

Real Marriage - Key #6 Moving From Roommates To Soul Mates

- Maybe I should dare

- You should do this, 'cause I keep messing it up. This is like the 57th take. Pastor Mark Driscoll here with my wife and best friend Grace, and I wanna thank all of you through Mark Driscoll ministries who give any amount to pray at any time, or encourage with any email or social media posts. We've got a brand new sermon series, Real Marriage. It's six keys to unlocking all of your relationships, including your marriage that we're teaching right here at the Trinity Church. I'm preaching, we're doing Q&A and we'll give it all the way through markdriscoll.org. So thanks a bunch for helping us out. All right, we're there last week of Real Marriage moving from roommates to soulmates. How many of you are married? Where's my married people? All right take your hands down and hold hands. You're all gonna hold hands, just with your spouse. And if you say, "No pastor Mark, we fought all the way here. "We will not hold it." Then you totally... You need to hold both hands. You guys need double the grace and twice the help. How many of you are single? There's free coffee afterwards. See what you can figure out, meet somebody nice. If they're here for a marriage sermon, you know that there's hope. Okay, so that being said, what I wanna talk about today, is I wanna start by talking about single people and how, what we do in our single years sets us up for our married years. So the first half of the sermon will really be for you single folks. The second half for you, married folks. And I wanna talk firstly, about three marriage killers, bang, bang, bang! Here's the first one, casual dating. Okay, if you brought your date to the Trinity Church, this is the point that you'll be disappointed in. Casual date... I thought that was funny? Okay, anyways, casual dating is where I'm seeing multiple people. we're dating relating and fornicating. We're breaking commandments, we're not sure if we're gonna get married or date or I don't know what we're doing, we're just kinda, we're kind of hanging out. And the Bible talks about relationships, Song of Songs, one of the great love stories in the whole Bible says, "Promise me all women of Jerusalem, "not to awaken love until the time is right." And there are different seasons. So when you're single, it's not time. When you're falling in love, it's time to get to know each other. And then when you're married, you get to live together. You get to sleep together. There are some other things that do happen. And the problem is, when you do things before their time, that's where things get confused. Now, the reason I tell you this, is because most of us were born into a broken world. Meaning there was a social experiment in the 1960's and 70's, nobody really knew what the outcome would be, but it was pornography, no fault divorce, legalized abortion, birth control, sexual revolution, free love, you know, get high, get naked, just get in trouble, and then we'll just see what happens. And most of you are those people's children. And you're like, it did not work. I know, I know, I know, that's why we're here. And many of you who are younger, your top two issues, statistically are marriage and parenting. You'd like to get married, but you're scared to because you saw how your parents' marriage was. And you'd like to have kids, but you're afraid they'll grow up like you. So you want help to try and figure out how to get around this problem. Well, the problem really starts with how we begin our dating relating and fornicating cohabitating casual relationships. And the result is that, today in an age of casual dating, people are waiting longer

to marry, for the first time in the nation's history, the majority of adults are single, not married. 90 plus percent of you, 91%, statistically will at some point marry. And since you're waiting longer, the average man is around 30, the average woman is in her late twenties in those middle years, it's lots of confusing, cloudy, casual dates, amen? Now what happens is, comparison, comparison and competition. That's what casual dating produces a comparison. Well, they're tall, they're short, they're rich, they're poor, they're smart, they're fun. You know, they're this and you start comparing, Oh, I like this about them, and I like this about them, and I like this about them. And low and behold, then if you get into one exclusive relationship, you're disappointed. You know why? Because one person is not able to be and do all that the parade was. And sometimes we think with a more consumer mentality of, oh, I wish they were like this and like this and like this. And they're looking at you saying, "Hey, you're not prize." You know, you really gotta understand that both of us are a little disappointed with what we're getting in this relationship. But it creates comparison, and the Bible says that we're supposed to be committed solely to our spouse. The pattern rather for leaders is a one woman. Job 31:1, it says, "I made a covenant with my eyes, 'not to look upon a woman lustfully'" That we're to be one flesh when we're married. And if you're just casually dating a whole bunch of people, it's very hard to be satisfied with one and not compare them. And it also sets up competition. So we've taken free market economics, which is not necessarily bad, but we've put it into romantic relationships where it's tragic. So let's say, for example, I'm shopping for a car. Can you do this with me? So I go to this dealer and I say, "what deal will you give me for the car?" And I get the deal terms. And I go to the next dealership. I'm like, "Well, they were willing to throw in free air conditioning and oil changes. "Can you beat their deal? "If you can, maybe you'll get my business. "If not, I will go elsewhere. "Oh, you beat their deal terms, great." Now I'll go to my third dealership. These are what the other two dealerships are willing to do. "Can you beat them?" That's a good way to buy a car. That's a bad way to get a spouse. Did somebody turn the AC on? It got so chilly. You go to one person, okay what are you willing? You're willing to sleep with me? You're willing to negotiate a good deal? Okay, great, this is your deal let me go to my next boyfriend or girlfriend or boyfriends girlfriends, boyfriends, girlfriend. Okay, here's the deal terms, can you beat the deal terms? Then sleep with me Oh, you'll not only sleep with me you'll let me live with you and pay my rent. Let me take the deal over here, sweetheart will you throw in a free car? Can you throw in a free car? 'Cause they'll sleep with me and they'll let me live with them but if you'll throw in a free car, I can be yours and we negotiate our deal and we call that casual dating, and if you've ever seen the television show, "The Bachelor" or "The Bachelorette" what's your Greek words for Damon? Then you have seen this as you were throwing up in your mouth. That's exactly what it looks like. That's the logical outcome of casual dating. Now this leads to the next step, so it starts with casual dating and then it moves toward cohabitation. It's marriage killer number two and we read this. This is the Bible standard. Here's what you need to know. God invented marriage, our country doesn't know that. As a result, there's a definition for marriage. Our culture doesn't know that, if you ask the average person, what's marriage? I don't know people doing things. There's really no clear definition of what marriage is and it's because we have lost our understanding that God is a relational God. He created marriage, He created the terms and definitions for marriage and marriage only works when you follow the design of the one who created it and knows how it is supposed to work. That's why, if you'll obey God,

both of you in a relationship, you have a hundred percent chance of success. If you don't, your odds go down considerably. Here's what the Bible says about intimate relations in marriage. Hebrews 13:4, Let marriage, let husband and I'm gonna lean over the plate, take one for our team, okay? It's one man, one woman. There you go, okay. And I was reading this book and this book is super duper clear. One man, one woman, let marriage be held in honor is timid, respected, right? Those who are single and those who are married, among all and let the marriage bed. I've looked in the whole Bible. I can't find the boyfriend bed or the girlfriend bed. Not there. I can't find the cohabitation bed. All there is, is a marriage bed. And it is a symbol of the sacredness of the consummation of the covenant of marriage. Let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral, unbiblical alternative lifestyle and adulterous. So the world in it's wisdom does not know God. The world in it's wisdom does not obey God. The world in it's wisdom does not lead to life and flourishing because as it is working against the very rhythms of God's intended created purpose for relationship. And you can't expect to do things that defile God and God to bless them for you to do things that denigrate God and God to bless them. And so what God says, "Here's my plan marriage." Hold that up as a good thing. Some of you are married, hold it up as a good thing. Some of you are single, hold us up as a good thing. Some of you are divorced. You're in the middle of a transition. You're widowed, but hold up marriage is a good thing, honor it. See the covenant consummation the marriage bed as sacred as something specially, something spiritual in the eyes of God. And don't conduct yourself in such a way that God has to judge you, conduct yourself in a way that God wants to bless you and wants to help you. Now, let's just ask this question. Why do single people move in together? They think that they are taking a half step toward marriage, to see whether or not they want to actually be married. The intent is I've seen so much devastation, so much pain, so much misery in marriage. I would like to enter into marriage, but I'm afraid of taking that big step. So maybe if we move in together, we'll take the half step and we'll test drive. We'll try before we buy. Statistically, it just doesn't work. It just doesn't work because what cohabitation is, it's practice for divorce, not marriage. In marriage, two people become one. That's the teaching of the Bible. That's why you have one last name. You sleep in one bed. You go to one church, you have one bank account. You worship one, God, you live one life together. Cohabitation is where two people like train tracks. You have your life. I have my life. You have your checking account. I have my checking account. You have your religion. I have my religion, right? You have your last name. I have my last name and we'll be like train tracks, side-by-side and if for some reason we don't wanna venture together. That's okay because I can move on without you. I have a life that does not involve you. Covenant is where two become one. Cohabitation is where two are two and the results are staggering. I've read a lot of the sociological statistical abstracts and journals. The non-Christian evidence is in controvertible. Cohabitation is not helpful. I'll give you some of the statistics. Cohabitation increases your divorce rates significantly. Couples who don't live together and get married. They tend to stay married far more frequently than couples who live together and then get married. Depression is three times higher for cohabitating couples than it is for married couples. Women are twice as likely to be physically abused in a cohabitating versus a marriage relationship. And they're nine times more likely to be killed by their partner. It's not safe. And I'll tell you as a dad, when you're a single guy, this looks different than when you're a dad. Amen. Let me just talk to the dads for a minute. This could be a whole

series of rants. You're welcome. Now, for those of you who are dads, how about when you were a dad you thought, well, she should move into my house and take care of all my needs. And I'll see if she's fitting for me to marry. And if she doesn't live up to expectations, I'll trade her in on another one. And as a single guy you like this, sounds like a good deal. And as a dad, you see it differently. If that was your daughter, would that be how you think? No. Say no dad, one, two, three.

- No!

- Say it like that. Say it like you mean it, say it from the heart. If it's your daughter and a guy comes and says, "I'm kind of dating and sleeping with five or six girls, "I think I'm willing to let your daughter "be one of my potential test drives. "And maybe someday we'll move in together "and she can feed me and sleep with me "and pay my bills and look after me. "And if she meets my approval and out-compete "all the other women, "then I will put a ring on her finger. "What do you think dad?"

- No!

- No! Right? Shoot him in the liver. That's what you gotta do. You gotta shoot them in the liver. Otherwise he could live, you know... I'm sort of kidding on that last point a little. I'll pray about it. I'll get back to you. Nonetheless, cohabitation doesn't work. Now, how about those who practice chastity before marriage and they get married. They don't live and sleep together. Higher rates of happiness, higher rates of satisfaction. Lower rates of conflict, lower rates of divorce. I was a brand new Christian in college and there was a buddy of mine and he was getting married in college. Grace and I got married between our junior and senior year. They were about our age, got married a little before us. This brave soul got up in the middle of a speech communications class at a state university in front of a bunch of hungover frat guys and gave a speech on the benefit's of waiting until your wedding night to be intimate. And the college guys, they were all drunk and frat guys, let's just say they didn't hold that worldview. So this guy is giving his lecture to this class and he's standing up for his faith in Jesus. And at one point of the drunk guy, well hung over guys. I mean, there's a fine line somewhere between drunk and hungover. He yells out he's like, "How do you know if she's gonna be any good?" He said, "I had never kissed a woman. "How will I know if she's bad?" I was like, Oh, drop the mic. One point to the church boy right there. That was a good point. What he's saying is, I don't have anybody to compare my wife to. And so I won't be dissatisfied with her because she'll be all I've ever known. I thought, Oh, there's something about that, that sounds really wise. And if it was my daughter, I'd want a guy to say something like that, amen? How many of you dads agree?

- Yeah.

- Yeah, you're like, yeah, that's what I'd want. I'd want my daughter to be his standard of beauty. I'd want my daughter to be the object of his desire. I'd want my daughter to be the one that he was devoted to, not the one that he settled for because she won some competition. And was

competing against, a number of other women seeking to outperform one another for the right to be with this guy. That's no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Amen. But that is cohabitation. And that is cohabitation in it's basic format. And it does not prepare you for marriage. It prepares you statistically for divorce and misery. The third marriage killer is contractual thinking. And all of these are intertwined. Contractual thinking is what leads to casual dating. You find a spouse the same way you find a car, you test drive and make them compete and get the best deal. It's contractual thinking, that leads to cohabitation. Try before you buy, lease to own, let's practice being married as if you could do such a thing and then see if it works for us. And all of this is the result of contractual thinking, let me say this, contractual thinking works really well for business and it'll destroy any sort of emotional, healthy, romantic relationship. That's why many of the people I know who are the most successful at work are the most unsuccessful at home, because they take a business corporate negotiation, contractual mindset that works great in the workforce and they bring it home to their spouse and or their children. And it absolutely just decimates and eviscerates the entire family. So the Bible doesn't see, loving intimate relationships contractually. It sees them covenantally. You cannot get this, apart from the Bible, this is exclusively the domain of the God of the Bible. Will give you two examples of covenant marriage and we'll compare and contrast that to contractual thinking. Malachi 2:14, God is talking to some men who are not loving and being kind and gracious toward their wives. And so He rebukes them saying, "She is your companion and your wife by..." Come on, you guys went to school, right? What's that word? Good job readers, good job. Okay, covenant, it's covered. That's a different kind of relationship. It says this as well in Proverbs 2:16-17, The father is warning his son about a certain kind of woman who's very dangerous. And there are men like this as well. It says, "So you will be delivered "from the forbidden woman, from the adulterous, "with their smooth words, "who forsakes the companion of her youth "and forgets the covenant of her God." He's saying, "Son now that you're growing up "and entering into the world, "there are certain people who are married "and they're supposed to be in covenant with God. "They're supposed to be in covenant with one another, "but they forsake that. "They abandoned that. "And as a result, "they start tempting other people "to do forbidden things with them, "which is the forsaking of their covenant commitment." Let me explain the difference between a contract and a covenant. I've had the honor of preaching and teaching for 20 some years. I'm a beatable old preacher. I've been with my girl for almost 30. We got five kids. And this is the final word I get to share with you at the end of this series. And I was trying to find a way to explore and for you to understand the context for the marital relationship. Some of you have problems, but they're not problems in your marriage. They're problems of your marriage. You're trying to negotiate deal terms like two people that are adversarial, trying to negotiate a trade agreement or a business sale. And as a result, you're always fighting and arguing over deal terms. I wanna take a step back. I wanna go Google earth. I wanna look at it big picture and ask, is your relationship with your spouse? Is your relationship with your kids? Is your relationship with God? Is your relationship with those that are nearest and dearest to you? Is it contractual or is it covenantal? 'Cause if it's contractual, you don't just need some adjustments. You need a complete reorientation and reunderstanding of the entire relationship completely. I'll share it with you. Here's the difference between a contract and a covenant. A contract is between two people. So if you're in business, you're negotiating a business deal, right? It's just between us

two. A covenant is with God, that's why you get married in a church and you take vows in the presence of God. It's us and the Lord. So we're not independent, isolated on our own. In a contract, I seek my best interest, right? I mean, how many of you... This is a sports mindset. This is a business mindset. You find a weakness, you exploit it and you win. Don't do that in your marriage. You'll lose because you won. Amen. Do what works great at work, does not work great at home. In a contract, I seek my best interest. In a covenant, I seek God's glory in our mutual interests because we're one. Ultimately in a contract, the goal is you lose, I win. That's what we're fighting over. One of us is gonna win. One of us is gonna lose. You lose, I win. In a marriage, it's God is glorified and we win. We win. This is good for us. This is good for our relationship. This is good for our union and communion. In a contract, we negotiate terms. If you will do this, I will do that. Okay, well, if you will do this, I'll do that. Well, I will only do that. If you'll agree to this, we negotiate all the terms. Is this okay for business? Yes. Some of you are married to this person and I'm sorry, thank you for bringing them. This is a terrible marital precedent. Some of you have this, well, if you do this, I'll do that. But if you don't do this, I won't do that. I'll read my Bible and pray if you will sleep with me but if you don't sleep with me, it's all negotiation. That's why one of the leading marriage family relationship experts on television will not say their name. They have no basis or background in relationships or counseling, they come out of the business world as a mediator for contract negotiations between companies. And all they've done, they've just taken that same contractual thinking from the business world, put it into a marital relationship, put it on TV, two people come together they're fighting over the terms and this person negotiates the deal terms and we call it marriage counseling, it's not, it's contractual negotiation. In a covenant, we don't negotiate terms, we serve each other. Like I serve you, you serve me. I love you, you love me. I take care of you, you take care of me and it's not because we have a big chore chart, and if one of us doesn't meet it, we get a demerit. What happens is well, in a contract, you have to keep a record of performance. You said that you would do this and you did not. You said you would sell this much, but you missed your goal by four points. You said you would agree to these deal points and you did not meet your obligations, so I'm not obligated to pay you. In a covenant, it says at 1 Corinthians 13, "I keep no record of wrong." That's love, Love does not keep a record of wrong. Some of you, you're with someone and it feels like every day is your performance review with middle management. Well, emotionally, I'd give you a C and spiritually a D and physically B minus and mentally you're a C plus. Maybe next time you'll do better. Oh yeah, thank you Barnabas, for all the encouragement, right? You're living with someone who is constantly holding you up to a standard that God doesn't give and unless you meet it, they continually keep a record of wrong and then the result is, I punish you if you fail. Oh, you didn't do what I said, well, then I'm gonna give you the cold shoulder I'm not gonna talk to you. Oh, you forgot to do that? Well then I'm not going to sleep with you. Oh, you failed in this area, well, then I'm going to raise my voice and yell at you, because you need to be punished, 'cause we had a deal and you didn't keep your end of the deal. Were your pair it like that? Trouble. And if you have a marriage like that, double trouble. Covenant says, I forgive you when you fail. I forgive you when you fail. Contract says the goal is to win. We're competing and I'm gonna win and the covenant the goal is not, I win or you win, but God wins. And so we worship we do whatever's right in the sight of God. So a contract ends up in a professional relationship, a covenant ends up in a personal relationship. Let me be clear,

is it okay to have contractual relationships in business? Yes or no? Yes. Is it a good idea to have contractual relationships in marriage or parenting? Answer? No. I'll give you some examples, some painful, horrific examples. A couple of years ago, I was teaching and preaching and I was talking about how, I'm not a big fan of the prenuptial agreement. I know we're in Scottsdale and this is just gonna cut attendance in half. But anyways, I love you and I'm trying to help, okay? And what I was saying was, a prenuptial agreement is really weird to me because it is... We need to negotiate our divorce terms before we share our vows. So before we share our vows, we need to negotiate our divorce terms. What? I was talking about how this doesn't make any sense to me that you negotiate your divorce terms before you are even married. And so I said this and there was a couple that asked to meet with me. He was very upset, she was pretty excited, Okay? Because they had negotiated a prenap agreement he was affluent, she was young attractive girl, he's a little older guy and so he was negotiating his deal with her. And his deal with her was, even when we get divorced, you get 20%. And as soon as I said, I think prenups are weird for Christians, she's like, ooh, then let's get rid of it because then I'm up to 50%. So here I am in this hostage negotiation with this couple, guns pulled, bank tellers on the floor, it's a real situation we've got. And I look at him I said, "How do you feel?" But he said, "I'm really upset with you "I had her down to..." He said, I quote, "I negotiated her down to 20% "But in the state, we're in, "if we don't have an agreement, "she's gonna get 50. "I just lost 30%." Okay, I said, "How do you feel about that?" She said, "I feel good "I feel like I just got 30%." I said, "You guys aren't even married." I pushed him, I pushed him. I said, "Why do you want this agreement?" He said, "Honestly, I don't really trust her. "I'm not sure she's gonna be faithful to me." What do we need? Flowers and invitations? Like, do you need to get married? I look at her and said, "Do you think there's any "reasonable grounds for him to be fearful "that you will be unfaithful?" I said, "Do you intend to be faithful to him "for the rest of your life?" She said, "I can't promise that." I said, "Can you try?" I looked at her and it I like guys, what you're saying is we don't trust each other so we're gonna negotiate terms to limit the damage. Maybe you just shouldn't get married, amen? So they didn't get married, he was very upset I didn't see him for a couple of years he came back with a really nice girl. I said, "What's this?" He said, "This is my fiancee." I was like, what kind of prenap? He's like, "Ah, come on man, she loves Jesus "She prays every day "She worships, she's Godly "She won't even sleep with me 'till we're married "And I've tried. " I was like, "Okay, well, you know, there's hope there "She's got self control, that's good." And I said, "Well, what attracted you?" He said, "She's just super Godly. "Loves the Lord, loves me." He said, "I trust her, I feel really safe with her." Oh, well then that would be a good wife. That you don't need contractual thinking, you need covenantal thinking. I'll give you another example of a contractual and they're married and they have kids and they're actually doing really well today. And this is many years later. Another example, I remember sitting down with a couple and I'll never forget it. I was a young pastor, I was in my twenties and I'm sitting there. And I said, "Okay, what's the problem?" He said, "She is violating our agreement." Okay, so he's warm, heartfelt guy, right? I said, "Okay, explain that." He said, "Well, before we got married, "We agreed to terms, no children "I told her, no children. "That was our deal." I said, "Well, tell me your side of the story." She said, "Well, I didn't know if I wanted kids or not "And I really loved him. "And I wasn't really thinking about it. "And I thought, well, "If we're supposed to have children, "We'll agree about that "We'll pray about that "The Lord will bring us to

agreement." And she said, "But now that I've been married a while, "guess what ladies?" Shocker, she want to be a mom. You ever seen this? A woman who wants to be a mom. You ever seen this? Okay, it's not like a Ninja snuck up on you. You're like I had no idea and I didn't see that coming. So she wanted to be a mom. And she said, "So I went to my husband and I said, "Honey, I really wanna be a mom."" And what he said was, "That's not our deal." She said, "But the scripture saying, my heart says "And can you think about it? "Can we talk about it? "Will you pray about it?" Here's what he said, "I don't need to." "I'm gonna hold you to the terms of our deal. "Before I married you, I told you no children." Here's what he said in my presence, "If you are determined to have children, "You will have broken our agreement "and I will divorce you." "So you either hold to our agreement or I divorce you. "There's no renegotiating the terms of our agreement." That my friend, is a contractual marriage. That is not a covenantal marriage. We all do this in different ways. Those of you who are very successful in business, you need to make sure you don't bring this mindset home and starting to see your wife, your husband, your children, as employees with job descriptions and a contract that they need to agree to for you to love them and have a relationship with them. I'll give you an example, a stupid example from my life, people have asked, "What's the stupidest thing "You've ever said to Grace?" I don't know, there were so many candidates, it's overwhelming. Okay, I've apologized to Grace for this. This is one of the dumbest things I've ever said. We were having a bit of an argument, okay. And I was frustrated. And so I looked at Grace and I said, "if you are my employee, I would fire you right now" That didn't help. She didn't go over praise the Lord. You know, it didn't... She looked at me like a sniper that scoped in one shot, one shot, one kill. I mean, I'm just like out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. And I'm like, Ooh, I wish I could get those words back. But that's what I was thinking. And she said, "And that's our problem. "I'm not your employee am your wife." Drop the mic, hashtag wife wins, okay? . In my heart, in that moment, I was thinking, contractual, this is what you're supposed to be doing. And she's thinking covenantal, you're not loving me, not creating a safe place for our relationship to flourish. So let me talk a little bit about covenant relationships. 1 Corinthians 11:13, He says, "I want you to understand "that the head of every man is Christ. "The head of the wife is her husband. "And the head of Christ is God." Covenantal thinking dominates the Bible. Covenant appears hundreds of times in the Bible. And when it speaks of the covenant, it mentions a head. The head is the person who is responsible for the well-being and the oversight of those who are in the covenant. We have a covenant relationship with God. I have a covenant relationship with my wife. I have a covenant relationship with my children. I have covenant relationship with others. Not all people, but some people. And so what it's saying here is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. They love each other. They're in covenant and God the Father is the head of the covenant. Jesus Christ has the new covenant saving relationship with his people, the church. And he is the covenant head. In the family, the husband and the wife love each other and the husband is the covenant head. Any guy who hears this and says, "see, the Bible says, I'm the boss" Oh my gosh, you miss the whole... You're a fool. But you should punch yourself in the head. I can't do it 'cause it'd be a crime, but you should do it 'cause you deserve it, okay? You should not think like that 'cause Jesus doesn't come and say, "I'm the boss!" He comes, He says, "I love you, "I forgive you, I'm devoted to you, "I'm committed to you, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. "This relationship is secure, you can count on me". Thank you Jesus. Let me say this about your

relationship with Jesus. If you are a Christian or you become a Christian today, you do not have a contractual relationship with God through Christ. And you should say, thank you. Okay, how many of you are glad you don't... 'Cause see, most of the religions, you have a contractual relationship with God. God says, "if you will go to Mecca, "if you will bow down three times a day, "if you will reincarnate to payback your sin, "if your good deeds will outweigh your bad deeds, "then maybe at the end, "there'll be a loving something "or at least not punishment for you". And so you're just sort of based in fear and trying to obey the terms and trying not to ruin the contract and hoping at the end, you're not set on fire, right? Your relationship with Jesus is a covenantal relationship. He loves you before you love Him. He forgives you before you repent to Him. He pursues you before you desire Him. He creates a safe unbroken union and communion with Him. And in the context of that loving relationship, He deals with issues and He helps you to change. That's what a covenant relationship is. Now, let me say this as well, some of you still try to do contractual relationship with God. You're the, if then Lord people. "Lord, if you'll give me a girlfriend, "I'll stop sleeping with my other girlfriend." No, that was my deal 'cause the deal I didn't agree, I didn't sign that deal, right? Some guys are like, "Well, God if you will give me a better job, "I'll tithe 20% otherwise I'm giving zero. "So there's the deal Lord. "You make your decision. "Lord If you'll heal them, then I'll worship you. "And if you don't heal them, then I'll curse you. "God if you give me the life that I want, "then I will praise you. "And if not, then I will curse you." How many of you have tried to negotiate a deal with God? Have you learned that he doesn't negotiate? Some of you're very frustrated by the guy. Like, he just doesn't negotiate. When you're the Lord, that's like one of the perks. You don't have to negotiate your deal. And what happens then some people get angry or disappointed or frustrated with God, 'cause they told Him what the terms were and he didn't meet the terms. God, you broke the agreement. God's like, that's the whole problem. That thing you have either written down or written on the tablets of your heart. It's a bunch of expectations and demands for me, to submit to you and agree to the deal terms, otherwise you will punish me, and what God says, "I do contract never, I do covenant forever." That's how God works. How many of you are really glad, you've got a covenant relationship with God through Christ? I have, right? That's why I sleep without one eye open a cap and a helmet on, right? I feel more relaxed, okay. But if we have a covenant relationship with Jesus, then we need to have a covenant relationship with our spouse. And when it comes to this issue of covenant, I'll give you a couple concepts, sometimes in your Bible It's called covenant love or loving kindness or mercy Steadfast love, loyal love, devotion, commitment, loyalty or reliability. I'll quote the Jesus storybook Bible on covenant love. "Never giving up", excuse me. "Never stopping, never giving up, "unbreaking always and forever love." That's covenant love. Never stopping, never giving up. Unbreaking, always and forever love. Let me tell you what this means. Here's the difference between covenant and contract. Issues relationship. If you have a contractual view of relationship with God, spouse or family, issues are above relationship. If you will meet my terms, we can have a relationship. If you will do what I say, I will love you. If you will just obey me and agree to our deal terms, then we'll get along just fine. But the relationship is always in jeopardy because the issues get dropped like a bomb on the relationship. And then the relationship is eviscerated. That's contractual thinking. Covenantal thinking is, the relationship is more important than the issues that the relationship needs to be strong if we're going to deal with any issues. I have seen couples divorce over things that are

inconsequential. And the reason that they ended up in such a precarious and painful place, is because they decided I will enforce the terms of the deal. And if not, then I will end our relationship. It's like over trivia. The relationship is more important than the issues. What that means, if the relationship is strong, loving, and secure, then we can actually deal with the issues. But some of the issues, we'll just let it go 'cause it's not a big deal and it's not worth the pain of savoring the relationship over. Here's how God works with us. Loving, gracious, merciful, forgiving, devoted, unconditional, unbreakable, covenant relationship. And as he is loving and safe and kind and gracious, it's his kindness that leads us to repentance. And then, because God is safe because God is loving because God is good, when God starts to address issues in our life. He's not saying you better deal with these issues or our relationship is over. Instead, what he says is "I love you very much. "And that issue is harming our intimacy. "How about if we deal with that issue "so that we can be closer "and we can have a better relationship.? "I'm going to have a relationship with you." God says, "No matter what, "but I'd rather have a really great relationship. "So how about we deal with this issue "so that our relationship can be better?" You get that? That's our relationship with Jesus. That's what it means to be in covenant relationship with each other. Now, what that means is that we believe in singular headship and plural leadership. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, they rule together and the Father is the head. What that means is, in our family, Grace and I lead together. We make all the decisions, prayerfully and carefully together because we're one. Division means two visions, and we want unity in our household. So Grace and I worked together. Prudent wife is from the Lord. The Bible says, I need a lot of help, and that Grace is a suitable helper for me. Any guy who says, "I'm the boss, you will base". Like oh gosh, no, you're the... Good luck Jack. I mean just good luck. I don't want this to ever be an opportunity for boarish overbearing domineering, high control contractual thinking men to load it over women and children. I wanna be exceedingly clear about that, because that's not how Jesus deals with us Amen. Amen. And the Bible says That husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Okay, what that means is the way that Jesus treats me is supposed to be the way that I treat Grace and the kids. That means I'm supposed to be like a mirror, reflecting the love and grace and mercy and affection and devotion and safety of Jesus to Grace and the kids. What this means is that as the head of the covenant, Grace and I we believe in singular headship, plural leadership, we lead together and we're both responsible for the well being of the home, but I'm in the first position of responsibility. Let me say this as well If you are the head, this should not make you arrogant or proud. This should actually feel like a heavy load of responsibility. And there is a difference then between fault and responsibility. So the covenant head is the one who takes responsibility even when they're not at fault. Give you an example, okay my relationship with Jesus, I have sinned against God, Is it Jesus fault that I sinned against God yes or no? No. Does Jesus take my sin which is not his fault and make it his responsibility. He does. He goes to the cross, He substitutes himself, He suffers and dies in my place for my sins. So it's not His fault that I sin, but because He's the covenant head, He takes responsibility to love me and care for me. So for your parents are the leaders of your family for your husbands with your wives and your children. I want you to understand that even if it's not your fault, it may still be your responsibility. Parents do this all the time Well my kids are rebelling they're total mess, but you know it's not my fault. Okay but it's still your responsibility now It may be your fault with that attitude. They may have

picked it up somewhere. I'm just throwing it out there as a prayer consideration, right? Even because if you really love someone, you pursue them and even if it is their fault, you get involved to love and help and serve and you take some measure of responsibility. What this means is because I don't have a contractual relationship with my kids. We don't have conversations like this If you will do your chores and if you will obey your mother and father and if and if you will agree to these deal terms, then maybe someday you can have my last name. You get my last name and I love you. Somebody asked me recently they said, "What if your kids are horrible?" Well, then they're still your kids and they're horrible, but they're still your kids. And if they're your kids you wanna pursue them and love them to see if maybe you can get them to at least be a little less horrible. You can't just look at them and say it's not my fault It's still my responsibility. I'll give you a case study you're ready? First marriage, Genesis three God makes Adam, Adam has a covenant relationship with God, but he doesn't have a covenant relationship with another human being. God says it's not good to be alone If you've ever seen a single guy you know why that's where Adam's at, right? Shirt, no buttons, one eyebrow, all leather black couch. I mean just sad situation, eating takeout sad okay. So God says it's not good for the man to be alone so then the woman is made to be the complimenter, to be the person he's in covenant relationship with. God brings them together, they get married, they consummate their covenant, they're husband and wife. Genesis one and two. Genesis three Satan shows up. Here's what you need to know, Satan doesn't even show up until they're married. I told you this before but the Bible goes from wedding to war in three chapters. Some single people think, I can't wait until we're married and then the war will be over. Ooh no. No, this is peace time my friend. Satan shows up declares war on marriage, as he always does. He goes to Adam and Eve and what he tries to get them to do is move from a covenantal relationship with God, to a contractual relationship with Him. In the covenantal relationship with God, God said I love you you're my kids I'll take care of you, I'm present with you, I'll provide for you. Here's one thing I don't want you to do 'cause it'll damage and harm our relationship and your life. Satan comes along and says, how about we renegotiate I think I'd give you a better deal than God. How about I give you some things, you give me some things. And I think at the end you're gonna see that you're getting a better deal than God gives you. Satan comes to give a contractual view and he wants that to be set over the covenantal relationship that they already have. Adam and Eve agreed to the contract, they violate their covenant, they partake of that which is forbidden. Sin is self-harm, it's not getting away with anything It's hurting yourself. Here's my question ladies, who sinned first partake of that which was forbidden was it Adam or Eve? You ladies know the story, who sinned first Adam or Eve? Eve. It says that she took some and then she gave some to her husband who was there with her. Men, what was he doing?

- Nothing.

- Nothing. What was he saying? Nothing. Okay, so us sons of Adam, our proclivity is sin of omission. Most of the time I meet with guys and they are like, I didn't do anything wrong. Okay, but did you do what was right? I didn't do what was right. Okay, that's a sin of omission. A sin of commission is where I did the wrong thing. A sin of omission is I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything. Adam didn't say or do anything and his wife did the wrong thing. She then gave some

to Adam who was with her. Some of you guys... I feel inclined to the Holy spirit to say this, you're afraid of your wife so you don't talk to her. Some of you men are afraid of your wife and the wrath and the fury and the conflict that will ensue. And you're not having a conversation with her about the things that are hurting the relationship. It's because you like Adam are a coward and you would rather have Satan rule your home than you to communicate with your wife. And the lie you've been told is that that will produce a good result. All you've done is you've taken your position and you've handed it to Satan. And that will not make for a good covenant. Not saying you should be mean or angry or harsh in fact completely the opposite. But it's appealing in the terms of the covenant, this issue is hurting us, I believe that the enemy is attacking us, I love you so very much, this relationship means the world to me. And I'd like for us to discuss this issue because it is harming our relationship with God. It's harming our relationship with one another. This is doing damage to both covenants. Adam sees and does nothing. What they both do then is what we all do, counselors call it blame shifting their fault not mine. Kids learn this young, right? Really young you walk in like Johnny's laying on the floor, "Oh, what happened?" "Tommy hit me with a truck. "Why did you hit him with a truck Tommy? "He made me." I don't think he did. It don't look like he wanna get hit with a truck. Well, what did he do? He took the truck so I had to hit him with the truck. Well, that's not the same. That's sort of your interpretation of the event. What we like to do is blame shift. Something bad has happened you should deal with them, right? So what happens is God comes and now let me ask again Ladies who sinned first Adam or Eve?

- Eve.

- Eve. Men who did God come looking for first Adam or Eve?

- Adam.

- Adam

- He asked, "Adam, where are you?" Why does he call out Adam? Covenant head, right? Sports team gets obliterated they don't go help we're asking the water boy what happened? Go ask the coach and then maybe the assistant coach, right? Company melts down, they don't go to the intern. Well, what happened? I don't know go ask the CEO, go ask the CFO, go ask the leaders. God comes looking for Adam, and all this means, is that Adam has held firstly responsible, not solely responsible because God does then call out to Eve and talk to her as well. So God deals with both of them, but he addresses the man first. And what Adam says, he blames shifts He's like "Well, let's just review this. "All was well and then a woman showed up. "And then all was not well, "I was thinking about it "must be that variable of the woman. "And here's the thing Lord, you made her. "So I kind of feel like I'm a victim and you and her, "I forgive you but you really need to work on that woman." This is what a lot of guys think, "God you gave me the wrong woman." No, if you're the wrong guy, there's never the right woman. Okay, I deliver the mail, I don't write it, I'm just trying to help. So he blames the woman and God, then God goes over to the woman, holds her responsible as well, you ladies are responsible as well. And who does

she blame it on? The devil she's charismatic. She's like, "I don't know it was the devil, "It was Satan, don't know." She doesn't blame her husband It's amazing to me how sometimes a woman with a husband who's not loving and speaking and helping. She won't even hold him responsible, She'll just get real spiritual about it. And here's what God says. The only way we're gonna fix this is with a covenant. It says in Genesis 3:15, it's the protoevangelium it means first gospel. God basically says "You know what? "I'm gonna have to send my son Jesus. "You people don't know how to do Covenant. "And I'm gonna send Jesus "and he's gonna take responsibility for "that which is not his fault. "He's gonna pursue you in love "and you're gonna kill him and hate. "And he's gonna resurrect because my son "is so committed to Covenant "that not even death can prevent him "from pursuing you for loving relationship. "So you can count on me and he's gonna come back and hug you "I'll send my son, He's gonna do covenant, "He's gonna make you in a covenant "with me and him "and then you'll learn how to do covenant "with one another." God's people need to think covenantially, not contractually, this flows all the way through the home. I'll give you an example of what this looks like very practically. It's an illustration I've shared before I apologize if you've heard it but I think it's helpful. Some years ago, I was in a pool during the summer with my daughter, she was little and I was throwing her up and flipping her and she's jumping off my shoulders 'cause when you got little kids and your dad, you're basically playground equipment that's what you are. They jump on you and jump off you and climb on you and I don't remember anybody else being in the pool and then this teenage girl looked like she was about high school age showed up wearing way not enough, this is underwear not outerwear. You know why I'm saying so She's not wearing enough clothes, She shows up with two boys kind of one on each arm to the pool and they jump in the pool and one boy swims to one corner of the pool, the other boys swims to the other end of the pool and she jumps in the middle, she looks at one boy, she looks at the other boy, she swims over to the one boy, is touching him, got him in the corner, kissing him. And then she finishes she looks over at the other boy she swims all the way across the pool, puts him in the corner, touching him, kissing him. My daughter swims over to me. she's like "daddy did you see that?" Unfortunately I did sweetheart. She said "Dad that girl she's with both boys". That's contractual thinking you, or you, you compete, which one of you is going to win me. My daughter asked me, "Daddy, what do you think about that?" I said, honey what do you think about that? She said, "It's very sad "that she doesn't have a good daddy". she immediately went to covenant. If She had a good daddy, she would know that she's valuable, she would know that she's beautiful, she would know that she's wonderful and she wouldn't need to chase boys for affection because she'd receive it from her daddy. That same daughter of mine, when I tuck her in every night she would say, "I am so glad that I have two daddies, "one in heaven and one on earth". That's covenantal thinking, it transforms the entire family. So what does this mean? It means that the most important day of your marriage is not your first day It's your last day. Covenantal thinking thinks about lineage and legacy. People spend a lot of time and money to get ready for their first day, their wedding day. Remember that? I was shocked at how much we had to decide like a lot of people make a huge plan for their first day, they don't have a plan for their last day. The most important day of your marriage is the last day. I'll show you what this looks like. This is a couple that was... This was a news story. This couple was married for 77 years, he is a 100, she is 96. They were both in the process of dying and they were separated at the hospital, tubes and

machines and care and their last wish their final request was, "Can you please put us in the same room "and push our beds together so we can hold hands". They died a few hours apart after 77 years of marriage holding hands as friends. I'll tell you what, if you're holding your spouse's hand in a loving covenant and you close your eyes for the last time and you open them to see the Lord Jesus and to enter into that eternal covenant, he will smile and say, well done, good and faithful servant. I have asked the Lord many times, let me outlive Grace, I don't want her to be alone, I wanna make sure that she is taken care of. In a moment, I'm gonna give you married couples an opportunity to exchange vows, covenant vows. covenants have heads, covenants have vows. I don't wanna pressure anyone to do this. If you're not in a place where you can do this from the heart, there's no pressure expectation, but if you do it, I want you to mean it from the heart. And in a moment, I'll ask you to stand and face one another and to repeat after me some things that I put together that are a summary of our time together in this six week series. And I love you. I'm honored to be your pastor, and it's a great joy that I get to teach you God's word, so thank you for that honor. But the covenant commitment would be, I vow to walk with God through Bible reading prayer, church involvement, I vow out to make you a priority over all other people, I vow to seek to be a healthy wise and safe person for you, these are all the sermons we covered. I ask you to forgive me for my sins and failures, I forgive you for your sins and failures. I vow to be a good friend to you about to grow old with you, make memories, have fun. And I believe you are God's best for me. If you are engaged to be married and your heart is inclined in that direction, if you are married and you wanna make those vows, I'm gonna ask those couples to now stand at this time and face one another. And you can repeat after me in just a moment, I'm gonna bring up my very best friend. Okay, so what you guys can do, you can face each other. Hi, I hear a little bit of kissing, be careful. Alright, I want you guys to hold hands and look your spouse in the eye. I vow to walk with God,

- I vow to walk with God
- Through bible reading.
- Through bible reading.
- Prayer.
- Prayer
- And church involvement.
- And church involvement.
- I vow to make you a priority over all other people.
- I vow to make you a priority over all other people.

- I vow to seek to be healthy.

- I vow to seek to be healthy.

- Wise.

- Wise.

- And a safe person for you.

- And a safe person for you.

- I ask you to forgive me for my sins and failures.

- I ask you to forgive me for my sins and failures.

- I forgive you for your sins and failures.

- I forgive you for your sins and failures.

- I vow to be a good friend to you.

- I vow to be a good friend to you.

- I vow to grow old with you.

- I vow to grow old with you.

- Make memories.

- Make memories.

- And have fun.

- And have fun.

- I believe you are God's best for me.

- I believe you are God's best for me.

- Now husbands, I want you to take a moment and pray over your wives, as you do I'm gonna ask pastor Dustin to sing a song that he wrote for his wife Trina, when they were engaged to be married.