

Pastor Mark: Called this the One Flesh Event and it's four ways that sex connects. So, it's going to be about sex and so, if you were homeschooled, you're going to learn a lot. It's going to be a good night for you. It's going to be a real good night for you.

Maybe tell them, out of the beginning, because there's going to be couples here that come in with some struggles. Did we do it all right the first way? Did we just start God's way and just continue forward, or where did we start on this issue of sex, intimacy, marriage?

Grace: I tried, but you really messed that up.

Pastor Mark: Yeah, I did. I did, I did, I did, I did. It was the eighties and everything was messed up.

Grace: Yeah, everything was messed up. No, we did everything pretty much wrong, actually. We were not pure.

Pastor Mark: So, were you a believer? When we met at 17?

Grace: I was.

Pastor Mark: Here's our wedding photo, by the way. This is us when we got married.

Grace: Oh boy.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. I'm the one on the right. I'm the one on the right. Just if you're wondering, "I can't figure this out." They say as a couple gets older, they look alike and I just want to thank God publicly that that's not happened. If I rolled over and looked at this every day, I'd be sad.

We were 21 when we got married, but when we first started dating, where were you at with the Lord? I'll tell them where I was at and then... Here's the big idea. We did everything wrong and God fixed it, so there's hope for you.

Grace: Yeah. I was a Christian, but I was not walking with the Lord at the time.

Pastor Mark: You were a pastor's daughter.

Grace: I was a pastor's daughter, yeah. Thanks for rubbing it in. Yes, I had some hard stuff and responded by running away from the Lord instead of running to the Lord. So, then-

Pastor Mark: That's when I showed up.

Grace: That's when Mark showed up.

Pastor Mark: I showed up, yeah. I was like there's a strategic opportunity here. She came out of a bad relationship, I came out of a bad relationship. It's amazing, if you don't know the Lord at 17, you've already got a bad relationship. Then, we met. I

wasn't a Christian. You said you would only date me if I was a Christian, so I said, "Well, praise the Lord." Then, we started dating and then we started-

Grace: See? You lied. I told you, it was your fault.

Pastor Mark: I did. Yeah, I did lie. Then we started sleeping together and we weren't virgins when we met and then we started sleeping together. Then I became a Christian in college, at age 19. You were at a different college far away and I remember calling you like, "I met Jesus." I was all in. I told you, I said, "I think we've been fornicating." Because a guy taught a Bible study on this brand new word I'd never even heard of.

He actually did. He gave a Bible study on fornication and I called him afterwards. A small study in college and I said, "Yeah, I'm calling for a friend of mine. I'm afraid that they may be fornicating." I didn't tell him it was Grace. He said, "Yeah"-

Grace: Takes two.

Pastor Mark: It does take two, yeah. Thank you were pointing that out, I didn't know. Then, he said, "Yeah, you got to stop sleeping together." I called you and I said, "Hey, we've been fornicating." And you said...

Grace: "I know."

Pastor Mark: I didn't know this, I didn't know this. Then we stopped fornicating and then we got married and then we still had a lot of baggage and carry-ons. The early years were hard, the middle years were kind of hard and right now, everything's perfect, right? Jesus can come back, we're ready.

We want to talk about this. Where we got the big idea is from Genesis 2:24. Maybe you read that, we're only going to have two big verses and then we'll break them down.

Grace: Genesis 2:24 says, "A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

Pastor Mark: Okay. Genesis 1 and 2, before sin enters the world, God made us, male and female. He created us with sex, male and female. He created us with gender, masculine and feminine. I know if you go to college, this is all very controversial, but this is how it is. There's no spectrum. There's guy, gal.

Sexuality is between male and female. The men are supposed to be masculine, the women are supposed to be feminine. Attracted to one another and then, marriage is for crazy, I'm going to throw it out there, a man and a woman. Just getting nuts on you here. That was God's original decree and design. That was His intent.

We're going to talk about this issue of this is how marriage is supposed to be before sin enters the world. This is God's prototype. The whole goal, God says, is

that they would be one flesh. That's kind of where we get our theme. Then we're going to work out of Mark, Chapter 12. We wanted to pick a very handsome name of a Bible book.

We're going to work out of Mark Chapter 12, verse 29 through 31. Then this will give us the four different categories that we'll be distributing as four podcast episodes. Maybe you read that as well, baby and then, we'll unpack it.

Grace: "Jesus answered, "The most important commandment is, 'Hear. O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Pastor Mark: Okay. So that's where we're going to spend our time together. We're going to deal with these four issues. Loving with all your heart, that's your emotional life. All your soul, that's your spiritual life. All of your mind, that's your mental life and all of your body, that's your physical sexual relationship, which is the result of the previous three.

That being said as well, when God here says that he is one, it's the same word that is used to say that the husband and the wife should be one. So as the father, son, and spirit are one, God wants the husband and wife to be one. And the question is when you get married, it's not which one, but it's a new one. The two of you join together. You start a new family and you become one together in that pursuit that God intends for you.

And so what Jesus is saying here is that the most important thing is to love God, heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor and Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, he said that your spouse is your nearest neighbor.

Grace: Hey neighbor.

Pastor Mark: Hey neighbor. Yeah. So if you tend to think about love your neighbor, well, this is my neighbor. Literally, this is my first neighbor. So loving starts here with heart, soul, mind and strength. We'll deal with heart first, emotionally. So episode one will be loving God in one another with the heart, emotionally. Loving God in one another with a heart emotionally.

For a woman when it comes to the sexuality, a lot of men are just thinking I want to have sex. For the woman why is the emotional component vital, important, strategic and where would you start with that?

Grace: Well, number one, she wants security and that means emotional, physical and mental security. And so if she doesn't feel that sexually, she's not going to be able to participate completely and become one flesh. And so security is number one for women. And so if a man is working toward that and vulnerable in that area, even if he isn't a hundred percent.

Pastor Mark: So let me just throw this out there. The average guy is not very emotionally healthy or present. So you got to coach him up here. Usually, the man and the

Oak coffee table are emotionally fairly similar. So you throw it out there as a way to like, well, if, if the guys are emotionally present, the guys are like... Okay, so you got to give them a little help. How do they do that?

Grace: Well, they probably need to ask questions if they don't know.

Pastor Mark: But not interrogate.

Grace: No. Ask questions that say that they actually want to know and they care about knowing their wife more. And so asking things like you used to not know how to ask-

Pastor Mark: Are we going to talk about my failures? Geez. I feel like this is going to be a running theme through our whole event. Okay.

Grace: It was easy for us to just talk about the day and not really get anywhere with conversation and then go on with our responsibilities. But to stop and actually ask about the emotional welfare of how you're doing. And so how did it go today? Okay. So are you okay after that happened? And how are you feeling about that? How can I serve you in that? What are some ways that we can talk through that? Do you need help processing? Do you need me to pray for you? Those are all emotional connections.

Pastor Mark: That was a lot right there.

Grace: It's also doing chores for the woman emotionally connects.

Pastor Mark: Oh no, you're not going to get the dishes in. We're not doing that. This is not the real dishes event. This is not, we're not doing that. So that being said, many of the problems in the bedroom actually are problems outside of the bedroom. If there's not emotional connection and safety for the woman outside of the bedroom, there's not going to be freedom and intimacy in the bedroom. Accurate?

Grace: Yeah. And if a man is harsh with his wife at all, it's going to take a rebuilding of trust. A repentance and a rebuilding of trust to get to a place where she feels emotionally secure. And it just breaks that down for a woman. She doesn't feel like she can open up in any way when a man is harsh with her.

Pastor Mark: 1 Peter says the husband shouldn't be harsh with their wife. And it's interesting, John Gottman, he's a researcher at the University of Washington. He's one of the leading marriage researchers. He's able to predict with a more than 90% success rate divorces through observation. I don't get any indication he's a Christian. But one of the things that he says leads to divorce, one of the main... He calls of the four horsemen is the harsh startup.

Now what that is, is it's emotionally starting the conversation in an adversary or elevated way. So that would be raising your voice, maybe physically being intimidating, approaching your wife, getting the crazy eyes. Some of you guys, you got it right now. I'm scared. And sometimes it could just be a subject that we

know is very tender and just sort of launching right at it. That's a harsh startup and his point is emotionally, you don't make any progress when you start with a harsh startup. How many of you know, if you start with a harsh startup, it just ends poorly, you're not emotionally going to be close with her?

Grace: Yeah. Either she fights back or she closes up and walks away or moves away emotionally.

Pastor Mark: So emotionally, what about if someone in the marriage has trauma in their past that they've not healed up from? Sometimes the problem emotionally is we're just busier. We're distracted at the kids or the phone. Sometimes it's harsh startups. Sometimes the lack of connecting at the level of the heart and being one emotionally is because of some past hurt.

Grace: Yeah. And definitely we were in that place and you felt really stuck because you felt like you were missing the key to unlock something.

Pastor Mark: I always used to say you live in a bank vault and I can't figure out the code.

Grace: Yeah. And I didn't understand that I hadn't dealt with trauma in my past. And so for me, when you would get frustrated and harsh because I wouldn't connect emotionally, it made it worse. It compounded my trauma from just triggers. And so for me, we had to meet with wise council and we had to get to the point of me realizing that I had actually been through trauma in my past and that, that was a wall that I was putting up with you because I didn't trust you with my heart and with my emotions.

And so in order to heal from that, I had to go and get help from Christian council. And I wouldn't do non-Christian council because they can't get to the soul level. So I needed to go to a Christian Bible counselor that was willing to deal with the trauma and help me heal. And then once I was able to walk through that process of healing, then I could learn that you needed to build trust with me in that area, and you needed to be tender with me in that area, and you had to learn how to emotionally connect with me in a totally different way than our attempts before that.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. And I didn't know that she was an assault victim before we met and it was many years into our marriage that I found out. And all of a sudden, what I had considered to be personal rejection was actually pain that she was just sort of defensive of herself because she had been taken advantage of in an abusive way. And so sometimes people say, "Well, that was in the past. I've moved on. I don't want to talk about it. I don't have time or energy to go back or deal with that." How important is it, if there is some trauma in the past that hurts emotional intimacy in the relationship, to get the help you need to heal from that so you can have a healthy marriage?

Grace: Yeah. You can't have a healthy marriage without dealing with it.

Pastor Mark: If we didn't deal with that, where do you think we would be today?

Grace: I mean, we would be divorced.

Pastor Mark: I think that was the road we were headed on because I felt rejection, but I didn't know why. There was a brokenness there. Once we got to the root of that, that's where I realized I needed to be very, very tender with you. Because up until that point, I was being very selfish, emotionally. Thinking I'm feeling rejected, not being cared for or tended to and I took that very personally. Then I found out that there was some deep trauma in your past and then it was man, I'm being very, very selfish. I'm thinking about what I'm not receiving emotionally rather than what she is suffering emotionally.

Grace: And you made it feel like it was my problem, not our problem. And when you're married, it's together. You work at it together.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. And in that moment, I think I either had an opportunity to come alongside as a friend and process with you. And once that trauma was revealed, if we didn't work on that... If I didn't come close to you and we didn't get help for that, I don't think we would've made it.

Grace: We wouldn't have and it was the hardest moment in my life to confess that because I was afraid your response would be either to reject me or somehow push me away or get upset with me. And instead you cried. And so it broke through this wall and this barrier in our marriage that allowed you to feel like then you needed to protect my heart.

Pastor Mark: I went right to protect defend. So then just to wrap up this episode and then we'll get into the next point. Maybe explain, we get into this a little bit in the real marriage book that we wrote in 2012.

Grace: Oh gosh. We could probably write a sequel because we've learned a lot since then.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. The really real marriage. So, but we talk about the three kinds of marriages, the shoulder to shoulder, the back to back and the face to face. Do you want to do it? It's kind of fun. So explain the shoulder to shoulder.

Grace: We're really good at this. It's working alongside each other in just the everyday things, kids-

Pastor Mark: Getting stuff done.

Grace: Work. Yeah. Just getting all your tasks done and checked off.

Pastor Mark: Okay. And then back to back. Nice. Thanks. I feel like we should have a balloon.

Grace: This is where you let resentment build up. You don't even really talk about anything that matters anymore. It's just like, well I'll just talk about what I have to, but I'm not going any deeper than that. You're bitter usually. Yeah. It's not fun. It's lonely.

Pastor Mark: We call these the nineties and then face to face. Face to face.

Grace: You actually have to deal with stuff when you look each other in the eyes. You actually have to love each other when you look each other in the eyes. You have to see each other. You can't just look away and be like, yeah, that was hard.

Pastor Mark: Or be on the phone or watching the TV.

Grace: Yes. Yeah. You can't be distracted when you look each other in the eyes. If there's things that you don't want to talk about, you need to look each other in the eye and talk about it because those are the things that are causing you to go shoulder to shoulder or back to back.

Pastor Mark: So those are the things not to text about or email about.

Grace: Pray and talk and push yourself and allow God to heal whatever is broken there and push yourself to get through that. Talk about it until you've come to a resolve where you're at peace with each other and can forgive each other or whatever the situation is.

Pastor Mark: And within that, our exhortation will be, this is where the emotional relationship gets developed. And the language of the Bible is that those who are close with God will see him face to face. That's the language of the Bible. So the language of the Bible is that our relationship with the Lord is supposed to be face to face. The reformers used to talk about living Coram Deo, in the face of God. Living face to face with God.

And when you're dating, you do a lot of this. And then you start having kids, and dishes, and a mortgage, and a broken radiator and you do a lot of shoulder to shoulder. And then you get frustrated because you're both overwhelmed and exhausted. You end up doing a lot of back to back, yelling at each other from the other room, firing off a nasty text or just arguing while the television is on or you're on your phone. And this is [crosstalk 00:15:54].

Grace: Or for me it was just grumbling in my heart.

Pastor Mark: Really? You can do that? I didn't know you could do it.

Grace: I can do it with a smile.

Pastor Mark: I didn't know you could grumble silently. I didn't know you could do anything silently.

Grace: Yeah, you should try it.

Pastor Mark: Well, that's great. We're going to collect an offering for our therapy and just bring the band up. All right. Thanks baby.