

Marriage in the Beginning

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 June 2023

Preacher: Nate Taylor

[0 : 01] All right, if you didn't see the slides go by earlier, we're going to be talking about marriage tonight. We're taking our cues from Genesis 2, 18 to 25, and we're going to be talking about marriage.

And now here's the thing. Everybody in this room is either married or not married. And when I categorize people like that, my guess is some people don't really like to be broken into those categories.

We all relate to marriage in different ways, and I'm guessing in this room this evening there are a variety of feelings about the topic of marriage.

Some of us in this room are too young to be married. Others of us might be dying to be married. Some are happily single.

Some are happily married. Some are unhappily single, and some are unhappily married. Some might feel the ache of a spouse who's no longer here.

[1 : 02] Some may have regrets about things that have happened in the past in marriage and the wounds that are still bared from that. Other people may have wounds from growing up in a home where the marriage wasn't good or wasn't there at all.

Some may wonder what the big deal about marriage is, and others might think that marriage is the biggest deal in the world. We all relate to marriage in different ways, in some sort of way.

And here's the caveat, right? I may be talking a lot about marriage, but I need to say it up front, very clearly, before we continue, as we're talking about the goodness of marriage, in no way does that denigrate people who are not yet married or might spend their entire life not being married.

There's this guy named Jesus and a guy named Paul who are single their whole life, and God seemed to use them and to delight in them, I think. At the same time, we want to see that marriage is a creational ordinance, and it is vital to God's plan for the world.

In this world, people like to pit things against each other, so you've got the married folks and the families, and you've got the single people, and we don't want to get along, right? It has to be either or. If you talk about the goodness of marriage, you must be saying that singleness is bad.

[2 : 24] If you talk about the goodness of singleness, you're like, wait, am I even supposed to get married? The Bible likes to have both. And here's the thing. If we actually want a church to flourish and the home to flourish and society to flourish, you need good marriages.

It's foundational. Good, healthy marriages are key to flourishing. I was looking up some statistics on marriage and divorce in Scotland this week.

In 2021, the divorce rate in Scotland spiked by 15%. It's like everybody got through COVID and spent a lot of time together, and then they're like, no more, I can't handle this.

The divorce rate currently in Scotland is at 42%, which actually has gone down in the past decade. It used to be above 50%. Same in the United States.

Why? Why is it going down? Are marriages getting better? Nope. Look up more statistics. People are getting married less and less and later and later. So, here's the statistics.

[3 : 34] In the 1960s, in the United Kingdom, there were over 400,000 marriages a year. In 2017, there was a little more than half of that, about 230,000 marriages.

And in that amount of time, the population's grown by 10 million. People are getting married less and less. Not just that. In the mid-1970s, the average age for marriage was 24 years old for men and 22 for women.

Nowadays, it's 34 and a half for men and 33 for women. It's more than a decade difference for both in times when they're entering into their first marriage.

You're thinking, what's going on in the world? Unless we think that the problem with marriages is just outside of these walls. There's rising generations in the church who are not just rejecting biblical definitions of marriage, but they're rejecting the Bible altogether.

This should humble us, cause us to seek repentance and renewal in our marriages. This is something we have to talk about. It's baked into the way God has created things.

[4 : 45] We need to go back and teach what the Bible says about marriage, holding out its goodness, its purpose, its beauty. So that's what we're going to do. We're going to talk about what the Bible says about marriage from Genesis chapter 2.

We could say a ton of things, but I'm Presbyterian, so we use three-point outlines, I guess, and we're going to say three things, and it's this. Marriage has a mission, marriage is built on a promise, and marriage points beyond itself.

Marriage has a mission, marriage is built on a promise, and marriage points beyond itself. First thing, marriage has a mission. Verse 18, the very first verse, it starts with what should be a jarring phrase to those who are reading it.

God says, it is not good that man should be alone. What's been going on through the creation narrative is these manifold blessings of God upon his creation.

It's good. It's good. It's good. Ooh, it's very good. But here, there's something that's not good. It's this amazing statement, right? Adam, he enjoys the bounty of the garden.

[5 : 51] He can eat from any tree, unmediated access to the presence of God, and still in some mysterious way, he is incomplete and lonely. Is God surprised by this?

Oh, hold on. Did I miss something? No. He's commenting, though, on how he's created man with a mission, and that mission can't be accomplished solo.

You might ask, you'd like, hold on, isn't a relationship with God enough for Adam? You know what the answer is? No. Does that sound unholy to you?

No. Why? Why? It's not because God is somehow insufficient. It's because he has created man to live in community. Of course, he could have created us in a way where it was just, you know, just me and Jesus.

That's all we need. In fact, in our age, we tend to give deference to the individual, and that's crept into our religion. And so we say things like, well, the most important thing about a person is their personal relationship with Jesus.

[7 : 01] Yeah. In one sense, I'm not going to argue with that. That is true. Most important thing is your personal relationship with Jesus. But do you know the Bible doesn't really talk about it a lot in those types of terms?

Most important thing about you is that you have a relationship with Jesus and with his people. A relationship with Jesus necessitates a relationship with his people because that's how he has created us to be.

It's kind of like saying, you know, what are the two greatest commandments? Love God and love neighbor. You shouldn't hear, the greatest commandment is to love God, and if I have time in a 24-hour day, I'll get around to loving my neighbor.

No. The two go hand in hand. In the same way, relationship with God means a relationship with other people. You can't separate those two things.

Now, it's God saying, every single man has to be married. There's something not good about them. Again, no. It does mean, though, that you're built for human relationship.

[8 : 04] It's his design in creation, and there's a goal, and there's a mission for humanity. What is his, what's humanity's mission? We've said it many times as you're going through this.

God emphasized it. Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion. Can Adam be fruitful and multiply by himself?

No. It's not good for him to be alone. Adam cannot fulfill his mission in isolation. So he's been tasked to work the ground, to bring forth the fruitfulness of God's creation from its raw materials, to build a world, and he can't do it by himself.

We've already seen earlier on the cue from verses 26 and 27 of chapter 1 is that God created man in his image, male and female, together.

Together, image of God. Not just one, right? Together, you see the full image of God. You need both. So, the Lord God, he sees a problem, and his solution is that he's going to make a helper fit for Adam.

[9 : 14] Now, be honest, ladies. I have a question for you. Do you like that phrase, helper? Do you like to be called a helper? I think you don't have to raise hands or anything.

I'm not looking for an audible response. I'm just curious. You see, here's the problem with it, is that that phrase nowadays makes it sound like assistant, the way that we use that word, right?

Adam needed an assistant. It's like there's Santa, and he needs some little elves, some assistants to get his work done. Therefore, women came into the world, right? That's how you can feel. Adam was given a mission, and he's going to get tired, and he needed somebody to make him a sandwich.

Therefore, a woman was created. It's a sad thing if men treat women that way, and it's a sad thing also if women hear that when they read God's word.

It might say more about us than God's word. There's two Hebrew words used there for helper fit for him, a help fit, okay? The first word, helper, which maybe some people bristle at, is the Hebrew word ezer, ezer.

[10 : 23] You get ebenezer, stone of help, okay? That word ezer, it gets primarily used in the Old Testament of God, okay?

It gets used. Is God just a little elf to help your agenda? Uh-uh, right? If that's what we're hearing, just assistant, we're hearing the wrong thing. Here's an example. Psalm 33, verses 18 to 20.

The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

That's what God's doing. Delivering from death, keeping alive in the midst of famine. We wait in hope for the Lord. He is our help and our shield, our help, our ezer.

Right? That's the way the word's being used. Psalm 121. I lift up my eyes to the hills from where does my help, my ezer, come from? My ezer, my help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

[11 : 25] In Isaiah 30, I'm not going to read the passage, but it refers, that word help, ezer, refers to military reinforcements. So, is the idea that Adam needs a personal assistant, a butler of some sorts, a cook?

No. The idea is there is a mission, there is a task, and it is in peril of not being accomplished. But here comes the cavalry. Here comes power.

Here comes help. This is how things are supposed to be. The second Hebrew word, neged, it carries this idea of fitting. It's got this idea of like, but opposite.

The ESV does a good job capturing this with a helper fit for him. It's same, but different. It's like two puzzle pieces. You know, they're different, but they go together, and you need both of them, and they have to be different, but they only make sense if they're together.

And so, you have this helper fit for Adam that God said he's going to make, and so you expect verse 19 to set, and then he created woman, right? But that's not how the author of Genesis tells the story.

[12 : 34] Instead, you go through this brief tension-building detour. Adam, he starts to name the animals. Use your imagination a little bit. Think of Adam as, you know, all the animal couples are being paraded before him, and he's like, lion, lioness, lucky.

God's inflamed desire within Adam. None of these things are going to do, right? And so God, he causes this deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he takes a rib.

I actually think a better translation is, takes from his side, but it doesn't matter. Either way, it's the same idea. That woman is coming from man, right? The woman is the same and equal, but different.

And since she's taken from his side, he doesn't stand over her, but rather she is coming alongside as an equal, different, separate, but equal in order to accomplish a task, a mission that God has for humanity, a co-laborer.

And what is Adam's response when he sees woman? Finally, this at last, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.

[13 : 46] There's this idea of unity and kinship there. And Adam, he explodes into poetry when he sees woman. See, marriage is given.

It's not this strictly utilitarian thing for the survival of the species, right? There's joy and romance and beauty and wonder in it here in Genesis 2.

God thinks that's that important to include in the first two chapters of his story. And then verse 24 says, since that, therefore, it's the first therefore in the Bible, I think.

It says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh. This one flesh thing, it's getting across this idea that the two, what used to be two separate things is now becoming one new thing.

There is a relationship that transcends all other relationships now being formed in marriage, right? And here's the thing. Adam, he's still Adam. Eve, she's still Eve.

[14:49] And yet together, there's this one new thing. Here's an illustration to help get across this point. If you traveled to the American South and you went into a restaurant and you asked for a tea, please, waiter, tea, they're not bringing you a hot cup of tea.

It's not a hot cuppa. They are bringing you an iced sweet tea. Okay? Say, tea, please, an iced sweet tea. And here's how you know, I'm looking at the Southerners over here, they know exactly what I'm talking about.

And it should be so sweet that like cavities start to form immediately as you drink it. Okay? Here's how you know if you're outside of the American South, like we lived, Aaron and I lived in St. Louis in the Midwest.

If you go, tea, please, they'll bring you, still not a hot cup of tea, hate to break it to you British people, but they'll bring you an iced tea, but it'll be unsweet. And you know what they'll do? They'll push some sugar packets towards you. And you're like, this is not how it's supposed to be done, because why? What's the problem? If you take the sugar and you put it in the cold iced tea and you try to mix it up, where does the sugar go?

[15:57] To the bottom. It stays two separate things. The beauty of Southern sweet tea is you put the sugar in when the tea and water are piping hot.

So there's some sort of chemical reaction that happens, and the sugar is bonding to the tea, and it becomes this one new super sweet thing. You can still taste the sweetness of the sugar, the sugariness of it, and the teeness of the tea, but there's this one new thing that's been created, sweet tea.

And marriage is like sweet tea. The husband still is the husband. He's still an individual, just like the wife. But together, there's this one new thing that's being created.

You don't lose your individuality, but there's a relationship priority. That's why I said leave one family to start a new one, right? There's a relationship priority that's happened because of this.

Now, some marriages struggle because one spouse or maybe both spouses do not leave their families in the way that this is talking about and hold fast to their spouse.

[17:14] They're still controlled by their parents. You know what? The biblical command, the fifth commandment is to honor your parents. It doesn't say obey your parents. It says honor your parents. Ephesians 6 says little children, obey your parents, right?

So that's part of it. Some of the kids are like, ah, only got to honor. Don't have to obey. Little children, obey your parents in the Lord. But last time I checked, no little children were getting married, right? You see, this idea of honoring goes for all of your life.

You're still caring for your parents, but you're not controlled by them. You're not obeying them.

You're not seeking to please them the most. That is not your primary loyalty in relationship. Rather, it's to your spouse.

And where they go, you go. That's the priority within it. Marriage supersedes the loyalty to your family of origin. And if you don't get that, there's going to be lots of problems in your marriage.

So let me ask you, what's your mission in life? Again, a lot of times we think about that in individualistic terms. Let me just throw this out there. I'm going to add some caveats so I don't get angry emails.

[18:20] It is not a bad mission for your life to desire to get married, have as many kids as your family can handle, serve the church, work really hard, and catechize your kids and your grandchildren.

That's a pretty good sketch for a life plan. Maybe there's more things to it. Okay? Again, okay, here's the qualification. If you're unmarried, it doesn't mean that you have no purpose or that you're a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God.

Some people, God ordains, might call them to a life of being single all the time. And they can still contribute to God's kingdom even in very strategic and important ways.

I'm speaking in general because what Genesis 2 says, in general, God's plan is for humanity to be married this side of the new heavens and the new earth.

And here's the hopefully gentle challenge. I think it would behoove single people to realize this. It's not an attack upon single people to say something like that.

[19 : 27] And on the flip side, it would behoove married people to realize that a single person is not somehow lacking in purpose and dignity. And the only way that they're going to find joy and satisfaction in life is they get married like you do.

Maybe they're looking at your marriage and they're kind of wanting to wait. I don't know. Marriage is a good thing to long for. It's not bad. You're not sinning to long to be married if that's where you are. You can make an idol of it, right? Right? Good things get twisted in idolatry and become God things. That's the way you can treat marriage. But just in and of itself, it's a good thing to desire a spouse.

If you're single and you're desiring to be married, that's a wonderful thing. There's no shame in that. But here's also, if the point of your marriage is just marriage, it's going to collapse on itself.

As wonderful as marriage is, it's not going to fix all that ails you. There has to be a purpose, a mission. You can only hang out at a coffee shop and stare into each other's eyes for so long.

[20 : 25] There has to be something more to it. What's your mission, purpose? There's a goodness. There's a creational intent. If you are married here tonight, my encouragement is this week at some point to sit down and to talk about the mission of your marriage.

What's its purpose? Where are you going with it? Verbalize it. You know, sometimes marriages get stuck because they think lovey-dovey stuff at the very beginning is the only thing that's going to sustain your marriage.

There's more to it than that. Not that romance is unimportant, but there's more to it than that. Also, at the same time, you know, sometimes you can pour your whole heart and soul into raising kids and they grow up and they leave the house and all of a sudden you feel like there's no mission. There's no point to your marriage. Come together. Talk. What does it mean to be a face-to-face couple who are serving the Lord together? You're asking, how can as two people who are one, how can we serve the Lord?

Let me apply this in one more way before moving on. It's about dating. Dating, courtship, whatever language you want to use, with no mind for marriage makes no sense according to Genesis 2.

[21 : 36] Just perpetual dating. It's like starting a car engine and just hanging out in the driveway. Now, I'm not trying to rush people into marriage or say if you're single and you hang out with the opposite gender and you're interested in them, you immediately have to go to them and be like, just so you know, if I ask you to coffee, it's because I'm thinking about marrying.

Like, don't be weird, guys. Don't be weird. But there's a mission. There's a goal to romantic relationships according to Genesis 2 and it is marriage. So it's good to look for a spouse, but this idea of modern hookup culture with perpetual, like no actual commitment at all to make you feel good about yourself, it doesn't make any sense.

According to Genesis 2, the goal is love. But there's a fruit from that love. All right. That was the first point. All right. Marriage. There's a mission to marriage. It's created with purpose so that humanity can fill earth, work the earth, and reflect God's glory.

Second thing, though, marriage is built on a promise. Every single one of the commentaries that you'd read that's worth its weight, it says, it will mention in verse 24, when it uses the language of leaving father and mother and holding fast to a spouse, that is the language of covenant.

It's language of covenant. Marriage is a covenant. A covenant is a relationship that gets entered into with promises that are made.

[23 : 05] It's a very solemn relationship and there are blessings when those promises are kept and there are curses. There's woes when those promises are not followed and those promises are broken.

God, he enters into covenant relationship with his people. And what kind of promise is a marriage built on? It's a covenant promise.

And what that means, it's this. A covenant, if marriage is a covenant, what kind of promise is that built on? It's this. It's a no matter what kind of a promise.

I've been reading a book called Biblical Critical Theory with Kirk. Kirk mostly, so after we read it, I can ask him what on earth the chapters we read meant. And he explains it to me.

But the author, he's talking about God entering into covenant relationship with his people. And he uses, this is a Bible scholar, he uses this example, Avengers Endgame. If you don't know what that is, superhero movies, still, listen, you'll still get the point.

[24 : 06] It matters. In Avengers Endgame, right, there's a big bad villain named Thanos. And all these superheroes get together and they know the odds of beating him are one in 14 million.

But every single one of the superheroes, you know what they say? Whatever it takes. They all make the same promise. Whatever it takes, we're going to sacrifice.

We're going to try to defeat the big bad guy. Now, why do I mention that? Well, here's another way that they could have made a pledge or a promise. If Iron Man goes, I pledge, you know, two days a week to defeating the bad guy and up to 10 million of my fortune to defeating him.

A penny past that and I'm out. Right? That one is not the type of promise that is a covenant. A covenant is whatever it takes, no matter what.

Because here's the thing. Again, there is a difference in relationships between, we can refer to as a consumer relationship and a covenant relationship. This is the difference. A consumer relationship.

[25 : 09] Imagine you have, let's use a coffee shop again, a coffee shop that you love. You love going to this coffee shop. It serves the best flat white that you've ever tasted. The baristas are super kind.

You've made friends there. It's a lovely place to sit. It's well decorated. But one day, you walk in and the price of that flat white has more than doubled.

Not only that, but you sip that flat white and it tastes like one of the baristas used the rag that they wiped the floor with and twisted it into your drink.

It just tastes disgusting. And day after day, it's the same thing. And then the price keeps going up. What are you going to do? You used to love it so much.

You're going to go find a different coffee shop. Why? Because you're in a consumer relationship with them. There's a product that you're trying to get and as much as lovely as it could possibly be, it's a transactional thing.

[26 : 09] Right? But marriage, marriage is based on a promise. I am my beloved and my beloved is mine, no matter what. So things get hard or the person's looks change or an illness comes, you don't leave.

Marriage is not a product to consume but a promise to sustain you. And let me tell you, any marriage, current ones or ones that you're going to be entering into, they are not going to flourish unless you understand this.

It is built on a promise. You can't make it on, I'm just enamored by this person and they make me feel these butterflies in my stomach.

Just at that point, if that's all it is, it's transactional. Because what happens when that goes away? Are you leaving? No, marriage has to be based and built on a promise.

This is the pattern that happens in relationships again and again and again. I tell you, over time, I've seen it again and again in ministry. The thing, the very thing that attracts you to your spouse ends up being the thing that eventually frustrates you.

[27 : 22] It happens all the time. So, this is what it is, the man goes, oh man, she is just so spontaneous and lovely and bubbly. And you know what it turns into 10 years down the road at some point?

Because of sin, we're sinners. Genesis 3 happens. Can I have a minute to myself? And what starts as her going, he is like a rock, I'm all over the place, but he is solid and dependable, turns into, can you have an emotional response to something?

What do you do? This matters a huge deal because the promise isn't as long as your expectations are being met and you're happy, you're in marriage together.

No, it's a promise of no matter what, whatever it takes because marriage is a covenant. It's built on a promise. The Bible does have reasons why a marriage can end.

There's biblical grounds for divorce and even in some situations it might be necessary based upon the breach of that covenant. However, what's interesting is nowadays people don't even have to give reasons.

[28 : 29] Right? In the UK and the USA, we have no-fault divorces. You don't even have to list a reason. You just go, it just wasn't working. We just became different people. We grew apart, right?

Right? Basically saying, listen, it just wasn't working. We're not happy anymore. And underlying that, it's basically, hey, listen, I went into this in a consumer-based relationship, not a covenantal one, where as long as my desires were being met, I was in the relationship. But that changed. So now I'm going to leave. You see the difference between the biblical view of marriage and what the world calls marriage? It's just a consumer relationship dressed in covenantal clothes.

And here's a helpful bit of information, in case you haven't found this out, if you're married or if you're not married, is that getting married doesn't eliminate your sin. In fact, it shines the spotlight on it.

Some people are giggling. I don't know why. Right? You know, if you were selfish before you went into marriage, you're going to be selfish in marriage. Right?

[29 : 37] If you're angry before you went into marriage, you're going to be an angry person in marriage. Marriage can sanctify you, but it doesn't in and of itself fix your sin. Aaron and I got married when we were young.

We were so in love. So many butterflies. Moved into our flat, first flat. And we tried to load a dishwasher together. I thought the other person was an imbecile.

If you're struggling in marriage, you're not alone. You're not alone. Talking through these things. Right? Talk through what it means that your marriage is based on a promise.

That you don't let the sun go down on your anger. That you work through hard things. Treat your marriage like it's a whatever it takes relationship. And if you and your spouse are finding communication difficult, you know it's okay to ask people for help.

If your spouse gives permission, talk to a friend. And receive counsel. Pastors are there to pastor you through issues in your marriage. And if for some reason it's beyond our capabilities and you need a marriage counselor, somebody very skilled in the art of entering in and helping people reconcile, come talk to me.

[30 : 49] I'd love to give recommendations towards that. Marriage has a mission. Right? There's a purpose, a beauty, a goal, a goodness to it when you live as God intended. Secondly, marriage is built on a promise.

It's not a consumer relationship. It's a covenantal one. Last thing. Marriage points beyond itself. I was listening to a podcast this week. And the guy hosting the podcast helps to disciple other Christians.

And he says he likes to ask them this simple question. If you had to use one word to describe how God feels about you, what would you say? Do you want to know what the number one response is? Disappointed. I don't know what yours was. Disappointed. If that's you, you're not alone. But I am here to bring you the good news of marriage.

Whether you're wed or you're unwed. Paul quotes Genesis 2 in that Ephesians 5 passage that we were reading. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother. He shall hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

[32 : 00] And then what does he say right after that? This is a mystery. But I'm telling you guys, I'm talking about Christ and his church. And listen, men, if you feel kind of squeamish about being called the bride of Christ, you can talk to some of the sisters here who've been called sons of God their entire life in church, and they will walk you through that process.

You will be okay. But here's the thing. In Jesus Christ, you can hear the words of Song of Solomon in a more profound way than even from a spouse to a spouse.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. This is the power of marriage. It's going to bring change to our families and churches and society if it is based on this, if marriages actually point beyond themselves.

This is actually the strength that your marriage needs. A greater promise that never gets broken. This is the kind of love your marriage gets to reflect.

That Jesus, he's not just your king and your shepherd, but he is your bridegroom. And if he is your bridegroom, then you are his bride. And he looks at you, not with disappointment, but he is ravished with love for his beloved.

[33 : 21] He is covenantally committed to you and says whatever it takes, even if it costs his own life to cover our nakedness and shame.

And if he didn't spare his own son, how will he not graciously give us all things? Jesus unites himself to his bride in covenant love. He's not in a consumer relationship with you.

You ever heard this critique about modern praise and worship songs that are written? They all sound, they're all too emotional and it's too much like Jesus is my boyfriend.

Right? And sometimes, yeah, I can agree with those things. We don't need to write Jesus is my boyfriend songs. That are just like, oh, there's this emotional thing that happens when I enter into church and that's all I need to survive.

No, you know what we need? You know what kind of songs we need to be singing to ourselves? Is that Jesus isn't our boyfriend, but that he's our bridegroom. That he's that committed to his church.

[34 : 23] That we see a picture of in the Old Testament comes into fullness in the new. And do you know what's waiting for God's people? A wedding. A wedding.

Because you see, the first Adam gets put in the garden and is given a marriage. Right? And what starts out as poetry, next chapter, these words are going to be, they're going to be trading barbs and blaming one.

And another is the woman you gave me. First Adam fails. What is he supposed to do with Adam, with Eve? He's supposed to bring the children of God into the world and to fill the earth with the children of God.

And he fails and he disobeys. And what comes is disaster and divorce and betrayal and death. Into the picture then steps the second Adam. Who from his side comes life of his bride.

And he obeys where the first failed. And now he calls people to himself. He said, come. Come. We're going to fill the earth with the children of God.

[35 : 27] It is a promise that I am making that you're invited into. Come to the wedding supper of the Lamb. All these runaway brides get brought home.

Those wandering in loneliness get called into love. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. Just away from idolatry and loneliness and fear and lust.

Into a relationship that will transform you and direct you and name you. And give you what you need to make it in this world. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Do you know what this means? That the one true God, the creator of the world, looks at you. Not with disappointment if you have repented and believe and trust in him.

But he calls out to you. Arise, my love, my beautiful one. And come away. This is the love that you need. It's a love you're not going to find in your marriages.

[36 : 29] But it's a love that's going to transform your marriages. And transform you even if you are not married right now. Thanks be to God. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would be with the marriages in this church.

That they would reflect the whatever it takes love that you've shown to us. For those pursuing marriage, give them a vision of a spouse that is committed to covenantal love.

That these would be the definition of marriage. That this would be the thing that they long for. We pray that you do a work so that the character of love shaped by the gospel in a person would be a deeply attractive thing to single people.

And in all this may we get glimpses of the gospel. If anyone's here who isn't sure if they're invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. I pray that by your Holy Spirit they would hear right now your words to arise and come to you.

And to find love and joy and purpose. To find a committed bridegroom who will never leave or forsake them. We ask this in the name of our bridegroom Jesus. Amen.