

Stop Fighting, Start Flirting

- We're gonna put the fun back in fundamentalism. That's what we're gonna do with our Bible study. We're in Song to Songs chapter five. How many of you are dating or engaged? Dating or engaged? All right, so now I'm gonna ask another question. How many of you are married? Raise your hand. Okay. I need honest answer From the married people. We're going to inform the people that are not yet married. After they get married, are they gonna fight?

- Yes.

- Yes. The women were much quicker to that answer than the men. Men are like, I don't know how to answer this. If I answered wrong, we could end up in a fight. Some of you had a fight on the way here. And here's the big idea. When you're dating, there's a lot of flirting. When you get married, there's a little, there's a little fighting. So what we want to do, we want to help you fight a little less and flirt a little more. Amen. Team you up for Valentine's Day. So we've got the sermon, we've got the Real Romance book, we've got the podcast, all the resources and where we're at in Song of Songs, chapter five, the couple has a fight. They have their first argument. Now it's not like a knockdown drag out, Jerry Springer meets Cops. The whole trailer park is in an uproar and a firearm might have been discharged kind of situation. They just have a little bit of a disagreement. It's a little bit of a spat. And I love it because the Bible is the most honest book ever written. And it doesn't just tell us about marriage, but that in marriage we're gonna have some conflict. How many of you, you had a fight this week? Don't raise your hand, but maybe raise your spouse's hand. Cause we know it's their fault, you know? So anyways, grace and I, we'll be honest with you, we had our first fight on our first date. Like we just started fighting and it's been 35 years. We're still figuring this out. But nonetheless, our first date, we were 17 years of age in high school. We talked a little bit on the phone and I picked Grace up. My first car was a 1956 4-door, bone stock, original Chevy Bel Air. And I sold it. I wish I never did. For my 50th birthday my kids bought me another one exactly like that. And that's on the front cover of the book. So anyways, I drive up to pick up Grace, I pick her up, and then we're going downtown and we're 17 in high school. And we're, you know, we're kind of broke and I'm really excited to be with her. So we park, we get out of the car, we're just gonna go for a little walk, go get some dinner, and we're walking away from the car. And Grace goes, oh, wait a minute. I left my wallet in the car. I said, no, that's fine. You're not paying for anything. She said, oh, yes I am. You're not gonna buy my dinner. I asked her later, I was like, we're going to Red Robin. I mean I, you know, I'm like, I'm 17, but not to brag, but like, I can afford this, you know? And I asked her later, I was like, why did you not want me to pay? She's like, well, I didn't want to be obligated to you. I was like, well, I'll tell you this. I mean, there is, if you are on a date, and the guy is in the power position, because it was all you can eat fries. Wrong guy, right? You gotta start over. I was like, honey, I'm not gonna manipulate the all you can eat fries to my advantage. So we're arguing over who's gonna pay for, she's like, you're not paying for dinner. I was like, I'm paying for dinner, so she goes to grab my keys and my keys drop outta my hand and they fall down a sewer grate. First date. We just got outta the car. Grace came right at me violently. I mean just. She's like a Glock. She's small but powerful, you know? And so then I look, my keys go down into the sewer grate and I look up and she just looks at me. She does

the whole- Now I'm emotionally conflicted. Like I'm furious. She's adorable. I'm not sure what my response should be. Okay? And so she's like, oh, that's fine. We'll just use your other key. I was like, honey, I only have one key. This is my only key. It's down there with the Ninja Turtles. I don't know what to do. The key, it's down in the sewer. So then we gotta figure out how to get my key. So we devised this plan that we're gonna go around to these different businesses and we got a flashlight, so we can see, we got a string and we got a magnet, and we're trying to get the magnet down on the key. Okay? So finally it happens. We do it. And I realize I have an aluminum key. Somebody's like, "Huh?" Well he went to my public school. Let me just shortcut for you. Magnet doesn't work with aluminum. Okay? So now we got ourselves a situation. Now we're the first hour into our first date and we've been fighting for the whole hour. So I called my dad 'cause my dad's a construction guy. I'm like, dad, you got your tools in your truck. Come down, we gotta break into the city sewer system. We gotta go get my key. So thank you, dad. He's probably watching, my dad. Great dad. Drives down, we take the manhole cover off, we go down, we get my keys, we finally go on our date. First fight. First date. Kid you not, some of are you like, glad that's over. No, happened again. Okay? 20 years later, this is a true story, Grace will verify when she comes up at the end, if we're still together. The 20 year anniversary of our very first date, we were in southern California getting ready to go out for a date. And we had a suburban at this time 'cause we had five kids, we'd filled it up. And then Grace goes to grab my keys outta my hand. 20th anniversary of our first date. Keys come flying out of my hand down a sewer grate. Yeah, 40th anniversary. We're staying home. We're not even risking it. We're not even risking it. It's too risky. Thankfully, crafty veteran. Another set of keys. So we're all good. How many of you though, you know, we have these days where we're flirting and then we have these days where we're fighting. Our hope and prayer with this sermon is to get out of the fighting and get back to the flirting. And so we're gonna pick up the story, Abby and Solomon, this husband and wife, and they're going to have a spat. And here's the issue. Selfishness is the problem. Okay? So what's the problem? Selfishness. Let me, I'll just do this. We're gonna read this in a minute. Lemme just ask you a question, okay? Raise your hand if you're selfish, okay? Okay. If you didn't raise your hand, raise both hands because you're too selfish to even admit that you're selfish. There's only two kinds of people who aren't selfish, dead people and liars. Amen. Okay, so right back to the text. All right, Song of Songs 5:2-8. So she says, and he says they're having a little back and forth. She says, I slept but my heart was awake. So she's kind of in and outta sleep. Listen, my beloved is knocking, he's trying to get into their bedroom. He says, open to me, my sister, my darling, my love, my dove, my flawless one. He's trying really hard, right? This is a lot of poetry for one guy. He's trying hard. My head is drenched with dew. So it's late at night toward the morning, my hair with the dampness of the night. Oh, she responds. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night. She says, I have taken off my robe. Must I put it on again? I have washed my feet. Must I soil them again? Then she says, my beloved thrust his hand through the latch opening, he's trying to break into his own bedroom. Okay? A lot of married men are like, that's a trigger for me. This bring back some bad days. My heart began to pound for him. Story goes on. I arose to open for my beloved. So she finally opens the door and he's gone. My hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. I opened for my beloved but, he gone. He gone. He left. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him, but I did not find him. I called him, but

he did not answer. The watchmen, so the guys keeping an eye on the city 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 could find my husband, please send him home. If you find my beloved, what will you tell him? Tell him that I'm faint with love. One quick caveat here. This may either be an actual event or a dream sequence that she's having. What she says is, I was in bed and I was awake and I was asleep. So she may have went looking for him and had a rough experience or she may be having a nightmare, a night terror, we don't know. But here's what we do know, they're both being selfish, okay? Is a husband selfish? Ladies answered that. Curious, okay, is a wife selfish? Yes, we're both selfish. Two selfish people need to understand that their selfishness is going to be the source of most of their problems. So he's selfish. First of all, what it says is, she waited for him and he didn't come home. So she probably had dinner ready, didn't come home. Before cell phones. So he didn't send communication. She stays up late, he's working late, he's being selfish. He doesn't come home for dinner, he doesn't come home for bedtime and he doesn't tell her that he's working late. So he's being selfish. Finally, he does come home and it's headed toward the morning because now the dew is out. So what did she do? She was selfish as well. She went to bed and she locked the door. I wish you could see your face. I know all of you that have done this. I now know all of you have done this. All right? How many of us, we locked the door. So he's being selfish and then she's being selfish. And so he gets to the door and he's trying to get in and what she makes is a series of lame excuses. Her first excuse is, I've taken my clothes off. He's like, yeah, I know, that's why I'm trying to get the door open. Like, that's the whole problem I have with the door, you know? And then she says, oh, but if I get outta bed, my feet will get dirty. Okay, let me just unpack this briefly before I have to fire myself. But first, she's a princess. They live in a castle. Do you think it's that dirty? Probably not. And if so, how many men are like, I was really excited and then her feet were dirty, so I'm out. How many, like... Zero men in the history of the world have been like, I was in until I saw the bottom of her feet and then I was out. This is not a deal breaker. Hey men? How many of you guys are like, she has feet? Okay, anyways, so what's happening is he is being selfish and then she punishes him and rejects him. So eventually as many men do, he gives up and he walks away. We looked at it a few weeks ago. The counselors will call this stonewalling, where if a guy feels rejected, he won't fight, he will flee. So he leaves, then she has to go find him. She comes to the conclusion, she's just like, ah, he is my husband. I don't know exactly what happened. Maybe I got a little emotional. Probably shouldn't have punished him. So she pursues him. Sometimes it's the wife's fault. So she needs to pursue. Sometimes it's the husband's fault. So he needs to pursue. In this instance, she punished him and then she pursues him. That being said, in marriage, selfishness is always the problem and selfishness is always present. So here's what I want to do. I want you to just sort of examine yourself, particularly if you're married, and ask the question just how am I selfish? Or when and where am I selfish? And I'm gonna take this from the the real romance book, but I wanna use 1 Corinthians 13 as what I'm gonna call a marriage mirror. Meaning look in it and evaluate yourself. How many of you at your wedding, or you've been to a wedding, where they used 1 Corinthians 13, love is blank, blank, blank, blank, blank. It is the scripture used at a wedding more than any other verse I've ever seen in 27 years as a senior pastor. But this isn't just for your wedding, it's for your marriage. And it's a good mirror to look into. If you

had it read at your wedding, that's great, but read it and evaluate the state of your marriage. Here's what I'm gonna do. I'll just go through it. Love is patient. Here's the question. When am I impatient with my spouse? Love is kind. Here's the question. When am I unkind to my spouse? Love is not jealous. Here's the question. In what ways am I jealous of my spouse rather than happy for their blessings? Love is not boastful. Here's the question. Does my spouse hear me mainly talking about myself? Love is not proud. Here's the question. Does my spouse experience me as a proud unteachable person? Love is not rude. Here's the question, how am I rude to my spouse? Love does not demand its own way. Here's the question. How does my spouse find me inconsiderate? Love is not irritable. Here's the question, when am I grumpy and moody? Love keeps no record of being wronged. Here's the question. What bitterness am I holding onto and using as a weapon against my spouse? Love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. The question is what unjust and untruthful things do I say and do to or about my spouse? Love never gives up. Here's the question, when have I given up on my spouse and our marriage? Love never loses faith and is always hopeful. Here's the question. What parts of my spouse and our marriage have I lost hope will never improve? And lastly, love endures through every circumstance. And the question is, in what circumstances do I use an excuse to give up and stop trying to love my spouse? If we're honest, we've all been selfish in our marriage, we tend to be more aware of their selfishness than ours. And so what I would say is, let's just be honest and say that we're both selfish and that it's something we both need to be aware of and work on. So if you're married, I want you to hold hands for the next point. If selfishness is the problem, serving is the solution. Here's what we see. So her friends speak in, this would be her wise counsel. They've got a marriage spat. How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others, that you so charge us? So she can't find her husband. She has rejected him and he has left home. So then she asked her wise counsel to give their input? And they basically ask, so tell us about your husband. She says, my beloved is radiant and ruddy. He's a good dude, outstanding among 10,000. He's the dude of dudes. His head is purest gold. So he's got maybe light colored hair or maybe not. His hair is wavy and black as a raven. I didn't see that. Let me, okay, let me just say this. What we just learned is, what do you call it when a man has dark hair and then some light hair? He's got highlights. He's got frosted tips. Okay, so there I didn't know that until right now, but this was a revelation. If you're one of those guys with frosted tips, there you go. New life verse, Johnny, you're welcome. His eyes are like doves. He said that about her. She's saying about him. Symbol of peace and purity and presence of the Holy Spirit washed in milk mounted like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spices yielding perfumes. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. His arms are rods of gold set with topaz. This dude goes to the Gold's Gym, literally. His body is like polished ivory, dude is not allergic to sit ups. Decorated with lapis lazuli. What is that? I don't know. I was busy this week. Didn't have a chance to look it up. But it's probably awesome. His legs are like pillars of marble. So he's got a nice firm base. We always like a guy with thick legs. That's how you know the good guys are. We got thick legs. Amen? Skinny guy? Be suspicious. Judas had skinny legs. Jesus had thick legs. Okay, his legs are pillars. It's in the Hebrew. I'm a scholar. Trust your pastor. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars, his mouth is sweetness itself. He's all together lovely. This is my beloved, this is my friend, daughters of

Jerusalem. So then their question is, so why did you reject this guy? Where has your beloved gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your beloved turn that we may look for him with you. They've reached a point where they've got this season in their marriage that we're all aware of. Tell me if you've ever heard this phrase, the honeymoons over. The honeymoon's great. You got no work, you got no chores, you got no responsibilities, you just get to have fun and be together. The honeymoon is the best time. But then the honeymoon's over. We use that phrase to denote sort of getting back to life and work. We gotta go to work, we gotta pay the bills, we gotta take out the trash, we gotta change the oil on the car, we gotta pay our taxes, we gotta deal with the in-laws. Things happen. Life gets overwhelming and busy. They're at this season where we saw previously in the book their wedding day and their honeymoon and now literally the honeymoon's over. And so when they have a marital spat, you'll see throughout the course of the book, it's he, that's Solomon the king. She, we've established that it's probably a young woman named Abishag so we're naming her Abby. And then the third group or category are the friends. We've established that these are wise counsel. Wise counsel are the people that you invite in to help you figure out how to do something different or better to pivot, to have wisdom to make a better decision. And I always like to say you need to get your counsel before your crisis. Get your counsel before your crisis. Otherwise, if you don't have your counsel before your crisis, when your crisis comes, you're gonna leak or vent to whoever's in front of you. You're just gonna talk to your in-laws, which may not be the best solution. You may talk to your extended family, which may make things much worse, or worse thing you can do is go online, to the universe, post on social media, invite other people to give you marriage advice. That's the worst thing you can possibly do. Anyone who has a good marriage is too busy to be on social media. Everyone on social media is just going to give you toxic advice. And if you're watching online, thank you for proving my point with your comments. That being said, you've gotta figure out if we're stuck, if we're in a bad place, if we're having a bad day, who do we invite in to help us get unstuck? And so for Grace and I, I approve of the women and she approves of the men. She's not gonna go invite in women that I don't find safe and godly and I won't invite in men that she doesn't find safe and godly. We have a few couples that we really know and love and trust and we will talk to them or do double dates with them. In addition, we would never have wise counsel of the opposite sex. I would never tap in a woman to be my wise counsel on my marriage. And if Grace did that with a man, I would be doing prison ministry from the inside. So these are just sort of the general rules. Husband gets a guy, wife gets a gal, couple gets a couple that is godly friends. Sometimes this could be a ministry leader or a pastor. Sometimes this can even be a professional counselor. But it's when we get stuck, 'cause all marriages get stuck, who's gonna help us get unstuck? This is the wise council. And what we're seeing here is as we've established, they're both being selfish. He's selfish to not come home and not communicate. She's selfish to lock the door, reject and punish him. They're both being selfish. Selfishness is the first seven years of marriage. If you're in year six, keep going. And statistically they tell us that in marriage, the most likely year for divorce is year number eight. You ever heard of the seven year edge? It's actually a thing. It's a thing. And what that is, is in the first seven years, you're wondering, did I marry the right person? Are we going the right direction? You know, should I start over? Is this time for me to get out? Year eight is where the majority of divorces happen. And statistically the sociologists tell us it's between years nine and 14 in

marriage that we go from selfish to servant. We go from me to we. How many of you have been married for a while? You can fast forward this by being humble and pursuing the attitude of a servant. Or you can elongate this by being arrogant and selfish. That being said, what happens is in the first seven years of marriage, oftentimes people think this isn't working. So then around year eight they get out of the marriage and then they go into another marriage. And what do they do? They reset the seven years of selfishness. I'm not saying that divorce is always wrong and always assume, I'm not saying that. But if the major issue in the marriage is selfishness, then the issue is not getting a new spouse but getting rid of the old selfishness. That being said, we live in a culture that makes it more difficult than ever to have a good marriage because do we promote servanthood or selfishness? A hundred percent selfishness. And it starts when you're little. When you're a kid, you can't do anything for yourself. Children are innately selfish. First thing a child needs to learn is there's other people on the earth. They don't know that. So when they're little, they scream, they yell, they cry, they fuss. And what do the parents do? Drop everything to make them the priority. And then as the kids get a little bit older, they're still selfish. It used to be, let's say some generations ago, you lived on a farm, you were part of the family business. You had chores and responsibilities. You had to go serve. Today, nothing. You just get up, eat junk food and watch a screen, right? We don't have any responsibility for children. We don't have any ways to serve. And they become very selfish, very self-centered, very self-indulgent, very self-absorbed. So for those of you who are parents, does it get better in the teen years and course correct itself? No. All the people who started laughing and then started crying, those are the parents of the teenage children. The teen years are very selfish. Your feelings, your emotions, your drama, your day, it's the most important thing on the earth. So then you graduate and you're in your twenties. Are you selfish? Oh yes. Because now you have a little bit of money and a lot of freedom and no responsibility. You don't have a house, a spouse, a kid, nothing. You eat where you want to eat, you go where you want to go, you do what you want to do, you watch what you want to watch. Completely selfish in your twenties. The average person gets married in their early thirties. By that time you've got two people that have a PhD in selfishness. They have been working on this for 30 years and they have maximized this opportunity. Then they get married and how does it go? Conflict. 'Cause the husband looks at the wife and he's like, you're selfish. And then she looks at the husband and she's like, you're selfish. And Jesus looks at 'em both and says, you're both right. You're both selfish. You don't know how selfish you are until you get married. I was very selfish early in marriage, right Grace? I mean not now. Now I'm like Jesus. No, I'm still selfish. But when I first got married, I thought, this is great. Grace will take care of me. And then I was disappointed when certain things that I wanted to have done didn't happen. And it was just selfishness. That was the underlying issue of most of our conflicts. Well, what we know in the Bible is that selfishness is a sin and serving is a virtue. And how do we know our God is a servant? His name is Jesus Christ. In Mark 9, there's this occasion where the disciples are having an argument about who's the greatest, which is kind of a silly debate, right? Like, who do you think's the greatest? Well probably the guy whose mom's a virgin, came down from heaven, water skis without a boat, atones for the sin of the world and is coming again to judge the living and the dead. I think he's the winner. You know, I think that guy's the winner. Instead they're arguing. Jesus comes into the conversation. It had to be awkward, right? I'm better than you.

No, I'm better than you. I'm better than everyone. No, I'm better than everyone. Jesus comes in, what are you guys talking about? Oh, nothing. You know, it had to be an awkward moment. And what I love is Jesus doesn't rebuke them, He redirects them. He doesn't say, I can't believe you want to be great. What He says is, you wanna be great? They lean in, yeah, we do! Serve. The greater you are is determined by the degree to which you serve. Oh, serve. See, that's not our natural inclination. That's a supernatural inclination. The next chapter of Mark's gospel, chapter 10, Jesus says this, He said, I didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give my life. If you want to have a Christian marriage, then you need to serve each other like Christ. So Jesus lives without sin. He serves us. He goes to the cross and He dies in our place for our sins. And He serves us. And He goes into the grave paying the debt that we owe to God. And He serves us. And He rises from death to forgive sin and to open heaven. And He does that to serve us. And He ascends into heaven where right now, He's interceding and answering prayers to serve us. And one day He will come again to get us risen from death and to give us His kingdom and serve us forever. So the key to marriage is Jesus Christ. And the key is having Jesus serve us and then having Jesus' attitude to serve our spouse. And so when it comes to serving, if selfishness is the problem, and if, can we just agree that selfishness is the problem? So then serving is the solution. Now, one of the things that Grace and I got wrong early in marriage is we were serving each other but not in the ways that the other person would've been best loved. So like for example, Grace would do a lot of chores and I wanted her to sit on the couch with me and I'd go to work all day to make money. But she wanted me to come home and to have a conversation with her. And so what happens is, if you're not aware of how your spouse is best loved and served, you may be serving them, but they may not feel served. You may be loving them, but they don't feel loved. And this leads to a lot of hurt. A lot of you are like, I do everything and you don't appreciate me. There's a guy who wrote a book on this, it's pretty well known. It's Gary Chapman, it's called "The Love Languages." And what he's saying is, how we love and the ways that we serve is just different. And the key, and I'll use this analogy, it's not just about serving your spouse, but being a servant of your spouse. There's a big difference between serving and being a servant. Serving means you're doing something. A servant is you're doing what they need 'cause you can be doing something, but it's not what they need. A servant not only serves, but knows how the one they love is best served. So he talks about different love languages, different ways that people serve. Many of you are probably familiar with this. How many of you, it's words? Encouragement, text, right? It's a love letter. It's a voicemail. How many of you, it's words of encouragement? Means a lot to you. How many of you it's gifts, right? Flowers, candy, date, night, housekeeper, spa day, new car, new house. We're looking at degrees of high maintenance, right? Like, I got you a flower, I got you an estate we're like, okay, that works, but it's gifts. How many of you- You know you're a word person when you save all the cards and letters. You know that you are a gift person when you save all the gifts. I'll give you an example. It comes to mind. Some years ago for two birthdays, I wrote a nice card for two of my kids and I put money in each of the cards. And my daughter, she put the card and she posted it on the wall of her bedroom. And I asked her, I said, what'd you do with the money? She says, I don't know, I lost it. So then I gave a card with some money to my son. And I asked my son, what'd you do with the money? He literally said, I invested it. I said, what'd you do with the card? He said, I threw it away. So different love languages. Hers was words, his

was gift. And so different people will receive love different ways. How many of you at service take out the garbage? Gas up my car, vacuum. Pick up the laundry, right? Put the lid down. I've already been baptized, right? Like I help do some things. How many of you, it's time? Date night, time together, go to bed at the same time, doing life together, carving out time where you turn your phone off and you open your heart to each other. How many of you it's touch? Like holding hands, you like snuggling, you like going for walks, you like driving together and holding hands and you're hoping it leads to a little bit more than that? So when Grace and I were first married, she was always serving me 'cause her love language was service. And then when the kids started coming, five kids, she's like, hey, could you do some things? I was like, oh, there's things? You know? So for me to love her, if I was like, I love you, you're amazing. She's like, take the garbage out. You know? So like, oh, okay. But it's asking in every season, how can I best serve you? And it changes. You get sick, you get older, you have kids, career pivot, different ways to love and serve. What we're seeing here is they've rejected one another. Now they're pursuing one another, they're going to serve one another. So I've got this little point. Serving is sexy. Amen? Alright, I'm gonna just ask the wives, okay, ladies is serving sexy? Yes, okay. So I'm gonna say that there are three kinds of marriages when you're dealing with selfish and servant. A selfish person and a selfish person. That's a pretty brutal marriage. It's always like a business negotiation. You owe me, right? And I'm gonna try and get more than I give. When you get a selfish person and a servant, you get an abusive marriage. And I'm not saying necessarily like, disqualified for marriage, but it's like, you win, I lose. You take, I give. That's not an equal marriage, that's an unhealthy marriage. And then two servants. A servant, a servant. It's a beautiful marriage. If you're gonna be together, we've been together now married 30 years, let's say we got 30 left. At some point, keeping score and negotiating? That's not a marriage, that's a company. And ultimately like I serve, you serve. And this season maybe I carry a load. And this season you carry a load. We just serve each other. We've had the opportunity to help couples for a long time. And I won't belabor this point, but I have never seen a marriage crisis between two humble servants. I've never had people come in like, what's your problem? They're too humble and they serve too much and I just can't take it anymore. You know, I've never seen that. I have seen proud and selfish people have problems. I've never seen humble and serving people have the same level of problems. So if selfishness is the problem, serving is the solution, here's the dangerous question to ask on the way home. How can I best serve you? And then listen and don't argue and don't turn on the radio and don't turn on your phone. Just listen. And what you'll build then is a friendship. And this is gonna be my final point before I bring Grace up. There's a little pregnant line here in Song of Songs Chapter five. In one translation, she says it this way, he is my lover, my friend. So this is the Hebrew friend with benefits, right here 3000 years ago. My lover, my friend. For Grace and I, this is one of our favorite definition in the whole Bible of marriage. Lover sometime, friend all the time. Lover in the bedroom, friend everywhere. A key to marriage is friendship. We wrote a book about a decade ago on marriage and this was the issue that we really stressed was friendship in marriage. There's a gentleman named Dr. John Gottman. He can predict divorce with a 90% success rate. He's considered one of the leading researchers on marriage and divorce in our generation. And he says that you oftentimes hear that men and women are different. Have you heard that? Like men are from Mars, women are from Venus, men are from Prescott, women are from Scottsdale. You hear these things,

right? Right? Men are from hell, women are from heaven, whatever your analogy is, okay? But there is one thing that men and women both agree on. 70% say the most important thing is our friendship. Men and women both want the same thing. And here's what he says. Happy marriages are based on 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're well versed in each other's likes, dislikes, personality quirks, we've all got 'em, hopes and dreams. They have an abiding regard for each other. And express this fondness not just in the big ways but in the little ways. Day in and day out. Friendship fuels the flames of romance because it offers the best protection against feeling adversarial toward your spouse. Grace and I would tell you, be servants working on your friendship. Our God is one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. What that means is only Christianity has the right understanding of God. And the trinity is literally a community of friends. Our God is friendly and has friends. To be made in God's image and likeness is to have relationship with God and each other. To have friends. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbor, who's our closest neighbor? Our spouse, and then your kids. And we always like to say ministry starts at home. It doesn't do any good to go love the whole world if you don't love your nearest neighbor first. And lastly, there was a study that came out recently. It was a longitudinal study over the course of 84 years. A lot of sociological journals published it and reported on it. And they traced people for 84 years. And they were trying to determine this question, what makes life joyful? And here's what they concluded. Your relationships. It didn't matter how much money that people made, what degree or position of status and power they obtained, it didn't matter whether they were healthy or sick. The number one thing that made life joyful was healthy relationships. Friendships with people who love you. The point is, sometimes it's less about what you're going through and it's more about who you're going with. And if your spouse is your friend, it makes the good days twice as good and it makes the bad days half as bad. And we are jealous for your marriages and 90 plus percent of you will marry. And I tell you what I tell our kids, make sure that you love the Lord and you're friends with Jesus and you love each other, you're friends with each other. That being said, I'll bring Grace up. We will illustrate this for you and then we'll do one question, okay? Thanks baby. You guys welcome my best friend up? Hey babe. Come on up here. So maybe you explain kind of the three kinds of marriages and we've got a little slider.

- Back to back, shoulder to shoulder and face to face.

- Okay, we've been talking about this for years, but maybe you summarize it. We gotta hold hands 'cause I'm touch. Sorry.

- Do you know why I wear cute shoes?

- No.

- So you don't notice my feet.

- Oh, okay. Thank you.

- Do you know why I wear boots? So you can't see my hairy feet.
- Back to back is... Okay, we're gonna do this. Basically you've shut the person out, you don't wanna look at them, you don't wanna talk to them. You maybe throw insults over the shoulder, but you want nothing. You don't want to work on the relationship at that point.
- Walk away, you stumble-
- Bitterness is set in, criticism, you just are sick of the person basically.
- So we just saw that in Song of Songs five, they got back to back. Okay?
- Yep. Shoulder to shoulder is what we've done really well throughout-
- You can't look at me, you gotta look forward. Yeah.
- Sorry. Working on the constant day-to-day, side by side. You're getting your stuff done. I'm getting my stuff done. We're not looking at each other, but we're working hard thinking we're serving one another, but we're serving and doing all the things in front of us. We gotta do that stuff. It's part of life. But if you don't take time to do the face-to-face.
- So let me say this real quick. The shoulder-shoulder, we're great at this. This is our default. If we don't pay attention, like we've worked together before we got married, we planted churches together, raised five kids together, did tours, marriage events, wrote books, lead ministries, like, renovated houses. Like, we get stuff done.
- Yes. But we've gotta work really hard on this. We've gotta focus on this.
- And we always love it when we do this, but we have to be very intentional. Otherwise the shoulder to shoulder will take over.
- So if you're married right now, look at your spouse for a moment. Just do the face-to-face for a moment. If you want to give 'em a kiss, that's fine, but then knock it off and come back. I'll do that. Love you. So face-to-face.
- You have to look at each other in the eyes. You can't be quite as mad when-
- What if I'm on the phone?
- Then you're not face-to-face. You're face-to-face with your phone.
- Yes. I don't have a phone. I'm here. Okay. What else does face-to-face do? Why is it

important?

- Because you're connecting and you're actually paying attention to the person in front of you. You're connecting through their eyes, through their expressions. You're not looking to the side or down or up. You are looking at the person noticing what you appreciate, hearing what you appreciate it, engaged in the conversation so that they know you care.

- You're so cute. No, come here. So this is, no, I like this. You guys, we gotta go. But this is the Bible's language for friendship. It says that Moses met with God face-to-face as a friend. It says in 1 Corinthians 13 that when Jesus returns we'll see him face-to-face. So this is the Bible's language of friendship.

- Yeah.

- Thank you, baby. You wanna do a question now?

- Sure.

- You got one?

- Yes. It's from a husband.

- Uh-oh.

- And he asks, "My wife and I love each other, but I struggle with compliments. How do I make her feel loved with my words without it coming across as awkward?"

- So some guys are a little non-verbal, some guys are a little shy and some guys are awkward.

- Yes.

- Okay. So how important is it for a husband to compliment his wife? We'll just start there.

- A hundred percent important. He has to. He needs to. And guys oftentimes notice stuff, but they just don't speak it. And we can't read your minds as much as we think we might be able to.

- Yeah, you don't want to, it's not good. But what sometimes guys do, they will only say what's negative. They don't say what's positive. So they'll give criticisms instead of compliments like we've been talking about. It's like an account, the, you know, the compliments are deposits and the criticisms are withdrawals. So this is a guy who does love his wife and you know, does appreciate her, but he has a hard time expressing it. So what would you say from the wife's perspective, why it's important to overcome that?

- It's gonna be awkward. It just is.

- Aren't there parts of marriage that are just flat out awkward?

- Absolutely. But it doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. And I think for me, you're good at complimenting. I have a hard time receiving the compliments. And so I think you can sense that when I don't receive it well and it makes you not wanna give it, but you still do. And I think guys probably have, I mean, as wives, we have insecurities or we wanna say, oh well no, that's not true. Or oh thanks, I don't know what to say. But we just need to receive it. Because if a guy is willing to compliment you- Your spouse, your husband's willing to compliment you.

- We don't encourage random men to just have the ministry of encouragement to random women. Yeah.

- Then we need to receive that. And that will fill us up. And it takes a lot longer, it takes like, 20 seconds to let a compliment sink in versus a criticism, sinks in immediately. And so if you think about it, it takes a lot more compliments to actually sink in. And for a woman to believe, and I can say that I believe the things that you say about me now that you're not lying to me. I didn't think you were lying, I didn't know how to receive it. I had insecurities. And so for a husband, it's gonna be awkward, but a wife, she takes it. And even if she doesn't fully believe it for a moment, she will eventually. And it changes her. And I think for a woman even, I mean love her where she's at, but compliment her in ways that you want to encourage her in as well. I mean, I think you've done this well and like I said, I couldn't receive compliments in the beginning in some areas, but you've continued to pursue that and now I feel very treasured by that.

- Oh, thank you. And I would say it's better for a woman to get compliments that feel awkward than no compliments at all. And everything in marriage starts awkward. Like, when you're first married, you're going to bed together, showering together, it's awkward and you just sort of, and everything starts a little bit awkward in marriage until you kind of figure out who you are as one and figure out how to do life together. I would say for the guy too, who struggles with maybe the awkwardness, there are other ways maybe to be more creative. One guy I know, he got a really cool journal and he would write down things in the journal for his wife. And so every day she'd get up and wonder like, is there something else? And so he would go to work before she did. And so every day for many days, he would just write her a compliment or a little love letter, a little love note, and it kept a record of it. This can be a text, this can be a card, this can be a gift. There are lots of ways to compliment, but at the end of the day, we live in such a critical world. How many hours a day is the average person getting some measure of negative feedback, whether it's at work or online or driving in front of me in traffic, you know, whatever it might be. And how few people really have that gift of encouragement and are encouragers. And so if your spouse can be an encourager to you, it can really help change the attitude of the entire day because you're probably not getting much encouragement or any sort of, you know, positive affirmation anywhere else.

- It's also important not just to compliment the outside, but think of things that you can compliment about their character or something that they're doing that you appreciate. I think for me, early on, a lot of people complimented you. And so I thought, okay, well-

- A lot of people criticized me, too.

- Well, not in the beginning.

- We've caught up.

- Yeah. That's fun. But. But I think I assumed that you had enough compliments and you didn't need 'em from me too. And that was a lie from the enemy, honestly, because the compliments you appreciate most were from me.

- Your opinion matters more than everyone else combined.

- And so I had someone tell me one time that a wife can't compliment her husband too much. And I was like, really? He seems confident, he seems fine. He doesn't need my compliments. And they're like, nope. Men, they always have insecurities, just like we do as women and as wives, we're the best ones to say good things about 'em. And so she told me, be your husband's biggest cheerleader. And I was like, gosh, that feels awkward. It can feel awkward for women too. But yet when you do it with a sincere heart, I mean, it just, it feels good to be able to compliment it. It feels good to receive one. So highly recommend complimenting.

- I love you with all my heart.

- I love you too, babe.

- I thank you for 30 years. I'm gonna start crying. You're the greatest blessing, after Jesus Christ, in my entire life. And I thank you for hanging in there through everything, I thank you for forgiving and being so resilient and hardworking. And I didn't know we would end up here. But man, I will tell you guys, 30 years in, this is the best season of our marriage. This is the best season of our life. I am in tears a lot lately 'cause I'm overwhelmed at God's grace and His faithfulness and His goodness. And its His provision. And I am so looking forward to the next 30 years.

- Me too. And you've set it up so that we can have 30 more years or more. And I think knowing the security that you're always gonna preach the Bible, love Jesus, and out of that God tells you to love your wife and love your kids and future generations, I'm so secure in that. I know you're never gonna waver from that. And so that's the best gift overarching all the other things that you do for me. I can't imagine having it in any other way. So thank you for being faithful to God and faithful to me and our kids.

- Yeah, my pleasure. And I love the friendship. I just, I really am grateful for the friendship. And I think that most men, all of our relationships are shoulder to shoulder with guys we did sports with, or military with or work with. Oftentimes the wife is the first time you've ever really had a face-to-face friendship. 'Cause most guys don't just gaze into each other's eyes and share their feelings. And if they do, we have a prayer team in the back that does deliverance ministry. But I just love the fact that I get you to be my best friend and I get to do everything with you. So it means the world to me. So thank you. Wanna pray for them and we'll go on a date?

- Dear Lord, thank you. Thank you for the hope that you give us in our marriages. Thank you for love that comes through you to our spouse. Lord, I pray that we would receive it from you so that we can love our spouse as well. I pray that if we are being selfish in areas in our marriages, that you would convict us of that and that you would show us how to love and serve them. That we would repent of that Lord and come before you and come before them and ask very sincerely, how can I love and serve you better? We can all improve in these areas, Lord, but thank you that we don't have to live in condemnation for it. We get to live in newness. And so, Lord, I just pray that you would heal these marriages that are selfish and just allow them to see, to have a new view of how they can serve, knowing that you came to serve and we want to walk like you in Jesus' name. Amen.