

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Building Blocks Of The Family

PART

2

TITLE

Undivided Devotion

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Genesis 2:4-18



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Well, it's great to see you, Providence family. I hope you've had a great week and that as God was faithful in your life in some way, I pray that God opened up your eyes to see some of those practical ways that he's been good to you. I also say, for all of our guests, welcome. We're really glad that you have joined us. If you have a phone or a Bible with you, if you want to turn with me to the second chapter of Genesis, which is the second chapter of the Bible. If you don't have one, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. If you don't have one at home, please take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have your own copy of God's word. As you turn there, let me ask you a question to sort of set the table for this morning's sermon. It is this. What if your family or the future of your family was similar to how you made a cake?

Meaning what if the things you're doing today, what if your habits, what if your skills in relationships, what if your decisions, what if the patterns of your life were ingredients that were being added to the mixing bowl and you could not remove them from the bowl and they would have a direct impact upon the future of your family? When I'm saying the future of your family, it may be that right now you're here and you're single and you think of the future as when I get married. Or maybe you're here and you're married and you don't have kids and you want kids and you think, "Man, when that happens, then that's going to be a significant time." Or it may be that you're done having kids and maybe even having grandkids. They're all out of the house. What you're thinking about in the terms of the future of your family is the legacy, is that even when you're not here, is there would be future generations with your name tied to who you are that call themselves a family.

What would it be like? What would you change? What would you stop doing or maybe start doing if everything that you were currently doing relationally, whether you like it or not, is being added into a bowl as the ingredients for the future of your family? You see, most of us don't make that connection between what we're doing right now and our future, but the Bible really won't let us make that mistake for it tells us these words. He says, "Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap." Most of us never consider the fact that healthy families do not begin at an altar and they do not begin in a birthing room. They begin right now when people are cultivating hard soil within their own life, maybe stubborn patterns of sin, maybe generational sin that's been passed to you from grandfather to father or grandmother to mother and to you. Those things need to be cultivated so that we can sow good seeds.

What we want to do is go to the second step of this series. It's a seven-week series. It's these building blocks of the family that God designed the family and he designed it to be so important as the building block of all of culture that he chose. He says, "I'm not going to let its construction be built by chance." He gives us the ingredients. What you see on this screen is the seven topics of where we're going. Now, last week we're on gender, which was chapter one. God created male and female, both in the image of God. When they came, they weren't immediately married. There was a season, in fact, that's what we're going to look at, to where a very brief amount of time, certainly it was very brief, Adam was not married and there were things that God did in his life when he was not married, said to him when he was not married, that are very prescriptive to us and to all of us as to how we live.

We'll look at marriage next week. Then God tells us to actually be fruitful and to multiply. We're going to talk about sex on June the third. Parents, just a heads up. Then, we have children. We need to parent them. We're going to look at motherhood, fatherhood, with the hope that the seventh week, when we look at childhood, is that our children, that they would look at our lives, they would look at our families, and they would look at something that they want to emulate, want to model, so that a healthy family can perpetuate itself from one generation to the next. Here, this morning, we want to look at the second building block, which is singleness. Before we do that, I want to pray for us. If you would, let's bow. Let's pray together.

Father, we come to you today and we recognize, we see upon this earth the breakdown of the family. We see how the breakdown of the family is literally cascading into all manner of chaos in our culture. Even today, we pray, again, as many of us have, maybe all of us, for the people in Texas, in particular those 10 families who lost a loved one, recklessly and foolishly. God, we pray that you would help us to see the dignity of human life. We would pray that as we look at the foundation of the family, these building blocks of the family, God, I pray, God, that you would help us to see the dignity of human life, the dignity of masculinity and femininity and singleness and marriage and sexuality, fathering and mothering, and being a child.

I pray, God, that you would open up our eyes. God, we do pray for those families, that you would comfort them today. We pray that you would encourage them today. We also pray, God, for our families. Lord, many children wonder in this world that's just so full of chaos. We confess to you, God, we don't feel safe. God, would you remind us, as you promise this to us, would you remind our children that you love them? God, I pray that you would bring about a moral revolution in our country and that it would begin in the home. I pray, Father, that even you would use this, even these next few moments, Lord, to transform our lives that would transform future families in our own culture and in the world. God, would you speak through weakness? Would you encourage every single person here? I pray in Christ's name, amen.

Now, why would we include a sermon on singleness? Why are we going there? There's really three reasons that I want to show you. The first is this. The majority of our church family here at Providence isn't married. That may surprise you, but if you add everybody up, if you are married, you are a marital minority at Providence. Sometimes we think that's the rule. You're the exception. The fact is is that every single person in our church family who is not married, they're doing things now, they're living now in certain ways that are going to affect the future of families. We want to address that. The second reason is because we're called to bear each other's burdens. We're a family. We love one another. We're all different. Yet, we're all together because of Jesus Christ. We, as a church family, want to recognize some of the significant burdens that our singles carry, sometimes singles who are fully functioning responsible adults as well as those who are single who are four and five years old, because one day both may have, will have a family.

It's interesting when you think about some of the burdens that our single adults carry. Now, for 13 years at Providence, I had the privilege to serve with our single adults and so I've heard the stories of literally hundreds and hundreds and watched the stories of hundreds and hundreds. It's fascinating to me how God, during that time, sort of just etched within my heart a sensitivity to people who are single. It's interesting the things that I've heard and what people feel. It's important for us as a church family to recognize how some of our church family feels. Within our church family, there's many singles who want to be married. There's a desire in their heart that God's planted and they're wanting that. They're praying for that. Yet, it hasn't happened yet. There may be, and on some cases, a level of disappointment, "What's God doing? Why is he waiting so long for this?"

Many in our church family feel a pressure about this. You see, they go home for Thanksgiving and they have an Aunt Edie just like you do who comes and says, "Now, sweetie, has God brought you anybody in your life yet?" That constant pressure would be relieved if there was somebody. When there isn't, there's a sensitivity, there's a burden that they have to carry, a pressure. "If I was married, they'd stop asking these questions, things that are already etched within my heart and within my own desire." There's many in our church family who are weary of that dating gauntlet that tends to burn and bruise more people than it blesses. Then, there are many in our church family who feel less, less than. Honestly, truth be told, they feel that we help them feel less than in how we live, in how we preach, what we talk about. We talk about marriage a lot. We talk about parenting a lot.

You see, Mother's and Father's Day for some of us is just a great delight because not only do we have a great mom and dad, but we are a mom and dad. There's a lot of people that Mother's Day and Father's Day is not only an appreciation for what they have, but it's also a recognition of what they don't. It creates within them a burden, a feeling. Sometimes even a series like this, "Just stick with a book of the Bible. Why a family series to just remind me of what's not there?" Sometimes within the church, we give the impression that marriage is graduation into adulthood. Every time that a single adult is involved in a life group and there's a social, they're keenly aware that every dining room table comes equipped with an even number of chairs. All of these are recognitions that they feel and sometimes we don't feel. It's important for us to recognize as a family the burdens of other people that we don't carry.

There's a third reason I think that we need to do this. It's because the Bible goes there. That's where the Bible goes next. You see, what we find here from the scriptures is a fascinating thing. What we looked at last week was the first chapter of the Bible where God designates in a manner of days his created order. When we get to the sixth day, it says that he creates male and female, both in his image. Then, what we find in chapter two is God recognizes the significance of that sixth day when he created us in his image, different from all the other things that he has created. What he does is he zooms in and he gives that day an entire chapter and it's chapter two, where he's really describing for us how he created the man. He's explaining to us the process by which Eve came upon the scene on that special day.

What we find here is really important. There's a set of verses from verse four to verse 18 where God is interacting with Adam before Eve arrived. In other words, he's interacting before his wedding day. He's single. We want to read it together. Look with me. Let's start in verse seven. It says, "Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground, the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

Now, skip down to verse 15. Verse 10 to 14 are wonderful verses that really describe the beauty of four rivers, but that really doesn't have too much to do with singleness and so we're going to pass that by today. Verse 15, "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for of the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.' 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, what you find within Genesis are several markers that are prescriptive for all of humanity. For example, next week, we're going to get to the place when he talks about marriage.

God's going to say with his own lips, "So you shall leave, cleave, and become one flesh." When he talks about leaving, he actually says, "Leave your father and mother." Well, the first two, they didn't have a father and mother. What's happening there? He's creating categories for the rest of humanity so that we can look back upon God's original design. He does the same thing here. These truths that I want to show you today of how God calls us to cultivate our life, they're applicable to all of us. They're prescribed for all of humanity. Yet, it's really important for us to be sensitive enough to recognize that when God first said them and when he first did these things, everybody listening and everybody watching was single. Adam was alone. God could have waited a couple hours, created Eve, and said, "All right. Now let's do this," but he didn't. We want to honor his timing in these things. He calls us to three things. I want to show them to you.

The first is this. God calls us to cultivate faithful stewardship. You see this in verse 15. It says, "The Lord God took the man whom he had created. He literally brought him up from the dust. The breathed life into him." What this means is that God has authority over you and he has authority over me. He has creator privileges, creator rights. He gets to inform our life because he created us. He has authority. It says that what he did with authority was he put them in the garden to work it and keep it. This is beautiful. If you think about culture, you think about that soil. Deep within the soil of the garden was this potential. Deep within that soil was the potential to create civilizations, civilizations like the one on the screen right now that includes bridges and skyscrapers and vehicles and engines and medicine and computers and fabrics and textiles and writing utensils and books and food. The potential was all there in the earth but it had to be unlocked. God ordained that the soil could be unlocked, its potential could be unlocked as man, as humanity, worked hard, infused it with creative imagination and faithful stewardship. Stewardship simply means management. God says, "I'm going to entrust this to you," and it's our responsibility to manage what God has given us.

Have you ever thought that Adam could have said no? I mean, we know that because he's about to say no. It's not going to take long before he and Eve, they say no to God. He could have said no. He could have said, like so many people today, "You know what? Work just isn't my thing. I just don't want to work. I'm on my Xbox. It's hot outside. Why don't you create someone else to do the work?" He could have. He could have set the bar of what we now know of Proverbs chapter 24 where it says, "I pass by the field of a sluggard and it was all overgrown with thorns and the ground was covered with nettles and its stone wall was broken down." Instead, the assumption is that Adam worked. Why we assume that is because when Adam first rebelled, the Bible made sure to explain it.

We assume that he just began working. Why I think this is important for us is this. This call to work the earth and keep the earth and its soil has been placed now upon us. He's made us stewards and God has given us, every single one of us, abilities and interests and gifts and resources and responsibilities. He's called us to be faithful with each and every one of them. In other words, whether you're single or not, now is the time to bust up the hard soil of our complacency and our passivity and cultivate deeper patterns of faithfulness and deeper patterns of self-discipline and deeper patterns of personal responsibility. You see, whatever it is that you have right now, you may be a kid and someone says, "What do you have?" You say, "Well, I have a bed. I have a room." Okay, you have a bed and you have a room. You have a stewardship.

Whatever it is that you have, it may be a garden, it may be a yard, it may be a house, it may be the floorboard of your car, whatever it is, whatever friend you have, whatever relationships you have, whatever entry-level job you have, whatever it is that you have, it is a field awaiting faithfulness. It's awaiting faithful stewardship and those who are faithful with what God has given us at that very moment will learn later on that God was using that faithfulness to prepare us for something different. It may not be more. It may not be greater or more significant, but it may be different. Whatever it is that God knows you're about to face five and 10 and 15 years from now, he wants to forge faithful stewardship into your life by what you now have, by what you're now a manager over. God has called us to be faithful, to cultivate faithfulness and stewardship in the things that we have.

The second thing that he does though is he calls us to cultivate trusting obedience. We see this in verse 16 and 17. God comes and he says, "The Lord commanded the man saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree in the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.'" You see, there's a whole lot of us in the room that we get so confused with obedience. We start thinking that the heart of obedience looks like a fist that's so tight that you can begin to see your knuckles turning white. I want you to know that if you liken obedience to the scriptures, an obedience to God's will, as a closed fist, this, "I have to do this," you're actually replicating everything Jesus spoke against when he was on the earth. That was not his intent for you.

You see, the heart of obedience is not resolve. The heart of obedience is trust. It's where we look at God and we say, "I trust you. I trust your heart. I trust your word. I trust your commitment for my good. I trust you." Did you notice in verse 16 how God literally frames the portrait of his command in generosity? He says, "You may surely eat of every." The emphasis is on what God has put on the banquet table, not on what he's reserved from the kitchen. As I thought about, "How do I illustrate what he did and we respond to what he did?" Just imagine a chef. A chef fills up an entire banquet hall with beautiful desserts, exotic desserts from all over the world like you see on the screen right now. There's this beautiful portrait of sugar everywhere. It looks so good. It's appealing. Then the chef comes out and says, "I made all of this for you because I love you and I want you to enjoy it. Enjoy all of it. However, there's just one little Hershey Kiss that I left in the kitchen. Just don't eat it. All of this, enjoy, but that little Hershey Kiss, just don't eat it." Our response to this generosity is, "You don't love me. I bet that Kiss is sweeter than everything you put on this table."

How many of you parents have ever felt the pain of your child not trusting your good intentions? It's one of the most devastating things for a young parent. You just assume as a young parent that all of your sacrifice will be recognized by the person that you're pouring it out upon, but it just doesn't happen that way. You start to give instructions. You start to serve them. You get up early. You go to bed late. You're caring for them in every way and, all of a sudden, you say, "Hey, do this." They're like, "No, I don't think so." No, you don't understand. I am so for you. I am committed to your good. I am telling you these things to protect something for you because I care about you. If you can imagine that pain or if you ever felt that pain, then you know the pain that God expresses when he says these words in Deuteronomy chapter five. When he speaks to the people of Israel and he cries, literally cries, "O, that your hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all of my commands always, that it might go well with them and their children forever."

You see, Providence, listen to me. We will not know joy or peace in our families and the future will not know what they can know and what God wants them to know until we get to the place where we can honestly say, "God, I trust you. I trust your timing. I trust your prohibitions. I trust your instructions. I don't understand them all, but I trust you." You see, whether you're single or not, now is the time to cultivate this trust. It's not to wait until you feel like you need to trust. It's right now. It's to over-see right now when it comes to your trust in God and in his word. The only way that I know to work through the confusions of what I don't understand about his instructions, prohibitions, and his timing in my own life and in yours, is I have to look at the cross.

I have to go back to Romans chapter eight verse 32, which I know that I've referenced frequently to you, and it's because I think about it frequently. This is what it says. It says, "He," God, "who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" You see what he's saying there? He's saying if God would kill his Son for you, don't you think that he's for you when he tells you how to spend your money or how to treat people or how to work hard? You see, when we see Jesus Christ, what we find, we find the Son of God is literally making good on God's promise to rescue us.

You see, when we sinned against God, God said, "I'm going to send you a rescuer." Then he did. He sent Jesus Christ, his Son, to the earth.

Jesus came and he lived here just like us. He was tempted in every way just like you and I, and yet he never once sinned ever. He was perfect in love and righteousness, holiness, and mercy and humility. He's perfect in every way. You know what he did? He recognized that we had a problem. That was that sin was separating us from God, that relationship was broken and it would be broken for eternity unless that sin was removed. Jesus Christ came. It says that he took all of our sin upon his shoulders. He went to a cross and he died for all of it, to pay the penalty for it, all of it. He was buried in a grave. The creator of rock was buried in rock for us. Then he rose from the dead. He rose from the dead three days later. When he did, he became the victor over death and evil and sin. Then he gives us an invitation.

How could he do this? He comes and he says, "If you'll trust me, if you'll stop leaning on your own righteousness and you'll lean on my righteousness, if you stop trusting in your accomplishments morally and you lean on my accomplishments morally, this is what I'll do. I'll take away all your sin. I'll give you my righteousness. I'll give you the gift of eternal life and bring you back into a right relationship with me." Don't you see that the cross is the proof of his absolute undying commitment for our good? When I'm confronted with things that I can not explain, when I'm confronted with God's timing, the things in the world in your life or in mine, that I look at and I say, "God, I just don't understand," the natural reflex in the human heart is to say, "God's not for me."

That's exactly why, frankly, it's why we put that cross right there. It's not so that unbelievers walk in this place and know we're Christian. Jesus said, "You'll know their Christians by their love, not by their crosses." We put the cross up for the believers. You can look there. Right there. You can see it. When you come in here and you are weighted down with the burdens of his timing in your life and wondering if he's for you or not, you can see that he's for you every time that you look at that wall. He's for you. He's so committed to you. If you've never said yes to Jesus's invitation to trust him, we urge you to do that now, today. You simply pray to him. You admit that you're a sinner. You confess your belief that he is the Son of God who did come to the earth, who did die and rise again. You confess him as Lord of your life. The Bible says you'll be forgiven. He'll change your entire life.

Now, check this out. Once we have this trust, once we're absolutely committed, we're certain of his commitment for our good and now we can trust him, what happens is this overflows with obedience. You see, obedience now is not white knuckle response. Now it's delight. Now it's, "I trust him. I know he's for me. I know he's committed to my good and my future." What happens is this. The overflow of obedience results in character, godly character. The English word for character comes from a Greek word that literally means stamping tool. If you ever seen somebody work with leather, I want to show you a little picture. At the very top of this picture is unstamped leather. It's just smooth.

Then there's a tool and it's a stamping tool. What you do is you take that tool and you press it down into the leather. You take a hammer and you pound the end of that tool and it leaves an imprint, a new design in the leather. This is what sanctification is all about. We look at God's commitment for our good. We're absolutely stirred by it, so much so that we trust him enough to say, "I want to obey. I want to show preference." Every single time that we obey, it's like God taking his hammer and stamping down his character upon our life. He's changing us from the inside out. Every act is a stamp upon our lives. What I want you to see, whether you're single or married, is now is the time to trust him.

Years ago, my dad had a really good friend. His name was Mike Compton. He encouraged Mike to actually influence each of his two boys, my brother John and myself. Mike was in his 50s. I was in high school. The sad reality is the time of this made it much more ... What's the word? Likely. It's much more unlikely today because the amount of abuse that takes place that we kind of frown upon these kind of friendships, but Mike, who was a single man, he would go with my dad to go watch play basketball. Then we'd go to McDonald's afterward with my dad. We'd talk. Mike would speak into my life. Well, one time I went over to Mike's house unannounced. Mike was really wise about it. Mike says, "Hey." He didn't let me know. Now I know what he was doing. At the time, he didn't. He says, "Hold on just one second." He goes in and he gets two sodas. We come out and he goes, "Let's sit out here, right by the road." I'm like, "All right. Whatever. All right. Let's do this."

I said, "Mike, you've been asking me all kinds of questions. I want you to know what I've been working on." I pull this sheet of paper out of my pocket. I said, "You know, I've been reading the Bible like you've been telling me and you know that I'm sort of interested in getting married one day. I made a list of the kind of characteristics from the scriptures that I want to find in a wife." He goes, "Well, let me see them." I pull them out. He goes, "Wow. 82 characteristics. All right. 82." Literally, there was 82 characteristics. It was in red ink. I still remember. Only one of them had anything to do with physical appearance. There was one word and it just said beautiful. That's it. Everything else, what I did was look at characteristics of godly women within the scriptures and said, "You know what? It would be wonderful if the person that I would marry would emulate that." I just wrote it down.

Mike folds it up. He hands it back to me. He goes, "You got a lot of work to do." I know this is probably arrogant, but I said, "Yeah, it's going to be really hard to find somebody like that, isn't it?" He said, "No, that's not what I'm talking about." He goes, "It probably will be hard to find somebody like that." He goes, "But God can help you with that." He goes, "Here's where the hard work comes in. You find that and she won't marry you. Not now, she won't." He said, "You see, you find this person of moral strength and character and what you're going to find is that she's going to want the same in her husband. Stop looking for her and start working on your own character."

You see, now is the time to learn to confess sin, not then. Now is the time to learn patience and forgiveness and how to make a commitment and how to keep a commitment, how to serve other people with a point of need and how to pray. Now is the time to learn the scriptures. You see, marriage is simply a spotlight that highlights whatever's there, the good and the bad. Be a person and then find a person who is wholly yielded to the Lord. Be a person and find a person that trusts God, that hears the scriptures, that reads the scriptures and says, "I trust this God and so it's a delight to obey him." You find that person and you become that person and your future family will be blessed.

The third thing that he calls us to is to cultivate refining relationships. In verse 18, we find the first denouncement in all of the Bible. He says, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Prior to this, everything was good. Now he says this is not good. Now, there's something here for every single one of us. We were created in the image of a relational God. We were built for relationships. It's not good to be alone. We know from the scripture, what we'll look at next week when we pick up in verse 18, that God's remedy for his aloneness was marriage. It was Eve. For the majority of people on the earth, marriage is God's provision for this need or at least it's one of those big provisions from God, but what I want you to see is that Adam's threat was being alone, not being unmarried.

God could have said, "It is not good for you to be single," but that's not what he said. He says, "It's not good for you to be alone." Alone is not good for humanity. Being alone is not good for us. Isolated people are vulnerable people. You guys have seen the fade of that isolated antelope on lion week on Animal Planet, haven't you? It looks like this. This is not a back rub. This is disaster is what this is. The same thing happens with humanity. You find an isolated person and you will find him or her a few steps away from disaster. We weren't created to run alone. When Adam and Eve sinned against God and they felt shame for what they did, they hid from God, but they also hid from each other. They hid alone.

It's obvious that when Jesus came and restored us back to a right relationship with him, one of the first things he did afterward was brought us into a relationship with each other. 1 Peter chapter two verse 10, he says, "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God." He gives us all kinds of instructions within the scripture as to how we're supposed to live and interact among each other. I just want to show you just a little representative sampling of some of these. We're to love another and welcome one another and exhort one another. We're to forgive one another and submit to one another and wait for one another. We're to sing with one another. We're to pray for one another. You see, single or not, now is the time to develop friends and relational skills.

Why? What is all this preparation and cultivation for? You see, this is where some of those who are single, the category in their heart any time this happens is, "See, I know where he's getting. The finish line is marriage and I'm still not married. I'm going to do all this and what if I don't get married?" Listen, the majority of the people who live on this earth will one day marry. Every single one of these areas that God calls us to cultivate will prove to be beneficial for those who do, but marriage not the goal.

Marriage is not the finish line. It takes about 72 hours, that's with a good honeymoon, after saying, "I do," to learn that marriage is not the point of life. Jesus is the point of life. Whether you are married or whether you are single, the point of life is Jesus Christ. What God does to those who are single is he says this. He says, "If you'll live devoted wholly to me, you'll prepare your life for what matters most. If it's my will to bring someone in your life to where you'd be married on this earth, then how you prepare for me will spill out in preparation for that, for marriage. Give yourself to me. Give yourself to serving the church. Give yourself to my mission. Give yourself for my glory."

This is true whether we're married or not. Three applications. The first is this. Let's be devoted to Christ, every single one of us. I urge you not to spend another day of your life apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ. I urge you not to spend another day of your life, if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, distanced from living with him and his glory as the direct aim of your day. Be devoted to him. When you look at 1 Corinthians chapter seven, it's interesting. It's a chapter on singleness and marriage. What we find there is this. God invites us to pursue marriage if indeed God puts marriage upon our heart, but he gives us a warning and I want to read it to you. This is what he says. He says, "Those who marry will have worldly troubles." Let me just stop there because this is really good. Next week, we're going to see. He says that you're to leave, cleave, and become one flesh. Now, this is what happens. Now you put two sinners into one. You got twice as much flesh working. You can be having a great day, a great morning, if you're married, and your spouse can be having a really bad morning. Now you're having a bad morning. That's how it works. This is what he's talking about. The fact is is that it adds complexity to your life.

Then he goes on. He says, "The unmarried man is anxious about the things of God, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and secure your undivided devotion to the Lord." You see, as married people, we can get so wrapped up in being married that we reject the commandment of God. I know people in our church that say, "There's no way that I could go on a mission trip because I'd have to be away from my spouse for seven days." Jesus said, "Go and make disciples in all nations." We have to be careful in our marriage that we're not so wholly devoted to him or her that we reject why we're devoted to them. It's for him and for those who are single. It's possible to be so wrapped up trying to be married that we miss that the whole point of everything is Jesus Christ, so let's be devoted to Christ. Whatever the state, marriage, singleness, whatever it is, child, no children, whatever it is, let's be devoted to him.

Second application, let's care well for the whole church family. We're one body with lots of different parts and every part should have equal concern for all of the rest. The singles in this body should have genuine concern for the marital health of those who are married and the married people in this room should have genuine concern for the realities and the burdens of those who are single.

You see, this includes every age and every stage and every marital status. Let me just say to those who are not married, we, as a church family, appreciate you. We thank God for you. We thank God for your giftedness. We thank God for your sacrifice. We need you and we want to be a body that better bears with your burdens. We also want to be a body that better affirms your stunning contributions. We need to care for the whole body.

The third thing is this, last. Let's be faithful to plant during hard seasons. This may be a hard season. You may feel like just getting here today was a significant win in your life because the emotional state would have said, "Just stay in bed." Some of us are so discouraged right now about being single or about not having kids or maybe about being married and having kids. I don't know what it is, but we're so discouraged about wherever we're at in life that our resolve to plant good seeds is a little shaken. There's two verses at the end of Psalm 126 that I want to read to you and then we're going to end here. This is what he says. He says, "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping carrying seed to sow with return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." You look at this and you go, "What exactly does that mean? He's sad because he got work to do." That's not what's happening. There's two different kinds of seasons that align at times in life. Let me describe them.

One season over here is an emotional season. Sometimes we're feeling good and sometimes we're not. Sometimes we're emotionally happy and sometimes we're emotionally devastated. Sometimes we feel like we can just pop out of bed and go and do all the work and cultivate so many hard things. Sometimes we think the biggest thing I'm going to do is sit at the edge of the bed and just hold Kleenex all day. On the other side, there's another season. The season over here is a season that's called agriculture. That is that God has ordained, there are times when we're supposed to put seed into the ground and there's times that it grows up. There's times we're supposed to cut it down and harvest it. Sometimes these two things align. This is what he's talking about. He goes sometimes it is the time to put seed into the ground. It's time to go do the hard work. It's not the pleasant work of harvest. It's the hard work of planting. Sometimes that season aligns with another season when we have tears streaking down our face. Some people, at the moment when they must plant, they feel like they can't and so they don't.

Here's what happens. Life changes. Just as the months change from cooler to warmer weather to where there's harvest time and sowing time, so our emotional state also changes. Sometimes where we were once so devastated maybe life doesn't even change and God just gives us a level of contentment where we can smile with where we're at. Now we just feel different. Now we can sing again. Now we don't have tears of sorrow. Maybe they're tears of joy. We're just happy with things. Here's the question. When you have that change and it's time to rejoice, will you have sheaves of grain on your shoulder because you were faithful to plant when tears were streaming down your face? You see, I've done a lot of weddings at Providence.

My favorite ones are the people who metaphorically walk down the aisle and stand at the front and they have so much grain wrapped around their shoulder of love and wisdom and character and faithfulness and trust in God because they were faithful to plant when things were harder, when they were lonely. What you find is those become the healthiest marriages. Those become the healthiest families. Providence, wherever you're at, let's be faithful to plant. Let's be faithful to care for each other. Let's be faithful to be devoted to Christ. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we love you. We thank you for your kindness to us and we pray, God, that as we have looked at this passage and this passage has maybe even looked at us, I pray, God, that you would strengthen our hope in your faithfulness. Would you strengthen our resolve to see your commitment for our good, that obedience would just flow out naturally? I pray, Father, that you would strengthen us for the task in front of us. I pray for our single adults here or for those who are struggling with whatever season that they may be in. I pray, Father, that you would help every single one of us to plant good seed, to cultivate faithfulness, and to cultivate trust and to cultivate relational skill. I pray, God, that you would bless us as a church family as we are faithful in the days to come. We thank you that you love us and it's a joy to sing to you. It's a joy to be able to give a response to what you have given to us. We pray that you would receive this worship as it is. We love you. We are grateful. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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