

Fast and Furious Family

Why The Church Needs to Stop Lying to Singles and Start Fighting for Them

July 17, 2016 // Trevor Atwood // Mark 3:31-35 & 12:18-25 // Friends & Family

I've never...ever...lived alone.

I left home at 18, and moved in with Dustin Walker, who is now one of our pastors here at City Church...then, when Dustin traded me in for the MTSU baseball team...I lived with two different grab-bag roommates in an MTSU dorm room for a semester apiece...(you could have made a fascinating documentary out of those experiences by the way)...after that, I got married.

I was 20 years old. I've never lived alone.

Every year or two, my family will go out of town without me, and I'll find myself alone in my empty house.

I never feel more strange and out of place than I do in those moments. I don't know how to be alone...I'm used to being a husband and a dad.

Every night, when I go to sleep, I turn out my light, and say, "I love you" to my wife, then we reach out to touch each other and hold hands for 2 minutes...or, I just poke my foot across the bed and touch her foot. Just to remind myself that somebody is with me. I used to do this with Dustin, which I think is the real reason he moved out.

When my wife and kids aren't there...I don't even know how to go to bed. I just turn out the light and kind of lay there.

I don't know how to be alone.

So I read a book about it.

The book is "The Visible Man" by Chuck Klosterman.

It's a story about a scientist who invents this suit that makes him almost completely invisible.

He uses the suit to sneak into single people's apartments to observe them for days and weeks at a time. He's interested in seeing what people act like when they think they are truly alone.

I know, creepy. But it's a good book. Take a look at what the Visible Man says about his creepy experiment.

“You want to know what I learned? I learned that people don’t consider time alone as part of their life. Being alone is just a stretch of isolation they want to escape from. I saw a lot of wine-drinking, a lot of compulsive drug use, a lot of sleeping with the television on. It was less festive than I anticipated. My view had always been that I was my most alive when I was totally alone, because that was the only time I could live without fear of how my actions were being scrutinized and interpreted [by other people]. What I came to realize is that people need their actions to be scrutinized and interpreted in order to feel like what they’re doing matters. Singular, solitary moments are like television pilots that never get aired. They don’t count. This, I think, explains the fundamental urge to get married and have kids, or even just the need to feel popular and respected. We’re self-conditioned to require an audience, even if we’re not doing anything valuable or interesting.

We don’t have ways to quantify ideas like “amazing” or “successful” or “lovable” without the feedback of an audience.

Nobody sits by himself in an empty room and thinks “I’m amazing”. ..But being “amazing” is supposed to be what life’s about. As a result, the windows of time people spend by themselves become these meaningless experiences that don’t really count, It’s filler. They’re deleted scenes.”

We are in the middle of a series where we are talking about relationships...friends & family.

Today, we’re going to talk about singleness. Which I realize may seem odd to you. It may seem to you like addressing Atheism in a series on World Religions.

...and that’s a part of the problem.

When we treat single people as if they are in a constant transition state that’s a little less than being married with kids.... we’ll only perpetuate the idea that your time alone doesn’t count. The only real bits of life that count are when you finally graduate to a marriage...and then get promoted to having kids.

...and the church has perpetuated this idea that your time alone doesn’t count. Like its all deleted scenes. That singleness, while it’s a something that really happens...ultimately, the stuff that really matters to the director doesn’t happen until after you say “I do.”

...and so many of our single brothers and sisters are constantly in this fight of trying to figure out how to be alone. This, brothers and sisters, should not be.

I want you to hear me say 2 things very clearly this morning.

1) On one hand...your time alone COUNTS. It doesn’t need to be graduated from. Singleness is as much a part of the mission of God as marriage is. Its not to be shunned, overlooked, or looked down upon.

2) On the other hand...your need for human interaction, face to face conversations, hugs, the real life presence of human beings that love you and care for you,is a real need...is a godly longing...you shouldn't be ashamed of that or try to shut it down. ...and it needs to find its answer in more than just an over-spiritualized..."You JUST need to be satisfied with Jesus." That longing needs to find its answer in God's people.

The Bible speaks very clearly about singleness, both directly and indirectly.

Today, I want to zero in on the loneliness of singleness... and show you from the Scripture that your time alone COUNTS...and that we, as the church, have to step in and be the flesh and blood relationships that every human craves.

I want to show you 2 encounters with Jesus in the book of Mark that show us something very important about singleness.

Here we go...

Mark 3:31-35

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Mark 12:18-25

And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

Churches have long looked at singleness as if it represents a necessary deficiency in a person. In other words, if you are single, there is something wrong with you. Well, first of all...there is something wrong with you...but its not your singleness. And there's something wrong with every married person, too.

See, when we see “married with kids” as completion, we are bound to see single with no kids as incomplete. ...and that is contrary to what God says about being single. See...

1) Marriage is not human completion and Singleness is not immaturity.

I don't know if you know this or not, but Jesus was single. Also, Jesus was the most complete human to ever walk the face of the earth. Also, Jesus was the most emotionally and spiritually mature person to ever walk the earth.

So, for the church, as the body of Christ, to perpetuate a myth that singleness means that you are incomplete and immature is not only a wrongful condemnation of single people... it's a wrongful condemnation of Jesus.

Did you see what Jesus said in Mark 12?

Mark 12:24-25

Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

When the Sadducees ask him this crazy hypothetical question about marriage...and who this woman will be married to in heaven after she has married these 7 brothers...look at his response.

He says “You haven't been paying attention to what the Scripture says about marriage. “When we resurrect...there is no more marriage.”

Do you know why that is? Because God shows us in the Bible that marriage is a sign...its not a destination. Marriage points us to something. It doesn't point to itself.

There are a number of things that marriage points to, but the main one is this.

Ephesians 5:31-32

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Paul says in Ephesians 5 that the deepest, most profound mystery to marriage is that it shows off the way Jesus loves his church.

Passionately, permanently, intimately, unconditionally, and in a way that gives life. So marriage is good...but it does not COMPLETE us. It points to the love of Christ that DOES complete us. It points to the promise of our Resurrection.

Listen, you and I are incomplete. Married, single, we are all incomplete. Even those of us who are Christians....we are still incomplete.

Yes. Jesus died for our sins to restore our relationship with God. But remember, though we are being renewed on the inside, we are still wasting away on the outside.

Though we have received adoption as sons and daughters, we are still waiting to receive an inheritance. Even though we have a sure hope of a resurrection where all pain, hurt, injustice is completely fixed....its still a hope. It hasn't come to full fruition yet. Marriage is not Human Completion. Resurrection is Human Completion.

So in the meantime, to help us wait for our resurrection...God gives us signs. Marriage is one of those signs. The lifetime permanency of marriage testifies to the eternal permanency of God's love to us in Jesus Christ. The love that rescued us from death.

That means..., when the church acts if marriage is the way a person is completed, we are telling a lie about marriage...and we are telling a lie about resurrection. Because we are distracting people from their true hope...the resurrection we have in Jesus Christ.

Think of it like this.

See, Signs, like marriage, are never meant to be glorified above the object to which they point.. Jesus performed signs like healing or resurrecting people...signs that were meant to point people to what life was like in the Kingdom of God...when he brings New Heavens and New Earth...

Whenever people started just taking joy in the signs, without hearing him about the Kingdom of God...he would stop performing the sign. Because a sign that doesn't end up getting people to the reality is not helpful.

When you treat marriage as completion, you are setting up camp in on the exit ramp to Disney Land...while you tell single people...YOU ARE MISSING OUT!

Additionally, if you are single, that does not mean you are an immature Christian.

Yes, marriage is a sign that points to Jesus and the truth of the resurrection...and it's a tool God uses to chisel us into his image and grow us in maturity...but so is singleness.

There is as much testimony in singleness to the coming Kingdom of God as there is in marriage. Likewise, there is as much potential to be mature and be chiseled into the image of Christ through the difficulties of singleness as there is in marriage.

Let me give you 2 of the ways that singleness does this. Now, both of these presuppose that you are living the way God calls people who aren't married to live...that is...not having sex. I can't spend a lot of time on that today, but I can say, and have MANY times before

in these sermons, that there is zero doubt that is the case in the scriptures. Singleness means celibacy.

1) Singleness tells people that Jesus is our highest pleasure in a world that thinks sex is.

When you aren't giving your body away to a person you aren't married to, you are showing that even in the deep difficulty of celibacy, you count the Lordship of Jesus to be better than sex. You are saying that Jesus' love is a greater prize...than physical pleasure. Your singleness becomes a countercultural prophetic sign of the deep pleasures of God's Kingdom.

The one's David talks about in

Psalm 16:2, 5, 9a, 11

I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;... I have a beautiful inheritance. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

As a single person, your life is a sign to that Psalm. As you trust the LORD in keeping yourself from sex outside of marriage...its necessary to see that you are not missing the pleasures of the Kingdom simply because you didn't experience one of the signs.

Can you imagine taking your kid into Disney world, walking into the Magic Kingdom, and then that child bursting out in a level 10 temper tantrum because they never saw the exit sign that said "Disney World this way"?

That's insanity right? For a single person...this remembering the Resurrection is a constant discipline in a world that preaches to them that sex is the ultimate pleasure...and... that its necessary to be a complete person. How dare we as their brothers and sisters fight against them by saying things like "So, you dating anybody yet...or When are you finally going to settle down and grow up and get married?". They are in a constant battle...they have to deny that...and look to the hope of ...the resurrection and the coming Kingdom.

You don't think that ridiculously matures you? You don't think that God uses that to make our single brothers and sisters mature and strong in their faith?

What would you say to single women Corrie and Betsy Ten Boom, or the single Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who testified hope of God's Kingdom and eternal love the in face of Nazi persecution and under the shadow of death? What church, would you say to the single Apostle Paul, under the constant suffering and threat of death...would you seriously look at them and say, "Boy, if you guys would grow up and get married, sure would help you to better image Jesus Christ."

No. You wouldn't dare. But we do it to our single brothers and sisters, most of the time completely unaware of the message we are sending them. Completely unaware that we are not helping them in the fight to keep Christ in front of their eyes. Instead, with those insensitive comments, we are inviting them to look away from the Kingdom and set up shop in front of the Green Exit sign that says "Disney World."

Fight WITH your single brothers and sisters. Encourage them. Talk about the grace and maturity you see God working in them...don't pepper them with questions and comments that assumes they are in some inferior state of limbo.

Here's the second way that Singleness is a beautiful sign of God's Kingdom...

2) Singleness without having kids tells people that Resurrection is better than family.

In the first century...and even today...we think of children as a way to carry on our legacy. As a way to guarantee that we are remembered and cherished. As a way to pass on our name and heritage.

Did you know that in original Hebrew culture, they didn't even have a word for "bachelor"...because there was so much tied up in a man's worth in whether or not he had a son to carry his name.

And into that culture...into that mindset, steps Jesus saying things like, "My family isn't the biological kids I could have...that's not my hope...my family are those who do the will of God. Those are my brothers and sisters."

Into this culture Paul gives commands in 1 Corinthians 7 that its better to remain single, because of the way it allows you to further give yourself away to others to bring them the hope of the gospel.

Look. That's not some concession that just follows cultural trends. Jesus...Paul...they are saying this stuff when people don't even have a word to describe it!

...and its testifying to that culture that when you understand the eternal family that God has promised you...when you understand that you aren't eternal because you are someone's ancestor that carries on your name and your memory....but you are eternal because you are united by faith to the KING OF THE UNIVERSE who himself raised from the dead and therefore, on when he comes back ...you will literally and physically raise from the dead and live eternally with him and with your church family forever on a New Earth that is conspicuously missing sin and death.

That's the story your singleness has the potential to tell.

See, your time alone is not wasted. Its not a deleted scene. You know, I agree with Chuck Klosterman when he says, "We're self-conditioned to require an audience, even if we're

not doing anything valuable or interesting.” Except, in Christ, I would tweak that statement like this. “We’re God-created to require an audience, even if we THINK we’re not doing anything valuable or interesting.”

See, the way you live your single life is being watched. All signs are being watched. By others...pointing them to the Resurrection and the Kingdom of God...but more importantly by God. The deep longing of the human heart is to hear those that observe us say, “Well Done. I’m Proud of you.” The deep longing of the human heart is to be known and loved. It is to be valued not for what we do...but simply who we are.

In Jesus Christ, that is exactly what we get. The gaze of a heavenly Father that sees everything we do, and because we have been hidden in Christ...he says, “I see you, and I love you. You are never alone.”

Listen, my single brothers and sisters, I don’t even pretend to know the depth of your pain. On one side, you have the culture saying, “Chase sex, but not marriage”. On the other side, you have the misguided church sayingwrongly... “Chase marriage, but not sex.” And there you are in the middle trying desperately to cling to this resurrection mindset... trying desperately to lift your eyes to things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father...and from both sides, people that are supposed to love you keep grabbing your chin and trying to get you to look at the temporary.

We are perpetuating the lie that your time alone doesn't count. That's its deleted scenes. Its not. Its powerful. It's a sign of the Kingdom of God. But the truth is. You are never alone. On one hand,

Guess what City Church...the culture is not going to give our the single folks in our church family a different message anytime soon...but we can start today. This afternoon. But that means us realizing that....

2) Church family lasts infinitely longer than nuclear family,...and we need to act like it.

If you ever want to be embarrassed about what the American church has become...just watch the Fast and Furious movies.

I fully admit, I've only see 2 or 3 of the 7 of them...and I always fall asleep during all the racing parts....which...admittedly make up 90% of those movies...BUT...I always wake up and pay attention to the other 10%...and that's where Vin Diesel's character Dominic Torretto and his group of street racing vigilante crime fighters....that's where they put the American church to shame.

See, Dom is an incredible pastor. Because he's always grabbing the faces of this rag-tag group of would-be criminals and turning their eyes to see something transcendent. Something that's bigger than just racing cars. Something that's bigger than egos...than comfort. He's always reminding them that they're not just a bunch of street racers...they're

family.

"I don't have friends. I got family." "The most important thing in life will always be the people in this room, right here, right now. That's what's real." "You don't turn your back on family. Even when they do."—Dominic Torretto, Fast & Furious movies

And in response to this, Dom's wife Letty says, "If you die, I die. If you ride, I ride. If you fight, I fight."— Letty Ortiz

I mean, in a lot of ways, those 4 lines from the Fast and Furious are more like Jesus than the entire script of both Left Behind movies, and both God's Not Dead movie's combined. (Please, don't get me started on that.) Not to mention, the diversity of the Fast & Furious crew. They've got cops, ex-cons, Black, White, Asian, Latino. I mean, I think if we shaved Chad Degnan's head again...he would kind of look like Vin Diesel, I'll be Paul Walker...Who want's to Ludacris? Seriously, though. In a very limited thematic way, the Fast & Furious crew looks and talks more like the church than the church does sometimes.

In the American church we tend to look at church as a thing to go do...instead of a people to be together. We think of church as a worship service...as preaching...as music...as an event we attend...We even think about community groups as a event to attend on our schedule... not a group of people to die for, ...a people we are riding together on a mission with...a people to fight with and fight for.

But did you see the way Jesus talks?

Mark 3:33-35

And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus is sitting in a room teaching people who want to listen to him...and his family shows up outside...and the crowd just assumes that Jesus' mother and brothers have VIP passes....like they are more important than the other people in the room. But Jesus doesn't just say, "You are all equally important." Look what he says....he says, "And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Do you know what that is? Its Dom Torretto. Its Vin Diesel as Jesus. "The most important thing in life will always be the people in this room, right here, right now. That's what's real."

Jesus taught...and showed, that it wasn't biological ties...it wasn't DNA...it wasn't even marriage....that were the bedrock of the most important relationships in the universe. He showed us that the church is even more foundational than that.

Still don't believe me? Let's go to one of the most awkward moments in the Bible, shall we?

Luke 11:27-28

As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Jesus is teaching and a woman in a crowd yells out "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed,". Jesus looks over at her and says, "CREEPY! Please...don't EVER bring up my mothers' breasts"....no, he says "You aren't blessed because you share DNA with me...you are blessed if you hear and keep the word of God." In other words, you are blessed if you believe who I am and what I say...and let it change you....That's exactly who the church is.

Look. Let me say something really clearly. None of this means that you don't bear a primary responsibility to your family. It doesn't mean that pastors should abandon their families to spend more time with church members. BUT...it does mean that as the church, we've got to be family to each other...and that has a profound impact on how we treat our single brothers and sisters.

See, when Jesus comes back bringing New Heavens and New Earth, we aren't going to relate to each other as husband & wife...or biological brother and sister...We are going to relate to each other as the family of God.

And as ambassadors for this Coming Kingdom...we need to start acting like that now. Once you realize that the bond we have as believers in Christ is an eternal bond...and the bond you have through biology or adoption...well, those are just signs...we start to treat each other differently.

Let me bring this home for our single brothers and sisters. I want you all to hear something loud and clear.

It's a real and good longing you have to be noticed. To be seen. To be touched. To just know someone is there with you.

You aren't made to be alone. You are made to be WITH others.. For relationship. And too often, the married folks in the church forget about single people. We get caught up in our own lives...we treat church as merely a Sunday morning thing...and we forget that our brothers and sisters are sleeping in beds where they can't reach a hand out to find someone is there. They can't reach a toe over just to remind themselves they aren't alone. They are fighting to remember moment by moment the promise of God that he will never leave or forsake...but it sure feels lonely when you click the light off and try to go to sleep.

...We can't keep over-spiritualizing the solution to this problem. We can't just look at our single brothers and sisters and say, "You shouldn't feel lonely, you have Jesus!"

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST!

Church! We are the flesh and blood of Christ.

We can't tell our single church family to look to Jesus for comfort, and then shut the doors of our houses to "be with our families". THEY ARE OUR FAMILY!

In their fight to remember that their alone moments count....in their fight to remember that they are showing a beautiful sign of God's Kingdom in their singleness...they need us...and BTW...we need them. In this fight to Remember the Gospel...the beautiful

It's not even us and them. THEY ARE US. Right here. In this room. Right now...this is family. This is what's real.

So let me give you some idea of how we do this. First, if you are a family, or a married couple, and you don't have a single person in our church that is in your home with you at least once a week. DO IT. I'm not talking about a scheduled thing with a bunch of other people...I'm not talking about a community group meeting. I'm talking about intentional hangs. Dinner. Watch a TV show. Something. Your kids ought to know an adult in our church who is not married that they can learn faithful singleness from. And, BTW, I think once a week is a minimum. I actually think it's a pretty good idea to clear out a bedroom and have somebody move in with you. So you get in the rhythms of each other's lives...Keva and I have done this some 5 or 6 times over the course of our marriage and we've been blessed every single time...except one. But, you know, it's a fallen world.

Look, who is the single person who's at your house for dinner....at your kids' birthday parties...who's the single person that cries on your couch....and goes on vacation with you?

Second, We need to de-sexualize touch. Ok, I realize some of you just got REALLY uncomfortable. And I would fully expect that. But I want you to hear something. God did not design humans to go long periods of time without a hug. Without touch. Do you understand the power that God has put simply in feeling the loving touch of another person? I don't have time to go into the science of it, but you can look it up. But since our culture has turned sex into something it's not, we've also turned touch into always being something sexual. It bothers me to no end that our single brothers and sisters have to turn to dogs and cats to get the physical touch they need...I'm all for pets...but we're humans. Image bearers don't shake hands...Image bearers GOTTA HUG!

Guys, please don't be afraid to hug. You need it, your church family needs it. Don't be afraid to embrace someone as you pray for them...and yes, I think this should be done in an honorable way, and no, I don't think a married man or woman should be hugging and holding onto people of the opposite sex.

But I do think we need to be more ready to put our arms around each other and say, "I love you. You aren't alone. You die, I die. You ride, I ride. You fight, I fight."

When we do this, we are helping our church family to remember what Jesus promised.

Mark 10:29-31

Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Our single brothers and sisters, in their waiting, in their pain, in their fighting to remember the gospel...are looking for these brothers and sisters, mothers and children that Jesus promises...IN THIS TIME...not just later eternity...this eternity starts NOW WITH THE CHURCH....they need this family that remind them, that though they are putting themselves last...we are putting them first. We don't have friends. We got family.

There's only one way to do this....to keep believing this...and that's

3) Married or single...live as if it's not your hope. Jesus is.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul directly addresses single folks and married folks. I've preached it before, you should go and read it later.

Look at what Paul says in

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

What does he mean, "if you have a wife, act as if you have none?" If you buy stuff, act like you didn't buy it...If you are rejoicing...live like you aren't really rejoicing?"

Here's what Paul saying. He's saying there will be temptations to make things that are short lived...both things that make you sad (maybe your singleness...maybe your marriage)and things that make you rejoice (like singleness sometimes...and marriage sometimes) ...and you'll have this temptation to build your life on those things.

So he says, "if you're married, you'll be tempted to see THAT relationship as even more important than God. Don't wrap your happiness up in your spouse." See, To the married person, he says, "Live like you're single." "Live like God is the eternal relationship that gives you significance...not your spouse."

...and this is what every married person can learn from a single person who is walking with Jesus.

He's telling us to live like God is your joy, and like God is going to do something about your mourning. Live like the money you make can't make you happy...because its temporary.

See, when Paul says the present form of this world is passing away, he's telling you that marriage, business, joy, mourning...all of your relationships and dealings with the world are given to you by God to lift your eyes up to the eternal.

...and any time you use those relationships... for anything else...it will devastate you.

So how do you live like this? How do you live with this eternal mindset that makes such a difference in the here and now?

Well, you have to see the friend that died to make you family.

John 15:13-14

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Mark 3:35

For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

"I don't have friends, I GOT FAMILY!"

Jesus said, "The greatest love in the universe is the laying down your life for your friends." He said my friends become my family..he used them interchangeably. My friends obey my commands...my family does the will of God."

The line was blurred. I don't have friends...I got family...and Jesus did lay down his life for to make us his family. But the remarkable thing as this Jesus did this for a rebellious people. He didn't do this for people that could repay him, but for back stabbers. He died for the people who's sins killed him.

Remember Peter? Jesus welcomed him in. Made him a disciple. Gave him a vision for a future. Loved, served, and taught him. Yet Peter, because Peter didn't think his alone moments counted...when Jesus was arrested...Peter denied him. Stabbed him in the back.

Luke 22:61-62

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

You don't turn your back on family. Even when they do.” And just when he denied Jesus for the third time, the rooster crowed and Jesus, being beaten, mocked, on his way to be crucified...met eyes with Peter...but here's the strange thing. They weren't eyes of condemnation. They weren't eyes of judgment. They were eyes of love. Peter...you're not alone. Peter...I'm dying for you. I already knew you would betray me...but “You don't turn your back on family. Even when they do”...and Peter, remember...I told you, On this Rock, I will build my family. Sure, you gave up on me...but I'm dying for you.

Of course, that was Friday night. On Sunday morning, Jesus rose up out of the grave...and the Scripture calls Jesus ‘The firstborn from the dead’...the firstborn of many brothers... But Jesus also calls us to die to ourselves...to give our lives away for others....to help others fight the good fight of faith.

...and that means when we see what Christ did for us on the cross...and we are sure of his resurrection, we can say back to him...“If you die, we die. If you rise, we rise. ...and then we can look at each other, married and single, black, white, Cop, ex-con...and say... “If you fight...I fight with you.”

Our hope is not in marriage...its not in singleness, its not in money...its not in sex...our hope is in the life, death, resurrection of our Big Brother.

IF that happened...we don't just look at the people in this room...but we can look to the whole world with this gospel hope and say... “The most important thing in life will always be the people Jesus loves... right here, right now. That's what's real.”

I love the way the last Fast & Furious movie ended. It ends around a big table...a feast. A family dinner.

On the night before Jesus died, he ended his time with his disciples...just before they betrayed him...with a dinner. But he didn't use it to mourn their betrayal...he used it to infuse in them, one last time...the gospel. He told them that the bread they broke symbolized his broken body...his death in their place.And the cup...it symbolized his blood...not a blood that they shared in his DNA with...but the perfect, sacrificial, spilled blood of his perfect life. The blood was his righteousness. The blood was the way their betrayal would be forgiven...and they would be adopted into God's family.

...and this meal...it was a preview to the meal at the end of the movie. When Jesus comes back and makes all things new...he told us that we would eat and drink with him again. At the marriage supper of the lamb. A wedding feast. Where the church...who is tempted to

believe that Jesus left us single...alone...actually has been with us all along. That we've never been alone...and then in New heavens and New earth...in flesh and blood...we can hug Jesus...as we hug each other around a meal...that lasts a long, long time.