine to drink the juice of my pomegranate. Okay? Sounds intense <laugh>. And if you use your, imagine -- that that is what you think it is, okay? That that's what she's describing. She's describing a sexual encounter. And, and that's interesting, but there's a more interesting pattern actually taking place because this is not the first time, again, the woman has told us not to awaken love. It's not, she said it a few other times. And each time she says it, each time she talks about this, um, it comes on either side of the, the admonition with descriptors of sustenance.

Look at verse uh, five of chapter two. She said, sustain me with raisins. Refresh me with apples for I'm sick with love. Next verse. And do not awaken love until it pleases. That's a pattern. Friends in marriage, um, our bodies, their bodies, their emotions, their spirits bring nourishment to one another. They bring nourishment. When you and I, when we awaken love, it creates essentially an appetite for even more love. Anyone who's been in love knows that you're not gonna, like I am madly in love with this person. I spent eight hours with 'em. Like, okay, I think I'm done. I felt great. Love's over. No, you're like, I need more of that person, more of that person. Because as we've said, love always creates a deficit. It always makes you long for more of it. That's by design. That's what it's for. Love awakened on time is able to satisfy us and sustain us in our need for love.

Married love is ready for that challenge because it's mature enough to meet the need it creates. Love awakened on time is able to sustain the need. It's always generating. Marriage is designed for that task. Love awakened before it's time though, creates the need that it cannot fulfill. It can't. See, married love can actually hold both the benefit and obligation that love creates -- including sex -- because biblical marriage requires an unbreakable covenant in which the marriage can operate.

Marriage calls us to relational stewardship, to submission, to sacrifice to kids, to children, to sexual pleasure, all of that. And marriage can handle it and hold it like a fireplace can hold a fire. Unmarried love though. Unmarried love is not a covenant. It's more like a contract. It's more like a contract that you might sign at a job or a lease agreement or something like that. Because sex outside of marriage has the benefits of marriage. But none of the obligation it has none of the obligation. So either party can always hit the eject button at any time. It doesn't matter if you've had kids. It doesn't matter if you've been living in the same house for six years. The thing is, if you decide that this is no longer for me, you can go, you can go. You're, I'm not saying you're not gonna take tremendous amounts of pain and destruction into your, into your next relationship. You will, but you can leave it because in those relationships, the relationship is always contingent on the other party holding up their end of the contract. And if not, guess what? I'm hitting the eject button. I'm out of there. No questions asked. Each party in those senses are always looking to be a recipient of love and not a servant. In a covenant, you've agreed to stick with it regardless of how difficult it is. And I'm never going to abandon this covenant. Love is sustaining.

Love is also permanent. It's permanent. Look at verse six. I'll show you how permanent. She says, set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. For love is strong as death, jealousy as fierce as the grave. Now, there's not a lot of things you and I can agree on culturally, and there's not a thing that, there's not a lot of things that probably anybody can agree on in culture right now, especially right ideologically, politically, socially, religion, all these different things. But there is one thing that every single person on planet earth can agree to. All seven, 8 billion people can all agree to this one thing. Do you know what it is? Nobody. It's that you go and die. Okay?

We all know whether you're five years old or whether you're 95 years old that you're going to die, right? We, we all understand. Now, some of us that reality is closer than others. I understand that. But the point is, we all know that we are going to die. Love, when it hits you, she says, and when you agree to it, is permanent. Like love is permanent. Like death is permanent. Because love is as strong as death.

Think about how sure that is. I mean, only Jesus really escaped it on his own. And a few other people had the help of God the Father, to do it right? No one else has escaped death, right? Only a few people. That's how sure love is. And then she says, let me set me as a seal on your heart. Essentially, a seal is like an insignia ring. I wanna stamp my, my insignia on your heart. I want it permanently there. And then she says, like a seal on your arm. Think about that. A cultural idiom of a seal on your arm is like an extension of the arm, is like a ring on your finger, right? So she wants it as permanent as marriage should be, which is as permanent as death is stamped on your heart for good.

What's the point? God intends marriage to be permanent. Now you might say, you don't -- that's not true because I can't control who I love. The emotions hit and I love them. That's like, that's who it is for me. And I'll say, actually, you can control who you love. You actually can. You actually can control it.

Culturally, today, we confuse love with a feeling or emotion that happens to us. You know what I'm talking about, right? Hallmark movie style. While there is an initial draw to one another

that's emotional, that's biological, that might even be spiritual. Anyone who has been married can tell you that that feeling will fade at some point. But the intention and command to love must sustain the marital love going forward. Okay? God, that's why God uses a command to husbands to say, husbands love your wives. How could he tell me to love somebody? Because he's commanding you to do it. Jesus was was, was sent, he volitionally and intentionally made a decision to love the church. Husband, you're supposed to do the same, to love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for. Love your wives.

So in this sense then love becomes essentially, listen, a decision that is preceded by an initial drawing emotion that leads to then a permanent union. Okay? This is why when we get married, we sort of agree to marry, til death, do us part. And I was like, did anyone do that? Kind of scary. When I was getting married, I remember hearing that as part of the procession, and I was like, I got the little flutter like, wait, what? What? Is that in there? Hold on. Til death? Like all the way death? I don't know about that. Like it's a little bit scary because there's a sense in which you're under, you're committing to something so permanent that it's gonna shape and change the way you live. That's what love is.

Til death do us part. For those of you that are engaged, okay? This is what a covenantal command is from God. Do you take that seriously in your marriage? Like til death do us part. Like I'm not going anywhere. I got you. You take that serious. Um, husbands, do you do that? Do you wives?

Love awakened before its time is not permanent. It's transitory. It is not stamped on a, on a heart with a seal. It is written in pencil with a really big eraser like a third grader bringing those giant eraser pencils home. Like we, I can erase this at any moment, right? That's how we think about it sometimes. Because that sort of love is not about a covenant, it's about hormones, it's about emotions. And those can change anytime. Those can change anytime. They're important, but they can change friends. I don't wanna, I hate to be the one to tell you this, maybe hopefully you've already heard it, but your emotions cannot be trusted. Not all the time. This is why we must trust God's call in marriage into marriage and command to stay in the marriage instead of, I don't know, our fleeting and changing testosterone and estrogen levels. It's worth thinking about. Or even the desire is that change all the time.

This is why God said in Proverbs three, trust of the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. You might say, well, what my understanding is pretty solid. I, I got into college. I mean, I feel like I read a lot of books, like I got some podcasts I'm listening to. I feel like I can trust myself. And Proverbs 14 will tell you what I'll just say -- God will say, this is the, there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

So you can think that your way is right, but in the end it leads to a permanent destruction. Even in laughter, the heart may ache and the end of joy, maybe grief, you can put a smile on. You can tell yourself you're doing the right thing, but hey, hear me, your decision making can lead you off a cliff. And that gravity is as sure as anything. So question for our singles. Where have you trusted yourself instead of God's commands or Godly wise counsel? Where have you decided that you are the master of your universe and you have all the decisions and all the thoughts in your head to note, to lead yourself to the proper way of life? Married people, if we treat our spouses in a conditional sense, that changes as our emotions change. And when, when we

threaten separation, whether that's physical separation and divorce or spiritual or emotional separation, even in certain areas that symbolizes conditional and contingent marriage.

So the question for you then is, in what area do you treat your spouse with contingencies instead of permanency? Where do you distance yourself when it comes up? Like the, the boyfriend from the past comes up and all of a sudden you get a little nervous and detached? Or maybe the kids come around and it's the kids that are triggering you and you get frustrated or angry. Or maybe it's that guy at work that's been talking to your wife or that lady at the gym that's always at the front desk. What is it when it comes up in your relationship? Maybe it's a mother-in-law, a father-in-law, a sister-in-law. When they come up, I gotta go. I think I'm just gonna distance myself and get up outta here. And is it possible your spouse feels that on you? And is that the reason why your marriage is growing apart?

Love is permanent, but it's also persevering. Let's look at the middle of verse six. On jealousy is as fierce as the grave. Love is persevering, right? Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. Love is like an unquenchable flame, guys. The flame of God himself, the burning bush itself, that even hurricanes and torrential downpours and floods and even the drizzle of the Seattle rain could never put out. Love awakened in its proper time, pushes through even a torrential flood. That's the tension of God. That's why God's word in his, his power and his love is like a, a sword on fire that can be dunked into the Pacific ocean and still be a blaze lighting the bottom of the ocean. That's the tension of what God can do in this world.

Once that fuzzy feeling wears off that we all get, and you will have it if you're getting married or you've been married, that's when the real battle to persevere starts. We get, by the way, statistically the hormone pool you experience when you get married, they call it the honeymoon phase that does last for six months to two years after your first intimate encounter. So one of the challenges is you start, you start that early, you awaken love before it's time early, and then maybe you don't get married for three years and you're already outta that phase. And so you hit the eject button on the relationship, but then you gotta bring that into your next marriage. And we do that over and over again. That's why also why newlyweds who have an awakened love feel like they have the greatest marriage of all time. Um, you probably do, not breaking it too, you probably do. But that love will fade, and when that fuzzy feeling fades, you've gotta agree that we're gonna persevere in love together.

Because when you get married, you're not just agreeing to love one another, you're agreeing to do battle. That's what marriage is. There will be spiritual battles. Um, the enemy hates Christian families 'cause of what they're capable of, because raising children can do. There will be battle of changing life stages together. That's gonna be hard. There's a battle of having kids and raising kids and seeing kids go off. I haven't hit that one yet. I don't know how I'll react. You may need to be my pastor in that moment. It's gonna be hard. Bodies changing. Appearance is changing. Then there's the real battles, the battles of betrayal, battles of anger, the battles of sadness with each other, frustration, resentment, bitterness. But true love, Bible says, fights through those things. You come out stronger with a deeper love that was even previously unimaginable before the problem start.

But here's the catch. Each of you will need to carry the other through various parts of the marriage. Those of you that have been married knows sometimes it's not 50 50, sometimes you're 99% and they're 1% and you're carrying them along through the frustration and how hard it is, and they're carrying you along through the marriage. And there's gonna be an ebb and a flow. But the worst thing you could do is decide that this isn't for me and leave those trenches. And then you leave your spouse with the bullets of life flying by their head as they're at their worst moment. And just when your partner is most vulnerable and they're taking fire, you decide you're gonna retreat leaving them when they're at their broken, most broken. And what's worse is that behind the sacrifice of staying in the trenches with them was actually the deeper bond and deeper love you were after.

So we have to ask a question of ourselves then. In what area of life have you abandoned your partner in the trenches? Which spot in your life? Have you left them by themselves and said, I can't do this anymore. Maybe your wife is insecure about her body and intimate sex life is just not common anymore. Maybe your husband has been down and out at work and he is been depressed. Maybe a little too depressed. Maybe it's been years. Maybe he needs to get over it. Maybe someone has been sick. Maybe someone's been wrestling with anxiety. Maybe every time the kids come around, the dad decides to step out or the mom decides she can't do it anymore. Or someone's been medicating their way through life with alcohol or pornography because they just can't get through it anymore.

And we think, man, I just gotta get outta here. I just gotta get, I gotta get a new change of scenery. But guys, the time they are at their worst is when they need you. They need you in that moment because the love, like the love of Jesus in our lives, persevering with them leads to greater transformation. And hear me -- immeasurable, immeasurable joy and gratitude, the thing we were after when we decided to leave them in the trenches, staying with them and fighting gives you what you're looking for. Not leaving.

And lastly, love. It's not just persevering. It's, it's invaluable. The woman ends her description of love by saying this. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised. She's saying, there is no price on love. You can offer me as much money or millions of billions of dollars or whatever it was then -- sheep, livestock, I don't know. You could give me everything, and there's nothing that's gonna make me leave my spouse. There is nothing anyone would should be able to pay you that would make you abandon the calling from God to be entrenched with your marriage in those trenches for love.

I know for me, like as I think about this, there isn't actually a dollar amount that anybody can pay me to abandon my wife like nothing. I would rather be broke, pennilessness in the streets with her than have as much money as I could possibly have and not have her be there. I I, I believe that to be true. Um, but I will say there are days in our marriage where it doesn't feel like that to her. Spoil alert. Um, there are days in our marriage where my wife probably isn't sure of what it would take to get me to leave. It might just be a crisp hundred dollar bill and an Uber down to Oceanside and a stay at the La Quinta Inn. Like, she's like, I don't know if this guy wouldn't leave me for a box of Ritz crackers and he doesn't eat gluten. Like that's how much he like, I'm not sure he loves me. That's because I'm a sinner. It's 'cause I'm, I'm lost, I'm broken

and I need Jesus. And sometimes I'm poor reflection of the love that Jesus gives me to her. But that's just -- that's just marriage. That's what we are. You and I, we're all reflections of love.

You see marriage in and of itself as wondrous and as beautiful. It is actually only a reflection. It's a reflection of you and I experiencing the love of God and giving it to our spouse. And if you're here and you're not a Christian, you say, I'm married, I don't love Jesus. I would say that God creates everything, and in His common grace, He's given you oxygen to breathe, sunsets to experience, the smiles of your children to look upon. And you've experienced the love of God even though you don't love him back. And you take that love and you give it to other people. You and I are only ever conduits of love. We don't generate it ourselves. It may be the reason why our marriages feel loveless is because we don't feel loved by Jesus. And we don't know how to give that love to somebody else that we're not. We only have it for ourselves. We are a reflection of the love of God has for us. And God's love is a gazillion times more, more powerful. Like the sun is to the moon, we only reflect it. The love we grant our spouse is meant to be a reflection of love that we have, that we've experienced, and it's reflection of the love that the amount of love that Jesus has given us.

Jesus' love to us, just like our love should be to our spouses, is sustaining. Jesus when he loves us, when God loves us and he gives us the Holy Spirit, we can press forward in resiliency. Because now we have nourishment and we have power and potency. And Jesus is the bread of life. And this isn't like Wonder Kid's bread that is void of any nutrient. This is hearty and wondrous and powerful and it's got all the ingredients we need for our spiritual life. And you can go to the McDonald's of, of, of the bread of life all you want. You can go to the bookstore and go pick off your shelf of Jack in the Box spirituality, and you can eat it and feel full for a while, but let me tell you something that is short-lived and your longevity in the faith is going to be minuscule if that's what you're doing.

You can pay 10 grand to go to a seminar and get all motivated to start your business and fall on your face in your marriage 'cause you have not been pulling from the bread of life. Real sustenance, not Pop-Tart sustenance that we find in culture, not to pick on Kellogg or anything, although I got my beef with them. Another sermon. I'm serious. Um...

Love to us is sustaining, but love to us is also permanent. Jesus' love to us is not just fleeting. Jesus isn't love for us isn't transitory like our love is. He is not fickle like we're fickle. And lemme tell you, I'm fickle sometimes in my marriage. I really am. And I didn't think I was gonna say that in the first one, but I found out by the power of the Spirit in this moment, in the earlier service that yeah, I'm fickle and I'm, and I'm fickle. And I, and I'm tit for tat and and there's moments where my wife does something, I go, I don't know if you're worthy of the love that God has given me today. Because you are not respecting and loving me the way I should be. And that's not the love of Jesus.

The difference is between you, between us and Jesus, is that when Jesus says something, he means it. That's what God is. He's not fickle. When God says in Romans eight, for I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God we have in Christ Jesus. He means it. He's not saying it's permanent love, it's not like, I mean all of that, but you know, if you don't make a outward call and decision, then that's

kind of the deal breaker. I can cross every barrier unless, ah, you don't think I'm all that lovely and then you can just be alone. No God's like, no, I love you, I'm coming for you. That's right. It's permanent.

Jesus' love to us is persevering. God would jump mountains for you. He has jumped mountains for you. He crossed the traverse of death for you. His love won't leave us in the trenches. And some of you have been left in the trenches. You've been abandoned there. Mom and dad have probably abandoned you in those trenches. Your sister abandoned you in those trenches. A boyfriend left you in your trenches, abused you, took something from you, left you. Maybe your spouse left you in the trenches or maybe somebody died and you feel all by yourself.

Jesus is not like us. Jesus is firmly trenched in that trench with you on your six. And he's not alone. He's got an army of angels there. He has got your back in a way no one else ever has had your back. You have a God that is not like us. You have a God that will never leave nor forsake. That's different. That's powerful. You're not alone. You've been going out whole life thinking you're all by yourself. No, Jesus has you. He's not forsaken you. The reason why you're not dead yet is because he's taking the fire. It's the moments where you felt the weakest that he's been carrying you, protecting you, walking with you.

And lastly, Jesus love is invaluable. Our love or our love should be invaluable to our spouses, and Jesus' love is invaluable. God was willing to give the only invaluable thing ever generated on the planet Earth, and that's the precious blood of his Son. He -- that he shed his blood on our behalf. Jesus goes to the cross, takes the abuse that you and I have taken on himself. He's takes the sin that we commit on himself and he overcomes it.

That's wonderful and powerful. That's why Hebrews can say, how much more will the blood of Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the King. How? Because of the eternal shed blood of Jesus. And you might think, man, there's so much I've done. You don't think -- Jesus' love is invaluable, it conquers everything. All of it.

You say, you don't understand, I've committed adultery on my spouse. I've done some horrible things, I've slept with people I'm not supposed to sleep with. That's funny, there's a guy named David in the Bible and he's forgiven. There's a guy named Solomon, had a thousand partners. He's forgiven. You don't say, you know, I don't understand, I betrayed people, I've turned my back on him. Yeah, there's a guy named Peter. He turned his back on Jesus too. He's forgiven. There's this, you don't understand. I've done worse; unconscionable things. Really? Like murder? There's a guy named Paul in the Bible. He's forgiven too.

There's nothing you've done in your marriage, your sex life or otherwise that Jesus can't come for. He can traverse any sin and he will prove it to you. So if you let him in, he can show you. I know you want to get married. For those of you that aren't married, I get it. I know it probably hurts a lot. I don't understand the pain, but I know it probably hurts. I know you probably, if you're married, want your marriage to be better or maybe you're not intimate enough or maybe you're, you guys are growing apart or maybe your marriage is on the rocks. Or maybe you just want someone to help you feel whole inside. Or you just want someone to help solve the lonely ache that you've got in your soul.

What you seek in a spouse, you need in a savior. And Jesus has come for that. Will you let him in? Let's pray. And so it is, Lord, we ask for your Spirit and your presence on my friends here, as we, as we talk about hard things, Lord God. What's so beautiful about all of this and how marriage is important is this doesn't have to turn into a practical seminar, why we're not doing good enough, things in our marriage. We actually can look past and through our marriages and hope for their generation and goodness and power and for the, and change then look past them and through them into the eyes of your Son. And we know that our love for our spouse or for anyone else is merely a reflection of the love that we have for you. And so, whether we're married or whether we're unmarried, what we don't need is another person to solve us. What we need is a Savior to solve us. So Lord, would you do that for us? We love you. We praise you. We give you all things in his name. Amen.

Question & Response

Eddie:

Alright, now we're gonna try for a transition and answer some questions. Okay? So Sarah, you wanna join us on stage? Hey, will you welcome my wife on stage while she comes up. And Curtis too. Thank you bud. Thank you Curtis. Alright, if you have questions, like I said, um, you can scan the QR code on screen and we'll get to those for you. If not today -- we won't get to 'em today, but we'll get to 'em probably throughout the series. Like I said, we're doing a panel discussion, um, at the end of, of the series to answer all of those lingering questions.

Eddie:

Eddie: So how you doing? You ready to go? Yeah. You ready? Okay, I'm sweating. Ready? Alright, here we go. <laugh>. Alright.

Eddie:

Sarah: I noticed.

Eddie:

Thanks. I I'm confused. I'm confused. Not me. But the question, uh, I've heard that some people don't even kiss or be alone together when dating phase, but then I've heard others say that they just make sure they don't have sex or leave before they fall asleep. I want to honor the Lord. So what are some good biblical physical boundaries for the dating phase?

Sarah:

So I have two parts to this last, uh, uh, this

Eddie:

The morning service.

Sarah:

Yes. Thank you. I know words

Eddie:

<laugh>.

Sarah:

I, I just kind of went to the why because for me as a young person, I knew the rules I guess, but I didn't know really why. Okay. Why was it important? So the first part for me when I hear this is like, yeah, working backwards, right? So whatever you do before your marriage, you're gonna have to bring that in. If your future spouse, like for me, I picture them with the most loving look on their face there, like ready to marry you. And if you're willing to do all of those things with them right there, okay? Mm-Hmm, <affirmative>. But if that just breaks your heart, then you kind of are testing yourself. Like that's sort of the why very simply put for me. Um, but then the second one, which is a little funny is like, hey, uh, a full coverage bathing suit, maybe nothing under there to touch. How about that? Like <laugh>?

Eddie:

Oh yeah, that's --

Sarah:

Right. Like it's asking for physical boundaries.

Eddie:

Oh Yeah.

Sarah:

It sounds corny a little bit, but it's like some people think you should wait to kiss -- whatever -- there's theories on that. Let's say you, you do decide to kiss somebody, can you still keep the rest of your physical boundaries by not touching other areas of their body? I mean that's, that's gonna be something you'll have to figure out as you go. But.. I actually talked to Allison about this in the hall.

Eddie:

Allison doesn't do anything with Brian. Her parents aren't present for <laugh>, so I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. That was one of the boundaries was you wanna say that one? Don't do if you're, oh jeez. No, we're not gonna go down that way. We're not gonna go that way. I'm gonna answer the question

Sarah:

I said, I said, did I say full coverage bathing? So I can't remember now.

Eddie:

You did say full coverage.

Sarah:

I was joking because there's a lot of different versions of bathed suits now. So I'm kind of like trying to make you laugh a little bit. But I also, you know, it's the idea of that those parts of your body are reserved for marriage.

Eddie:

Yeah. Um, there's no guarantee that the person you're dating is someone you're gonna marry. So even no matter how your emotions are telling you this is the right for us, we're gonna enjoy this. This is gonna be, this is gonna be the guy or the girl. There's no guarantee. And if you, if you awaken love before it's time in any of these capacities, just understand that gets to come with you into your marriage and your spouse is gonna have to wrestle with that. And I feel burdened to say, if, if you've been hearing me say that throughout this series and you're a married couple and you feel like that hasn't happened yet, which is common, you should have those conversations because they're, they're gonna happen regardless. They're gonna happen. Something will expose them. Um, the other, the other theory is anything you're doing, imagine that your future spouse is, you know, gonna have to deal with that and see it and experience that too. Because they will, um, the right question is, and I know this is bad to say in culture and society, just understand societally, societally our culture has said you can do sort of whatever you want. It's sort of like open it up to whatever your discernment is. And so in sex ed class in high school, they give out protection. They tell you about everything. If you do it, you should do it. All these different things. And maybe some of that's a correction against purity culture and I understand that. But it's blurred the line in, in terms of what biblical principles are. And the right question is not how far can I go, but it's when is the time to begin and the time to begin all of this is then within covenantal Godly marriage. And if you do that, your marriage will be better off for it. Because you won't have a bunch of false starts that you have to deal with when you're married, which will inevitably come.

Sarah:

It's never too late to start boundaries too. Yeah. Maybe you're already dating, maybe you're already engaged, maybe you're already Yeah. You know, you can always work backwards. It's never too late.

Eddie:

Yeah. You're not too far gone for Jesus and obviously, and even in, in your relationship, you can quit now and start now from afresh and your marriage will be better for it and God will be honored in your decision making. Next question. We can talk about that for like 35. We didn't, you know, scratch the surface. Okay. What should I do if my spouse thinks he or she has the -- I love how you hid the question, right? He or she, so they don't know -- has the right list of priorities and doesn't think there's much wrong with the relationship and avoids talking about conflict with me. I.E. Won't admit they are wrong. Um, say sorry, or name things they need to work on. Do I just pray and hope for the best?

Sarah:

So for me, I came from a family that had a lot of a passive aggression and then also there was just lots of arguing, sort of loud conflicts. So sort of a mixture of both. So what I brought into our marriage was more of like what you're explaining your spouse is like. So I didn't like conflicts, I don't want anything to do with it. Like if you're getting loud and angry or for any reason, you must just be wrong. Yeah. I'm I'm gonna go in the other room and like cry or something until you can figure your stuff out. So I actually relate a lot with your spouse

probably. So what would be really helpful for me was to, what was helpful and still is 'cause it can still be a challenge for me, is to be aware of why I feel this way. Why am I avoiding conflict? So maybe ask those questions to your spouse, like what kind of conflict did you grow up seeing? What did your parents act like? Or whoever raised you or whatever type of home you were in and like why, and then that will lead to these better conversations of why maybe they're avoiding conflict with you. Maybe they don't even know. 'cause I didn't know

Eddie:

Yeah

Eddie:

When we got married. Like I said, I really just thought he was wrong every time and that I just needed to leave the room and that's real.

Eddie:

Yeah. Well you're giving us our, you're getting free, we're getting free counseling up here it sounds like. That's great. I agree with all that. I would also say, the way this question is phrased makes me, I don't know if I'm wrong, but it makes me feel like you believe you're or maybe know you're right in the, in the terms of the conflict. Like you know that they're not doing everything right. And I guess the question I'd ask back is, are you sure about that? Like, are you sure that, um, they're the one that is wrong in this, that they don't know how to admit they're wrong or say sorry or name things that they need to work on? Like are you positive that's true? Um, I, when I first started doing professional counseling years ago, uh, I was shocked to find as I engaged in the relationship initially because I listed all of the things, Hey, this is what this person is doing, this is what this person isn't doing, this is what this person's doing. And their first flinch was to actually not come to my aid and agree with me, but to come against me and go, Hey, maybe you're the one causing that. And I didn't like that obviously. Like, oh no, no, no, you're supposed to, I'm paying you to like affirm me that they're idiots. Like, but they didn't.

Eddie:

And that's part of what I'm saying here is that maybe some counseling's helpful for you to understand that it turns out you may be the source of some of the conflict and maybe actually, maybe actually they're, you're looking for things that aren't there in that relationship. And then if you do the work on yourself and you begin to be more coachable and humble and you bring that into the relationship, they might be more apt to open up to you and then maybe you guys head to counseling together and work through some issues. So don't do I just pray and over the best You should pray, you should hope for the best, but it's not a hail Mary that God can work in your marriage. That's the first option. That's first in 10, not hail Mary, do I just pray and you know, flip the coin and hopefully this works out. Pray first. Yeah. Alright, last question.

Eddie:

I feel the pressure as a man to provide for my family and be strong and I'm not sure how or where I can share how hard the struggle is for me, especially when men are seen as wrong and women get the benefit of the doubt a lot in society. How can I fight to stay strong in the middle of this hardship?

Sarah:

I I'm not a man, I don't know that experience, so I can only speak to what I'm, what I'm hearing is this big picture of all men are wrong and all women are right in society. And I feel like a lot of that narrative is happening and the only sort of advice that I could offer, and this is, it might be a good time to fast from social media and maybe news outlets or whatever you have that's speaking this vision into you and into your family of like you, you know why men are wrong all the time. You might just be hearing too much of it and you might need to just shut it off and go through, you know, a fast and maybe read your Bible and let God remind you of who you are.

Eddie:

Yeah, that's great. I would, I would agree with all that. Yeah. Some of this does sound like cultural conversation of like if you're trying to consume all of like three and a half billion women's problems and you're seeing like all women get the benefit of all men don't like that's a lot of like that maybe you're not meant for that sort of conversation. Like we're not designed to be able to hold that. Um, you just need to worry about really one man and one woman at this point. Um, but I'll say it is, it is hard to be a man. There is a lot of pressure in society to be a good man. It's very hard. Men are under a lot of scrutiny. That's true. Men have a lot of responsibility and they're, they also don't talk about their emotions a lot. And so most people don't really get that men silently struggle really deeply.

Eddie:

It's hard to be give your kids something that you've never been, that you never received from a father. It's hard to be married to a woman and try to lead her in a way that's kind, honoring, respectful and loving in a culture that like is very difficult. I get all of that. It is hard. Um, if you don't communicate how you're feeling, which most men aren't, um, you will suffer silently. Men are more likely to to succeed and commit committing suicide. They're more likely to commit violent crime. They're more likely to go to prison. Um, men are responsible for a lot of this and so much of what happens blows back at at you as a man is probably a lot of shame for being, for being who you are. And that's probably hard to swallow too.

Eddie:

But I would say, uh, Jesus was a man who showed his emotions, who was strong and was potent and powerful. And if we were, um, biblically formed instead of culturally formed, um, we could see the congruency there and we lived out at what his understanding was of us, then we could avoid some of the, the @ unneeded pressure society. But you do need, it is hard to be a man. It's very difficult. It's a weight and responsibility. Um, and God wants you to have it, but he wants you to be able to steward it well. And part of not being able to steward it well is not having spaces to talk about how you're feeling, sharing the shame and the guilt that you have, finding a community. Hopefully you can find that, that here at Doxa or through MC and through DNA and finding spaces to go, I am not okay. We want that for you. It's okay to not be okay here and in society, but yeah, also turn off your social media. That would be helpful.

Eddie:

Okay, wanna pray? You want me to pray? You got this. I got this. Okay, let's do this. Lord, thank you for another opportunity, uh, to be present. I love you. I'm thankful for you. I think all of us can speak, speak in and say, um, Lord, we were so thankful for your Spirit working here today. I pray for our marriages. I pray for our singleness. I pray for our children if we have them and our future children. And I also pray for our hearts and minds that we be softened to who you are and what you've done. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.