



SONG OF SONGS

A Biblical Vision for Marriage, Sex, and the Body

SONG OF SONGS: CATCHING FOXES

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Song of Songs 2:8-17

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

Today we're reading from Song of Songs, Song of Solomon in your ESV translation, chapter two, starting in verse 8.

"The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.' My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among

the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, like a gazelle or a young stag on the cleft mountains."

This is God's word. You may be seated.

Alright, well good morning everyone. For those of you that are brand new, my name's Eddie. I'm one of the pastors here, and I have the privilege of trying to translate what you just heard me read, which is quite the challenge. We are in week four, if you're new, in a series called Song of Songs. And that book of the Bible is semi-erotic love poetry, so it's rather unique, and its goal as a part of the Bible is to give us really a biblical vision for marriage, for sex, for relationships, and for the body as a whole. Okay? And so that being said, if you have young kids up to fourth grade, we encourage you, please get them checked into our kids' ministry. We have a great kids' ministry program happening upstairs. You can do that. And for future weeks as well. And also, we do offer students from fifth grade through 12th grade for that as well. Okay? Additionally, one of the cool things we get to do in this series is at the end of many of these messages, we're gonna do a question and response. And so if you have questions around this series, marriage, sex, the body, identity, things like that, please feel free. Scan this QR code, get some questions asked. You may wanna scan it preemptively, just heads up because this sermon is, you know, challenging. So you may have questions that come up. We'll try to get to those throughout the series as well. And my wife will be joining me again up on stage to help answer, thank goodness, some of these questions, okay? Alright. As you can tell, it's gonna be a good one. I'm gonna pray for us. I'm gonna need your help. I'm gonna need your response. I'm gonna need the Holy Spirit's presence more. But we're gonna pray for that right now. Lord, I pray for, I pray for you to send the Spirit's presence in this room. Would he settle in this room. There's so many challenging details to a sermon like this. And so I pray for your kindness over us. I pray for your work to open our hearts, to open our minds that we would be receptive to what you teach through me, Lord God. And I pray for me for courage, for clarity, and for calm, that you would settle in in me so I can deliver what word you have for me. And for my friends, if they hear things, Lord, that are challenging, will they wrestle with those. Will they wrestle thoughtfully. Will they not be shut off and closed off. But would they be receptive to what you do. And I pray for our marriages. Our marriages are, some of us are in good spots, some of us are not. And so I pray for protection over those marriages as we talk about such a timeless and timely message. We love you. We praise you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Alright, well, if you've been with us, we've been following, essentially this man and this woman, their journey through this semi-erotic love poetry, okay? And through the song, we've seen them ebb and we've seen them flow, right? They're doing both. They're gonna alternate essentially between pursuing each other and embracing one another. They get to go back and forth. And so last week we saw them finally embrace in this wonderful covenantal marriage, this wonderful love making happening in this wonderful, beautiful environment outside. And now we get to go back and ebb again and see them pursuing one another once more. Okay? And it really is a beautiful picture of love and relationship. I wanna highlight verse eight again. Look at this. "Listen! My beloved!" the woman says, she says,

"Look, here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice. My beloved spoke and said to me, 'Arise, my darling,' and behold, or arise, my darling, geez, I can't even read.

"My beautiful one, come with me."

You see how flustered I get reading this kind of stuff, guys. I need your help. Okay? The woman sees her man pursuing her. He's like a young stag, she says. Good grief. Young stag. My wife's never called me a young stag, you know. Have you been called a stag? Anyone? And as he approach, he's approaching her and all of a sudden he looks at her and he says, arise darling, arise my darling, my love, my beautiful. Come with me. Right? That's what's happening here, right? The point is, this is as good as a marriage gets. This is as good as a marriage gets. This is a wonderful, loving relationship. Love, pet names, pursuit, embrace. Married folks. Is marriage always like this? No, it's not. Married people back me up, right? It's not always like this, right? In fact, many of us know marriage can get much, much worse, can't it? It can get a lot worse. In fact, there are good times, there can be bad times and sometimes really bad times, sometimes very bad times. How many of you have had dark times in your marriage or relationship? It's okay. I have, we have, we've done it right? We've done it. It's been, it's challenging to experience those things. If left unchecked, challenging marriage issues could be irreparably damaging to the marriage, irreparably damaging, and potentially even could end the marriage. You guys know that. You start off with some conflict. You start off with some fighting, you start off with some issues, and all of a sudden it becomes more regular fighting. Maybe instead of acute problems, there's chronic fighting and all of a sudden hostility develops in the marriage and the relationship, all of a sudden you guys started hating one another, maybe actively or passively, right? Passive aggressive. Passive aggressive, a hostility between a man and a wife or active, aggressive, right? And all of a sudden, if that left unchecked, it keeps going. And purposely, all of a sudden, purposely or incidentally, we begin to explore other options for our relationships, what could life be like without her? What could life be like without him? And if that goes unchecked, we consider ending the marriage altogether. And by ending the marriage, by the way, I mean actually ending the marriage, like through divorce or even just functionally ending the marriage, like the marriage is essentially over. Like we barely talk. We're co-parenting, we're roommates, but with no shared vision or purpose at all. Okay? Even in 2023, we know around 50% of marriages end in divorce. If you get married a second time, 67% chance of second marriages ending in divorce. And if you were to marry, let's say a third time, you have a 73% chance of ending that marriage in divorce. The more you divorce, the more odds you have at getting divorced again. In recent memory, marriage has been, has not been seen, I should say, as this wonderful cultural ideal for men and women to strive towards. Maybe in the forties and fifties, maybe watching black and white tv, marriage was seen as this great thing. But right now, marriage is not seen as a positive thing, is it? Men are dogs. They're oppressive. Women, they're not loyal. They just want to use your resources, right? I wanna keep my options open is the thing you often hear, right? I wanna make sure that I've got, you know, the pick of the litter, so I'm gonna keep my options open. Marriage is portrayed as boring. It's seen as boring. Pop culture shows it as mundane, it's lame, it's unexciting, blah,

right? It's only ever exciting when the prince and princess of England get married. Then all of a sudden over for the next three weeks, we're like, we love marriage, this idea of marriage. But even that fades after a while. Ladies, you know what I'm talking about. I'm just, I'm reading information about this. I've never seen this marriage, but I've heard through every person ever that it's amazing when those two people get married, right? It's this wonderful, beautiful thing. But other than that, culturally, we don't look at marriage as a positive thing at all.

You know, it hasn't had a positive ally in a while. Not in culture, not in politics, not amongst young people. Even half of married people hate marriage. They get divorced, right? Bad. They're bailing out a marriage. Now, I think it's time in this sermon that we should think and consider what it means to fight for our marriages. I think it's time that we state a case for why this ideal here in Song of Songs is worth striving towards this beautiful marriage. It's worth pursuing and it's worth longing for. And if we want a little help, we do pick up one major piece of advice from this section that can help all marriage function at a much higher level. Look at verse 15. Look at this little verse. The man said to the woman, he said,

"Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."

Now, here the woman is quoting her man saying something to her, right? He's saying, catch the foxes that spoil the vineyard. Collectively. Let's catch these foxes. These, the vineyard here in their garden is representative of their intimate love and relationship and the environment for their marriage. Okay? So if you wanna protect your marriage, if you want to be ready to be married, if you're engaged, or you're single, or if you, if you need help to save your marriage because your marriage is on the ropes today, then it's imperative that you go into your marriage, into your vineyard and you start catching these foxes because these foxes have infiltrated your marriage and they are gnawing at your crops. And their goal is to slowly, death by a thousand cuts, destroy your marriage from the inside out. We gotta catch these foxes. Great marriages do not just happen. And they definitely are not a hundred percent reliant on you marrying the best of best persons either. If you're single, you think, oh, I'll just marry a great person. Trust me, that doesn't work. Okay? There's more to it than that. Great marriages do not just happen. They are fought for. They are forged over time. So in order for you to continue to strive towards a wonderful marriage, you're gonna need to fight. You're gonna need to fight for one another. And you're gonna need to fight with one another. Not with like your enemies with them, but with like teammates towards a common enemy. The foxes in your vineyards, the demonic powers, the world, the culture, politics, all these things that are longing for your marriage's destruction. You've gotta fight and you've gotta fight together. So let's do it.

Today, we're gonna wage a little war on these foxes in your vineyard. Now, I cannot, you know, give you all the tools in one sermon, neither probably could I anyway, if I had all the time in the world. But I would say, and what I can do is point you to the Bible's wisdom in three big areas, we're gonna learn the current state of marriage, what's marriage like today for us, how to prevent those foxes in our marriage to begin with, and then how to remove the foxes that are already in your marriage as it is. Okay? That's what we're gonna do. First here is the current

state of marriage. Now, what's helpful for all of us here in this is to understand that this beautiful, idealistic, wonderful marriage that we're seeing in Song of Songs is meant to remind us of a time way back in the Garden of Eden when the marriage marriages all thrived. It shows us what is possible between a man and a woman without any brokenness, without any conflict, without any betrayal at all in a marriage. And guess what? It's beautiful. It is connected. They're connected to God, they're connected to each other, and it's wonderful. They're without shame. But there is one big difference between Eden's first marriage before sin and our marriages. What is it? It's sin. That's right. I just said it. It's sin. Yes, sin is the root of all conflict. So we have to go back to Genesis chapter three. Now, you might be saying, hold on a second, we talk about Genesis three all the time. We've been talking about Genesis one and two. Why are we gonna talk about Genesis three? I already know this story of sin. I already know that sin is broken, yada, yada, yada. Listen, nobody understands the ramifications of Genesis three. None of us get what really happened that day when sin came into the world. Quite literally, the entire Bible is necessary because of the third chapter of the Bible, in Genesis chapter three. We don't even need a savior if it wasn't for the sin that was brought that needed us saving from. This is incredibly important and it's infiltrated our marriages. We've gotta see it through that lens. So remember what happens, we have this beautiful, in the beginning, in Genesis one and two, marriage is perfect. God created everything. He creates Adam and Eve, they love one another. They're naked and they're without shame. They're embracing one another. They have, there's no conflict management, there's no marriage counseling needed. There's no money fights and money problems. Okay? It's just beautiful, right? It's wonderful. There's no betrayal of course, until Genesis three. And in there, God told Adam and Eve to avoid one particular thing. All of these other trees are perfect for you. You should partake of them. But this tree, if you partake of it, it has the potent potential to kill you. And it likely and most assuredly will. So they're eating other trees and a servant slithers up and says, eh, maybe you should check out what that tree's about. And so the woman she decides, she's going to quote, find out for herself the consequences of disobeying God. And so she eats the fruit. Here a lot of people in marriage, when they're talking about divorce, we're talking about cheating, we're talking about all these things, infidelity, they said, well, I just needed to find out for myself. Don't marry that guy. You shouldn't do it. Well, I wanna find out for myself. You know, I don't think you should be going to that. I'm gonna find out for myself. Anyone here who's found out for themselves knows, please listen. Eve here wants to find out for herself what the power and the knowledge of good and evil is like. So she partakes her husband passively obliges, and then also partakes as well. And both of them together embrace and taste from this fruit. And then all come, here comes the shame. And now they're ashamed of their own bodies and they sew themselves clothes. And then when God shows up, guess what? For the first time ever, they what? They hide because they're ashamed of who they are before God. And all of a sudden now, now they've fundamentally mistrust God. They mistrust one another and sin infiltrates themselves. This is what happens now. Because of sin, all of God's words to us, like the rule not to eat from the tree, all of the sudden become hostile and restrictive. Sin makes us second guess God's word, and whether or not it's actually good for us. And even in marriage, marriage is an environment for flourishing that all of a sudden now becomes to feel restrictive and oppressive to us. I wanna find out for myself what marriage should actually be like for my flourishing. So then we start asking some questions. Why just marry one woman? You say, God, why not many?

Solomon figured, decided to ask that question. And he said it was all meaningless. We asked a bunch of questions, why do I have to keep the same spouse? Why not just change 'em out? Why not experience different multiple spouses? All of a sudden the questions and the environment that God gave us for marriage, all of a sudden starts to feel restrictive. Why does marriage have to be just between a man and a woman? Hmm. Oh, why should I submit again? I don't understand. Why is marriage just between two people? Why not three people? Why not four people? Why not 12 people? Why not be married to 12 people together in covenantal, godly marriage? Why not God? Why can't I marry an animal or a house? Why get married at all? Some of those questions may seem more reasonable to you than others. I wanna say this as lovingly as possible, and I hope this comes across as respectfully as possible to you. I wanna say, if you hold some of these questions, the Bible teaches that the reason we ask these questions is because sin is common in the world and has disrupted our trust in God. Sin has disrupted our created order. And now the environment God gave us for relationships to flourish in marriage feels oppressive and it feels restrictive to us. And so now we want to find out for ourselves what is good for us. And all of the questions, as deep as they may be in you or not, all of the questions are essentially the wrong question. Because every question we ask in that way presupposes a distrust in God. So the real question then is why don't you believe what God says? Why don't you take him at his word? Why do you need to find out for yourself if it's good or not? Now, practically, this has led to things all over the map. Why are marriages now ending left and right? Well, number one reason, do you know the number one statistical reason for marriage's ending, do you know what they are? You know what they are? Infidelity. It's number one, physically and emotional infidelity, right? We are unfaithful to one another. They also end because of a quote, this is a statistic, lack of compatibility, i.e., we go through the trouble of getting married and we realize we don't like the person or we don't have any shared interests in the first place, right? Probably something you should figure out before you decide to get married. People also get divorced because they feel spiritually unaligned. They're spiritually unaligned. In other words, we marry people of different worldviews and faith systems. We don't agree on who God is. People get divorced as well because of something called cohabitation. This is when we do, again, we go against what Song of Song says, and we awaken love before it's time. And we live and sleep with people we're not married to. Statistically, if you live and sleep with someone you're not married to before you marry, you're statistically at a much higher clip to get divorced. Much higher clip and addiction. Things like sex addiction, love addiction, digital addictions. Sometimes we even enable addictions in our spouse and we say, I wanna be the cool spouse. You go ahead and go to the strip club. You go ahead and have, that's fine. Do what you gotta do, right? We enable. So there's an addiction and then there's addiction enablers taking place.

All of this is overwhelming the state of marriage. This is where marriage is at. And maybe some of this hits home for you. Like I'm not ignorant to the fact that many of you are struggling in your marriage. Maybe you're living this, some of this stuff right this moment and you're experiencing that. Your situation is hard. But that's no reason to quit. Not yet. We have a responsibility to get into that vineyard and start catching these foxes. And guess what? We can catch them now. We can go after the things that are eating our crops and destroying our marriages and start sticking up for marriage and why it's good and live out this ideal that Song

of Songs calls us to. One of the best ways to catch foxes in your vineyard, in your marriage, is to prevent them before they get in. And that's what we're gonna talk about next, how to prevent foxes.

There's a few things you can do and think about in your marriage that if you just align your marriage in such a way, you might actually sort of by default weed out a lot of the problems and stresses and struggles in your marriage just by ordering your marriage in a biblical way. So without further ado, let's talk about this created order that God gave us in Ephesians chapter five, every pastor's favorite verse to preach. So I look forward to this for years. Just kidding. Pray for me. This is gonna be rough. Okay, here we go. Verse 22, in verse 22,

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

Okay? Wives submit to your husbands. What? <Laugh>. Oh my no way, right? I'm kidding. Okay, obviously, hopefully that's true to you, that's clear. But when we read words like submit, there's something in our DNA that like is passed down generationally from our matriarchs that have been abused and lorded over in with verses much like this by people who claim to be Christian and hammered them home. And so we're just bristling with this word, like submit, like how on earth, the PTSD from our motherly ancestors is there, we're experiencing, okay, so let's work on clearing the air around what God is trying to say in this passage for you. Okay? I'm gonna do that understanding that culture disagrees with much of what scripture has to say, particularly even around this. So first thing that's helpful for you folks to understand about this, opponents of the Bible will sort of leverage a verse like this to call and call the Bible an oppressive tool designed to suppress the freedom of women and uphold patriarchal society for all men into the detriment of women. And I just wanna say that is just not what's happening here. That's not God's intention for this passage. It may be what men 500 years ago or even a hundred years ago, or even some marriages even today, have used as sort of a hammer on women or a woman specifically, but that's not God's intention for this verse, okay? Second thing, ladies, this is not a call for all women to submit to all men. That is not what's taking place here. This is an admonition for you to submit to one man in marriage. Women are not subordinate to men, men and women are made equal in the image of likeness of God with equal dignity, value, purpose, and worth. Any person who would say this verse is sort of setting up a structure where men are better than women or dominant over women is wrong. And that's demonic, okay? That's the first thing. Amen is right. This is an admonition for you to submit to one man in marriage. This does not apply at work. This does not apply in your community. This does not apply even in a dating relationship. And if you're engaged, guess what? This does not apply. Okay? Men get married if you long for a relationship like this, you do not get to just sort of make yourself more valuable than any woman because you're in a dating relationship with them.

Third thing ladies, you submit to one man and it's the man of your choosing. When you choose your husband, you are essentially looking for a man who is loving, who is kind, who is willing to

provide and protect the family, and one who is willing to assume the responsibility for the family when it is not doing well as the head. Fourth, when you choose that man, you submit to him as you would the Lord, the scripture says. Not exactly like Jesus, but in that same manner. This means essentially, what does that mean? It means unconditional submission. It means unconditional submission, not when we sort of feel like he deserves it and not when he's in a good mood or, and especially not just when you agree with him. Submission is giving over authority to a man of your choosing to hold the pressure and responsibility of providing, protecting and caring for you and your children, if applicable for you in that moment. Think about it like first among equals, right? You both are made in the image and likeness of God. But there may be times sort of in your deferral to him, there may be times where you are sort of deadlocked and you may defer in those situations knowing that essentially he is responsible for those marriages and for that marriage and for the family if the decision goes south. Okay? Submission is also about respect. When you submit to your husband, even when you disagree or don't see eye to eye, you're showing him a lot of respect. Now, if you still have questions about submission, I imagine you do, hold off judgment until we discuss this next section, Paul's word for the man, okay? Here's verse 25.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

See this sort of, I guess if you were to call it the patriarchy or some version of like whatever caricature we placed in that chauvinism, male dominated sort of way, abuse, abusive male authority they love the first part of this verse from Paul. Wives submit, but then when they get to verse 25, they kind of read quietly and move on. Right? Here's what's happening here. Men, while your wife or your future wife is to submit, you are supposed to give yourself up for her. Your love to your wife is to mirror the love that Christ had for the church. Okay? How did Jesus love his church? He died. He bled and died for his church. While the wife is called to submit to the husband, the man, the husband is called to die for the wife. Sacrificially, this means men that you are good, godly, loving, strong, sacrificial, courageous and bold as Jesus was towards the truth. He fought for his church and hear me, he was victorious for his church. Men. That's how your demeanor is supposed to be. More men are less like Jesus in their marriage to the church and more like Satan to, to the church. They're adversarial, they're frustrating, they're domineering. They're angry, they're manipulative, and they're coercive. That is not the order. Men. You don't own your wife's body. You are not in charge of your wife. You do not own her. You know who does? Jesus owns her. She was bought with a price paid for by the precious blood of Jesus. Just like you. You are called to steward your wife as Jesus stewarded the church. Not Lord over her, like some God. Ladies, you have chosen or get to choose one man to submit to. And guess what, if you choose right, who wouldn't want to submit to a good godly, loving, strong, providing sacrificial, courageous, bold man who is willing to die for you and your potential children that you might give him if he follows Jesus. Now, he's not Jesus, you know that <laugh>, but his call is to strive to be like him. That sounds better. I have three daughters. And so, you know, as I read things like that, it just changes the way I filter through it. The way I think about it is, and this is helpful at our preaching team meeting, but if God tells you ladies to submit to a man that is like Jesus as Jesus died for the church, do you know what that means? It means that you're worth dying for. God's asking you to choose a man that is equal to your

worth. One that will provide, protect, lead, and sacrifice himself on your behalf. That's what you're looking for.

Now, practically speaking, as we work through this, we kind of sort of understand, we understand our created order and sort of the biblical call for what it means to sacrifice and what it means to submit. Then we can really understand another concept to help us fight foxes in our vineyards. And it's really this idea of ordering our loves or our priorities, right? And there's a list of five up here and take this as a sample list. And it comes from this idea that really people can only hold four, five or six things on our plate at any given time. And so this is how our priority list should look. God, spouse, if you have a spouse, kids, if you have kids, then your job, and then anything else that you might have. It could be a hobby, it could be friendship, it could be your golf game. I don't know what it is, but it definitely comes after everything else, okay? A lot of marriage struggles happen just by disorder, having disordered loves. A lot of marriage challenges happen just because we got this outta order. For example, if you take your job and place that right there at number two, and all of a sudden it's about your career and it's about, Hey listen, nothing gets between me and my career. Nothing. And like that's the, that's the gauntlet you're throwing down. And so the job all of a sudden becomes more important where you live and where you move is dependent largely on whatever your job is. Not with a conversation with your spouse, not having anything to do with the flourishing of your kids. All of the sudden marriage becomes disrupted because your kids are the ones who are taking the brunt of that. And your spouse is taking the brunt of that as well. No one at your company is going to care in 20 years if you worked additional hours, but you know who will remember? Your children. That's right. Your children will remember that you took your job over them, but the people you work with aren't gonna give two flips. They never will because your kids matter more. Another common mistake or disordering, taking number three and putting that right at number one. Marriages often suffer when we put our kids right at the center. Kids were not designed to be saviors. When your kids have free open access to anything at you any time, that is always gonna present a challenge for your marriage. Now there is a, there are a few specific circumstances where kids have to supersede mainly right when they're born, okay? They're gonna overwhelm everything, including your ability to eat a decent meal at any given time or especially sleep. But you can't say, Hey, hold on baby eight day old baby, like I've got my marriage to maintain. Like you hold off like we don't do it there. But if you've got nine year old or a 12 year old with you at any given moment, any time, all of a sudden they understand that, hey, I've got this. I'm the center of attention. And you know what happens to marriages when the kids are at the center? It destroys the kid because they're holding the weight of God and it definitely destroys the marriage. The best thing you can do for your kids is have a great marriage. The best thing you can do for your kids is have a great marriage. And that means instilling boundaries between them and your spouse. Okay? For example. So that's how we can prevent some foxes. That's how we can prevent foxes.

So let's talk a little bit about what it means to remove some current foxes from your vineyard. Okay? Now remember, Song of Songs is wisdom literature, much like Proverbs, the goal is to sort of take knowledge and apply it to our lives. That's what we're gonna do in this next section. Okay? So as I run through these, keep that in mind. We're applying these biblical principles to

catch foxes in our vineyard. First thing you can do to help catch, take the D word off the table, take the D word off the table. Divorce may be really common in society, but if you wanna catch foxes, navigating conflict in your marriage will be a lot easier without a big red eject button sitting on the kitchen table between you. Many, many of us, we put this big red button like, Hey, if this goes south, I'm out. And you just hit it, boom. And then your seat goes flying off like airplane or something. Like you're adamant, right? Take it off the table. Now you might be thinking, wait a second, I thought, I mean a lot of people do get divorced, lot of Christians that many of you are Christians here, not everyone's here Christian, but some of you're a Christian. Maybe you've been divorced. Like, is divorce okay? Like is that a thing? Well, I knew that might be a question. So to answer it, I'd like you point, I'd like to point you directly to Jesus words in Matthew 19. Okay? Here's what, here's what happens. Some Pharisees come up to Jesus. They wanna ask him this very same question. And they say,

Jesus, "'is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' And he answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?" So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.'"

Jesus here answers this question, not from his own well of, you know, thought. Although he could have easily done that. He decides he's gonna appeal back to Eden, a time that existed before sin. And he essentially says that before sin, when a man and a woman got married, there was no concept for them ever splitting up. None back in, back in Eden. There was no category for what you're talking about splitting up. That just doesn't exist. And so Jesus is saying, well, what are we talking about here? Marriage is not a thing. But wait a second. Isn't there a bunch of laws in the Old Testament around divorce? And you know what I'm talking about? Like, isn't there all these different laws about like how to regulate through a divorce in Deuteronomy, all these different passages like do you know what I'm talking about? The people, the Pharisees there asked Jesus the same question. And they said, didn't Moses regulate divorce in the Old Testament? Wasn't there like a system to get divorced? And here's how Jesus answered him.

Well, "because of your hardness of heart," because of your stubbornness, your sin, your hardheadedness, "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

Jesus says, yeah, divorce was allowed to litigate the sin. You were, you were divorcing women at a rapid clip. You were running through them and acquiring more wives for yourself. It was sick and disgusting, so to regulate your hardness of heart and your frustrations with your sin, we had to put a system in place to sort of legalize what was taking place so we, it wouldn't be so rampant. But from the beginning it wasn't. So what does Jesus do? He appeals back to the creation story. Jesus is past, present, future. He is living in Eden now. He understands the reality. There's no category for sin. We only did that because you are sinful. You shouldn't be doing that. From the beginning it was not so. When God created the world, this is not a reality. This is why you and I should not even consider divorce. Remember, we're striving towards the

ideal. And in Eden there was no such thing as divorce. Okay? But Jesus does say there is one scenario that has biblical grounds for divorce. Maybe you know this passage, you're like, wait, hold on a second. And Jesus said, well, yeah, except for sexual immorality, he throws this one in here. Now essentially this is infidelity of a significant nature. This is this big concept for bucket for all forms of kinds of sexual deviancy and betrayal that take place perhaps things like adultery or abuse. Now this is the part where I have to have an aside. There are cases where it is possible you should seek a divorce. It's possible. Certain cases of abuse, physical, psychological, sexual cases of abuse in those cases you need to run. You are not saving your husband or your wife, let's say, by staying in a marriage and being abused by them. In fact, you're more likely to send them to hell than you are to have them get them redeemed. What might be the best thing for them is to go to prison for what they've done or at least go through some sort of counseling or whatever the, the, the issue is depending on the degree. What you should never do is submit to your husband by maintaining abuse. Jesus has not called any woman to be submissive to verbal, psychological, or especially physical abuse. Not at all. He's not called you to do that. Run for your life, get some help. And you may need to call the police. We can help if that's an issue for you. In other cases, I'd say if you're saying, well what about all these other cases, I'd say don't make the decision alone. Oftentimes people are looking for ways to get divorced or trying to look for a technicality. Can I get off on a technicality? I would say if you're looking for a divorce on a technicality, remember Jesus said that from the beginning it was not so. We've seen here, even at Doxa, we've seen cases where perhaps the spouse could have left but didn't and saw redemption in marriage. It's possible. The point is, redemption is possible in marriage if we're not willing to hit the eject button because from the beginning it wasn't so.

Okay, next thing we can do to catch foxes, get comfortable with confession. Get comfortable with confession. Now it sounds weird, but asking for forgiveness in a marriage is like a cheat code. I mean you're talking about up back back, right, B, X, you know, whatever, boom, unlocked all the characters like this is it. Marriage will do that. For all the women, you're like what? I didn't play any video games growing up, but yeah, it's like all the guys were like, yeah, I remember that. Yeah, it's for Mortal Kombat. Yeah, I get that. Here's the point, <laugh> admitting where you're wrong is so helpful. After admitting you're wrong and then repenting and then moving towards reconciliation with your spouse, your partner, making restitution, paying back if there's potential wrongs that need to be paid back can absolutely save your marriage. Sometimes anyone needs to hear is, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that. I really apologize. Will you forgive me? That's it. Modeling practical repentance. Keep this in mind. Three things to keep in mind when you're confessing sin to one another. First frequent, confess your sin and ask for forgiveness regularly. Like as much as you can. Like make sure they're sick of you apologizing for things you actually did okay for things you actually did frequent. Confess sin as they happen all of the time. Okay? Get them early. Second transparent. Don't tell half-truths, don't tell half falsities, don't confess half a sin. What oftentimes happens in marriages, we like to confess the tip of the iceberg 'cause it's less painful. Yet under the water there's all of this big mound of all these other things going on underneath. And guess what happens? When those get found out later, which they will because that's how life works. The problem is way worse. The foxes have grown, they've been fattening themselves on your vineyard and now

they're ready to explode and take over. Okay, transparent. Third thing, start early. The best time to confess to sin to your spouse is yesterday. The next best time is right this moment, right this moment. And right now go for it. I'll give it a few minutes. No, don't make a scene. But I'm saying like, you know, at some point, go do that, right? This is important. It's a very important thing. And by the way, if you're single or you're engaged, you can start repenting for sin, for sexual sin or otherwise right now you can begin making changes in your life right this second. And you can make these changes and you can go into marriage healthy and without a bunch of hidden baggage. And let me tell you, you can save 10 years of conflict off of your marriage or even more, 20 years by doing the work now and going into marriage, confessed past history, having gone through counseling. So your marriage can be set up for success. Do that now. And if you got into marriage and you didn't do premarital counseling and you didn't, and you didn't confess anything to one another prior, I'm telling you right now, you got all sorts of stuff you haven't worked on and it's there and you're starting to see the bubbles sort of well up. You gotta go get some help. Okay? That's leads me to my next thing. Counseling is not failure. Getting help and asking for help is a good thing because guess what? You don't have all the answers. None of us do. We were designed for community. Marriage counseling or gospel care here with an elder at Doxa is not failure. It is, this is a sign that you're needy and that you are leaning into growing in your marriage. If you're afraid of counseling and you have all this shame and all this guilt that's understandable, let someone bring to light that which is in the dark and help you understand that there is redemption and growth and change possible for you. You need that. If you're not doing life with other people, if you're not in relationship with people, if you're here and your marriage is struggling and you're not in an MC or a DNA and you haven't given people in your life that aren't related to you permission to speak in your marriage, when they see something, then it, it's no wonder you're struggling, 'cause you're trying to do it by yourself. You can't. You can't. This doesn't say, hey, struggle in your marriage alone. Make sure she submits to you. Pay the bills and move on. That's, that's horrible. That's horrible. No wonder why 51% of people want outta that. I would want out of that. We all would want out of that. Biblical submission, submitting to Jesus, sacrificial love from the man, beautiful biblical submission by the wife, shared vision together and calling and working on yourselves together is a beautiful picture of what God has for your marriage. Proverbs 11:14 says,

"Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."

Okay, I'm gonna bring my wife up here in a second, but I do wanna say Song of Songs is all about pursuit. It's about pursuit of one another. We're leaning, we're looking to, to sort of pursue our beautiful spouse if we can. We're in search of this ideal marriage. There are ebbs, there are flows. But if we resolve to press forward using Holy Spirit's power, you can break through and achieve joy and love in your relationships. Now maybe you're here and you're feeling a bunch of shame and maybe you feel like you've failed and maybe you feel like you had your shot and you missed it with that guy or that girl. Maybe you've been divorced and you're like, I don't even know what to do anymore. I'm a failure. I wanna tell you that conflict, divorce, shame and guilt are all a part of the fall in the garden. And I want you to know that Jesus came for that reason. He came to free you from that guilt and that shame that you're experiencing to rebuild your relationships. And let me, hear me just in this one moment. You are not too far

gone for him. You are not too far gone, you're not too dirty, you're not unclean, not before a loving kind savior you're not. Your marriage is not beyond repair. I don't boast from the stage often, if at all, actually. Obviously I think it's unbecoming of a preacher to brag and boast. But I can say unapologetically that my wife and I have an amazing marriage. We have an amazing marriage because we've had our marriage assessed through the roof trying to do church stuff. We always score, we always score super high. My wife is kind, she's lovely, she's servant hearted. She, she's hilarious. She's great with our kids, all of these things. But let me tell you, none of those reasons are why we have a good marriage. We have a good marriage, an amazing marriage because we did the work. We did premarital, we sat through the Song of Solomon series very similar to this. We've been to marriage conferences, we've had conferences, we've had, we've asked hard questions to one another. We've been through brutal moments of confession, past history, sin to each other. We've turned our back on each other. We've betrayed one another. We've hurt one another. We've maligned one another. We've talked badly about one another. But we repented to one another. We reconciled and we decided we were gonna fight for the ideal of what God presented before us in the scriptures. When you've been in the trenches like that with somebody and you overcome, that bond is like nothing else. Now I'm not gonna tell you to stand here and be, have a great marriage like me or anything like that. I think that's crazy. But what I can tell you is you should access the source that made that marriage possible and that's Jesus shed blood. You have opportunity for redemption because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. If you're sitting there frustrated and mad, angry, confused about your marriage, you can lean onto a good savior who loves us and who's come for you. A good marriage is possible. The ideal marriage is possible because Jesus Christ went to the grave. And guess what? The tomb was empty. He rose from the grave. And if he can rise from the grave, then he can absolutely fix a marriage like yours. That's the power we have in Jesus. So don't quit. Don't quit. Fight. Decide to fight and see what riches lie on the other side of your struggle, and your sacrifice in Him. Okay, sermon's over.

Sarah, will you come up and join me on stage? Will you give her a hand while she wanders up here? Thank you, sir. Here you go. Thank you.

You got it? Got it. Alright, ready for some Q and R? We call it question and response because we don't have all the answers. In case you're curious, we're gonna respond, we're not gonna answer. So, alright, let's do it. Let's ask the first one.

The allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs does feel pretty awkward to me, me too, and yet, Ephesians 5 portrays Jesus as a bridegroom and the Church as a beautifully prepared bride. So marriage points us to a relationship between Jesus and the Church. Isn't that also awkward?

No, not really. Just because it's more of an example. It's something to look towards. Not an exact, it's not the exact same. So Jesus loved the church. He wanted to die. He died. He lived and died for it actually, which is the part that I take into marriage. If you find the right spouse, they not only die for you, but they, they live for you too. which is just beautiful.

Yeah. So you're, you're saying that basically Jesus dies for the church. That's what a husband's supposed to do for his wife. The church submits to the Jesus and a wife is doing that with a husband. So it's actually a great, great metaphor. Yeah. Yeah. I, I agree. I think the allegorical interpretations, if you weren't here, I sort of poked fun at the allegorical interpretations of this kind of, sort of comparing the woman to the church and the man in the story to God. I poked fun at that. And I don't think they're the same, mainly because one is clearly a literary device. It's clearly a simile like love Christ or love that Jesus loves love your wife as Christ, love the church, like Christ loved the church. So there's that. Also just the literal metaphorical breakdown of being in bed and doing sexual things between God and the church is, is far more awkward and there's really bizarre eight chapters worth of those acts. And so that is, that feel feels more like shoehorning an allegory in as opposed to just taking a simple analogy and making it so I wouldn't say they're the same. No. That's it. That's it. Okay. That was easy. Unless you answered the question, asked the question, you didn't like that answer, then.

Okay, next one. How do you honor the friend relationships that were much closer before your committed relationship, but also understand that your marriage comes first? Yeah. So just very practically, if you have friends who champion your marriage, who want this marriage for you, that would be the goal. If they really are your friends worth, if you're, if they're worth honoring, then they definitely would hopefully honor that. And it's a season, if it's new, if this is a new thing for you, it's gonna be, there's gonna be few growing pains. You're not gonna be the exact same friend anymore 'cause now you're with your husband and that's just gonna change. There's gonna be more planning. And you can't just go out whenever you, well, I mean, yeah, I don't know. You, you have to care about your spouse first. And then the question to me too is if it's God, spouse, and then kids, family, friends, whatever it's a huge call. It's a huge deal. Yeah. And kind of like how the culture doesn't make it a big deal or make it exciting or, or something to look up to, you know, like you have to really go back to the scriptures and remember that as well. So Yeah.

Do you have to honor past friendships? Am I putting you on the spot? How do we honor?

It says they were closer before. Okay. And that might be part of growing pains to get back into that close relationship. But no, you don't have to. Like, you're not gonna have your 50th wedding anniversary with them. It's gonna be with your spouse. Hopefully they're there and hopefully they're like a part of that. But if that's like crossing over a barrier and trying to be more important, then no.

Well, I mean, we've been married long enough to know, and for those of you that are single, you're like, I can't believe that you would say that about Stacy, that you wouldn't honor that relationship. My point is, my point is that you statistically you, you lose relationship with 50% of the friends you have every seven years. And so the longer you're married, the longer those relationships are probably gonna fall off. We've been married long enough to know that there's people at the beginning of our marriage or even before I couldn't imagine not having a relationship with, and now those people are like completely gone out of our lives. You all know exactly what I'm talking about. And so my point is, if you're deciding, like if you're making the

choice, like do I honor this friend really well by like hanging out with 'em still and grabbing wings with 'em or whatever instead of hanging out with my spouse, I would say always choose your spouse first. The people that honor your marriage will be the ones that stick with you over the course of that time. The people that are frustrated more so maybe in the beginning a little but continually frustrated that you're not spending time with, those are the people that are gonna be like footnotes later in your life in marriage anyway. So I would say that if this is about a opposite sex friend or relationship, and that to me is a different answer. And I wonder how I wouldn't answer that without getting in trouble. Do you want to save me?

I think they're okay with whatever you say.

Okay. Well I, I would just say if, if you've got, gosh, if you have friends that are opposite sex with you and you say, I've always had like these three girlfriends and I'm a guy, but now I'm getting married and I'm still going out and having drinks or whatever, or having fun with these, I would say that's crazy. Proverbs says, can you scoop hot holes onto your lap and not burn yourself? Right. Can you hold a flame, open flame close to your chest to not catch fire? Like when you talk about catching foxes in your vineyard marriage is already 50% chance. So like add, you're making it worse and much harder on yourself by adding potential foxes into your vineyard by having these other isolated relationships. Now I know there's exceptions to the rule and all that, I totally understand, but for the most part in general I would hope that my wife doesn't have good enough relationships with men I'm not married to, that are outside of me and her that she knows super well. I mean, we hear marriage issues all the time. It's always like, oh, this man understands me so much better than you do. I've heard that come up a lot. You're like, how does a man, or how does a woman know you better than your spouse? Like, how have you put yourself in that position? And so Proverbs is applied wisdom, right? You know, like my grandfather always used to say, you can drive a car with your feet if you want to. Doesn't mean it's a good idea. Like it's applied wisdom. Like you could, I suppose, and you could also maybe wreck your marriage.

Amen.

I don't know if you should say amen, but you next one.

Alright, here we go. I wanna submit to my husband, but he's very challenging to submit to. Any guidance to help me submit to a difficult spouse?

I know. So my first response is kind of like, okay, if you really want to, it sounds like you want to submit to him, then consider observing what he is good at. Consider, like trying to figure out who God did make him and encourage those attributes in him in like a loving, helpful, like, be helpful. He needs it. He like, he actually does need you. It sounds like in this scenario, if you are looking to, you know, and feel like you really want to pursue that. And then if you actually are just don't, maybe don't like his leadership. That's a, that's a different question. So that's something to look at internally and figure out like, well, maybe you actually just don't like

where he's leading you. You don't like submitting, you disagree with him. That's another scenario.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think there's a big, like, I agree, I agree with you. I think there's a big difference between my husband's not leading me and my husband's not leading me the way I think he should be leading me, which is you leading instead. Like, I think that's probably, would I be fair to say that,

To simplify it, you, this question, obviously, we could talk, we could talk for, while you're here, we could talk for three hours about this question specifically. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So that is like a very simple Yeah. Answer.

I, I think the thing I can help with the most is on the husbands side, the key, again, the key to being respected is be respectable. So if, if your wife's struggling to submit to me, I, I would want, first of all, I would wanna know that. So ask your wife, how am I doing? Am I doing okay? Like, ask for that communication. If she's like, you know what, it's been really tough to be married to you and here are the reasons why. Like, you might need to hear that information. And then you've gotta, you've gotta work on yourself and be somebody that's worthy of respect and honor and who's actually sacrificing. Ask her, what are the ways I'm sacrificing? Like, what are the ways you've seen me be courageous? What are the ways that I've honored you publicly? Ask her those questions. What do I need to improve on? And let her be brutally honest to you, like, it's good to get that information so you can improve. So for the man's perspective, if this is the case, work on being respectable and worthy of such an honor to have a wife that would even consider submitting biblically to you. That's what I'd say. Good. Okay. We're coming up on time, so why don't we pray? You wanna pray for us? Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

Thank you Jesus, for your word. I just pray that the scriptures can come to life. I pray for your Holy Spirit to come over everybody and, and break the hard, hard hearts, if there's hard hearts out, out here in Doxa today. Help those who are healing. Help wounded marriages. Help people who have yet to even think about marrying and who are trying to make the right decisions. Just pray your, your truth of your word and your gospel over each one of us. Amen. Amen.