



MY BELOVED, MY FRIEND

Part 5 of The Peasant Princess

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Song of Songs 5:2- 6:1 | October 19, 2008

You're listening to The Peasant Princess Sermon Series where Pastor Mark Driscoll takes us through the poetic book Songs of Songs. For more audio and video content, please visit Marshallchurch.org.

Here we go again. Chapter 5, this week, Song of Songs beginning in Verse 2; if you've got a Bible, you can go there. If you're new, my name is Mark. Good to have you. We're actually at the half-way point as of today in our Peasant Princess study of the Song of Songs and I'm gonna go ahead and pray. We've got tons of material to cover. Go ahead and text message in your questions throughout the duration of the service. My wife, Gracie, will join me on stage later and try to be of service to you all. Good to have you and we should pray first.

Father, God, thank you so much for Scripture. God, apart from your Word, we wouldn't know who you were. We wouldn't know what you had done through Jesus. We wouldn't know how we were to live in light of who you are and what you've done. God, as we open your Word tonight, I'm asking that you would give me the grace to serve your people well, and, God, as we examine this sin of selfishness and this great honor that it is to be a servant, may we see particular applications for our life, our relationships and our marriages and so we ask for the grace in Jesus' good name. Amen. Tell you right up front, this sermon, it's going to be a little rough. The reason is, as we've gone through this series, I think we're getting a pretty good handle on where a lot of people are who call this church home and it's concerning. I'll just say that. It's actually terrifying.

The text messages, the questions, the follow-up in counseling, the number of people in redemption groups, even some of the pushback from the counsel that we give is amazingly selfish, and if I had to put my finger on what I consider to be the big issue when it comes to relationships, in general, marriage, in particular and sexuality within marriage, the issue is selfishness. The issue really is selfishness. We had an elders meeting this last week and I was teaching some of the pastors, and really told them that there are five points of grave concern that I have for us as a people. I'll share them with you in a moment, and I offer them in love. I'm your pastor. I want the best for you, for your life, for your marriage. Most of you, statistically, will be married even though many of you are not. I want good for you, and so this rebuke may be something new.

Paul tells a pastor in the New Testament to "Rebuke with all authority." Some of you have never been rebuked, all right. You grew up in the world. You're a snowflake. You're one of a kind. You're special and sparkly. You're amazing. It's too bad more people weren't like you, then the world would be a happy place, right? That's all not true. All right? You're evil, period. That's it. That's it. All right? And that you and I, we're all selfish. We don't really, truly, deeply give a rip about anybody or anything beyond our own self-interest, and so these are the five points that I gave the elders. First, there is not a servant understanding in our church of sex and marriage, which is an underlying Christian virtue, for all of life which leads to selfishness that is ultimately the root of abuse as people are takers and not givers.

Almost every question is: can I do this? Can I do this? Can I do this? Can I do this? We don't even see questions like: how could we improve our prayer life? No. Not even close. How could we improve our mutual Bible study? Not even close. My wife was abused. How could I encourage her to grow in Christ, to be patient? We don't even see those questions. Every question is a selfish question. I want to take. Tell me I can. Number 2: there is a common misperception that everyone is an exception to the Biblical rule according to their extenuating circumstances. Oh, I know that's what the Bible says, but we're married in our heart. What? Well, we prayed about it. Well, you dialed the wrong number if that's the answer you got. You know, I mean, what? And if I had a buck for every single guy that came up and said, "Well, that's your interpretation."

Well, isn't it convenient how your interpretation ends up with a naked girlfriend? I mean, you're not the most hermeneutically neutral, you know. Just weird how people — "Oh, we're the exception. I know we're not supposed to do that, but, you know, for us it works and that's okay and God understands and," — and all of these bizarre arguments. "We're the except," — you're not the exception to the rule. You're not. Number 3: there is no relationship for many between God, marriage, sex and children as in any way connected. God and sex? What does God have to do with my sex life? Nothing. Sex and marriage? What does sex and marriage have to do with one another? Sex, marriage, children? We're going to have kids? I don't have kids. I want to get married, just want to have sex.

Want to get married and have sex. Just don't want to have kids, as if they were completely unrelated issues. I'm not saying that all birth control is a sin. I've got a whole sermon on that. My blog's online. I've dealt with all of that, but there's just a lot of people who want sex. They don't want marriage. They don't want God. They don't want kids. They just want sex; totally unrelated. Number 4: there's a strong pressure for us as church leaders to legitimize people's sinful lifestyles and when we refuse, there is strong personal vengeance as they want us to both bless their sin and their sense of righteousness so as to appease their guilty conscience. Tell me it's okay for me to do this. No, I can't tell you that, because the Bible says it's a sin. Oh, you're not loving. You're being judgmental.

If you're here because you want a legitimization of a sin, let me tell you, in love, we're gonna hold the line and we're going to ask you to cross it in repentance, because we love you, because we love you, and Number 5: people want to know what is and is not acceptable so as to get as close to sin as possible without a deep concern for the hard motives that drive their ethical decision making. So many of the questions from single people, for example, are: how far could we go? Which is like? How much can we sin until you bust us? It's the wrong question. Married couples: how far can we go until it's wrong? Well, the heart's wrong, so it's all wrong. For so many, the question is: how close can I get to sin, not how close can I get to Jesus? All of this is really concerning.

I mean, if there's upwards of 8,000 people here Sunday and this is the heart attitude, there's great concern for me as a pastor and for the other leaders in the church. There's great concern, and underlying all of this is selfishness and here's what I wanna hammer. Here's the big idea. You are selfish. Okay. Not humanity, you. Humanity? Absolutely, and you are among them. You are fundamentally selfish. The only question is: to what degree? Some of us are less selfish. Some of us are more selfish, and when it comes down to it in the Bible, there's really only two options: you're selfish or you're a servant, and I want to today compel you to move from selfish to servant, from selfish to servant. You are selfish. That is a sin, and I know we've got a whole economy built for it.

People work in the service industry, the whole goal is to make enough money, that people serve you, but fundamentally selfish people are terrible friends, terrible lovers, terrible spouses, terrible Christians, terrible parents. They leave a terrible legacy. Will you be selfish? Will you be a servant? That leads us to Song of Songs, Chapter 5, Verse 2. Last week we looked at the man's sin. This week we look at the woman's sin. Some of you will be shocked that we would even say that women sin, because we live in a culture where you could say terrible things about men. It's no problem. Say something about a woman and you're being sexist. No, it's equality. He was evil last week. She is evil this week. That's equality.

That men and women are both sinful by nature and choice and that when we deal with the men's sin, we do so because we love them, and when we deal with the women's sin, we deal with that because we love women and we want everyone to not be bound by sin but to be free in Christ. And this week her sin is something that is not just done by wives. It certainly is done by husbands, as well, so there is an application for men and women, but her sin is this: she rejects her husband. That's the sin. She becomes selfish. He wants to be together. She says "No." That's the selfish sin. We pick it up in Chapter 5, Verse 2, Series of Love Songs and she sings or communicates here this week, "I," — Verse 2 — "I slept but my heart was not awake."

You've been in that state where you're kind of awake, you're kind of asleep, you're in and out, kind of having a little bit of a dream and then you wake up and you're not sure which was reality? She's there. "A sound, my beloved it knocking." So she hears a knock on the door. Who's that? So he is locked out of his bedroom. She locked the door, went to bed. Husband comes home, knocks on the bedroom door and he's really trying to get into that room. Here's how he says it. He pulls out his best four lines, "Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one." He's trying really hard to get this door open. "For my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of night." What time is it? It's very late. All right. Some of you men, some of you husbands, you have jobs, 9:00 to 5:00, 8:00 to 6:00, whatever.

Some of you, like me, you've got a lifestyle job. You don't get to punch out. Sometimes I gotta work all night. Sometimes I gotta travel. Sometimes my flight lands at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. It's a lifestyle job. I'm not guaranteed to be home every night at a certain time. He's got a lifestyle job. He's the King. He's gotta rule a kingdom. He's out late. He gets home when there's dew on the ground. That means it's after midnight. It's late at night. She then comes up with a series of lame excuses. Okay? Ladies, when is the last time you did this? It's too late. It's too early. I'm too hot. I'm too cold. I have a headache. I think if we are together, I would get a headache. Lame excuses. "I had put off my garment." That's sort of a — that's a cruel excuse. Oh, I can't get up. I'm unclothed. He's like, "That's why I'm trying to get this door open."

"How could I put it on? I have bathed my feet. How could I soil them?" I don't think that's a great excuse. You're a queen living in a palace. You're not camping, right? It can't be that dirty. Lame excuses. "My beloved put his hand to the latch." He's really trying — he started trying to break into his own bedroom. "And my heart was thrilled within me." It's a double entendre in the Hebrew. "I rose to open to my beloved and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh on the handles of the bolt." So she tells him, "No, I'm not in the mood. You should have been here earlier. You came home late. I reject you. I punish you. I deny you."

She doses back to sleep, wakes up later. Goes to check the door. "I opened to my beloved but my beloved had turned and gone." What did he do? He left. You ladies need to know this. Men tend not to fight with their wives because they can't win. All right. If a man fights with his wife and he wins, he loses. If he fights with his wife and he loses, he loses. Very quickly in marriage a man realizes, "I lose," so he doesn't fight. He just sort of, in humiliation and embarrassment, just walks away. That's what he does. That's what he does. He just leaves. "My soul had failed me because when he spoke, I sought him, but found him not. I called him, but he gave no answer." So then she doses back to sleep. She has a nightmare.

"The watchman found as they went about in the city. They beat me. They bruised me. They took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls. I adjure you oh daughter of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved that you tell him I am sick with love." She goes back to sleep and has a nightmare. We're in danger. This is terrible. There's a debate as to whether or not she's awake or asleep in the next account. I think she's awake. I think, she went to bed, was frustrated that he didn't come home on time. He comes home late, tries to get in. She makes lame excuses, denies him, rejects him, punishes him. He leaves. She wakes up couple hours later, very late at night, checks the door. He's gone. Checks the palace, he's gone. She's worried. Goes back to sleep, has a nightmare.

Wakes up the next day and talks to her girlfriends about this, and she has good gal friends. They give her good counsel. Friends are very important. "What is your beloved more than other beloved, oh, most beautiful among women, who is your beloved," — or rather — "What is your beloved more than another beloved that you adjure us?" The girls basically ask their friend, why did you reject him? What's wrong? Is he a bad guy? Is he an abusive

guy? Is he a mean guy? Is he a harsh guy? What did he do that you would punish and reject him? She then speaks, "My beloved is radiant and ready distinguished among 10,000." She says, "We didn't really do anything. He's a good guy. Loves me and I'm attracted to him and I just rejected him. I don't really have a great answer." There are some good answers. Like, my husband is violent or abusive.

She doesn't have any of those good excuses. So she starts talking and reminiscing and thinking about her attraction to him. "His head is the finest gold. His locks are wavy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves besides streams of water bathed in milk sitting beside a full pool. His cheeks are — his cheeks are like bed of spices, mounds of sweet smelling herbs. His lips are lilies dripping liquid myrrh." You get the idea she's attracted to him. "His arms are rods of gold set with jewels." This guy even goes to the gym. "His body is polished ivory bedecked with Saffires. His legs are alabaster columns set on bases of gold." Not only does he go to the gym, he does squats. You think he would've kicked the door in. It seems like he's got it in him.

"His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet." And he is what? Altogether desirable. She said, "No, he's a great guy and I'm totally attracted to him." Sometimes in marriage we do silly things that don't make any sense. Why did you reject your spouse? I don't know. I was just in a mood. Was just gonna punish him. No good answer. This next line is very important and we'll come back to it. "This is my beloved," the New International version says, "My lover and this is my friend oh daughter of Jerusalem." So then her friends — her female friends say, "Where has your beloved gone, oh most beautiful of women — among women, where has your beloved turned that we may seek him with you?"

The gals who are her friends are asking, "Well, where do you think he went to? Let's — we'll help you find him. I mean, if your husband's left, obviously there's a serious problem." What's the issue? She's selfish. That's the issue. This is not just a woman's sin. Men do this, as well. So we need to apply this equally to men and women, but on this occasion the Bible gives us this very honest snapshot of a bedroom conflict between a husband and a wife. That's because the Bible's the most honest book that's ever been written. For those of you who are married, I know that statistically all of you will be married if you're not already. I think there are four ways that people are selfish in the bedroom. This is gonna get real practical. Number 1: you just deny your spouse. Hey, could we ~~no. Okay. Deny your~~ sometimes it's more subtle.

You go to bed, roll over. Give them you're back, pretend like you're sleeping. That's the more pleasant way of denying. Number 2: don't initiate, all right. You don't initiate. You don't pursue. You never ask, "Hey, could we be together tonight?" You make them initiate and pursue, take the risk of getting rejected and if you don't initiate, you're automatically reducing the amount of time you'll need to be together over the course of a year. Number 3 — now I say this too because some of you are sneaky. Some of you would say, "Oh, I don't deny my spouse." If you don't initiate, that's a tactic. Number 3: do as little as possible. Could we be together? Yeah, hurry it up. Yeah, get the toy. Let's get this over with. Yeah, I don't wanna do that here. Can't we just do something else? Let me just get it over with.

Some of you ladies have certain ways of trying to just get your husband taken care of so you can get it over with. Some of you men: same thing. Number 4: sabotage. Bedtime's coming, time to say something snide. Time to make a nasty comment. Time to all of a sudden, start a project. Oh, I'm going to be up late. Got a lot to do. You go to bed without me. That's the sort of passive-aggressive way of denying your spouse, and, for some, this is just making yourself as unattractive as possible. All right? This is the gal who, it's bedtime, her hair goes up. She puts on the pitted out old t-shirt and the huge facial mud mask. Walk in, hi, you want to be together. No, but I'll put candy in your bag. Like, I don't know what.

And for the guy, this might be the guy who works all day and he's all pitted out and grease or dirt under his fingernails and he doesn't shower or brush his teeth before he goes to bed knowing this will gross her out and she'll leave me alone. It happens. It happens. Those are ways that we are selfish and deny our spouse, and then, under that, I'll tell you this. This is actually an exhausting day for me because I told my wife. I said, "Honey, I keep thinking of all these couples that we know that they're struggling. They're frustrated. They're divorced. They're committing adultery. They've walked away from God." It's all going bad and under their selfish denial of one another are a host of reasons.

So I'm going to share them with you, in love, as a pastor, trying to point out areas of concern so that perhaps you could avoid them or, if you're in them, that you can repent and get out of them, but there are underlying reasons why people are selfish martially. First is abuse. Upwards of a third of the women in the church were abused, either as children or adults: molestation, rape; men to a lesser degree but equally painful nonetheless. If you were abused and you haven't gotten help and worked that through, you may have fear in marriage. You may be cautious. You may be guarded. You may not feel safe and you will deny your spouse and become very selfish.

One thing I need the abuse victims to know is this: if you don't grow through it and learn through it, join a redemption group, meet with a Biblical counselor, get the help you need, you will end up abusing your own spouse, because you will take your defensiveness and your selfishness and your guardedness into your marriage and you will not only be abused, you'll be an abuser. Number 2: an underlying reason why some people are selfish is they have what I call covenant abuse. Marriage is a covenant and a covenant has obligations and benefits and selfish people love to be keenly aware of all of the benefits of the covenant that they receive while overlooking the obligations that they accrue. This is the guy who says, "I want sex," but he's not loving your nice. Doesn't pray with his wife. Doesn't work hard at his job, isn't attentive or affectionate.

He just pulls out the verses, "Submit to me and don't deny me my conjugal rights," and overlooks all the stuff. "Love her like Christ loves the church, provide for the needs of your family." He overlooks all his obligations and wants all his benefits. A lot of wives are the same way. You say, "Well, he can't get a divorce and you can't cheat on me. Those are his covenant obligations. He's gotta work hard and let me stay home with the kids and pay the bills. Those are his covenant obligation." What about respecting him, loving him, sexually tending to the marriage? "No, not in the mood. I'm not that way." Just bizarre. That's covenant abuse. It's keenly aware of all that I get and keenly unaware of all that I'm supposed to give. It's hypocrisy. Number 3: fatigue. I'm tired. I'm tired.

My answer to tired is, be together early in the morning, be together in the afternoon, be together earlier in the evening. If it's late and you're tired, wash your face. Drink a Red Bull, whatever. You're not that tired. I know, because if the fire alarm went off, you would have enough energy to get out. You're not that tired. Number 4: for some it's control and manipulation. All right. You know your spouse wants intimacy, sex, so what you say is, "Oh, you want that? Well, I want this. You didn't do that. I'll punish you by withholding." It's punishment. It's punishment. I mean, one of the sickest guys I ever met, tell his wife, "Well, if you want grocery money, you gotta earn it." I'm just like, that's prostitution. That's not covenant marriage. That's prostitution. It's manipulation. It's control. Oh, you want this, oh, well, then I'm gonna negotiate.

It becomes a bartering chip in the relationship. Number 5: one way of being selfish is considering your spouse extreme and dirty and vile and gross and maybe they are, but most of the time there's incongruence, where one person wants to be together more frequently than the other, and the person who wants to be together less frequently assumes they're normal and they're married to someone who's got a real problem. Then you shame them, make them feel dirty. There's something wrong with you. You always want to be together. What's wrong? You're sick. So Gracie and I keep getting this question. It gets texted messaged in like 100 times a Sunday. How often should we be together? Under that is someone who's frustrated, saying, "It's not enough, tell him to do it more." The Bible doesn't have a number.

What it does say, and we'll get to the 1 Corinthians 7, is not to deny one another, but let me give you the statistics as I've researched it. The average married couple is intimate two to three times a week and the average married man takes care of himself secretly, privately on the side usually with the accompaniment of pornography three to four times a week. So what the means is: even in marriage the average man is living a secret life more often than when he is with his wife. So, statistically, that would seem to indicate that the average couple should probably be together about every day. Number 6: an underlying cause of selfishness in the bedroom is often you feel guilty of your past. Cohabitation, fornication before a marriage, pornography, adultery, lots of sin, you feel like damaged goods, you feel gross.

Need to know that Jesus died for your sins so you could be forgiven and the Bible says "He cleanses us from our un-righteousness so that we can be clean and get a fresh start and a new identity," and not live with sort of shame-based guilt ridden hesitation within our marriage covenant. Number 7: sometimes there are seasons of life where being selfish just seems like you've got a right to it. Children are born. All right? My wife's got five kids. Me too, all right? I'll clarify that. You never know how people will take that. We have five children. A child is born. That's a huge undertaking for a wife. Some wives use that as an excuse to say, "Well, I won't do anything to take care of my husband."

I know one guy, his wife was on bed rest the last four months of her pregnancy and then had two to three months of recovery and told him, "No, nothing for six months." Nothing, like, we can't be together in any way. You can't get creative. I don't — you know, I told him. I said, "Don't be selfish and expect sort of the normal relationship you had with your wife," but her pushback was, he gets six months off. That's not serving. That's selfish and frustrating, or one of you gets sick or there's an illness or an injury. Say, well, we can't have normal relations. Well, then you've still gotta figure out how could you serve one another and what can you do. What can you do to not be selfish? Number 8: there's problems outside of the bedroom. He's not loving. I Peter 3, "He's harsh." Ephesians 5, "She's disrespectful. She's mouthy, quarrelsome."

Just like Proverbs warns against, "He's hot-headed, angry." Just like I Peter 3 warns against. There's problems outside of the bedroom that cause problems in the bedroom because they don't love, trust, cherish one another as they ought. Number 10: it's boredom. I'll never forget, I was working at Long Shore as a high school kid. Lied about my age, I was working for the port. Unloading, I think it was a railroad car and the guy told me about his wife and his girlfriend. I said, "Your wife and your girlfriend?" Said, "Yeah, my wife doesn't know about my girlfriend." I said, "What do you need a girlfriend for?" He said, "I've been with my wife for a long time, it's boring. It's like, Tuesday night at 7:00, that's when we're together. Check it off the list. See you next week."

It's no excuse for sin but one of the ways you mitigate against selfishness is by being creative, being spontaneous, being a little free and not getting into some totally predictable, boring rut. Number 11 — I see this a lot with women. I offer it. Women need to be keenly aware of their body. Women's bodies are more complicated and have more functions than men. Your cycle. That's complicated. Pregnancy, complicated. Fertility, complicated. Birth, it looks complicated. I mean, it does. Nursing, menopause, way more variables. So many women are very keenly aware of their body from a medical perspective, but not comfortable with their body from a sexual perspective. So they're very free to talk about their body in medical terms and health and nutrition and hormones and then sexually they're very guarded.

They are not as free and they're not as open to seeing their body in sexual not medical ways, and Number 12: an underlying cause of selfishness in the bedroom is also there's just a fundamental disagreement as to what we should and should not be doing. Someone — you know, the wife wants to do this. The husband says "No." The husband wants to do this. The wife says "No," and it's always conflict who gets their way. Okay? A lot of the questions that we are receiving seem to fall into that category. Okay? And I was talking about it with the elders this last week. I wanna share with you, to answer that question, what it is you can and cannot do within your marriage covenant. It comes from I Corinthians 6, the context is sex.

The Corinthian church was a lot like our church in a city much like ours and they asked their Pastor, Paul, a whole bunch of questions and he answers them and as your pastor, I want to answer those questions with this framework, because here's what we're getting. We're getting lots of specific questions that if there's not an ethical decision-making framework, then we're just answering questions, but you don't know how to make those decisions for yourself. So here's what I Corinthians 6:12 says, in the context of sexuality, "All things are lawful for me but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me but I will not be enslaved by anything." Three words we're going to pull out: "lawful", "helpful", "enslaved". So the first question is this: is it lawful? Okay. There's a couple ways to understand lawful. The first is, is it legal?

A couple of the questions we got, it's like you can't do that. You will go to jail. That's illegal. I won't even tell you what the questions were. Okay? The Bible says in Romans 13, "We're to obey the government until the government tells us to do something that's unbiblical." If the government says, "Hey,

no reading the Bible," well, then practice civil disobedience and be willing to go to jail. Keep reading your Bible. But is it legal? Second question under legal is: is it Biblical? Is it Biblical? Now, God's intention is one man, one woman in the covenant of marriage being intimate together alone. That's God's intended design. Anything outside of that is unbiblical. So I actually put together a definition of what is unlawful.

It will take a while to read, but we have to be this specific and I say this not to be crass or gross, but just to say, there's a lot of very confused people. Here's what's unlawful Biblically: homosexuality, bestiality, bisexuality, fornication, friends with benefits, adultery, swinging, prostitution, masturbating someone who is not your spouse, oral sex outside of marriage, anal sex outside of marriage, heavy petting outside of marriage, dry humping outside of marriage, rape, polygamy, sinful lust, pornography, phone sex with someone other than your spouse, sexual chatting online with someone other than your spouse, prostitution, pedophilia, incest, etcetera. I put etcetera because I knew there'd be one guy be like, "I got one." No.

Okay, because this is what happens when the heart is wicked, we could put together a list of 27 things and somebody invents a 28th., so that they have a technical loophole. That's why the New Testament uses the Greek word, *porneia* Sort of a junk drawer saying sexual sins of all sorts and kinds. Second is: is it lawful? Is it legal? Is it Biblical? And then under that issue of lawful, as well, let's say you're a teenager, what are your parents saying? You're supposed to obey your mother and father. Your mom and dad say, "No dating. No dating that boy. No dating that girl. No kissing, no touching, no nothing. Don't do that. You can't be with him. You can't sneak out with him."

Then it's not lawful because God has placed over you parents who love you, and sometimes this is even a Biblical counselor, a pastor, a Christian leader saying, "You shouldn't be dating that person. You should not be doing that. You shouldn't be looking at that. You shouldn't be participating in that." You're supposed to submit to Godly authority that loves you. I had one guy recently say, "Well that's your opinion." Like, "My opinion?" That guy's been happily married for 16 years. I'm the guy who teaches the Bible for a living. I'm your pastor. I love you. I want good for you. I hope my opinion would count for anything. Is it lawful? Number 2: next question, is it helpful for me and others? Will it help our marriage? Will it help our walk with God? That's the big issue.

This comes down to the fact that the Bible mentions six purposes for married sexuality, and then you examine whether or not a particular acts is helpful in light of these. These are in no particular order, but one is pleasure. Song of Songs is all about pleasure. If one person enjoys it and the other person's in pain, that's not helpful. That's not helpful. It may be acceptable. It may be permissible. It may be lawful. Maybe you can do something that's not against the Bible or the law, but it hurts your spouse, then don't do it. Number 2: one of the results of intimacy is children. Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful, multiply. Increase the number. Fill the earth and subdue it." Again, it's not a sin to use birth control. It's not a sin to be intimate when there is not a possibility of children.

But if your whole goal is to have sex all the time and you have no desire for children, then you're not using the intimacy in the marriage for one of the purposes that God created it. You're being selfish. Number 3: oneness, Genesis 2:24, "The husband and the wife were one flesh." It's oneness. Does it pull you together or push you apart? Does it make you closer or more distant? I tell you, if somebody's in one room with something plugged in all by themselves, that's not oneness. If somebody's taking care of themselves on the side and the other person doesn't know about it, that's not oneness. If one of you feels ashamed, embarrassed, hurt, denigrated, that's not oneness. It's not pulling you closer. It's pushing you apart. Number 4: knowledge. Genesis 4:1: "Adam lay with his wife, Eve, and he knew her."

Does it cause you to be vulnerable, to be trusting, to be intimate, to be connected, to be devoted to one another in a special sacred covenantal marriage way or does it cause one of you to be fearful, to hide, to not reveal yourself because you're not in a place of safety? Number 5: protection. I Corinthians 7: "Are you together enough to safeguard the marriage from lots of sin and temptation?" And Number 6: for comfort. II Samuel 12:24 talks about how sometimes we give our body to our spouse to comfort them, to physically connect with them, to love them and it's an act of kindness and mercy and affection. All right. There's lots of reasons that God gives marital intimacy and the question of is it helpful for me, for my spouse, for our family, for our legacy? It gets answered in these ways. Is it serving a Biblical purpose?

Number 3: will I become enslaved by it? Paul says, or addicted. These are his three ethical, categorical decision-making criteria. There may be something that's lawful. It's okay, but if you come addicted to it, mastered by it, habituated by it, it becomes unhealthy and therefore unhelpful. I know couples that get so into toys and you say, what's the position on toys? The Bible doesn't say anything, doesn't forbid it, but if you get to the point where that's the only way you could really have satisfaction, you're mastered by it. If just being with your spouse doesn't do it for you, you've got an addiction. All right. There are things that are acceptable that if not carefully guarded become habitual and they become enslaving, and let me tell you about slavery. Most of you would never think you were a slave. Let me tell you a secret about slavery.

There's two forms. There's one where it's imposed on you. There's another where you give yourself away. When it comes to drugs, alcohol, sexual sin of various sorts and kinds, gambling, whatever it might be, there is self-given slavery. You give yourself as a slave. That's what Paul's talking about. No one's taking anything. You're giving it, but you're becoming mastered, ruled by someone or something other than Jesus and that's devastating. Well, the question is then: if we are selfish, how do we fix it? If we are selfish, what's the answer? She gives us a clue in Chapter 5, Verse 16. She says, "This is my lover and my friend." Let me explain this. A friend is someone who serves you outside of the bedroom. A friend is someone you serve outside of the bedroom and a lover is someone who serves you in the bedroom.

It's someone you serve in the bedroom. She says, "He's my friend, my lover." We should be serving one another outside of the bedroom. We should be serving one another in the bedroom. Now let me explain this to you. Christian ethics is built on the framework of being a servant. I — I'm worried for so many of you. I mean, I really do love you and I really am concerned, because the ethic that so many of you build your life on is to be takers and not givers. To be served, not to serve, and selfish people make terrible friends. They make terrible lovers. They make terrible spouses. They make terrible parents and they leave a terrible legacy, and here's what the Bible says. "Jesus is God. He comes into human history as a man." And here's what he

says, "I did not come to be," what? "Served. I came to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many."

Jesus says, "I'm God. I didn't come to be served and take. I came to serve and to give. My greatest gift is salvation. I'm going to the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and I'm gonna die so that you can live." See, Jesus is God. Jesus is a giver. He's a servant. They came to Jesus — a few people did in one of the Gospels — couple men — and they said, "Jesus, we wanna be the greatest. How do we be the greatest?" And Jesus' answer was, "Serve well." Oh. Philippians 2, Paul says that our attitude — talking about attitude here. Our attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus who came as a servant. I would say Philippians 2 has such pronounced, profound implications for marriage. If you wanna be like Jesus, it starts with assuming within your covenant of marriage the posture, the attitude, the disposition of a servant, of a giver, of someone who is selfless not selfish.

Well, here are your options when it comes to married sexuality. Number 1: you have sex rarely if ever. So you know what, it's too much trouble. We've gotten text messages from couples saying, "We have not been together in 15 years." You know what I find amazing is within Christianity it is not uncommon to find people who don't have sexual intimacy; don't have emotional intimacy; don't have spiritual intimacy; don't pray together; don't do their life together; don't put their schedules together; don't put their budgets together, but they don't get divorced. So they can pat themselves on the back and say, "We're good Christians." They're divorced in everything but the paperwork. Number 2: you, —but see that first one is selfish. The second one is selfish too.

You do as little as possible. As infrequently, as quickly as possible get it over with, do the minimum. Number 3: some say, "Well, we'll be together when we both feel like it. When we're both in the mood then we'll be together." You're not going to be together very much, I'll tell you that right now, and that ethic never works outside of the bedroom. You don't eat dinner when you both feel like it. You don't pay the bills when you both feel like it. All right. You don't cut the grass when you both feel like it. You don't do your taxes when you both feel like it. There's a lot in life you say, well, just this is part of the obligations of married covenant, this is what we need to do. My wife, again, five kids, I don't know how many diapers she's changed. I'm sure there's at least one she didn't feel like it. At least one. Okay.

I love you. I love my wife, love my job. There are more than a handful of days that I don't wanna go to work ever again. Okay? And I go because that's my obligation to Jesus, to you, to my wife, to my kids. I'm in covenant. See that's very selfish to say, "Well, if I feel like it and you feel like it, we both happen to be selfish at the same time, then it's the right time." It's very selfish, or, Number 4: here's what you can do. Whenever one of you feels like it, you'll be together. So wife says, "I want to be together. Husband says, "I'm not in the mood, but I will serve you." Next night husband says I'm in the mood. Wife says, "Curious I'm not in the mood tonight, but you served me last night, I'll serve you tonight." Marriage is about mutual service and I'll let you in on a little secret.

If you're not in the mood and you take the humble position of a servant to serve your spouse, God is gracious and usually you get in the mood. Married couples all chuckle. I'm not in the mood. Five minutes later you're like, "Hey, guess what mood I'm in." And it's not anything other than saying, "I wanna serve you. I don't wanna be selfish." A great marriage is a servant and a servant. A terrible marriage is selfish and a servant. That's pretty abusive and lonely, or selfish and selfish. There's a train wreck of a life. A good Christian marriage is a servant and a servant. How can I serve you? This works. Actually, it's the only thing that works. It's what it says in 1 Corinthians 7, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband." You need to take care of one another

"For the wife does not have authority over her own body," despite what the bumper sticker says, but the husband does. "Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does. Do not deprive one another." I'll read it again. "Do not deprive one another." I'll read it again, "Do not deprive one another." What was the big problem in Song of Songs, Chapter 5, "She was selfish and deprived him." Again, it's not just what wives do. Husbands do this, as well. Married couples do this to one another had we a snapshot of another night, he would have denied her, so this is equally applicable. Do not deprive one another except perhaps maybe by agreement. Okay. We've got major marital problems. We need to get some help, and for a limited time 15 or 20 minutes, that you may devote yourself to prayer.

Get close to Jesus. Figure out the junk in the marriage. Maybe you find out one of you was abused. We've got to get some help. Maybe you find out your spouse has got a closet porn addiction. We got to get a break. We've got to pray. We've got to get to Jesus. We've got to get some help, but then come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I'll close with four questions. Let me say this first. Some of you are sitting here saying, "I'm single. How does this apply to me?" You're the most selfish of all. See, selfishness begins in how you're parented. If you're the little kid who learned if I throw a fit — my parents look at me and ask this question: what do you want? They are raising someone to be innately selfish. If your parents did this with you: stop freaking out, stop disobeying and I'll give you a treat.

If all their parenting was appealing to your selfishness, all right. See, selfishness starts when you're little, but you master it when you're single. You get a master's. Some of you are working on a master's degree in selfishness. That's your primary study right now because if you're single it's well I live where I want. I get up when I want. I go to bed when I want. I eat what I want. I do what I want. I spend my money however I want. I watch whatever I want on the TV. I do whatever I want, and some of you who are single, you have the audacity to think that because you're single, you're just like Jesus. This is where people get all self-righteous in this. Well, Jesus was single. I'm single. It takes more than that to be like Jesus. He was selfless, selfless rather and he was a servant. He, do you serve? Who do you serve? Your time, your money: are you generous?

You a giver or a taker? And even some of you, I know this and I love you, but I got to hammer you on it. Your list of what you're looking for as a spouse is basically a job description for a slave. I want someone who will do this and do this and do this and do this and do this. Why? Because I want to be served and I'm looking for someone who will do it my way. Incredibly selfish. Very rarely do I meet a single person who has anything on their list about how they can serve their spouse. I'm looking for someone who wants to grow in Jesus so I can encourage them. I'm wanting to meet someone who wants to do ministry so that I could do it with them. Very rarely does anyone have on their list anything that is not selfish. Four

questions: these are dangerous questions. You ask them of your spouse.

First, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being terrible; 10 being incredible: how am I as a servant outside of the bedroom? 1 to 10, score yourself. Some of you say, "That sounds mean." Be nice. You don't have to be rude about it, but be honest. I'll tell you especially for the husbands. This will work because we like scores. We just do. I'm a two, uh-oh. On a scale of 1 to 10, how am I as a servant outside of the bedroom? Second question: what can I do to be a better servant of you outside of the bedroom? What can I do to improve my score to have the attitude of a servant? Number 3: what is my score, 1 to 10, as a servant in the bedroom? One being terrible, you're totally selfish. 10 being, you're incredible, you're a great servant. You think of me, consider me and serve me. Fourth question: what can I do to improve that score?

How could I serve you better in the bedroom? Set aside some time. Have that conversation. It may be very painful but I assure you it will be very fruitful. I'll bring out my wife, Gracie. We'll answer a few questions and I'll close with this. At this point some of you because this sermon is in large part a rebuke, you're going to wonder about motive. Hey, baby. Here's the bottom line. There are two kinds of pastors. There are pastors who take a job for a couple years and then they move on. Me — we started this church when I was 25 and I plan on being here for 50 years until I'm in my 70s and I die or retire. I don't think I'll ever retire, but I'll probably not be able to keep the workload that I have now. Many of you I've seen get married. Some of you need to know you're going to be here long enough. I'm going to see your kids get married.

I'm going to see your grandkids get married. I'm not going anywhere. Here's my fear. If we're all selfish; our marriages are terrible; our children are terrible; their marriages are terrible; their children's marriages are terrible and what is 8,000 people at Mars Hill Church today, if you do the numbers for a few generations, it's theoretically a few hundred thousand people that I could live to actually see born, many of them raised and married, and if underlying our ethic as a people is not serve, be a servant, be selfless, there is nothing but devastation in our wake.

And it starts with each of us owning our own personal selfishness, repenting of our own personal selfishness, not making ourselves the exception to the rule and getting the attitude of Jesus which is a servant starting first with our spouse, and that's what we want for you guys because we love you and we want good for you. And I'm deeply, profoundly concerned because it's not a good place that we begin. Take a few questions from the booth. Bellevue: "Any tips for women to be more thoughtful about initiating? I love to be with my husband, but I'm shy about initiating." That is a gal question, sweetie pie.

Grace Driscoll: I would say there's lots of things you could do. Start out by just, during the day, make sure you think about him and send him a little note. You can write him love letters. You can help them to anticipate coming home by saying you have a surprise. Just plan little things that you know he would enjoy. Ask him what his En Gedi is maybe and plan that out for him.

Nice job.

Grace Driscoll: You can be ready for him when he comes to bed. You can buy lingerie. You can have candles. Draw a bath. There's lots of things that can —

Communicate nonverbally.

Grace Driscoll: — that — right.

Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: That he take as you initiating.

What if she's shy? Is it okay for her to write a letter, to send him an email or a text message because maybe that's — she's ~~warms up there. It's a start. Gets her communicating~~

Grace Driscoll: Absolutely. That's a great way to start. It's nonthreatening and you can pray through it so that you know that God is preparing you and ask him to prepare you for when you're together and God is faithful in that.

Mark Driscoll: — I'd say for the wives, too, you know, what the husband really appreciates is an effort. That's all. Say, "Man, my wife is really making an effort." You can't underestimate ladies what hope does for a husband. Like, "She loves me. She's trying. We're making progress. We're going to be together for a lot of years. We're going to keep making progress. I have hope. I have hope that it's just going to keep getting better," and that — just that attitude is encouraging for a husband. You know? Let's do another one, guys. Ballard: "How are husbands to balance a lifestyle job that often takes precedence over the marriage?" I've got one of those. I mean, I think I was gone six or eight weeks this year out of state or country. I have — when I have book deadlines, those are imposed.

When I have travel deadlines, when I have media interviews, there's certain things I can't flex on. I've got to make them. Sundays, I can't call in sick. Just can't show up and just get up, sorry, Mark had the flu today. See you next week. Put a sign on the door. I mean, I've got to show up and do my job and some of us have those kinds of issues. I think what it is, is what I try to do is safeguard all the time that I can and when I block out my vacations, those kinds of things. I don't take my laptop. I don't take my cell phone. I don't get distracted. I work from home as much as I can and another part of it is, Grace and I do meet every Monday and we sync up our schedules and I tell her like this week, here's exactly what I got going on.

So she and the kids know in advance, this is kind of what it looks like this week and going into or coming out of a hard season, we will plan something fun as a family, so like I just came out of a hard season, so we went down to Great Wolf — free advertising — indoor waterslide amusement park for

my birthday. Normally, not what I would pick as a grown man, but my kids thought it would be an awesome idea. So, we did waterslides and went down for the night. And this — it was just sort of a: daddy's got book deadlines. It's going to be a hard week or two and then we're going to get a couple days off and daddy's going to unplug the phone. He's going to be fully available. We're going to go have fun. We're going to go down the waterslides.

It will be cool, trying to not just, you know, have those hard seasons, but then celebrate at the end that you get to be together and the kids seem to understand that. If it gets to the point where really you say, "I can't be a good husband and father with this job," if it gets to that point, sometimes you've got to look for a new job. Just say, you know, "I can't see my family enough to really be connected to them." Then the job has to maybe be considered and reconsidered for the sake of the family. It may mean downsizing. It may mean smaller house. It may mean a simpler lifestyle.

I think I find too with most wives, they're okay with that if they know he really loves me and the kids. Most wives are willing to go with a simpler course of life to make sure that they get time together as a family. It's a big priority. Yeah, I'll leave it at that. A lot of it's organizational tools, administrations, good assistants. If I knew you, I'd get into more of the specifics. It's a little hard. Let's do another one. Lake City: "My wife's love language is service, how, I think it's — how can I serve her above and beyond helping around the house or with the baby? Suggestions?" Maybe you'd take that one. Sounds like they're a younger married couple. Got a kid or kids. Wife loves to be served, he's trying to figure out how to serve her and help out.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, it's good that you're asking. I encourage you to ask your wife because every woman has different ways that she appreciates being served in different seasons of life. I didn't usually want much help with the babies because I just ~~it's a real natural thing for me to~~

She really likes babies. She really, yeah.

Grace Driscoll: — so to me it wasn't helpful for him to hold them or any of that. It just really ~~I was fine with that. It was other stuff that~~

Though I did hold the babies.

Grace Driscoll: — yes, you did. You were great about it.

Yeah, they're mine, go cut —

Grace Driscoll: So I would encourage you to ask her. I mean, for me it changes a lot. Sometimes it's as simple as, can you be home this day when I have to do carpool and the kids are napping and I just need to be able to get eight other kids in the car. Sometimes it's just as simple as that. It's a big deal to me because it means I don't have to have all the car seats and all that kind of thing. Sometimes it's, you know, I don't know, picking up the house in one area or...

We do that too on Monday nights where we sync our schedule up, you know. I'll ask you, "What do you need this week?" And you'll say, "On this day I need you to watch the kids or I need you to run this errand or you tell me that week's area of service."

Grace Driscoll: Sometimes it's I had a ton today. I tried to get dinner ready but I couldn't. Is there any way we can grab, you know, quick takeout or something. Sometimes it's something like that even though I don't like to do that often, but yeah, I would just really encourage you to ask your wife. She probably, if you don't know, she might feel bad asking. I know I felt that way a lot just because Mark is so busy and so taxed with responsibilities, but I'm his first priority and he wants to serve me, and so I would just really encourage you to ask her, you know, what are some ways this week that I can serve you or, you know, long term if you look through a calendar, you know, what are some ways consistently each week that I can serve you or that sort of thing.

Yeah, I think that's where guys, they just want a: tell me what to do and I'll do it every week and her needs may change so it may be every week. This week, what do you need? And especially with little kids and different seasons of growth and maybe you've got other kids, it's going to change pretty quickly from week to week.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, sometimes it was as simple as can you stay home with the kids while I go grocery shopping because they were starting to throw groceries out of the cart while I was shopping. So, I mean, it just really varies and, and as a wife I hope she's willing to explain to you what her needs are.

Cool. All right. Do another one. Couple minutes. Lake City: "Pastor Mark, how do you lead your wife and kids as you study the Bible? My wife and I study, read very differently." All right. Dude. The worst thing you can do is try and force two people who have very different devotional lives into one system that works. Okay. It just doesn't work. Just, I mean — literally, I know one guy, he was a seminary prof and he would bring out an overhead projector for family devotions. If you want to raise little Atheists that's the short cut right there. It's just miserable. Gracie and I are very different. I read continually. I read, I probably, I don't know what I read maybe 1,000 pages a week or some. I mean, it's — I read almost a book a day to this day. I've always got probably 60 to 80 books I'm working on at a time.

Plus research, I'm constantly studying and, and my life is constant study and Grace tends to read and study things that are different, have different areas of interest, is a nice way to say it, and so what we have found is on Monday night when we sync our schedules up, the kids go to bed. It's okay. What are you learning? What did you read this week? What did God teach you? So we're listening to each other. Part of it as well, on date night we have a lot of those discussions on Friday night. What are you learning? What's God teaching you? What did you read this week? As I prepare my sermons, I run them by Grace. What do you think about this? What do you think about that? Get her input. As well one of the things we just do is we integrate it like

as soon as we learn something, we talk about it. So give two examples from this week.

Saturday I was reading in Samuel where there was Abigail, sweet gal, married Nabal, which means “fool”. He’s a complete imbecile and kind of how she tried to work around the fact that her husband was an imbecile, and I thought, “Wow, we know a lot of people like that.” So I went and talked to Grace. I said, “Hey, I saw this in Samuel, you know, for gals whose husbands are imbeciles. I think this is a helpful insight.” And so we had a little Bible study out of Samuel on it and then last night, I was watching Ultimate Fighting, having my devotions and she came in and sat on my lap and brought a book. She said — so I turned the TV off — she said, “I was reading this and I think it’s helpful and can we talk about this and I think it will help in the sermon.” So she read a section of a book she had been studying this week and what God showed her in that.

So for us it’s kind of that what are you learning? What am I learning? How can we share this together? You’ve got to read this. I think this would be helpful, and it’s integrated into our family time to where I think the best thing we’ve done is it’s hard to sit five kids down from ages 2 to 11 and do like family devotions, especially with 3 sons, because they always end up trying to arm-bar one another and they’re always wrestling, and so what I started doing is just put a Bible on the table and I’ll read a section and as the kids are eating dinner with us at night, we just have family discussion. So we did a chunk of Luke. Now we’re doing I Peter. Who’s Peter? What was his life as a disciple? I’m asking all these leading questions and the cool thing is the kids actually, they’re totally into it.

So we use the dinnertime when their hands are busy and they can talk and we got them all as a captured audience and now it’s really interesting, when they set the table, first thing that goes on the table is a Bible, and I’ll come sit down, we all sit down and we pray and then we have these very interesting theological discussions over a little Bible discussion, read a passage and talk over dinner and I think that works really well for our kids at the age that they’re at. Of course we read Scripture with them throughout the day as they have issues and questions, we bring them to the Bible. We read Bible stories with the little ones at night. The older kids are old enough, they read the Bible on their own. I’ve got a deal with buddy Zack. He reads the Bible every day. Ashley reads the Bible every day.

We want them to have their own walk with God, but it’s a lot of ways to come at it, but I think integration is the easiest. You’re talking. Everybody’s learning, reading and you’re talking about what you’re learning and reading and it just becomes a natural part of the conversation in the family. Last thing I want —

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, I think just as the seasons of life constantly change, the way we study can change with that and so don’t feel trapped to study at one certain time, one certain way, alone or with your spouse or with your kids. It can vary. We need to just integrate study and prayer and all of the spiritual disciplines in all of our life throughout every day as much as possible.

— you were talking about it this week how you used to think you needed to get a couple-hour block of study to study and then you’ve had to shift that.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, I kept waiting for that two hours to come along so I could get through a book in one thought and not be interrupted and it just doesn’t happen. So I was just praying about God how do I get this time that I want to study and, and I started noticing, He started bringing out throughout the day all the little moments that I was — I could use for that and I didn’t think I could study that much, but as I started doing that there was several, you know 10, 20 minutes here and there that I actually started getting quite a bit of study and prayer done during those times and started getting through the books I wanted to read and that sort of thing. So that was really helpful. I just — you just have to — different task, but if we’re faithful to ask God for those moments, he really showed those to me. It was helpful.

I like looking at you. How about if you close their time in prayer, we hand it over to the campus pastors. Thanks, Baby.

Grace Driscoll: Thank you, Lord, for your Word. I thank you for revealing our selfishness. I pray, Lord, that you would continue to open our hearts and ears to what that looks like in each of our lives. I pray that we would desire to be servants of you first and that out of that many others would be served. Lord, there’s so much work to do and you have many redemption opportunities here and we thank you for that. We thank you that people are here wanting to hear your Word and wanting to change and I pray that that passion would continue and that we would be able to serve these people well and that they would move on to serve others in ways that they’ve been served. So thank you, in Jesus’ name.