

# On Marriage

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[ 0 : 00 ] Father, it was refreshing to hear Ken publicly say he agreed and disagreed with parts of your word. And Father, that's the way we are, Father. Often we cover it with pious stuff, and often we cover it with very complicated intellectual arguments.

Father, we confess before you that we often judge your word, that we think we're wiser than your word. And Father, we confess before you that there's times that we're embarrassed by your word, that we're ashamed of your word.

We confess before you that there's times we're greatly puzzled by your word, and maybe even afraid of your word and what it says. Father, we ask that you would keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, your Son and our Savior who died upon the cross for us.

And pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and quieten our hearts and turn our hearts and minds and wills and our very selves towards you. Father, deliver us from all fear and hesitation of your word and shame of your word.

And help us, Father, to humbly enter into it and allow it to form us. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

[ 1 : 14 ] Amen. For a lot of people in our culture, they think that the way marriage was in the 50s and the 60s is the way the Bible talks about marriage.

And so for a lot of people in our culture, they think that if they know about what marriage was like in the 50s and the 60s, and if they know about marriage then, they know about the Bible, and the marriage in the 50s and the 60s isn't for them.

It's square. It was repressive of women and of gays and of transgendered. And so therefore, we don't really have to pay that much attention to what the Bible says about marriage because, once again, it was just like the 50s and 60s in North America.

We all know about that or think we know about that. And therefore, there's a certain degree of cynicism, even amongst Christians often, latent cynicism as we hear biblical texts on marriage. And, you know, it is true that... I've been thinking about this a lot this week because, you know, you see the text that I'm going to preach on.

[ 2 : 23 ] And I know I'm really old, but... When I grew up in a suburb of Montreal, I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood. Everybody in the street was Jewish except our next-door neighbor.

And, like, the next street was that way and the next street and the next street. And there were virtually no Gentiles. It was an all-Jewish neighborhood in a suburb of Montreal. And my parents and I, we went to this little Baptist church. And everybody on my street, every single person on my street, it was their first and only marriage.

Like, all of my friends, their parents were together. And they... This wasn't their, like, their second dad or their third dad or their second mom.

Nobody was living together. And that was the street that I lived on. And in the church, everybody was married, like, everybody was married or they were too young to marry. And, in fact, actually, I was thinking about it a lot this week that the only type of scandal that I was aware of as a kid growing up in the church was that one of the...

This is a Baptist church, okay, that one of the men secretly smoked cigarettes. And this was sort of a shameful thing. It wouldn't... In Anglican context, I don't know, they probably smoked like chimneys and drank like fish.

[ 3 : 37 ] And those wouldn't be scanned. I don't know what... Some of you... You can ask some of the older Anglicans what the equivalent might have been in the 60s. Maybe it was that they didn't smoke. I don't know. In an Anglican church. But that was the church I grew up in.

And I was thinking a lot about that this week is that in that type of social context, with these types of texts, they would have just... It would have been just very straightforward. In fact, the minister might not have even wanted to talk about the text because it was just so obvious.

And, of course, he wouldn't have read Proverbs 5. But apart from that, it would have been very obvious. And it's a very different social context, right? As I've been thinking about that a lot this week, it's very common for people, younger people, that have multiple...

You know, they're children of divorce and their parents have lived together and they've had... It's just a very, very different social context. It really is. And so what is the Bible?

Did the Bible... Is the Bible... If you know the 50s and the 60s in North America, do you know what the Bible teaches? Is that... Like, is it equivalent? Is the Bible different? Is the Bible still wise and sane?

[ 4 : 42 ] Or is it something that we should be cynical about? Well, let's look at these different texts. And as we've been doing week in and week out, as we've been going through the book of Proverbs, my big hope at the end of the sermon, apart from the fact that you would know Jesus better, is that you'd actually remember...

Not remember my words, but remember the Proverbs. So I'm going to have you read them along with me. And we're not going to do them in the order that they're printed in. I just printed them in the order that they come in the book of Proverbs. If you look in your book or turn in your Bibles to Proverbs 31.10, let's read that together first.

Proverbs 31.10. Read it with me out loud, please. An excellent wife who can find. She is far more precious than jewels. Let's read it again, just so we get into the rhythm of reading.

An excellent wife who can find. She is far more precious than jewels. Now, here's the first thing that we have to be careful of when we hear this text, is that in our culture, in our time, there's a deep-seated...

We sort of alternate between a cynicism and sentimentality. And so it's very easy for us to, on one hand, take a text like this and say, oh yeah, that would be like a Hallmark greeting card that we would...

[ 5 : 52 ] You know, you'd go out and you'd buy it. Somebody would buy it for their wife on their anniversary and give it to their wife. And it's like a very sentimental type of thing. And we have to, as we're going to see as we go through the book of Proverbs, is the book of Proverbs is very unsent...

It's not sentimental at all. It's not like Canadian sentimentality. It's also not at all cynical. Because you could well imagine a guy in a bar, okay? Two guys in a bar, and they're standing there along the bar, and they're having their beer, and one guy says to another, yeah, an excellent wife.

Good grief. Who on earth can find an excellent wife? They're rarer than rubies. They're rarer than precious jewels. In other words, it's impossible to find a good wife and then have some more beer and watch the football game or whatever.

And it's a cynical type of reading of the text. But it doesn't mean that an excellent wife, a noble wife, a virtuous wife, a strong wife... And that word excellent, it implies...

It's actually a military image. It implies valor and might and courage and ingenuity and skill.

[ 6 : 58 ] And that's what it's saying about the wife. It's not talking about trophy wives. It's talking about character. And what the text is saying is that a great wife is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars.

Like the crown jewels of England versus a good wife, you pick the good wife because it's of greater value. Like an economist would just say that that's where the money is and that's what it's trying to communicate to us.

It's not being sentimental, actually. It's trying to say something about a great wife, a good wife. And that's how we have to try to hear the text. Well, some of you might be saying, well, what about husbands?

Well, we're going to get to husbands. But let's look at another text because there's a key idea here. By the way, I've taken all of the texts in the book of Proverbs, all but one of the texts in the book of Proverbs that mention husband and wives.

So that's what we see before us today. So let's look at Proverbs 18.22. 18.22. You want to read it with me? He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

[ 8 : 11 ] Let's say it again. He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. Now, this is a very, very interesting text.

If you notice that he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. And it's far more obvious in the original language. But the implication here is that the young man or the man is to seek.

And he's to seek and he's to seek and he's to seek. Or as we'll see in a moment, the woman is to seek and to seek and to seek. It's something that you should seek. But at the same time, that when you actually find a great wife, you're actually finding something which is actually a gift from God. That God actually is granting you a very, very great gift. And in the language here, when we think of good thing, you know, we're so controlled in our culture of thinking of what's the good thing to do or the wrong thing to do.

And, well, the good thing is whatever causes the least amount of pain. And this whole utilitarian way of our culture understanding good and evil, it's very, very thin. And sort of an empty and wispy, looks like spider webs.

[ 9 : 15 ] It doesn't actually hold up much. It doesn't stand anything up. Like just like the smallest rock will go through a spider web. And so it is that when you have a culture of control with thinking about good and evil in terms of utilitarian terms, it's like a spider web.

Things just drop through it. And this biblical notion of being good is it's a very, very, it's a transcendent type of idea. It's a very, very big idea. Because ultimately God is good.

And so to talk about something being good is to say that in some ways it's similar to God. It reflects God. It emerges out of God. It's coherent and consistent with God. And in this particular case, the idea of something being good, it also has this idea that it's a proper joy.

That it's properly beneficial. That it's properly life-giving. That it's properly pleasing to God. It's a little bit like the idea that if you're out for a bike ride, you know, maybe later on, and far later on in the day, and it happens to be a beautiful sunset, and you stop on your bikes and you look and say, gosh, that's just so beautiful.

That's such a great view. That's so good. If you're to have like a really fine meal, if, you know, you go over to a friend's house and they make this spectacular meal and you take one bite of it and it's, I don't know, just, sorry for vegetarians here, but it's like roast beef or something.

[ 10 : 40 ] It's just perfectly cooked and it like, you almost don't even need a knife to cut it. It's like, it just melts in your mouth. You go, oh, that's so good. And you get, you see that the biblical idea has all of those types of things, that it's a pleasure, it's a joy, that it's right.

And that if somebody was to see that sunset and just say, oh, gosh, you know, I've seen better things in, I see better things in the movie. I see better things in my Twitter feed. You go, gosh, what a, like, this person doesn't know anything.

I mean, that deserves to be appreciated. That deserves to be extolled. That deserves to be noticed. That deserves to be praised.

And that's this idea of good here. Okay, that's what it says. So when it says, can you read it with me again, 1822? He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

And the idea of favor here, it's a religious term. It's in terms of God's specific blessing, that it's something that's good, it's something that's a blessing, and I should seek it, I do seek it.

[ 11 : 46 ] And at the same time, when God gives me a good wife, it's actually a blessing that I'm receiving, a great good that I'm receiving from God. And some of you are saying, well, one moment, George, what about husbands?

How come it's not mentioning husbands? And what about the single people here? And what about polygamy and people like same sex and like, how does that all fit in with this?

Well, we're going to get to that in a moment. Let's look at another text. Proverbs 19, 13, and 14. It's right under the first one. Can you read this one with me? A foolish son is ruined to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain.

House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord. And prudent here implies very, very energetic and wise in skillful living that is healthy.

If you think living life to its fullest, life to its absolute fullest, and skill in living life to its fullest, that's what prudent means. That's what it means.

[ 13 : 00 ] And so it says a foolish son is ruined to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain. Drip, drip, drip.

The roof's going. You don't get the drip. The floor is going. The walls are going. There's going to be mold. There's going to be rot. It's really irritating. Drip, drip, drip. House and wealth are inherited

from fathers.

In that culture, it would have been inherited from fathers. Obviously, in our culture, it's not. But in that culture, that's that. But a prudent wife, skillful in living life to its best, is from the Lord.

So now, you can't keep running away from this. Like, is the Bible sexist? Like, why is it only talking about the wife's quarreling? Like, some of you women might be saying, have you met my husband? If there's a quarreling problem in our house, it's not me. And you might very well be right. It might very well be that the husband is the one who's more anger-driven and more picky and more, you know, easily wounded and just harping away at things.

[ 14 : 11 ] Like, what's going on here? Like, is the Bible sexist? Is it sort of the meaning to women? Like, how should we read this text?

How are we going to get anything out of it? Well, first of all, the one thing I'd like to try to communicate to you is that the Bible is not sexist.

It's never opposed to women. In fact, at the very, very beginning of the Bible, there is no more powerful statement in philosophy and ideology and religion than the biblical picture that men and women, male and female, were specifically created and designed by God, and that they both equally bear the image of God, that they are both individually, as male and female, are good.

There is no more powerful statement in religion and philosophy than the biblical picture that at the very heart of creation is that God didn't say, oh, I'm going to make women, I'm going to make men because they're so much better, and oh, dang, you know, maybe I should make a lesser creature. Well, what the heck, I'll make a woman. Like, that's not at all the picture of the Bible. It's that both are fully created by God or fully sustained by God or intended by God, designed by God, that God creates male and female.

[ 15 : 35 ] And after the fall and after sin, the Bible teaches that, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end, that all who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.

And the Bible portrays is that when both male and female, men and women, boys and girls, that when they had fallen far away and God recognized and realized that human beings couldn't leave themselves to save themselves or help themselves, that God sends his very son to be the one that will redeem male and female, men and women, individual men and women.

It doesn't say that Jesus just died for men or that he died for men first, and if there's a little bit of salvation left over, it'll be left for a few women, a few noble, virtuous women. No, it doesn't say that at all.

The very, very heart of the Bible is not only the doctrine of creation, but the doctrine of redemption and of glorification. That God, that Jesus loves men and loves women.

He dies for them equally. Both equally need a Savior and both equally are offered a Savior. And even in the structure of the book of Proverbs, in Proverbs chapter 8, you get the pinnacle of all creation.

[ 16 : 50 ] The very, very pinnacle of creation is pictured. In fact, it's so pictured as the pinnacle of creation that in the Arian controversy, Proverbs 8 was used as an explanation to try to explain how Jesus wasn't actually a God of God, light of light, very God of very God.

But he is that Proverbs 8. It's like the pinnacle of creation. And how does the book of Proverbs picture the pinnacle of creation? A woman. And if you go back and you read all the book of Proverbs from beginning to the end, and you'll see that the first nine chapters are a series of like sermon-type exhortation poems.

And then there's all these random helter-skelter poems that are going in and out, in and out of different themes. And you come to the very end, which begins at Proverbs chapter 31, verse 10, which we just read a few moments ago.

And if you read that very carefully after reading the book of Proverbs, you realize that Proverbs 31, verse 10 to the end, all of the themes of the book of Proverbs are carried together. That you have the picture of the person, that everything in the book of Proverbs is trying to get what you're going to look like.

And how does it portray it as a woman? The excellent wife, the virtuous, strong wife. That's how it's all summarized at the end. So at no point in time, anything in the Bible but in the book of Proverbs is anything sexist.

[ 18 : 10 ] It's not at all ever meant to put women down. And not at all. Not at all. You see, in fact, what's happening here in the text is that the book of Proverbs is going to be, and we're going to see

this very much in a moment, because after this we're going to read out loud Proverbs 5 together, is that the book of Proverbs is very concrete.

Like spouse or partner isn't as concrete as husband or wife. And I'm not making any comment about, you know, traditional English and modern English, but when you use the plural and everything to try to communicate an individual, you're moving.

It's a type of abstraction. And the book of Proverbs is really concrete. And so it doesn't, it could have said, you know, to, it could have said that, you know, a foolish child is ruined to his parent, and a spouse is quarreling as a continual dripping of rain.

But that's more abstract. It's more vague. And the book of Proverbs is, it's like a poke in the chest. It's very concrete.

It's the literary form. It's a literary form of being very concrete and specific. And just as we understand that you can get an abstract idea, and then you sort of have to try to apply it, the book of Proverbs is saying you take these concrete ideas and you apply it.

[19:37] So in all the way through the book of Proverbs, except in two texts, it's completely and utterly valid to substitute husband for wife. And that's how the book is written, that it's valid.

You know, the women can just say, oh yeah, like a husband, a noble husband, like as a gift. Like, that's how it's designed to be applied in your lives. The Proverbs are to be like somebody pointing you in the chest, and it's supposed to be like one of those songs that gets stuck in your head, you know, a line of a song or a tune that gets stuck in your head.

And Proverbs is supposed to be something that gets stuck in your head, and it's really concrete.

And then out of that, as you meditate upon it and reflect upon it, you try to figure out how to apply it in a whole range of different areas.

And so for the balance of the imagery, it's always imagery around the wife, by the way. It's both the excellent imagery and the bad imagery. It's always the wife, never the husband. It's very concrete. It's part of the literary form, but it's to be applied. And so here's the specific thing, though, from these four Proverbs, which we read already.

[20:46] Andrew, if you could put the first point up. I can't read it, so I'll read it from my notes here. A good marriage is a great good and should be pursued ahead of career and wealth.

This is not advice that you would have got in the 50s and the 60s, and it's not advice you get today, but that's what the Bible's teaching. I think that's what Proverbs is teaching. That a good marriage is a great good and should be pursued ahead of career and wealth.

For many of the single people here who are younger, it means that you should marry younger. Let me give you a bit of an illustration about that. Imagine for a second that you're, once again, you're in a coffee shop or a bar.

You're talking to somebody. Maybe it's an older guy, a guy in his 40s or something like that. It seems young to me, but an older guy for some people. He starts talking.

He says, gosh, my marriage is in trouble. My wife's really mad at me. I knew your heart breaks for that person. She said, what are you going to do about it? Your marriage is in trouble.

[21:49] Your wife's really mad at you. She's thinking of leaving. She's just really irritated. What are you going to do about it? He said, well, I thought about this, and I've really been thinking about it. And I think I need to go back to school and get an MBA.

And then I'm going to get a job, and I'm going to get a promotion. I'm going to get more money, and I'm going to get my mortgage paid off. And in about eight or nine years, then I think I'll work on my marriage. What would you say? You'd go, duh.

You're not going to have a marriage in eight or nine years, dude. You don't deal with trouble in your marriage by going back to school part-time to get an MBA so you can get a better job, so you can make more money, so you can pay off your mortgage.

And after you've got all of those types of things done, then you can finally sort out your marriage.

You're not going to have a marriage left. Isn't that what we would say? Why would we say that?

Because we'd say, you know what? Your marriage is worth more than the MBA. And your marriage is worth more than getting your mortgage paid off quickly. And your marriage matters more than your promotion.

[22:50] Isn't that what we say? But why then, in a sense, we're saying the exact same thing here as the book of Proverbs. But why would we say, you know, listen, you're 21, and you've been dating for two years, but you're too young to get married.

Like, you should go off to graduate school, and then you should get your doctorate, and then you should get your job, and then you should get a down payment on your condo or your house. And after you've sorted all those things out in eight years, nine years or ten years, you should look about getting married.

Why? Because, like, all of a sudden, if a person's single, we're saying that actually having a degree matters more, that having a job matters more, that having a house matters more, that having money matters more.

Well, why is it that way for single people but not for married people? Like, why is it that we think the Bible's confused and we don't recognize that we're confused? Like, why is it that we don't recognize that we're confused?

Am I saying we? Why is it that I don't recognize so many times when I'm confused? And my wife recognizes it. That's a whole other topic. My kids recognize it. But we don't recognize it, right? And the Proverbs here is saying it's, and by the way, for single people, this is one of the radical things about the text.

[ 24 : 01 ] How do, you know, Hollywood movies, how do Hollywood movies like to end? Hollywood movies like to end with everybody clapping for the hero.

And what makes an even better Hollywood movie? The hero and the heroine kissing and going off together to applause. What solves everything?

The right relationship. You know, with or without, you know, with the sex and all that. But what solves everything? And that's one of the messages of our culture. But the Bible never says that marriage is the greatest good.

It doesn't say that it's the good that you should pursue before all others. But it does say that it's a really great good. It's a great good. It's a great good.

But, you know, what the Bible is saying here, like if, you know, Proverbs 31, 10 is right and that, you know, a good marriage, the crown jewels of England, the crown jewels of, you know, England are like light like this and that's where you have real depth.

[ 25 : 05 ] You know, the second, the most important decision you can make in your life is the decision to give your life to Jesus, to trust him as your savior and the Lord. There is no more important decision than that. That relativizes all other decisions.

But the second most important decision that you can make is who you marry and getting married if God calls you to marriage. That's the second most important decision you make. And I think the Bible is teaching here that it's far better for you to have a low-income job and be well-married than to have a high-income job and to be terribly married.

I think the Bible is saying here that if God calls you into marriage that it's a great good. The Bible here, you know, in this text, it's saying, you know, things like, you know, wealth and all, that sort of comes from your father and your mother and it's just sort of inherited but a great wife, that's from the Lord.

It's a, you know, rich people have terrible marriages. They can have good marriages as well. But knowing somebody's bank balance does not tell you anything about the state of their marriage. Knowing how big a house a person lives in tells you nothing about the state of their marriage. To marriage, to marry well is something that's appropriate to pray for if you're single.

[ 26 : 26 ] God doesn't grant all of us to get married and even those of us who are married aren't always married for all of our lives. We're single for a while and then one will maybe die before the other and we will have maybe a short or a long season of singleness.

But marriage is a great good. And dating is to be ordered not towards conquest, not towards sex, not towards dealing with loneliness.

Dating is not to be ordered towards the prestige of the other person. Dating is ordered to figuring out who you will marry. And if you're in a dating relationship for a period of time and you realize that you would not marry this person, you should stop dating them.

You should stop dating them. You're not doing the other person any good and you're not doing yourself any good. I don't know if I'm going to get a whole lot of hostile emails after this, but I think that's what Proverbs is teaching.

I think it's what it's teaching. So some of you can say, okay, George, what about same-sex marriage?

[ 27 : 42 ] What about polygamy? Is this just for straight people? Like, you know, I'm going to, you'll get my email about Mary Younger. But you know, what else is going, like George, come on, what's

going on in this text here?

Well, just a very quick thing about polygamy. One of the very powerful things about the Bible, by the way, is that the Bible never, never, ever, ever, ever, ever says that polygamy is a good thing. And every Old Testament story that involves polygamy, the marriages are screwed up. Every one of them are screwed up. And the Bible never portrays polygamy as an ideal, never portrays it as a good thing.

But what it does is that given that it's been a common thing and still is a common thing in many parts of the world, it tries to limit the evil caused by polygamy. And in fact, Proverbs is a very powerful series of texts.

And there's not a single proverb about how a man deals with having several wives. The entire image behind the whole book is one of monogamy.

[ 28 : 47 ] It's a very powerful thing. That's where the ideal is. It's to deconstruct the patriarchal and religious establishment that okays polygamy and the economic establishments.

It's that just as in the same way the gospel undermines the structures that support slavery, that the Bible completely deconstructs and undermines that. The thing which is portrayed is the marriage of one man to one woman.

That's where the source of blessing in God's favor comes from. Well, what about same-sex marriages? Well, let's look at Proverbs 5 and I'm going to say something very briefly about that. And I'd like you to read it with me. If it's a bit hard for you to read, read it with me because, by the way, the first parts of it are in the ancient culture are erotic imagery. It's all, if you go back and read Proverbs 5 from the beginning, it's one long poem from verse 1 to verse 23 all about marriage. And the first 14 verses are a series of verses warning you against adultery. And it goes very seamlessly from warning against adultery into this text. So when we just read it without reading the first 14 verses, it might just sound like it's talking about the water project.

[ 30 : 05 ] But it's all imagery of rather than being with an adulteress, now it turns its eye to the positive understanding of what marriage is. And if you could read it out loud with me.

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets, let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you.

Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely dear, a graceful dough. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight.

Be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.

[ 31 : 09 ] He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great falling, he is led astray. This is the word of the Lord. It's a very, very powerful text.

Actually, I think along with the, in this week's bulletin, you'll always have something called Going Deeper, where I provide extra scripture passages. And the Genesis text of Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and 3, and the Ephesians text, and this text, and some of Jesus' teaching on marriage are the absolute fundamental building blocks of a Christian understanding of marriage.

And this is one of the texts, Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 31, where you can't put just switch men and women. It wouldn't make any sense for wives here in terms of if you were to be praying this text for your husband, you have God's permission to take this concrete imagery and turn it around in imagery for your husband.

And boy, if there's one thing that men here could do who are married is they should memorize this text and pray this text. We should memorize this text and pray this text and have it deeply enter into our lives.

You know, in a pornographic culture, to have a text like this which so deeply undermines and rejects pornography and directs a husband towards his wife, this is a very powerful marital text to meditate upon.

[ 32 : 39 ] It's very powerful. It sees, it has this wonderful, powerful image. And we in Ottawa don't fully understand the power of water imagery because we have so much fresh water.

water. And, but water means life. And in an arid culture and in an agrarian culture, water means life.

In California, they have a bit of an, British Columbia, they have a bit of a sense of how water means life. And so there's this image that there's life in marriage, that it's life-giving, that it's to be this ever-flowing stream.

It's not just something static that can die and rot, but that there's this image of marriage marriage as a continuing, deepening, life-giving journey.

And that a husband is to understand that he's to turn his heart and his mind and his will and his affections towards his wife. And it's life-giving. And that it's a place of delight and of goodness.

[ 33 : 39 ] And that his mind and his heart and his will is not to be captured with pornographic images or the images of other women, but it's to be captivated by his wife.

And whether this imagery works or not, or it's the turn of a jaw, the shape of an eyebrow, the feel of hand, like whatever it is, that there's, that the husband and the woman in appropriate imagery as well is to actively seek to delight in the other.

That if, in fact, in our marriage there's no delighting, that all you can think of of the other person is of their faults and of their limits, of their inadequacies, of the things in them that are irritating, that that's a type of a, as we'll see in a moment, it's a type of a rotteness or sickness which has entered into the marriage.

And maybe the thing from this text is that we are to go from here, those of us who are married, who are to call out to God that we would no longer spend our time meditating and dwelling upon the inadequacies and the failures and the irritations of our, in my case, my wife, in your case, if you're a woman, your husband.

But that God, not that he makes us blind about the faults of the other person, but that he once again help us to be filled with the delight of the other.

[ 35 : 06 ] Their, their beauty. But that's something the Bible is saying that married men and married women should be praying for, to enter into. And, and I want to say something else.

If you could put up the second point, Andrew, and I know this is not, you know, you folks have probably all noticed about, I mean, there's a whole school of thought around points on Screams for Sermon. And most people think it's all like, you know, it should all be an acronym.

I'll begin with C or B or A or spell a word or something because it'd be easy to memorize. And there's nothing wrong with that. Occasionally I do it. But sometimes I just want to make a big impression on you with a complicated idea.

You can go to the webpage later and you can write it down if you have time or you can go to the webpage later and look it up. I just want to try to make, I want to try to capture something that's, that can't be put in a slogan that'll fit on a t-shirt.

Like sometimes, like a lot of things in the Bible, it just, it's make an impression on our hearts and it can't be turned into a slogan that goes on our t-shirt. And, and there's this unbelievably powerful image.

[ 36 : 03 ] These other images that we've already seen from the book of Proverbs and in this, this long text here, like at the later on in the text when it's talking about the Ponderola's Passage, it's, it's portraying this idea, not that, that marriage is like there's God and then there's marriage, but that God is involved in marriage.

That, that, that it, the implication is, is that, that God is the creator of all things. And just as God created male and female, he created male and female with the idea that there would be marriage. And that, that male and female marriage between a man and a woman is something rooted in the created order.

Something woven and built into the created order. And at the same time, because God is involved, because it involved his, his mind, his heart, it's his good intention towards his creation, his design and his delight, that there's something as well in the union of a man and a woman in, in holy matrimony, that it's also something transcendent, that it's something beyond the merely physical, that it, it has its origins, not just in, in social convention or, or the will of the flesh or what my technology or techniques can do or, or how I can redefine who I am physically in terms of what I want to be.

And it's not just a product of human will, that it, that it, it comes ultimately from God, that it's rooted in the created order and that it has its origin beyond this created order, that it has something transcendent about it.

And that God, as he's designing all of this before the fall, and this is the point, the Bible teaches the primal and transcendent unity of delight, a unity of delight and procreation and godliness and

pleasure and companionship and goodness and holiness in the marriage of one man to one woman.

[ 37 : 47 ] The Bible teaches the primal and transcendent unity of delight, procreation, godliness, pleasure, pleasure, companionship, goodness, and holiness in the marriage of one man to one woman.

You see, abortion separates godliness and procreation from sex.

Pornography separates delight from fruitfulness and procreation and sex. It's not all pornography. Maybe not all.

I don't watch pornography. So, you know what? Pornography always exalts barrenness.

Pornography exalts barrenness as an ideal.

That's what it exalts. Not life. Although in our culture, somehow that pursuing of life is separate from procreation, which is the actual creation of life.

[ 38 : 50 ] And so we want to separate these things out. We want to separate pleasure from godliness and pleasure from companionship.

And we want to separate out holiness and goodness from delight or from procreation. And we want to separate all of these things out. And we want to separate them out and make them all separate and think that, yeah, yeah, yeah, you can have a type of sexual stimulation, sexual knowing, which is pleasurable.

But you don't have to have pleasure connected with companionship or goodness or holiness or procreation. You can just separate all these things out. And that to separate all these things out are a good thing.

And the biblical image is so completely and wildly, radically different from our culture's understanding that it's almost even hard to have a conversation about it.

And even a whole lot of Christian talking about it is actually not even very Christian because it accepts that it's a good thing to separate all these things out into bits and pieces.

[ 39 : 51 ] And then it just tries to regulate. But the Bible teaches, this Proverbs teaches, the Bible as a whole teaches this unity between these things, not to be divided.

And a male and a male will never procreate. You can separate out sexual desire and sexual pleasure and all that from other things, just as you can with pornography.

And you want to know I'm going to be very politically incorrect right now. I can't remember the guy's name. There's been a lot of stuff in the paper about this supposed pickup artist. He sounds like a real jerk from the States who's come up to Canada.

But other than the fact that he's a jerk, isn't he just saying what a lot of men say all the time and increasingly women? That you just want to be able to have sex with somebody. But you're going to be Canadian, be civil, and you want to figure out a way to do it so that you don't hurt the person's feelings too much.

You don't let them down afterwards, and you're sort of discreet and hide the intention. But actually, it's a lot of what you just see on TV and what you experience in the culture, isn't it? Separating that pleasure from companionship and covenant and godliness and being like God.

[ 41 : 04 ] So some of you might say, oh, I can see I'm, you know, I prayed that I would preach for 40 minutes. I'm not going to make it today. But we need to keep going. So some of you are going to say, George, are you just saying that the Bible teaches that heterosexual marriages are so great?

Like, isn't that just what the 50s and 60s held up? That marriages are just by nature so great? And doesn't that by nature put down single people? And doesn't that by nature put, like, is that what you're saying?

No, the Bible's not cynical and it's not Hallmark, and it's very realistic. Let's look at some other Proverbs just very quickly.

Look at Proverbs 12.4. And if you would read it with me. An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.

This is the hardest one to do, but let's reverse it, okay? An excellent husband is the crown of her wife, but he who brings shame is like rotteness in her bones.

[ 42 : 12 ] This is the hardest one to reverse. You have to write it. So you're going to do husband and wife all the way back forward. You know, and that's just so true. Like, you know, some marriages are so terrible for the other person.

They are like rottenness in our bones. Some marriages, they just empty and hollow us out. Let's look at, read together Proverbs 21.9.

It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife. Let's reverse it. It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome husband.

Isn't it quarrelsome? Let's read it, 21.19. It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.

Let's reverse it. Read it again. It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful man. Let's read. Well, we're going to read Proverbs 27 in a moment.

[ 43 : 24 ] That'll be the last proverb. Proverbs doesn't believe that marriage, just because your marriage is going to solve everything, doesn't believe that. Doesn't believe that all marriages are perfect.

doesn't believe that it's a magic wand that heals sin and evil and death in our lives. The Bible doesn't believe that.

That sentimentality that comes from Hollywood and our culture and technology is not from the Bible. In fact, actually, the Bible acknowledges how hard it is to change the other person.

Let's read Proverbs 27.15-16 together. A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike. To restrain her is to restrain the wind or to grasp oil in one's right hand.

Now, let's read it again, but reverse it. A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome husband are alike. To restrain him is to restrain the wind or to grasp oil in one's right hand.

[ 44 : 30 ] You know, a continual dripping on a rainy day, it's rotting the ceiling, rotting the floors, rotting the walls. There's mold. The house will be unlivable. Quarrelsome means picking fights, majoring in the minors, majoring in things which are bad, not overlooking anything.

And sometimes, how do you control the other person? It's like trying to restrain the wind. Can't do it. Just make a wind tower. Make a wind channel. And you try to grasp oil in one's right hand.

The Bible is not naive about marriage. In fact, Andrew, if you could put up the third point. Here's what the Bible teaches. Sin is powerful and real in every marriage.

Sin is powerful and real in every marriage. And sin is powerful and real in living together and all other post-modern options which are being developed. Now, here's several things.

And I, boy, the first one is that the implication of this text isn't, Gosh, George, this is so right. I'm going to go home and divorce my wife. Or, this is so right.

[ 45 : 35 ] I'm going to go home. I can't change my husband. I'm going to go home and divorce him. No, the Bible's not teaching that. Now, by the way, this is a whole other topic.

This is why, you know, one of the things I was so worried about in this sermon is that people write thick books about marriage. I get 40 minutes, which is now going on past 40 minutes. You know, if there is adultery going on in your marriage, and if there is abuse going on in your marriage, it might very well be that your marriage has to end.

And I'm not talking about that. And it might be that the quarrelsome and dripping is a type of powerful abuse. And if you're in a marriage like that right now, then you need to talk to somebody, and they need some drastic stuff going on.

But the implication of this text goes in all sorts of ways. And the first thing here is that you have to look in that situation in a 360-degree way.

And you might have to pray for the power to forgive. You might have to pray for a greater power to delight in your wife.

[ 46 : 47 ] It might be if it's a wife dealing with her husband, she's not respecting her husband. Because husbands desire respect more than they desire love. That's what the Bible teaches.

And a lot of it is a person hearing these texts. For me reading these texts, it's not, I should not say, gosh, I wish Louise could hear all these texts because she needs to hear them. But I need to ask myself, what am I doing to provoke my wife?

What am I doing to weaken my marriage? How can I pray for my wife? One of the reasons that it's good for single people to hear texts like this is because it's not good to have a Hollywood understanding of marriage.

And it's also something that it can help you to be a powerful force of prayer in your married friends' lives or your parents' or whatever. And it can be very powerful and helpful for you even praying around your own status as to whether God's calling you to be married or whether he's calling you to

use you to be very fruitful and filled with life in singleness as the Bible as a whole teaches. But the Bible sets before you, you see, here's the thing about the book of Proverbs and the Bible. It makes us aware of the fact that we need grace.

[ 48 : 10 ] No marriage survives without grace. No marriage survives without grace. It doesn't matter if it's a Muslim marriage, an atheist marriage. It doesn't survive without grace.

There's not somebody who's willing to turn the other cheek and willing to forgive and willing to pray and willing to go the extra mile. If that's not happening in the marriage, that marriage ain't going to last. Or it's going to be just rotteness to both people's bones.

In fact, if you could put up the final point, Andrew. Remember, the third point was sin is powerful and real in every marriage. And the fourth point is that life needs to be grounded in and shaped by the grace which is stronger than sin and death.

Life needs to be grounded in and shaped by the grace which is stronger than sin and death. We Christians undervalue the teaching of common grace. Marriage was God's idea.

And God gives grace to all sorts of people. He gives grace to atheists. He gives grace to Christians. He gives grace to Muslims. He doesn't just give grace to certain people. Grace is a common thing. There are many people who are just, they have the ability to forgive and to turn the other cheek and to go the other mile and to delight in their spouse and their wife.

[ 49 : 23 ] And that's also all part of common grace. Grace is a common grace. And marriage, because sin is real and present in every marriage, every marriage needs grace. But we as followers of Jesus understand that the grounding of grace is not just common grace, but there's special grace.

That in fact, in some ways, everything in the book of Proverbs is to make us realize that, see, because what ultimately, whether it's recognized or not by a person, and when we say that a marriage needs grace, it's saying that it needs God.

It needs something that only God can give. That every one of our marriages, only God can keep that marriage together. Only God. It's to create in us a realization that we need a Savior.

And the book, all of these things, both the power of marriage and the unity of marriage, it's a picture for how God desires to relate to us. And it's also, in a sense, setting the stage for us to realize that we need God to do something that only we can do.

I'm going to close by reading Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5, it's not going to be on the screen. You're not going to read it out loud with me. I'm just going to read it. It's Ephesians 5, verses 25 to the end.

[ 50 : 30 ] Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourished and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and whole fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. All of these texts are showing us of our need for grace, our need for grace to start to move towards that ancient unity that the Bible is preparing.

And it shows us our need for not just common grace, but that grace that comes from God in the death of his son upon the cross, freely and unmeritedly dying for us and sacrificing himself for us, so that we could be one with God, and that we could enter into a life with God.

[ 51 : 53 ] And that grace is to ground us, and is to shape how our marriages live. It's to give us the confidence to call out to God in prayer. It's to ground how we understand our marriage.

It's to shape how we understand and live our marriage. We are to be disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel, who live for his glory. Let's stand, please. Let's stand.

Father, we both thank you for marriage, and we thank you for singleness.

We thank you, Father, that you are... Father, we thank you that you are the great good, that you are the one that every single human being is fundamentally made for and prepared for.

Father, we thank you for Jesus, that he loves us and died on the cross and redeemed us, so that we could be one with you, that we could be one with you. And Father, for those of us who are in the

state of singleness right now, I ask that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon them and help them to be fruitful and life-giving and God-glorifying in their state of singleness.

[ 53 : 14 ] And Father, for those who are present who are single but dating, Father, may you help them to understand that all dating is ordered towards marriage, and that their dating relationship would be wise and holy, and that you would grant them your wisdom and discernment as to whether you're calling them into marriage.

And Father, for those of us who are in marriages where there is great evil going on, the evil of adultery or abuse, we ask, Father, that you would turn hearts, that the one doing the adultery, the one doing the abuse, that he or she would repent, that they would seek help from you, and that you would turn their hearts towards their husband or their wife, as the case might be.

And Father, you know that every marriage here, even the ones that are so-called good, that there's elements of a dripping of rain in the marriage, of quarreling, of anger. And Father, we ask for those of us in marriages, that you might turn the heart of the husband to his wife and the wife to the husband, that there would be delight, that there would be grace, and that you, Father, that you would be the Lord, that you would be God of the marriage, and that Jesus would be the Savior and the Lord of each marriage, each one here who is married.

Father, help us to pray for each other. Help us to pray for each other. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.