

Why Is the Last Day of Your Marriage the Most Important?

- All right, best day of the week, welcome to church. We're in a book of the Bible called Genesis. We're in chapter 22. If you wanna find that, that would be most helpful. And let me just start by saying on the way, and I was praying for you, I just feel like saying thank you and I love you. This is a great, wonderful church family. I look forward to seeing you every week and you guys could be anywhere other than here. And for those who are joining online, the same is true as well. I've been teaching the Bible kind of verse by verse, book by book for about 26 years. And it just really struck me on the way in today what an honor it is, nobody has to listen to me. Nobody has to give me the opportunity to teach them God's word and it just means a lot to me. And what we like to say here at Trinity Church as we open our Bibles to learn and we open our lives to love. So ultimately we like to learn from God's word and then build healthy, loving, joyful relationships with God and one another. And then we say, so that lives and legacies are transformed, not just your life, but your legacy that would include your children and your grandchildren. That would include your friends, family, those you mentor, spiritual children. We want life to be in you. And we want life to come through you to pour life to those around you. And to help in that we've been in this crazy book of Genesis. If you think you've got a dysfunctional family, just read Genesis, you'll feel so much better. If you're not married to your sister and you have pants on, you're doing better than most of the patriarchs, you're doing great. And so it's kind of this messed up, dysfunctional family system, but it's super encouraging. And one of the things as we're in Genesis is it covers about 2000 years of history. So from Jesus to us is 2000 years. Well from the beginning of Genesis to the end is 2000 years. Sometimes you turn a page and you're actually turning hundreds of years. And so what's really interesting is this couple, Abraham and Sarah, that we're gonna really investigate in detail today, they arrived on the scene around Genesis chapter 12. Well, today we're in Genesis 22. They have been front and center for about 10 chapters. You think about it, 20% of the book of Genesis covers, not just the whole 2000 years, but just two people, Abraham and Sarah, they're really a featured couple in the history of the world and in the scriptures. Abraham is mentioned a few hundred times. Sarah is mentioned dozens of times. They're one of the most significant, impactful couples in the history of the world. And today we're going to see the last day of their marriage. And today we're going to answer this question, why is the last day of your marriage the most important? And what we learned earlier in the book, to catch you up to speed, they met as unbelievers. We don't know a lot about their dating years, their engagement, we don't know about their wedding day. We just know that they were pagans, non-Christians in some weird cult in what is ancient Babylon, modern day Iraq. And then God shows up and they become believers. They get saved and they walk with God. They leave everyone and everything they know to follow a God that they just met. And so think of a couple that's been married a while, maybe their thirties, forties, whatever the case may be. And one of them gets saved. Let's say the husband gets saved first. And then the wife gets saved and they've gotta reset their whole relationship. That's Abraham and Sarah. At this point, they've been married for a very long time. He is 100 and lemme see, he is over 100. She is definitely over 100. And at this point in their marriage, for those of you that have been with us, have they had some bad days? Yeah, some bad days. They're really good at lying, which isn't a good thing, but they're good at it. Twice he gives his wife away and twice God brings her back. They make some decisions out of fear. They come up with a crazy

idea to do polygamy and bring another wife into the marriage and have a kid and who could have seen this coming? It didn't end well. And it resulted in conflict. So they've had some bad days. They've also had some good days. They've walked with God, they've trusted God, they've worshiped God, they've served God. They've given generously to God. They've made decisions in faith, not just fear. How many of you who are married, you would say that sounds pretty accurate, right? Good days, bad days. There's a highlight reel and a lowlight reel in every marriage and family. There's stuff you tell the kids, there's stuff you don't tell the kids. The good news about the Bible is God tells us everything. And it gives us a little hope. If God can work with them, God can work with us. If God can fix their marriage, God can fix our marriage. If God can work through their family, God can work through our family. They're not a perfect family, but they are a believing family. And they're a blessed family. They're not perfect, but they have a perfect God and he is blessing them continually. And so the big idea is this. If you're a believer, we're not the good people, we're the blessed people. We're not the people that always get it right. But we're the people who have the God who makes it right when we get it wrong. That's the story of Abraham and Sarah. And they're supposed to be an encouragement to us that we can keep going because no matter what we've done or where we are, the God who blessed them is the same yesterday, today and forever. And he is there for us. So in Isaiah 51:1 and two, we read this, "listen to me you who pursue righteousness, "who seek the Lord", speaking to believers, "look to the rock from which you were hewn "and to the quarry from which you were dug, "look to Abraham, your father and to Sarah. "He was but one when I called him "that I might bless him and multiply". What he's saying is this. Spiritually speaking, if you're a believer in the God of the Bible, Abraham and Sarah, they're like your mother and father, they're the matriarch and the patriarch. That's where faith and relationship with God as we know it and experience it, that's really where it all began. I was thinking about it this week, my parents were in town. It was really cool to see my mom and dad. We got a couple weeks with them. And the time that we spent with them, a lot of it was spent them telling us about extended family, also their upbringing and their life. It was catching Grace and I and the kids up on our family history. But what it's saying here in Isaiah is that spiritually speaking, we are in the same family line as Abraham and Sarah. And as we study their life, what we're doing is we're looking at our family history, not through our genealogy, but through our spiritual ancestry. And here's the good news. The God who is faithful to them is faithful to us. The way God treated them is the same way that God wants to treat us because God is faithful for generations. And that's the big idea. So we'll jump right in Genesis 22:20 through 40. "Now after these things, it was told to Abraham, "behold, Milcah" a gal "has also borne children "to your brother, Nahor". So Abraham's got a brother and he and his wife are gonna have some kids. "Uz his firstborn, Buz" his infinity and beyond brother, "Kemuel, the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, "Jidlaph and Bethuel". I always say, when you're reading Old Testament names, just read fast and confident 'cause nobody knows how to spell. "Bethuel fathered Rebekah". The point there is very important. Rebekah's gonna be the one who marries their son, Isaac. So what you're starting to see here is the shift from one generation to the next. "These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother, "moreover his concubine, whose name was Reumah "bore four more, Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah". So the point is this through Abraham's brother, is going to come 12 sons, kinda like the 12 tribes of Israel. What we see here is that the stage is set. Up until this point, the focus

has been on this married couple Abraham and Sarah. They waited 25 long years for God to fulfill his promise and give them the son. His name is Isaac, means laughter, filled their life and their house with joy. At this point, he is a mature man. It's time for him to get married. It's time for him to launch, it's time for him to move on with his life. And what we're starting to see is the scene shifts from one generation to the next. I'm at that age, I'm 51 years of age where our kids are getting older. We've got two married, now two in college and one left in high school. And when you're younger, you wake up and you're thinking about, okay today, what have I got to do? You know, what dragon can I slay? What hill can I take? What mission can I accomplish? And then you have children and you wake up and your first thought is where are they? Are they okay? What do they need? As they get bigger and begin to launch, the thought shifts to how can I help them? How can I support them? How can I bless them? How can I coach them? How can I fund them? Because all of a sudden, they start to take center stage and you start to exit or move off to the side. For a season of life, we're really focused on what we're trying to get done. And then the season comes where our children are maturing and they're launching and it's our great, grand honor and opportunity to help and to serve them. And that's what's happening here. Up until this point, the spotlight of the story's been on Abraham and Sarah, and it's gonna shift over to the next generation, to Isaac and ultimately to his wife, Rebekah. And this is very, very important. Let me say this to all the parents. At some point you gotta step to the side and at some point you need to step further to the side. If you are determined to be the center of your family, if you're determined to be the one that everyone and everything orbits around, if you're determined to be in control, ultimately you're not going to have a legacy because the people need to learn to live without you. They need to learn to live without you being present. They need to make decisions without you making them. They need to generate income without you generating it. One of the things that we're learning from Abraham and Sarah is they are the pattern, precedent and prototype in the Bible of faith. And true or false, it takes faith to let your kids grow up? It just totally does. And as they're little, you're very invested and involved. Now you need to give 'em a little breathing room as they grow. They've gotta make friends and make decisions. Eventually their faith needs to become their own. They need to figure out who they are. They need to figure out God's will for their life. They need to pick a spouse. Now they're gonna start their own family. They gotta make their own decisions. Now they gotta make their own money. Now they've got to raise their own children. And what happens is we're not involved in their life less. We're just involved in their life differently. Rather than making the decisions, we're praying for them and coaching them. Rather than doing things for them, we're helping them learn how to do things for themselves. And this is the scene here where everything begins to transition and to shift. This is the last time that Abraham and Sarah will be the focus, they're stepping off to the side. At some point, every family needs to have the parents step to the side so that the children can step forward with the life that God intends for them. And let me just say for every parent that is usually a hard season. 'Cause the thought is, well, what if they make a mistake? Well, the good news is there's also a God involved. For those of us who are married, let me ask you a rhetorical question. Have you ever made a mistake done, said something stupid in the last 24 hours? I mean like we all do. And the God who was faithful to us will be faithful to them. The God who taught us will teach them. The God who rescued us will rescue them. That's the story of Abraham and Sarah. And so Abraham and Sarah here are trusting that

God is going to treat the next generation as he has treated them. And then what's good here is that this family system is healthy. It's getting stronger, it's architected well. And then it's the big transition. So here's the big idea. If you're married, I want you to hold hands. If you can't hold hands, I want you to hold both hands, 'cause you guys really need this. The last day of marriage is the most important day of your marriage. In this scene, Abraham buries Sarah. Okay? Just husbands just think about that day, where you're having dinner by yourself. You're going to bed by yourself. You're going to church by yourself. Sarah lived 127 years. Genesis 23:1 through 16. "These were the years of the life of Sarah". And Sarah what? She died. At some point, our spouse is going to die. My encouragement to you would be don't spend the time between now and then arguing over petty things, focus on primary things. Don't wait until they're dead to forgive them. Forgive them now. Don't wait to tell them what you appreciate about them on their deathbed, make sure they hear it every day. "Sarah died at Kiriath-arba, that is in Hebron, "in the land of Canaan", that's the promised land. "And Abraham went in to mourn". He's lost his wife there. His girl's gone. "For Sarah and to weep for her. "And Abraham rose up", you know why? He was on the ground. This strong, mighty warrior, we've seen him previously lead 318 mercenaries into battle. His wife dies and he's just beside himself on the floor. "He rose up before his dead wife and said to the Hittites, "I am a sojourner and a foreigner among you". I don't own a piece of land, I'm a guest. My wife's dead. "Give me property among you for a burying place "that I may bury my dead out of my sight. "The Hittites answered Abraham, hear us, my Lord. "You are a prince of God among us". We're not godly, but you are. We see God's hand all over your life. His anointing and blessing is obvious and evident. We let you live here because we honor you and your God. See God said he would bless those who bless Abraham. They welcomed him and they were blessed as well. "Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs". Abraham, we love you, we honor you. You pick whatever you want, it's a gift from us for your wife. "None of us will withhold from you his tomb "to hinder you from burying your dead. "Abraham rose and he bowed the Hittites". In the Eastern culture that's honor and respect. "The people of the land and he said to them, "if you are willing that I should bury my dead "out of my sight, hear me and entreat me "for Ephron, the son of Zohar that he may give me "the cave of Machpelah, which he owns. "It is at the end of his field". He knows exactly, how many of you are into real estate? You're like, I know exactly what piece of real estate I want. He knew exactly what he wanted. For the full price, he's not looking for a discount. "Let him give it to me in your presence "his property for a burying place. "Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites "and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham "in the hearing of the Hittites "of all who went in at the gate of his city". That's where business is conducted and the leaders gather. So he's a prominent man in the community. "No, my Lord, hear me. "I will give you the field "and I give you the cave that is in it". It's a gift, it's free. "In the sight of the sons of my people, "I give it to you, bury your dead. "Then Abraham bowed before the people of the land "and said to Ephron "in the hearing of the people of the land, "but if you will hear me, I give the price to the field. "Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there". Abraham's like, I will not take a gift. This is for my wife. I will pay full price because my wife is priceless. "Ephron answered, Abraham, my Lord, listen to me. "A piece of land worth 400 sheckels of silver. "What is that between you and me? "Bury your dead. "Abraham listened to Ephron and Abraham weighed out "for Ephron the silver that he had named "in the hearing of the Hittites, 400 sheckels of silver, "according to the weights

current among the merchants". So here's a couple of things that are unusual here. First and foremost, this is the first funeral in the whole Bible. How many of you have been to a funeral? First funeral that I remember going to, I may have been to one previously, was my Grandpa George. He died when I was 10. I'll never forget that day. I loved him with all my heart and I just was kind of in shock, like it's over. I always went to his house and we'd go out to breakfast and we'd stay up late and we'd watch Big Time Wrestling with Roddy Piper and Jimmy Superfly Snuka and the Iron Sheik and Andre the Giant. And if you're judging me, Jesus says don't judge. But, and I'd eat caramel apples with my grandpa and I'd ride in his old Buick and get suckers out of the glove box. He always left him in there for me. And I never thought about not having him. Like I was always just looking forward to the next thing with grandpa. And then he was gone. He was just gone. This is the first funeral in the Bible. You know, who have you lost? There are some people here that this story is gonna hit in a deep and profound way, 'cause you've lost your spouse. You're you're a widow or a widower. Some of you've lost people that you love. I think about it with your marriage. If you really love your spouse, you don't have any plans without your spouse, amen? Like I don't have any plans without Grace. All my plans include Grace. If she's not there, I don't have any plan for that. Abraham and Sarah have been together for a very long time and she's gone. There's no more holding hands. There's no more going for walks. There's no more one hand clutching your beloveds and the other worshipping you're God. It's one of my favorite things to do with Grace. There's no more going out for breakfast. There's no more date night. There's no more holidays. There's no more vacations. There's no more snuggling up watching TV, sitting by the fire, falling asleep. Holding the person that you treasure the most. Every day's a precious day. And you never know when the last day's gonna be. So every day should be treated respectfully and accordingly. This is the first funeral in the Bible. Certainly not the last. Also this is the only woman in the Bible that we know her age when she died. I think ever since then, the women got together and they put a little conspiracy in place. Yeah, the Lord named Sarah's age, we gotta stop this. And so most women don't like their age to be known. In addition, this is the first time in the Bible that we see anyone weep and shed tears. Who is it? It's Abraham, who's he weeping for? The loss of his wife. The Bible says in the New Testament that we who are believers, we grieve, but we don't grieve as people who don't have hope. There's a difference between grieving to get to the hope of the resurrection and eternal life and grieving without hope. He's grieving with hope, but he's grieving. Let me say this, men, a lot of what I'm gonna say today is just from the heart, it's not from the notes. Your wife, if God blesses you with a wife, your kids, if God blesses you with kids. And I would say, with daughters, if God blesses you with daughters, they should see you shed tears. It shouldn't just be when they die, you cry. Because what does the tears indicate? Deep, profound love and affection. These are tears that come through the eyes, but they come from the heart, right? If you never as a man demonstrate, love, affection, empathy, compassion, presence, and gratitude, your wife, your kids, they're not gonna know if you love them. And some of you men have been wrongly told real men don't cry. Well, the shortest verse in the Bible is Jesus wept. And what I would say is he was a real man. In fact, he was the perfect man. And so real men do have times where we shed our tears. It's good for your wife and your kids to see your tears before death. And here we see his tears following her death. This is the first recorded tears in the Bible. The last recorded tears in the Bible, Genesis is the first book. Revelation is the last

book. Revelation 21:4 says quote, "when Jesus returns", you know what that means? Until Jesus returns, there's gonna be a lot of tears. We're gonna lose people that we love. "When Jesus returns, however, "there will be the resurrection of the dead". And Revelation 21:4 says "he will wipe away every tear "from their eyes and death shall be no more. "Neither shall there be mourning nor crying, "nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away". We learned early in Genesis that sin causes death and we shed our tears because ultimately death is undefeated and it comes for us. And it says that Jesus is coming again. He died and rose to defeat death and he's returning a second time to call us from our graves so that we will defeat death with him. And it says that when we resurrect from the dead and we're with Jesus forever in the condition that he intended for us in Genesis one and two, before sin entered the world, some of us are gonna still shed tears. We're gonna think back on this life and our failures and our losses and our griefs and our regrets, we're gonna mourn. And then it says this, then we're gonna see Jesus, face to face. You're gonna see Jesus. See now you live by faith, but you're gonna live by sight. And as soon as you look at Jesus, you're probably going to burst into tears, just overwhelmed with emotion. And then what he's gonna do, he's gonna take his hands and you're gonna see crucifixion scars in them. And he's gonna wipe your tears and you're never gonna shed another one because all the mourning will be over and all the rejoicing will be forever. See this is where we grieve, but we don't grieve as people who don't have hope. And here, Sarah, she dies in faith. Okay? Did she get to see her son get married? Answer, no. Did she get to see her grandchild be born? No. Did she get to see the magnificent nation of Israel come from her family? No. Did she get to see the promised Jesus Christ, the savior of the nations, the son of God that came through her son? Nope. Let me say this, a lot of things in our life, we believe by faith and then those promises are fulfilled long after we're gone. And here's what Abraham is doing, he's doing two things. He's grieving and he's honoring. Grieving is very important. If you don't grieve, you cannot heal. You cannot be emotionally well unless you process the loss. And after I don't know how long they've been married, maybe 100 years, we don't know, but how much grieving would there be? What those who have lost their spouse tell me is that the grief hits at unexpected times. They're just, you know, getting ready for bed and they just start talking, hey, what have we got tomorrow? And they realize, oh, they're not here. And then it hits them. They jump in the car and they're waiting and they're oh, that's right, my spouse is gone. They're not gonna jump in the car, I'm driving alone for the rest of my life. But Abraham is grieving. He's processing the loss of his wife. Hey, I love you, I'm not trying to pick on you. Here's what I'm telling you. Life moves fast, so don't spend it all bitter and angry and fighting. Just the holy spirit brings to mind one of my favorite books of the Bible is Ecclesiastes. There's a little word in Ecclesiastes. It's the Hebrew word hevel. It appears about 37, 38 times, depending upon your English translation. And it's the first word of the book and it defines life. It says "meaningless, meaningless says the teacher, "everything is meaningless". That's how some translations state it. Here's what that word means in the original Hebrew, breath. Another way to look at it. And it uses that same Hebrew word in the Psalms in this way, it says "breath, breath says the teacher, "everything is but of breath". It just feels like you're born. And your life is just one breath. And then it's your last breath. See the older you get the faster it seems to be going. Amen? When you're in third grade, you're like, when is school over? When you're 63, you're like I missed the last 50 years. I mean, it just moves so fast. If you've ever been up on a

cold day and you breathe, you see your breath, it's like a mist or a vapor, and then it's gone. And it's that same Hebrew word in Ecclesiastes that says life is a breath, it's a mist, it's a vapor. Those are various ways that that word gets translated. Don't waste all your time arguing with your enemies, spend it loving your friends and family. You're never gonna finish everything on your to-do list so make sure that loving God and your spouse are the first two things on your to-do list and let the others fall off the list. Don't harbor bitterness for one second. It is a waste of that second and you don't know how many seconds you've got. If you've got fun on the calendar, make sure you make memories and take photos, preserve your legacy. The point is this, that life just goes so fast. You know, I don't want you to live and then at the end be left regretting. Oh, I wish I would've said, I wish we would've done, I wish we would've spent, I wish we would've enjoyed. I wish, I wish, I wish. You know, I just, I wish I spent more time looking at my spouse than my phone. I wish I spent more time holding my spouse's hand than holding my phone. I wish I spent more time talking to the Lord than talking about politics. Don't waste your life, it's a gift. Invest it, you've only got one. And here Abraham he's grieving. He's shedding his tears, he misses his wife and he's also honoring her. He's honoring her. What he's saying is first and foremost, her body and soul are now separated. Her soul has gone to be with the Lord, her body remains. That's what Paul says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. To depart and be with the Lord is far better to live is Christ, to die, is gain. So Sarah's having a good day, but Abraham's having a tough day and he's gonna honor her body. What he says is it needs to be buried. And the problem is he doesn't live in this country. He's not a citizen, so he can't legally own land. He could go back to their homeland or the Chaldees, ancient Babylon, modern Iraq. But God told him to leave there. He's not gonna bring his wife back to the place that God told them to leave. God told them that they were to leave and to go to a place that he would show them, that's where they are. And what Abraham decides is I'm going to bury my wife in the place that God called us to, not the place that God called us from. And so he goes to negotiate a land deal and they don't want to give him the land. And then they negotiate and then they're willing to perhaps sell him the land. At first, they're very generous with him, but eventually he's unwilling to get something for free to give to his wife. Very important lesson here, men, don't be cheap. Amen ladies? Because ultimately she is priceless to him, so he's willing to pay any price to honor her. Furthermore, what he knows is who's gonna visit this grave? The kids, the grandkids, the great grandkids, and what are they gonna think? Great Grandpa Abraham, he buried grandma on a freebie. That's not a good legacy. Amen? Now he paid, he paid a significant price because he honored her and he cherished her. If a woman marries you and is your wife, she is a priceless gift. So pay any price to honor her. Abraham won't take free because she is priceless to him. So he's willing to pay that price. I love the fact that he's generous even after she's gone. So they negotiate a deal. And ultimately he knows exactly what piece of real estate he wants. Ultimately, it's going to be the beginning of the promised land. And he pays 400 sheckels of silver. So in that day they didn't have coins yet. So you would pay by the weight, gold, silver or bronze. It's in the study guide, but what's interesting here, how many sheckels did he pay for the land to bury his wife? 400 sheckels. Some years later when they went to build the temple, the land for the temple cost 50 sheckels. He paid eight times more to bury his wife than they paid to build the temple. Let me just submit this to you, he may have overpaid. Okay? And I'm telling you this, it's more important to be a good husband than to get a

good deal. If it's for your wife, be willing to be generous. That's what he does. So that for generations when his family comes to honor his wife, wow, he must have really must have really loved her. Look at what he bought to honor her. In addition now, had he received as a gift, the land, he would be obligated to the landowner. Instead he wants full freedom for who? For his family. Let me say this, men, the goal as we are patriarchs leading our family and I know all of those words are offensive and I don't care because as a patriarch, I don't care. What this world needs is more patriarchs. It needs more men who say, that's my wife, she's priceless. I honor her, these are our children. I want to raise and invest in them. I wanna set up the next generation for success. I want to make sure that the legacy walks and serves with the Lord. You know, people need to make their own decision, but I'm gonna make my decision. I'm gonna do everything I can to set up our family and our legacy to love and serve the Lord for generations. That's the heart of a patriarch. And what he knows here is if he gets the land, but someone else owns it, then his children and grandchildren are going to live on land where they are not free. Abraham cares a lot about freedom. So he's willing to pay a high price so that his family could be free. It would've been cheaper for him, but it would've been worse for them. So he makes a decision that costs him, but benefits the children and the grandchildren. And so here's what we read. Abraham and Sarah will rise together. Genesis 23:17 through 20. "So the field of Ephron and Machpelah, "which was to the east of Mamre", they know exactly where this is, "the field with a cave". It's where she's gonna be buried is in the cave, "that was in it and all the trees that were in the field", all the assets and the resources. Does Abraham need these resources? No. Does his kids and grandkids? Yeah. See fools think of a good time. Patriarchs think of a good legacy. "Through its whole area was made over to Abraham "as a possession of the presence of the Hittites "before all who went in at the gate of his city". He's buying land with resources to honor his wife and to give to his children and grandchildren. "After this Abraham buried Sarah's wife in the cave, "in the field of Machpelah, east of Mamre, that is in Hebron "in the land of Canaan. "The field and the cave that is in it "were made over to Abraham as a property "for a burying place by the Hittites". So Sarah's buried here. Abraham's gonna live another 38 years and then he is gonna be buried there with his wife. You know what that means when Jesus returns? They're gonna rise together. In addition, you're gonna see next week that Isaac marries Rebekah, who was just introduced, eventually, as we continue in the storyline, Abraham and Sarah, and then the next generation, Isaac and Rebekah are buried in that tomb. And then Abraham, Isaac, and then Jacob, the grandson, he eventually will be born and marry and he will be buried there with his wife, Leah. And so ultimately what you're gonna get is three generations buried together. And when Jesus returns, the whole family is gonna rise together. Now, I don't want to discourage those of you who have struggled with infertility. I don't want to be causing any grief for those of you that have a prodigal. Let's pray they come home as happened in this story that Jesus tells. But I don't wanna just think about life. I wanna think about resurrection life. I really hope that when you rise from the dead, two things are true. You're with your spouse and generations of your family. Amen? Like if people who aren't here yet, love Jesus after I'm gone and then we rise together, guess what the kingdom of God is? It's a giant family reunion. Who are you? I'm a Driscoll, crazy. I never got to meet you. Yeah, I was told about you by your grandson, who was my dad. You just never know what God is doing. And sometimes the most important things God is doing are not in our life, but through our life and lives that come long

after ours. You know, in the backyard right now, my window in my office overlooks the backyard. There are huge water slides, there are squirt guns. There are sprinklers, there are splash pads. There are popsicles. And there are children who are having a really good time, way better than you guys. I mean, I wonder what God has for them. And I wonder what their kids will be like. And I wonder what their grandkids will be like. And I wonder what their great grandkids will be like. And when we're all gone, I wonder at the resurrection of the dead, who we're gonna meet and who's gonna be there and what it's gonna be like. See Abraham is thinking about these kinds of things, because he's got his whole family together. Not just in life, but in resurrection life. Well, some of you would ask did, is this true? Like, did these places exist? Are these people real? Yeah, this is where Abraham and Sarah buried, friend. It's not a real secret. The Muslims have it as a holy place. But today that is the place under which is the cave in which Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, their wives are all buried. It's called the Tomb of the Patriarchs. And when they rise from the dead and Jesus returns, they'll all be together with a family reunion there. And as Christians, we think it's interesting but we're more excited about an empty tomb, just so you know. Like filled tombs are interesting. The empty tomb, that's really interesting to us. So let me talk about marriage if I can, let me talk about the first day of your marriage, the last day of your marriage. What we've just seen here with Abraham and Sarah is the last day of marriage. First day of marriage is a very important day. True or false? Okay? Okay, ladies, when do girls start planning their wedding? Nine or 10 days of age they start planning. That's when they start planning, My girls were little, guess what they always played? Dress up and dress up is just practicing for the wedding day. She gets gown on, heels. First time this hit me, again not in the notes, just in the heart. We were at Disneyland, Disney World, I should say. And Ashley was maybe four or five. Zach was two or three. And I don't know if Calvin was born yet. The kids were little and it was late at night. And I was teaching in Orlando and my oldest daughter, she says, dad, I wanna go swimming. It's late at night. I was like, of course. So if my girls ask, the answer's yes. And some would be like, they're spoiled. Exactly. And so I took her swimming and we were in the pool and it was late at night and I'm throwing her and flipping her and she's laughing and splashing. And we come back to the hotel room at Disney World and I put her up on the bed and I get the white towel. And I she's got really long, really thick hair. And so I'm drying her hair and she grabs the end of the towel. And she looks at me. She says, it looked like a veil. She's just like, daddy, would you marry me? She saw tears, my girls make me cry all the time. I said, honey, someday, there's gonna be a man who loves you as much as your daddy loves you. And he's gonna take care of you like your daddy takes care of you and he's going to marry you. She's like, okay, daddy, how will I know who that is? And I said, I will tell you. So that's a true story. And I laid hands and I prayed over her and I prayed for her future husband. And I kissed her on the head and I thought, okay, she's gonna be married someday. The first day of marriage is really important. How much time and energy and effort, how much money and planning goes into the first day? A lot. Like if you're engaged right now, you're racking up quite a bill. Okay? You are. 'Cause we want the first day to be the best. But here's what I'm telling you, the most important day is the last day, right? I don't want just a photographer or a videographer or a celebration on the first day. I wanna be together, throw a party on the last day. Most marriages have a great first day. Most marriages don't have a great last day. So when it comes to the first day of your marriage, let me speak to those of you who are younger. So how

many of you are teens and twenties? Okay, you guys here. These would be the, I think they called them the millennials. These would be my kids. We're 16 to 24 with our five kids. This generation is the largest, most diverse, most educated generation in the history of America. And also the most lied to, the most lied to. And here's what we learned earlier in Genesis. I'm talking about your first day of marriage. So for those of you who are younger, single, just hear me. In Genesis one and two, everything was perfect. And it was God's pattern for how life is to be. And if we operate within God's principles, it works. So God created Adam and then he educated him. First thing, Adam got educated. God's like, okay, I'm God, you're Adam. Here's your job description. You're under my authority. You have dominion over animals and plants. You're supposed to make culture. You're gonna need to work, I'm gonna bring a wife. You're gonna have kids like, okay, here do this, don't do that, enjoy the trees. Stay away from that tree, educated him. And then he gave him a job, okay? He says that Adam was made to work and God put him in the garden to work. So, first thing I'm gonna educate you. Then I'm gonna give you a job. Notice the order. And then he got a wife. If you're single, write this down. Job, wife, job, wife, job, wife. What about wife, job? No, get a job then a wife. A lot of guys think, oh, girls find loud car stereos and mufflers attractive. No, they don't, they find a job attractive. So get a job. Okay? Get a job, get a job and get a Bible. That's sexy, amen? Job and a Bible, okay? He gets educated, he gets a job and he goes to work. And then he gets a wife, a wife, and then they consummate their covenant. And then they have a kid. So in review, get educated, get a job, then get a wife, then have a child with the wife. Is that the order? Yes. Okay? And this was written 4,000 years ago. And the sociologists studied it. And guess what they found? This works and nothing else does. They call it the success sequence. It's put together by Bradford Wilcox. He's my favorite sociologist on marriage and families at the University of Virginia. And he calls it the success sequence. And what he says is it doesn't matter what your family of origin was like. It doesn't matter what your race was like. It doesn't matter what income or class your family participated in. If you want to avoid poverty, whoever you are, wherever you are, do these three things in this order, calls it the success sequence. Number one, graduate from high school. Number two, get a full time job. And even if you're working on it, then eventually you get married first before you have kids. If you will do these three things in order, you will only have a 3% chance of being in poverty. Okay? Let's look this again. Graduate from high school, get a full-time job and get married and then have a kid. Let me say this, put the dad hat on. Some of you will say I've been taught differently, then you've been lied to, been lied to. And this is why we have generational cycles of poverty. So if you're like, oh, why are there poor people? Well, oftentimes it's very, and I know it's offensive. And again, I don't care, but just point out the obvious, if you don't graduate and you don't have a job and you get somebody pregnant, that's poverty. If you graduate, get a job, get married, have a kid that ends poverty. It doesn't matter how much money the government gives you. If you don't have behavior that God honors, eventually you'll be in poverty. We think that we can solve poverty by giving people money. What we need is to give people wisdom. If you have no money and you have wisdom, you can actually make a life. If you have money and no wisdom, you will ruin your life. So your first day, this is really important because for those of you who are younger, my millennial kids' friends, your generation has the highest out of wedlock childbirth in the history of the United States of America. 55% of you are reversing the order. You're having sex before marriage and having

children without a job. And then it hurts and they're like, it doesn't work. And then you vote for a government to give to you so that you can be dependent on them so that they can control you and own you and brainwash you. And eventually here's what happens. Eventually the government runs out of other people's money. That's what happens. So the best way to have a life and leave a legacy is to follow God's success sequence. Get educated, not just graduate high school. I would say know the Lord Jesus and study the Bible work. Don't just vote for other people to go to work and the government to take their money and give it to you, go to work, then get married and then have a kid. If you will do those things, your first day of marriage will be a better day than most of your peers. And let me say this to the young men. The sooner you start on this, the further ahead you are. The average guy today is over 30 when he finally does get married. By that point, he's had a lot of sexual partners, maybe had a child out of wedlock, got himself into debt. He's got the sequence backwards. The sooner you start, the further ahead you are, this is not just a crisis for everyone. It's also an opportunity for God's children. So let me talk not just about the first day, but the last day. To do this I'll bring up my wife, Grace. And here's what I'm gonna ask you to do. If you are married, hold hands. If you're engaged, hold hands. Okay? We'll hold hands, hi baby. So we've been studying Abraham and Sarah the last day of their marriage and then Abraham, he's got the funeral to bury his wife. I am not ready for that day. There's gonna come a day when one of us says goodbye. I always pray, I prayed since we got married, that I would outlive you so that I could make sure that you were protected and taken care of your whole life. The thought of me not being there to take care of you, that troubles me.

- I always pray that we'll die at the same time.

- Yeah. Well, if you're driving, we might.

- I would say it's when you're driving.

- This August just in a couple months will be our 30th anniversary of our wedding. And that probably means we're at about halftime. We're probably gonna live into our eighties. And so we probably got about 30 more years to go. I want to thank you for marrying me and being the greatest blessing after Jesus. I wanna thank you for buying me a Bible that I got saved reading. I want to thank you for going through hell and attack and difficulty and still smiling and being joyful and being here. And I wanna thank you for being the best friend I've ever had. And I wanna thank you for putting up with me. I mean, if I didn't have to put up with me, I wouldn't. But you've hung in there through all of it. And these are the best days of our life. This is the best season of our life. And the future is so exciting and who the kids are and where they're going and what they're doing it's such a rich blessing. And I was thinking.

- Thank you for being the patriarch that's led our family well and taught them about the Lord and the Bible and just about how to love.

- Well, it's fun. And I was thinking about it. What's the last day, you know, of our relationship

gonna be? And if you're married, what's the last day of your marriage gonna be? And wanted to share a story with you. This is Charles Ray and Martha Jean Harris. This is the last day of their marriage. We want you to have a great first day, but the most important day of your marriage is your last day. They are from Tennessee. They met at the age of 12 and fell in love at the age of 12. They married at the age of 19. They were married 65 glorious years. They both were Christians. They were married in the church. They sang in the choir. They served in Sunday school and they raised three kids and they were God's people. And they died at the age of 84. And she got suddenly sick unexpectedly. And he was so tied to her in body and mind and soul, they were connected. It's interesting in Genesis, it says the two become one. And so when she became sick, he was fine and healthy and then suddenly he took a very quick turn toward joining her with hospitalization and sickness. And so they were hospitalized together. For two weeks daily, he would be wheeled into her room. She was dying. They had a hard time speaking and breathing. And so he would just say, he said the same thing over and over and over. He just said, I love you and they held hands all day. And he just kept telling her that he loved her. The story is told on Monday, Charlie Ray, who was talking and eating, went to say goodbye one last time to his middle school sweetheart when his own health took a turn for the worse. "I could see daddy getting worse rapidly, "he was chasing her", said their son, Richard. "He chased her right into heaven. "She was pronounced deceased and 42 minutes later "daddy joined her holding hands". The son says, "you know this is just conjecture, of course, "but it's nice to think about that they held hands "going through the gates", their son said, as he smiled. They lived holding hands for 65 years. They died holding hands. They had their funeral in the same church they had their wedding. They're buried together. And when Jesus returns, they're gonna hold hands again. We want the last day of your marriage to be the best day. For Abraham and Sarah, it was a great day. And honey, I promise you, I'm gonna hold your hand 'til the end. And when Jesus comes back, I'm gonna keep holding it.

- Amen.

- Why don't you pray for them?

- Oh Lord, thank you for your word that it is full of stories of real people's lives. And we get to see the journey that Abraham and Sarah took. Thank you that they had a relationship that he grieved because he enjoyed his wife. Lord, I pray that over all of the marriages and the future marriages in this room and the people that are listening. Lord, we just ask that you bless, that you allow us to know how to forgive well, love well, for the men to lead well, for the women to follow well and to be a partner with their husband. Thank you that you have given us the blueprint of what to do and how to live in the order that it needs to be in. And thank you that the culture, the scientists are showing that this is true, that your word is true and that when we live, it works. But Lord, our culture is suffering. So I pray that you would reroute us, that you would show us and that we would believe once again, your word and that your way is right. And that you would renew the lives of the young people and of all of us that are married and allow us to walk in your steps and not the steps of the world, Lord. Thank you for who you are. Thank you for having a plan for us and thank you for loving us and picking us back up when we do it wrong.

In Jesus name, amen.