

Greenwood Baptist Church
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The War on Marriage
Genesis 2:18, 22-24

Man, what a great report. I was so excited to hear from Coach on Thursday morning that he was able to come home and be with his family. He was in the hospital for a long time for the transplant, and for him to be able to come home was a huge, huge blessing. I just continue to pray that God will continue healing him and helping him and his family during this time. And we appreciate you doing that. That's the church being the church. We lift one another up. That's how we bear one another's burdens. It's really the most important thing we can do. It's the best thing we can do for someone else — to take their name into the throne room of God, where we have access because of our relationship with Christ.

Today we're going to talk about the war on marriage. We've seen in our culture, in our country, and around the world the results of this war on marriage. It has created so many different issues and problems. I don't know if you've ever watched some people protesting, and they interview them, and they just seem overly emotional or overly invested in something. You're like, why? Why are you out here protesting this?

You also see men who are out there and have decided they're trying to make a name for themselves, something that'll last. You can drive down into Fort Worth or even Weatherford and see, on some of these buildings, the names of people. They thought, if I can get my name on this building, people will remember me. Well, all we know now is there's a building with that name on it. Most of the time we have no idea who most of those folks are. That's how it works. But we see people chasing all of these things, and they can be really passionate about it. There are all kinds of podcasts and information you can get about how to make lots of money, about how to do this, about how to do that. And the thing about it is that a lot of these stem back to the way God designed us, and how we've gotten away from God's design.

I see women sometimes — it amazed me — this mom killed her own children and went to trial, and all the women jurors voted immediately to acquit her. There might have been issues, I understand that. But they started a campaign and went out, and I'm thinking, man, why in the world would you go out and do that? And they even stated, "We're trying to make this better for all the rest of these women who have experienced the same things." There was a passion behind it. Some of the passion that you see in these causes for things that are not of God — for trans children, or for people that do this or that — you wonder, where's that coming from? And some of it is coming from the fact that God designed women with a little mama bear inside of them. You think that ain't true? Go mess with some mom's kids and see how that works out for you.

So God designed women. Throughout history there are all these stories from the frontier and from life about women who, when the time came, did things they never thought they could to protect their children, because that's part of God's design. But when we don't live out the way God designed us to live, it comes out in other ways. The same thing is true for men. God designed us to be protectors, and God designed us to be providers for our family. But when we don't choose to go down that path, it comes out in other ways. And sometimes those ways are ugly.

So what I want to talk about today is how the enemy has tried to attack marriage. It's interesting to me. We've passed laws. It's been to the Supreme Court. But for thousands of years, the church was the determiner of marriage. In other words, if you wanted to get married, you had to go to the church. And if you wanted to get a divorce, you had to go to the church. It was the church that determined whether somebody should be married. It was the church that determined whether there were biblical grounds for divorce. It never went to the government. Now it's become a matter for the courts, and we have this system now where every divorce is a no-fault divorce. We're going to get to that in a minute.

I understand something. I get it. There are people here — some of you are single. Some of you don't want to be single. Some of you are single again, and you don't want to be single again. Some of you are married. Some of you are in a marriage where maybe you're in a rocky spot. There are all kinds of things, and I understand that, and I'm going to touch on all of those. But here's what I want us to do first: I want us to see God's design, and I want us to see how that involves marriage.

So we're going to start out in Genesis chapter 2. I'm going to read verse 18 and then 22 through 24. Would you please stand with me in honor of the reading of God's Word?

“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.’” And then down in verse 22: **“Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. ‘At last!’ the man exclaimed. ‘This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called “woman,” because she was taken from “man.””** This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”

Thank you. You may be seated.

The first thing you see from that is that when God originally designed man, He did not design him to live on his own. When He looked at the man, the first thing He said was, it's not good for man to be alone. So He didn't say, “You know what, I'm going to create a best buddy for him,” or “I'm going to create a circle of buds so they can watch Sunday night football together and play games and go hunting together.” He didn't do that. He created a woman. He said, “I'm going to create a helper that is just right for him.” So man is not intended to live life alone. God made him

with this need, this desire, to be with someone.

What God did with Adam was He brought all the pairs, all the animals, males and females. He brought them all by him and he named them. Some of the names he came up with are a little weird, and we're still using them — I don't know. But anyway, he saw all these pairs, male and female. All of them came in front of him, and he's like, "Man, where's the one for me?" And that's why, when God brought the woman to him, he said, "At last! This is one for me." And he rejoiced.

One of the things we need to see is that God created this helper, and so a man and a woman together are greater. That's why the Bible says in Ecclesiastes, **"Two are better than one, because there is a good return for their labor."**

One of the things that the first pastor I served under told me — and it may be the only thing he ever said to me that I never forgot, but I never forgot this. He sat me down one time and he was talking about stuff. I was just twenty-one years old when I started serving in the church. And he said, "Look, you want to get married?" And I said, "Yeah, whenever God brings me to the right one." And he said, "Well, you need to understand this. The woman you choose, the woman that you marry, is either going to double your ministry, or she'll cut it in half or kill it." And I was like, "Oh, okay, that's kind of serious."

So from that point on, I started looking for a woman who would double my ministry. And you know what? God led me to her. Carrie has more than doubled the ministry that I have. She does all kinds of things in this church. She leads the missions area. She leads the women's area. And it's because she loves it. I didn't tell her, "Hey, you marry me, you've got to do this." When I found her, she had already felt like God had called her to be a minister's wife. So God brought us together, and He's been able to help us. A lot of the growth of this church is a result of her ministries.

I see people all the time — some of y'all, your wives maybe work with you, or they help you with that. Some of them just do things at home. Maybe they have something else, maybe they have a job while they're helping you get going. Whatever it is that they do, the right wife can double your production going down the road.

Now, there are a few things you've got to look at. One of the things you see from where God created woman: He took a rib from the side of Adam. He didn't take a bone from the top, because He didn't want the woman to rule over him. And He didn't take a bone from his foot, because He didn't want man to trample over women. He took this bone from his side so that she would be a helpmate, a partner in life.

And yes, the Bible says the man is the leader of the home. I get that. You get that too. He's the leader in that relationship. He should be the spiritual leader in the relationship. But that doesn't

mean it's not a partnership. It is. And when you find the right one, it's going to double what God can do in your life. Two are better than one, for there is a good return for their labor.

The other part is — one of the beautiful things — Coach was here, his wife's here. His wife has been right there with him every step of the way. When I had my knee surgeries, my wife was with me literally every step of the way. She'd watch me walk down the hall and say, "Nah, you're dragging that foot." And at some point I'm like, "Would you quit critiquing my walking? I'm just walking here." But she helped. And it was at a time when I needed help. And I've been there for her when she's needed help, and I will be going forward. That's part of what marriage is about. **"Woe to the one who falls when there is not someone to help him up."** When you have a husband that's following Jesus, and when you have a wife that's following Jesus, you pick each other up.

And that marriage is a great picture of the gospel. The Bible says the church is the bridegroom of Christ, and it says that even in marriage — Paul said this — it's meant to be a picture of Jesus and the church. And he says, "Look, this mystery is profound."

A godly marriage is a witness to everyone around them. A godly marriage is a witness to your children, to the people that are in your church, some of whom don't have that at home. And you can do things together that you couldn't do apart. Marriage is a blessing.

Now, in our society we've come to this point where there are people out there who have decided, "You know what, we don't need marriage anymore. What's the big deal with marriage? Why do you have to go and make vows and all that stuff? Why can't you just live together?" And unfortunately a lot of the attitudes about marriage have crept into the church. You'll hear people say, "Well, man, once you marry them, they change." Well, yeah, they do, because now you're one flesh and you're partners.

Look, I ain't been married to the exact same woman the whole thirty-plus years I've been married. My wife's changed. There are times children change you — now, children are a blessing, don't get me wrong. There are events that have happened in our life that have changed me. Now, fortunately for her, I've just gotten better looking and easier to live with as the years went on. At least that's my side of the story; she might have a different perspective on that.

But listen, your wife is going to change. Your husband is going to change. That's one of the beautiful parts of marriage — they change, and you learn how to love them where they are now. And they learn how to love you. That's one of the great testimonies about life. You can say, "Well, yeah, we got married, we were this age, and now we've been married thirty-something years." It'll be thirty-five years for my wife and me next month. And we can look back through those years and, man, there are a lot of things that have happened in there. But we've stuck by each other. And that's a testimony too.

You know what? That's the way Jesus is with us. Guess what — you changed. You changed when you came to know Jesus. You became a new creature. And since then you failed. And you got up and you went on. And then you failed again. And then you've done well, and you experienced victories and failures and all those things. But Jesus never leaves you. It's one of the ways we testify to the love of Christ — in marriage.

There's this idea that marriage is a burden, that it keeps you from things, that it's going to be a problem. Look, if you want marriage advice, go to somebody who has successfully done it for decades. Be careful about who you take advice from. Be careful about who you look to as an example. And be careful about this idea that you should just be single, because that way, if things don't work out, you can just move on. That is not of God.

It is a blessing and a reward. It says in Proverbs 31:10-12, **“Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.”** Now, it doesn't mean that she's going to be perfect. She's not. But if I look at my life with my wife, there is no doubt that she has greatly enriched my life. She's brought me good and not harm all the days of her life.

It doesn't mean that we haven't had moments. We did a thing early on — we decided, before we were married, that we were never going to throw out divorce as an option. We've both contemplated murder many times, but never divorce. I'm kidding — mostly. But look, there are times it's hard. But you move on and you go through it.

And this idea that somehow being single is better — not only that, people are getting married at later ages. I understand that's not always the way you wanted it. I get that one hundred percent. But this idea that, “Oh yeah, wait till you've done all these things, because a wife's just going to keep you from doing all the fun stuff,” or “A husband's just going to — no, just do whatever you want, there's plenty of time for that” — we've got all kinds of issues now because of people waiting. They've been told, “Hey, it doesn't matter, whenever you want to have kids you can have kids.” But biologically that's not necessarily true. And then we have people who say, “Well, let's just get a surrogate, and that way you don't even have to go through gaining weight with a baby and all that.” And has that caused some problems? That has caused some problems.

Now, I want to say here, I fully relate to and have sympathy and compassion for people who have experienced fertility issues. My wife and I did. We went through all the testing. We went to doctors. And finally we decided we were going to pursue adoption. All our children are adopted, but we seriously believe — and I'm not just saying this — we believe that our children were created to be our children. They're our children. And I can't even tell you how much love and blessing we've gotten from them. So God gave us a family. We wanted a family. We weren't able to do it one way, so we did it another way. And there are all kinds of ways. God is good, and

God is faithful, and God can help you when it comes to that area of life.

But you can also see in our society all the problems that are being caused by this. People say, “Well, they just don’t want to commit.” Well, they want to commit to living together, or sleeping together. They just don’t want to commit to a marriage. And the thing about that is, when you come together in that union, the Bible says you become one flesh. That’s the act of marriage. And there’s a supernatural element to that. That becoming one flesh is supernatural. God gave that as a gift to a man and a woman, because it causes them to become one flesh. It creates a union that is stronger than flesh. And the thing about that is, when you go outside of marriage and do that, there are consequences.

Paul talks about that in 1 Corinthians 7. This verse isn’t up there, guys, so don’t worry about putting it up. But here’s what he says in 1 Corinthians 6:15: **“Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don’t you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, ‘The two are united into one.’ But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”**

So sinning sexually is sinning — you are uniting the temple of God with someone else. It is a sin against your own body. And listen, that is why you see all these wild breakups. You see people who go and murder somebody. The reason why is this: anybody ever had a chunk of flesh torn from your body before? Maybe even a limb or something like that? Did anybody do that and think, “Oh, that was cool. That felt really good. I’d like to do that again”? No. It hurts. It hurts a lot. And it does cause people to do things that don’t make sense, because they’re losing something that is a part of them. When there is a breakup of two people who are not married but have become one flesh, it’s painful.

Now, what about singleness? Singleness can also be a blessing. Being single can be a blessing. When I first started out in youth ministry, I was twenty-one years old. I had six different high schools represented in the youth group where I was at, and a lot of them played sports and did things. I went to everything. I didn’t have anything else to do. You got a volleyball game? Yeah, I’ll be there. I went. I went to all kinds of things. I’d even hang out where they meet the parents afterward, to see if they’d invite me to dinner. That happened on a regular occasion. I’d go visit people about 5:30 and see if they’d ask me to stay. I didn’t make any money — I got paid, I think it was six hundred dollars a month. I was part-time. So that was how I supplemented my income. They knew it. Some of them would just give me a standing invitation. But I had all kinds of time to spend with them.

Now, when I got married, I didn't have all that time, because now I had a wife. But it increased my ministry in other ways. But there is a blessing, and there can be some positives, to being single.

This is in Matthew 19:10-12. **“Jesus’ disciples then said to him, ‘If this is the case, it is better not to marry!’ ‘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.’”**

So this covers everything. There are people who cannot have relations with somebody else, and so they're going to be single. They're going to live a life of service. And it was somebody else's choice that did that to them when they were young. Some chose it voluntarily. And then some, it says, chose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, there are people who, for whatever reason — maybe it didn't work out for them — but at some point they said, “You know what? This singleness to me is a gift, and I'm going to use it to serve Jesus. I'm going to use this to serve God.”

I can remember growing up, there were men and women in the church who weren't married but who spent every spare moment they had serving Jesus. A lot of them had a huge impact on my life and on the lives of others. There are people who maybe didn't have kids — maybe they were even married but didn't have kids — and spent a lifetime teaching children on Sunday mornings and had this incredible impact on their lives. So not having all these things can be a blessing when we serve Jesus.

Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35. He says, **“I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.”**

Now, there's great value in being married. But he's saying, look, when you're not, there are things you don't have to worry about. So how do you know? Maybe God intends for me to be single — how do you know? He says, look, you choose which way is best for you to serve the Lord: in union with someone else, or to serve Him single.

But he also says this in 1 Corinthians 7:8-11: **“So I say to those who aren't married and to widows — it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can't control themselves,**

they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust. But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife."

So he's talking about people — particularly in the early days of the church — where one of the household is saved and the other one's not. What do you do? You don't get to say, "Well, they're not a Christian, so I'm out of here." If you're already married, he says, stay with them as long as they consent. But he's also talking about this: if you think maybe you're going to be single, being single while being sexually immoral is not profitable to the kingdom of God, and it's not good for you either. I talked to you earlier about how it's a sin against your own body. So what's the solution? It's to get married.

Now, there are some things I would encourage you to be careful about. So many times when someone says, "I'm looking for a husband," "I'm looking for a wife" — what are you looking for? "Well, I've got some apps." Or, "I'm going down to the bar. That's where the single people are."

Here's my recipe for finding the person: quit looking for them. Here's what you need to do. Strive to become the kind of person that the kind of person you want to marry will marry. And number one, don't be yoked to unbelievers. That means when some guy comes up and says, "Hey, you want to go out to dinner?" — forget about wondering, is he going to pay, or am I paying? Is he going to pick me up? Here's the question: "Well, what are you doing on Sunday?" "I don't know. Same thing I always do. Probably this." If they're not going to church, if they're not serving Jesus somewhere, if they're not displaying in their life that they love Jesus, if they're not willing to tell you — no. Don't even go out to dinner with them.

"Well, but I might witness to them." Hey, there's nothing in the Bible that says thou shalt date unbelievers with the hope of converting them to Jesus. You know what it says? Don't.

Be determined that you're going to marry somebody who loves Christ. Not somebody who, well, they said they'd be willing to go to church with me. So what? My dog would come to church up here if I brought him, because he thinks I might give him a treat. No. Look for somebody who is the kind of person you want to marry. Not somebody that you think, "Well, I might be able to change him into that." Y'all know how many times that really works? Like zero point zero zero one percent of the time.

Find somebody who's trying to follow Jesus just like you are. And don't be afraid to ask them. Look, let me tell you something. If it's a godly young man and he's following Christ, and the first thing you asked him was, "Do you know Jesus? Because I ain't going out with anybody that ain't serving Jesus" — let me tell you what that guy is thinking, if he's a godly young man. He's thinking, "I'm going to tell my grandkids about that question." Guaranteed. If they're not a

believer and they're trying to get you to go out by saying whatever, they're going to be a little bit offended that you asked that. "Well, what do you — I don't know, what do you mean?" And then they're going to come up with, "Well, you know, I mean, yeah, I believe in God." So do the demons. You can answer them that way too. No, don't do that. Be nice. But just say, "You know, I don't think it's a good idea, so I'm going to have to say no."

Don't settle. Don't buy into the, "Well, if I don't marry this one, then who have I got?" Wait until the right one comes along. And wait until you've given your vows and exchanged rings, and then go become one flesh. That's the way God designed it. That's for your protection. And that's the way it's supposed to be.

Now, here's the deal. What about — some of us in here, I know, have experienced divorce. And here's what the Scripture says: **"The Pharisees came to him and said, 'Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?' And Jesus said, 'Haven't you read the Scriptures? They record that from the beginning God made them male and female.'" It was God's design from the beginning for man and woman to be married. And He said, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife."**

That's a picture of a covenant relationship. He leaves his father and mother. She does too. They're joined together. Now it's them. **"The two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."** Let no one split apart. Nobody. You're one.

Now, I understand — and we'll get there — that's not always... Some of you are like, "Well, that wasn't my choice. Somebody else chose, and I didn't want it, but that's what happened to me." I understand that happens. I also want you to understand that God hates divorce. Now, God doesn't hate divorced people. That's not what it says. He hates divorce.

Here's what it says in Malachi 2:14-16: **"You cry out, 'Why doesn't the Lord accept my worship?' I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young."**

I want to tell you something. If you were married and you stood up and you said "I do" — "Do you promise to love them, in sickness and in health, till death do you part?" "I do." Guess what? God witnessed your vows. You were making vows before Him — not in front of those people who were there, and not even to the person you were marrying. You made those vows to God, and He was watching.

"The Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young, but you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows. Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union."

God wants babies, just like the pastor wants babies around his church. All right?

“So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. ‘For I hate divorce!’ says the Lord, the God of Israel. ‘To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. ‘So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.’”

I talked to somebody not long ago who went to this church a long time ago, and they’ve been through a difficult divorce. He’s trying — there were circumstances there, which I’m not going to get into — but he’s trying to follow the Lord and do the right thing. And he said, “In the end, every divorce ends up with abuse on one side and her being crazy on the other.”

And I don’t want to make light of the fact that abuse does happen. But sometimes we want a reason for a divorce so that we can feel better about moving forward. And sometimes we just need to say, “You know what? It was both of us.” I’ve never yet met a relationship that split apart that was one hundred percent one person’s fault and zero percent the other. Now, the choice that broke the vows was one person’s choice. That can happen, for sure. But here’s the deal: God hates divorce because it breaks apart two that He made into one, with the intention that it be for life. And God hates divorce because it hurts.

I want you to hear that one phrase again: to divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty. It hurts, and it’s cruel. And people don’t respond well to cruelty.

Anytime I see single guys — “Ah, man, I can’t find a girl. Every time I do, she ends up being crazy.” And I want to go, “Were y’all living together?” “Well, yeah.” “And then you decided you were going to end it?” “Yeah.” So you became one flesh with her, united with her, and then tore that apart, and are wondering why she seems nuts. Maybe you made her nuts. Now, are there crazy people out there? Yeah, there are. But a lot of them were made crazy. And does that not sound, at least at some level, kind of like “to divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty”? Don’t be surprised when they cry out emotional abuse, if you did something that overwhelmed them with cruelty. Now, don’t get mad at me. That’s just the Bible talking. That’s God’s words Himself. There are quotation marks around that. That’s God speaking.

So we need to understand something. Now, here’s the other part of that. You might have been sexually immoral. Maybe you’ve been through a divorce. I want you to understand something: God loves you, and He’s got a plan for you. And His plan is to heal you, to give you a future and a hope.

And if you’re single right now and you don’t intend to be, the message of Jeremiah 29 is that God says, plant where you’re at. Because they were like, “God’s going to come get us. We’re going back to our land.” So they kept their bags packed. They wouldn’t marry anybody. They wouldn’t let their kids marry. They didn’t plant gardens, because they thought they were fixing to be gone. And God says, “Nope. I’ll come when I come. But in the meantime, you plant where you are.”

Whatever season of life you're in, plant where you are. Maybe your marriage isn't what you want it to be. Plant where you are. Love your wife the way Jesus loved you. Love your husband the way Scripture calls you to love him. Not because they deserve it, but because you want to please Jesus in this place. You want to serve Him. If you're single right now, maybe you don't want to be. Maybe you want to be married more than anything. Plant your life where you are right now. Find ways to serve Jesus. And you know what? God will bring that person to you. Somehow, some way. That's what God does.

Nowhere in there does it say, "I shall bring thy wife to thee by the Tinder app," or whatever else. It don't say nothing like that. You serve the Lord. And if you're serving the Lord — "Well, what if I miss him?" If you're where you're supposed to be, and they're serving the Lord too, y'all will end up in the right spot at the right time. Because that's what God does. He makes things happen.

God led me to Ada, Oklahoma. How many of you — has anybody in here been to Ada? I know they have cutting stuff. It ain't on the way to anywhere, is it? It's just out in the middle of nowhere. It's a big nothing-burger town. I was living in Austin. There was stuff. You could eat whatever kind of food you wanted any time of the day or night. There was something open twenty-four hours. I went to Ada — the whole town went dark at like 6:15. And that's where God took me, to meet my wife. Then, fortunately, He moved me out of there not long after.

But anyway, God will make it happen. All you've got to do is follow Him. He's going to make sure that person crosses your path at the right time. All you've got to do is follow Jesus. Quit worrying about looking for him. Follow Him. Serve Him.

And as a church, we've got to start embracing right thinking. Hebrews 13:4: **"Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery."** What we're to do is to honor marriage. We should be lifting that up. Lift it up to your kids as something to aspire to. Your young men — teach them, hey, when the time comes, figure out what God's calling you to do. Learn how to make a living from it. Get married and have a passel of youngins. Yes, I used the word passel. I know some of y'all are like, "I don't know what that means." A whole bunch.

How many of y'all in here are like sixteen years old? Anybody? You ain't sixteen. When my grandmother was married, she was running her own household. She was married and had a baby already. She had ten over her lifetime. My dad was one of them. My dad was the last one. So I wonder sometimes if she'd had the same options. I mean, she loved kids, and they didn't have birth control. But if it weren't for the tenth child, I wouldn't be here. There's a ton of people — my brother wouldn't be here.

I know we've got all kinds of means now. You can plan your family. "Yeah, we want this. We're going to have 3.2 children. We're going to have the golden retriever." And that dog's going to chew up everything in your house, by the way. Just letting you know. But have you ever even

asked God, “How many children do You want me to have?” Because guess what — if God has a different plan than yours, guess who’s got the best plan? Him. We play God way too much.

Now, we weren’t able to have kids biologically. God provided them a different way. Because, man, we wanted a family as much as anything. We started almost as soon as we got married. “Do we want to wait a while?” Nope. So we didn’t. But it didn’t happen. Then we went through all kinds of testing. And then, you know what? God allowed us to adopt. And that’s been a blessing. So there are different ways. But why wouldn’t you at least ask God, “God, what is Your plan?”

Honor marriage, and see that children are a gift. Being married is a gift. Being single can be a gift too, if that’s what God’s led you to do. Being married is a gift. **“The man who finds a wife finds a treasure, and he receives favor from the Lord.”**

And then you know what God wants? It doesn’t happen for everybody. It’s not God’s will for everybody. But He wants us to seek to have families. Psalm 127:3-5: “Children are a burden from the Lord. They cost lots and lots of money. They will bleed you dry and make you exhausted.” Oh, wait a minute — I misread that.

You know what it actually says? **“Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.”** Anybody in here said, “God, I don’t want any more gifts from You. I don’t want any more rewards”? Think about it. Man, I want that nursery back there hopping. Y’all understand what I’m saying? Hopping. **“Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior’s hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.”**

One thing I’ve had through the years — it can be difficult, but it’s also a blessing and an honor — is to go in to people who are at the end of their lives. Maybe they want me to pray over them, or just want me to see them. I have yet to have one of them say, “Hey, man, could y’all go to the bank, get all the money I’ve made, bring it in here, and spread it around the room before I go?” I have yet to meet any of them who said, “Hey, man, those buckles or trophies I got — could you bring them in here so I could look at them one last time before I leave this earth?” No. Never.

You know what they want? Their family. I’ve seen people hang on beyond what the doctor said they should be hanging on, just so they can see somebody that they know is coming and is not there yet. Because that is your greatest legacy. That is the most important thing that you do here on this earth — to serve the Lord.

And when God calls you to it, get married. Don’t wait till you’re thirty-five years old if the opportunity is there and you’ve met the right one. When I knew that Carrie was the right one, I proposed to her — this will shock some of y’all — in like two weeks. And I wanted to get married the next month, but we had to plan it around her school schedule at the time. But within four months, we were married. We went out on a date, and less than five months from our first

date, we were saying “I do.” Thirty-five years later, we’re still doing it. Still love each other. That’s right. God’s good. He had to make it obvious to me, but He will.

This all begins with a relationship with Christ. It’s the desire to serve and to honor Him, and to see things through His Word instead of what the culture and the world around us says. Marriage comes from God. It’s one man, one woman, period. And it is designed around the way God designed us. God designed us with marriage in mind. He designed us with having children in mind. And those things are a blessing. It’s not something that holds you back. It’s a blessing.

Would you bow your heads and close your eyes, please?

If you don’t have a relationship with Christ, I want to tell you real briefly how to begin one. It’s really as simple as ABC. The first thing you’ve got to do is admit you’re a sinner and ask forgiveness of your sins. “God, I know I’ve sinned. Please forgive me.” The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The second thing is, you’ve got to believe in Jesus. Jesus is God’s answer for our separation from Him because of our sin. You’ve got to believe that Jesus is God’s Son, that He died on the cross for your sins, and that He rose on the third day.

And then the last thing is, you’ve got to confess Him as Lord. You’ve got to be committed to doing it His way. And once again, I’m going to tell you, you cannot find anyone on this earth who will love you more than God loves you. His plan for you is the best. And you’ve got to be committed to following His will and His way to live out His plan. Romans 10:9-10: **“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”**

If that’s you, and you’d like to know that your sins are forgiven, that you’re in right relationship with God, I’m going to lead you in a prayer of salvation. You can just pray it in your heart. God will hear you. But pray it with me right now.

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me, and thank You for Jesus. God, I know I’m a sinner. Forgive me of my sins. I believe Jesus is Your Son. I believe He died on the cross for my sins. And I believe He rose on the third day. So today I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I confess Him as my Lord.”

Now, without anybody looking around — if you prayed that prayer, there’s information on the screen, also in your bulletin, about how you can get in touch with us. We’d love to spend a few minutes just answering questions, encouraging you, and praying with you. But I’d like to pray for you right now. If you prayed that prayer today and you meant it, I just want you to look up at me right now, and keep looking until I see you. If you prayed that prayer, you look up at me right now.

Okay, yes, ma'am. Okay, yes, sir. I see you. Yes, ma'am. Got you. Okay. Yes, ma'am. I see you. Yes, sir. Gotcha. Let me pray for you now.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You, God, for Your goodness, Your mercy, and Your love. Lord, I pray that You would continue to lead these who made a decision to follow You, that You'd speak to them, that You'd lead them to the right church, whether it's here or somewhere else. And thank You, God, for sending Your Son to die on the cross so that we might know You. Lord, thank You for Your goodness. Thank You for Your love and Your mercy. And thank You for these who made a decision today to trust You. We pray and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.