

The Most Important Day of Your Marriage is the Last Day

- We're in an Old Testament book of the Bible called the "Song of Songs". And we're dealing with the issue of real romance. And I'm gonna cover much of the "Song of Songs" in the sermon series. But two other resources I wanted to make you aware of. There is the Real Romance book and you get a free copy on the way out. If you're watching online, go ahead and buy one through our friends at XO. And also there are parts of the "Song of Songs" that are perhaps not quite appropriate for church. Those happen to be my favorite sections and new life verses. But you can go to the Real Marriage podcast. Sign up wherever you get your podcast. And Grace and I go through all the details in the "Song of Songs including the things that maybe wouldn't quite work for a church setting. And if you don't know what I'm talking about, just check it out for yourself. All right, here's what we're gonna do. Today's topic is the most important day of your marriage is the last day. If you are married, just hold hands for a moment. And if you're fighting, hold both hands. You need it real bad. And just think about the first days of your marriage. Think about your wedding day, think about your honeymoon. Think about those first days. I think they've got a few photos of grace and I. We met at the age of 17, married at the age of 21, between our junior and senior year of high school. And the summer leading up to our wedding we were both working very long hours to make ends meet 'cause we were college broke. I worked two shifts as a deck hand down on the docks and I'd work from one shift from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM and then 1:00 AM to 9:00 AM. And oftentimes I'd sleep in my truck at the docks just to save money and time. And Grace was working at a hotel and we did get married. I think they got a wedding photo as well. That's crazy. We were children, I don't know. Who let us get married. It looks like we rode our bikes to the wedding. We look so young. But I'll never forget, we were married between our junior and senior year of college. And we had two pastors. So we had a pastor at college, a wonderful man of God that I'm forever grateful for. And Grace's daddy whose since gone home to be with the Lord. He was a pastor as well. So we had two pastors and two sermons at our wedding. And I'll just say this too, their sermons combined are not as long as mine. But we had two sermons. And it was a hot day. It was August, the church didn't have any air conditioning, it was really uncomfortable. We had seven bridesmaids and seven groomsmen and a very large wedding. And that night we stayed at a hotel not too far away. And then the next day we made the drive down to our honeymoon on the Oregon coast. And we rented a little bed and breakfast, cute little cottage off a creek in a stream with deer running by in the woods. And it came with bikes and you could bike down a path and go to the Oregon coast. It was just lovely and we were so tired from working and the wedding that we went to bed and we woke up at 4:00 PM the next day. And we got up by the crack of dinner and we went out to dinner. And we just were exhausted and overwhelmed, but we were so glad to be together. The second most important decision you'll ever make is who you marry. The most important decision is whether you'll receive or reject Jesus Christ as your God and savior. And the most important day of your wedding is not your wedding day, it's the last day of your wedding. We want you to have a great day, but the last day is the one that really counts. Usually you're together on the first day. We want you to be together on the last day. On the first day you're smiling. We hope you're smiling on the last day. The first day you're looking forward. And on the last day we hope that you're looking backward. And so what we're gonna do today, we're going to get into the wedding of Abby, the woman, and Solomon, the man, and their honeymoon night. So we're

gonna look at their first day of marriage. This is a husband and wife. A man and a woman speaking back and forth poetically. She says, "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke?" This is their wedding day and they're going to be together. "Perfumed with myrrh and incense." Gentlemen, just write this down. He smells nice. That's huge, right? Some of you guys, your wife, she understands that you've got some issues. But you should have a healthy relationship with soap and water and pray about deodorant and a breath mint. Otherwise she'll feel like Satan's breath is in her husband. So anyways, "Made from all the spices of the merchants?" Look, it's Solomon's carriage." So, horse-drawn carriage coming to pick her up for their wedding day. "Escorted by 60 warriors, the nobelists of Israel, All of them wearing the sword." So they're armed for battle, they're an open carry state. Thank you Lord. "All experienced in battle, each with his own sword at his side prepared for the terrors of the night. King Solomon made for himself the carriage. He made it of the wood of Lebanon." And she says, "It's post he made of silver, its base of gold, its seat was upholster with purple." That's the color of royalty. "It's interior inlaid with love. Daughters of Jerusalem come out and look, you daughters Zion." She's like, eat your heart out ladies. "Look on King Solomon wearing a crown. The crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day his heart rejoiced." So this is their wedding day. Do you remember that day? Remember sort of getting ready and preparing and waiting and anticipating and then the time arrived and you were headed to the wedding. That's where they find themselves. In the ancient near east, weddings would last upwards of a week. You would consummate on the first night and then you have food and drink and celebration over the course of a week. And so that's what we see here. And because this is a royal wedding, Solomon is the King of Israel, this would've been a national holiday. So she's like the Princess Diana of her day. This is a big deal and a national holiday. The carriage comes and it is custom made for their wedding. Silver, gold, the choices of timbers. Pulled likely by some Egyptian horses as he had a very large fleet. I mean this was majestic. She would've seen him and he would've had the crown on his head. The crown that his mother crowned him with. This is royal pageantry. And then ultimately she says as well that she feels safe because he has sent to pick her up, not just the carriage, but 60 armed special operations forces soldiers. Can I get an amen? This is important because for a woman to enjoy her marriage, Grace has told me repeatedly that the number one issue for a woman is she needs to feel safe and secure. She can't be emotionally intimate, physically intimate unless she is protected and safe. And so what he does here, he sends 60 armed guards to ensure her safety. And I'll say this to the men. Men, we tend not to feel like women do. Most men don't walk around feeling unsafe. Many, if not most, women do. It's because God made men inherently stronger. It's why the Bible says we should use our strength to protect our women, not to oppress or harm them. That we should use our strength to bless them and not to burden them. As a man, very rarely do I walk around feeling unsafe. Very rarely. A few occasions. One time I landed in Haiti doing relief work. As soon as we landed we were bringing medical supplies and food. There was total anarchy. There was no military, there were no police force. I saw a kid shot in the head and bleed out in front of me. And I was walking around with a rifle in the middle of a riot. Didn't feel super safe that day. In South Africa going to townships and seeing a carjacking in front of me and seeing guns pulled on people that were traveling in extended entourage with us to go do some relief work, didn't feel super safe. There's only been a few occasions in my life where I felt

like this is a dangerous place to be. For many women, if not most women, they feel like that most days if not every day. That men are dangerous, the world is dangerous. And so good men need to stop evil. You need to know this, men. Evil never stops itself. That's why cowards and passive men are part of the problem and not part of the solution. If there is evil and there is danger, then good men get between those men and women and children because evil doesn't stop itself and it has to be stopped. That's why we love police officers. That's why we love military soldiers. That's why we love justice. And what he's doing here, he is practicing the example of Jesus Christ. And I tell this to the men all the time. And I'll see you men on Wednesday night. We have real men, this place is packed. It's just a bunch of guys who want to be like Jesus. It's the best men you'll ever meet. And we talk a lot about real men. That in the Bible Jesus is presented as a lion and a lamb. If you only think he's a lion, then you're going to be intimidating, domineering, and overbearing toward women and children. If you think that he's only a lamb, you will let the bad guys win and harm women and children. If you understand to be a lion and a lamb like Jesus means to be tough for and tender with women and children, then you have the heart of what we see demonstrated here. We want you men to be lions. When harm comes, get in the middle. And we want you to be lambs with. Be tough and tender. I used the analogy some years ago I had a friend of mine. He was special operations sniper. He would get dropped into a country, shoot bad guys, stack bodies come home. And I'd pray for him before he would leave. I was his pastor and I would always ask him, "Where are you going?" He is like, "I can't tell ya." He said, "Just pray I get home." And he had a routine, a ritual with his daughter. He had a beautiful little girl. And the routine was that he would jump on a plane, he would then usually parachute or somehow enter a foreign country. He would then go find bad guys and he would stop them and then he would come home. And the routine, a ritual that his young daughter had, was as soon as he got home, she didn't know where he was going, but she would welcome him home with a tea party. So this guy who would go out and do what needed to be done for evil men would come home and there's this little girl tea party all set up, lot of pink, lot of lace. She's all dressed up like a princess, crown on her head. Little tea, little sandwich. Hey dad, you ready for the tea party? Yes. He could be tough and tender. He was tough for her, he was tender with her. She was never scared of him because all she knew was the tender side. A good man is like Jesus. He knows when to be tough, he knows when to be tender. Solomon is, in a moment, going to be tender with her. But here he is tough for her. And then we're going to see their wedding night and we're gonna see that compliments build confidence. I'm gonna show you this in just a moment. Abby, the wife, she's already articulated that she has some measure of insecurity about her appearance. She says, "I'm dark skin." And what she's saying earlier in the book is the wealthy women, they just stay indoors all day and go to the spa and never go out in the sun. And as a result their appearance shows that they don't have an outdoor job. She says, "My brothers made me work in the vineyard." It seems like she's raised by a single mother. Her father is never mentioned. Her mother and her brothers are. But she's a blue collar gal. Ponytail, dirt under her fingernails, farmer tan, sweating in the sun. She doesn't feel super confident in her appearance. And so what he's going to do, he is going to compliment her to build confidence in her. And he's got a lot to say. We'll read it, it'll take a moment. He says, "How beautiful you are my darling. Oh, how beautiful. Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats." And usually you tell a woman she looks like a

goat, it doesn't really work. Unless you've got yourself a real rural relationship. I'll explain that in a moment. "Descending from the hills of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing." So she has bright white teeth. "Each has its twin, not one of them is alone." So we know she's not British. We also know she doesn't play hockey, okay? "Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon." She's got beautiful, lovely red lips. "Your mouth is lovely. Your temples." This may be a mistranslation from the original Hebrew. This may be her cheeks but, "Behind your veil, are like the halves of the pomegranate." It probably means she has rosy cheeks. "Your neck is like the tower of David." She has a long neck. "Built with courses of stone. On it hang a thousand shields." She likes a lot of jewelry. If you're one of those bedazzled accessory gals, there's your verse to give your husband and he should give you a credit card. "All of them shields of warriors." "Your..." Nobody said it, that's curious. Your... All right, thank you for assisting the pastor. "Are like two fawns, like twin fauns of a gazelle." We'll return to that. Usually referring to a woman as an animal is not super helpful, but this is interesting. "That browses among the lilies. Until the day breaks in the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of incense. You are all together beautiful, my darling. There is no flaw in you." His wife is his standard of beauty. God doesn't give you a standard of beauty. He gives you a wife as your standard of beauty. "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride. Come with me from Lebanon. Descend from the crest of Amana, from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon, from the lions dens and the mountain haunts of leopards." They're talking about escalation. Just like a hike you go to higher elevations. That's what's happening to their passion. "You've stolen my heart, my sister, my bride. You've stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How delightful is your love." In the Hebrews it's literally love. "Making my sister, my bride. How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume more than any spice." You smell good. "Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride. Milk and honey are under your tongue." How many of you're feeling awkward in church right about now? You're like, "Hmm, okay." "The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride. You are a spring and closed, a sealed fountain. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits with henna and nard, nard and saffron." Talking about smell and scents. "And calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree. With myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices. You are garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon." Lemme say this. First he has general compliments. Ladies, true or false? It is good for a husband to compliment frequently. Yes? A lot of guys are like, I'm not very verbal. We'll fix that. You gotta say some things, okay? And a lot of times guys are like, "I told her she was pretty." Yeah, but you gotta tell her again, right? And you need general compliments and then specific compliments. Here are the general ones. You are beautiful my darling. Ladies, do we like that? Yes. Okay, you are all together beautiful. Do we like that? All right. There is no flaw in you. Do you like that?

- [Audience] Yes.

- Whoa, do you hear that, men? That got a little louder. A little more intense, right? No flaw in you. What he's saying is, "You are my standard of beauty." And he says, "You have stolen my heart." Ladies, do you like that one? Okay, those are all good. Now, there are specific

compliments. He says her eyes are like doves. We looked at the fact that doves denote what? Peace, still the symbol of peace. In addition, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus in his baptism, in the form of a dove. So that's a reminder of God's presence. In addition, doves have faithful mates their entire life. What he says is, "When I look in your eyes, I see peace, I see fidelity, and you remind me of God's gift and grace to my life through your presence." He says that her hair is like a flock of goats descending down Mount Gilead. And so let me explain this. So Mount Gilead was a hill kinda like camelback. And there were wild goats that would run up and down the mountain. They had long sheens of black coarse hair. And so as all the goats were together, what did it look like? Well, it look like her long black hair. And he's saying, you're beautiful, and I love your long black hair. He says that she has all of her teeth and they're white and none are missing. So right, yay. If you're tuning in from Great Britain, we still love you. But your people are not very biblical. You need more dental work. How about this, "Your lips." He talks a lot about her mouth. "Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon." He says that, "Your mouth is lovely and under your tongue is milk and honey." How would he know that? All right, thank you for answering the question. I was wondering. Because he's investigated. How about this one? "Your cheeks are rosy, your neck is long." This is a distinguishing feature. And sometimes a woman will think like, "Okay, this part of me, I don't look like everybody else." But that may be the thing that makes you really lovely in his eyes. She's got a very long neck, okay? But what he says is it's really beautiful because she wears a lot of jewelry. She's got the real estate for it, and he thinks that's amazing. And what that means is he's bought her a lot of jewelry and all the women said?

- [Audience] Amen.

- Amen, okay, there you go. Something to pray about. He also talks about her smell. He talks about quote, "The fragrance of her perfume." How many of you men have noticed that women smell different than men? How many of you? You can walk into, let's say, a house or an apartment and you can tell whether or not a woman has been there. If it's single guys you're like, "It smells like Satan farted." And if it smells like potpourri, lit candles, maybe vanilla? A woman is there or has been there recently. Things just smell differently when a woman is around, amen?

- [Audience] Amen.

- There was one guy I met some years ago. I said, "So tell me why you married your wife." He said, "She smelled like vanilla." I was like, "Okay, I'm never gonna have any vanilla when you're around." And then he talks about her garments. And what this would be is her style and her appearance. What he's saying is, "I like your style, you've got your own cute little style." There's only one section here that's really debated. And it is the two breasts that are like fawns, twins of a gazelle. Now again, I don't get into all the details in the sermons. We've actually skipped the most spicy sections. It's all in the Real Romance book or The Real Marriage podcast. But there are some weird translations of this verse. Usually from single guys who are monks. And so they tend not to have the best insight into marriage. If you're a single nerd monk, you have no

business interpreting this verse. You have no idea what you're talking about. I need to take water and silently pray so I don't disqualify myself. Now, some have said that this, the the two... Rarely am I at a loss for words. But some would say that he is referring here to Moses and Aaron and it's typology. Do you think that is likely?

- [Audience] No.

- No, okay, thank you. Some would say it refers to the old and New Testament, the give us the pure milk of God's word. Do you think that is what he is speaking of?

- [Audience] No.

- No, okay, thank you very much. Some commentators say that it represents the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ when the spear punctured his heart sack on the cross. Do you think that's what it's talking about? No, that's a very frustrated nerd monk. How about this one? The mystics said it referred to the twin disciplines of contemplation and action. Do you think that's what it refers to? No, okay. So what is it referred to? Well, I'm not gonna say. But I'm gonna ask you a question and then you're gonna answer it. And if people online don't like it, it's your fault, okay? So that's how we're gonna do this. So two fawns, twins of a gazelle. When you go to the zoo, what section are the happy frolicking baby deer in? The petting zoo. Thank you, yes. So moving right along. In addition. Just, hey, just a little Bible study. Is he allowed to do that? He's been doing that for 27 years, yeah. Is that why we're here? Yeah, that's why we came back, yeah. Okay, so I'm just gonna move along, okay. And if you're single and you're like, "I didn't get it." Praise the Lord, right? And he refers to her. He's got this lovely series of title, my sister, my bride. Notice the order, my sister, my bride. We live in a day when single people are really given a horrific set of options. It's like, here's people we sleep with and here's people we ignore. We don't have a category for healthy relationship that is non-romantic, non-sexual, with the opposite sex and gender. We just don't. Here he says she's first his sister and then his bride. What they're saying is that the spiritual comes first and the physical comes second. Paul tells Timothy in the New Testament to instruct younger men to treat younger women as sisters with all purity. Now you can have a relationship with your sister, you can care about her, you can enjoy her, you can get to know her, but it's not romantic and it's not physical. In the church, we are God's children. God is our father. We are to use the language consistently of the new Testament. We're brothers and sisters. And so your relationship with someone who you might fall in love with and marry, it starts spiritually. You're serving God together, you're going to church together. You're in a Bible study or we call life group together. You're worshipping God together. You're in the same friend group. You're getting to know one another. And if it doesn't work out, you're still brother and sister. And if it does, then you add husband and wife to brother and sister. The deepest part of you is not your body, it's your soul. You're not a body that has a soul. You are a soul that has a body. And even when you die, your body goes into the ground and your soul goes to be with the Lord. What that means is the deepest, most profound part of you is not the physical, it's the spiritual. That's why you want to start having a relationship, if it's going to be romantic, that is spiritual. And you don't rush the physical. You have the profound

emotional, relational, spiritual growing connection up to your wedding day. And then you consummate physically. The problem is if you put the physical first, you undermine all of the spiritual. You're living with guilt and shame. You're not having God's blessing because you are disobeying God's commands. And so what he says is, you're my sister, my bride. The deepest part of your relationship. This will be maybe controversial, but our world knows nothing of this. Do you know what's deeper than sleeping together? Praying together. There's a level of intimacy there. An intimacy literally means into me see. When you are both in the presence of God and you are worshiping, you're studying the word of God and you're praying, you are getting to know one another at the deepest possible level. And then the physical is in addition to the spiritual, but the deepest is the spiritual. That's why couples who sleep together won't pray together prior to marriage. It's too intimate. And he says that she is sister and then bride. And he's talking about their relationship again, We've noted this, as a garden. And what he says that their marriage relationship is like a garden. How many of you love getting into or visiting a beautiful well tended garden? It's amazing. How much work is a good garden. In Arizona it's a lot of work. To have a garden takes a lot of intentionality. It takes a lot of time and energy and investment. And just because you have a garden doesn't mean it'll stay beautiful. You need to tend to it constantly. What he's saying is that marriage is like a garden. That the husband and the wife both need to tend to that garden. It takes a lot of sowing and reaping and watering and pruning. It takes a lot of attending. A good marriage is not something that just happens. It's something that requires a mutual effort and a lifelong pursuit from a husband and wife. Now, in that day as King, Solomon had private gardens that were only available to him as the King. There were public parks, but he had a private garden. And what he's saying to her is that their relationship, particularly the most intimate aspects of their marriage relationship on this their honeymoon night, is a private garden. He says, "Locked up." What he's saying is this, that what they enjoy is private. It's not a public park. Your marriage is not a public park. Your bedroom is not a public park. Your body is not a public park, it's a private garden. And what he's denoting here is that she has waited for marriage. In addition, they are going to have privacy. And one thing that we have tragically done in our day, we have obliterated privacy for married couples. People overshare on social media all the time. People don't need to know where you're on vacation, what your date night looks like. They don't need to know all the details of your life. They don't need to know when you are intimate. They don't need to know any of that because it should be private. And there's a difference between privacy and secrecy. Secrecy is we're concealing something that is bad. Privacy is, it's none of your business. And so when you get married, people ask all kinds of questions. Well, how often are you guys together? And what's date night look like? Right? That's in first and second meddling. You don't need to answer those. You say, "You know what? We have a private life and we like to keep it private. And we don't post it all online 'cause we're not inviting the universe into our marriage." Now they are consummating their marriage. Marriage is two things Biblically, covenant and consummation. Covenant with God, consummation with each other. And we read of this here in "Song of Songs" Chapter 4:16 through 5:1. So she says, she's very verbal. She speaks most, she speaks frequently, she speaks passionately. She is a very secure, strong woman. She says, "Awake, north wind, come south wind blow on my garden that its fragrance may spread everywhere. Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits." He then says, "I've come into my

garden, my sister, my bride. I've gathered my myrrh with my spice. I've eaten my honeycomb and my honey. I've drunk my wine and my milk." And then they come out after their honeymoon night and all the attendants celebrate. "Eat, friends, drink and drink your fill of love." Very intimate, very poetic. It is not clinical or crass, but it is beautiful. Question. How many of you wonder what exactly this poetry means? Okay, here's what I will say. No comment. Not gonna tell you. Some of you are like, "But it sounds exciting." It is, yeah, it is. Real Romance chapter four or the Real Marriage Podcast will tell you in detail. And if you don't want to know, sad. Okay. So I'm not gonna say anymore. I've been getting in trouble for 27 years and I'm just trying to take a day off. So here's what I will do. I will tell you that if you are married, you need to study this book a little deeper. It's the only book of the Bible that's expressly about marriage. But because it's a husband and wife talking to each other. The entire reason that Grace and I wrote Real Romance and the devotional commentary on it is to set up married couples to have these kinds of conversations. Okay? So read the book, grab the podcast, and have the conversation. Now this is their wedding day. How's it going? Amazing. If this was a Hollywood fairytale, how would it end? And they lived happily ever after. That's not what happened. The Bible is the most honest book ever written. If you don't tend to your garden, eventually you can destroy your garden. Here's the next point. If you stop walking with God, you start walking with demons. Satan didn't even show up to attack Adam and Eve until after they were married. Satan hates marriage, he hates love, he hates covenant, he hates family. Grace and I like to say after the wedding comes the war. I'm gonna summarize 1 Kings 11. We don't have time to get into it in detail but you can read it for yourself this week. It looks down the road from this, their wedding day and their honeymoon night, to some years later in their marriage relationship. Ladies, how many of you think that she seems like a pretty incredible wife? Pretty incredible. He then added to this marriage, 700 additional wives. 700. And 300 concubines or girlfriends. She went from the one to one in a thousand. One in a thousand. Now Solomon should have known that if he strayed from his marriage covenant, horrible things would happen. Because he, himself, was the result of sexual marital sin. Solomon's father was King David. His mother was Bathsheba. The story the Bible tells is that the soldiers were off at war defending the King and the kingdom. King David then was up in a high place and he looked down and he spotted a woman named Bathsheba bathing herself on a rooftop and he lusted after her. And so he seduced her. He committed adultery with her and then she became pregnant. Now, it would be certain that she would be found guilty of adultery because her good husband, Uriah the Hittite, he was off at war fighting for the King and the kingdom. And so his wife would've gotten pregnant when he was deployed with the military. So King David, rather than repenting of his sin, and he is got many sins. He's not worshipping God, he's lying, he's committing adultery, he is coveting another man's wife. He's breaking multiple commandments. He brings your Uriah the Hittite home from the battlefield. And he gives him a furlough. He is like, "We're gonna give you a little gift here from the king. Go spend a bit of time with your wife." And he's hoping that they what? That they're intimate. So that then Uriah would live under the myth that that was his child. And that he would raise an illicit child birthed out of adultery. Uriah is such an integrity man that he says, "If my brothers who are at battle cannot be with their wives, I will not be with mine." "Until all of my brothers come home from war. And we can all be with our wives, I will not be with my wife." Is he a good guy? It's unbelievable, man of integrity. So then David sends him back to battle and

devises this military plan. Tell Uriah to advance and tell everyone else to retreat. We're gonna leave him exposed in battle so he gets killed. He has him murdered in battle. That's Solomon's mother and father. The child that they conceived died and then they had Solomon. Solomon grew up in a home that had generational curses of adultery and infidelity. He should have known if you stray from your covenant, God will not bless you. And generations will pay a tremendous price. Nonetheless, that's exactly what he did. The Bible said that he asked God for wisdom and God gave it to him. He was the wisest man, the Bible says, after Jesus Christ. People would travel around the world to seek his wisdom. Here's the thing, sometimes you have wisdom for everyone but yourself. Sometimes you're a fool in your own life because you're the one always doing the teaching. You're never learning. In addition he's a King, but he can't rule over his own pants. He has dominion over everything except for himself. And sometimes you can rule but you can't rule yourself. And you could tell everybody what to do, but you don't do what God has told you to do. That's Solomon. To be sure some of the marriages were political, but that was still in violation of God's command. Solomon was chosen by God to create the temple. To build the temple where God was to be worshiped and the presence of God fell. Yet later in life, it tells us in 1 Kings 11 that he married foreign women who worshiped demon gods and they seduced him and drew his heart away from the Lord. We never see this woman again. She's gone. Solomon had more money than Bill Gates. He had more money than Jeff Bezos. He was smarter than Albert Einstein. He had more power than a United States president. He had more spiritual influence than the Pope. And he had a harem much bigger than Hugh Hefner. Here's a few things I want you to know. Number one, polygamy is misery. Adultery is misery. Polygamy is going to be legalized in our lifetime. And even some Christians who have already caved on gay marriage are gonna cave on that issue. Because homosexuality is clearer in the Bible than polygamy. Both are clear. But there are people who did love the Lord, or at least purported to love the Lord, who are guilty of polygamy. Polygamy started with Lamech back in Genesis. He was a godless man. God flooded the earth and when he started over, there were no polygamists left. It was Noah, his sons, and their wives. Just faithful covenant marriage. Tragedy happened in human history when Abraham took two wives and had two sons. To this day, as we studied when we examined Genesis, there are the Arabs and the Jewish people as well as the Christians. And we now have global conflict generations later 'cause one man had two wives and two sons. There's never a time when polygamy comes with God's blessing. The Bible says in the New Testament that a leader in the church is to be the husband of one wife. That means that he is a one woman man to set an example for marriage. And Jesus is depicted in the Bible as a groom and the church is a bride. And Jesus is faithful to his bride. He doesn't run around with Islam. He doesn't run around with Buddhism. He doesn't run around with Hinduism. He doesn't run around with Jehovah's witnesses. He doesn't run around with Mormons, and he doesn't run around with Pantheists. Jesus Christ is faithful to his church, his bride. In addition, number two, you can murder your marriage. He murdered his marriage. His marriage died. His wife disappeared. He writes perhaps elsewhere in Proverbs 31 about this sort of prototypical perfect Proverbs 31 woman. He married one. And then he cheated on her, he betrayed her, and he abandoned her. Number three, in addition to adultery of the hands, there is adultery of the heart. See, before we have adultery of the hands, we have adultery of the heart. Jesus speaks of this in Matthew:5. He says, out of the heart come lustful thoughts. Before we act with our

hands we lust in our heart. You and I, friends, if you're going to be married you need to be very honest about yourself, your desires, your feelings, your longings. There will be moments that even the Godly among us will be sorely and severely tempted. You need to be honest about what's going on in here. And you need to surrender what's going on in here. And you need God to change what is going on in here before it happens out there. I've been faithfully married to my wife. We've been faithfully married for 30 years. And I'll tell you what, I praise God for that. And the key is you need to start by paying careful attention to what's going on in here. Right? If you're starting to wander towards someone at work, that's danger. If you're checking people on social media, that's danger. If you're direct messaging someone you're not married to, that's danger. If you find yourself looking forward to being with someone, even if it's in a church or a social setting, that's danger. Guard your heart, it's the wellspring of life. In addition, the longer you wait to repent, the more damage is done. So it is my belief, and I've been studying Solomon since I was a new Christian. I believe that he wrote the "Song of Songs" when he was a young man, newly married, very much in love with his wife. I believe that he collected the book of "Proverbs" over the course of his life. Truisms and learnings and experiences like a journal. And then I believe at the end of his life he penned the "Book of Ecclesiastes". And I believe it was him looking back on his life with remorse and regret. And remiss at the absence of this lovely woman. And so "Ecclesiastes" is this tremendous book. It has 12 chapters, it's written by Solomon. And it opens with this word meaningless. Meaningless says the teacher, everything is meaningless. Right? Sounds like a punk rock kid getting a philosophy degree at a junior college with a medical marijuana permit. He sounds like that kid. I just see him in converse high tops with a bad attitude and highlighted frosted tips. That's just how I see him. And then the question is, what does that mean? Because life doesn't need to be meaningless, but it can be. It can be very meaningful. His theme in the "Song of Songs", he talks about life under the sun. What he's talking about is living life without acknowledging God's ruling, reigning, sovereignty overall of life. If all of you do is just live your life without considering and inviting God, life is very meaningless. It's only God above it all that gives meaning to it all. Nonetheless, that word in Hebrew, it appears 36, 37 times. Meaningless it is translated. And depending upon which translation you prefer, sometimes it'll be translated as fleeting or vapor. In the original Hebrew, it's Hebel. And the "Book of Ecclesiastes" begins with that word. And that is the theme and thread of the book. So the meaning of that word determines the meaning of life. I don't believe that life is meaningless, though it can be. I believe that what that word means when it's used elsewhere, like in the Psalms, is that life is fleeting like a vapor. It was a weird week here in Arizona. Grace and I were at a pastors and wives retreat. Thank you. You generously helped pay for 50 couples of churches to come to Arizona and to be invested in their marriages this week. Trinity helped fund that as well as our friends online at Real Faith. And it was with Pastor Jimmy Evans. One of our pastors. Had come preach for me in March and I'm excited to have him. But it was really weird 'cause we were up in North Scottsdale one night and Grace and I walked outside and there were snow flurries in Scottsdale. Very rarely in Arizona do you see your breath? But it was cold enough this week that you see your breath. And what happens is when you see your breath, how long does it last? It's gone. What he says is, life is like that. It's a vapor. When you're young you feel like you have so much time. When you're older you wonder where all the time went. You get so busy working, doing your chores, paying your bills that you

forget to enjoy your life. I believe "Ecclesiastes" is him as an old man saying, "I lost my wife. I ruined my life, I wasted it. It's over now." And I believe he's an older man who is recanting or perhaps even repenting of his behavior. And he's looking back and he is saying, "Well, some of you think that money is going to satisfy. I had a lot and it didn't. Some of you think that education and pedigree and degree will satisfy. And I was the wisest man on earth and it didn't. And some of you think that power will satisfy. And I was the King of Israel. And Kings visited me from around the nations to get my wisdom and my encouragement and my counsel and it did not satisfy. And some of you think that eating the best food and drinking the best wine and sleeping with the most beautiful people will make your life worth living but it's not." It's not. See everything that everyone is chasing, he chased. My summary of "Ecclesiastes" is this. He came to the conclusion that, apart from God, life is a wild goose chase and there is no goose. He regrets, I believe at the end of his life, the decisions of his life. In addition, blessing and cursing goes for generations. The story of Solomon is this. After he dies, he has so many wives and so many children. What do you think happens to his inheritance and his kingdom? It is a complete anarchy, Lord of The Flies, survival of the fittest situation. Every woman is saying, "My son is going to be the King." It's a war. It divides the nation into the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The kingdom of Israel goes into such a decline cycle that they have the same sexual sin and demonic idolatry as Solomon. It has generations of destruction and devastation. Let me say, there are people coming into this world with your last name and the decisions that you and I make today determine what kind of life they will inherit. Blessing or cursing, life or death. This leads, this decline of Israel, to the days of a guy named Elijah. We're gonna study him after this. The decline of spiritual and sexual sin and debauchery of Solomon, it continues for generations until Elijah shows up and he confronts Jezebel and Ahab. He goes to war against the demon gods of Baal and Astra that are worshiped by Solomon. And he does battle with the Ahab spirit and the Jezebel spirit. We're gonna get into all of that next, starting in March. Next one. If you walk away from God you are capable of the worst evil including the murder of your own child. If you read 1 Kings 11, he worshiped a few different gods. He married women who were of other religions. Bradford Wilcox, the greatest researcher on faith, family and freedom in America says that the best marriages are those where two Christians live together worshiping God. The highest divorce rate is two people practicing different religions. And so what happens is he marries women who worship false gods and their powerful demonic counterfeits of the real God. In 1 Kings 11, this includes Milcom and Molech. This was the Ammonite chief God. He was worshiped through illicit sex. And then you would sacrifice your children through fire. So you would take your own child and you would sacrifice them through fire. Now we read that today and we're like, "I can't believe that." They did it, and we do it. We have chemical abortion where we literally burn our own children in sacrifice to Milcom and Molech. In addition, it says that he worshiped Kamos, also known as Baal. This is the Moabite God of sex and child sacrifice. See we had globally something called a pandemic. And even if you believe the most extreme numbers, the leading cause of death was still abortion. The most dangerous place to be was not a church singing without a mask on. It was in your mother's womb. If you worship sex, you sacrifice children. Now, if you've done that, the Lord Jesus is the son of God and he can and will forgive you. But as God's people, we are pro-marriage and we are pro child and we are pro-life because our God is. In addition, 1 Kings 11 says that he

worshiped a God, or Goddess rather, named Ashura or Astra. She was a Canaanite goddess of sex and fertility. It was believed that she had illicit sexual union with the Demon God Baal. And so what Solomon did, he created high places. Not only did he build the temple, he built strip clubs, he built abortion clinics, and he built demonic places of worship of false gods. She too was worshiped by the sacrificing of children. Let me just say this. These old demons now have new names. We hear Milcom or Molech or Kemos or Baal or Ashura or Astra and we say, "Never heard of them." Well they've just changed their name to pride and tolerance, swingers, and open marriage, pornography, spectrum, a respect for Marriage Act, planned Parenthood, friends with benefits and Tinder. Same demons, new names.

- [Audience] Right.

- Same demons, new names. Your marriage matters. Your life matters. Your children matter. Your legacy matters. The goal, men, hear me. Father's heart, hear me. It's not about a good time, it's about a good legacy.

- [Audience Member] That's right.

- It's about a good legacy. And the most important day of your marriage is not the first day, it's the last day. It's the last day. I'm gonna share some stories with you. Here's the first one. This is Herbert and June Malicote. They met at church. They were married for 79 years. They died at age 100 holding hands and holding each other. She died first. And then his kids say he died of a broken heart. Basically what he said was, "My wife is gone, I'm ready to go." He loved her every day of her life. And he made sure that he lived long enough to see her last breath. And as he held her hand and as he held his wife, they both passed away. The most important day of your marriage is the last day. Tell you another story. This is Alexander and Jeanette Toczko. They were married for 75 years. They died in each other's arms at age 95. He died first. And she said quote, "Wait for me, I'll be there soon." The next one. This is Kenneth and Phyllis Zerr. Never met him but he's a hero to me. They attended church their whole marriage. When they were older and unable to leave, to go to church the pastor would visit them and bring communion. If you're married, please hold hands. They were married 63 years and his wife was not well physically. Their house caught on fire. He could get out, but he couldn't get her out. So he called the fire department and he told them the story. "Our house is on fire. I can get out but I cannot get my wife out." And they told him, they said, "Sir, you, you need to leave. We're not gonna get there in time." You want to know what he said before he hung up the phone? "I'm not leaving my wife." That guy burned to death. He would rather burn to death with his wife than live without her. Most important day of your marriage is the last day. Tell you a couple more stories, friends. I've told this story before, but I think it's worth repeating. I had a friend some years ago, his grandpa died. Big Italian family, lots of kids. His grandpa got cancer and he was declining quickly. So he had a new roof put on the house, had any possible repair in the home done, got all new appliances, new car, scheduled the oil changes, put together the passwords, made sure that the life insurance was paid up. Did everything he could to prepare his wife to live without him. He made videos for each of his kids and grandkids. Just speaking blessing over them and

sharing scripture with them. Including making multiple videos to leave for his wife. He died, they had a funeral. It was many months later and his wife was grieving because it was their anniversary. And her husband of more than 50 years was gone. And then there was a knock at the door and it was a flower delivery with a note from her deceased husband. He scheduled that every year flowers would be delivered to her on their anniversary. And a handwritten note from him thanking her for being such a wife. He not only loved her every day of his life, he loved her every day of her life. We won't do Q&A, babe. So I met my dream girl at 17, married her at 21. And we should be a statistic, right? We weren't virgins when we met. We started sleeping together. I wasn't a believer. We get married, we're broke. We had to stop sleeping together and reset our entire relationship. Over a decade into our marriage, we realized that grace has some pretty severe trauma from previous to us meeting. We're doing ministry. We have five kids. We've been attacked a lot. Our whole life has just been a series of head on collisions in war if I'm totally honest with you. We've been faithful to each other. And if it wasn't for Jesus, we wouldn't be together. And this week I was honored to help some pastors at a marriage retreat. We've got a marriage book coming out. We're gonna go speak at some marriage events. Because we believe in God and we believe in the Bible and we believe in marriage. And we believe that God can forgive and heal and redeem and reconcile. And we believe that if a husband and wife come under God's word and obey it, if they both obey it, they have 100% chance of success in their relationship. And this is the best season of my whole life. Yesterday Grace and I sat outside and it was her prompting. We just wanted to make sure we're keeping sured account. So we confessed any sin together. We asked for forgiveness of one another. We shed tears and held hands and we prayed together and we invited the Holy Spirit to make sure that we're not just good, but we're getting better all the time. We got two kids that are married and they're happily married. And one of my kids posted online so I'm saying anything that I shouldn't, I don't think. But we're grandparents now we just found out too, so. So I've been crying all week. Because I feel so blessed and so grateful. 'Cause God didn't just save us from Hell, He saved us from us. And we're happy, and we're blessed, and we have a legacy that we're so proud of. And the other night, Grace was asking me, "So how are you doing?" And I cried myself to sleep. I was weeping so heavily, I just couldn't even breathe. And I fell asleep. It's 'cause I feel blessed and I feel grateful. We were driving the other day, one of our kids sent a text and kind of updating us on their marriage. And Grace showed it to me. I started crying so hard I almost wrecked the car. I told her, please don't do that. Wait until we're parked. I don't know where you're at, but I know where you can be. I don't know what you've done, but I know what Jesus can do. And I don't know what you think, but I know that God thinks that there's a future and there's a hope and there's blessing for you. We've been through Hell. And I just wanna thank you, Grace, for being there, sweetie pie and hanging in there. I'm really excited about the future, real excited about the future. Happiest, most joyful I've ever been. And so just get through whatever your burden is and and get to your blessing. Grace, why don't you just come up? We won't do Q&A but maybe you just close our time in prayer and then we'll spend some time singing. And as we sing, it's a corporate prayer and it's inviting God's presence into our midst. If you're married, I want you to worship by holding hands. If you're engaged, worship by holding hands. On your way out there's communion in the back to remember that Jesus died so that we can live. And there is forgiveness. We're a church of believes in marriage. We're

committed to marriage. And we want your marriage to be a blessing to you and your family and your legacy. Thanks for hanging in there for 30 years, babe. I'm signing up for 30 more.

- Me too. Oh, thank you Lord for your faithfulness. Thank you for teaching us that we can be faithful to each other with your help and only with your help. Lord, thank you that you've given us over 30 faithful years and that we look forward to the future. And we want that for all of our couples. Lord, we want that for the marriages here and that are listening online. We want people to experience joy together because of you. So Lord, I just pray that we would start with humble hearts. That we would start wanting and asking for healing in our marriages so that we can experience all that you have for us. And Lord, those that are looking forward to marriage someday, I pray that you would do healing in their lives so that they can be ready to experience joy in their future as well. So thank you, Lord, that we can depend on you. Thank you that you walk with us through all the heartache, through all the blessing, through everything, and you never leave us or forsake us. In Jesus name, Amen.