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Message: What the Gospel Teaches us About Marriage

Well, it is a joy to be back here with some of you that we met yesterday. And Pastor Carlon, thank you so much for letting me stand here today on a Sunday. It is a gift to do so, and I hope something is said here will stir our affections for Christ and will hopefully move us closer towards, not just Christ, but also towards our spouses, towards our friends, towards those that are in our neighborhood. We had a great day yesterday, a lot of fun. We talked about some very practical things. If you were here, we talked about some of your parents – if you know, you know. And then we also played some games. We did a newlywed and some of you guys, it's very obvious, you spend lots of time together, and you're doing great. And some of you, you need some help, man, and that's part of, probably why they brought me here. I felt compelled just a few minutes to share this story, I don't know why, it's for someone here.

Early on in our marriage, Pam and I had gone to a social situation, and we were talking with our friends. And we get back in the car after we're done, and I ask Pam, hey, did you have fun tonight? She said, absolutely. And what I'm kind of trying to get her to say is, just how funny I was there. You know, like I'm just giving her these softballs. Did you laugh tonight? What did you think about that one time when we were all standing in a circle, you know, all these things, and she's not biting. So I just asked, did you think I was funny? Or no, I think I told her, I didn't ask. I just wanted her to know. I said, hey, I was so funny, so funny. I wanted to take a video of me and just like watch my clips afterwards, that kind of thing. And I said, did you think I was funny? And she looked at me in confusion or something like that. I don't know exactly what it was, and she looked at me, and she goes, John, you're so sarcastic. And I said, I know, I mean, that's what I'm good at. That's basically the baseline of my humor. She said, you think you're funny, and I think you actually wound people. Everything in me wanted to fight back with her. I wanted to just say

something sarcastic, candidly. I sat there with the hands on the wheel in silence, and I said, I think you're right. I remember like the next year or two going to social situations, and having my Diet Coke, and really not having anything to say, because I didn't have a sarcastic comeback. I realized, golly, I had spent at that point probably 25, 26 years of my life just being sarcastic and throwing jabs at people. The laughter they had was actually nervous. That's what she said. She said, they're laughing not with you, but because they're nervous that they might be your next target. And I just thought, man, I don't want to live the rest of my life that way.

So, I've been so grateful for marriage and the refining nature of it. I've been grateful because it has allowed me to live out the gospel that we just sang about, and that's what I want to talk about today. What does it look like to actually live out the gospel in our marriage? not just to be recipients of the gospel that we just sing about, but to actually live it out. What is the gospel? First Corinthians 15 tells us, verse 3, Paul says, what I've passed on to you is of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. The Gospel is that you're a sinner, and Christ had to come and die for you. He came. He came to you. You didn't work your way towards him. He came. He died, and he is the one that we just sang about that saved our life. He saved our life, and now we get to live out that gospel.

If you're married, that's the first place you live that out. As Carlon said, it's the one another's, it's the practical application of the one another's. and if you're not married, you've got plenty of relationships to live out the gospel. This morning, I want to talk about the gospel, and I want to talk about marriage. You might go is this just a sermon about the gospel? Or is it a sermon about marriage? To which I would say yes. If you're not married, many of us want to be married, many of us know people that are married, this will be applicable to all of us, because those things are true, and we have relationships.

So, what's an example of this? Number one, one of the things that the gospel teaches us to do is how to initiate, and so Romans 5:8 says this, but God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we're still sinners, Christ died for us. Christ came to us. Christ initiated with us. He didn't ask us. He didn't ask us to come to him, to work our way up to

him. Most every other religion that man has made up is some version of us climbing the mountain, to somehow get to God. Christianity is the only religion where Christ came down to us, where we say the only the only thing we had to do to get in the club was admit that we can't climb that mountain, and so he came he came to us, and Christ initiates with us.

So, in all relationships, we don't just simply receive the initiation of Christ, we actually initiate with others. We initiate with our spouse, so that when there's a conflict that needs to happen, we move towards it. When there has been a little bit of a distance, we ask is it okay. When we haven't spent much time, we don't wait for them. We say I'm here. As soon as they say something to me, we initiate with them. We don't wait until that scale tips in their favor or where they've done enough for us, and so now we'll say hey, can I help you, can I serve you, what can I do for you. we don't do that, because that's not the way that Christ related to us. We initiate. We initiate. Then in conflict I would say especially, we don't sit around and wait for people to ask if we're okay. Leaders go first. Christians go first.

We just installed some elders at our church. We installed them again. Many of them were serving during COVID. It was during COVID, we had a leadership transition. It was some crazy times, late nights, tough decisions, fast decisions, bullets metaphorically flying. I served with them then, and many of them were coming back. I just went to one of the elders and said I probably should go and just make sure I'm good with all those men. He said I think that'd be a great idea. So, I set up three coffees with three men, just initiated. All of us, in every meeting I had, there was something for both of us to confess. There was a misunderstanding that existed because of that crazy time. I left each one of those meetings just being so glad that I initiated, and as were they. We asked each other's forgiveness, and that was easy for me because I know that Christ has initiated with me.

My wife Pam, I can just remember this, it was several years ago. She had a bad back. She was hurting. If we were going to kind of weigh the scales, I had been a better husband in that season than she had to me, right, because she's down. I remember thinking, man, I'm giving a lot here, and I'm not getting. I'm not getting mine back. I walked into the room, and it was Romans 5:8. That is so odd. I walked into our bedroom and heard

Romans 5:8. I went over to Pam, and I remember just thinking I feel like I'm good here, like I'm husband of the year already. You should be just be grateful to be married to me. I remember just giving her a massage, and saying hey you should go to sleep. It was Christ's initiation with me that made that possible. But really, I felt myself so grateful that thinking in that moment that even when I had nothing to offer Christ, he initiated with me. So, we initiate.

We talked about that yesterday. Matthew 7:3 through 5. We kind of glazed by that quickly. I want to just want to read it again, and pull out one thing, in the context of conflict. Jesus says in Matthew 7:3 through 5, why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, and you pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your own eye, when all the time there's a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. That was the metaphor that we used yesterday. If you want to have a better marriage, if you want to fix your marriage, you draw a circle around yourself, and you fix everybody inside the circle. Jesus didn't talk about circles. He talked about logs, and planks, and specks of sawdust in in our eye, or in our brother's eye. He said, you always go first. You're always the one who is to initiate this whole thing. You go first.

The very first step is to take the log out of your own eye, and then, it's a phrase I just kind of glossed by for so many years, you see clearly. If you will do that, you will see clearly. I was telling Pam that oftentimes when we have conflict, and we're in it, there's a misunderstanding. If this was like a computer game, and there's those little power bars, the power bar goes to ten. Whose fault is it? Ten. Pam's. How justified am I in this anger? Ten, right? All these things. I just have found, if I go first, if I get the log out of my own eye...

The first step, the first part of the conversation is, I've been thinking about this. I think this is my part, and I want to ask your forgiveness. Would you forgive me? All those little power meters come down. Another one is, is this a character issue? Or a circumstance? Most of us in conflict, what we tend to do is, we give ourselves a pass if we're five minutes late. It was circumstances, right? It was traffic. But if your spouse is

late? Well, that becomes a character issue. They're always late. They're irresponsible, those kinds of things, right? And I can find myself going, that's a character issue. But if I take the log out of my own eye, and I go, it probably wasn't, I should probably give some grace. This posture, friends, of not waiting for our spouse to change, but us initiating conversations, and really initiating change, and work on ourself, is our best play. It's not just a pragmatic move. I think it's a response to the way that God has moved towards us. The gospel teaches us to initiate, and that's what we're supposed to do with our spouses.

The gospel also teaches us to forgive. In Matthew 18, Peter goes to Jesus, and they're talking about forgiveness. Peter asked a how many question. He says, hey Jesus, how many times should we forgive our brother? If they sin against us, how many times should we forgive? And Peter asks, is it seven? Which is kind of like, as the kids would say, a flex. Generally, people would have understood you're supposed to forgive three times. Three times then after that it was on them. And so, he said, what if I double that, add one, Jesus, will you be impressed? And Jesus is not impressed. He answers his question. He says, you should not forgive seven times, but 70 times seven, which is to say, you just keep on forgiving. There's no limit.

He keeps on going then, which is to say, hey Peter, you actually asked the wrong question. You asked a how question, so while I've got you here, while you ask that, while you teed up the topic about forgiveness, let me tell you why. That's the question you should have asked, and he goes on to tell him about a king, if you know the story, about a king who decided to settle the accounts. I want to know everybody who owes me money. Let's get them in here. Let's get them to pay us back. Let's put some more money in the coffers. He's calling people in, and he calls this one servant in. this guy's a servant to the king, and he realizes that he owes him 10,000 talents. A talent is a day's work. The debt would be like billions of dollars, which is really hard for us to imagine. What Jesus is saying really is like, it's a number that this guy could never pay back, ever. There's no chance.

So the king says, hey, we're going to basically sell all you have, and we're going to put your family in prison until you can pay it back, which is to say, you can't pay it back. Then in Matthew 18, verse 26, this servant falls to his knees. You can imagine a big, giant

courtroom with other servants in there, and attendants, people from the community. He falls on his knees before him, and he says, be patient with me. And he begged him, and he said, I will pay back everything which he couldn't. He's begging for mercy. And then in a move that just had to send shockwaves through that court, where people audibly gasped, the servant's master took pity on him, and he canceled the debt, and let him go. He didn't put him on a payment plan. He didn't say, if you'll work extra hours overtime for me. If you will try your hardest, if you'll sell some of your stuff. He's on his knees. The king says, get up. The bajillions of dollars? We're good. You're free to go.

I just imagine what that would have been like to be there, to watch that, to feel that, and how you would have looked at other people, like, did you just hear what I heard? Well, the rest of the story goes that as he walks out of that courtroom. And you can just imagine the roller coaster of emotions. It went from hey, I am going to die in prison, as probably will my family, to now I'm scot-free. He's riding this endorphin release. He's walking out, and he sees a fellow servant, someone that works alongside him. He's no different, and it turns out that this other guy that he meets actually owes him some money. It was about three months wage, not insignificant. He sees him, and he goes up to him, and effectively says the same thing. Hey, I'm going to put you and your family in prison, and you will repay, you will die penniless, you will die behind bars, unless you repay me.

Matthew 18:25. His servant fell to his knees and begged him, be patient with me, and I will pay it back. We should remember that phrase, because that's exactly the phrase that the first servant said to the king. I'll pay it back. Please, please be patient. But he refused, and instead he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt, which is to say that he couldn't. He actually, before that, put his arms around the neck of this servant, and he's kind of choking him and saying, pay it back, pay it back, pay it back.

Jesus goes on to say, the king was not pleased. That would be a way to say it, when he heard about this. He had pardoned this man everything, and he went and choked out a fellow servant for three months wages. When we read that story, we find ourselves in it, and it is so clear who we are. It's so clear, isn't it? We're the first servant. We're the first

servant. In an audacious move that we shouldn't be able to get our minds around, Christ has forgiven everything, everything that we have done, everything that we will do, no payment plan. Not even a I need to see some good intentions and some actions from you. I'm going to need a little bit something from you. No, Christ just forgave us. What happens is we take that same forgiveness, and we have audacity. If you're watching from the outside, it doesn't feel that way sometimes when it's you. but if you're watching from the outside, that we would have the audacity to metaphorically choke out our spouse, our friends, our kids, our co-workers, and say, even though I have been forgiven everything, I've got a clean slate. I'm going to need something from you. You're going to have to repay me. You're going to have to repay me, and friends, the gospel teaches us to forgive. The gospel teaches us to forgive. Marriage, all our relationships, is an amazing, amazing place to exercise this forgiveness, to extend this forgiveness that we have been given.

There's lots of misconceptions about forgiveness, and I just want to take a second to talk about a few. What it isn't, what it is as we think about how do we give it to others. Number one, I just want us to know that forgiveness is not forgetting. It's not forgetting. You may still forgive and still feel the emotion of that, the sting of that. You might be able to remember what they said, how they said it, where you were, the temperature in the room, but you can still forgive.

Number two, forgiveness is not condoning. Some people will say, I don't want to forgive because I don't want them to think that it was okay. The very fact that you have to extend forgiveness means it was not okay. You're not telling someone that what they did was okay. When you are forgiving someone, you're letting them off the hook for something they did that was not okay.

It's not a feeling. A lot of times people will say, hey, I'm going to forgive when I feel like it. When I feel like it, which is to say you probably will never get around candidly to forgiving them because you are going to not feel like it given what they did to you. We don't listen to our feelings. We listen to and order our lives around the gospel.

This is mind-blowing for many of us, but forgiveness doesn't have to be asked for. You can forgive someone whether they ask for it or not. Whether they understand what

they have done or not. Whether they even agree with you with what they did was wrong or not. You have that in you because you've been forgiven everything you can. You can extend that forgiveness.

Forgiveness is also not reconciling. It's not necessarily trusting. I don't know if this would be your story or if this hits home, but let's say you're married and one of you is a spender, like a big spender. We are doing the bills. One day, let's just say this is Pam. This is not our story, but just for argument's sake, Pam comes home. I'm just noticing all these bags of things that she keeps bringing home. She's excited about them. She lays it out. I'm like, I don't know if that's going to fit in the budget. We get the bill, and Pam has maxed out her credit card. She comes and says, yeah, I kind of blew past our budget. I'm really sorry. Will you forgive me? Again, this is just not so uncharacteristic of Pam. That would not be the case. I would say, well, sure. I forgive you.

Then if I notice some more bags day after day, week after week, and we get the next credit card bill, we've maxed out another card, and she says, I'm sorry. Will you forgive me? I would say, yes. She says, well, now the two cards I had, I maxed out. Can I get a third? No. No. We can't afford this crazy train. I now don't trust you. Do I forgive you? Yes. I do forgive you. I'm not going to hold this against you, but it would be unwise just to give you a fresh card, a pat on the back, and say, go get them, tiger. Pam could work back towards trust. Whatever it would mean for her. It would mean maybe just sitting down and saying, here's an account in this illustration. Here's an account of what I've spent, how I've spent. I've stayed within my budget, building trust.

Someone who has an addiction to pornography, I'm not going to give you a fresh new computer. I'm not going to give you unfiltered internet access, but we can move towards trust. I can forgive you, but reconciliation and trust might take time, friends.

And lastly, on what it's not, forgiveness is not just about the other person. Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. Some of us in the room are holding on to unforgiveness, thinking that it's somehow hurting them. They have no idea, but it is killing us. First, it dishonors God, and second, it's doing great harm to us.

And so, if you can't get there as a proper response to the gospel, at least give yourself a gift and forgive. Let it go. The biblical metaphor is to write it off, to send it away. It's a debt, a bill that you have, and someone says, we're good, and they send it away. Honor Christ, but if you can't, that's not enough. Give yourself a gift. Give yourself a gift and forgive. The gospel teaches us to forgive.

And so, what is it? Number one, it's just giving up the perceived right to get even. When you forgive someone, you say, I don't need anything back from you. There's not a debt to settle. It's been settled.

Number two, it's agreeing not to hold it over their head, not to bring it up later, to freeze them out until they're really sorry.

And then third, it's just moving ahead. I'm going to do my best. It still hurts. I can still remember. I still have emotion around it. But because Christ has forgiven me everything, I'm trying with everything I have to move forward. And when we understand it, guys, when we understand what we've been given, we're able to give it. We're able to give the forgiveness that we have received in the gospel.

Several years ago, Pam and I were going to bed, and I don't even know what I said. It was an errant word that was unkind. I guarantee there was zero reason for it. I just fired off and I said something to Pam. You know what that's like in real time. You say something and it lands even with more weight than you had intended and it really wounds the other person. It was one of those. Pam's countenance changes in real time. And I thought, oh no, man, what have I done? At least the spirit had me in that moment. And I said, babe, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for what I just said. There's no excuse. I hate that I said that. Would you please forgive me? And she was quiet. She was wounded. She said, yeah, of course, of course I forgive you. I'd tell you exactly what I said if I could remember it, but because Pam hasn't brought it up, I can't. I can't remember it. I just remember how I felt and I went to bed.

I got up just a little bit before Pam the next morning and there was a first thought. I was like, man, what are you doing? Like, why would you say that? That's God's daughter. And you just fired off that statement, man, what are you doing? I was in the bathroom

getting ready for the morning and Pam came around and I think I was brushing my teeth. I could see her coming. I'm looking in the mirror, she's coming over here. And, and I just said, hey babe, again, I'm so sorry. And I asked her again, I said, hey, will you forgive me? And she didn't say anything. She came behind me. She stands behind me now. As a man of a little more girth than her, I can't see my wife. I can't see her and I don't know what she's going to do. Is she going to take me down at the knees? I didn't think she had a sharp object. I'm standing there and I see these little bitty arms, right? Like little, little T-Rex arms, and they just come around me, and I still can't see her. She sticks her head around me and she looks in the mirror at me. She goes. Hey, I said I forgive you. We're good. Next. And she walked out of the bathroom. That's what happens when someone has received the forgiveness of God, when they understand to the depths of which they've been forgiven. They can stick their head around and say hey, we're good. I forgive you. Next.

And friends, I just wonder if there's someone in our life that we need to stick our heads around and go. Hey, we're good. You're forgiven. Next. But I wouldn't let the sun go down without sending a text to initiate a conversation. Begin to pray or begin to ask someone else for counsel about what that would look like. Again, you may not have to reconcile. It may not be wise to completely restore the relationship because of different things that are going on. That's okay. But many of us today need to give and grant the forgiveness that we have been given.

The gospel teaches us to initiate. It teaches us to forgive. And then lastly the gospel helps us extend grace. The gospel helps us extend grace. live in a posture of grace. Ephesians 2:3 through 5 says this: Paul says all of us also lived among them at one time gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and its thoughts like the rest we were by nature deserving of wrath. You and I because of what we have done deserve the wrath of God. It's a terrifying thought.

I don't know if there was a playground bully when you were a kid – someone who came after you so you walked with your head on a swivel. They might get me. Imagine if that was God and he's coming after you. When you leave your house, He's looking to take out his wrath on you. Can you imagine? Many of us don't have to imagine as the passage

goes on but because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy... Mercy is just not releasing that debt owed to God. He made us alive with Christ and when we were dead in our transgressions, He made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions. It is by grace that you've been saved. It's by grace. You didn't have to satisfy the wrath of God on your own. Christ Jesus satisfied that wrath to the Father which is astounding. Something needs to happen. Something needs to be paid for. Someone needs literally needs to pay. Christ said it's not you. It's me on your behalf. Rather than the wrath of the Father you get grace. We go to the Father through Christ by grace. It's not what we've done. It's a free gift.

Then God relates to us in a posture of grace. When you woke up this morning if you're in Christ, God was for you There's a posture today you're walking around in. God is for you. He's not against you. He's not waiting for you to be good enough to get behind whatever it is that you're doing. Just the very nature that you are alive, that you are breathing. God's for you. He's got this kind, loyal love towards you and that, friends, is the way we are to relate to others. But so many times we're relating to them, wanting them to perform, wanting them to give us something. We're great when the other person is great. If they're not? We give them a cold shoulder until they do the things that we think they should do or that we deserve. Grace doesn't work that way. It is unmerited favor. It's a favor that we did not earn. Anything else is not grace. We've received it. We walk in it today and we give it to those that we love.

Several years ago, my kids were little. We've got adult kids now, but I remember this one. I've got two boys and two girls. The two boys that day had done something very egregious. You know, not all infractions are equal. This was one of those biggies, like a really, really big deal. So I sent them to the room because you don't want to discipline out of anger. Bad things happen that you regret and that they would as well. So, I sent them to the room and I'm livid. I left them back there quite a while. Did that ever happen to you as a kid? You got sent to your room and they just forgot that you were there. That's probably what they thought. They thought that dad just forgot about us and you know, he's watching TV or something. I was just trying to calm down.

So, I walked in and they and they knew they were in trouble, man. I could see these little heads looking over the edge of the bunk beds at me. I walked in and I could tell like they knew this was serious. I don't know what the conversations were like, but I imagined it was like hey, I don't think he's going to take one of us out. Maybe he totally is. I don't know. It could be you. It could be me, but I just want you to know my cash and the passwords to my video games are in the second drawer. And hey, if he takes me out you can have all my baseball cards and things like that. You know, they're just writing a verbal will to each other. I walked in and I said, hey guys, do you know what mercy is? Back to Ephesians 2 and they say nothing. They say nothing, and they're like this is entrapment. We don't want it. We don't want to play along. We want our lawyer. We're not falling for it. I say guys, mercy is when we don't get something that we deserve and so today I'm going to give you mercy for what you did and man, I mean, the room changed. The lights are burning brighter. They're smiling. Everything's better.

And I said, hey guys, do you know what grace is? All right again everything's changed and I don't know that they were doing this but kind of the way I remember it is they're on the edge of their beds, you know, like no, father, please teach us. What is this amazing teaching of grace? What is that? We want to know. I said grace is when we get something that we don't deserve. I said, what do you guys deserve? They're like big trouble. I said, let's go get ice cream. Are you serious? Yeah, we'll do this one time, and we went to Braums. We have Braums in north Texas. So, we've got that that gift. We got two scoops, and we sat there and we just talked about grace.

Listen. Don't shoot me an email. I know that two scoops of ice cream compared to the grace of God is not even categorically close. I understand that. But if you're eight and you thought your life was about to end and now you're eating a double scoop of ice cream, to them it was about as close as we could get to the biblical text. We just sat there and said man, isn't it amazing? When God is for us irrespective of the ways we rebel – is that not amazing? Did they fully comprehend? Probably not. I do remember this the next time when some version of the same story happened. They went back to their room so I could calm down. I came in and they're like, hey dad. We want grace. I said, hey, do you guys know

what the word justice means? Yeah, they didn't like that one as much. They didn't like it nor do I. Friends, we have received the grace of God in the gospel. It's amazing and it's so much better than two scoops. I mean It's not categorically close. You woke up this morning, and the God of the universe is for you and yet we have the audacity at times to relate to our spouses, to our friends in a conditional manner or out of wrath until they somehow repay us. Grace says I don't care what you did yesterday. I don't care if you met my needs. I don't care if I felt energized in your presence. I just want you to know I am for you. And we've got a category for that, friends, because we've received it and we give it to our spouse.

At the conference we talked a lot about how different skills, different things and techniques are always helpful. There's actually great research that when a couple receives training, it's called the intervention. They receive some new skills, and their marriage gets better. But what happens over time is it tends to revert back to where it was unless there is another intervention. That's secular research would say. It makes sense. It's almost like you need a tune up.

You've got a category for that. My contention is that if we understand, think about, meditate on the gospel and ask God, how can I give that to my spouse? We don't always need these new interventions. We don't always need boosters because we'll have more than enough content to execute on if we can just quiet our hearts and remind ourselves of how we have experienced the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be amazed. Again, It makes it so easy to give that to our spouse and you can have skills or not. I think skills are really, really helpful but I would say if you understand that you don't need skills. You don't need marriage conferences especially if you just have a deep love for Christ. You're going to open the scriptures and do whatever it says.

And so, I'll close with this. We have a friend, and she sat at our kitchen table. Her husband wanted a divorce. He was deploying overseas and told her do not come. Do not come. I don't want you to come. I don't want to be married to you. I don't like you. Please don't come. She was really fearful in a way that I still can't get my mind around. So, the thought of getting on an airplane was terrifying. It was terrifying to live in a foreign country. It was terrifying to be in a place that she didn't know anyone. It was terrifying. But she had

faith. My only play now is Jesus. I don't have any other cards in my hand. I'm just going to follow and obey Jesus. So, she went she went overseas with her husband and her kids. She didn't know the language in the place where she didn't know anyone. She would open her Bible every single day and lay it in her lap. She would just read it and said some version of God, will you show me whatever it is I'm supposed to do and give me the courage to do what you show me? I want to obey what is in here. You're my only hope. She did that for several years. We caught up with her when they came back to the States, and they are doing amazing. They're doing amazing. They're actually leading in a marriage ministry. I bet you they've got a book in them. It's been an unbelievable story.

And so Pam and I sat around at the table and we just said well, hey, tell us the story. Tell us the difference. Tell us what you learned. She would begin to tell us some different things, very similar to some of the things we told you yesterday and she would almost verbatim give us something that would come out of research, something that would come out of a marriage book as if she had locked those lines in her mind. She's kicking them out to us and this happened probably five times and she said she would say something. Then I would say, Oh, so you read this book, and she looked at me confused. No, I never read that. I'd say that's the whole premise of the book. And that happened five different times. She hadn't read all those books. Maybe what she did was she actually understood the depths of which God had loved her and she tried to give that love to at that time a very obstinate man. And maybe she asked the Spirit to help her do what she couldn't conceive of her own ability to do and He strengthened her. And maybe she asked God to remind her just how forgiven she was so that she could forgive her spouse. And maybe she read John 13 when Jesus's very last words to his disciples were you have watched me love you. Now I want you to love one another just as I have loved you. Maybe that is what she did, which is to say that's exactly what she did.

So, friends, I think you should read marriage books. I think you should go to marriage conferences. But if I could give you one piece of advice in marriage, in any relationship, in the workplace, it would be to remember the gospel and just ask the Spirit

for wisdom, for insight and courage, about how to extend that to others who just like you are in need of God's grace.

Let me pray for us. Father, we can stand up here and we can give tips and tricks and techniques which are helpful. They are and I don't mean to minimize them. But what we need more than more than anything, what will help us over the long term, what will give us a reason, what would give us a why when we tend to ask how questions is the gospel. If there are friends in here who haven't responded to that incredible offer of grace, of forgiveness, of mercy, I pray they would do so today. And then for my friends in the room who have responded, who have bent their knee to you and said I don't have what it takes. I need your mercy, forgiveness, and grace, Father, would you help us live out that gospel and give it to the person that's sitting next to us, the person that's in our home, the person that is in the workplace. May we not be the unmerciful servant who receives incredible forgiveness but is too stingy to extend it. Would you help us do that? In Christ's name we pray, amen.