

Covenant: God Loves

- Well, we've looked at God and God creating us and God revealing Himself to us and God creating a perfect environment for us and God desiring a relationship with us, and then we betray God. And so, what I wanna do is emotionally bring you to a place just for a moment where in as much as possible you look at things a little bit from God's perspective and that's empathy is ultimately sitting where someone else sits to see what they see and feel what they feel. So let me ask you this, who has betrayed you? Betrayal. What they have done is inexcusable, it's inexplicable, and it's awful. It's a breach, it's a violation, it's a horror. Who has betrayed you? And then consider for a moment that you and I we have betrayed God and the people who sin against us well, they're sinning against an imperfect sinner, but were sinning against a perfect God. We're rebelling against the source of love and life. We are self-destructing, and this is where ultimately when Jesus comes, He comes to save us from Satan, sin, death, hell, the wrath of God and to save us from ourselves. So how have you responded to betrayal? And then consider for a moment that God responded to our betrayal with grace. It says in Genesis 3, after they sinned, God showed up. That's grace. He showed up. He could have just abandon them. And sometimes when someone betrays us, that's what we do, I'm done with you. God comes, not only does God come, He comes looking for those who are hiding from Him. Not only that, He calls out to them to communicate with them. Not only that, God covers their nakedness, shame and guilt, and God makes them a promise that Jesus is coming to fix this mess. That's the grace of God. And the language for that is covenant. That's the Bible's language for relationship. It's how God pursues His betrayers. And just to fully again, I wanna revisit this point, and then we'll move on, to fully understand or appreciate because we tend to think of it from our perspective, right? Like, I've sinned, God give me grace. Imagine God owing us nothing, because let me ask you this when the demons fell, did He pursue them for loving covenantal relationship and promised Jesus for them? No, He gave something to His human family that He did not make available to His divine family, and that's a covenant. That's a covenant and that again, is the Bible's language for relationships. So before we get into it, let me back up and ask the question about the problem of evil 'cause we're gonna get into covenant is how God overcomes evil with relationship, but it raises the question, okay, well, why was this problem in the first place? And that is the problem of evil and it's a problem for every religion, every philosopher, every ideology, and the basic gist of the question is this, and if you're a person who wants to study this in more depth, the word you're looking for is theodicy, T-H-E-O-D-I-C-Y, theodicy, and it's how we answer this question if God is all powerful, is He? Yes. All-knowing, is He? Yes. All good, is He? Yes. Then why is there suffering and evil? How many of you have asked this question in a moment of suffering? How many of you've buried a loved one and asked, "Why do good people die and bad people live long lives? Why do bad things happen to good people, and why do good things happen to bad people? And if God is out there, then why does the world look the way that it does? And why is my life feel the way that it does?" And there are six options. There is no God, that's the answer of atheism. All we have is the material world not the supernatural world, therefore everything is cause and effect. There is no God, there's no one beyond the system to rescue or help or save or fix. We're on our own and we're doomed. That's why atheism ultimately leads to despair and suicide. There

is a God but God is not all powerful. That's called finite Godism. That God loves us, and God sees the problem, and it's like His hands are tied, He can't quite fix it. God's fighting, but He's losing. He's not all powerful. God is not all-knowing, meaning, God doesn't see the future, and so when things happen, He's just as surprised as we are, and He's in a reactionary mode. This is called evolutionary Godism, it's an evolutionary view of God. And there's a Christian heresy called open theism that teaches the same thing. That the future is open to God, but He doesn't know the future. Let me tell you this about God. He sees everything in total and complete, finished state, that God knows the end from the beginning. That He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning in the end. 25% of the Bible when it was written was prophetic in nature, predicting the future. We'll get into that in future lectures, because not only does God know the future, God rules over it. I'll give you an analogy. Recently I was watching television, Gracie and I were my wife, and we're flipping between channels. How many of you when you watch TV, I mean, for those of you who are old like me, and you have something called the TV, when you watch the TV, you flip between two channels 'cause you don't like the commercials, right? And so we had an old biography on that was a series of news reports about World War II, and then the other channel we were watching was the current nightly news of things that are transpiring today. As we watch the nightly news of what was transpiring today, some things made us very upset. We were emotional, and as we watched what was old news, we didn't have the same emotional response. For God, everything is the History Channel, nothing is the nightly news. When God sees it, He sees what He already saw, He knows it all. God is not all-good. This is called pantheism or panentheism that God is in all or all cumulatively is God that there is no God beyond the system, that God is an energy and a life force, not a personal being, but an impersonal force that is at work in rivers and trees and animals, and we've all got our spirits. And they would say that God is not good. That's why the symbol of pantheism and panentheism is, for example, like the yin and the yang, it's black and white showing that God is good and evil. There is no suffering in evil. Some they would hold their philosophy called subjectivism, and that is, well it feels like suffering to you, but, I disagree, I think it's or it's cause and effect. And then some religions like Buddhism will say that suffering is an illusion. So that is deny suffering. Here's what the Bible says, "God has not done yet, so live by faith, not by sight." It's as if you and I are in the middle of watching a film, and it's bleak and it's dark, and it's horrifying. And in the end, the hero saves the day, and we're like, "Oh my gosh, what an amazing finale that was." That's the storyline of the Bible. That all of human history is Satan and demons encouraging us to join in their rebellion, and nothing is better until Jesus shows up, until Jesus comes again. We need a hero, we need a rescuer, we need somebody outside of the system. Let me tell you this, this is the basis for all modern storytelling, and if you like those superhero movies, almost everyone is, the planet is in crisis, there is like someone who is like half from another real, half from this realm, and they're coming in to save us, and to redeem our realm. I'm telling you that everybody who's paying for an Avengers or Marvel's ticket ultimately wants Jesus and they just don't know it, that's what I'm telling you. And so the storyline of the Bible is that God is going to work it all out, and until He does, we need to trust Him. That's what faith is. Faith is seeing that you can trust the God who sees the future. And I'll give you some Scripture on this, Romans 8:28, "We know that for those who love God," what things? All things, that's encouraging, right? How many of you have had some brutal stuff in life? "God works all things for good." God is so good that He can even use evil for good. It doesn't mean that God causes evil, but God

controls evil. I'll give you an example. Worst thing that ever happened, the murder of Jesus. Best thing that ever happened, the murder of Jesus. It was evil and God used it for good. So at the cross we see Satan, attacks, death, destruction and the victory of God. In Genesis 50, there's a story of a guy named Joseph. He had brothers who became jealous of him, threw him in a hole, left him for dead, sold him into slavery. Many years later, he rises up, and goes from a pit to a palace to a prison, and then ultimately he's back into a palace. And when he's ruling and reigning, and he's very powerful in a fluid, his brothers show up and they're in a desperate needy financial position, and he gives them grace and mercy and they're worried that he is going to seek vengeance on them. And here's their conversation. It's one of the most beautiful forgiveness and reconciliation stories in the whole Bible, and it gives us hope for our families. He looks at his brothers, he says, "You meant what? Evil." You did what Satan did, and you made an evil plot and plan to destroy. That's evil. It's important for us to retain this language so that we could say that certain things are evil, they're not just alternatives. Need to be able to say, "We're murdering babies that are already born." That's evil. Let's just use the word and call it what it is. It's not a choice, it's an evil. He looks at them and he says, "What you have done is evil, and you meant evil against me, but God," that's the key, but God. "But God meant it for good to bring about that many people should be kept alive as they are today, so do not fear." He looks at them and he says, "What you intended was evil, God used it for good, so don't worry, I'm not gonna punish you, I'm gonna praise Him, because He's bigger than you, and He's better than you, and He has grace for you, and He has grace for me, and He has grace for us to share with each other." That's amazing, right? And so what I'm telling you, I'll give you an analogy. There was a group called the Puritans and they would commonly use this analogy of a loom. Any of you weavers or knitters? I'm not, probably not a real shocking reveal there, I'm not real crafty. But what they would use the analogy of is for those of you who weave or knit and you look under loom and you look from the bottom up, what do you see? Knots, phrase, there's no pattern, it's chaos, it's unattractive. If you gain perspective and you're looking down on the loom from above the loom, what do you see? A beautiful symmetrical pattern. And they would use that analogy to say right now, we live under the sun to quote Ecclesiastes that here we are on the earth and we're looking up meaning we're living our life under the loom. God, there's just death and destruction and fray and pain and chaos, I don't know what you're doing. But there will be a day when you're seated with God, and you look down at your life and human history, and you realize, oh, He was weaving a beautiful tapestry and faith, trust that what God is doing is not what we are seeing. Does that make sense? So that being said, God's answer to sin is covenant. It's covenant, it's relationship. And so when we're talking about covenant, Genesis 17:7, God says, as one example, "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring throughout generations, for an everlasting covenant to be your God, and to be God to your offspring after you." God is saying, "I am going to have a relationship with you, and I am going to bless you, and I'm gonna keep blessing you forever." Question, why? Because God is good. We are bad, but God is good. And God's good is bigger than your bad. That's the good news of Christianity. So He says it this way in Leviticus 26:12, He says, "I will walk among you." you know what that is? Relationship. I'm a dad, I got five kids, I love being around my kids, I love being with my family. God's a father, He likes to be with His kids, He likes to be with His family. So the Bible says that He inhabits the praise of His people. When the family gets together, dad likes to be there. He says, "I will walk among you and I will be your God and you shall be my

people." This is a constant refrain through the Old Testament. God says, I'm looking for a family, I'll be your dad, you'd be my family. I'm looking for a family, I'll be your dad, you'd be my family. God is so relational. This is all the way back to the Trinity. That God is always looking for love, God is always looking for relationship, God is always looking for covenant, not because He needs it, But because it's who He is. This is something that I think will spend all eternity just trying to actually plumb the depths of and figure out. God, why would you love people who don't love you? Why would you pursue people who don't pursue you? Why would you endure people who betray you? Why would you forgive people who disobey you? Why would you bless people who hurt you? And some people will say, "Well, God picks us because we're good," and I would say, "No, that's not the story of the Bible. God picks us because He's good." That's the family of God. And so this concept of covenant, it appears hundreds of times in the Bible. The Hebrew word is . It's translated covenant love, loving kindness, mercy, steadfast love, loyal devotion, love, commitment, loyalty, patience and reliability. There's a kids Bible called The Jesus Storybook Bible and it calls covenant, God's never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love. My kids are little and I tuck 'em in bed at night, and I'd read them The Jesus Storybook Bible, that was one of the refrains that God loves us. God loves you with a never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love. Eight things that covenant reveals about God. Number one, God is relational. My goodness. God's relational, He wants a relationship with you. God is gracious, He doesn't need anything from us. He's a giver, not a taker. Number three, God is sovereign. He initiates the relationship, we respond. We see this all the way back to the pattern of Adam and Eve. They're not looking for God, God comes looking for them. God is also the Lord. That means He's in authority, and so He says repeatedly, "I am establishing my covenant with you." So He is the one who's in charge and in authority. Number five, God is also holy, and oftentimes in the Old Testament, when a covenant is made, a sacrifice would be made, and they would literally call it the cutting of a covenant. So let's say two families were entering into some covenant, they would sacrifice an animal, and they would both pass between the two parts of the animal, declaring to God, if I betray the terms of the covenant do to me as we have done to this animal. I invite you God to curse and judge me. So it was called the cutting of a covenant. That's why the concept of blood that repeatedly appears in the Bible, it's connected to the covenant because the covenant is cut in blood and ultimately that leads us to the blood of Christ and the New Covenant. In addition, God is loving, number six. He blesses, and He's gracious and He's kind and He's loving and He's forbearing. Number seven, He is just, He deals with our sin. And number eight, God is inexhaustible in His ability to pursue covenant relationship, you can't exhaust Him. All your other relationships at some point, you're gonna wear that person out. How many of you are married and you're like, "We've reached a point where we've worn each other out. You've taken all I've got, I got nothing left for you." God never gets there. God never runs out of love, God never got runs out of grace, God never runs out of energy, God never runs out of patience, God never runs out of concern, God is inexhaustible in His pursuit of covenant relationship with His people. So what I wanna do and it's in your notes, and I'll run through it quickly, and then I wanna talk about it practically. There are covenants in the Bible. So God makes a covenant with people who are representatives of groups of people. So the first covenant is what we'll call the Adamic Covenant. It was God's covenant with Adam, and this is in Genesis 1 and 2 and Hosea 6:7 says that God had a covenant with Adam. And in each of these, the mediator of the covenant was

Adam and he was the representative of humanity. So God shows up to have a covenant relationship with Adam and humanity through him. God pronounces blessings, "Be fruitful, multiply, increase the number, fill the earth, subdue it," so there's blessing. There are also conditions in every covenant. "You can partake of any tree, but not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." In addition, there is a sign of the covenant and that was the Sabbath day. On that day, you're supposed to cease from your work and that is the sign that you are my people, and then the covenant community is typified in marriage. One man, one woman consummate their covenant. You need to know that that's the functional definition of marriage. It's covenant and consummation. And then lastly, the promise of Jesus is given in the Adamic Covenant. In Genesis 3:15 it is stated, God states that ultimately through the line of the woman would come a male son. What's interesting about that is in the Old Testament, it's patriarchal, it always mentions the dads, but with Jesus in the promise called the proto-evangelium on the first gospel in Genesis 3, there is a promise that Jesus is coming as a male child to be the dragon slayer. He is coming through the woman, and there's no mention of a father. All the other genealogies in the Bible, they mentioned the father, it's 'cause Jesus wouldn't have an earthly father. And the promise is made Jesus is coming to fix the problem and to establish the relationship of covenant. Then you move forward, God starts into a covenant with Noah, the Noahic Covenant. The mediator is Noah and his family for all humanity. The blessings given to them, they're given grace for life, children, and they're spared from the flood. The conditions are that they're not supposed to murder or take innocent life. This is all in Genesis 6 and 9. The sign of the covenant internally is faith, but externally it's the rainbow. And God says the rainbow is my promise that I'll never bring that kind of flood to the earth again. And I told you, God create Satan counterfeits, He's also counterfeited the rainbow. It's a demonic counterfeit. In addition, the covenant community is a family and the promise is that Jesus is coming as a savior. I wanna do this briefly, I won't do this with all the covenants, but if you've got a Bible, go to Genesis 6. How many of you have heard the story of Noah in this way? Noah was a good guy, he got a boat, the bad guys, they got to swim. How many of you have kind of heard it like that? The moral of the story is be a good guy. Was Noah righteous or an unrighteous man? He was unrighteous and God made him righteous. Okay, let me show you the Noahic Covenant, and I used to read this story to my kids when they were little in the kids Bible, and they all got it wrong. So my kids will testify, I got a black sharpie, and I edited all the kids Bibles in our house to retell the story of Noah. Here's the real story of Noah. Genesis 6:5, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention to the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Let me just tell you, it hadn't been very long since God made everything very good. And everything, everything is on fire. "And the Lord, regretted or grieved that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart." You need to know this about God, sin is not just the breaking of God's laws, sin is the breaking of God's heart. How many of you, your parent, your child has been rebellious, and it breaks your heart? God is a father with a father's heart, and when we rebel against Him, we self-harm and that grieves His heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land and the animals and creeping things and birds of the heaven for I'm sorry that I have made them." God is saying, you know what? I made everybody, they messed it all up. I'm gonna get rid of everybody and we'll start over with Noah and his family. The next verse, "But Noah found favor," that's the Hebrew word for grace, "in the eyes of the Lord." Everybody was evil,

including Noah. Noah got grace. And then what's the next line? "Noah was a righteous man." Was he righteous because of his behavior or God's grace? God's grace. That's how you and I come into covenant relationship with God. We're part of a fallen family here in the world, God knows our heart, sees our deeds, hears our words, knows our motives. It breaks His heart, and then He says, "I'm going to give you grace so you can be righteous." So what comes first, the righteousness or the grace? The grace. The only thing way to be righteous is by the grace of God. This is all pointing and foreshadowing to the forthcoming of Jesus, that He would take your place, that He would put you in His place. I'm just reminded of 2 Corinthians 5:21, it's one of my favorite scriptures that says, "God made Him who knew no sin to become sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Somebody said, "I wanna be righteous." You need grace from Jesus to be declared righteous in the sight of God. That's how covenant works, it's by grace. It's what God does, not what we do. Anything we do is in response to what God has done. That's the Adamic Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham is a, he's got a pagan dad, he's a pagan guy, he's a Gentile, he doesn't know the Lord, and God just shows up literally and says, I'm paraphrasing, obviously, but, "Hi, I'm Yahweh, I'm gonna be your God and bless you and your family, and I'm gonna bring Jesus through your barren, elderly wife, and He's gonna fix everything that's wrong in the world." Abraham didn't deserve it, didn't ask for it, wasn't looking for it. It's like literally somebody knocks on your door and says, "I wanna bless you and make the rest of your life awesome." Well, welcome. That's amazing. I didn't invite you, I didn't know you had this opportunity, I wasn't pursuing it, but I'll take it. In the Abrahamic Covenant, the mediator is Abraham and his family to all humanity. The blessing are of a land and lineage that they would be given the promised land and that through them would ultimately come a family line that would bring Jesus. The conditions are that he is to walk with God, he is to maintain relationship with God. The internal sign of the covenant is faith, the external sign of the covenant is circumcision on the males, the concept of the covenant community is in the context of a family, and the promise of Jesus is that He would come as the seed or offspring of Abraham. And you go to Galatians 3, and Paul says, it's offspring singular or seed singular, not offsprings or seed plural, meaning that the fulfillment of the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant is not the nation of Israel, but it's Jesus Christ, one person who came through the family line of Abraham. So all covenant points to Jesus, and relationship by grace. The Mosaic Covenant is obviously with Moses. We find him in the book of Exodus. He is the mediator between the kingdom of God and the people on the earth that are under the kingship of the Pharaoh. The blessings promised is God's gonna free you to worship Him. The conditions are that you need to obey Him, and so the 10 commandments come in the middle of the Mosaic Covenant in Exodus 20. The sign of the covenant is always faith internally, but for them the sign of the covenant was Passover externally, that they would literally take an animal without spot or blemish, symbolizing and foreshadowing the sinless Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," John the baptizer says. Paul tells the Corinthians, I think it's in 1 Corinthians 5:7, that Christ our Passover Lamb has been slain. So they say animal that's part of the Mosaic Covenant, and the Passover is all foreshadowing the coming of Jesus to make covenant possible by grace through His death. So they would name their sins, they would slaughter the animal as a substitute, and then they would literally paint the doorposts of their home with the blood of the lamb so that when the death angel and the wrath of God came, it would literally passover those homes that had faith internally

demonstrated externally, through the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, and the painting of the door posts in blood. Most Jewish people don't understand Passover is about Jesus, 'cause everything is about Jesus. That's the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, the covenant community is a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, and the promise of Jesus is His coming as our redeemer, as our rescuer, as our liberator. He's gonna free us from bondage to Satan, as He freed them from bondage to Pharaoh. He'll take us from the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of God, from slavery to freedom, from idolatry to worship. All of that is part of the Mosaic Covenant. And then comes the Davidic Covenant, and this is about a king and the kingdom. The mediator is David, the blessings are, you're gonna get a king, his name's David. He's gonna have a kingdom and you get to be citizens of the kingdom. And God will bless that king, and then the kingdom of heaven will start to show up in this particular kingdom on the earth, you're going to leave kingdom down. The conditions are that if you sin, there will be consequences. The sign is faith internally, the external sign of faith is the throne. So the king who sits on the throne is God's anointed, and he's ruling and reigning as a vice region under the kingdom of heaven. And the promise of Jesus is coming to be the King of kings to establish a kingdom that never ends. So the whole point of the Davidic Covenant was, you're gonna get a king and a kingdom, and that's a placeholder until you get King Jesus in the kingdom that never ends. And then, all of this culminates in the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the fulfillment of all covenants, and it's how we come into loving relationship with God. The mediator between us and God in the New Covenant is Jesus Christ. I think it's 1 Timothy 2, there is one mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus. So the way that this relationship is reconciled is through Jesus, the blessings that we receive are salvation, the presence and power of the person of the Holy Spirit, and faith in Jesus. The inward sign is faith. The external signs are communion and baptism. Baptism is your way of showing I believe in the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus, communion is your way of saying I believe Jesus died on the cross, broken body, shed blood in my place for my sins. It's external signs demonstrating internal faith and the covenant community is marriage, and family and church family, and it's relational. That's the New Covenant. Every covenant is initiated by God, because God pursues. Every covenant is made possible by the grace of God, 'cause that's the only way we have a relationship with God. And every covenant is secured and maintained, because God is faithful even when His people are unfaithful. The Bible says this in the New Testament, even when we are faithless He is what? Faithful. Some of you have had a relationship with your kid where they were faithless, but you were faithful or maybe you had a season with a spouse. They were faithless, but you were faithful, meaning you're loving and pursuing until they're returning and changing. That's God. That's God. And the reason I need you to know this is because your relationship with God, ultimately is the prototype for many other relationships. Before we get into the specifics of that, let me just summarize this. Jesus is a better Noah who brings judgment of sin, salvation by grace, and a brand new world. Jesus is a better Abraham, who is the blessing to the nations of the earth. Jesus is a better Moses who has conquered our Pharaohs of Satan, sin death, and liberated us to worship God because He fulfilled the law for us. And Jesus is a better David who is seated on a throne ruling as King of kings, Lord of lords and coming again to establish a kingdom that never ends. So every covenant is a foreshadowing of Jesus being greater, and if you wanna do a little bit of study on this, you could just read the whole book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews takes the Old Testament covenants, and then just says, and Jesus is greater, and Jesus is

greater, and Jesus is greater, and Jesus is greater. And then all of the covenants were pointing to the greatness of Jesus Christ. Now, the reason I tell you this, is that if God has covenantal relationships with us, that means as God's people, we need to understand how to have covenant relationships. And this is different than non-Christians because you don't understand covenantal relationship unless you have a covenant relationship with God, and then that becomes the pattern, prototype and precedent for your other relationships. So let me explain how this works very, very practically, and I wanna take it from sort of this somewhat complicated Old Testament theology to make it very practical relationally. Paul tells us in the New Testament to pursue sound doctrine, the word there is healthy. One of the ways you have sound healthy, doctrine is you have healthy relationships, 'cause our God is a relational God, and He wants the covenant with Him to impact our covenant with them. He wants this relationship to make these relationships better. Next slide please. What is the role of a covenant head? So in every covenant, there's a head, okay. In the Adamic Covenant, who was the human head? Adam. Noahic Covenant, who's the human head? Noah. Davidic Covenant, David, Mosaic Covenant, Moses, New Covenant who's the head? Jesus Christ. It's where it says in Ephesians and Colossians and Corinthians, He is the head of the church. That language of head is covenantal. In a covenant, there is a head who is responsible for the covenant, they bear some responsibility as the senior leader. Now, the reason I'm driving toward all of this is that this affects our view of marriage. Malachi 2, "Have we all not one Father? Has not one God created us? Why are we faithless?" Why are we breaking our covenant? "If God is faithful, why are we faithless to one another profaning the covenant?" God says, "I wanna talk to you my sons about covenant. You're breaking covenant with your wife, because you're also breaking covenant with me." And the second thing you do, you cover the Lord's altar with tears. They're coming to church like, "God our family's in crisis, we're having a problem. My wife hates me. It's a total disaster," "Because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand." Peter says something similar, I think it's in 1 Peter 3, where he says that if a man is sort of harsh, domineering, overbearing, that God doesn't answer his prayers. What God is saying is until you give grace to her, there's no more grace for me. If I'm gonna give it to you, you need to share it with her. And if you're not willing to share it with her, I'm not willing to give it to you. Here they're coming to God saying, "God, we have this huge problem." He's like God's not going to just fix your wife. He first needs to fix you. Or we say this, every time I officiate a wedding, I put the bride and the groom together, and have them hand off the flowers and stuff and I have them hold hands and look at each other, and I always say, there are only two problems in this relationship, this man and this woman. Those are the only two problems in this relationship. And I say, "And the good news is between them is Jesus and He's the only hope for that problem." That's the New Covenant. And marriage is a covenant between husband, wife and God. It's between husband, wife and God. Some of you say, "Our culture disagrees with marriage." Yeah, 'cause Satan counterfeits what God creates. "You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, 'Why does He not? God, why don't you fix it? Why don't you fix my wife? Why don't you fix my family? Why don't you fix my problems?' Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant." Marriage is a covenant. Marriage is a covenant. Marriage is sacred. Now people that don't know God don't know that, but we know

God's so we know that. That ultimately the relationship between a husband and wife is, I talked about early on that were made in the image and likeness of God, that God said, "It's not good to be alone." Everything was good and very good, and God said it wasn't good to be alone. And so God created a woman to be with the man and His answer was the covenant of marriage. And Jesus says that, rather Paul says in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, that husbands are to love their wives like Christ loves the church, that's covenantal. It's covenantal. So a husband who loves his wife is reflecting, imaging, mirroring Jesus love for His bride, the church. And the man who is abusing his wife is functioning as a heretic because that's not how Jesus treats His bride. Jesus doesn't batter His bride, Jesus doesn't intimidate, domineer, threaten or punish His bride. He loves her covenantally, and that love changes her. So marriage is covenantal. And then, next slide please, in the covenant of marriage, who is the head? The husband. This is controversial. Everything I say is controversial. But the man is the head. It says that Christ is the head of the church and the husband is the head of the family. Okay, say this. Number one, you are in covenant with God, and Jesus Christ is your head. So any guy who hears this and says, "I heard that I'm in charge," no, no, no, you're under authority. You're in covenant with Jesus and He wants you to treat your family like He treats His family. Number two, for a Christian family, the husband is supposed to function as the head, and what that means is that he is to reflect Jesus to the family. If you remove the concept of headship from the person of Jesus, it can get domineering and overbearing and unloving and frightening. They say, okay, husband, father, Jesus wants you to treat your family like He treats his family, covenantally, lovingly, patiently, generously, graciously. So what we believe is what I'll call singular headship and plural leadership. Who leads the family? The husband and wife. That's why the Bible says children obey your mother and father 'cause they're plural leaders, singular head, plural leaders, singular head, plural leaders. This is the pattern that God establishes in the Trinity. The father is the head, and the Son and Spirit are plural leaders. This is the pattern of precedent in the church. Jesus is the head, and then there are pastors who are a plurality of leaders under the headship of Jesus. In the family, the husband and wife are the leaders and the husband is the head. And it doesn't say that if he wants to he can be the head, or if the thumb wrestle and he wins, he can be the head. The question is not is the man the head? The question is the man a good head or a bad head? And here's what it means to be the head. It means you take responsibility even if it's not your fault. Most of the problems in the world are because of men. And the answer is to encourage the men to be in covenant with Jesus and then to treat others covenantally. So let me ask this in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sin, who sinned first? Eve did. She partook, gave some to her husband. She sinned first, he sinned second. God showed up, who did he ask for first? Adam. Here's the line Genesis 3, "Adam, where are you?" He goes from Adam to Eve to Satan, because that is supposed to be the org chart, that's supposed to be the governance structure. You're the head, your wife is co-leader, what the heck happened? And so as men, this should not cause us to be arrogant or braggadocious. It should actually be very humbling and a little bit overwhelming. To be the head means you bear additional responsibility. Adam and Eve are each held responsible because they're both leaders, but Adam is held firstly responsible because he is the head of the family. The difference between fault and responsibility is this. Sometimes men will say with their family or their wife or their kid, it's not my fault, but it is your responsibility. How do I know that? Who is my head? Jesus Christ. My sin, is it His fault? No. Did He make it His responsibility? Yes, He did that on the cross for me. So

my covenant head took responsibility for that which was not His fault, and He paid a price so I could be blessed. Now as covenant head, when I am responsible, I need to repent and own my sin, something Jesus never asked to do. And even when it's not my fault, maybe some member of my household does exactly the opposite of what I instructed them to do. I still take responsibility, because I love and I wanna pay a price so that they can be blessed, even if that comes at my expense. This is the essence of what it means to be a Christian husband and father. So let me compare and contrast this. There's a difference between a contract and a covenant. I teach this to the men, but I just feel inclined to share it with you. Here's the difference. A contract is between two people. How many of you have contracts for work, buy house, buy car, conduct business, sell goods, transact services? It's a contract. Two people. Covenant, three people. That's why when we get together for a Christian wedding, and it's in the presence of God, it really is in the presence of God. Like He's really there and He is a witness to the covenant. It's three people, it's three people. In a contract, I seek my will, in a covenant we see God's will. Most of the time what happens in a marriage is the husband and the wife are at war, who's gonna win? Who's gonna lose? The question is not who's gonna win, the question is who's gonna worship? If the husband and wife will worship God, then they will have an aligned goal, there'll be an agreement. So for Grace and I, we come to agreement because we're one and it's not good to be alone, but we will fast and pray on difficult decisions, asking what is God's will? Not what do I want or what does she want? Together, what does He want? It seeking the will of God. In a contract, you serve me, in a covenant, I serve you. Possibly the clearest example of a covenant is a mother with a child. What does it benefit a mother to have a child? Answer, there's no benefit there. The whole process is painful, the baby comes out, it's a situation, and then they just throw up on you and poop and yell at you all night. So you laugh because you don't have newborns, those that have newborns, they're feeling this deep in the soul. So what does the mother do? She serves the baby and she's not expecting the baby to return the service. It's grace and grace is one way. So in a contract, you serve me, in a covenant, I serve you. In a contract, your performance is recorded. If you don't abide by the terms, the contract is canceled. If you don't meet your sales quota, you don't get your bonus. In a covenant, no record of wrong is kept. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13, that love keeps no record of wrongs. You're going for a performance review? Boss is like, "Well, here's all your failures." When you go stand before Jesus, He's gonna tell you about His righteousness, not your failures. So how you deal with your spouse and your kids needs to be covenantal not contractual. In a contract, failure is punished, and in a covenant failure was punished at the cross. So when you fail, I don't punish you 'cause Jesus was already punished for you. And because we're both in the New Covenant, we're not gonna punish each other, we're gonna forgive and love one another, and we're gonna do grace based relationship. In a contract, it's a win lose. One of the most famous counselors, if I can use that word in quotes on television, and he does a lot of marriage counseling. I won't say his name, but he started off as a business negotiator between contract negotiations between companies. as an arbiter, what do you want? What do you want? Okay, let's find an agreement where we can both sign the contract. All he did was he took those skills to marriage. What does he want? What does she want? Okay, let's try and find some agreement where you both give a little and get a little. But the goal ultimately is, we both want you to feel like you won, but one of us is gonna win and one of you is gonna lose. In a covenant, it's a win win. Everybody wins because God loves everybody in the covenant. That's

one of the ways you know something is God's will. Everybody's blessed, 'cause God loves the whole family. And what a contract creates is a professional relationship. And what a covenant produces is a personal relationship. Does that make sense? So contract is for work, covenant is for home. Think of it like two hands, covenant, contract. When you go to work, you go to business. What should you use? Contract. We're in a fallen world you need a contract. When you come home, you use covenant or contract? Covenant. So what tends to happen is some people are really good at contract, how many of you are really good at contract? Performance, results, to do less, execution, you're at, negotiation. You'll win at work and you'll lose at home. That's why some people don't leave work 'cause they don't know how to do covenant so they can't go home. So they keep doing contract, they stay at work. How many of you are really good at covenant, love, grace, mercy, relationship, patience? You might win at home, but you will lose at work. I'll give you an analogy or an illustration. There was a man I knew some years ago, very loving man, very loving Christian husband, father, and there was a home that he wanted to renovate, and do a remodel on and then split the equity with the owner so that his family could own the home. So they moved in, and he did all of the work, and then the owner of the home came and said, "I need you to vacate, I'm selling the home." And he's like, "Home? This is our home. This is where we live. I've remodeled the whole thing out of pocket. I've spent all my money. Our agreement was that we would sell the home after I did the renovations and we would split the equity." And the man asked, "Where's your contract?" And he didn't have one? Because all he had was an understanding that everything should be covenantal. So his family went bankrupt. Though he was a loving, gracious man, his family went bankrupt. I'm not saying that contract is bad and covenant is good, I'm saying that contract is good for work and covenant is good for home. And some of our relationships are contractual, and some of our relationships must be covenantal. Does it make sense? How many of you, you have to raise your hands, but how many of you you've won here and lost here, you've won here and lost here, and the goal is to win at home and to win at work? What kills covenant is contractual thinking. I'll share with you one of the stupidest things I've ever said to my wife, Grace. Honestly, there are so many candidates. I can't tell you of the stupidest, but this is one of the finalists. We were arguing one night and we were standing in the bathroom. I'll never forget it. I looked at her and I said, "You know what? If you work for me, I would have fired you a long time ago." I'll just throw it out there. Not real covenantal. I had a contract. In my mind, I had a job description for Grace, and every time she didn't execute a duty, I made a record of wrong. That's contractual. She looked at me, she said, "That's the problem. I don't work for you, I'm your wife." Mic drop, collect the offering, Grace wins, right? But out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. In that moment, my frustration was, I wasn't getting what I wanted. You're not serving me. That's not how I want it done. I need to be winning here. That's not how Jesus treats me. That's not how Jesus treats me. So I had to repent to my wife and say, "Oh my gosh, babe, most of our conflict is that my thinking with you is contractual, not covenantal, and I need to repent of covenantal excuse me, I need to repent of contractual thinking in my marriage and have covenantal thinking in my marriage." And I'll close with this and then we'll do Q&A. Covenant is love, grace, mercy, blessing that comes from the head through the leaders to the members of the covenant. I'll close with this analogy on covenant thinking there was some years ago, our oldest daughter, Ashley, she was a young girl at the time, little girl. And I remember it was summertime and we were on vacation and we went to this pool, and I'm

flipping her and ooh, and she's jumping in and doing the dad thing. And this seemed like high school teenage girl comes to the pool and she's got a boy on each arm and she's wearing a very small bikini. And she's very flirtatious with the boys and it's awkward because here's a teenage girl in the bikini with two boys. And they jump in the water and one boy swim to one corner the pool, and the other boys swim to the other corner of the pool. And the girl was sort of looking at them flirtatiously, and then she swam over and made out with and was grinding on the one boy. And then when she finished, she swam across the pool and did the exact same thing with the other boy. My little girl is in the pool with me 'cause literally, it's her and I in the pool till they get in the pool. It's just the five of us, and it's very awkward for two of us at this point. My little girl looks at me, and she swims over. She's quiet and she's discreet about it. And she says, "Daddy, did you see that?" I said, "Yeah, I did." I said, "What do you think about that?" She said, "I think it's really sad she doesn't have a better daddy." That's covenantal thinking. The head is not protecting and blessing, and as a result, the members of the family are suffering