

Pastor Mark: Well, howdy. It is such an honor to have you join us for the Real Romance Song of Songs series. My name is Mark.

Grace Driscoll: I'm Grace.

Pastor Mark: And we're going to let you get to know us a little bit, and we're just really grateful that you would invite us into your marriage and relationship. And so maybe tell them a little bit about your upbringing, how we met. Every relationship has some sort of beginning, maybe just share a little bit of our story.

Grace Driscoll: Well, we met in high school. I grew up as a pastor's kid, youngest daughter of three girls. And we met in high school after I was in a bad relationship and I started dating you and we dated for four and a half years through the first part of college and you weren't saved.

Pastor Mark: Yeah, we did it all wrong. So if you're watching this and you're like, "Hey, we've done it wrong." We know how you feel.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, there's help for you.

Pastor Mark: There's help for you. When we met, you were a Christian who wasn't walking faithfully with the Lord, that was my strategic entry point into your life. I was a marginal Jack Catholic kid. Some Catholics know love Jesus, I didn't. And you asked me if I knew God, I was like, "yeah, whatever." You'd come out of a bad relationship.

Grace Driscoll: I was obviously naive.

Pastor Mark: We were not virgins when we met, even though we were just 17 years of age at a public high school. And then when we got married, we had a lot of things from our dating years that we hadn't really worked through or resolved. Because we started sleeping together when we were dating, we didn't have a spiritual foundation in Christ. We weren't praying together, we weren't walking with the Lord together. And then I got saved at age 19 in college reading the Bible that you gave me.

And then we stopped sleeping together. We met with our pastor, we got premarital counseling and help. We tried to start to make some pivots and do things God's way, but we hadn't gone back and cleaned up some of the pains and problems from our dating relationship, both with each other and relationships prior. And it caused a lot of problems and pains into the marriage. And how far would you say it was into the marriage that we actually went back and revisited some of those things to clean up those messes we had made and those hurts that we had so that we could then have a better future?

Grace Driscoll: Probably at least 10 years.

Pastor Mark: Probably at least 10 years. Did we have five kids yet at that point?

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: So we were in ministry, 10 years married, five kids in, we did know and love and serve the Lord. We were married, we were faithful to one another in marriage, but we weren't as close as we could or should have been. And there was some problems in the past that were prohibiting and inhibiting our freedom for the future.

Grace Driscoll: It's never fun to go back and deal with past hurt, but there's times that are better and not having five kids during it would've been-

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Right. I think it was right after the fifth kid was born. It's like, hey, we've got a ministry and five kids. Let's add a lot of brokenness to it and just see what happens.

Grace Driscoll: Just encourage you to deal with that as soon as the Lord convicts you, that you need healing.

Pastor Mark: The earlier, the better. And so for us, one of the things that was particularly helpful was just looking at sex in general, in the Bible, because we disagreed. And then one book of the Bible in particular has been the most helpful, possibly my favorite book of the Bible, the Song of Songs. And so we'll get into that and we expect you to practice what we preach, it's going to be great.

Grace Driscoll: After you leave.

Pastor Mark: After you leave and if you're dating, after you're married.

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: That's right. So maybe let's start with just talking about sex in general and then we'll get into the Song of Songs in particular. We come to the point that we think that there's basically three ways that people view sex.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Sex is God, is one of them and that's when you put sex in the place of God, it's your priority, you think about it constantly, not in a healthy way. And it's how you see your spouse or whoever you're with, you see them through the lens of sex instead of who they are and getting to know them and loving them in a character way. And so yeah, that can be really damaging because the person can feel used. They can feel, just like you don't care about anything else.

Pastor Mark: Don't care about the soul, the emotions, the relationship. It's just the physical act. Second one?

Grace Driscoll: Is gross, and that is where a lot of times, historically, even in Christian homes, a lot of kids are raised as sex is gross. Save it for the one you marry.

Pastor Mark: I always say sex is dirty, nasty, violent, wrong. So save it for the one you love. That's kind of that. That's kind of what we tell kids in youth groups sometimes.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. And so it's seen as not as something that God created as a beautiful thing and as a gift it's seen as something that's just, "I'll just tolerate it. It's gross, but we'll get through it. And it's just not a fun thing. It's not an enjoyable thing. It's just gross. So avoid it."

Pastor Mark: And then God's way?

Grace Driscoll: And then God's way is, it's seen as a gift. And He created it for Adam and Eve, He created it so that we could enjoy it mutually, He created it also to procreate, He created it to comfort. There's a lot of purposes as sex being a gift. But if we don't see it as that, that's kind of where we need to start in order to start to heal up. And if we don't see it as that, we need to stop and think about, okay, if I see it as gross or God, how do I go back to seeing it as the gift God has given it? And so that's kind of what we're doing through all these series is helping people see sex is a gift and heal up so that they can have that relationship with their spouse, that it is a beautiful thing.

Pastor Mark: So you're very practical. I'm very theological. So let me unpack a little bit of this. So that sex as God, it has always been that God's people were surrounded with people, who basically worship sex as God, or used false sexuality as just part of their identity and lifestyle. This includes in the old Testament times, God's people were surrounded with fertility cults. There were Canaanite gods that you would worship with erotic poetry and part of the sex acts in their cultish worship included sexual activity. And the temples really were brothels with sexual activity.

In the old Testament times, there were the Asherah poles that were really male phallic, symbols that, you think of a society that's not well built and constructed like the industrial age modern era, you look out on the plains, and the one thing you can see is the phallic symbol of the Asherah pole. And that was to encourage everyone to venture to that place, to have illicit sex, to demonic false gods. This included temples surrounding God's people in the Old Testament times and the New Testament times like Corinth, where these temples would have upwards of a thousand prostitutes, male and female for any kind or sort of sexual act.

Imagine taking sex trafficking, pornography, adult entertainment, and strip clubs, and then calling that a religion and then saying that was good spiritual act. This includes in the history of the world, religions like Hinduism have things like the Kama Sutra and prostitution that would have sexuality as part of idolatry and worship. In the new Testament times the Greeks were very

perverted people and the New Testament was written in the language of Greek. And so also this would include men thinking that the highest form of sex was not a man and a woman, but an older man and a younger boy. And so it was a culture of pedophilia and grooming.

And so when Paul writes, for example to the church in Corinth, it's a very Pagan city. One guy's sleeping with his mother-in-law, people are living and sleeping together, there's transgenderism, there's gender confusion, there's men dressing up like women, women dressing up like men, there're sleeping together, they're having all kinds of sex and orgies. And this includes at their house church meetings where they're getting drunk and sleeping together. So he has to write the whole book to sort of clarify all of that. Today, we're seeing the outgrowth of what Paul warned in Romans chapter one, where he says that we either worship the Creator, or the created. And when we have this inversion that some created person or thing takes the Creator's place, the result is all kinds of sexual sin. Paul talks about homosexuality, talks about lesbianism, he talks about orgies, gender confusion. All of this was present in the times of the Roman Empire.

And so times change, but people don't and their sin and their preferences and their prejudices don't. And sadly in early Christianity, there was this Greek dualism where the body is bad, but the soul is good. So the goal is to leave your body and live in your soul. And so there was this sort of disdain for the body and its passions and pleasures. This allowed certain church fathers to say that Adam and Eve would've gotten pregnant from partaking of a particular tree. They wouldn't have had sexual relations until after the fall. All of this sort of false thinking, just craziness, that sex is essentially bad. And that is the sex is gross. And today the sex is gross view is really the result of two things, either a sexual sin or assault. So if you either have a lot of sexual sin, you can see it as gross, or if you've been sinned against and/or really bad religious teaching in churches. Prudish people saying "sex is just for procreation. It's not for pleasure."

Grace Driscoll: Oftentimes they have-

Pastor Mark: Some sort of brokenness or trauma.

Grace Driscoll: So that's why you say that.

Pastor Mark: Would you say honey, that when we first got married, that you would've leaned more toward the sex is gross position?

Grace Driscoll: Absolutely.

Pastor Mark: Why would that be?

Grace Driscoll: Because I had trauma in my past. And so I couldn't see it as a gift because it was traumatizing to me to think about it. And so for me, I had to heal up from that

and really allow the Lord to reach in to my soul and work through the things that were keeping me from seeing it as a gift. And it was a process and it was hard. But when you know that God has created something as good, we have to keep working toward letting Him heal us so that we live as if it's good.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Because God made marriage and he made marriages, the hearth to hold the passionate flame of sex. And he did so before sin entered the world, he said it was very good and they were naked without shame, and so it is a gift.

I came, when we first met, from the other position, which is more sex is God. That would've been my proclivity, that would've been my tendency. I grew up not far from a couple of strip clubs. I grew up as a non-Christian in a non-Christian home. I was sexually active before I met you. I was sexually active once I met you. And so for me, if anything, I didn't care much about God until I met the Lord Jesus. And for me, I just thought I was a good person. As long as we're in a dating relationship, any kind of sexuality is a good thing. And so you would've had a view that sex is more gross. I had the view that sex was more God. And so then we stopped having sex before we got married, but we didn't really talk about it or work it through. And I think you were assuming, and I was assuming that when we got married, things would just sort of figure themselves out, which they didn't.

Grace Driscoll: Well, and you can see if I see it as gross and you see it as God, how not fixing that issue makes each of us get worse because I'm seeing it as grosser, the more you see it as more God.

Pastor Mark: So I'm, I'm like, "Hey, Hey, Hey". And you're like, "no, no, no" offense/defense.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. It's like, you're backing away from each other. You're running after me and I'm going. It doesn't work well.

Pastor Mark: It did not work well.

Grace Driscoll: So the only answer is to go back to God created it as a gift. How do we get to that point of both of us seeing it as a gift?

Pastor Mark: Because would you have thought "sex is way too important to him? Yes. He wants to be together too often. Yes. This guy's got a problem."

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: Okay. I forgive you. I forgive. OK. Cause that's not how it was just so you know. And I would've thought, "man, she's not available, she's not warm. She's not friendly." I think I told you, I feel like you live in a bank vault and I can't figure out the code. I was always trying to pick the lock.

Grace Driscoll: You didn't need to say that.

Pastor Mark:

Yes I did. So nonetheless, sex as gifts. So sex isn't God and it's not gross. It's a gift that God gives. And so we see in scripture that there are six reasons that God gave sex as a gift. The first is pleasure. So we're going to jump in here soon to the Song of Songs. It never mentions children or procreation. It's just sex for the pleasure and unity of a married couple. Number two for children, Genesis two says to be fruitful, multiply, increase the number, fill the earth and subdue it. We did that. We got five kids. Nailed it. And so out of the most intimate, passionate sharing of marriage comes more life. So we bring forth children.

The third is oneness. It says that they two shall become one flesh. And we'll get into this later in our study. But it literally hard wires, biochemically, a husband and wife together as one flesh.

Grace Driscoll:

Which is why it needs to be in marriage.

Pastor Mark:

In marriage, yeah. And then it's for knowledge, it says in Genesis four, one that Adam lay with his wife, even he knew her. Knew that there's an intimacy, there's a knowledge, that's why sex is only for heterosexual marriage. And then there's a part of you that only one person knows.

The fifth is for protection. In First Corinthians seven, it says, "do not deprive one another except by mutual consent and for a season that you may devote yourselves to prayer, unless you be tempted, then come together again, so you don't give the devil a foothold." And so the point is, if you're not having regular marital intimacy, you're open to temptation for pornography, sexual sin, emotional and or physical adultery.

And then also the sixth purpose and gift of sexuality's comfort. It says in Second Samuel 12, that there was the loss of a child, a couple was really struggling. And so there was nothing to say. Sometimes there's nothing to say. There's no way to fix it or to explain it. And so you just comfort one another by being sexually connected to one another in the moment. And so sex is a gift that God gives. And any one of those six functions of sex is proper for marriage.

And what happens sometimes in bad teaching, they'll just say that only one of those, "Well, it's only for procreation or it's only to consummate the covenant", and it's any time that any one of those six purposes of the gift of sex is elevated and being used in marriage properly, that's good. If it's being elevated and used in such a way that it negates the others, then that's negative.

Well, that being said, we're going to, we're going to jump into the Song of Songs and I'll read the first and then you can read her portions. And I'll read his portions. And the big idea is here that it's a series of conversations between a husband and a wife. And they start in their dating years, their engagement years, it goes up to their marriage and then it walks through their marriage then into their later years. And they even have a fight later in the book.

And so that's just a good biblical marriage. Well, we've, we've heard it happen for them. So we're praying for them. That's nothing we've experienced. And so the big idea here is it's about conversation and listening. It's about really hearing from one another. So chapter one, verse one, he says Solomon Song of Songs. And so the title of the book for some would be the Song of Solomon. Some will call it the Song of Songs and the Songs of Solomon. It is poetic. It's Solomon's Song of Songs. You can read her response.

Grace Driscoll: "And then she says, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for your love is more delightful than wine. There's a passion there. Kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." It's not a peck on the cheek or just a hug.

Pastor Mark: It's an invitation. Do you think she's flirting?

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: Good. I was hoping you'd say that. Okay. Yeah. That's good.

Grace Driscoll: "Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the young women love you! Take me away with you, let us hurry. Let the king bring me into his chambers." There's a healthy jealousy there. She notices that other women notice him. And she's saying, "but I want to be with you."

Pastor Mark: And then the friends jump in. So there are three primary characters throughout the book. There's the man that we're going to do in a moment we believe is Solomon. The woman that is most likely a woman named Abishag, we'll call her Abby. And then there are the friends who speak in. This would be the wise council. This would be your extended family that has wisdom. This would be your friends that have wisdom. People in your faith community. It would've been a synagogue for them, it's a church for us. So the friends are involved.

Grace Driscoll: They're celebrating with her in a lot of their phrases.

Pastor Mark: And they're encouraging what they're seeing, because they're seeing health and life and godliness. And so the friends then say, "we rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine." What they're saying is you should be together. You've got a great relationship. We're super proud of you. This is what God has. This is the will of God. And then she speaks last.

Grace Driscoll: She says, "how right are they to adore you? Dark am I, yet lovely, daughters of Jerusalem? Dark like the tents of Kedar" and the tents of Kedar were on a hillside. And then on the outside of the tents were black goat hair. So if you looked on the hillside, you basically saw like black hair running, she's describing that. "Like the tent curtains of Solomon do not stare at me because I am dark because I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards. My own vineyard, I had to neglect. Tell me

you whom I love where you graze your flock and where you rest your sheep at midday. Why should I be like a veiled women beside the flock of your friends?"

Pastor Mark:

So they start off and it's ancient Hebrew poetry. So let me just introduce the Song of Songs or Solomon Song of Songs. It's about 3000 years old. And so it's ancient Hebrew poetry. And what's amazing is, it's very frank without being crass. It's very clear without being clinical. It's very descriptive. And so a lot of people read it and they're like, that's a little bit too much. And so what happens is some people have a hard time with it because it's so clear.

So they'll allegorize it, "It's not about you and your spouse. It's about you and God". You're like, "that's actually still weird."

Yeah. And I think every loving relationship can teach things about our relationship with God. So maybe that's a secondary use, but we would have a literal and not what's called an allegorical interpretation of the book. It is the first philosophy. Some would say that philosophy comes from the Greeks, Socrates Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides, Alexander the Great. It actually comes from Job and Solomon.

And so here it's about the first philosophy of love is really what it is about. And it's a series of love songs. And so when it says Solomon Song of Songs, the Bible says that he had more than 3000 Proverbs and around a thousand songs, he was very creative. He's a songwriter, he's a poet. And in calling it the Song of Songs, it's like the King of Kings or the Lord of Lords. These are his best works. These are his greatest hits.

What's interesting is the Jewish people in Antiquity. They would read it every Passover at the pub. So you'd get together at the pub, have a drink with the guys and read the Song of Solomon. And if you were Jewish, there is an indication that they wouldn't let you read it until you were 30 or married. So you have Jewish boys late at night, under the covers with the candle, reading the Song as Solomon, trying to figure out what it meant. Again, the woman is mentioned, the man is mentioned, the friends are mentioned. There is a debate as to whether or not God is ever mentioned. We'll get into that later.

And what's really interesting, it's never quoted in the New Testament so it just sort of stands alone, and it never mentions children. Right? And so the primary purpose of the book is not to be fruitful, multiplying, increase the number, fill the earth and subdue it. Though, if you do what they say that will happen. Most likely the odds are in your favor. It's just about a married couple, having passionate, deep, connected, romantic intimacy.

Grace Driscoll:

Because that's needed before you have kids. Your marriage is always most important. And so having a healthy relationship gives you healthy perspective in raising your kids and keeping your marriage priority.

Pastor Mark: Well, and let's just get to that real quick. So what happens is oftentimes people get married and they have kids and the passion in the relationship is gone and all the passion goes toward the raising of the children.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, cause they are a lot of work and that's easy to do and not even think about what you're doing. And so it's important to go back to Song of Songs and remember, "okay, this is what I need to keep priority. We still need to enjoy each other". Because when the kids are gone, we have a relationship still, ideally. And so then we can still enjoy each other as we're getting to know each other, even while we're raising the kids.

Pastor Mark: Well, and we're seeing this just personally in our own relationship today, we're 50, we've got two kids that are married, one in college, two in high school. And when they're little, they require a tremendous amount of physical energy. It's just exhausting. Little boys are always trying to kill themselves. So you're always on suicide watch if you're raising boys. And as they get older, they get a little more independent and it's more emotional energy. It's being available to coach them through life, their relationships, their conversations, their conflicts, them figuring out who God made them to be. And then there's a point where your kids leave their mother and father. They go start their own family. They're no longer part of your family. And you become extended family, at least in a healthy family system.

And the result then is if you don't have a good, passionate, loving, satisfying, exciting marriage, a couple of things happen. If the children are the gravitational force sort of serving as the center of the family and marital universe, when the children leave, then everything flies out of orbit. And we're seeing couples that we know that are around our age that do love the Lord. And as their children leave their marriage craters. And it's tragic and it's very horrible. And/or then the couple tries to overly invest and involve themselves mental in their children's lives and/or marriages because there's nothing holding them together. So they're trying to pull their children back home or pull this new family through marriage, back into their family as one big dysfunctional family, rather than two extended families.

Grace Driscoll: And they don't know each other anymore.

Pastor Mark: And/or they're just begging for grandkids because they're like, we had a little person that held us together. You're not little anymore. Give us some new little people so we can repeat the dysfunction of our broken marriage. And so it's really important, not only in the dating and engagement in early married years, but throughout the course of marriage to keep pursuing one another, growing in your intimacy, increasing your passion, enjoying your sexuality.

Grace Driscoll: Which is why we go back to, it's important to heal up so that you can move in that trajectory. That's healthy as you go through marriage and parenting.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Because a lot of people they're broken and rather than dealing with their brokenness, they just try to find people or things to continue their brokenness.

Well, in so far as the Song of Solomon goes, it's our perspective that the male is Solomon. He is the king. He is the wisest man after Jesus. He has this supernatural, Holy Spirit anointing for wisdom. He's named six times in the book. It continually refers to him as the king. In addition, there is Abishag and the reason we use her name, her name is never mentioned in the book. But when Solomon's father David was dying, they brought in a young maiden to tend to him kind of like hospice or nurse or end of life care. She comes from the same region that is mentioned of this young woman in the book, the Shulamite region, Solomon becomes very defensive and protective of her and her name is Abishag. And so though her name is not given in the book, probably the most likely person that she is, this gal named Abishag. And we'll call her Abby. And then there are the friends. So jumping into this first section of the Song of Solomon, let's just talk about her. What do you think it indicates that she speaks first?

Grace Driscoll: I mean she's free. She's wanting a relationship with her. She's being frank about her desires with him.

Pastor Mark: She's very honest and straightforward. She's very passionate. She's got a lot of thoughts about sex and marriage and I would say, she's very aggressive and flirtatious.

Grace Driscoll: And she makes it clear that she is interested in him because she sees all these other women around that are interested. But she puts herself in front and says, I'm interested. I'm very interested.

Pastor Mark: Well, at this point they, they don't work under the same sort of categories, but this will be like their engagement. This is their betrothal. And she's saying "you are my pick, I am excited to be with you.", they're anticipating their wedding and their marriage. How do you think that corresponds with a lot of sort of religious prudish teaching about how women should be, they shouldn't have sexual desires. If they do, they shouldn't be passionate, they shouldn't be aggressive. They shouldn't express them. Some of this comes out to the Victorian age where women were to dress very modestly and then we put table cloths over tables because if men saw the leg of a chair, they would lust. And that's a really weird guy.

Grace Driscoll: We've kind of gotten to the other extreme now, so I'm not so sure that all of that was bad, but we need to be modest still.

Pastor Mark: Okay. Let me do this then we'll have a little argument in front of the live audience. So would you say that perhaps outside of the church for non-Christians it's more sex is God?

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: And some women are encouraged to just be way too aggressive outside of marriage, but that within the church it can be more sex is gross. And so women are discouraged even within marriage to being passionate, to having desires, to expressing their interests.

Grace Driscoll: Well, women have desires. And in the church, we don't always talk about what to do with those desires. And so oftentimes it's hidden sin or secret passions or reading the romance novels and kind of getting all hyped up about it. Instead of having an appropriate relationship with someone that's wise counsel that can talk through those emotions. It's normal to be passionate, we should be passionate about God first and then people. And if it's our upcoming spouse, that's awesome. We want to encourage that, and we don't want to discourage it like often happens in the church.

But a lot of people don't know how to talk about it. And so they just say, "oh, don't, don't feel that. Or don't talk about that. Or don't look at that." And it's talking about the heart issues and if we're desiring God first, he's going to give us pure desires toward our spouse or our future spouse. And so yeah, in the church, it's gross, outside of the church and the culture it's God, and so again, how do we-

Pastor Mark: That's going to be very confusing for women.

Grace Driscoll: Yep. It is. It is. And then if you have any trauma in there it's even more confusing. So there's a lot of aggressive women that I see young women in this day and age, number one it shows to me a lack of trust with the Lord providing, but there's also a sense where some guys are kind of clueless and so you may need to put yourself kind of in front of him, just getting to know him as a friend and that sort of thing. But it doesn't mean you're aggressive as-

Pastor Mark: Well what about within marriage? Once you are married?

Grace Driscoll: Yes. It's great to be aggressive if that's your relationship.

Pastor Mark: A second emotion. And she invites him to kiss her. So what is she doing there?

Grace Driscoll: She's saying I want to be with you.

Pastor Mark: She's inviting. She's flirting. She also highlights his character. She says "your name is like perfume poured out." So what I like to say is that women are generally aroused and men are genitally aroused. And so for her, a lot of her attraction to him, she's going to talk about his physical appearance and how he smells, and he brushes his teeth and he has two eyebrows and his shirt with buttons like he's put together. But why is it so important to character outside of

the bedroom, be in place for a woman to have courage in the bedroom with her husband?

Grace Driscoll: Because that establishes trust and security. And if she sees good character outside of the house and the bedroom, for women, security is the number one thing.

Pastor Mark: Explain that. What does that look like?

Grace Driscoll: So emotional security, financial security, spiritual security, for a woman, for her to feel safe those all need to be in place. And it's not that it needs to be perfect. It needs to be the man working toward all those things together with her.

Pastor Mark: Consistency, effort.

Grace Driscoll: And then she can feel free to be in the most vulnerable place in the bedroom with him because she feels safe on all these other accounts. And there's studies that show security in all those areas is the number one thing for women.

Pastor Mark: And so then she talks about her own insecurities. She says-

Grace Driscoll: "Dark am I"

Pastor Mark: "I'm dark." Meaning in that day, every culture generally speaking has a cultural standard of beauty. And our big idea is this, that God doesn't give us a standard of beauty, he gives us a spouse. And your spouse is your standard of beauty. So when God made Adam and Eve, there was one man, and there was one woman and they were each other's standard of beauty. It wasn't like there were other men or women to compare one another to.

Grace Driscoll: Made it easy.

Pastor Mark: Made it real easy. There's an aardvark. Okay. Well, they look amazing. That's incredible. And so your spouse is your standard of beauty. That's where he says in Job 31-1, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully". Lustfully looking is having someone other than your spouse, be your standard of beauty. That's why a requirement of a leader in the New Testament is to be a one woman man, that literally his standard of beauty is one woman.

And so what she's saying though, is that she doesn't fit. What would be the typical normative cultural standard of beauty. If you were wealthy, you would stay indoors and you would have pale skin. If you were working outside, you'd be very tan and you'd have a farmer's tan. And that's how you knew who the poor people versus the rich people were. The poor ladies had farmers tans and they were all sweaty. And rich gals, they were very pale and put together and living indoors. And what she's saying is I don't fit the cultural standard of beauty.

She has some degree of insecurity about her appearance. Maybe talk about that, just how women tend to kind of always feel that way. To some degree.

Grace Driscoll: We all judge ourself the most harshly. And so when a man sees something wrong with us, when a husband sees something wrong with us and says it, it's really painful because we already see that tenfold. And so for a man to compliment a wife constantly is the most helpful.

Pastor Mark: And he is going to do that throughout the course of the book. Much of what he's going to say is not just you're pretty, but he has, he has very specific compliments. "I love your hair, I love your long neck." You'll find later, she's got a huge nose. And he is like, "I love your big nose and your long neck." And so for him, he is saying the things that she may have a question about are the things that he finds really unique about her and adorable about her. So he's very specific with the compliments to increase her awareness because it's important for the wife to see herself through the husband's eyes.

But if he's not specifically complimenting, she's not sure what he's thinking. And if he's criticizing that's, as you said, pretty devastating. What would you say to women who are maybe spending a lot of time on social media and today it's all about comparing yourself to someone else. And we all know that they're photoshopped and airbrushed and it's not like that's how they look at three o'clock in the morning, you know?

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Comparison is really deadly in many areas for women, but God created us who we are and we need to live that to the best of our ability. And it doesn't matter what we might think is wrong with us, we can use those things like she did to an advantage and pursue. "I know these things, aren't great about me, but I love you. And I want to be with you."

Pastor Mark: Well, let's be honest that most guys, they're not ready to take their shirt off and be modeling. You know? And that's, what's very interesting is sometimes especially in our culture, there's a lot more pressure put on women for appearance than men. And it's really unjust, it's unfair, it's ungodly, it's unholy, it's unhelpful. And I think really that is what a lot of pornography does, it creates a complete dissatisfaction with an actual human being. And it creates a series of beauty standards that are untenable and impossible. And there's not the same level of pressure or expectation for a man, so it's an unfair status. But if you know that your husband is attracted to you, his passion is for you, everything is going toward you, all of his affection. What does that do for the security and confidence of the wife?

Grace Driscoll: Just builds a hundred percent trust. Yeah. She can trust him and feel safe with him. And then she's open to continue to grow and blossom as a woman and who God created her to be. Instead of worrying about the criticism that will come or what he might be thinking or what someone else is thinking. And that's a trap. I mean, as women, we easily fall into that. Because the enemy wants to remind us of all our shortcomings and the Lord wants to convict us where we

need to work on things, but not condemn us in that he wants to help us grow and utilize who he created to be, to be a blessing to others.

Pastor Mark: Well then too, they, they talk in this first section at the conclusion about intentionally pursuing one another. What pastor Jim Evans calls the law of mutual pursuit that cleaving to one another in Genesis is that active, aggressive, mutual pursuing. Like I'm going to make an effort. You're a priority.

And what they're talking about is intentionally getting time together. She says, "tell me where you're going to be at midday." And what she's saying is you're the king of Israel. Like he's got a lot going on, and he's out somewhere deployed for work. He's not at the office or he is not at the palace for the day. And she's saying, "I need to know where you're going to be for lunch. I don't want to just be looking for you." You know, that's what ungodly women do. They're just running around looking for men. She's saying, "I want to know where you're going to be so that we could intentionally schedule some time together in our busy lives."

Grace Driscoll: She's showing him that she's thinking about him as well and not just doing her thing, he's doing her thing. And then, oh, at night we'll be together kind of thing. It's intentional, it's preempting and pursuing each other throughout the days.

Pastor Mark: So what would you say to those who say, "well, we're just going to be filled with passion, and our lives are going to intersect and we don't need to schedule or architect it or plan it, it's just going to happen."

Grace Driscoll: Fireworks. Yeah. That's only in the movies. People need to be pursued to feel safe and open.

Pastor Mark: And so maybe explain to them kind of the importance of a date night and what we would call a sync meeting.

Grace Driscoll: So date night we've kept,

Pastor Mark: Or it could be date day

Grace Driscoll: Or yeah. Any day or night or morning, whatever time together is the goal we've done that since college and our Pre-married pastor told us that this needs to be a priority. And if it's not, everything will come into that place. And so we've kept it since college and it's changed throughout the 20 years.

Pastor Mark: Kids are little and all of that. Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: But, but we've maintained, and so that way you can look forward to that time together. There's always that- [inaudible 00:35:58

Or even when you have kids, if you're staying at home and they're in bed and you're like, "okay, we get a couple hours together". It doesn't matter what it looks like, it's just getting that time of enjoyment together. And that's a really important time to invest in the relationship and pursue each other. Whereas the sync meeting is something that is important beside that.

Pastor Mark: It's not very romantic.

Grace Driscoll: But it's important to sync each other's schedules and know kind of like she did, "where are you going to be at midday?" Knowing how you can be praying for each other throughout the day? Are you going to be counseling with someone or you're going to be in this meeting or you're going to be, prepping a sermon or whatever it is for you. I look at the calendar and I pray through, okay, I'm praying for him in this. I know God is talking to him in this area. So it helps me engage in your life without being at your side.

And then for you can do the same. And so we try and sync our calendars in a way where we're aware of what each other is going through during the day. And so that meeting to kind of sync that up and you know, once you have kids, who's going to take this person where? They're sick today, so you got to take them to the orthodontist or whatever the issue is, but syncing up so that you're on the same page and not frantic.

Pastor Mark: Cause usually the difference between a value and a priority, a value is something you hold, a priority is something you do. And a lot of people have values, but not priorities. So like "I do love you. You're important. You matter to me." It's like, "well, but our life is not architected in such a way that our time together is a priority". So the sync meeting is very unromantic. It is.

Grace Driscoll: You like it though.

Pastor Mark: I do. Well, I like to look into the future, and I like to know that we're going to have our life put together according to our God given priorities. And also I always like to have fun on the calendar. I need to have a vacation, a holiday, a trip. I got to have something to look forward to. I always need fun on the horizon. And so I love asking you and the kids, "where do you want to go? What do you want to do? Let's get that on the calendar. Let's get that in the budget. Let's make sure that fun is always first in line." Because if Jesus comes back, I want to make sure I got my fun out of the way.

Grace Driscoll: That's going to be way more fun anyway. Yeah.

Pastor Mark: What we do in the sync meeting, we have a shared calendar, so we know what one another is doing. And then we're looking at the holidays and the birthdays and the weekend and work and budgets. And we're just trying to put life together. And so the sync meeting is where you work on your life. And then the

date night is where you work in your life and it's to carve out time and energy to be together.

And so thank you for joining us for this first session in real romance. Learning about sex in the Song of Songs and what we're going to give you is just one discussion question. There's going to be many more in the study guide and additional homework and scripture and such. But what we're going to ask you to do is carve out time. This will be a sort of date assignment in a private setting. You don't want your kids or your in-laws and Outlaws involved.

Grace Driscoll: Phones off.

Pastor Mark: Turn your phone off. Phone is the Greek word for demon, so cast that out, turn that phone off. Pray together, maybe hold hands and look each other in the eye and pray, forgive, love, put a lot of grace invite the Holy Spirit. Lovingly kindly discuss what?

Grace Driscoll: Whether sex is God, gross, or gift.

Pastor Mark: Have that conversation.

Grace Driscoll: And where you actually honestly are with it. Be willing to listen to that and not criticize that because if you're not honest, you're never going to grow in where you need to be. And that was a hard first conversation for us, it really was. And we took it personally at first.

Pastor Mark: Oh yeah. Because you'd be like "Mark, you're wrong." And I'd be like, "Grace, you're wrong" and God's like, "you're both right." That we were not at the position regarding our understanding that was the God given God glorifying scripture revealing position.

Grace Driscoll: There's going to be a lot of forgiveness entailed in this as well. So go into it, praying that God would give you the fruit of the spirit and to forgive each other before you even have the discussion. Because if you have that going into it, there'll be a lot more graciousness. And the Holy Spirit will be a part of that with you, because he wants to have you have a healthy, fun, enjoyable marriage.

Pastor Mark: And through the conversation, if it starts getting tense or intense, just stop and pray. Forgive one another, take a deep breath, invite the Holy Spirit that these can be very sensitive issues. And for some couples it's like a grenade with a pin pulled. And the key here is just to get the pin back in the grenade. Say, "you know what? We're not going to argue and fight about this over and over and over. We're going to pray and learn about this so that we can be one, and enjoy one another is one flesh."

We're pulling for you. That's our homework assignment for you to have a loving, private kind spirit filled, humble discussion about sex is God, gross, or

gift. And how you can learn and grow. And maybe you just close our session by praying for their discussion.

Grace Driscoll:

Dear Lord, thank you for what you've done in our marriage and will continue to faithfully grow in us. Lord, I pray that you would just minister to these couples. I pray that there would be honest conversations, not attacking each other, but working through the issues. And if there's healing that needs to take place, if there's repentance that needs to take place, if there's new frame of mind, renewing their mind and not conforming to this world, Lord, I pray that you would equip them to do that. I pray that these conversations would build their marriage and not tear it down. And I pray that you would just bless them as they walk this journey together in honesty and truth and blessing in Jesus's name. Amen.

Pastor Mark:

Amen. Thanks.