

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

## THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT | HEALTHY MARRIAGE

RYAN BRAMLETT | APRIL 23, 2023

Traders Point, how are we? Hey, it is so good to be with you. And we're going to start today just a little bit differently. We just want to take a moment and celebrate and honor a very specific group of people, and that is our first responders. I just want to ask if we have any first responders in any of our rooms at our campuses. Would you stand? You could be a fire fighter, policy officer, EMT, any capacity. Would you stand?

I know you love this so much, but stay standing. Stay standing. We're going to pray over you in just a moment. And I just want you to know that we see you, we love you.

One of my best friends and neighbors is a fire fighter. And I just hear some of the stories of what you guys run toward. It is heroic. And we're going to pray for you. But as a church we always want our prayers and our resources to go side by side. So we're also going to be giving \$50,000 to local fire stations and police stations to go toward community relations.

If you are near someone who is standing right now, one of those first responders, would you just lift a hand up toward them? Symbolic of covering them in prayer.

God, thank You so much for these first responders. God, You have uniquely wired them to run toward things that many of us run away from. And, God, I know it is a heavy job. But I pray that Your Spirit would meet them. That You would give them the endurance that they need. That You would give them the peace that they need. God, be with them. Be with their families. And, God, I also pray a prayer of protection over them. God, be with them.

Father, I pray that they know that we see them today. We always see them. We are with them and we are for them and we love them. Father, it's in Your perfect and holy name we pray. Amen. Amen.

Well one more thing. Keep this going. We want to invite all of our first responders and family members to something special we're going to do here at the Northwest campus next Saturday from 1 to 5 at the Park. It's going to be a space just for you and your family. There is going to be dessert and really just another chance to honor you and



show you how much we appreciate you. So we would love for you to come out next Saturday to the Park at Northwest from 1 to 5.

One more time for all of our first responders.

Today we're continuing on in our series *Cumulative Effect*. And a cumulative effect is really just an effect that occurs after a long period of time. It's this kind of effect that has been built up little by little.

I love the way Paul talks about this concept in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. He says:

*"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face,"* meaning nothing is separating us from God, *"beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, and here it is, "from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."* 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (ESV)

And I really want us to focus in on that, "...from one degree of glory to another." How many of you wish growth happened from like, "I'm at one and then I'm at 100? I'm at 100 and then I'm at 1,000."? But everything that really means anything, and real transformation, and healthy transformation isn't done overnight, but it's little by little, it's brick by brick, from one degree to the next.

In this series we're just looking at different parts of our lives that when we apply that cumulative effect that we see in God's design, it is really incredible what He is able to do.

Last week we talked about Long Game Parenting. We're going to talk about work and intentional relationships in our community. But today, here's what we're going to be looking at. We're going to be looking at:

### **Healthy Marriage**

Healthy Marriage. Now, I know at the moment that I said we're going to be talking about marriage, I almost lost about a third of you. For one reason or another, you are like, "I don't want to talk about this." Or maybe you're going to want a different message on marriage than what I am going to give today.

Maybe you want the message on marriage to be: what about life after marriage? What about singleness? What about being married to someone who doesn't believe? And those are all great messages. What I just want to do is corral all of us together and say, "Just because this might not be for you, this one might be for you." Usually the messages that I don't think that God has anything to say to me are the ones where the Spirit just blindsides me. And I get hit harder than I ever expected.



Here's what we are going to talk about today. Here's what I'm going to try to do. Within a healthy marriage, I'm just going to try to show:

The beauty of marriage.

The beauty of marriage. This God designed covenant that He has given to us. I just want to hold it up and see the beauty—how beautiful it can be. And here's the thing with beauty. Beauty is built one degree at a time.

Maybe you've seen relationships with couples who have been together 30 years or 40 years or 50 years and you kind of nudge your spouse and say, "I wish we were like that."

They didn't get that way overnight. It was little by little from one degree to the next.

I'm excited to talk about the beauty of marriage. I am married myself. A little bit about me, two months away from 12 years of marriage. This is us. A younger version, but it's still us and we're still growing up. Just like we were that day. But marriage is beautiful.

And our story, I'm telling you, there have been amazing seasons, there have been some tough parts. I mean we met on a blind date and here we are almost 12 years later: married, four kids. I mean, Nicholas Sparks, if you are looking for your next story, gotcha.

But here's what we're going to be looking at today. And if you are the note taking type, you are already ready for this. But if you don't take notes, I just want to encourage you to. We're going to work through a lot today. And the hope is that the message does not end today. There is going to be stuff that we take from here and continue to build that cumulative effect.

So we're going to be looking at:

### **Healthy Marriage**

There are going to be four different sections that we're going to look at. And coincidentally they all begin with the letter S. You figure it out. So we're going to look at the:

START

SERIOUSNESS

STRUCTURE

SOURCE

We're going to look at the start, the seriousness, the structure, and the source. So we're just going to kick things off with the:

START

And here's what I mean. When do we first see this concept of marriage? When did it come into the picture. And what's fascinating is that marriage is one of the few things that existed before the fall, before sin entered the world. But, unfortunately, some of us treat marriage like it is an effect of the fall. Too real, huh? Buckle up.

We see the story of Adam and Eve, the first marriage that existed, in Genesis, chapter 2. And here's the beginning. It says:

*"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.'" Genesis 2:18-19 (NLT)*

So God created everything at this point. He created the sun, the sky, the stars, and the moon, and the beasts and the birds. And then He made man, but there was no one suitable for him. And He said, "This isn't okay. I'm going to do something about this." So God created the first woman. And I want you to look at the man's response. He says: *"At last!" the man exclaimed.*

And this is free. This isn't in my notes. But if you want to help your marriage this week, add that to your vocabulary. When you see your spouse come through the door, just be like, "At last. I've been waiting for you all day. Do your feet hurt? You've been running through my mind all day."

And use it in a real way, not in a condemning way like he's been in the bathroom for 45 minutes, you're like, "At last. Glad you could leave your throne and come to the rest of us." Or maybe she went to Target just to get one thing and she walks through the door three hours later with four bags. "At last. No, no. I'm glad you made it back." But he says: *"At last. ... this one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'"* And here it is. The fundamental thing of what marriage is. *"This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."* Genesis 2:23-24 (NLT)  
This is marriage.

What a beautiful gift. God creates man, he creates woman. They are different. They are distinct. But they are equal. Then you bring them together to complement one another. And they do a better job together, fully reflecting the glory of who God is.  
This is marriage.

And here's the thing that I want us to get from the start:

### **Marriage is God's design.**

Marriage is not just a piece of paper. Marriage is not just a ceremony. Marriage is not a tax benefit. Marriage was not created by the government. Marriage is God's design. And unless we start there we will bring marriage down to this low place and minimize what it really is and what takes place there. And we'll make it much more temporary, much easier to leave, which brings us to the second point that we're going to see today:

#### **Seriousness**

It's the seriousness of marriage. So we have the start and we see that the seriousness—it won't take full effect until we see that this is God's and not ours. Jesus would speak directly to this seriousness of marriage.



It's important to know what we're going to read here is a response. You see, these Pharisees, these religious leaders go up to Jesus and they are trying to catch Him. They are trying to give Him a no-win situation. So here's the question that they phrase to Him, "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for any reason?"

And we see by Jesus' response that He's almost offended that they would reduce God's design for marriage to something that can just be thrown away or for any reason set aside. You can see that there is a seriousness to His words. Look at the way that Jesus responds. He says:

*"Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. 'They record that from the beginning "God made them male and female." And he said, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."*

Sounds familiar. It says:

*"Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."*  
Matthew 19:4-6 (NLT)

Marriage is His and anything that God is a part of, there is a weight to it. And anything God is a part of is no longer what is best for me and you. We have to take what He wants into account. There is a third person in all of our marriages and it is God. You see, a lot of times when we get married in our culture, there is a ceremony. Right? We bring together people, friends, family, and we stand together face to face with this other person and we make a vow to one another. Maybe it looks something like this. If you're married you can remember. I do a lot of these:

In the presence of God, I take you for better or for worse, in sickness and in health. This is my solemn vow.

And we stand together u[ there, but it's not just us. Can either I or you turn two into one? No. That is a supernatural work. God is saying, "If you want this, then what I'm going to do is when you make this vow, you commit to one another, and I'm going to seal you two together. Two become one. Two households. Two families become one. Two sets of finances become one. Two houses become one. And the culmination of all of this is the act of sex. This visual, this physical representation of two becoming one.

He says, "God has brought this together. Let no one tear apart what God has brought together." And Jesus continues to talk about this teaching. He says:

*"And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful."* Matthew 19:9 (NLT)

And this is what He's doing here. He's not only saying... Is it okay for you to divorce for any reason? Of course not. And He also goes a step further and He says that it's not okay, it's a really big problem, unless she's been unfaithful.

And I'm not going to go into a full teaching on reasons for divorce, but Jesus points at one here—unfaithful. And we see a few different ones in 1 Corinthians as well from Paul.

## Reasons for divorce

Here are three big buckets when you talk about reasons for divorce that we are going to take seriously.

Unfaithful  
Abandoned  
Abused

These are three kind of big markers that would say, could you get a divorce? Yes. Do you have to get a divorce? No. But these three things a lot of times lead to divorce. We need to be extra cautious that we never even represent or get close to one of these things. Here's the way that I would like to say it today:

Divorce should not be as easy as signing a document. Divorce should be as hard as amputating a part of your body. Some of you have been through a divorce and you know that that is what it feels like.

But here's the idea. Two becoming one, this isn't just signing something and walking away. You are amputating a part of yourself. And when would you amputate a part of your body? It's when you can't possibly move forward with it. You can't move forward with it and live. So you make the unbelievably hard decision to get a divorce. Marriage is not high stakes dating. There is weight to it There is a seriousness to it. And the disciples pick up on this. This conversation goes a different direction. They could not have expected the way Jesus really leaned in on this. This is heavy. And look at their response.

*"Jesus' disciples then said to him, 'If this is the case, it is better not to marry!'"* Matthew 19:10 (NLT)

Guys are the worst, "So you're saying that it's going to be really, really hard? Yeah, I'm out." Oh, man. There is this audible sigh. Yeah, it's true.

This is how Jesus responds to their statement, "If this is true then we might as well not get married." Look at Jesus' sobering words:

*“Not everyone can accept this statement,” Jesus said. “Only those whom God helps. Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.”* Matthew 19:11-12 (NLT)

And I just want you to feel that seriousness today. There are some of you in the room who are thinking about marriage and you need to count the cost. You’re thinking this will make things easier. Marriage makes a lot of sense. Easier is not one of them. We always sit down with couples and do pre-marital counseling. And that’s one of the first things I say, “Marriage is the hardest thing I’ve ever done.” And they kind of laugh a little bit and they wait for me to laugh. And I’m like, “I’m not laughing. Next to my decision to follow Jesus, it’s the second-best thing I’ve ever said yes to in my life, but it is really hard. It’s not for the faint of heart.”

I think that we think “until death do us part” is not going to come the next day where you spend a lifetime dying to yourself and placing the needs of this other person above you, I just want to say, “Count the cost.” Even if you’ve got a ring in your pocket right now, count the cost. The other thing that I want to highlight here is:

### **Healthy Singleness**

I know this talk is about healthy marriage, but He mentions singleness here. And I just want to say that whether you’re single for a season or maybe you’re committed to being single for a lifetime, I want to go back to the words of Jesus here. This is for marriage and for singleness. If we approach it for the sake of the Kingdom, all things are possible.

I also want to say that singleness is not a placeholder until you get married. There is no evolution to this. It’s like, “I was a single Christian and now I’m a married Christian.” No. There are Christians. And there are two options for those who want it, you can be married to one person. Or, two, you can be single and celibate. Both are honoring to God. Both bring honor with them if we submit them to God.

There is something unique that God will do in our marriages that He couldn’t do in any other relationship. And there is something God can do in our singleness that He couldn’t do in any other relationship. So what we need to do is just give them to God. Submit them to Him and say, “Hey, marriage is for the sake of the Kingdom.” “My singleness is for the sake of the Kingdom.”

But I think for far too long you’ve heard that or thought that, “Maybe my life will start when I get married.” I just want to say, “You, because of Jesus, are completely fulfilled where you are.” And I just want to take a moment and honor all of our singles across our campuses. What you are able to do and the way you serve God is honoring. And we honor you.



So that's the seriousness of it. It's not for the faint of heart.

## **STRUCTURE**

And then I want us to look at the structure, the structure of marriage. Mainly, what is this arrangement? We see that there is a foundation to it. We've already been talking about the seriousness of it. But what do we build on top of that foundation? This is where a lot of us get in trouble, unless we start at the place that this is God's design, His blueprint. We don't get to decide what we put on top of it.

A lot of times we take this concept of marriage, this foundation, and we say, "I see what you are doing, God, but hear me out. I think I might have a new idea. I think I've got a better idea." And it's like, "No, just stick to the thing."

Have you ever built gingerbread houses with your kids? You unpack everything and you lay it down and they are like, "Dad, what if we use the roof for walls and the walls for the roof?" What if? Or, "We could just use the roof for the roof and the walls for the walls?" "What if we took the chimney and put it in the front yard?" Or, "We put the chimney on top of the house." What are you talking about?

It reminds me of this comedian who was making fun of America. He's from Africa and he was talking about how we pronounce the word *zebra* wrong. He says, "You guys call it a zebra. It's not zēbra, it's zĕbra. Debra but with a z—zebra." And then he makes this distinction. He says, "You don't get to name them because you don't have them." So what we're going to look at here is that marriage is not ours, it's God's. We don't get to name it. We don't get to decide what it looks like. We're going to look to Him. What does the structure for marriage look like? And the umbrella term for the structure of marriage is:

## **Covenant**

Covenant pretty much, I would say, is only talked about in the Bible. You probably don't have a lot of covenants going on with different people. You don't use it every day, I guess I would say.

## **Contract vs. Covenant**

But there is difference between a covenant relationship, and then what I think a lot of us turn marriage into today, which is a contract. Now, a contract—if we're looking at marriage from the standpoint of a contract, it is a horrible contract. We just look through the vows: for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health—where's the exception. You know what I mean? It's a horrible contract, but it is a beautiful covenant. And it's a personal promise that we are making to this other person. So it's a covenant, not a

contract. I'm not looking for what I can get out of it, but I'm looking for what I can bring to it.

And then the second distinction I would make about the difference between a covenant is, a lot of times it's the difference between:

### Happiness vs. Holiness

A lot of us got married under the guise, "I am going to be so, so happy." And then you got into it and you were happy for a season, maybe a big season, maybe seven years, 10 years. But then when the happiness faded you thought, "This marriage must have run its course." But the whole point of marriage is not happiness. Marriage, more than anything, is this discipleship tool that reflects our relationship with God. You will have seasons when you will not be happy, but every season can be used to bring holiness.

Marriage is a covenant that helps make **us holy, not a contract for guaranteed happiness.**

I love the way that Philip Yancey paints a clear and real picture of what marriage is and what it is not. He says:

Marriage strips away the illusions about sex pounded into us daily by the entertainment media. Few of us live with over-sexed supermodels. We live instead with ordinary people, men and women who get bad breath, body odors, and unruly hair; who menstruate and experience occasional impotence; who have bad moods and embarrass us in public; who pay more attention to our children's needs than our own.

We live with people who require compassion, tolerance, understanding, and an endless supply of forgiveness. So do our partners. Such is the ironic power of sex: it lures us into a relationship that offers to teach us what we need far more—sacrificial love.

And what we're going to do now is we're going to do a study in Ephesians, chapter 5, starting in verse 21. This is probably the biggest bulk of Scripture that we see that speaks directly to marriage. And one, what I want you to do, we're going to read a big chunk, so buckle up. And then two, you may read some things that you are not sure about. You may read some things that you disagree with. I just want to ask you to suspend judgment until we work our way through this whole thing. Okay?

**The marriage covenant is supposed to reflect the covenant God has made with us.**

**Take a look at this. Here's the structure for marriage. Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 21 through 33. Paul says:**

*“And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.*

*“For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.*

*“In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body.*

*“As the Scriptures say, ‘A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (NLT)*

This is the Word of the Lord.

So, I just want to give us a little bit of background to what we just read. Just to remember what we read here; this came at a real time in history with real people. Paul wrote a letter to a church in the city of Ephesus, to people who were going through obvious things that were dealing with marriage. Why was that?

Well, at this time Ephesus was known for a few things. Probably what it was most well-known for is that it was the home of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the temple of Artemis. And so I want you to think about this. You have this space where people are coming together believing in Jesus for the first time. They are coming, but not as blank slates. Women are coming believing that this god, Artemis, said who they were, gave them the identity that they were above men and they were made in this form and this image of a god and they should be ruling.

All in the mix, you have Christian men coming to believe in Jesus in this Roman culture that for as long as they can remember have been told that they are the strong ones, “You are the strongest force in the world. You are a man. There is nothing that you do that has consequences. You sleep with whomever you want. You marry whomever you want. You do what you want.”

And now these people are getting married and Paul offers a new paradigm, “Which one is greater? How about you submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. You want to be first? Well, the first is last.” Go figure that one out.

What is it going to look like for these two to come together? And what’s fascinating is the first audience who would have read this, the men would have been taken back. The men would have been going, “This is hard to hear.”

For others... I'm guessing that it may be, as you're reading through these Scriptures, that women may have a harder time today wrestling with, "What does that mean?" And it may be around this word *submit*. Maybe you've heard it used in different ways over the years. Maybe it was used as a weapon. I just want to bring a little bit of clarity to this word *submission* and what it means here in this Scripture. The first thing that we need to see is:

### **Clarity on submission**

Wives to husbands

This is wives to husbands, not women to men.

Second, the word submission really is a military word that just means to line up behind. And he says, "Wives to husbands," and then:

### **As to the LORD**

Meaning a husband could never ask his wife to do something outside of God's will.

The third thing:

You are submitting to someone who has already committed to placing the needs of his wife above his own.

And then the last thing I would say is:

Submission does not mean silence. Submission does not mean he comes home and decides the way things are. Submission does not mean you just zip it and whatever makes him happy makes you happy. No you have been brought together to complement one another. To do this life together. You speak, you influence, you work together. Mutual sacrifice. Mutual submission.

I think for far too long men have thought that headship meant playing dictator and telling everyone, "This is the way that it is going to be." But biblical leadership is a call to die. Biblical leadership is a call to selflessness, a call to serve, a call to place the needs of another above your own.

I heard it said like this once. If a man ever calls out:

**Woman, submit!**

**She should respond with :**

**Man, die!**

**Now, I want to work through just a little bit of what Paul spoke directly to each one, to husbands and to wives. And we're going to start with husbands, mainly because, if you've noticed, in this description, it's three times longer, the instructions for men than for women. I'll let you figure that one out.**

**This is what Paul says when he summarized this:**

## **FOR HUSBANDS**

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church.

This is an agape love, which is important. The Greeks had a bunch of words for love. They had more of a brotherly friendship love, they had erotic love, and then they had this agape, this God love. It's the same love that we see in John 3:16 where it says, "For God so loved the world..." "Husbands, I want you to love your spouses like that, with that agape love." And then he follows up with these two words:

### **FEED AND CARE.**

I like the way that the ESV translates this to:

### **CHERISH & NOURISH**

**Love is my responsibility. What does it look like to cherish you and to nourish you? To protect you and to provide for you? To feed and to care?**

**You know, there is this beautiful Jewish saying:**

"God made woman, not out of man's foot to be under him, nor out of his head to be over him, but 'She was taken from under his arm that he might protect her and from next to his heart that he might love her.'" (Barnhouse)

And I just want to call all men to this right now. This is your call. Love is your responsibility, which doesn't mean what you say goes. It means you are the first one to sacrifice.

It's a very limited view of it, but I always talk about it like this. It means, for example, if someone broke in in the middle of the night, who is the one meeting them at the stairs? And if you say, "Her," I hear you.

It means that I'm the first one to sacrifice. I'm the first one to take this thing head on. If there is a cut to be made, I'm taking it first. If there is a second job that needs to be had, I'm doing it first. It's a call. Love is my responsibility. Not to use my authority but to leverage it and say, "How can I love you better?"

Here is a question that I want you to wrestle with this week. Husbands, taking notes if you stopped, start again:

Is my spouse growing spiritually because of me or in spite of me?

Here's what I mean, "Does my wife have to go around me to get to Jesus? Is my wife clinging to Jesus in spite of me because of the lack of love she is receiving from me? Or is my love ushering her in closer and closer to Jesus? Am I leading the way? Protecting and providing for her."

And then here are two questions to ask your spouse today and this week:

Is there anything I am currently doing that makes you feel like I don't love you?

Ask this question and don't say anything. Don't defend it. Don't try to explain it away.

Just ask. And then here's the next one:

How can I love you better?

This is where the love languages that kind of exploded over the last few years come in, because it is so important to communicate love, not just love, but to communicate love in a way that it lands and is received.

I remember when we first got married... The way people showed me love growing up is they bought me something. They bought me a pair of shoes. They bought me a new outfit. Whatever it was, they bought it for me.

So when I got married I thought that the way that I'm going to show her that I love her is by buying her things. I would buy her things, and it's not that she didn't appreciate it, it just wouldn't match the level that I spent and what I was getting back.

And then I started to realize it's like, "That's not the way that she receives love." To her it would have been much better if I would have scheduled a date night or spent time with her asking questions. Or, if I would have helped around the house. So it's important to ask the question, "How can I love you better?" And to hear how they receive love.

## **FOR WIVES**

*He says:*

*"So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."* Ephesians 5:33 (NLT)

That's what he boils it down to: respect. And the two words I would use, obviously respect, but then:

## **ENCOURAGE & CARE**

What would it look like in your marriage to truly care about the things that he cares about? To encourage him. Because he may put on a big face and seem so sure, but he's probably got a lot of insecurities. And encouragement from someone who sees him better than anyone else will go a long way. Know that there is a lot of disrespect he may face, but if he is respected at home, it's worth so much more. And here are two questions for you:

### **Is there anything I do that makes you feel disrespected?**

Is there anything I do that makes you feel disrespected by it? Again, ask the question and hear where it goes. You don't have to defend; you don't have to explain. And then:

### **How can I show you that I respect you?**

Here's how you answer that question, "When you do this, I feel like you respect me." And guys, I wish I could tell you that you're going to take this, you're going to have this conversation tonight, and you're going to wake up in the morning and you're going to be saying, "The Lord is good. My marriage went from darkness to light."

Remember this series. It is:

## **The Cumulative Effect**

It is one degree at a time. It's not just having the conversation one time. It's not just praying for these things one time. It's giving yourselves a lifetime to grow one degree to the next, to truly live out the beautiful marriage that God has for you.

So boil that down. The cumulative effect, when it comes to a healthy marriage, what are those little things that we can do day in and day out that will bring us to that beauty that we have been talking about?

### **One:**

Find ways daily to show the love you have for your spouse.

### **Two**

Find ways daily to show the respect you have for your spouse.

Here's a word that conveys both love and respect when it's deserved: sorry. "I'm sorry," is a great use of words. Then:

Serve one another in the small things.

When it comes to marriage we get caught up in the big things, "I can't wait to plan that one-year anniversary, that 10-year anniversary—those big moments. But the truth is, marriages are built daily, little by little. It's a cumulative effect, like we said. Either pulling us farther apart or bringing us closer together.

Here's the thing. When people talk about how, "I woke up and I didn't even recognize this person next to me." That didn't happen overnight. It's hard to see because it happens in such small fragments one after the next. As it's trying to pull us apart, we have to be very intentional with pulling ourselves back together. And it's in the small things. You have so many opportunities to love and respect one another every single day.

I know for me most of the small ways that I can love and respect my wife is usually through water. I've never met anyone who drinks more water than my wife. I used to go days without even drinking the stuff. And she drinks so much. We don't have a pool at our house but I bet even if you have a pool at your house our water bill is higher than yours because she drinks so much of this stuff.

Usually she gets super thirsty from about 8:30 to 10:30 at night. And usually, she doesn't do it intentionally, it happens this way. I'll get in bed. I'll be under the covers. And I lay down. And she will say, "Hey, are you going to go back down stairs tonight?"

"Wasn't planning on it. Why?" And I already know the answer. "Oh, I was just wondering if you could fill up my water. Because between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. I'm going to need to drink about 32 ounces."

And how I respond in that little moment says a lot about where my heart is. That's not a big thing. That's a little thing that goes a long way. So how do you serve one another in small things?

Ask the question: how can I meet your needs?

That's a normal question. Normal night at dinner, "How can I meet your needs?" And fellas, she has more than sexual needs. Oh, it got quiet. There is a whole list of them.

And sex is at the bottom. There is mental, emotional, physical (outside of sex)—there is a list of them. Alright? Work on fulfilling those needs. How can I meet your needs? And the final one:

Stop keeping score.

You know the Bible talks about love keeps no record of wrongs. And I don't think love keeps records of right either. So it's not like, "Hey, I really respected you this week. I respected you. I respected you. And you didn't love me so I'm going to withdraw all of that respect and give you some disrespect."

For the cumulative effect to happen over time, there is no withdrawal, it's, "I invest. I invest. I invest. I nourish and I care and I encourage and I protect and I love and respect. And I never take anything but I just pour out my love and I pour out my respect for this other person. That's when we begin to have this beautiful marriage. And I know that it is hard. But it's possible. And it's only possible when I've seen this through Jesus.

You know, usually when my wife and I sit down to do premarital counseling with a couple we start things off with this question. It's an icebreaker. What's your biggest fear when it comes to marriage? And it's usually at this time when the man is like, "I knew we shouldn't be doing this."

Here's what I hear, after doing this for six years. This is what I hear most of the time. It's some version of this. The man will say, "My biggest fear is that I don't know how to be a husband." You know what he is saying? He's saying, "I'm not worthy, I don't know if I'm worthy of respect."

And for the wife, she says, "One of my biggest fears is I think he might leave me." Do you see how that works? What she is saying is, "I don't know if I'm worthy of unconditional love. I don't know that I can be fully loved and fully known at the same time."

And I just want to land here with:

### **THE SOURCE**

If you are in that place right now where you are like, "I don't know if I'm worthy of respect." "I don't know if I'm worthy to be loved like that." These marriages that we are talking about here, these beautiful, God ordained, God designed marriages are only possible if the source is the very Spirit of God. There is no other way.

There is no other way to do what we are talking about day in and day out to completely put ourselves out, to be so vulnerable that we are naked in front of this other person.

This is to choose to see ourselves in our nakedness and our brokenness and say, "No. No. No. I love you," over and over and over again. And, "I respect you even when I have so many reasons not to." It is only by the power of God.

And this is through the gospel. You see, God would come and He would live this life that you and I could not live and He would go to a cross and He would die for me and you, defeating sin and death. Hinting back to that first verse that we read, now we come to

Him, unveiled, no separation between God and us. His Spirit is alive in us. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the grave can restore marriage from whatever depth it is in right now.

So what we want to do right now is just to create space because the covenant that we are in, this marriage covenant, it's not ultimate, it's not the main thing. It points to a much larger covenant. It's the new covenant that Jesus made with you and me. And this covenant, this is the one that completely fulfills, this is the one where we find our identity, this one is not just for married people, but it's for singles—everyone in this room.

So what we want to do is we want to close out today by taking communion together. And you know, when Jesus established this, His words were, "This symbolizes My new covenant with you." My new covenant.

So what we're going to do right now is just collectively, through this time of communion, we're going to offer up all of our relationships, all of our singleness for the sake of the kingdom, remembering His covenant.

As we take the bread, which represents the body of Jesus, which was broken on our behalf, we take it and we remember.

And we take the cup, which represents the blood of Jesus, which was spilled for me and for you as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. We take this and we remember. Would you pray with us?

Father, we come to You today and we repent. God, we repent of downplaying Your idea of marriage. God, we repent of reducing it to a contract. God, I pray that You would allow us to live inside the covenant of marriage, mutual sacrifice, mutual submission, unconditional love, unending respect for one another.

God, allow us to live together in a way that our marriages reflect the greater marriage between You and Your church. God, let everything we do point to that. God, I pray that You would awaken the seriousness of our marriages. They are not just for us. They are a visual that points to the mystery of how well You love Your church. God, I pray that You would use our marriages as an evangelistic tool to show people the love of Christ. God, I pray for all of the people who are not married, for the singles. And, God, I pray in this moment that they would give their lives to you for the sake of the kingdom. And, God, it's in You and You alone that You provide fulfillment, You provide identity. And, God, as we go from here in our marriages in our singleness we ask You to bless us, to keep us, to grow us one degree at a time, more and more into Your image.



And, God, I pray if there are some here today who need prayer, I pray that they know that this is a safe place for them. We are here for them no matter what.  
Father, we love You. It's in Your perfect and holy name we pray. Amen.

