

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Building Blocks Of The Family

PART

3

TITLE

Making A Marriage

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 2:18-24



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Well, it's great to see you Providence family. I hope that you have had a great week, and if you're a guest with us welcome. We are so glad that you have joined us on this really special weekend. When we think back, and we honor those who by sacrifice gave their life for our freedoms, for our nation we're grateful and on this incredibly special weekend when we think back, and we honor people it's also so fitting for us it's such a privilege for us to come and to worship Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ gave his life for each and everyone of us. It's absolutely stunning if you really think long enough about what the gospel is and what that word gospel it means just good news, and it's the good news that you and I can be forgiven of our sin because God loved us so much that he chose willingly to send his only son from heaven to earth.

You see, God knew that we had a problem that was separating us from God and he called it sin. It's when we made choices in our life that violated God's very specific word for our lives. It's absolutely tragic, but every single one of us have sinned and fallen short of its glory and as a result of that every single one of us knows what it feels like to feel shame and to feel regret. We also know what it feels like to be separated from God. We may not necessarily know how to find words that really describe it, but when there's a lack of joy or lack of peace in your life you're distanced from God so God looked upon us, and he saw sin separating us because he's holy, and we have all fallen short of his glory, so he sent his son can you believe that? He sent his son the son of God from heaven to earth, and he lived a righteous life in this mess of a world. He was tempted in every way just as you and I are and yet he was without sin and yet in love in incredible love he chose to give up his life for us.

He died on a cross, and he was buried in a grave and then he rose from the dead on the third day and then he gave to you and to me an invitation and that is that if we would believe in him, if we would say yes to his invitation and say, God, I cannot save myself, but I believe in your son's merit and your son's righteousness and his accomplishments on my behalf. The Bible says that he actually forgives us of all of our sin. He takes away all of the sin, and he fills that gaping hole in our heart to where we feel. We actually have peace and how he does this is it says that when we trust Christ it says this his Holy Spirit comes to actually live within us. He gives us a new operating system so that we can think about new things and do things that we can even want different things. God inclines our heart to actually want to do his will.

One of the reasons this is so important, obviously, if you don't know Christ today, and you're sitting here, and you've never been forgiven, and you're still banking and relying upon your righteousness I have good news for you today and that is that your righteousness will never be enough, but his righteousness is, and he wants to give all of his to you so that you can be free so that you can have peace in your heart, but there's another reason this is so critically important to us even for those of us who are believers and that is that when we trust Christ as our savior is that he literally puts his Holy Spirit within us to confirm what otherwise the Bible would seem like says that it's foolishness to us and that is his very word. You see, I'm going to talk about something today that's not necessarily popular in our culture, and I'm going to say things about it to where many in the room may even feel a little bit uncomfortable, but here's the reality.

If the Holy Spirit of God is living within your heart then the Holy Spirit inclines our heart he whispers into our ear, and he says, "Believe this, this is true," but if the Holy Spirit is not in your heart then the only thing you have to go on is this word in comparison to everything else that you hear, and you hear it every single day of your entire life so what I want to do is to pray for us. I want to pray for you. If you've never trusted Christ you can do that today did you know that? Even while I'm praying you can say, God, I admit that I'm a sinner, and I want to receive your free gift of forgiveness, and I believe in Jesus Christ and I confess you as Lord, and he'll save you from all of your sin so let's pray together.

Father in heaven we come to you and as we address the family and as we address marriage we confess to you that your voice is not the voice that we typically hear so we need your help. I pray, God, that you by your spirit would confirm these things within our heart that they really are true. I pray, God, that you would help us as a body to lean into your word this morning. I pray for those who are here who do not know you even now would you lead them Lord to trust you with their life. I pray for families who are here today who are grieving the loss of a loved one who gave his or her life for others, for us, for our freedoms. I pray this weekend that you would draw near to those who are brokenhearted. I pray that you would encourage and build up and that you would minister to them in ways that no human being can. We thank you, Father, for your grace in our life, and I pray now that you would speak through weakness and confirm these things in our heart, and I pray this in Christ's name, Amen, Amen.

Well, we're on a series. This is the third week of a seven week series where we're just looking at these basic building blocks that God has established that God has chosen for the family. I want to show you what these are. Two weeks ago what we looked at is that God created us male and female so we looked at gender and then what we looked at last week is that he made us not married but first we're single we have to get married so we looked at this whole season of life to where God has really blessed and he is used in the hope that we would cultivate our life and our character for whatever he has in front of us. This week we're on marriage next week we're on sex so God says, "Fill the earth to have children," so we're going to be looking at that.

If you're wondering like should I bring my kid? I would bring my kids. They hear it everywhere so you might as well hear it from the Bible, but I promise you that I will be careful, okay? I'm always careful about things like that and I won't be flippant in any way next week. Then all of a sudden we have kids around so we have to parent them so we're going to do a sermon on motherhood, a sermon on fatherhood, and then the last one what we want to look at is what God has called children to do and that is to look at male and female and to look at singleness and to look at marriage and to look at my mom and dad and say, you know what, I want to emulate that. I want to imitate that in the hope that they would perpetuate another healthy family that in time would perpetuate more healthy families.

So this morning as we look at marriage I want to ask you to turn to the second chapter in the Bible, Genesis chapter two. If you don't have one with you there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you and if you don't have one at home take that home as a gift, but as we look at marriage I want to tell you that I'm asking you this morning to lean in even if you find yourself initially resistant to things that I'm saying I want to encourage you to lean in and say God is this true? Help me to see in your word is this true? You see, the fact is that if you and I merely accept the loudest voice that we hear about marriage it won't be God's voice. You see, God could thunder with his voice, but what we find within scripture is that he typically whispers. It's a still small voice. He normally chooses to communicate and speak to us in a way that can only be heard by those that are leaning into his word wanting to trust, looking to trust saying God is this of you? So I urge you today the Bible is a book it's the word of God and it is quiet until you read it, but once you read it it can thunder in your heart.

This is what he says starting in chapter two, verse 18 it says, "And then the Lord God said it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast to the field and every bird to the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them and whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. The man gave names to all of the livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast to the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him so the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and while he slept he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh and the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man, and then the man said this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and holdfast to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

So what I want to do here this morning is to show you three ways that God is instrumental in marriage and then we're going to look at three ways that we can respond to what God is doing in marriage, okay? So the first thing that we see is this is that God prepares people for marriage. He prepares people for marriage and before I even show you how he does that we need to back up just one-half a step and we need to talk about authority. You see, every single day you and I we evaluate the goodness of things that we see or that we hear or that we feel or touch. Already some of you have evaluated the goodness of my shirt. You said, "It's a good a shirt," or "No, I don't like it so much today it's not good."

Here in about 30 minutes you're going to evaluate the goodness of this sermon. Some of you are going to say, "It was good." Some of you, "He's done better. It's not so good." Some of you you've already evaluated the music. Some of you said, "Well, it was really good this morning," or "Not so good this morning." All of us do this. The chair that you sat in you thought, "This is a good chair," or "This is not a good chair." Every single one of us, right? We make evaluations on the basis of what we perceive to be good or not so good on everything that we see. The fact is that we don't always agree do we? We don't always agree as to what's good. You can say, oh, this is really good, and someone else is going to say it's not so good.

There's a lot of our church family right now that's at the beach and if we were all at the beach and I was at the beach and if I saw a man walking down the beach in his Speedo I would say that's not so good, okay? However, there's a lot of people from Europe, right? Where a little bit less swimwear is the norm and they would disagree with that. They'd say, no, that's perfectly acceptable, that's fine, I disagree.

The point is this is that we're all limited and the reason we're limited is because we're not sovereign. We're not God and because we're not sovereign and not God our evaluations are not authoritative. They're not binding on everybody of what we think about certain things, but God is sovereign. God is the authority. God is the creator, therefore, God has creator rights and what this means is that his evaluations are authoritative and they are binding on all of us and our response to his evaluations is simply to agree. That's what's acceptable it's to agree. He said it I agree with it. So what we find here in verse 18 is the very first time among many times in the scriptures, but it's the very first time that God looks down from heaven he sees things on the earth and he says now that's not good. Our responsibility is to agree. The first thing that he says, "This isn't good," is he sees the man alone. He says, "It's not good for the man to be alone," it's not good.

Now what happens next is really significant, right? I think the only way that I can help you maybe remember the significance is to do something that potentially it worked okay last hour, right? It can tank, right? We're going to work on it, okay? So if you have something in your hand I need you to put it down because I'm going to ask you to clap after me, okay? So I'm going to clap I'm going to do something like this, okay? As I stop then I want you in sequence altogether to do it at the same time. You ready? I know it's big. We can do this though, okay? Maybe you think this is so stupid just embrace the awkwardness this is going to go somewhere. Okay, you ready? Here we go.

Okay, what's the difference? The difference was pattern wasn't it? On the third time it was one and four instead of one and two. Some of you I started doing four and all of a sudden your eyes got a little bit bigger like how many times is he is going go because I have to remember this, okay? So there's a sequence there's a pattern and once the pattern changes we recognize it. This is what happens in Genesis. There's a pattern up to this point and this is the pattern. God looks at something and he says, "Let there be light." The very next sentence it says, "And there was light," or "And it was so." Let there be an expanse and it was so. Let there be trees and it was so. Let there be fish and it was so. Let there be and it was. God's speaking things into existence. He's the creator. He has creator rights. He speaks and suddenly it's there and suddenly there's a change in sequence. He says, "I will make a helper for him." In other words let there be a helper.

We assume if we're following the Bible accurately that there's a change in sequence. Eve should show up in verse 19 and she doesn't. Instead God inserts something that's supposed to make us go what's that about? What he does is he has them name the animals. He says, "Okay, I'm going to make you somebody, but first I tell you what, there's just something that's just in my craw would you go name all these animals. I made them all, but they all need a name." Why would he do this?

Well, when you keep reading and you get to verse 20 we're told why. It says, "But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him." So God wanted to open up Adam's eyes to what he already knew and that was that every animal had a partner and a like kind, but that he was alone. Notice it says, "There was not found a helper." Who is looking? Adam was looking. Adam was going around finding animals in the garden and he kept finding two of them. There's two of you and there's two of you and there's two of you.

Finally, Adam, he's like, God, there's one of me. It is at this point once he recognizes there's a need once God has prepared his heart to see a need that God says, "I'll tell you what, why don't you take a nap." He takes a rib and he makes the woman out of that rib so what we find here is this it's a beautiful thing that God prepares. God prepares for things that are important to him. He prepares our life. He uses the seasons of our life to prepare for whatever season is next. He prepares our heart to receive. He even prepared the garden by saying I want you to spend some time working it, cultivate the soil, cultivate faithful stewardship in your life so that when I bring somebody into your life you can say welcome to my healthy non co-dependent world.

He prepares people for what is important to him. God met his need before Adam knew he had a need and this is God this is what he does. It says, "It's the Lord who goes before you." God know what next year holds for you and he's using this year to prepare you for it so we can trust God. Not only can we trust God we can see that God prepares people for this thing that we all just call marriage. He's doing something in our life for it that's the first thing. The second thing is that God joins people in marriage. He joins people in marriage so what you find in all of chapter one and in chapter two is that God is the principle mover he's the one doing things. God creates the man he reveals the man's need. He remedies the man's need by creating a woman and suddenly things turn into a wedding when you get to verse 22.

It says, "And God," he's like the father of the bride it says that "He brought the woman to the man." He didn't create or drop her behind a bush and says, "Good luck, figure it out." That's not how it went. No, God looks at Eve and he says, "I want to bring you." It's intimate it's incredibly personal. There's no aloofness to it. It's, hey, hold onto my arm. We're going to go for a stroll. He brings her to the man and it's fantastic what takes place. Adam goes Broadway on everybody. He starts speaking like most men never speak. He speaks in a poem. He says, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of a man."

How I interpret all of that is with this picture, okay? He's really encouraged right now. He sees Eve and he says, "Okay, this is really, really good." What he says is, "She's like me and we're like you and this is really good." Suddenly, God switches roles at this wedding. Some have seen one where the father of the bride is also the pastor that then just assumes the role and this is what God does. He walks her out and he's goes, "Hold on Eve," and he comes over and he stands and he goes, "Who gives this woman in marriage to this man?" He comes back and he goes, "Well, I do because I just made her." Then he comes back and all of a sudden now he starts proclaiming he's pronouncing marriage in verse 24.

This is what he says, he goes, “A man shall leave his mother and his father.” Now they don’t have moms and dads so what we find in Genesis is he’s creating categories that are prescriptive for the rest of humanity to look back upon that says this is the pattern in marriage and when he says leave mom and dad he’s not saying eliminate the relationship with your mom and dad. What he’s saying is this is when you get married you transfer the priority of allegiance or commitment to this person. Now you vacation with this person. You live with this person. You sleep with this person. You endure with this person. This person you leave for this person, you cleave or your holdfast. The word holdfast means to grip tightly. It’s fierce compatibility, fierce determination. It’s I am depended upon you. It’s as if you’re hanging off a mountain and you’re holding onto a rope and you’re saying I am not going to let go and there’s grit. There’s a labor to cleave to each other and then he says, “To become one flesh.”

Some people look at that and say, “Well, this is the sexuality part.” I suppose it’s one, but actually what he’s saying is this it’s two people are fused into one. There’s a fusion of people where the two now becomes one and this is what’s amazing about this. You look in our text and in verse 24 it doesn’t say who is speaking verse 24 does it? It just says, “Therefore man.” There’s no quotes there’s nothing there. The man speaks he finishes speaking in verse 23 and all of a sudden it’s almost like that there’s this summary statement so Jesus comes to the earth and when Jesus is speaking about marriage in Matthew chapter 19 he says that it was God himself that spoke this sentence and two verses later in Matthew chapter 19, verse six he says, “Now what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Now every single one of us who are married or are pursuing marriage or maybe you’re with somebody you’re dating somebody there is effort that’s involved in cultivating that love and that trust in that relationship we all acknowledge that. Let me tell you a little bit about my story, okay? I grew up in Missouri, was in college in Missouri. My wife, Tabatha, grew up in Georgia. She was going to school in Michigan and God put upon both of our heart a desire to go overseas to do short-term mission work. Short-term for her was two years and for me it was just a little bit over six months. So we had to go with somebody some entity so we went to Richmond, Virginia and that’s where we met. There was a two week training process and 10 days in I told her I’m going to marry you one day, okay? I don’t necessarily recommend that for everybody, okay?

So then literally I met her parents and she met my parents and then we literally parted ways. I went to Zimbabwe and she went to Senegal, Africa. Over the next two years there was a tremendous investment in lots of different ways. We had a few times where we saw each other, but the fact is that most of it it was writing. I would write her four, five times a week and this is before email, okay? This is before all the cool technology today it would have been so amazing, so I wrote letters four or five letters every single week. We’ve kept those letters. She would write back as well. They’re all in these little trunks and these are the actual letters, right? There’s literally hundreds of them. About two years later I surprised her and her family in Paris asked her to marry me on the Eiffel Tower, right? Get back and all of a sudden now we’re planning a ceremony.

Now all of you are going, wow, that's a whole lot of effort. You guys did this. You guys brought yourself together. You guys moved. The fact is, listen, we do pursue and we do propose and we make plans and we make vows at a ceremony and pastors declare us married. The states recognize us as married, but God is the only one who joins a man and a woman to be married. God does all the joining. We don't join each other, and if we could recognize that that it wasn't our hands that brought us together we would be more careful in taking it apart and that's what Jesus said. The son of God stood on the earth preparing to give his life for you so you know he's for you and he says, "What God has joined together don't take it apart, don't do it."

One man, one woman, joined by one God in a covenant. A covenant is an interesting word. In the Old Testament and New there's commitments and there's covenants. A commitment is where two people enter into something a deal and one person is freed if the other person defaults, and then there's a covenant and a covenant is when we fuse ourself to one another until death do us part. You see this in Malachi two, you see it in Proverbs Chapter five, you see it in Genesis 15 where God made a covenant with Abraham. It was until death do us part and the fact is that you and I both know that we live in a fallen world. The fallen world in which we live it creates all kinds of what if scenarios.

What if he treats me like this? What if she's unfaithful? There's many of us right now you're sitting here right where you're at and you're thinking, "You know what, I never once thought I'd be in a situation that I'm in right now." The fact is it is a fallen world so I need you to be really careful to listen to this, okay? God knows it's a fallen world so even in the Old Testament God told us that he loved us more than he loved our marriage. He actually cares about the individuals more than he cares about the marriage just like he cares more about the individuals than the Sabbath. He didn't create us for the Sabbath. He gave us the Sabbath as a gift for us and the same with marriage.

So God in his word you can find these in Matthew five, Matthew 19 and First Corinthians Chapter seven has sanctioned a few exceptions to protect somebody on the earth whose being harmed by adultery, abandonment or abuse to give freedom to them so that they're no longer bound in such cases, but make no mistake about it God's very intention when he joins is that we will be joined until death do us part. Listen to me if we will yield ourself to the Lord and each other we will make it to the end. He provides us enough strength and grace to make it to the end. I realize that you hear, otherwise, everyday and I just pray that you're able to see that there's nobody who loves you more than God and this came from his good hands.

The third thing I want you to see and hoped you'll see is that "God assigns noble purposes to marriage." You don't necessarily see them in this text, but it's interesting that the rest of the Bible comments on this passage. You see many times such as in Ephesians chapter five, in fact, if you have a Bible if you want to head there I want to read it.

I know that we just studied that and we just did a sermon on Ephesians chapter five a few months ago, but it's important because what happens is the rest of the New Testament God is adding color to the masterpiece of marriage where you have writers of the scriptures and they're looking back to what took place in the garden and they're trying to understand how to take what he did in the garden and apply it to now when we're all in the wilderness. In the garden there was no sin and now everything's sin. How are we supposed to think about this?

The fact is that when you look at the scriptures and you look at culture and society just because God has noble purposes for marriage it doesn't mean that everyone agrees. Not everyone agrees with what his purposes are which is why and very similar to previous sermons that my inbox will be a little bit fuller tomorrow. You see, there's many people in our culture they look at marriage as an unnecessary burden kind of like this picture here to where at one time our sexuality needed a house. God said it was marriage we agreed with God so once that instinct clicked on in our life it was a strong indication of, hey, you should start thinking about getting married, but now our culture we've rebelled against all things sexual and all things of God so now the institution seems like an utter burden just an obstacle. Why would you pull that up the road if I can get what I want without it?

Other people they look at marriage and they see it as just an enormous risk like you're going to Vegas and you're just going to roll some dice and you just pray to God you get two sixes because if not the thing is going to fall apart and more times than not you don't. A lot of people look at marriage this way and then still others they look at marriage like a lump of clay it spins and you can add water. It's really a possibility for personal experimentation. We can do what we want with it and we can change it it's malleable we can use it however we want. God's very aware of all of our divergent feelings and ideas of what he has created so he clarified his purposes here in Ephesians chapter five and this is what he says starting at verse 21. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Now before I read another word you need to see there that everybody is under the obligation of submission, okay? Submit to one another, okay? So everybody is invited to this party, okay?

Then he wants to tell us how it works with a marriage. He says, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 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 other 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 nourishes 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 holdfast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

There it is there's chapter two, verse 24. Then notice he gives clarity to it in verse 32 he says, "Now this mystery is profound and I'm saying that it refers to Christ in the church, however, let each one of you love his wife as himself and let the wife see that she respects her husband." So what we find here is there's two dominant purposes for why God created marriage, why he prepares people for it, why he joins people to it. The first is that he designed marriage to point people to Jesus. More than anything more than marriage he desires people to be saved. He wants people to be forgiven of their sin and to spend forever with him so what he does is he uses marriage it's an instrument to point people to that. He says, "Husbands, your responsibility is to show the world the kind of love that Jesus Christ has for the church and you're going to show it by how you treat your wife."

Wives, those of you who are wives he said, "Your responsibility is to show the world the way that the church responds to the perfect life giving leadership of Jesus Christ over us and how you're going to show our response to Jesus is you're going to treat your husband in a certain way." You see, marriage was not a late entry in the marketing plan of the gospel. Jesus didn't rise from the dead go back up to heaven and say, now how are we going to get this good news out? What's a good illustration that we've already created on the earth that we can just kind of twist a little bit and all of a sudden now we can leverage it for this. No, that's not what it says. What he's saying is this is that before there was sin in the world God created marriage to point to the rescue. Think about that. Think about the sovereignty of God in this.

After quoting Genesis 2:24 which is a verse that took place before sin entered the world, before there was a need for forgiveness, before there was a need for rescue he says this is his plan and then the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says this. Now I know this is going to blow your mind that's what he means when he says this is a profound mystery he goes that what I'm saying is that verse in chapter two, verse 24 before there was any sin in the world is about Jesus Christ and his church. You see, before we needed a rescue God made marriage to display the rescue and this shows us at least three different things. First of all it shows that the purpose and participants in marriage are no more interchangeable than Christ or his church. You can't say, well, I don't want it to be like this it's a lump of clay and we'll make it however we want and we'll use it however we want. You cannot substitute Christ from the gospel. You cannot substitute those who believe in Christ from the gospel and the same with marriage.

The second thing it shows is the amazing lengths that God has gone to save us. If he would create an institution for our good that would point to our rescue the ability to go to heaven when we die and he did it before anyone sinned. Third is it shows us a portrait of what is to come. You see, Revelation chapter 19, verse nine says, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb." You see, the Bible begins with a wedding and it ends with a wedding. The end is about the wedding between Jesus Christ and his people all who trust in him and what we find there is this is that some are invited and some are not and those that are invited are those who have trusted him on the earth for their forgiveness of sin.

You see, one day Christ is going to assemble every single one of us who have trusted in him at a banquet table and he's going to say this was the meaning of marriage. It was all meant to point to this. This is what I wanted people on the earth to see so that they could be here with us for a purpose. The second purpose is God designed marriage as a gift for our good. You see, in marriage God provides companionship that's infused with the kind of leadership and support to meet our deepest needs. Some people they look at chapter five and they think and they say it's just terrible the word submit is in there and there's all kinds of things in there that's just ... The reason that we find that so difficult is because we cannot imagine life without an abundance of sin. What if your husband treated you like Jesus treats you? Would you respect him? Would you admire him? You see, this is what he does, what are our deepest needs? Isn't it beautiful that he created us to meet those needs.

You see, God created women with a longing to be loved and pursued. Every single woman in this room, every girl in this room asks the question am I lovely? As we age we ask the question am I still lovely? So what has God done? He gives the man the primary responsibility to affirm her loveliness by acting loving to her as unto the Lord by saying look at what Jesus did. He protected and provided and fed and cherished. Every single man in this room longs to be respected and followed. Every guy in this room asks himself do I have what it takes? If I were to overhear my wife saying something to one of you about me and if I had to have a choice of overhearing her say I really love him or I respect him 100 times out 100 I would say, "I want her to say I respect him."

So what has he done? He gives to the woman the amazing responsibility and privilege to meet his greatest need to respect as unto the Lord. You see, it really is a good gift. I realize that's it's so hard to see it through all of the sin and all of the burden of our life, but it's a good gift so three applications before we close and sing some songs. The first is this as a church family let's honor the gift of marriage. Let's honor this amazing gift. Let's see it good. It's good and kind purposes that God has for us. He is for us in this. Hebrews chapter 13, verse four says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all." The way that we show honor towards marriage is in how we prepare for it and practice it and protect it and pray for it and talk about it to other people.

The second thing as a church family let's grow in our admiration for Jesus Christ. This is important because the New Testament frames all of the instructions of how to be a husband and a wife under the umbrella of the assumption that you revere or admire Jesus Christ. He says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." You see, God recognizes that our motivation gets interrupted when we are not acting lovely or respectable so what he does is he tells us to keep one eye on Jesus as we're responding to our spouse and Jesus says, "Look, in this moment I recognize that he's not acting worthily or she's not acting in a way that garners loveliness and yet I want you to treat this person like I would treat them, or like you would treat me." So for husbands what does this mean? It means we use our God given strength and leverage it for her good. It means we take our strength and we leverage it to point her to God to remind her of his promises. It means we take our God given strength and we practice cultural expressions that affirm a woman's dignity. It means we open a door for her.

What does it look like for a woman? He says the word submit. Obviously, in all of this submission has limits that you found within the scripture. If it's going to harm you it's going to injure your purity or injure your integrity to the truth then he says, "No, you can't submit. You first have to submit to God," but what I think what he's saying is this that even though a man's maturity will affect motivation that God intends for wives to give their husbands space to steer. To affirm him in his highs and his lows, and that you would show respect to him in such a way that garners his desire to live respectfully. It's to treat him in such a way that he wants to rise to the occasion to actually meet that kind of honor that kind of affirmation and encouragement.

The last thing is this is let's lean on the gospel, Providence, as we try to display it. Years ago I was asked by a married couple to tell me, I'm sorry, I asked that married couple to tell me the cause of their strife. They came in they sat down and I said, "Okay, tell me what's going on? What's the problem?" They simultaneously responded with each other's name this is the problem. You're looking at him. You're looking at her. Listen, Providence, healthy marriages are healthy because the people in those marriages learn to confess and cancel sin. The only lever that's strong enough to lift the wrath in our own heart is the same lever that's strong enough to lift the wrath that was in God's heart towards us and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians chapter four, verse 32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." In the 1850s I was reading this week in the 1850s there was a 48 mile stretch of railway that was laid in Panama and it was laid at a time, obviously, 150 years ago before photographs from the sky, before modern technologies and even before a reliable map and what we now know is that it appears to have cost more in dollars and in human life than any other railway that's ever been built. The reason for that is because in those 47 miles it required 170 bridges. Marriage is a perpetual bridge building project. You find yourself almost everyday or every week on opposite sides of a chasm and only the gospel of Jesus Christ and his grace can bring you together. You see, the gospel is the fuel for all of these things so I urge you as a church family let's honor marriage. Let's grow in our admiration and let's lean on the very gospel that we're trying to emulate and show to other people. For the good of your family and families in the future I urge you this morning to consider the word of God.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven we thank you for your grace in our life and we confess to you our vast need of mercy. I pray for those in the room that are longing to be married. I pray that you will continue to prepare them for whatever it is that you have in front of them. I pray for those who are married that you would sustain them with grace and hope and truth. I pray for those who wish they weren't married that you would move in their life in such a way that you would do a miracle that could only be accounted as the grace of God. So would you protect all that was not of you today help us to forget, and all that was of you would you confirm in our hearts that this is your word for us. As we sing to you now as we give to you as a response of our admiration and affection for you we say we love you, we trust you, we need you and we pray this in Christ's name, Amen.



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