

Why is Your Spouse the Second Most Important Decision of Your Life?

- All right, we're in a great book of the Bible called Genesis. If you got a Bible, go to Genesis 24. Here's the big question we're gonna answer today. Why is your spouse the second most important decision you make in your life? And we're gonna look at this incredible love story between Isaac and Rebecca. So let me just set it up for you. This point in Genesis, we have seen generations of this family, but we don't know how most of them got married. We don't see like the dating years, the falling in love, the asking the dad's permission. We don't get any of the details. So we started with Adam and Eve and it was pretty simple for them, right? They're like one man, one woman. They're like, I don't know if they're the one. They're the only one. That's for sure the one, right. That's all you got. So they're created as adults, they get married, there you go. And then we looked at Noah and his wife. We don't know how they met when they met, where they met. We don't know if they were on an app or met in high school or were serving in the kids' ministry, I don't know. You know, maybe they sat next to each other on a flight. I don't know. We don't know how they met. They just got married. And then fast forward we met the next great couple was Abraham and Sarah. They were married younger, they were believers later in life. So we don't know how they met when they met, where they met. We just don't know. Their son is born, Isaac. What we're gonna see today in Genesis 24 is how he falls in love, how he gets married, how he picks his wife, how God is involved. And so this is the first time that we see how do believers, you know, find each other and get married. So how many of you are married? Amen. How many of you are single? Okay. All right, afterward, so find someone that raised their hand and fix that, okay, that's how it's gonna work. Food trucks are in the back it's day night. There you go. All right, so, but then the question is if you're believers, how do you meet someone and how do you marry someone and how does this all work itself out? So if you are a person who is single, this is really helpful for you. You get to think about, "Okay, what does it look like "for me and for us?" If you're married, it's a good chance for us who are married to look back on our marriage and ask, "Okay, did we do it right, did we do it wrong? "Did we make some mistakes? "Or there's some things we need to go back "and course correct. "Are there things that we'll just never tell the children?" You know, those kind of things. Yeah, that's funny if you're married. And for those of us who are a bit older, maybe you're a grandparent and you've got grandkids. You're like, "Well, how do I help coach them "toward marriage?" Or maybe you're mentoring people or you're leading in ministry, you're a teacher, a coach, you're a counselor. How do you help people? So what we're gonna do, we're gonna read all of Genesis 24. It's the longest single unit narrative in Genesis. It's super long. We're gonna read the whole thing, right. And just let me tell you, if you want to go to the bathroom, now's a good time, all right. But we're gonna read the whole love story and we're gonna see it and then we're gonna unpack it. So if you woke up today and you're like, "I hope we read 11 slides in a row in church." Yes, nailed it. Prayer answered. Here we go, Genesis 24, 1-67. "Now Abraham was." Oh yeah, you see, a gal in the front row just passed out. All right, here we go. I'm a union preacher, I get paid by the verse. We're doing 67 verses. Just 'cause need to go on vacation, we need that bonus. Need that cash money. All right, here we go. "Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years." He's over a hundred. "And the Lord had blessed him." In what? "All things." So that's our hope, prayer and encouragement. God can bless every life. "And Abraham said to his servant, "the oldest of his household who had charge "of all that he had." So this is his most trustworthy right

hand man. "Put your hand under my thigh." We're not even gonna talk about that. Here, we believe in doing the knuckles, right. So how many of you men right now? We'll just take a vote, you're like, "I vote for the knuckles." Okay. All right, all right, there we go, all right. So, "That I might make you swear by the Lord, "the God of heaven and earth "that you will not take a wife for my son, "from the daughters of the Canaanites." The Canaanites, the really bad guys. They surround God's people. God's people throughout the Bible are forbidden from inter marrying with them. These are the heathen, these are the pagan, these are the forbidden. "Among whom I dwell." They're surrounded by not good options for his son. "But I will go to my country and to my kindred "and take a away from my son, Isaac. "The servant said to him, perhaps the woman "may not be willing to follow me to this land." It is a little weird. "Hey, go there, hey, I've got a really nice guy. "Would you like to move to another country and marry him?" We're probably not gonna get a first round draft pick up a girl, who's gonna sign up for an anonymous marriage in another country. And if you married someone, 'cause you met them on the internet and moved to America, just pretend I didn't say that. Okay, here we go. "Must I then take your son back to the land "from which you came." He's like, "Well, what if I can't find a girl "who wants to sign up for this deal?" "Abraham said to him, see that you "do not take my son back there. "And then the Lord, the God of heaven "who took me from my father's house "and from the land of my kindred "and who spoke to me and swore to me "to your offspring, I will give this land, "he will send his angel." God's gonna get involved in this supernaturally. "Before you, and you shall take away for my son from there. "But if the woman is not willing to follow you, "then you will be free from this oath of mine. "Only you must not take my son there." Here's the deal, "My son needs a wife, "we're not taking him to another land. "The gal's gonna need to move here." "So the servant gave him the knuckles. "And his master swore to him concerning this matter. "Then the servant took 10 of his master's camels." This is a 10 camel job. My guess is it's to move the gal. She's probably a shoe gal, lot of accessories. Yeah, my wife is amening that. Like I told you, we need that cash money. All right, so she's probably a shoe girl, a lot of accessories. It's a 10 camel move. "Took 10 camels and departed "making all sorts of choice gifts from his master "and he arose and he went to Mesopotamia "to the city of Nahor." So he makes the journey. "And he made the camels kneel down outside the city "by the well of water at the time of evening." It's nighttime, the camels are tired, they need some water. "The time when which women go out to draw water." So on that day, when the sun goes down, it gets a little bit cooler. How many of you just moved here? Don't go outside during the day, you're going to die. Wait for the sun to go down and then you'll die slower. You're still gonna die though. It's hot. And so they're gonna go get water. And this is where all the gals during the heat of the day, they all meet up at the well, and it's sort of, you know, catch up, how you doing, gal time. "And he said, oh Lord God of my master Abraham, "please grant me success today and show steadfast love "to my master Abraham. "Behold, I'm standing by the spring of water "and the daughters of the men of the city "are coming out to draw water." You notice he gets to the right place, he gets to the well. Moral of the story is, if you're a single guy, find a well. All right, "Then the young woman to whom I shall say, "please let down your jar that I may drink." He's gonna see, is she humble, is she loving, will she serve, is she helpful? "And who shall say drink and I will water your camels." Really nice gal lets you have a drink. Really, really nice gal helps your camel. Let's say you've got a pet dog and you meet a nice gal, she's like, "I'd like to take care of you and your dog."

That's a really nice girl, okay. "Let her be the one whom you have appointed "for your servant Isaac." So it's a real specific prayer. "By this I shall know that you've shown "steadfast love to my master. Before he gets finished speaking, before he finishes the prayer, what does God do? Answer it. Sometimes God doesn't even wait for you to finish the prayer, he just shows up and answer it. "Behold, Rebecca." Da, da, da. "Who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah." We met this family last week. "The wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother." We know this gal. "Came out with her water jar on her shoulder." You notice she's working. She's not just posting on Instagram, she's working. "The young woman was very attractive in appearance, "a maiden who no man had known." Hmm, this is going in the right direction. "She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. "Then the servant ran to meet her." He ran. "Oh, look at there, a virgin with a jar, "that's it, okay, here we go, game time." "Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "please give me a little water to drink from your jar. "She said drink my Lord." Woo. Woo. Woo, woo, woo. Yes, here we go. "And she quickly." So she's ready to serve. "Let down her jar upon her hands and gave him a drink." Nice girl? Sweetheart. "When she had finished giving him a drink, "she said, oh, I wanna water the camels." Da, da, da. "I will draw water for your camels also "until they have finished drinking." She's gonna, 10 camels, that's 25 gallons of water. How many of you, you're like, "Yeah, I need to find me "a 25 gallon girl, that's a hardworking girl." "So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran." Hardworking gal. "Again to the well to draw water. "And she drew for all of his camels." 25 gallons. "The man gazed at her in silence." "She's cute and she works, oh my gosh, it's a miracle." Usually you get one or the other, probably shouldn't have said that. "But the man gazed at her in silence "to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not. "When the camels had finished drinking." The camels are like, "We like her." "The man took a gold ring, wearing half a shackle "and two bracelets for her arms weight, 10 gold shackles." This is a big deal. Big deal. Anytime someone will trade you water for gold, that's a great deal. "And two bracelets for arm weighing 10 gold shackles. "He said, please tell me whose daughter you are. "Is there room in your father's house "for us to spend the night?" Can we get to know your family? "She said, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, "whom she bore to Nahor. "She added, we have plenty of both straw and fodder "and room to spend the night." "You can come stay with us, we love people, "I'm happy to help, I'm here to serve."

- [Woman] Wow.

- "The man bow his head and worshiped the Lord." This dude just like, "Woo, thank you, Lord Jesus, "amen, I got the camel, I got the girl, nailed it. "No more inner thigh blessing. "We're done with all of that. "Oh thank you Lord, okay." "The man bowed his head worshiped the Lord "and said blessed be the Lord, the God of my master, "who is not forsaken his steadfast love "and his faithfulness toward my master." "Are we done yet, Pastor Mark?" No. "As for me, the Lord has led me "in the way to the house of my master kinsman." He's like, "Can you believe it? "I came to another country and I landed at the right well "with people that we know." "Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household "about these things." "Mom, you'll never guess what." "Rebecca had a brother whose name was Laban." You're gonna meet him later, horrible guy. If you have an evil, demonic, possessed, corrupted relative, bring him for that sermon. It'll

be super painful for them, but helpful for you. Laban is a horrible person. And just so you know, if your wife's pregnant, you're like, "Oh, I wanna get him a Bible name." Don't just pick a name, do the research, don't name the kid Laban. "Laban ran out toward the man to the spring." So he's gonna cut in line. He's gonna get in the way. He's always in it for himself. He's a very selfish, conniving guy. "And as soon as he saw the ring "and the bracelet's on his sister's arms." So she comes back with gold, he's like, "Hey, there's an opportunity here for me." He's only in it for himself all the time. "And heard the words of Rebecca, his, sister, "thus the man spoke to me. "He went to the man and behold, "he was standing by the camels at the spring. "He said." Laban's gonna set this up for his own benefit. "Come in, O blessed of the Lord, "why do you stand outside?" It's only after he sees the gold that he's really generous. "For I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." Which he probably didn't. Somebody else did. That's how men are. You're like, "Oh, I cleaned the house "'cause I knew you were coming over." Don't lie. You can't even find the vacuum. "So the man came to the house and unharnessed the camels "and gave straw fodder to the camels. "There was water to wash his feet "and the feet of the men who were with him. "Then food was set before him to eat." Real generous, good hospitality. "Then he said, I will not eat until I have said "what I have to say. "He said, speak on. "So he said, I am Abraham's servant. "The Lord has greatly blessed my master "and he has become great. "He has given him flocks and herds, "silver and gold, male servants, female servants, "camels and donkeys. "And Sarah, my master's wife or a son to my master "when she was old." She since passed away. We saw the funeral last week. "And to him, he has given all that he has. "My master made me swear, saying, "you shall not take a wife for my son, "from the daughters of the Canaanites." My son can't marry an believer. "In whose land I dwell, but you must go to my father's house "and to my clan and take a wife for my son. "I said to my master, perhaps the woman will not follow me. "But he said to me the Lord, before whom I have walked." Right, "The God who's been good to me "is gonna be good to my son. "The God who helped our marriage "is gonna help my son get married." "Will send his angel with you at prosper your way. "You shall take a wife for my son, "from my clan and from my father's house. "Then you will be free for my oath when you come to my clan. "And if they will not give her to you, "you will be free for my oath. "He said, I can't believe it, "I came today to the spring and said, oh Lord, "the God of my master, Abraham, "if you are now prospering, the way that I go, "behold, I'm standing by the spring of water. "Let the virgin who comes out draw water "to whom I shall say, "please pretty, please give me a drink, "a little drink of water from your jar "and who will say to me drink "and I will draw for your camels also." He said, "I prayed and God answered my prayer, "really specifically." "Let her be the woman whom the Lord is appointed "for my master's son. "Before I had finished speaking in my heart." He's like, "I didn't even say it out loud. "God heard my heart." You need to know this, you don't even need to pray out loud for God to hear your prayer. And sometimes you don't need to wait a long time for him to answer it. "Behold, Rebecca came out "with her water jar on her shoulder. "She went down to the spring and drew water. "I said to her, please let me drink. "She quickly let her jar down from her shoulder "and said drink and I will give your camels drink also. "So I drank and she gave the camels drink also. "Then I asked whose daughter are you?" You notice these repeating the story. Right, this is what men do. We just, we keep telling the same thing over and over and over, it's in the Bible. "When I asked her whose daughter or you, "she said the daughter of

Bethuel, Nahor's son who Milcah bore to him. "So I put the ring on her nose." That's how we know it's official. "And the bracelets on her arms. "Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord "and blessed the Lord, the God of my master, Abraham, "who led me on the right way "to take the daughter of my kinsman for his son. "Now, if you are going to show steadfast love "and faithfulness to my master, "tell me if not, tell me "that I may turn to the right onto the left. "Then Laban and Bethuel answered." Laban shouldn't be involved. He's the guy who always cuts in line. "The thing has come from the Lord. "We cannot speak to you bad or good, "behold, Rebecca is before you take her and go "and let her be the wife of your master's son, "as the Lord has spoken." How many of you guys would not send your wife, your daughter, rather just yet to be a guy's wife? But they knew it was of the Lord. "When Abraham servants heard their words, "he bowed himself to the earth before the Lord "and the servant brought out jewelry of silver and gold "garments and gave them to Rebecca." I mean, she has just hit the jackpot. But she didn't know. She didn't know that she was gonna marry a rich man. She just knew that she needed to have character and God blessed her. "He also gave to her brother "and to her mother costly ornaments." So they're generous to the whole family. "And he and the men who were with him, "they ate and drank and they spent the night there. "When they arose in the morning, he said, "send me away to my master. "Her brother and her mother said, "let the young woman remain with us a while. "At least 10 days that she may go." They're like, "We need 10 days "to at least say goodbye to our daughter." And if it was me, I'd be like, I need 10 years. "But he said to them, do not delay me "since the Lord is prospered my way, "send me away that I may go to my master. "They said, let us call the young woman and ask her." You notice they're not just domineering her, they're conversing with her. She's not just being forced to do something against her will. They're like, "Well, we'd like her to stay. "We'll ask her what she wants to do. "She's got her own relationship with the Lord." "And they called to Rebecca and said to her, "will you go with this man? "She said, I will go." That was quick. That was super quick. She's like, "I'm already packed." "So they sent away Rebecca, their sister and her nurse "and Abraham serving and his men. "And they blessed Rebecca and said to her sister, "may you become thousands of 10 thousands "and may your offspring possess the gates "of those who hate him." So they pray a blessing over her. Last slide, "Then Rebecca and her young women." So she's got some gals who go with her. They're probably serving her. "And rode on the camels and followed the man. "Thus, the servant took Rebecca and went his way. "Now Isaac could return from Beer-lahai-roi "and was dwelling in the Negab. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field "toward the evening." He's gonna spend time with the Lord. He's praying, he's fasting, he's spending time in God's presence. He's a worshiper of God. He's like, "Okay, Lord, please bring me my girl." "And then he lifted up his eyes and saw." You notice prayer keeps getting answered here. "And behold there were camels coming." The question is, is there a girl on one of those camels. "And Rebecca lifted up her eyes." This is really romantic. She saw Isaac, he saw her, butterflies, background music, everything's slow motion, running in the fields. Here we go. "She dismounted from the camel and said to her servant, "Who is that guy walking in the field to meet us? "The servant said, it's my master. "So she took her veil and covered herself." She's being discreet, respectful in that culture. "And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. "Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother "and took Rebecca." They got married, she became his wife. "And he loved her." He loved her. "So Isaac was comforted after

his mother's death." Couple of things here, God had promised Abraham and Sarah, "You're gonna get a son. "Your son's gonna have more sons, "they're gonna become a nation. "That'll become the nation of Israel. "Through the nation of Israel "will come Jesus Christ, the son of God." And at this point Sarah's already died. Isaac's not married. He's around 37, late bloomer. He's gonna marry around 40 years of age. And part of the reason may be that they live longer, but also surrounding him is we heard, it's all Canaanites, it's godless women. Is it okay for a believer to marry a unbeliever? No. And if you're single, you're like, "I don't know." Ask a dad, okay, we all know it's a terrible idea. There weren't women around that loved the Lord, so they have to travel 450 miles to go find a wife. And the big idea here is this. The father is actively involved. He doesn't just let his son go out and just make any old choice. As our kids get older, they need to marry someone that they love, but that person needs to know the Lord and the parents need to be in the coaching process. They need to be involved.

- [Woman] Amen.

- And so that's what we see here. And men, you need to know this, active involvement in the life of your children is important for their whole life. When they're little, you make a lot of decisions for them. As they get bigger, they make their own decisions, but you coach them in the decision making process. So here I am assuming that Isaac and Abraham were like, Isaac's like, "Dad, there's no girls. "They all are godless. "This is just not a lot of options here." He's like, "Well, we're gonna have to go somewhere "and find a gal that loves the Lord." "Okay, what's our plan?" They work out their plan, they pray, they fast. Isaac is meditating, he's praying, he's like, "Okay, God, please execute on our plan. "Please bring me a godly woman." This is where the second most important decision you ever make, is who you marry. Most important decision is who you worship. Second, most important decision is who you wed. If you get this right and you get the marriage right, the rest of the things will work themselves out because God and your spouse will help architect a life. If you worship the wrong God, or you wed a person who doesn't know and love God, you're now taking yourself out of blessing on generations of your family. It doesn't mean that God can't save them and doesn't mean God can't give grace to you, but it doesn't mean you're making your life a lot harder and you're making your legacy a lot more complicated. And so they meet it the well, this is where Moses and Zipporah met, Isaac and Rebecca meet there, Jacob and Rachel meet there. The well just seems to be the Old Testament hotspot, just tends to be the place that everybody finds themselves. And so what we see here is this, does God in this scene say or do anything supernatural? Nope. It's all him working through circumstances. Let me say this about God. There are two ways that God works. Just like we've got two hands. There's the extraordinary and the ordinary. There's what seems like the supernatural and the natural. There are miracles and then there's God's providence or his sovereignty. Here God doesn't speak and he doesn't do a miracle, he works out the events. Sometimes people in their life, they'll say, "I don't know why God's not in my life. "I dunno why God hasn't showed up. "You know, I prayed and God didn't do anything." Just because you didn't get a miracle, doesn't mean God was there. Look at providence, look at sovereignty, look at events, look at cause and effect, look at who God brought, look at what God did. That's how he's working here. But ultimately everything works out according to God's sovereign plan.

Here's the big idea, God is sovereign. You and I need to know that. There is a God who hears prayer and he architects events to bless his people. Here we see it with a marriage. And this just shows us for those of us who are parents, should we be praying for our child's future spouse?

- [Woman] Yes.

- Absolutely. We should be saying, God, please bring them a believing spouse. But not just praying, also planning and putting them in environments where there are believers. This is why it is so important as parents to think, okay, where are we gonna raise our kids? You know, are they gonna go to school with believers? Are they gonna go to college with believers? Are they gonna worship with believers? Are they gonna have friends that are believers? If not, they're probably gonna end up romantically interested in a non believer. And a lot of parents, they don't see the cause and effect between the plans you make, the environments you create and the romantic relationships that come to your children. This is why for us growing up, it's like church is really important for our family. I'll just say this church is more important than school.

- [Woman] Amen.

- It's more important than school. 'Cause the hope is you're in church your whole life, you're in school for a certain number of years. And the hope and prayer and goal is, you know, they may tell you some crazy stuff at school, so you wanna pick a good school. But ultimately if you meet somebody that loves the Lord and you worship together, well, that's ultimately the end zone and the goal.

- [Woman] Amen.

- And so it's what environment, what surroundings, what relationships do you bring around your kids? So Abraham looks at, he is like, "We got no good options in this neighborhood. "We're gonna have to go to another country." The question is this, what lengths are you willing to go to, to have opportunity for your children to marry godly people, to love the Lord. That's why some people right now are moving. That's why there are whole cities, they're emptying out. God's people are like, "This ain't working. "Like the schools are crazy, the people are nuts "and my kids are gonna grow up and marry a demon, "so I'm out." Welcome to Arizona, right. So this is what's happening that you and I need not just think about, how come my kids get the best GPA, where can we make the most money? But what is gonna provide the greatest health, spiritually for our family and legacy? And that's really what's driving this decision. So what I wanna do now, I want to take this case study of Isaac and Rebecca. I wanna look at this first sort of premarital, marital process and I wanna do a deep dive, heavy duty, let's swim out to the deepest end of the pool, kinda look at dating and marriage. And I wanna look at it for this reason. For those of us who are married, let's look at our marriage and ask, "Did we have some cracks in our foundation "that we need to fix, "and it caused some problems in our marriage, "but it happened before we were married?" For those of us who are parents, it's like, "What's my plan for my kids? "What's

my prayer for my kids?" For those of us who are grandparents like, "Well, what are we hoping for and how do we help?" For those of us who are counselors or we're ministry leaders or we're coaches or we're teachers or we're spiritual mentors, "What do we tell people? "How do we help people?" First thing I wanna do, I wanna talk to you young men, 'cause the Bible says that women are taken in marriage, but men take a wife. The women are given in marriage. What that means is a man needs to initiate, a man needs to lead. It means that a man needs to take responsibility for himself. We looked in Genesis previously. Leave his mother and father, cleave, that is pursue his wife, the two become one flesh, right. That a man needs to take the initiative, that a man needs to take responsibility. So let me just say this. I'm gonna say a lot of things that are offensive and then the band will come back out and you'll feel better. So just hang in there. The band's coming. In a relationship, I will put the majority of the pressure on the man, I will. Now it doesn't mean there's no responsibility for the woman, but the man needs to carry the lions share the responsibility. So I wanna look at Isaac, he's not perfect, but he does do some things in a way that God can honor and bless. So let's use Isaac as an example of the success sequence for men. Number one, Isaac is living as a believer before he is married. So he has a relationship with God before he has a relationship with Rebecca. Really important. Number two, Isaac has a career and an income. He doesn't just vote for people that take money from people that have a career and an income. He actually goes to work. He has a job and an income stream. Number three, Isaac invited God into his marriage with faith and prayer. He's like, "Lord, I want you to make sure "that I don't make a wrong, bad decision. "God, I wanna marry in your will. "I wanna marry someone I can worship you with." Number four, Isaac seeks help from a godly parent and wise counsel. Abraham is alive, his mom is dead, so he's got his dad actively involved. If his dad was foolish or ungodly, probably shouldn't take his dad's advice. Sometimes parents who don't know the Lord don't know what's right. So even if you're single, you go to an ungodly parent, you're like, "Well I got somebody." Like, "Well can't you guys just live and sleep together, "why do you get so serious?" Oh, that's from first and second horrible ideas. That's where that's from. But so if you have a godly parent, seek their advice. But if you have an ungodly parent, love them, but don't necessarily take their advice. And wise counsel. So Abraham's senior executive, right hand man goes with and goes for and he goes as part of the process. Number five, Isaac does not cohabit or father a child out of wedlock. He doesn't sleep with her, he doesn't impregnate her, he doesn't move in with her. He what? He marries her. Number six, Isaac marries a believer and they live as believers. Number seven, Isaac is drawn to all of Rebecca. Let me say this, you're gonna marry a person, not just a body, you're gonna marry a person. So let me just unpack this. Is Isaac, do you think he's attracted to her character? Is she hardworking?

- Yeah.

- Yeah. Is she kind?

- [Woman] Yeah.

- She's super kind. Is she generous? She's really generous. Is she modest? Yeah, when she

meets him, she puts the veil on. She's not like, "He's loaded, "I'm gonna do the bachelorette and make this work." She doesn't do that. She's got character. She's got work ethic. She's kindhearted. She loves the Lord. And he thinks she's cute. So let me just say this men, if you're gonna marry a woman, you need to be attracted to her, right her, like, I like her. So like, I like Grace. I like her sense of humor. I think she's fun, she's sweet, she's devoted, she's hardworking, she's cute, I like her laugh. Right, I like her. He's drawn to the whole of her. If you're gonna marry a woman, you need to be drawn to the whole of her. Can't just be, "I like her wallet or I like her body." You need to be, "I like her." Like all of her. Isaac likes all of her, he loves her. And then lastly, Isaac chooses his love and keeps loving his choice. This is crucial. What happens a lot in our country, we choose our love, but we don't love our choice. He chooses his love and for the rest of his life, he keeps loving his choice. This is one of the great love stories of the whole Bible. So let me compare and contrast this with the last hundred ish years of a failed experiment called casual dating in the United States of America, which is the Greek word for stupid. Okay, so let me just unpack this. 'Cause here's what happens. What happens is when you're born into a world or a culture, that's all you've ever known, so you assume that's normal, that's the way it's always been, that's the way everybody does it. No it's not. Casual dating, the culture of hookup, shack up and breakup that dominates our culture is about a hundred years of age. So let me give you a little bit of a history lesson. Would you like a history lesson? You're gonna get one either way. So either way. So how many of you have heard of dating? That word was introduced to the English language in 1896 as lower class slang for prostitution. That's where it started. Oh. Some of you are like, "Oh my gosh, "I'm here with my girl on a date at church." This is very complicated, isn't it? Okay, so. When a guy would say, "I'm going on a date." What it meant was, "I'm paying for sex." Okay. Now in the early 1900s, some of you ask, "In the early 1900s "how did people get married?" Thank you for asking. Calling in our culture was more common. And that is, let's say there was a guy who liked a girl. He would go to her house and he would get to know her and her family. And the mom and the dad would be like, "Ah, he's not a good guy." You'd be like, "He's a good guy." The brothers, the sisters, whoever was in the household would get to know them as well. 'Cause here's the big idea, a good guy wants to get to know the people who love her. A bad guy wants to get the people who love her away from her so he can isolate her. A bad guy wants to enter into her world. Excuse me, a good guy wants to enter into her world. A bad guy wants to remove her from her world into his world. And so the way this would work, you'd have a living room, you'd have a parlor. You'd go meet with the dad, the mom you'd be like, "Hey, I really like Sally. "Your daughter's awesome. "And I'd like to get to know her, build a friendship." They're like, "Great, come on over. "Right, we'll have tea, you guys play board games, visit, "hang out with the family, "But you're gonna be in a open public area, right? "We're gonna watch this. "So you're gonna sit in the living room. "You're gonna sit in the parlor. "And if we're not sure we're gonna sit there too, "just so you know." Okay, so that's the way it worked. And at the same time in the early 1900s, young single women were discouraged from going in public alone with a man for two reasons, number one, it's not safe. If you're all alone, who knows what he's gonna do to you? Number two, the optics are bad. Someday, you're gonna get married and what's your husband gonna think if he's seen you just out and about totally isolated with a bunch of guys. I can just get a feeling. Some of you right now on the internet are posting things. We have a team standing by

waiting to delete your comments as a ministry. But what happens is people are like, "Oh, that's just so prudish." Yeah, and don't we treat women so great today. How many of you single gals are like, "I feel so safe on the dating apps" and then going out with total strangers. "It's like I meet Jesus over and over and over, "all these guys with high character and integrity." Okay, so. What happens then by the early 1900s, we create something called women's magazines. Have you seen these at the grocery store? I am convinced all the articles are written by dirty old men. That's what I'm convinced. And all of a sudden we created this whole culture of, "Hey ladies, wear this, don't wear this, do this, "don't do that. "How to please the man." Not how to please the Lord. Women's Home Journal by the early 1900s has a million subscribers. Now you've got a whole generation of women that are like, "Well, what should I do for my boyfriend? "And what should I wear?" And now we end up with this weird culture where it's escalated into influencers and social media. And I don't think it's bad. Like if you're like, "Hey, you know, here's cute clothes "and here's what you do there." I don't care. Obviously I don't care. I mean, but it's not a bad thing. But what it can lead to, it can lead to a culture where the least healthy women are telling women to do things that are unhealthy.

- [Woman] That's right, that's right.

- I mean like, you know, I mean, those were the days, you know, BK, before Kardashian and then you think about it, you're like, "What real contribution have they made to the world?" You know, I think to be famous, you should do more than not wear enough clothes and create drama. 'Cause like I could wear a tube top and throw a fit, but I don't think it's a real help, you know what I'm saying? Just throwing it out there. Okay, so. Somebody just threw up in your mouth. "Just keep reading the Old Testament, please, "that was not as bad." So then what happens? Urbanization happens in the 1920s. People start moving into the cities. Guess what the cities have? Bars, nightclubs, dance halls, movie theaters, places for entertainment. This is where guys tend to like to hang out. And then what happens is by the 1930s, the automobile becomes more prevalent and available. Now a lot of guys have got a car. So it used to be, you know, you'd walk or take your buggy over to her parents' house. Now you get in your car, you drive to her house, you pick her up and you drive her away from her family. Now she's in your environment, not her environment. Now you're in control, she's not in control. Now she's more vulnerable. This is not necessarily the best case scenario for a young woman. What happens then is over time, the young men realize, especially as they start to come home from the wars to get a car, to get dressed up, to go out to dinner, to go to a movie, to go to a concert, to go to a pool hall, guess what it costs? A lot of money. So what are the guys thinking? Well, if I spend something I should get something. Any of you ladies felt this?

- [Woman] Yep.

- Okay, just testimony. Little truth right there. Two or three witnesses, we got 75, so we're good. All of a sudden the guys are like, "Well, if I pay, what do I get?" Let me say, this is a prostitution mindset. Everything I say is offensive, 'cause I'm consistent, okay. But if it is, "Hey, I paid for dinner, "what are you gonna give me?" That is not a loving, grace based relationship. That is

transactional business.

- [Woman] That's right.

- So what happens then is in Western culture, dating becomes very prevalent. And then it becomes a competitive situation for women. And the guys are like, "Well, hey, if I take you out, "what do I get?" And it puts a lot of pressure on women to be alone, to be in a dangerous, vulnerable situation, to be isolated, maybe to be sexually pressured. And the more he spends, the more pressure you feel. This is why every gal who loves the Lord on a first date, if he's like, "I wanna take you out to a really nice date." She's like, "No, coffee's good. "And all by my own."

- [Woman] Amen.

- Because you probably have a nefarious agenda. I go to Trinity Church and Pastor Mark warned me about you. Okay, so. And what's weird is when you are a single guy, you see it different than when you're a dad. Amen. You're a single guy, you're like, "Oh." You're a dad, you're like, "Oh I see it very clearly, yeah. "See it very clearly." And so what happens then is it becomes a lot of pressure on a woman. This is why, if you're a young woman and you meet a guy and he's like, "Hey, I'd like to take you away on a vacation "and go somewhere in Vrbo, you know, in your heart, "This is about him winning and me paying."

- [Woman] Yeah.

- "That's what this is about." And so what happens then is by the 1960s, and what happens is the men come back from war and they all wanna meet their girl. And now you've got urbanization in full effect and dudes are driving cars and soldiers hit the streets. And every guy's trying to get a girl. And all of a sudden this leads to and culminates in the feminist movement of the 1960s. And what I do appreciate about the feminist movement is men should not mistreat women, they should treat women with dignity, value and worth as equals. I believe that 'cause that's what Genesis said, men and women are made the image and likes of God. One of the fatal flaws in their early first wave of feminism was saying, "Well then men should treat women like they treat men." And what I would say is, please don't do that.

- [Woman] Yes.

- How many of you are guys and you know that guys, we don't treat other guys very well? Like if any guy treated my daughter the way other guys treat him, it would not be a good day for him. The Bible says that we are to honor women, that we are to protect, we are to love, we are to serve. We are to treat our wives like Christ treats the church. What that means is protect, cherish, honor, love, dignity. If you're a man, we should treat women better than we treat men. Okay, better than we treat men. Any man will tell you, men do not treat each other well. We wanna treat our women better than we treat each other. Then in the 1960s, we have the sexual revolution. We have the culture of sex, love, rock and roll. We have total anarchy. We have the

hippie movement, counter cultural revolution. By the 1960s, Playboy comes out it goes under the counter. So if you wanna look at something you shouldn't, you go up to the counter, you're like, "Oh, I'd like to buy, you know, some vitamins "and maybe a magazine." It's awkward, 'cause you're in a small town and the guy on the other side of the counter, he knows you. "Hi Tony." "Hi." See it's awkward. But it's available. By the 1970s, we then legalized birth control, which isn't always bad and a sin, but it encourages people to have a lot of sex with hopes of not getting pregnant. Well, they didn't factor in is you could still get a venereal disease and there still can be some pregnancy. By the 1970s, Penthouse then becomes more aggressive than Playboy, and they go out from underneath the counter, up to the shelf. Now the shame and the stigma is kinda gone. Guy walks in, he is like, "Yeah, I'll take "one of those magazines and some alcohol "and I'm gonna get in my car "and I'm gonna go pick up some girl "and I'm gonna do what I see in the magazines, "'cause I've lost my inhibition "because I've drank what was in the bottle." The result then is, by the 1973, abortion is legalized in the United States of America. "Oh, everybody's getting pregnant "'cause we got everybody having sex. "Okay, well then let's kill the kids." I've got a whole book coming out on this. I just finished it. It'll be out next month, "Abort Abortion." And it gets into the history of Roe V Wade and planned parenthood and Margaret Sanger. And I've not gotten in trouble for 15 or 20 minutes and I need to fix it. So I'm coming out with the book in July. And then what happens in 1974, we come out with no fault divorce. And there are times in ways and even according to the scriptures, that divorce is permitted. Even though it's still painful. But now all of a sudden here's the culture that you were born into. Massive sexual assault and trauma, massive. Historic highs, most under reported crime in American criminology. In addition, you've got a lot of brokenness 'cause two people think, well, one person thinks, "Well we're in love." And the other's like, "No, we're not, "we're just sleeping together." "Well I'm committed to you." "Well I'm not committed to you. "We have cohabitation." "Well let's live together, I hope we get married." "I don't plan to." Total confusion and brokenness, lots of trauma, pornography addiction, sexual assault, abortion. It's just a culture of absolute death. And what happens is it's just crazy. And then we have out of wedlock childbirths, and it's just crazy. So rather than waking up and looking in the mirror, going, "If this isn't working right, "well let's do a month where we celebrate it." Welcome to June. It's like, why are you having a parade for that? You should have a funeral, it's not working.

- [Man] That's right.

- It wasn't God's idea. That's a terrible idea. It didn't come down from heaven that came up from hell.

- [Woman] Amen.

- It's a parade off a cliff.

- [Woman] That's what happened.

- It's a parade off a cliff. And so you and I are lied to. And if you're young, you've been lied to.

And so then it leads to these powerful myths that dominate our dating years. I'll share them with you. And thank you for asking. So the first one is this, here's the first marriage myth. When you turn 18, you know what you're doing? Just marinate on that kids. How many of you have met an 18-year-old, you're like, "Yeah, they're not fully cooked, "yeah they need more time in the pot." We have this stupid idea. You're like, "Well they're 18 now, "they get to make all their own decisions." Do you hate 'em that much? I mean, how much do you hate your kid? If it 18, you're like, "Good luck "with money and marriage and sex and children and life. "Good luck with that." Because you know what they teach you in school about life? Nothing. If they say anything it's wrong. They don't tell you about marriage, money, parenting nothing. At 18 you can really get yourself in trouble. You're gonna pick like your church, your spouse, your kids, your income, your president. Like you could really trip over your own feet.

- [Woman] Yeah.

- You can finally drink. I mean at 18, it's not that we control our kids, but it's like, "Hey you're you need some wise counsel. "We need to help you make some good decisions here. "You've never done this before." Marriage myth number two, I have to be in a relationship. Well, so okay, if you're a single gal and you're still here, it's a miracle thank you. But in addition, I would ask, do you feel this pressure? Like, "I always gotta be in a relationship." 'Cause we have that social media status, it's like, "Are you single, or are you in a relationship?" Like, "Oh gosh, I can't click single. "I gotta click relationship. "I'm gonna pick the loser." And don't, it's better to be alone than with a loser.

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- Much better, much better, much better. And if you have a Christian dad, go out to dinner with him, go out to coffee with him. Talk to him, have dates with him. Amen. Hey right, you're like, "Dad, I need a guy." I know a guy, I'm your dad. Right, "You wanna go out to eat, "I'll pay for dinner and we'll talk about things." You don't have to be in a relationship. There's all this pressure. And there's usually not the same pressure as men, as women. How many you single guys, your dudes are all like, "Are you in a relationship?" 'Cause most guys are like, "I'm trying to avoid them." But a lot of women feel this pressure to be in a relationship. So let me ask you this, perfect best life ever lived in the history of our planet. Jesus. He was?

- [Congregation] Single.

- Single and doing great. And a virgin. Virgin. He died, virgin. Went to heaven, virgin. Today, still a virgin. And you know what? He's doing great. Some of you are like, "Oh, that sounds crazy." I know. Jesus sets an example of what a perfect life looks like, even as a single person.

- [Woman] That's right.

- Okay, how about this one? Marriage myth number three. I need to marry my soulmate. I gotta

say it like this. My soulmate. Soulmate. Where's my soulmate? Are you my soulmate? Are we soulmates? Won't you be my soulmate? This is ridiculous, okay. So 'cause let me say this. So here's what happens, sometimes people you marry, they're like, "I don't know if I married the one." Well, if you married 'em, they're the one. That's how, you know you married the one. The wives clap. Guys are like, "I don't know, I don't know." "I don't know." So let me tell you where soulmate comes from. 'Cause there are Christians that use this language. So soulmate comes from Greek philosophy. It started, well it was made famous by a guy named Plato, didn't know Jesus, Greek philosophy, here was the thinking, are you ready? The concept of soulmate was this, that there was a man and a woman and they were connected as one being at the rear. Why? I know not. Like that seems to me like the last option. But anyways, they're connected at the rear and that they had three genders and genitalia.

- [Congregation] Oh.

- Happy pride month. Okay, so you had the guy, the gal and the androgyny and that they lived on a sexual gender spectrum as one. And they were so powerful that Zeus, Zeus got angry and cut them in half and split their souls in half. And ever since all of these split, divided beings were searching for their other half, their soulmate. And if that sounds plausible, you should not drive home because your blood alcohol level is too high. Okay. Huh? Okay, true or false, that's not really a Christian concept, soulmates. It's not. I could tell some here are like, "So you're not my soulmate." No, that's what I'm saying. All right, next one. Churches are for weddings, not marriages and families. What some people are like, "Well, we go to the church for the wedding "so it looks legit." It's fine to get married in a church, feel free, doesn't matter to me. It's fine to get married in the woods, 'cause God made the woods and he rules the woods. I don't really care where you get married, I just care where you spend the rest of your marriage.

- [Woman] That's good.

- One day in a church ain't gonna help you. One lifetime in a church that's actually really helpful.

- [Woman] Yeah.

- Okay, so some of you, okay, so the Institute for Family Studies, my favorite family sociologist, Bradford Wilcox, University of Virginia, I love this guy's work. But here's what his institute says. Quote, "Those who attend religious services, "you're doing that." That's what you're doing. "Are about 30 to 50% less likely to." What?

- [Congregation] "Divorce."

- "Divorce, divorce. "The communal aspect of religious attendance." You know, church family, other people, good examples, coaching, character. "Rather than self assessed spirituality "or private practice." "Oh, I just sit home and I look at the rocks "and I drink decaf and I go to Sedona and I stack rocks. "And I'm good." No, you're not. You're crazy. You're nuttier than a

planter's factory. Okay, "Matters the most, the communal religious experience "is powerful, shared family religious activities "and praying together, worshiping, praying, "taking communion." The stuff we're gonna do. "Create greater relationship satisfaction, "greater levels of trust, "both religious service attendance and joint prayer." Praying for each other and with each other. "May be vital resources for strengthening marriage and trust "and for promoting." What? "Happier, healthier and fuller lives." Would you like one of those? Then obey God's word. That's what it's saying. The point is this. A lot of times people are like, we get this all the time. People call they're like, "Can I have my wedding in your church?" No, but you can have your family. 'Cause you've never attended our church. We're not gonna rent it to you for a day. But we would invite you here all the time. 'Cause we don't want you to just get married, we want you to stay married and we want you to have a good godly marriage and we want God's anointing and blessing on it. And we wanna have a relationship with you and we want your family to be part of our church family so that we can help each other walk in the will of God. Amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- I mean, let me say this, the church is the only option. You're not gonna find this at a bar. You're not gonna find this at a sporting event. You're not gonna find this at a university campus. You're not gonna find this at some parade or march. The only place you're gonna find people who can help you walk in God's will with wisdom is in the church.

- [Woman] Amen.

- And so churches aren't just for marriages, they're for families and they're for legacies.

- [Woman] Amen.

- Myth number five. This is a popular, prevalent myth. Christians divorce at the same rate as everyone else. And this is what always gets, this is all the, you know, the critics they're saying, "Well, Christians "are no different than not Christians." Yeah, we are statistically actually. We're not perfect, but we're doing better than we were. You should have seen us, we didn't have pants on, I mean we've made progress, we're doing great. And what happens is this myth gets thrown out, "Well, you know those who are Christians, "they have the same marriages, same abuse, same divorce, "they're no better than we are." Lie. Satan is the father of lies. And he runs media, he does social media, he does marketing. And it's just a false narrative.

- [Woman] That's right.

- I can't get into all the details, but when the sociologist did the data analysis, they didn't just ask people, are you a Christian? 'Cause how many people say they're Christian and they're not. They're not right. Like I could tell you right now, like I'm a ballerina. Don't judge. I'm a ballerina in my heart. Okay, I could say I'm a ballerina. Now, if I try to do ballet, what will happen? I will pull something. And fall off the stage. You could say whatever you want, what you do that shows

who you are.

- [Woman] Amen.

- 'Cause see lip service is easy, lifestyle's a little more painful. "Oh I'm a Christian." "When you go to church?" "When I die they pull me in." Well you probably, maybe not, all right. "Right, well, so what's your relationship with God like?" "Yeah, I ignore him every day. "Oh yeah, you know, I'm probably not a Christian." Lots of people will say they're Christians and they don't live like it. They then asked, "Well, do you read your Bible? "Do you pray? "Do you go to church?" Those who did. Highest marital satisfaction rates, lowest divorce and domestic violence rates, of anyone in America. If the sociologists were honest, they would say, "Well, if you kids really wanna have a good marriage, "like read the Bible, pray together, "get involved in a good church, worship God together. "Those people have the highest success rates "and the most satisfaction." But they're never gonna tell you that, 'cause it doesn't fit the narrative. Here's what they found. Highest divorce rate, husband and wife, both practicing different religions. How many of you can see that?

- [Woman] Yeah, yeah.

- Like different gods. So like I have the holy spirit, you have a demon. I have God's book, you got a fake book. We have kids, what do we do? This is gonna be a brutal mess. Lowest divorce and domestic violence rates, husband and wife, both practicing Christians. Here's the big idea. God created us, God created marriage, God created a success sequence for marriage. When we abide by it, the odds are better, when we disobey it, the odds are worse. It's very simple. Marriage myth, number six, it is better to marry later in life than earlier. Now Isaac and Rebecca, we don't know how old she is, we know he's a little older, he's a little autumnal, he's pushing 40. But how many of you been told, because you're young? Let me just unpack it here. So, how many of you have been told, 'cause you're young, you're like, "Well you shouldn't be married young. "It's better if you get married older, "'cause then you can mature." How many of you have seen people in their 20s and they're not maturing? How many of you have seen that? Have you seen people making dumb decisions in their 20s?

- [Woman] Yeah.

- If not just find any social media platform and look for someone in their 20s. You'll just have evidence. You can grow in wisdom but just because you're getting older doesn't mean you're getting wiser.

- [Woman] That's right.

- One of the dumbest things we say as well, as you get older and wiser. That's not automatic.

- [Woman] That's right.

- There are some people that their life is a cul-de-sac. They just fire up the carnival music and just keep driving around, they're going nowhere. Same dumb decisions, same bad pattern, same ridiculous nonsense over and over and over. ♪ Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da ♪ That's not progress, it's wasted time. The point is this, it's not how old you are, but how prepared you are for marriage, just like anything. You can spend your single years growing in your faith, serving, saving money. Or you can just waste it. Dating, relating and fornicating.

- [Woman] Yep.

- Time doesn't make things better. We have the stupid statement. Even time heals all. No it doesn't. If I shot you, and I was like, "Oh, I'll just wait a week, "see what happens." Not gonna help. It's only time and wisdom and obedience that makes progress. And so we tend to tell people, "Well, don't get married, just live together, "date a lot, sleep around, move in with each other. "Don't take it so serious. "Wait till you're ready." You'll spend your years not preparing for marriage, but damaging and breaking yourself as you head into marriage.

- [Woman] That's right.

- Doesn't mean God can't heal it. But because I love you. And I'm a dad, I got two married kids, I got two kids in college, one in high school, like we're in it. I want the same for you as I want for my kids. And that is the best and the blessed, that's what I want. So here's what the research shows. The Institute for Family Studies reports, religious Americans are less likely to divorce. If you're married, give each other a high five. There you go, you're still together. Even as though they are more likely to marry younger than 30. The average man today is a little over 30, the average woman, a little under 30. Why do Christians tend to get married a little younger? 'Cause they're less likely to live and sleep together.

- [Woman] Right.

- The mom said, amen. No single men did. Shame on you. Okay, religion, religion reduces young adults' odds of cohabitating prior to marriage, even though it increases their likelihood of marrying at a relatively young age. Grace and I got married at 21, we were in college. We kinda grew up together. Not everybody needs to do that. Yes, very young marriage still has risks as does late marriage, very late marriage, but religious upbringings seem to partly compensate for those risks, especially among women marrying in their 20s. Religion fosters relationship stability by pushing young adults away from cohabitation, which is highly unstable. Highest divorce rates are people who live together before they're married. Lowest divorce rates are those who do not live together before they're married. If you wanna have the lowest divorce rates don't live or sleep together until you're married. Don't live or sleep together until you're married. Right, the parents are excited. The single guys are like, "I'm no longer monthly tithing. "I'm out, I'm not paying for this. "I'm not paying for this." Which is highly unstable and toward marriage which is more stable. I'll never forget, I got a few minutes left. I was in college as a brand new Christian, I

had a buddy of mine, we were in a speech class where you get up and kind of argue and make debates. So I loved it, like that was my love language. So we're in this class. He gets up before a bunch of frat guys and he gives the case for not living or sleeping with your girl until you marry her. And he was a Christian who was in college and engaged to be married. And he was brave. So he came to, he gave his case and he said like, "I'm not gonna live "or sleep with my fiance until we're married. "And here's all the reasons why." And he was engaged and he was like 20. And the dudes just eviscerated him, mocked him. One frat guy raised his hand, he's like, "How do you know if she's any good in bed?" He's like, "How will I know if she's bad?" He's like, "That'll be the best woman I've ever been with." I thought, you know, that makes sense to me. 'Cause why would I want to take every day and compare my wife to all these other women? Why wouldn't I just have my wife? It made sense to me. And now that I'm a dad. Woo, makes total sense. Makes total sense. Some dude's like, "I've only had a heart "and hands for one girl." Great, so you love my daughter. Great, that's great, praise God. Now I don't have to kill you. Okay, great. So prison ministry from the inside, that's always plan B. All right, so marriage myth number seven, Cohabiting is a helpful trial before marriage. How many of you heard this? Well don't just get married, move in together, like test drive it, you know, like a car, you know, like just take it around the block, see how the relationship runs. No. Here's what the research says. Today, more than 70% of marriages are preceded by cohabitation, cohabiting before marriage, especially with someone beside your future spouse is also associated with an increased risk of divorce, as found in that highly right wing conservative. Make marriage great again. Institute Stanford University. Okay. So it's fun, right, I mean, it's fun for me. Here's a big idea. We take God seriously, not ourselves. And let me close with this. So somebody like, "Okay, we know what not to do, "what should we do?" All right here, thank you for asking. All right, let me close with this, and then we'll bring the band out. So I need a slide. There you go. Marriage myth number eight. If we start, oh, I've got one you were right and I was wrong, good job. All right, marriage myth number eight, we started on the wrong foot, our relationship cannot be repaired. Hearing this, how many of you, now don't raise your hand, you're like, but how many of you you're like, "Yeah, we blew it, didn't do it. "It was not good. "Yeah, yeah, we're not even married, "we got 17 kids." You know, like, I mean, how many of you, you like, "We did it wrong." If you made it wrong, can God help you get it right? No, okay, no. Yeah he can, I'm just kidding right. Some of you like, "Huh?" He can. So let me ask you this, some of you know our story, did Grace and I get it right?

- [Woman] No.

- No. Obviously we didn't and I was involved. So, when we met, neither of us were virgins. She was a wayward pastor's daughter, now walking with the Lord, that's when I walked in. And I did not know the Lord, but I was kind of a religious Catholic ish guy. We start dating, casual dating. We start sleeping together. And then I get saved, I read the Bible, I go to church and they're like, "Yeah, that's wrong." I was like, "Ah, are you sure?" Okay, I'll just confess this. Probably shouldn't tell you this, but like as a pastor, I do word studies on original language words from the Bible. The first word study I ever did, fornication. I was 19. I was trying to find a way around it. What's the Greek mean? Ah, dang. All right, so. So then we stop sleeping together. We meet

with our pastor, we repent of our sin, we get trained, like we get married. This August will be 30 years of faithful marriage. Right 30 years faithful marriage, okay. So, Grace they're impressed by you putting up with this for 30 years. So, Jesus used the analogy of people who build a house with no foundation versus those who build it on a foundation. And what I love is let's say you built your house and your foundation's all cracked and flawed. You can fix your foundation or God can actually give you a new foundation. This happens all the time in homes. But if your marriage is barely able to survive, what happens when your kids build the next level? They build the second floor. What happens when your grandkids build the third floor? What happens when your great grandkids build the fourth floor? Like if the foundation ain't right, eventually the whole family's gonna crumble. Well, we don't want that. So if your marriage doesn't have a good foundation, let's shore it up. Let's repent to some stuff. Let's meet with the Christian counselor, let's apologize, let's say, "You know what? "Shouldn't have done that, let's reset." And here's the process that God has for Christians. And I wanna close with this. And when I say close, I don't mean I'm gonna close, I'm just saying, please keep paying attention. So. Don't get legalistic about this. Sometimes single people get very legalistic. They turn everything into a checklist. It's tools, not rules. Sometimes well-meaning Christian parents are like, "Well, we have this 97 point checklist "for our four-year-old and their dating relationship." So just don't do that. But here's where I would recommend you start, number one, godly friendship. Let's say you're single guy, you meet a gal, you're like, "Oh, she loves the Lord. "Seems interesting, friendship." Is it okay to start with a friendship?

- [Woman] Yeah.

- Yeah, you should. 'Cause if it doesn't work out, we're still friends. And if it does work out, we can be friends with benefits. So you start with friends, okay. Probably shouldn't have said that. Number two, intentional dating, the difference between intentional dating and casual dating is very different than intentional dating. Casual is just like, "What are you doing? "I don't know, let's live and sleep together, "see what happens." Nothing good. Intentional dating is this it's exclusive. How many people do you date at a time? One, just one. In addition, it honors the person in their support network. If they have a godly family, church family, friends, you're like, "I wanna get to know them. "I want them to know me. "I want them to be involved in the process. "If you love them and I say, I love them, "I wanna also get to know the people who love them." It's overt, not covert. You're honest about your intentions and what you're doing. You're not sneaking around. It's not back channels, hidden communication. "Don't tell anybody, don't tell your parents, "just keep this between us." It's not that. It is non-sexual and the intent is, "I wanna get married someday. "And I don't know if that's you, "but if you'd like, I'd like to figure out "if maybe we should be together." And then it's premarital counseling, meeting with a pastor, taking a class, like we've got an awesome one, meeting with a Christian counselor, like, "Hey, we've never been married." Or, "We don't know what we're doing "so we'd like to tag in somebody, who's got more experience. "Are we ready? "What do we need to work on? "What do we need to forgive? "What do we need to heal from? "If we're not ready, do we get ready? "Could we be a good couple? "Or is this just a really bad idea?" And then if everybody signs, wise council signs off then engagement. "Hey, you know what? "I think we should be together." And then you

start planning your marriage. And that is a covenant that is consummated. And then your marriage is not a finish line. It's a starting line for a lifelong of repenting. "I'm sorry, it was my fault. Learning. "How can I grow?" Worshiping. "God, please help us." And loving. "How can I care for you?" That's God's process for healthy marriage. Don't fight over the words. Don't get legalistic over the process. But at the end of the day, God's people should do marriage, family, parenting, and legacy differently. And I want you guys to have great marriages. It means the world to me. I want your kids to be born into homes where it's like, "Mom and dad love the Lord, "they love each other. "We see marriage is a good thing." 'Cause God's pro marriage and we're pro marriage. And if any of you are here and you're single, like where are you at, how's it going? If any of you are young marriages, any challenges you need to overcome or any changes you need to make. For those of us who've been married for a little while, are there some cracks in the foundation that need to get sealed up? We're gonna spend some time worshiping God in a moment, if you're married worship with your spouse, if you're dating or you're engaged, worship with that person, invite God's presence. If you're single, pray for yourself. If you've got kids, grandkids, pray for them. Father God, thank you for an opportunity to have a lot of fun. And God I thank you that we could take you seriously, but not ourselves. And God, the truth is when it comes to marriage and relationship and family, the world is kinda lost its mind, nobody really knows what to do and it's not working. And so Lord, I pray that we would not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind. I pray for those who are single Lord God, that they would be satisfied with their relationship. But even if you would have them to be married, you'd bring the right person at the right time, in the right way. God, for those who are dating or engaged, I pray for clarity regarding your will for their life. For those who are married, Lord, I pray for enduring endearing marriages. And God for generations that are coming, children that are in the back playing, they grow up in homes where mom and dad worship and they worship together, and the love of the holy spirit floods the house. In Jesus' name, amen.