

## **a good creation gets better marriage part 2**

All right, well, I invite you to take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to Genesis chapter 2. And we are crawling along here through these opening verses that have just been so rich. It's like a distilled substance where just a couple of drops flavors the whole cup. Very few words that contain so many implications.

And this morning, I'm titled this message, A Good Creation Gets Better, Marriage Part 2. And so we're going to take our second pass here at this section in verses 18 through 24. And what's amazing here is to understand that marriage predates the church. It predates the first proclamation of the gospel.

It is part of God's purpose in creation to bring male and female together in this union. And this is for all peoples. It's for all times.

So long as this life lasts, we just read this morning that marriage does not endure in heaven. There will be no need for marriage. We'll look at that probably next week.

But I said last week that I have a concern that we tend to think about marriage incorrectly from a principled standpoint and then also personally. And so principally, we can tend to think about marriage incorrectly in that we don't rightly think about God's purpose and design in the institution itself. And then personally, we just tend to kind of get confused as we think about our own roles and responsibilities and diagnosing issues that come up in our marriages.

And in particular, we can begin to think about marriage primarily as it relates to our own personal fulfillment. And so Genesis 1 and 2 gives us God's vision here. This is pre-fall for the nature and the purpose and the meaning of marriage.

And so in order to ask you just this afternoon, which you'll probably have a better answer this afternoon than before this message, but in order to ask you, hey, walk me through God's purpose for marriage. Why does God want people to get married? Or why does he want people to remain single? Why did God create sexual differentiation in the first place? Why did he create attraction? What is the point of these things? I think you'd probably have good answers. I hope biblical answers and how you'd form that.

But the question is, are we getting the best answers from Scripture? And are we seeing marriage designed by God to accomplish his own purposes on Earth? Now marriage, as I mentioned last week briefly, is somewhat under assault in our day. Certainly in the West, it's been well-documented that marriage and children are both being delayed or altogether abandoned by an increasing number of individuals. Cohabitation is on the rise.

After all, people think weddings are expensive. They're kind of a lot to plan for. And with so many marriages ending in divorce, I mean, why kind of go through all of that hassle anyway? And then when it comes to children, the view of children is oftentimes fewer and later, if at all.

And so God is, of course, the one who determines the womb. He opens the womb. He closes the womb.

God is the one that calls some individuals to singleness and to marriage. So I'm not speaking here as if there's a blanket morality to how this application works itself out in the lives of individuals. But in principle, marriage and children are to be regarded for God's purposes.

They need to be understood in light of the Creator. It's God's design for his creation to function primarily through the means of marriages coming together and producing offspring and family units populating the earth through that means. Church has not avoided thinking wrongly about marriage and children.

One author notes during the 20th century, both Protestant theology and Western culture have asserted the primacy of relational good and marginalized the blessing of children as central to God's purpose of marriage. If I were to attempt to define what I think is the single greatest issue that plagues marriages and by extension an improper view of children, it would be this. It would be that marriage and children are to be thought of primarily as it relates to me and my own personal sense of satisfaction and fulfillment and well-being.

That marriage exists for me and my own personal fulfillment that the question of having children is really about what would fulfill me. If more children would fulfill my yearnings, then I want to have more and if more children would be inconvenient, I want to have less. Marriage would meet my goals and I can find someone that will help me get to where I want to go, then I want to get married and if it would potentially not help me achieve those goals, then I don't want to get married.

Christopher Ashe writes that perhaps the deepest manifestation of human sin is the replacement of the Creator by some created good. I'll read that again. Perhaps the deepest manifestation of human sin is the replacement of the Creator by some created good.

And so I just want to say at the outset this morning, it is possible for marriage and children and this is whether you're married or single and whether you have children or whether you don't, it is possible for marriage and children to become even for us as believers. An idol of the heart. Rather than a good gift, it is to be received from the Maker with gratitude for His purposes.

I was thinking of an illustration of this and I was part of a couple, small group Bible study when I was single and I think it was truly just for couples. I don't know how, why I was there, but I got to be a part of it and there was one couple in particular that I remember, Bobby and Lynette. They were energetic and personable.

They were attractive. He had a successful business. Whenever the other couples would talk about marital issues, Bobby and Lynette didn't really seem to be able to relate to those issues.

Ostensibly, they had what would appear to be a problem-free marriage. And so as you can imagine, they were the envy of all of the other couples in the group. And when asked marriage

advice, I distinctly remember, and I couldn't quite tell all that was off with it, but I knew something wasn't right.

I remember Bob speaking to the group about the secret to a happy marriage. He said this, we have a recipe for success. I know what she wants and I give her what she wants.

She knows what I want. She gives me what I want. And we're happy.

That was Bob's recipe for a fulfilled and happy marriage. Couldn't put my finger on it, but Bob's advice felt a little wrong at that time. I mean, certainly there's an element in Scripture, spouses are to consider how to please one another, 1 Corinthians 7, it's appropriate.

But if the highest and best goal of the marriage is the relationship itself and our personal fulfillment, our own happiness, our own completion, our own sexual satisfaction, then at some point, what happens when the marriage no longer provides that? When it doesn't deliver on those expectations? Somewhat unsurprisingly and tragically, Bob and Lynette are no longer married. It was only a number of years, short years after that conversation that that formula no longer worked. And so what happens is that sometimes we move from thinking of love as a permanent commitment with obligations to considering it more as an expression of personal, subjective, romantic feelings, really, in a sense, narcissism.

And so any marriage that is a couple-centered marriage dissolves into a self-centered marriage, and a self-centered marriage is doomed to fail. Even when we have wedding vows, we commit to one another for better or for what? For worse. For better or for worse.

There's a principle behind it. And so if you're married or unmarried, I want you to just consider for a moment motivations. It's a very profound thought.

I didn't come up with it, but it's spot-on. Your motive for marrying will be the same as your motive for staying married or ending a marriage. Your motive for getting married will be the same motive in either staying married or ending a marriage.

One other says, it's a short step from loving you to loving me and wanting you. And so the goal of a relationship is not merely self-fulfillment. In fact, I don't know that in Christianity, we always help ourselves here, and that some of the material that is being written and promoted today regarding marriage tends to focus primarily on the betterment of the marriage itself rather than helping the couple have an outward focus for their lives that views marriage for the purposes of God and serving others.

So the Christian message is not how to have a better marriage than the world by being more loving and more committed. The Christian message is to see marriage redeemed for the purposes of God and to see marriage as a good gift from the Creator used to bless His creatures and to serve in advance His purposes on earth. Are you challenged just by that introduction? I know I am.

See, we just tend to think very self-fulfillment, self-expectations related when it comes to our marriages. And so as I've tried to work this over and express it simply, I think maybe the best way of articulating it is this. Married or unmarried, you are very first and foremost a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

First and foremost, you're a disciple of the Lord Jesus. If you're married before you are a spouse, you are a disciple of Jesus. You belong to Him and your marriage then is a commitment to another person but under His Lordship, under His tutelage.

It's for His purpose and His example then is yours, which if you remember is to lay down your life for the sake of another. So if you approach marriage with the desire of your own personal fulfillment, you're trying to get something from marriage that it was never designed by God to provide. God is to be your fulfillment and your source of satisfaction and your trust and your hope.

He's the one who fills your soul and now you get to then if that's in its right place, enjoy marriage for the wonderful gift that it may be, but it is marriage in the service of the King. Marriage in the service of the King. God's kingdom purposes and I want you to see that this truth is all over these opening verses of Genesis 18 that God designs and intends marriage certainly for our benefit, for our joy, for the good of His people, and yet ultimately it is to serve Him and His purposes.

Genesis chapter 2 beginning in verse 18, then the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

Whatever the man called them, whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused 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 his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Verse 18 kicks off, then the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. And we noted that this is a very short window in time.

On day six of creation where God has created animals and then he's created Adam. And in the time period between creating Adam and creating Eve where he says, it's very good. In verse

131, there's this short window of time, few hours on day six.

Or God says it is not good. There's a better situation than one man being alone. And so we mentioned that there's some purposes that we see for God in the creation of Eve and that there's elements that sometimes are understood as the primary purpose, but these are really secondary.

And one of them was was God created Eve to be a co-worker alongside Adam. That's certainly true. Ecclesiastes 4.9, two are better than one because they have a good return for their toil.

And if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. So one of them fell down in the garden. Now, there's somebody to pick the other one up.

The work goes a little bit faster. We also mentioned that this idea of a co-labor is more than just another set of hands. That if the goal was merely to accomplish gardening, God would have provided Adam with another man who probably would have been more physically capable of doing physical work in the garden.

And so this this co-labor then is not in a linear fashion that merely adds the same work in the same output, but rather her contribution as a co-labor is going to be in a way that is distinct from Adam. Therefore, it's complimentary. She's going to be different.

We saw the kind of companionship relational reason that some would say Adam was lonely. And so Adam then needs a spouse so he can feel complete. Marriage is obviously a source of companionship or it ought to be.

We see that when when a spouse is widowed, they have great grief and sorrow because they're bereft of their beloved. But we also consider that marriage is not in principle God's remedy for loneliness. Rather in Scripture, you have friendship and family and fellowship that are all God's remedies for those who are lonely.

If you remember, David had a friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan. According to 2nd Samuel 126, it surpassed the love of women. It was very sweet to them.

They had a precious friendship. And according to 1st Thessalonians 2 6 through 8, the Thessalonian Church became very dear to the Apostle Paul and to Silas and to Timothy. They shared life together at a deep level.

So you see friendship, we see fellowship in the scriptures. And then according to Psalm 68 6, God's provision for the lonely is to put them in homes to give them families. And so God does remedy loneliness in Scripture.

He does it through friendship, through fellowship, and through family, sometimes through companionship. But this is not the primary purpose for which God creates Eve. Rather, we see here in the language, part of God's design for marriage when he says, I will make him a helper.

A helper fit for him. One word to describe Eve. She's a lot of things.

She's more than a helper, but fundamentally and primarily here, she's given to Adam as a helper. Okay? The helper is because Adam has something that he's been given, a task, a responsibility by God, which he is unable to carry out by himself. Note this helper is necessary.

It was not good before Adam had the helper. And this helper is designed by God specifically for Adam. Look at that.

A helper fit for him. And so God knows exactly what Adam needs. He needs a female.

And he needs a particular female. And so Eve is created then in relation to Adam. She corresponds to Adam.

She is given in relationship to this man. We see her this idea of a helper. Then is that she is to come alongside Adam in the role that God has designed Adam to play.

It means that a wife then finds is one of her primary responsibilities in this life to come alongside her husband in the calling that God is placed upon his life. I believe that the phraseology of a helper suitable is unimprovable in terms of conveying the sense. That Eve is not merely the antithesis of Adam.

It's not a matter of oil and water as we said, or black and white, but rather she corresponds to him and yet she's unique. And so her contribution is unique. He is a male.

She's a female. And their union here is going to form the first family. When you think of this helper language, then what do we know of that God has called Adam to do? Remember back in chapter one? Wasn't that long ago? God said we're going to create man in our own image.

What do we want him to do? We want him to be fruitful. And to multiply. And to fill the earth.

And to subdue the earth. To bring it under submission. To put it in order.

And to have dominion over the creation. And so guess what? In order to do that, you need a male and a female that can produce offspring. You need a male and a female that can work together to bring up children and to nurture a family.

To be able to do the work of building families that will produce families. That will produce families that in order to carry out this mandate, Adam needs a helper and she must be a female. Not only that, but God has called Adam to work the garden and to keep the garden.

Remember in chapter two, we saw that in verse 15. He's to work the garden and to keep the garden. And so marriage here is given to Adam and Eve.

Certainly as a gift for their benefit, but as part of God's larger umbrella design of how humanity is going to carry out this dominion on the earth. And so everything comes back to the Creator.

Procreation, for what purpose? For the Creator.

Nurturing children, for what purpose? For advancing God's glory on earth. Remaining faithful in marriage, for what purpose? The marriage itself, not really. For the glory of God.

And we also see here in this initial language, some of the role distinction in marriage. Notice that Adam is the head. Adam was given the instruction by God about the trees and which ones you can eat from and the one that you can't.

Adam is the one who's given the responsibility to work the garden and has charge over it. So God has a little bit of alone time with Adam where he instructs him. He gives him expectations.

He creates Adam first. That means Adam has responsibility as the leader for that domain. And then Eve is given now as a gift to Adam to come alongside him in carrying out that responsibility.

It means then for the wife that her purpose is connected to her husband. We'll see the husband is connected to the wife as well, but in a different way. And so if we're honest, sometimes we struggle with these roles.

Do we not? In marriage? We struggle with these roles. I mean, for a woman to embrace her role in the marriage as a helper surely requires faith. Does it not? It requires reliance upon the Spirit.

I mean, this requires faith to trust God in how your husband is going to lead the family. Sometimes you might say to drive the family right off a cliff. Requires faith to not try to take over the leadership role by just encouraging him in the way that he needs to lead.

I mean, it's subtle sometimes. Hey, I want to step back and let you lead. By the way, as I do, this is the way that I think you need to lead us.

It's still called leading, actually. The faithful helper, of course, is going to speak truth to her husband. She's going to make appeals to her husband.

She's going to encourage her husband. At times, she's even going to correct her husband lovingly and respectfully. I mean, we're not advocating here for spineless or weak women that do not stand up courageously with Christ as an instrument of benefit to their husbands.

But in terms of responsibility for leading the family, it's clear that Adam is the head and Eve is the helper, and that's God's design, and it works. And so women, of course, struggle at times to not be in the position of leadership. They struggle to watch and to fix her hope on God as she sees her husband at times make bad decisions or lead poorly or abdicate or not do things the way she deems best.

And then is it not true that as men, we don't really struggle any less? It's just a different struggle. You know, it's interesting. Immature men, having been there and done that and still

kind of coming out of that, I feel like I can say that.

Immature men tend to kind of latch on to the idea of headship and think, man, this is going to be awesome. Like, I get to be the boss. I get to be the one in charge.

I'm going to call the shots. And so now I'm going to take that role. And yet men who are honest know, know the struggle of leadership and the burden of leadership and the weakness of the flesh to be passive and to abdicate or to be selfish and to dominate or to use your position for your own benefit rather than to serve your family or even to blame shift for things that go wrong in the home.

I mean, this is a key part of training men in the church is when you see areas of your wife's sanctification that you don't think are as they ought to be or you see issues in your home or you're having career problems rather than shifting the blame elsewhere to understand how God has called me as the head of this household. And I'm responsible. I'm responsible for the direction of this home.

For the tone in the tenor. For the children's respect of authority for our finances and for all of the dimensions of our home fall on my shoulders. And so you see that this is important that we have these roles firmly established in our minds.

For men to be humbled in that role to to embrace it by God's design. Our beloved Todd Marie is going to be here for our spring conference in a few weeks would always say that that men by nature of their maleness are leading even if they're abdicating means that there's an influence that God has given the man in the home. So even if you're a weak abdicating leader, you're still permeating the home with that influence.

And so when we seek to encourage young people in marriage, we have these roles in mind young men is your own life in order. Can you can you conduct and discipline your own life such that you might actually be able to lead others in that we try to encourage young women to look for a type of leader that can actually lead a family knowing that you're going to be submitting yourself to this man's leadership. And so God here creates Adam first.

He gives Adam a responsibility. Adam cannot carry out the responsibility on his own. God creates a helper.

She's to come alongside him and to aid him in this process. And God designed this wonderful complimentary. I mean, when it works, it works.

This is a good design. Of course, post fall, we know all the struggles that go with that, but this is a good design. And I want to remind you here of the divine prerogative that this plan originated in heaven above.

God is the one who says first 18. It is not good that man should be alone. No one counseled him.

Adam did not raise his hand and say problem here. This is the Lord who identifies the need. He brings the solution.

I will make a helper fit for him. And so. God knows exactly what Adam needs.

I mean, I wonder what their personalities were like pre fall. If you're like me, sometimes just kind of sit back and wonder a little bit what things were like. We have such limited information.

Like, OK, so neither of them are sinners. But I mean, you're not just like the Swiss Army knife. I mean, you have something that you're lacking.

Still, you're still a creature. So Adam had a personality and Eve had a personality. That particular gifts that the Lord had endowed them with, they were untainted by the fall, but they were to come together in their complementarity in service of God right here in his garden.

And as we saw, this particular woman was suited for Adam, fit for him. You know, sometimes in marriage. We struggle to believe this, do we not? I mean, maybe it's hard for you to believe, but in some marriages, the husband and the wife don't actually always see eye to eye on everything.

Are you aware of that? It's like the introduction to John Piper's book on marriage. His wife writes the intro and she just says, you know, I've heard of couples who always see eye to eye on everything and it's bliss in serving the Lord together. John and I can't relate to that.

That's not our marriage. And so the challenge is oftentimes in the human heart to think, and I need a spouse that's different in whatever XYZ fashion. I could just mold them a little bit more like the way I want them to be.

Things in my marriage would be much better. Life would go a lot smoother if she would just kind of see things from my vantage point. If he would just be the man that I would really think he should be.

Things would go better in our life. And yet here, what you have to realize is that God's wonderful design was, was to create two different people. Adam and Eve had the exact same perspective.

What benefit is there in that? And so this helper is tailor made by God for Adam. He knows Adam. He knows what he needs.

He gives Adam the gift of a wife. And so if you're married, it's good for you to remind yourself that the wife that God gave you is suited to your particular needs. And part of that is ways that you need to grow in your faith, and ways that you need to be sanctified, and ways that you need to die to self, and ways that you need to learn to serve and understand someone who's not like you.

God has a brilliant plan in his design here, and the helper that's designed to come alongside

and encourage you in particular ways, serve you in particular ways, and yes, believe it or not, even test you in particular ways. Same idea for the wife. Eve doesn't choose who she's married to.

She gets made out of a rib, and then here's her husband. That's the one that God has for her. So we need to be reminded here that, that God is the great designer of marriage generally, and then he's the one who providentially orchestrates bringing two together in union for his purpose, for his glory, for what he wants to accomplish.

And so we read exactly how this took place for Adam to meet his bride. Verse 19, Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast in the field and every bird of 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 livestock, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field. Now when you read now in verse 19, as we said, this is not a mix-up in chronology to say that God created Adam, and then now in verse 19, he created the animals. Point of chapter 2 right now is not chronology.

God created the animals first, then he created Adam. Verse 19 is saying, looking back, remember how God formed the animals. We didn't find this out yet here until chapter 2. Look at the language, verse 19.

Out of the ground the Lord God had formed. He'd already made these animals. How did he do it? He made it out of dust.

That is the point. We are more or less made from the same stuff as animals. And we saw God brings the animals to the man.

There was a line. They all stood on a ridge. However it is they came about, they come to Adam there in the garden.

And this exercise demonstrates dominion. Naming rights always indicate authority. Adam gets the right to choose the names for the animals.

He gets the authority over the animal kingdom. It's totally appropriate. It's given by God.

We saw not every animal needs to be named. In fact, Adam names the beast of the field and the birds of the heavens. It would seem that the sea creatures and the creepers don't get named, at least not at this point.

Adam most likely is naming bigger categories of animals rather than the individual species. We said a lot happened on this day. But the climax of the scene is as Adam is naming the animals, however many he named, 5,000, 10,000, 15,000.

We don't know. He's naming animals. He gets to the very last animal.

And the drama is, but for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him. I mean, he saw some incredible creatures, beautiful creatures, intelligent creatures, fast ones and flying ones, but none of them were like him. None of them were human.

And so one of the purposes of this naming exercise for Adam is he's coming to grips. I'm sure I'm gonna see one soon. I'm sure I'm gonna see one soon.

Okay, we're down to our last 10, last five. Okay. It's just me and all the animals.

And so the Lord in his providence makes Adam aware that he in fact is alone on earth. He's the only one like him because he's named all of these other creatures and exhaustively he gets to the end and there's not one like him. And so then the Lord brings his solution.

In verse 21, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. Interestingly enough, this is actually the proof text for a doctor who first started experimenting with anesthesia.

He was in Genesis chapter two and he was thinking, man, you know, we're performing surgery on people who are awake. God did this on someone who was asleep. Maybe we should start experimenting with different chemicals that could cause someone to fall asleep when we operate.

But God formed this woman not out of the dirt like he formed man, but he forms the woman out of the man. He uses the man to do it. There's an order of operations here.

And what is so interesting about this is that the first woman comes from a man and then every subsequent man comes from a woman. There's interdependency there. And Paul is actually clear about that in first Timothy chapter two, lest anyone get kind of a chauvinistic idea here that one sex is more important than the other.

God creates Eve from Adam and then every future man will come from a woman. Adam wakes up and he immediately sees the significance. Verse 23, then the man said, this at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called a woman because she was taken out of man. As we said, this is pretty dramatic here. He's been waiting for maybe like eight hours for a wife.

It's a pretty short time to be waiting to get married. But, you know, I mean, I appreciate this a little bit. I know it's pretty common.

Moms that have little ones at home, if you're around babies all day, 5.30 comes and what do you say? Man, some adult interaction. It's just nice to talk to someone who can think and speak like an adult. And so Adam wakes up and he sees now in front of him, not an animal, but to his incredible delight, one who is like him.

She's like him and yet she's not like him. This is a female. His helper, given by God, is not a

brother.

It's not another man, but she is a woman. And Adam comes up with this very thoughtful name for her. He calls her a woman.

In Hebrew, Ish is man, Ishah is woman. You know, and you kind of think, it sounds almost caveman-ish or something like, man, woman. Like just is not a lot of thought went into this.

But the idea is that she is simply a feminine form of a man. So in the same way and yet feminine. And our English words are the same way, a woman, a female.

It's that which is related to a male or to a man. Adam and Eve shared DNA. Interestingly enough, if the female had been created first and the male was taken out of the female body, there would have been a problem with reproduction because there would have been only X chromosomes producing females.

Adam had the XY chromosome. Eve contains XX, and now they're both able to reproduce. And as they reproduce, they can produce both males as well as females.

And so when Adam exclaims, at last, this at last, Adam is pleased with what he sees. One author says, here is the natural and innocent affirmation of sexual desire and delight, of nakedness untouched by shame. I mean, this is a sight for sore eyes indeed.

And it would seem that God did not need to give Adam a detailed instruction manual regarding the purpose for which he'd created Eve. Rather, God is hardwired into male and female, innately, attraction. They would have immediately understood the point of being created male and female.

And so this first couple serves as the basic model for marriage. And in verse 24, we read, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed.

Verse 24 is fundamental to our understanding of marriage. It's quoted by Jesus. It's quoted by the Apostle Paul.

It's gonna form our basic understanding of God's design for marriage and even the ethics that flow out of marriage. And we're gonna have to take next week to dive into verses 24 and 25, begin to understand all the implications of this new one flesh union, what it means and what it doesn't mean, how we're gonna protect that, the implications for parents and for married couples, what it means that the man is to cling and hold fast to his wife, and then even to explore for a minute that the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. The few minutes on earth prior to the fall.

I mean, a marriage relationship without any sin, it is just incomprehensible for us to fathom. Individuals that had no sin prior to their marital relationship and no sin in the relationship itself.

And then lastly, we're gonna see that God's blueprint here is about something much greater.

That marriage is gonna serve then as a metaphor to help God's people understand the intimate and committed covenant love that God has toward his people, the church. And that there's profound lessons for us even in that. Well, I hope that you're encouraged as we're walking through this.

Send me questions as they come up. We wanna be sure to answer those. And then next week, we're gonna look at verses 24 and 25 together, but our time is gone today.

So let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord, I just confess in thinking through even the roles in marriage, it indicts my heart because, Lord, I make marriage about me and abdicate, excuse me, the role that you've given me so often. And, Lord, as people, we think wrongly about marriage and our singleness.

We think wrongly about it when we're married. Lord, I pray that you would be rescuing us from our selfishness. Lord, that you'd help give us a vision for what it means to live for you in your discipleship, in our singleness or in our marriage, wherever you've called us.

Lord, we know that you're not a God who withholds good things from his people, and so walking in faithfulness to these truths always produces benefit and blessing. Lord, we know the joy of that on the backside of living for your glory and your purposes, that you fill us as your people with joy and peace. So I pray, Lord, that you'd be helping strengthen our marriages, Lord, certainly for our own benefit, not only for our joint marriage, but ultimately for your glory through our partnership, Lord.

Teach us to serve you together. Thank you so much for this instruction. We love you in Jesus' name.

On the first Sunday of the month, we partake of the Lord's Supper together, and it is a time of communion. Those are the words that are used in the scriptures to describe it. Communion, that is fellowship with God and with one another.

It's also a time of thanksgiving. It's a supper where we gather together and we remember what the Lord has done. We also look forward to his arrival.

And so in a few minutes, you're gonna be invited to partake. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you've repented of your sins, if you've been united to Christ, then you are invited to partake. If you're not united to Christ in faith, then you're actually encouraged and urged not to partake.

This is specifically for people who are a part of the family. And you can be a part of the family through faith and repentance, but this table is for the family of God. And the scriptures are clear how it is that we are to partake.

We're to partake as God's people in a worthy manner. In a worthy manner. What does that mean and not mean? What it means to partake in a worthy manner is to recognize that in the public demonstration of fellowship with God and his people, you wanna make sure that there's actual fellowship with God and his people.

And so if there's anything that you are hanging onto in your heart, a stubbornness, a resistance to the Lord, an area of disobedience that you don't wanna let go of, you need to confess that and resolve to forsake it before coming to the table. You have an unreconciled issue with someone in the body, you're not to come and partake without resolving that. And yet when you come, you're also to come then in gratitude, considering that it's not your worthiness that makes you able to partake, but it's ever and always the finished work of Jesus Christ.

It's his merits that make us worthy to come. And so we wanna give you a couple of minutes just to go before your Lord in prayer and prepare your heart for partaking. And I'm gonna lead us in prayer just in a couple minutes here after you've had a chance to do that.

Lord, we come to you this morning believing blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit. Lord, thank you that you've chosen to release captives, to come and set free those who are in bondage, or to proclaim liberty and favor, or to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Lord, thank you that you nailed the certificate that was against us to the tree and you canceled it out at the cross. Lord, thank you that as much sin as we've accumulated in our lives, you've had an answer for all of it. Lord, as defiling as our sin may be, as shameful at times as it makes us feel, Lord, as dishonoring as it can be to you, Lord, we're thankful that we never have to face the judgment for that sin because you bore those sins in your own hands.

You laid your own body on the tree. Lord, in order that our sins might be washed away and that we might be clean. Lord Jesus, we love you.

We thank you that you're not ashamed to call us your brethren. We thank you that you are a sympathetic high priest who knows our weakness, who is tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. Lord, thank you for bringing us the gospel message and thank you for reconciling us to yourself through the cross.

Lord, we love the lamb who was slain for us. Lord, we know that he is gonna be the object of our worship in eternity. As we gather around the throne, we're gonna see that lamb and he will be standing yet is slain.

And those scars, Lord, are going to serve as a reminder of the work that you did for us and the fact that our entrance into heaven was not free. It was free to us, but it came at great cost to you. Lord Jesus, we love you so much.

Thank you for communion. Thank you for the reminder of your sacrifice on our behalf. We love

you.

Amen. I want you to stand with me and we're gonna sing Behold the Lamb together, which is a communion hymn.