



Message **Transcript** God's Picture of Marriage

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Well, thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. And as every time we get ready to open the word, just pray that you would prepare your heart for what God has for you. As you hear his word this morning, that you wouldn't be distracted, that you wouldn't be thinking of other things, and that you would come and hear the living word of our savior, would you pray with me? So, Jesus, we just lift up your name, we glorify you, we praise who you are. And, Lord, we ask, as we open up your word, Lord, that you would be clear to us, Lord, that you would be helpful to me as your servant, and, Lord, that you would accomplish what you're setting forth to do.

Lord, at the end of the day, we want to honor you. We want to give glory to you, we want to praise you. We want to give you all of the glory that is rightfully due your name. And so, Lord, if there's any distractions, we confess them right now. Lord, if there's any sin in our life, we confess that right now.

And, Lord, we invite you to speak deeply to us from your living and your active word, and we prepare ourselves for you right now. And all God's people that were ready to receive his word this morning very loudly agreed by saying with me, amen. Amen. I want to encourage you to open your bible this morning to first Corinthians, first Corinthians. We're going to begin in verse 16 of chapter seven.

First Corinthians. Chapter seven, verse 16. A couple things I want to tell you before we get started as we're moving through the book of first Corinthians, there's a lot of things that the church is writing back to Paul and asking him, hey, would you address this? And would you address this? And, hey, would you talk about this?

And Paul is going to begin to address them. So I want to let you know something about your pastor. I am a student of scripture. I am not an expert in the scriptures. Okay.

And by that, what I mean is there's a lot of these places that when you read ahead and see what we're going to be talking about, normally the first question Christians ask is, does Pastor Jeff agree with me? Okay, terrible question to ask. Here's the question you want to ask. What does God's word say to me? And am I aligned with what God's word is saying?

Okay. That's number one. Number two, I want to tell you this. Whatever your

view of marriage is, God's view is higher than your view. Okay?

I'm just telling you, whatever you think marriage is or how God views it, it's actually higher than what you think of it. And I want to tell you this. Whatever you view of the gospel and Christ shed blood and his resurrection from the dead and his forgiveness of sins, there's a much higher view of that than what you're appreciating this morning as well. And you need to know those things before we get into his word today, because this is a very hard text to preach. I'll tell you about my Friday.

Friday was my birthday. Okay. And thank you. I share it with Lorraine, who turned 98 on Friday as well. I'm just a little bit behind you, but I'm hoping I'm.

I catch you someday. And, you know, I planned the whole day with my family, planned the whole night with my wife, and I was so troubled about where I was landing in my notes, I spent 11 hours on Friday and four more hours on Saturday and called in and asked if we could do the notes on Saturday instead of Friday, just because I wanted to make sure I was convicted, and I wanted to make sure that the word of God was saying what I said it was saying, and I'm convinced it does. You may not.

And here's what I would encourage you. If at any place you say, I don't agree with Pastor Jeff here, that's not going to hurt my feelings at all.

Just make sure that you align yourself with this book and that this book is where you're getting your opinion from. If you'll do that, we're all good. Amen. Okay. So with that, we're in first corinthians, chapter seven, verse 16.

And to bring you up to speed, what Paul has been talking about is sexuality, singleness, and marriage. And so at the end of chapter six, we took a look at how God designed sexuality, what its purpose is, how it works, how God wants it to be used. And then last week, we took a look at God's cure for immorality, and we said to all singles, here's your answer. Celibacy or abstinence, that's your call. That's what singles have the privilege of doing to the glory of God.

Married. It's being married to the one person that you're with and sexually fulfilling each other. If all singles live the way they were to do, and all marrieds live the way they were to do, we would not have sexual immorality. That's what Paul says. Well, today he's gonna say, why?

Cause he's gonna give a picture of what marriage really looks like. And as we look at this, I'm asking you to open your heart. Cause I'm telling you again, God's view of marriage is bigger than whatever yours is that you came in here with today. Okay? It's just bigger.

And we're gonna take a look at four things that God has to say. Now, I wanna let you know from the beginning. Hang with me for the whole message, like, don't get up and leave halfway through. We'll get to where we need to go. But I'm setting a standard.

My job as your pastor is to preach the authority of God's word without apology, and set the standard, and then let you know there's grace where we don't hit the standard. Okay? So with that in mind, let's go to first corinthians, chapter seven, starting in verse 16. Here's what Paul says. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows that it's good for them if they remain even as I.

But if they do not have self control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. And really what we see here is, as God's setting up this standard of marriage, Paul is going to address a specific group of people. He's going to talk to the unmarried and the widows. Now, this word unmarried in this context really aligns with widows, because there's no masculine word for widower.

And so Paul is really talking here, not just to all singles. He's talking here to those who have been married before, whose spouses have died, whether you're a widower or whether you're a widow. And here's what he says to this group of people. He says. I say to them that it is good for them to remain even as I.

It's interesting that he uses these words even as I. I mean, it almost gives this little clue that Paul could have been married to someone who has now died. That's a possibility. And it wouldn't be beyond the realm of possibility, considering Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees, and all young boys would have probably been married by the age of 20. It was almost required.

So it would not be outside the realm of possibility if the apostle Paul, earlier in his

life, was married. Crystal clear on it. Certainly not something we're going to split the church on. But I'm just bringing that to your attention. Because when you get down to verse 26, when he's talking about virgins or those who have never been married, he says, I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

He doesn't say even as I, he doesn't identify himself with virgins. He identifies himself with widowers and being a widow. And that's who he's addressing here. And here's what he's talking about. And this is my first point, that singles should choose wisely, because marriage is a covenant until death.

Okay, singles, listen to me. Choose wisely who you marry because marriage is a covenant until death. Paul says now to the unmarried and the widows, it's good for them to remain even as I, but if they do not have self control, let them marry. For it's better to marry than to burn with passion. Here he's telling them, it's good if you're a widow or a widower, it's good to remain as you are.

But if you can't go ahead and get married, there's nothing wrong with you getting

married. Here's what he's not saying, singles. He's not saying if you're a single and you're just burning with sexual desire, marry the first Christian that comes down the road. That's a really bad choice. Just so you know, singles, let me tell you something.

Who you get married to, you're married to until death do you part. Who you pick as a partner is a really, really, really big deal. If you think you're miserable as a single, marry the wrong person and you will wish you were single. Okay, so Paul is not saying, if you have a sexual desire, just marry whomever and it'll be good. That's not what he's saying.

He's saying it's good to be single. But if you choose to get married, choose wisely. That's what he's saying. Why? Because Paul understands marriage.

And to find out what God defines marriage at, we only need to go back in the very first chapter of the Bible, and we see how God designed this. In Genesis, chapter one and verse 27, we see the divine illustration of what marriage is. In Genesis 127, he said, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him, male and female, he created them. And we talked about at length how both genders were

created by God.

And both genders are good. If you're a female, good. If you're a male, good.

This is how God designed the family. Okay?

Then he says to the man and woman this God blessed them, he gave them favor. And he said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. So what does he do? He gives them dominion over the earth. He blesses them.

He says this, be fruitful and multiply. Okay, so a command in your marriage is be fruitful and multiply. We talked that the procreative aspect is not the only aspect of sexuality in the marriage, but it's a part of it, and it's a good thing to multiply. Why? Because God has a design for the family to represent him.

Why? Because he already said, we're created in the image of God. Plants are

not, animals are not. The sky is not, the sun and stars are not. We are.

So God designed this family unit for a husband and a wife and lord willing, children to come along. So in that mystery of husband, wife and kids, you have this picture of the image of God going forward. That's what it is. And in Genesis 224, he highlights it even more, because prior to Genesis 224, he says, it's not good for the man to be alone. I'll make a helper suitable.

And women, don't be worried about that word helper, because sometimes, like, well, he just made a helper. I'm a nobody. That's the same word in the Old Testament that God uses for savior or deliverer. I mean, it's really important. Here's what it means.

When for Adam, there was no suitable helper, it means this man. When you know that you're called to being married because you say, I don't have the gift of singleness, that's not what I want. And God brings a wife for you. It means that you could not be who you were designed to be apart from the woman that God brought you. That's what it means.

She's not your person that does the dishes for you or your laundry for you or vacuums the floors, even though she may do some of those things, that's not why God brought her. God brought her because you needed her to be the fullness of what God had for you in your life. That's why this may come as a shock to some of you, but that's why you and your spouse are totally different. Did you know that when you're dating, you don't realize just how different until you get married? And then you realize, wow, we're really different.

And do you know why? Because if you were both the same, one of you would be unnecessary. And God brought you together for the purpose of seen things in the world in a way that you wouldn't have otherwise seen. Now, my wife and I were totally different, okay? I remember early on in our marriage, we sat down, we had a Bible study.

We were sitting on the couch, and, like, let's just open up. I don't remember what we were studying. I think it was psalms or something. And we opened it up, and, you know, I've been trained in the word. I mean, this is what I do for a living.

So we were reading through it, and I asked her, I'm like, what do you see? What do you observe? And I'm expecting some, like, detailed report in my head, like, well, here's what I see in the sovereignty. And here's what her response was. Wow, that's beautiful.

And I'm like, beautiful. Can you even say that about the Bible? I mean, give me some more stuff. And we ended up getting an argument over the whole thing. And I kind of got in a fight over having this Bible study.

Okay. It was like, three months later, and I'm driving home one day, and I noticed this sunset off in the distance. And as it's going down in my heart, I thought, wow, that's beautiful. And the lord's like, yeah, that's why I gave you your wife, so that you could recognize the things that you've never, ever seen in the world before. Right?

And my wife is an artist, and she always sees things, and she takes time to smell

the flowers, and she enjoys relationships, and she lives in the moment, and she's fun to vacation with, and she's all these things that I'm not, and I'm better for having her, and she is better for having me. And we both talk about how we've changed over the years because of our appreciation for one another, right? So when God brings a man and a woman together, here's what he says in Genesis 224. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Here's marriage.

A man and a woman joined together in covenant with God. It's not a covenant before God. It's not. Kim and I made a covenant to each other. God's in on that thing.

Do you remember your wedding day? There was probably something said, like, along these lines, like, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, till death do you part. And then the preacher or the minister or the justice of the peace or somebody said something along like this. And what God has joined together, let no one put asunder. In other words, here's what God was saying, because God's the designer of marriage, because he's the one that orchestrated it.

Here's what he says about marriage. Marriage is that one woman and that one man that's joined together, they're in covenant with me. And here's what breaks the covenant. You know what breaks the covenant? Death.

You probably didn't hear me. Okay, here's what breaks the covenant. Death. If one or the other person doesn't die, you're still married according to God. That's how serious marriage is.

Like, we have a cavalier view of marriage, no matter who you are. And when we talk about this, trust me, I know. I'm talking to singles and marrieds and divorced and widows and widowers and those who have been remarried and believers and unbelievers and all these different things. I realize even if you aren't dealing with this personally, I guarantee you somebody in your immediate context is going through a situation that I'm gonna be addressing today. And it's super painful.

But just understand, my job is giving you the standard. And here's what Jesus says, and here's what he would say if he were standing here. I designed marriage. I created marriage. It's for one man and one woman.

And when they're joined together, they join together till death do they part. And that's the only way you get out of the marriage. So, singles, again, let me tell you, be very, very careful who you're going to marry, because if you're getting ready to get married and you're saying, well, I'm kind of 90% there, but they have this 10% that bothers me, that 10% that bothers you, multiply that by 100, because that's what it's going to be when you get married. That's a great place for every married person to say amen. Okay?

Because here's the deal. Like, when you're dating, it's easy. You're not sharing a pocketbook, you're not sharing a house, you're not sharing children, you're not sharing your life, going out to dinner. And if you can't get that right, don't marry them. I'm just telling you, it gets harder.

Even when you marry the right person, there's seasons that can be really hard. Am I telling the truth? So, singles, be very, very careful who you marry. It's really, really important. Paul tells him, hey, I think it's good.

I think it's good. He says in first corinthians seven, for you to remain even as I am. But if you do not have self control, go ahead and marry now. I know of a few guys that I met during my life that have chosen to remain single. It doesn't seem to be the norm.

Paul talked about last week, we looked at it last week, talked about it in the previous verses, that it's a gift. If you're called to be single, it's a gift. And the reason it's a gift is because you can devote yourself wholeheartedly to the work of Jesus Christ. It's a gift. I know a few guys that have that gift.

One guy is a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. He graduated in my class. He's brilliant. He's got a medical doctorate degree. He's got a theological doctorate degree.

And I think he has one other doctorate degree. And he has chosen celibacy to give himself wholeheartedly to all the myriads of different things that he does in advancing the kingdom of God. I have another friend that's a missionary in czech

republic, and I remember sitting down with him when I was over there. I'm like, don't you have a desire, like, to get married ever? Or do.

He's like, not really. He goes, I really want to devote myself wholeheartedly to seeing the gospel of Jesus Christ be realized in the Czech Republic in my lifetime. Great. Okay. So if you can be single, let me tell you something, nothing wrong with it.

In a couple weeks, you're gonna see there's many advantages to being single. Oh, and by the way, if you are single and you're not satisfied, don't get married either, because the person that you think is gonna satisfy you, they're gonna let you down. Okay? You don't get married to somebody so that they satisfy you. You get married because you're totally satisfied as a single and you're ready to give up all your rights that you have to yourself to give them all to somebody else.

That's what it means to give married, right? So be very, very careful. That's what Paul says. Because Paul understands. Even in this verse, you see, or in this chapter, you see.

In first corinthians 7:39, it says this, a wife is bound as long as her husband lives, but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes. Only in the Lord means you can only marry christians. Christians should only marry christians. All right. Second corinthians six says, do not be unequally yoked to an unbeliever.

Christians marry christians only in the Lord. Paul gives the same teaching in Romans and chapter seven, verses two and three, where he says the exact same thing he's spelling out in one corinthians. He says, for the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while the husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.

Now do you hear this? You as a woman, join yourself to another man while the husband that you married is still living. It's adultery. But if her husband dies, she's free from the law. So she's not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

It means this. If I were to die this week, my wife would be free. If she would choose to marry another man now, she'd never find somebody quite as lovely as me, but she's free as long as that guy is in the Lord, so there's no guilt heaped on her. No, you can't do this. No, none of that.

If she would choose, she can choose singleness, or she could choose to get remarried. Same would be true of me. If something happened to my wife and she died, then I could stay single, or I could choose to remarry. That's what Paul's saying. Only in the Lord.

Why? Because marriage is one man, one woman becoming one flesh, and they are covenanted to. When? Till death. Why death?

Because Jesus said, there's no marriage in heaven or no giving. A marriage in heaven, your marriage is only for time and space. It's only for here and now. There's no marrieds in heaven. Okay?

Now, that may freak some of you out. Like, well, I love my spouse. You'll know them. If they're christian, you'll see them. But there would be a hindrance.

When the full glory of Jesus is in your life and they are known, your spouse will be a hindrance in the coming kingdom. I promise you. Right. But in this world, in time and space, it's a gift. So marriage is only good until death to you part.

But it's binding until death to you part. It means if you're single and you're choosing to get married, know this. I am choosing, no matter what happens, to stay married to this person, for better or for worse, whether I like it or not. That's what marriage is. And I'm telling you, we don't have nearly as high of a view of marriage as the Lord Jesus Christ does.

Okay? Now, here, if that's true, that we should choose wisely because it's a covenant until death. Let me tell you something about a covenant real quick too, and we'll move on. A covenant is different than a contract. A contract is something that has rules and regulations that if one party breaks, then you get out of the contract.

We signed a contract with the bank when we bought this building. We signed a mortgage that said, we'll continue to pay this and then we'll keep the building. But if we stop paying on the building, the bank will come and say, hey, you didn't fulfill your part of the deal. We're taking the building back now. It belongs to us.

Cause why? Cause it's a contract. People try to get married with contracts. They think it's a marital contract. Well, if he does this or if she does this or if that's what happens, then, then I'm out.

Let me tell you something about a covenant. There is no way out. You're not listening to me. I'm just telling you from the authority of God's word, there's no way out. Not out of a covenant.

Now you can go to the justice of the peace and you can file for divorce and you can get a piece of paper. I'm telling you, there's no way out of your covenant. Cause God's not saying you're out of the covenant. Cause once you're married, you're

married. So singles, choose carefully.

I mean, on our wedding day, when you have your wedding day, if it was similar to mine, we don't really think about stuff like these because we're too busy looking googly eyed at the other person that's across from us. And we're thinking about the reception and the honeymoon and life. But I'm telling you, this is what goes on in heaven. You're covenanted. And why?

Because God wants to build something through that one flesh. And you will be one flesh until one or the other of you dies. I mean, I joke. I mean, Kim and I are so different. We love each other so much.

But I joke this way because when her and I got married, I mean, we got married a little older and we thought we had life figured out and knew each other, and it's going to be so easy for us. And our first year and a half was rather difficult. And I look back on our marriage that when we were saying our I do's and we were like, yeah, we got this. We got this. That God was up in heaven saying this, ha ha ha.

Gotcha. You're stuck now. And then you can either figure out how to make this thing work and love one another, or you can pull apart. And we, by God's grace, have always said, there's no pulling apart. We're just going to figure out how to make this thing work.

And when we stopped trying to change each other and started living out the gospel, which was for a man to love her like Christ loved the church, no matter what, and that my life's not about me. And for her submitting to me as to Christ, and it's not about her man, our marriage not only changed, but it began to sizzle. And can I tell you something that's true for every single marriage? Why? Because it's covenant.

God promises it. Well, my spouse isn't doing this. They don't even need to be involved in the process. It's you and God. You make a majority, so you live out what God wants you to live out in your marriage, and you let him deal with your spouse, but you got to do it God's way.

Right? That's the introduction, by the way. Now, let's get into the text.

Here's the deal then. If we should choose wisely, here's what Paul would say then. So if you're married, stay married. If you're married, stay married. Now, that sounds simple enough.

It's just really hard to do. And here's why. Because when we go through challenges in our marriage, when we go through hard times and it's so painful and it's so hurtful and it's more than we can handle, we're like, no, I'm not doing this thing. You don't understand how hard this is. That's why God gives us his word.

Notice what he says in verse ten. But to the married, I give instructions, not I, but the Lord. Now, why would he say that? He's gonna say that because Jesus Christ has already given specific instructions about what marriage is to be. And we'll look at some of those in just a second.

So all Paul is doing here is he's harmonizing the words of everything that Jesus has already taught. And you'll see that all Paul is doing here is saying exactly what Jesus said to the married, I give this command, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband. But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried. Okay, wives, you cannot leave your husband. You can't divorce your husband.

But if you do, you get to be unmarried for the rest of your life according to the word of God. Okay, but. Or else be reconciled to your husband. You get those two choices, you leave your husband, you get to stay single, or you should work to be reconciled. That's your option.

And that the husband should not divorce his wife. Christian men, you don't get to divorce your wife. Excuse me? You see how hard that teaching is? It's simple, because if you go back to Genesis 224, that's exactly what Jesus taught there.

Okay, christians, let me just tell you something. If you're married, you're married. So stay married. There's no out clause. Okay?

So I mean, let's look at the words of Jesus, because I want you to see this with your own two eyes. Now, this is only for those that want to see what Jesus wants for their marriage. But this is what he says in Jesus teaching about divorce. In Mark's gospel, he made it super clear. In Mark, chapter ten, verses eleven and twelve, he said this, whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.

And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery. Okay? If you divorce and marry another, that's called adultery. That's out of bounds. Why would it be out of bounds?

Because God is trying to do something through that one flesh that only can be accomplished by that one flesh. Flesh. In Luke chapter 16 and verse 18, he goes one step further. He says, everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. And he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

So he goes one step further. Now, it's like this. You divorce your wife and marry another. You're an adulterer, and anybody that comes along and marries your unmarried wife that you divorce, they're an adulterer too, and so is she for participating in it. Now you say, wow, that's super strong.

That's super hard. Why? Because Jesus view of marriage is much higher than yours. He said, we're in covenant here. It's not a contract.

Now here's what happens. But you don't see what he did. You don't see how he acted, and you don't see what she did, and you don't see how she acted. And here's what Jesus response would be compared to how you treated me before I died for your sins and rose from the dead. That's nothing.

That's nothing compared to what I've done for you. So why don't you live out the gospel for them? That's what he's saying. Now here's the deal. Why is that a big deal?

Because in Malachi chapter two, the very last book in the Old Testament, he spells out why marriage is so important because at that time, Israel and especially the priests, were upset because they were worshiping God. But God didn't seem to be answering their prayers. And so they're crying out to God in Malachi 2:13, and they said, God says, this is another thing you do. You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because he no longer regards the offerings or accepts it with favor from your hand. In other words, you're crying, you're weeping, you're offering all these stuff to God.

But God doesn't seem to be listening. And he says, I'll tell you why. You say, for what reason? Here's why. Verse 14 because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife.

Here's what he says. He says, you broke the covenant. You broke the covenant when you broke covenant with me. I'm not listening to your worship anymore. You haven't repented of breaking the covenant.

It's a covenant, right? Isn't it interesting? In the New Testament, when Jesus passes out the wine, the drink on the night that he's betrayed, what does he say? This cup is the what new, what? Covenant?

In my blood. What's covenant? Covenant means it's not a contract. I'm not accepting you and forgiving your sins so long as you continue to do good. It's a covenant.

I'm keeping it myself. So even if you run the wrong way and even if you go this way, and no matter how much you sin, if you're mine, then you'll always be mine, because I always fulfill my word. It's a covenant. This is what he's saying. Marriage is right.

He says, I'm not listening to you because you broke the covenant of your youth.

And what did the one do while he was seeking godly offspring? I mean, what's

God's purpose in a family? Let me tell you what his purpose in a family is. It's for a husband to love his wife like Christ loved the church. It's for a wife to submit to her husband as to the Lord and by his grace.

If they provide kids, it's to raise them in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord, so that as they grow up, they're disciples who are multiplying the image of God on the planet. So if I have kids who grow up and they move to Texas, Ohio and Massachusetts, then in Texas, Ohio and Massachusetts, there's representations of the kingdom that Kim and I have helped establish what happens when a marriage covenant's broke. It ruins some of what God was trying to get done. Some of you are children of divorcees. It hurts.

There's pain. It wasn't God's intention. It's not what he wanted. And so God says, I'm not listening to you because you've broken covenant with the wife of your youth, yet you refuse to repent from it and get right with me. Instead, you're just offering me money and crying tears.

And I care about the covenant that was made. I care about what happened.

That's what he's saying. So here's the deal. If you're married, stay married.

Now, I know what you're thinking, because you want to get to Matthew 19 really fast, don't you? Except for unfaithfulness. Except for unfaithfulness. I mean, some of you want to go there. I get it.

So we're going to go there.

But I need you to understand that the plain, simple teaching of Jesus is if you're married, you're married until death do you part. And if you get a divorce, you stay unmarried or you reconcile with the one that you got divorced from. That's the plain, simple teaching of Jesus. That's the plain, simple teaching of Paul. Now we have Matthew's gospel that we got to deal with because in the sermon on the mountain in Matthew, chapter 19, there seems like this exception clause, except for unchastity or except for unfaithfulness, then I can get out.

And here's how we read it. Everybody's good with marriage until they're getting a

hard one. And then they use this as the out clause. And we all try to be attorneys and we all say, oh, they did this and they did this and they did this. I'm out.

I'm freed up. Be real careful when you think that, because it just doesn't align. It's troubled me for years. This is why I spent another 15 hours on the message, okay, because what you see in Matthew's gospel is Jesus trying to explain his life story as well as what was going on. I mean, if you think about Jesus in John chapter eight and verse 41, you see how people thought about Jesus.

Jesus said, you're doing the deeds of your father. And he was getting ready to tell them that they're children of the devil and all this stuff. And here's what they said back to Jesus. They said to him, we are not born of fornication. That's that word porneia, that we're going to be talking about.

That's the word immorality that we're talking about. That's the word used all over Matthew's gospel as well. We were not born of fornication. We have one father God. What were they saying to Jesus?

You're an illegitimate child. Your dad Joseph, and your mother Mary fornicated. You didn't even keep the law. Why do they say that? Because they didn't believe in the virgin birth.

There's no way they believe that Mary was conceived by the holy, that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. They didn't believe that. They're like Joseph and Mary fornicated. That's how you got here. You're an illegitimate child, dude.

You're talking all these religious things and you were born in fornication. That's how the word's being used. And every time in Matthew's gospel we see this word immorality or this word porneia. It's always being used to describe fornication. Now let's go back to Matthew's gospel.

Let me build a case for you, because in Matthew chapter one, starting in verse 18, Matthew makes it very clear that Jesus was born of a virgin. In Matthew chapter

one, verse 18, it said, now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, which is before they had sexual relations, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Okay? And you can imagine if you're Joseph and you're betrothed to Mary, what you're thinking, she comes to you and says, I had a vision.

An angel appeared to me. He's putting the not only a baby inside of me, but he's going to be the savior of the world. That's going to save the whole world from their sins. And you're Joseph. What are you going to say?

Right? Looney. Like, no way. We're done with this whole thing. So what does Joseph do?

And Joseph, her husband, being what, a righteous man Joseph was righteous. What was he going to do? And not wanting to disgrace her plan to send her away secretly, planned to divorce her quietly. Why? Because in the first century, when you were engaged or betrothed, it was as binding as marriage, even though you weren't sexually active with one another.

Okay? And so Joseph and Mary are bound because they're betrothed. And during that time, Joseph finds out Mary's pregnant with Jesus, and he's like, okay, we're gonna get divorced. We're gonna put this thing aside and I'm gonna keep going on, and I wanna do it privately to save you from the shame that's gonna happen. But let's just keep moving forward, right?

And it took an angel of the Lord showing up to Joseph, saying, no, bro, hey, listen. It really is God inside of her. Take her to be your wife. And that's what Joseph ends up doing. So when we get to Matthew, chapter 19, which is usually the place people go for saying, oh, I can get out of my marriage.

Here's what we need to see is the context. First of all, the Pharisees are coming to Jesus. They're asking him, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all? Now, in the first century, you had a couple of schools of thought. One school of thought was you could divorce your wife for anything.

I mean, she burnt the toast, or didn't make the bed, or didn't clean the sheets. She's out. She's no good. You can divorce her for anything. Other schools of thought was something really major.

If you felt it was really major, then you could give her a certificate of divorce and leave. And then Jesus, what he answers is this. He goes, have you not read that? He who created them from the beginning made them male and female? That's Genesis 127.

And he said, genesis 224. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. And the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, God is joined together.

Let no man separate. What does Jesus say? I haven't changed my view on marriage ever. I created it. It's a covenant between a man and a woman.

Together as one flesh, covenanted to me until death do they part. Like, have you not read that? I mean, I haven't changed my mind on any of this stuff. That's what Jesus says. So then they ask him, well, then, why did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, to send her away?

And Jesus said, because of your hardened heart. Because you had a hard heart. I didn't command you to get divorced. Moses permitted it because you had hard hearts. But from the beginning, it was not this way.

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, that's that word. Pornea. And marries another. Commits. Now, it's really interesting, because if you go back a couple chapters in Matthew, chapter 15, when Jesus is talking about what proceeds out of the heart is what defiles a man.

In Matthew, chapter 15, verse 19, he uses two different words. He says, for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders, etcetera. But there's two different words used. One is adulteries, which is mokea, and one is the word for immorality, which is porneia. And so he's using those

two different words.

What Matthew 19 does not say is this. Let me just tell you what it doesn't say. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for adultery and marries another, commits adultery. It doesn't say that. It says, whoever divorces his wife except for porneia, which all the time in Matthew's gospel is fornication.

In other words, here's what Jesus is saying. He goes, I tell you, I haven't changed my view on marriage one lick. It's till death do you part. And here's what I'm going to tell you. Anybody who divorces his wife, except in the instance of during the betrothal period where you discover that your spouse has fornicated, and prior to the actual marriage day, you send her away.

Other than that, you can't get a divorce ever, which is what I believe Jesus is saying. And if he's really saying that, the disciples response is the same as many of ours. The disciples said to him, well, if that's the relationship between a man and his wife, then it's better not to get married, right? Why would they say that? Cause it's permanent.

Cause there's no way out. I mean, even if you go back to the sermon on the mount, Matthew, chapter five, I mean, in the context where it says the same thing in everything Jesus is doing in the sermon on the mount, he's heightening things. He's saying, hey, you've heard that it was said. You've heard that it was said, do not murder. I tell you, if you call your brother an idiot, you're a murderer.

You've heard it said, do not commit adultery. I tell you, if you lust after a woman, you commit adultery in your heart. Hey, you've heard it said that Moses said it was okay to permit a divorce and give her a certificate to your wife and send her away. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of. There's that word again, Pornea makes her commit adultery.

And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Jesus hasn't changed his mind. He's saying this. If you're engaged and while you're engaged, you discover that the person you're engaged to has been engaged in sexual relations outside the marriage prior to getting married, you can let them go. Other than that, once you're married, you're married till death do you part.

How about that? That's a consistent teaching of Jesus. That's the consistent teaching of Paul, and that's where I land in my conviction with the word because. Why? Because marriage is a much higher view than what we think of it.

We think of marriage as something that we do that's good as long as it's good for us, and then we get out of it. That is not Jesus view of marriage. You can go have somebody tell you to get divorced. You can go get a piece of paper that says you're divorced. Let me tell you who says you're not divorced, it's Jesus.

There is no out clause. There's no out clause. If you're married, stay married. So let me make sure I'm being crystal clear on this, okay? Because sometimes I want to make sure when I go home that I've said what I need to say.

It means I read all the prayer requests every week. It means that I'm your pastor and I love you. And I realize some of you are in really, really challenging situations, okay? And I, and I realize the pain that goes along with it. And as your pastor, it hurts

me to know that you're going through some of the situations that you're going through.

But I'm here to tell you, if you're married, you're married. You cannot separate. And if you do separate for a period of time, you should be working on reconciliation or staying single for the rest of your life to the glory of God. Those are your only options. So if you're married, you're married.

And if you really know that that's true, and that's what Jesus Christ says, you're going to work on your marriage a lot different because we're always looking for the outclass. So let me help you from the word. I don't see one in here. Now, there's other people that are more scholarly than me, that are smarter than me that may tell you, and oh, by the way, if you ever want to find somebody to tell you what you want to hear, you can find them. I'm just trying in all good conscience of somebody that studied the word for about 25 years telling you, I don't find, find any out clauses in this.

I find that you can get separated for a period of time. I find that you can remain single, and that's okay. But I don't see the word remarriage anywhere in the Bible, it's just not there. Why? Because there's covenant until one of you dies.

That's Jesus words, not mine. And if you don't like that, take it up with Jesus, because he's the one that invented marriage. I didn't. I'm just telling you what he's saying. Right.

So then what happens about this? Okay, well, Jeff, I'm married to an unbeliever. I came to Christ before I came to Christ after I was married. Now what do I do? Paul is going to address that.

He's going to say this. Even if you're married to an unbeliever, stay married. Even if you're married to an unbeliever, stay married. Notice what he says. But to the rest, I say, not the Lord.

It means this. Jesus didn't have specific teaching during his earthly ministry on this thing. So let me tell you what he would have said through revelation of the Holy Spirit. But I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who's an unbeliever and

she can sense to to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

In other words, if you're a Christian and you're married to a non Christian and they're willing to live with you, stay married to them. Why? Because you can represent the gospel to them in crazy ways. I mean, you have every opportunity. Guys, if you're married to an unchristian woman, that's very, very difficult.

There's even more opportunity to show what it looks like to lay down your life for somebody else. And wives, if you're married to a husband who's not a Christian, you have awesome opportunity to show what it looks like to submit to somebody as to Christ. So if you're married to a nonbeliever, stay married. Now, here's the question people are asking in Corinth, and it's sure a question you ask now, because Paul just got done at the end of chapter six talking about, hey, whoever you join yourself to, you're one flesh with. And he's got done saying, would you join yourself to a prostitute?

And he's like, heck, no, because you'd be one with the prostitute. And the

Corinthians are like, prostitutes. Nothing. I'm married to the devil, right? I mean, I'm joined to him, I'm joined to her.

I mean, isn't that going to hurt my walk with Jesus? And Paul is going to say, no, it's not. He's going to say, God is going to give you grace for that. Notice what he's going to say in verse 14, for the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband, for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. What in the world does that mean?

This word sanctified can mean several things in this context. It's talking about being set apart. It means this. If you're the Christian in a non christian home, God is pouring his favor and blessing through you to your husband or to your wife and to your kids, and you're being a blessing to them and you're impacting them for the gospel more than they're negatively impacting you. It's similar to this.

If I'm healthy and you have a severe cough or an illness and I get around you, you're more likely to give me your illness than I am to give you my health just by being in your presence. But wasn't Jesus just the opposite? I mean, when Jesus was on the

earth and he got around someone with leprosy, the person with leprosy was more likely to be clean than Jesus was to get leprosy. See what I'm saying? This is what he's talking about in this context, if you're married to a non believer, they're more likely to see the love of Christ in you than you are to be tarnished by them.

So stay married and continuing to show the love of Christ. And some of you have been children of parents like this, where one was a believer and one wasn't, and came to Christ because of the parent that was the believer and came to Christ because of the one that was serving Jesus faithfully. That's what it's talking about. My mother in law is good friends with a gal that's gone on to be with the Lord. Now, her name was Nancy.

And I met Nancy late in her life, right about the time when she was on hospice, before she went to be with the Lord. And my mother in law will tell you how much of an influence that woman had in her life because they grew up as kids and then they watched each other get married. This woman was married to a man that wasn't a good man, that was philanderous and was out and doing all sorts of things. And all the women that loved Nancy were like, hey, we'll take care of you. I mean, we'll take care of your kids, and some of our husbands have money.

We'll take. Get rid of this guy. You know what her answer always was? I can't.
Jesus won't let me.

And she stayed in the marriage for her life till she died. And my mother in law would tell you, it's very instrumental to her. Right. And you're coming to Christ of seeing a woman that endured such a difficult time because she modeled christian love in a difficult situation. See, we got to remember that in the gospel and in our marriage.

It's not about us. If marriage was just about our happiness, everybody get divorced some days. If marriage was just about me feeling good, everybody would be upset in their marriage some days. If marriage is about the holiness of God and what he wants to accomplish through two imperfect people for his glory that are willing to submit to his lordship, then there's a beautiful thing that can come out of marriage. And if you understand the way Jesus and Paul describe marriage and the way that God seems to map it out, that it's till death do you part and there's no out, you'll treat it very, very differently if you love Jesus.

And that's what God's saying. Even if you're married to an unbeliever, stay married.

Now, he says this in verse 15. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave. The brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us. To what?

Peace. You're married to a non believer. They're like, I'm out of here. I'm divorcing you. Let them divorce you now.

There's nowhere in here now, you'll find people more scholarly than me that will say, God has called you to peace. So now that they're gone, you're free to remarry. I don't find any remarriage scriptures. I just say you're not bound to that person anymore. You're free to let them go, and you're free to serve Christ with everything you have.

That's what the scriptures seem to teach right now. You can disagree if you go back to the word and say, no, that's not what the word says to me. That's fine. I'm just telling you what I think they mean. After studying for 25 years, you're married.

They leave, you let them leave, but then just stay as you are, because he's going to answer this question, like with point number four that I'm going to make. Why? Because marriage is a picture of the gospel. Marriage is a picture of the gospel. Notice what he says in verse 16 for how do you know, o wife, whether you will save your husband?

Or how do you know, o husband, whether you will save your wife? Here's what he's saying. You just don't know how God might use you. Let him leave. But you continue to serve Jesus wholeheartedly.

You don't know how God might use you in that situation. Now some of you are saying, well, that's a hard teaching and who can accept it? There's a lot of things that Jesus said that are hard teachings and who can accept it. I'm just trying to present

truth, but I'm also trying to be your pastor and tell you that I love you. And I realize that some of you are in really, really hard situations.

I mean, I just want to tell you, as I'm preparing this week, this is one of those weeks where I'm like, I think I'm going to quit and just be an evangelist and tell people to come to Jesus, because this stuff is just hard, right? Especially when I know many of you and know some of your circumstances and know all this stuff. But I think it's imperative because I'm more afraid of Jesus than I am of whether you like me or not. And I want to be faithful because I'm waiting for him to tell me, well done, good and faithful servant. I always said marriage was binding till death did they part.

I always said, never get remarried. I always said, focus on what you have. So that's what I'm telling you because that's what I see to be the consistent teaching throughout all of scripture. Now, you may say, if you're sitting here, let's just be really honest. There's not one single person who's sitting here.

There's not one married person who's sitting here that would say, yeah, I've done that perfect my whole life.

If Kim and I got up here and told you our stories today, I couldn't stand here and say, from the moment we said I do, I loved Kim like Christ loved the church. And I've always done that perfectly every time. There's not even. Not even close. Not even close.

This week, Kim couldn't stand here and say, ever since I said I do, I've always submitted to Jeff's leadership. I do to Christ. There's no way she could say that if you're single here, there's probably no way you could stand here and say, I've always been pure before God and honored him in every part of my life and never lusted after somebody that wasn't my spouse. There's no way. So let's just admit here for the moment that God has a standard that while many of us are trying to achieve, we haven't all lived out.

So what do we do? I want to tell you, like I told you at the beginning, God's view of marriage is higher than what yours is. Let me tell you something else. God's view of the cross is much higher than what yours is too. See, God wants to reach down and free you because there's some of you here, I know you're on your 2nd, 3rd, 4th or fifth

marriage.

What do I do? You repent of what you were involved in that led you to your 2nd, 3rd, 4th or fifth marriage. Now what do I do? Do I need to go back and undo? No, see, now you're married.

You repent of those first four, however many there were, and you stay married to the one that you're with and you love them until death do you part. I know what some of you are thinking because it's how our mind works. It's how Satan's talking. Well, you know what? We're going to get married next week anyway and then I'll just ask for forgiveness later.

I'm divorced and I'm going to get remarried and I'll just ask for forgiveness. And then God will bless my new marriage. Let me tell you something. You can't go against God and expect his blessing. God's blessing comes from repentance.

It's when you get to a place where you realize this is God's standard and I

haven't lived up to it. So I'm going to repent and trust that God wants to do his work through me. And whatever God wants to do, that's what I want to do. That's what it means, right? So I know some of you are on your second marriage, I know some of you are in your 7th marriage.

Maybe there's areas in your life you haven't repented yet that God would say repent. And let me fill you afresh with my holy spirit so you can live out what you have now. And perhaps some of you are divorced, okay? And you're like, man, I'm divorced and my spouse is, you know, still not married. Then I would say you pray your socks off and do everything you can to reconcile that thing.

And if you say, Pastor Jeff, I just don't agree with that. I don't agree. I'm gonna get married anyway. I can't stop you. I'm not here to control you.

I'm just not. I'm just preaching God's word. But I'll tell you this. I'm probably not the person in good conscience that would perform your second or third or fourth marriage just because I can't in good conscience get there. Not because I don't love you, but because I'm standing before the Lord and saying, hey, you're joined together.

You're now one. And I don't believe that you are. I believe you're one with the one that you were one with when you were first one. That's a tongue twister, right? That's what it means.

So it means this. The gospel of Christ frees us up. You know, a couple weeks ago, I was walking by my son, he's eight years old. I was walking by his room, and I noticed this huge bruise on his leg. I mean, so much so, it just kind of pained me, and I was like, dude.

I'm like, what did you do? He said, dad, I'm not going to tell you. You're going to get mad at me. And I'm like, dude, I promise, I'm your dad. I care about you.

I love you. I said, just tell me what you did. It took him a while. He's like, I was swinging on the banister like he told me not to do, and we've only had that talk, like, I don't know how many times, like, don't swing on the banister. Are you going to break it

or you're going to hurt yourself?

Don't do it. He did it. He hurt himself. And in that moment, you know what I was doing? I wasn't like, told ya.

Stinks to be you. I hope it's really painful. No, that's not what I was saying. If I would have had the ability to reach down and touch my son's leg and say, be healed, I would have done it in 2 seconds. See, that's what the gospel does.

See, Jesus Christ laid down his life on the cross. He said, father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. He knew all the sin you were gonna have regarding your singleness or marriage before you ever send it. And he said, I love you anyway.

Be healed. Receive his grace. And how do you receive it? Through repenting of anything you haven't repented of before that you need to. And then guess what?

God's grace comes washing in like, a flood. And God does a work that only God can do. Cause all this church is, all this church really is, is a bunch of broken people that haven't got it. All right. That just want to honor the Lord Jesus in every possible way, right?

I mean, I get the challenge of this message. I get it. Some of you are my really good friends. That's why this is hard to preach. I've got people close to me, good friends, going through a lot of stuff right now, but I care more about God's word and being faithful to what he's saying.

I think you'll find me pretty charitable if we talked one on one. But I also think I have a responsibility to hold up God's authority. So the way I want to end our service today is by this. I just want to invite everybody here just to stand for a moment. What I'd like to do for our prayer time today is take a couple minutes, and instead of turning to the person next to you and praying, I think there's some personal things that may need to get dealt with here in this moment.

Maybe this is a prayer time. If you're here with your spouse, you want to pray with your spouse. Maybe it's something that you want to do individually. Maybe there's something that God showed you that he's calling you to repent of and just show a hand, somebody's going to come bother you. If there was something, the message God showed you today where you're like, you know, that's me, and I need to ask for God's grace and God's forgiveness.

Would you just raise your hand? Is anybody here? I'm not raising your hand. You're basically saying either a, I've already repented of it, or b, I can't think of anything I've done wrong. And if that's you, he sees you.

And he sees the ones of you here that couldn't even raise your hand because you're so broken over this word that you just can't even. You don't even want to be here anymore. I get it. But could you just bow your head for a minute and close your eyes? Let's just pray.

Lord, we give you grace, we give you praise, Lord, we just tell you, we just

declare right now, we just need you, God. Lord, you know every single heart in this room, you know every heart that's receptive, you know every heart that's hard. And, Lord, we just come before you right now and ask your grace to fill us.

If while you were listening to God's word this morning, his holy spirit spoke to you and showed you an area to repent of, I just encourage you in the quietness of your own heart just to tell them right now, Lord, this is me. This is what I did wrong. I either didn't know I was doing it wrong, or I knew it and I did it anyway. And, Lord, I'm repenting. I'm telling you, I don't want to do this anymore.

I want what you want.

There's some of you that are here this morning saying, God, I just. I'm single, but I want a spouse. I've been praying forever.

Just tell them in your heart the kind of person that you want to be, to bring that

person to you.

If you're here with your spouse, maybe you just hold their hand. Maybe you see them whisper in their ear, I'm covenanted to you with Jesus until one of us goes to be with him.

God, I just pray in this moment. I know it's a heavy moment. I get it. Sometimes it's okay. But, Lord, I just pray that you'd free people up by your grace in this moment, Lord, as we sing our closing song, Lord, that you just have your way.

As we sing to you, we give you all the praise and glory in Jesus name, amen.