

Pastor Mark: All right, welcome back for the Real Romance study in the Song of Songs. This is number five. Last session, they had their wedding and their honeymoon. And there is a phrase that couples tend to use. And that is that the honeymoon's over. That means now we are back to work. When you're on your honeymoon, it's great. You got nothing to worry about. You got no one to think about. It's just the two of you absolutely focused on one another. What would you like to do? What would make you happy today? And then the honeymoon's over. Well, this week in the Song of Solomon study. The honeymoon's over and they have their first fight. So the duties and the responsibilities and distractions of life have shown up. So for couples that are watching, how sort of curious do you find it that there's only so much that can be put in the Bible, and this is the great love story book on sex and romance and intimacy, and it takes an entire section and focuses on a fight?

Grace Driscoll: It's reality. It's real romance. That's what happens. If you don't fight, you probably aren't talking much. You got to discover each other and get to know each other. And there's going to be disagreements in that. And you got to learn to work that out and have the Lord help you figure it out in the midst of it.

Pastor Mark: Well, and sometimes it's important to have the conversation about how you're going to have the conversation, because oftentimes we'll just jump right in. And John Gottman, he has great predictive analysis of divorce. And he says that one of the things that contributes is a harsh startup, that a conversation starts very intensely, very emotionally, very personally. And sometimes you need to have a conversation about how you're going to have the conversation. Where are we going to have it? When are we going to have it? How are we going to have it? Journal out your thoughts. Pray, not with the kids in the room, not at the restaurant, not at our parents' house over Thanksgiving dinner. We're not going to light the wick and blow it up there. And so couples are always going to have some things that are going to need to be resolved and worked through.

Pastor Mark: And so if you are fighting, even right now, if you're in the middle of a conflict, congratulations, you have a biblical marriage. There's a whole chapter on this. And the underlying issue, and we'll get into it in a moment, is that they're both being selfish. And in every marriage, we live on a continuum from servant to selfish. And so one of your spiritual gifts is serving. So maybe talk about what it is to be a servant and have a servant mindset. I can't illustrate this, because this is not my spiritual gift. I have the spiritual gift of being served, which is why we get along so well. You have more of the spiritual gift of serving. What does serving look like for you?

Grace Driscoll: It's asking, figuring out what you want, not just what I think you want. And then serving you in that way or serving whoever we're talking about. But in context of marriage, serving you. In the early parts of the marriage, I loved serving, but I didn't always figure out how you wanted to be served first. And so I was tirelessly serving and you didn't feel served, because it wasn't meeting the needs that you specifically had. And so it's really important to distinguish what their needs are. And that changes throughout your marriage. So you can't just

day one serve in one way and the last day be serving the same way, because there's usually some alteration of that throughout the marriage.

Grace Driscoll: But it's really figuring that out and just having the conversation. How can I best serve you in this? How can I be a friend to you right now? How can I love you right now? How can I minister to you right now? Do you need comfort? Do you need just a listening ear? Do you need someone to just sit with you and be present?

Pastor Mark: For me, it's often ministry presence, just having you around. Like Mary and Martha, Martha's the one that is busy and Mary's the one who hangs out with Jesus. You're more Mary and less Martha.

Grace Driscoll: No, I'm Martha.

Pastor Mark: You're more Martha, less Mary.

Grace Driscoll: Because I serve, but sometimes serving can be a sin if I'm not focused in my serving.

Pastor Mark: Well, and for me, when we first got married, you were very much a servant. And so home responsibilities and all the tasks and chores, you were very, and still are, very diligent, very dutiful. And then we started adding kids. And I didn't clue in that I should be helping as much. And so I wasn't very helpful. And there were years there where you were doing a lot of the practical and I wasn't. I was busy working. I would come home.

Grace Driscoll: You were providing, which was amazing, so that I could be home.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. But then I would come home and I would be more selfish. And I'm not thinking about, she's been home with five kids all day. There's all these tasks and chores and responsibilities, because you were very dutiful and you didn't complain a lot.

Grace Driscoll: I grumbled in my heart.

Pastor Mark: Did you?

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: Oh, I forgive you for that. I need to start doing that, because I only grumble out here and it's more painful. And so we all live in a continuum of servant to selfish. And there are certain areas, even in the marriage, we may serve in one area, but be selfish in another. Some people, it can be in or out of the bedroom, they're selfish in one area and they're serving in the other. And the Bible only has good things to say about serving. And it has only bad things to say about being selfish. And what oftentimes happens in marriage, two people are

married and they both think that the other is going to serve them. And they find out that they're both selfish and it leads to a lot of unmet expectations and hurts and frustrations. So they come to Jesus and they ask him this interesting question, "How do we be the greatest?"

Pastor Mark: And rather than rebuking them, he redirects them and he says, "Serve." And then he says that he didn't come to be served. That would be selfish. He came to serve and to give his whole life for us. And so what we like to say is that there are three kinds of marriages. There are two selfish people. That's a brutal marriage. It's taking conflict. I win. You lose. It's using and oftentimes abusing. A selfish person with a servant is an abusive marriage. You give. I take. You lose. I win. You consider me. And I'm inconsiderate toward you. Two servants is really a beautiful marriage. When one person says, "I'm going to do what's best for you," and the other says, "I'm going to do what's best for you," you both get your needs met. And it's a healthy, safe marriage. You don't have to defend yourself, because you can trust that your spouse has your best interest at heart.

Pastor Mark: And most marriages that end in divorce, they do so within the first seven years. If you've heard about the seven year itch, it's a real thing. And they say that it takes between nine and 14 years, the marriage experts and sociologists do, for a couple to go from being selfish to start being servants. And so what oftentimes happens is two selfish people get married. It doesn't work out. And so then they end it. And then they start over and they find out, oh, this person's selfish, too. And our issue is you can have a new marriage with the same spouse. Sometimes you need a new marriage, but it doesn't mean you need a new spouse. That if you both put on the attitude of Jesus, of servant and come in to serve one another, you'll have a good marriage. So here's their fight, where they're both being selfish. And so you can read what she has to say. And then I'll read what their friends have to say.

Grace Driscoll: Chapter 5, verse 2. "I slept, but my heart was awake." She was troubled. "Listen! My beloved is knocking. 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one.' My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night. I have taken off my robe. Must I put it on again? I have washed my feet. Must I soil them again?"

Grace Driscoll: "My beloved thrust his hand through the latch opening. My heart began to pound for him. I arose to open for my beloved and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh on the handles of the bolt. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had left. He was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him, but did not find him. I called him, but he did not answer. The watchman found me as they made their rounds in the city. They beat me. They bruised me. They took away my cloak, those watchmen of the walls! Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you, if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love."

Pastor Mark: So then she brings in the wise counsel. So here comes the Hebrew psychologist who says, "How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women?"

How is your beloved better than others that you so charge us?" And the man doesn't speak here, because they had a fight and they're separated. You can only have a conversation when you're together. So she here is doing all the talking.

Grace Driscoll: "My beloved is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. His head is purest gold. His hair is wavy and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. His arms are rods of gold set with topaz. His body is like polished ivory decorated with lapis lazuli. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearances like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. His mouth is sweetness itself. He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved. This is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem."

Pastor Mark: He's got a gym membership. And then the wise council speaks. "Where has your beloved gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your beloved turn, that we may look for him with you?" So let's unpack this. So what happens is, they're both being selfish. And most fights are one or two people being selfish. So he's working all night. And it says that he comes when the dew is out in the morning. So literally this is just around sunrise. And so he's literally been out all night, probably at work, really devoted to all of his responsibilities. But he doesn't come home for dinner. He doesn't tell her what he's doing. He doesn't consider her. He's just very busy and selfish. So then she too is very, very selfish.

Grace Driscoll: I can't put my robe back on. My feet'll get dirty.

Pastor Mark: These are lame excuses. So he comes home. He's trying to pick the lock to the bedroom, because not only did she go to bed without him, she locked the door. This is a little passive-aggressive.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: This is.

Grace Driscoll: You're going to be gone. I'm going to lock the door.

Pastor Mark: So he comes home and he is knocking on the door and she's kind of half awake, half asleep. There is a debate as to whether or not she woke up and went looking for him or she's having sort of a dream sequence when you're kind of in and out of kind of that awareness state. Because she says, "I went into the city and they beat me." So the commentators debate here. They're like, "Would the queen just sort of go on her own in the middle of the night and no security would follow her?" So it may be a dream sequence. But nonetheless, she's being selfish. She goes to bed. She locks the door. She's punishing him. It's that passive-aggressive punishment, not that you've ever done that. But this is for those people that are watching that may have experienced this in their marriage.

Grace Driscoll: I haven't.

Pastor Mark: Oh, my gosh. All right, we're going to do a series on the 10 commandments after this lie. And so then he's knocking on the door. He's trying to pick the lock. And it may be a double entendre. I can't get into all the Hebrew, but the language there is used elsewhere in Old Testament Prophets about sexual intimacy. And so there's probably a double entendre there. And eventually, he gets very frustrated and he gives up and he leaves. And John Gottman again, the researcher who studied marriage and comes to some great conclusions, he would call this stonewalling. Stonewalling is where you don't talk. You don't work it out. And most of the time that stonewalling occurs, it's the man. He leaves. This is where the guy gets in the car and drives away, or gets in the truck and drives away, or he goes out to the man cave, or he goes out to do chores, or chop wood, or he goes out to his garage and he literally is like, "That's it. I'm done."

Pastor Mark: And so he ends the conversation and he ends the ability to reconcile. And that's what he does here. So the whole time, in this whole section of the fight, he doesn't say anything, because he's gone. He is stonewalling. He is out. I did this a lot early in our marriage. If I got frustrated, I wouldn't talk to you. I would leave, or I would stay at work, or I would find somewhere else to be, or something else to do. True or false?

Grace Driscoll: True.

Pastor Mark: Okay. So I confess that publicly. I was wrong. But then she's being very selfish as well. He's knocking on the door. He is trying to get in. And she's got lame excuses. Her first excuse is, "I can't get up. I'm naked." He's like, "That's why I'm trying to get in." That's a lame excuse. And that's really sort of mean. Yeah. And then she says, "Oh, I don't want to get my feet all dirty." So she's a princess who lives in a palace, my guess is. It's-

Grace Driscoll: She has servants to wash her feet.

Pastor Mark: Well, and she has servants to clean her house. So I'm sure they're not camping in a tent and there's mud outside. I mean, so she's being very, very selfish. And so what she does then, he won't talk to her. Now, he should be talking to her. But then she goes and seeks wise counsel. So when you're in a fight and/or there's stonewalling occurring, how important is it to go to your wise counsel and have your wise counsel predetermined?

Grace Driscoll: Well, I mean, if you go to a friend that wants to listen and pass on gossip, that's not going to be healthy for your marriage.

Pastor Mark: So gossip is not wise counsel. It's somebody who just always takes your side.

Grace Driscoll: Mm-hmm. You need someone who empathizes, but again, points you to Jesus and unity in your marriage, working things out.

Pastor Mark: And so oftentimes people don't sense a strong need for wise counsel, this can be a mentor, this could be a pastor, this could be a Christian counselor, until there is a crisis in the relationship. The problem is, I mean, it's never too late, but it is better to choose your wise counsel before your crisis. So get your counsel before your crisis so that they know you. They know your relationship. They're up to speed so that they can then give the best counsel and advice. Otherwise, what happens is sometimes a crisis or a conflict happens in a marriage and you're rushing to bring someone in, but they don't know the two of you. Maybe the other person is gone. They've not met them. They've not had communication with them. And it becomes very, very hard to do crisis counseling with total strangers.

Pastor Mark: And this is where oftentimes people will run into the church and they're like, "We're in crisis. Fix it now." And it's like, "Well, we're here to help. But the check engine lights have been on. Smoke has been coming out from underneath the hood. And you've been push starting it for months." The sooner you can start to fix the problems, the less catastrophic they might become. And so she tags in the wise council. And so our question again, over and over would be for you, who are watching, like, "Who is that?" I know the guys that I would call. You know the gals that you would call. We know the couples that we would confide in. And so what she does then, she tags in the wise council and then she reminds herself of the things that she loves and appreciates about her husband.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, which is good, because we have to remind ourselves of truth in the moment of when we're frustrated or hurt. We need to remind ourselves of who we actually love, how God brought us together and the true story and not create a new narrative that's negative about our spouse. Not respond out of emotion, but remember to go back to the frontal lobe and logic and think through and process and wisdom in that moment. And so she's wanting that with her friends, but she's wanting to remind herself, "Okay, I do love this man. I am attracted to this man. I messed up. But how do I find him?"

Pastor Mark: And what Grace is referring to there is the brain has a rear section that is, they would say, more primitive. It's more emotional, more impulsive, more reactionary. And then there's the front brain, which is more reflective, more contemplative, more logical. Animals tend to have the rear brain. Only human beings have the front brain. And when we're feeling emotional, or we're upset, or we're hurt, or we're bitter, we're disappointed, or we're shocked, we tend to start in the rear brain. And that's when you get very emotional and you tend not to be very rational and very spiritual.

Pastor Mark: And it literally is then taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ. It's being transformed by the renewing of your mind. It's saying, "Okay, I'm going to invite the Holy Spirit in, wise counsel in. I'm going to pray and reflect. I'm going to get it to the front brain so that we're not just emotionally escalating, but we

are reasonably deescalating the situation." And so within that as well, she's stopping and she's saying, "Okay, let me go to the brain."

Grace Driscoll:

Yep.

Pastor Mark:

What do I love and appreciate about him? And she said, "He's got good character. He provides. He works hard. I am attracted to him. He's a good man. This marriage is worth saving. This man is worth forgiving. This situation is worth resolving." And sometimes it takes some time to get there. And he's gone. You'll see in the next episode where they ultimately do reconcile. But within this, you mentioned and referred to it earlier, when we're serving it would've been good for him to serve her by maybe telling her what was happening or just making her a priority and coming home. And oftentimes as men, we can make work a priority and our wife feels neglected.

Grace Driscoll:

And in that moment he could have said, "I'm sorry, I'm so late. I know this is hard on you. I want to come in and talk it through or we can talk it through tomorrow, but just let me come in and..."

Pastor Mark:

We'll pray together.

Grace Driscoll:

Yep.

Pastor Mark:

This was my error. This was my fault. Instead, what he does, he's selfish. He's out. He comes home and he immediately wants to have sex. True or false, most women...

Grace Driscoll:

It doesn't work that way.

Pastor Mark:

Doesn't work that way. And he's saying a lot of nice things. He's trying to compliment her and warm her up, but he's not owning his own failures. So how attractive is it for a man to be honest, repentant and own his stuff?

Grace Driscoll:

Well, for a man that feels really weak, but when a man does that for a woman, that looks very strong.

Pastor Mark:

Because he's safe. And so you're right. He comes home and he's trying to get in, but ultimately, he's not owning his own failure. And so when it comes to her, she could have served him by maybe just leaving the door unlocked. But this is definitely punitive on her behalf. And you know you've got a trouble in the marriage when you're not sleeping in the same bed. The Bible talks about the marriage bed. And so you should be in the same bed. When it comes to serving, Gary Thomas has got his book on the love languages, which is kind of a classic. And he says that not only should you serve your spouse, you should serve your spouse in the language that they speak, their love language. So it would be words. This could be verbal communication. This could be writing of notes.

Pastor Mark: It could be giving of gifts. Sending a text. Could be giving him gifts, big or small. It could be acts of service, doing things to alleviate practical burden. Gas up the car. Take out the garbage. Those are Grace's love languages. Time would be a big one for me. And it's just ministry of presence and having time together, just being available and then also touch. And so I like to snuggle. I really like to hold hands. When we drive in the car, I like to hold hands. When we do these things, I like having Grace close. And I need to hold her hand, otherwise she's going to stay busy with chores and tasks. So I have to lock her down. And so when it comes to serving, what would be your primary love languages and what would mine be?

Grace Driscoll: Of receiving?

Pastor Mark: Of receiving, yeah. So otherwise what happens is we're serving, but they're not receiving. So then we get angry or we feel rejected. But it's figuring out not only do we need to serve, but a servant figures out how you need to be served.

Grace Driscoll: Mm-hmm. Mine would probably be words and service.

Pastor Mark: Okay. So what that means is words are important to you. So if I am critical, or if I'm harsh, or if I negative name call, it's doubly painful for you, because words are very important to you. And then service, service wasn't as big when we got married. Once we had five kids, it really moved up the charts very, very quickly. And for me, it's always been probably time and touch. Yeah, because life is busy and I just like having you around. The key that she articulates in this section in Chapter 5, verse 16, second half of the verse, it's one of our favorite definitions of marriage in the entire Bible. One translation quotes her as saying, "This is my lover. This is my friend."

Pastor Mark: And so for us, we see this as the unique category of marriage. We have friends, but your spouse is your lover and your friend. It's a unique, once-in-a-lifetime intimacy that you share together. And so maybe just from your heart, honey, how important is it that marriage begins and is sustained by a genuine friendship?

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. I mean, there's so many different seasons of marriage. And some seasons are hard, whether it's physical stuff going on, or emotional, or spiritual stuff going on. You can't always be in that lover spot in every season.

Pastor Mark: The passion is not always going to be at a red hot ten.

Grace Driscoll: That's right. And so the friendship is what carries you. It carries you into the place of being lovers. But it carries you through the hard seasons. It's fun. It's more enjoyable in the joyful seasons to have a friend with you. And so it's essential to have that friendship at the core, because the other is important obviously, but that comes out of the friendship.

Pastor Mark: And we read, when we wrote the book *Real Marriage*, we read a massive stack of books. And virtually, or perhaps none of them really, in any detail talked about friendship in marriage. It's like marriage and friendship are two different categories. And for us, it's absolutely crucial. This is why you should be friends before you're married. You should be friends while you're married. And when your kids leave home, you better be friends, because what we're seeing now... We're 50. And our two oldest kids are married at this point. One is in college. Two in high school. The kids are not as dependent on us. They're more independent. And if we don't have a friendship, we've got a crisis.

Pastor Mark: Because it used to be that the kids would keep us busy and now they don't need us as much. And if we don't enjoy being together, we've got ourselves a real problem. And so the issue that she says is the reason I want to work this out is because he's my friend. And she misses the friendship. And so John Gottman in his book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, again, he's a good researcher. He says, "The determining factor in whether wives feel satisfied with the sex, romance and passion in their marriage is, by 70%, the quality of the couple's friendship."

Grace Driscoll: It's a big deal.

Pastor Mark: "For men, the determining factor is, by 70%, the quality of the couple's friendship." They say that men and women are very different, but on this, they're very much the same. The friendship really matters.

Grace Driscoll: And men and women approach friendship differently. So you need to, in order to work on your friendship, figure out how your definition of how to build a friendship and my definition of how to build a friendship so that we can do that for one another. And again, it's going to be serving you. Because generally men, I mean, you like to have the ministry of presence. But generally men like to go do stuff together to build a friendship. And so I, as a wife, if that's your way of building a friendship, I need to be willing to go and do stuff with you to build the friendship. And vice versa. Whatever I feel is building the friendship, you need to be able to serve me in that way.

Pastor Mark: That's one of my favorite things, is just holding hands and going for a walk.

Grace Driscoll: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And I like that, too so that works out.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. And in that issue of friendship, there was a pivotal moment in our marriage. I can remember it. We were upstairs. We had a little nook off of our bedroom where we would sit and watch a movie, or visit, or whatever. It was sacred space. Kids weren't generally allowed in there. And I would come home from work and you would oftentimes ask me, "Tell me all about your day. Tell me exactly what happened. Tell me everything that went on." And that was the last thing I wanted to do, because it's like revisiting the crime scene. I barely lived through the day. I don't want to relive the day. And on one occasion, I

remember you didn't ask what happened. You asked, "How can I be a good friend?" And to me, that was a revolutionary question, because the day was over. And there were certain things I couldn't fix. But you being my friend meant that I had this really beautiful relationship to come home to and somebody that I enjoyed.

Pastor Mark: And so it started to become a difference in our marriage, when you started asking, "Right now, today, tonight, how can I be a good friend?" And that changed everything. He goes on to say, "Happy marriages are based on a deep friendship," which is crucial. And we were friends. We were dating. We were friends.

Grace Driscoll: Four and a half years we dated.

Pastor Mark: Yeah, we dated four and a half years. We were friends. We still are friends. And that's why I used to travel a lot more than I do just to make ends meet and to generate revenue to take care of you and the kids. And I would go into a low-level depression before travel, because I knew I was going to be away from you. And then when I was gone, I just wanted to get home. And so for me, I don't like not having you around. And things that normally I wouldn't enjoy, if you're there, I enjoy them. It's like the other day, you were going to go to Costco. I have never been to Costco by myself and I will never go to Costco by myself. But Grace goes to Costco and I...

Grace Driscoll: And you went with me.

Pastor Mark: I will go to Costco!

Grace Driscoll: I said it's not urgent. I can go another time. You're like, "No, let's go to Costco."

Pastor Mark: If you're there, it's fun. If you're not there, I'm not going to Costco.

Grace Driscoll: We spend more when you go to Costco.

Pastor Mark: We do, yeah. That's amazing. When you go to Costco, there's all these things you didn't even know you needed. And then you're like, "I have to have that snuggly." All right, so he goes on to say, "Happy marriages are based on a deep friendship. By this, I mean a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other's company. These couples tend to know each other intimately. They are well versed in each other's likes, dislikes, personality quirks, hopes and dreams. They have an abiding regard for each other and express this fondness not just in big ways, but in little ways, day in and day out.

Pastor Mark: Friendship fuels the flames of romance, because it offers the best protection against feeling adversarial toward your spouse." If somebody is your friend, you're usually going to give them a benefit of the doubt. You're going to paint

them in the best light. When they're acting out of character, you're going to be more quick to sort of dismiss that and return to who they truly are.

Grace Driscoll: And friendship is built on trust. And so it means it's a safe place.

Pastor Mark: And I like where she says, "This is my lover. This is my friend." The friendship is constant or should be constant in the marriage. And the intense sexual passion and lover, it sort of ebbs and flows. It's not every minute of every day is going to be-

Grace Driscoll: Not like the movies.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. No! No, at some point you've got to go to work. You got to do the laundry. Got to get stuff done. And so, but the friendship sustains it. And within that as well, if you are friends, it actually creates a safer place for the sexual intimacy, because it's not about performance. It's about just an extension of the friendship. And so a lot of times people will wonder, how do we improve things in the bedroom? Well, maybe you need to improve the friendship outside of the bedroom so that there's more safety and freedom and trust in the bedroom. And if you are friends, it's not as serious.

Pastor Mark: I always tell the story. There was one couple we were dealing with and they were friends. And they got along well, but they were sexually very timid. And they both had things that they wanted to try, but they wouldn't talk about it. And they wouldn't try it, because they were a little bit embarrassed. And so one day he came home and she just grabbed him and passionately kissed him. And she's like, "I want to make love on the coffee table." Apparently, she really liked the coffee table. So she lays on the coffee table and it broke. And they just laughed, and laughed, and laughed. When your friends, even when you go into sexual intimacy, even if everything doesn't work out, you can still have a good laugh and your friends.

Grace Driscoll: That's right. That's right.

Pastor Mark: It takes some of the pressure off. So we like to say, we'll close with this. There are three kinds of marriages and there are three moments in marriage. There is what we like to call the back to back, shoulder to shoulder, face to face. So we can't move very much. So back-to-back, do this. Okay, so what are we doing? We're fine.

Grace Driscoll: We're not talking.

Pastor Mark: We're not looking at each other.

Grace Driscoll: Because we're looking at other things.

Pastor Mark: We're not talking to each other. And what happens here in this section of the Song of Songs, they literally are back to back. She turns her back on him. Rolls over in bed. Locks the door. And then he walks away. So literally, they're back to back. They're not talking to each other. They're not looking at each other. And oftentimes when you're fighting, you don't want to look at each other, because then you're going to start feeling warm and you want to be cold.

Grace Driscoll: You're going to forgive and you want to be mad.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. And then there's shoulder to shoulder, which is all the work, and the tasks, and the responsibilities.

Grace Driscoll: It's much of life.

Pastor Mark: How good are we at shoulder to shoulder?

Grace Driscoll: We're really good at that. But to our demise, sometimes.

Pastor Mark: Sometimes we get too locked into doing things. And so we work together. Actually, when we were dating, at a hotel, we actually worked together. And then we raised five kids together. We do ministry together. We do life together. We kind of do everything together. And we're very efficient at getting things done together. We work well together. We complement each other well. But with five kids, and ministry, and life, there can be so many things to keep us busy that were locked in to shoulder to shoulder. And then you end up over time becoming more roommates than soulmates.

Pastor Mark: And then there's the face to face. And this is the Bible's language for friendship. It says of people who were intimate with God that they saw him face to face. It says that of Moses. For example, and then Paul says in Corinthians that one day we see Jesus Christ face to face. And that's the language of friendship. And the old reformers used to talk about living coram deo, which is in the face of God. It's living face to face with God. How important is it for a couple, if they're going to be friends, to get a lot of face time?

Grace Driscoll: It's essential. You have to be able to look each other in the eye. That's where each other's telling the truth. You're looking into a person's soul by looking them in the eye. And it's hard to be mad at someone when you're looking at them in the face. You're reminded of why you love them and why you want to be with them and the fun times. And when you're looking away you can ignore and avoid all that. And so when you look each other in the eyes, you remember the love that you have for each other.

Pastor Mark: Well, and even in our world, I mean, we've got Facebook. We've got FaceTime, Zoom. I mean, so much of our communication is built so that we can have face-to-face communication. And so much gets lost. I mean, if you're trying to resolve an issue over text or email-

Grace Driscoll: Oh, boy!

Pastor Mark: ... not good. And-or if you're back to back. You're just not looking at each other. And you're sort of yelling at each other from one room of the house to the other. That's not how to resolve things. And so it's always thinking about what does face-to-face time look like? This would include a regular date. And it's not sitting at a movie all the time, though that's not a sin, because that's shoulder to shoulder. It's face to face. It's sitting down having a meal, having a glass of wine, playing a board game, whatever it is, praying together. Reading scripture to one another, sitting in the tub together looking at each other. And it's just that face-to-face time is crucial and important. And the reason that they have a broken marriage in this episode is because they've gone back to back. And we're going to see in the next one that they go face to face and they reconcile it. So maybe give them their homework assignment for this section.

Grace Driscoll: Okay. You got another private conversation.

Pastor Mark: And what we mean by this is not in front of the kids, not in front of the in-laws and the outlaws. And even if you're going to go to a restaurant, find a quiet booth in the corner. Or maybe go to the park. Or just find a place that's a little bit private.

Grace Driscoll: Yes. With your phones off, looking at one another, face to face, we just talked about this, with a lot of love and grace, have a healthy conversation inviting your spouse to be a better friend by number one, giving them examples from your relationship on how they have already been a good friend and then number two, how they can be a good friend in the present and future. So start with encouragement and how you appreciate how they've been a good friend. And be specific. And then ask or talk about how they can be a good friend in this season of your life. Like I said, it changes throughout your life. So you can't just keep doing the same thing, expecting them to feel super loved by you. You need to check in and do the face to face and figure out what do you need in this season?

Pastor Mark: And our goal for you is our goal for us. And that is that marriage is more than friendship, but it's certainly not less. And that your spouse should be your best friend. And I get really concerned anytime I hear somebody say, "I'm going to go spend time with my best friend." That should be your spouse.