



DO NOT AWAKEN LOVE

Part 9 of The Peasant Princess

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Song of Songs 8:1-7 | November 23, 2008

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

Good to see you all. We've got two weeks left in the Song of Songs: this week and next. We are almost done, and, so, if you've got a Bible, turn to Song of Songs, Chapter 8. That's where we will be. If you're new, my name's Mark, one of the pastors of the church. Couple of quick announcements; one is actually really good news. If you have logged on to our social networking site, The City; if you've enjoyed that, that was created by Zack Hubert, one of the pastors here at Mars Hill. Great guy, dear friend; wicked, Yoda-smart guy; he actually wrote most, if not nearly all of the code for that, and created that as a tool for our church to communicate and collect data. Well, it's become wildly successful, and so we have partnered now with, Zondervan, and you may have gotten the press release this week. It is being rolled out nationally and internationally.

We're exceedingly glad to see it move forward, help other churches, denominations, networks and the like, and if you'd like to catch up on this story, you can log on to The City. We want to congratulate Pastor Zack, and thank God for him and the loving support of his wife, Julie. She's an absolute gem, and they have been a real blessing to our church in a lot of ways, and this is one big public example of that. In addition, as I said, we will finish Song of Songs next week. So, at the end of this service, my wife Gracie, as has been the case, will join me on stage for questions. If there're any final questions, this is it.

We'll do a few questions next week, but next week is basically about: how do you raise sons and daughters to be morally chaste, pure? How do you talk to them about sexuality? Parenting and grand-parenting-type of issues, and, so, next week, probably if you have a really exciting question, we won't take that one. So this is your last opportunity for the really exciting questions, and Gracie and I will leave extended time at the end of this sermon to answer those questions, and then, after we finish Song of Songs, we're gonna have with us Dr. Don Carson. There's a lot going on at Mars Hill. He is brilliant. He is one of the leading Bible teachers and scholars in the world. I haven't confirmed it, but I think he is fluent in six languages, and may have memorized the whole New Testament in Greek. He teaches at Trinity Divinity School in Chicago.

I'm on the Board of the Gospel Coalition with him. I have taught with him around the US and in Australia in the past year. We keep bumping into one another, great guy. Author or editor of more than 50 books: big deal. He's going to be with us on Saturday – let me get the details right – December 6th, at the Ballard Campus, super cheap conference. Going through what he believes are the most important texts in the Bible about Jesus, and answering your text messages. You can register for that online at theresurgence.com. There's a link to that to that off the Mars Hill front page, and he will be preaching for me on Sunday, December 6th. You'll get to meet him, and you can ask him questions, as well, and then we'll do a series, through II Corinthians 8 and 9 for the Holidays about generous Christmas giving.

We'll look at how the Bible teaches that Jesus is our gift; that we are to be generous. We'll deal with a church that's in the middle of an economic downturn – very timely – and we'll also talk about a very large gift that is coming to our church, and the way we're going to steward that to help more people in 2009, and then, starting in January, we're gonna go through I and II Peter. So that's what we're doing in the coming months. That being said, I've got a lot of work to do. I'm gonna go ahead and pray. We're gonna get right to work. I hope you guys have enjoyed this series. I hope you have. We've gotten some good emails. We've gotten a few other emails. We've gotten a lot of good emails. Married couples talking; loving one another; serving one another; confessing sin.

Single people really clarifying what their vision is for their potential mate and their future and God's will for them, and, just really, really honored to have you all with us today, and it's a real great joy for me to teach this book. It's one of those books that the church has largely ignored, rejected, neglected, and even translated fairly poorly. It's because people are scared to talk about sex. Meanwhile, in the culture, that's all anyone and everyone is talking about, and so we wanna think Biblically. We wanna open the Scriptures. We wanna talk about dating and courting and marriage and sex and romance and pleasure and passion and joy in God's Word. So I'm gonna go ahead and pray, and we're gonna do that in Song of Songs, Chapter 8.

Father, God, we begin, as always, by thanking you. You are a great God. You are the source of all love. You are the Creator of all relationship. That you've made us male and female; that you created us to love, to communicate, to connect with you and with one another. You created marriage as that sacred and holy covenant for our passions and pleasures to be enjoyed to their fullest without sin. It is my pleasure, as we study today, Lord God, to teach, and it is my request that I would teach well, and that, Lord, God, we would keep thinking Biblically; that we would keep living biblically. And even, Lord God, for those who may not be Christian, maybe — may they have this opportunity to think about things from your perspective and have a change of heart, and we ask for this grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Well, as we've been in this book, we have looked at this amazing husband and wife. We've looked at their dating years, their courting years. We've looked at their wedding. We've looked at their honeymoon. We've looked at their fight. We've looked at their resolution. We've looked at their holidays. We've gotten an amazing series of snapshots on one of the most amazing couples in all of Scripture, and today, in Chapter 8, she takes us on a series of reflections. She's sort of looking back on some highlights of her life, as it were, one of those reflective moments, and the first one sounds just plain weird. I'll read it to you. She says to her husband, "Oh that you are like a brother to me." What? "Who nursed at my mother's breasts. If I found you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me."

Okay, there — just so you know, there's a little cultural distance between us and them at this point, right? Let's say, gentlemen, your wife came home, said, "I was thinking about you all day. I would like to make out with you like my brother." You go, "Wait a minute. Now I'm scared." All right? What does this mean? "I wish you were like my brother so that I could kiss you." That's weird. Now, let me explain it culturally. Here's what was happening in that culture. Not that they were all making out with their brothers, okay? This isn't like a little slice of Kentucky in the Middle East. That's not what's going on. What's going on here is this. In that culture, you were not allowed to have public displays of affection. So, men and women were not allowed to hold hands, all right? They were not allowed to snuggle in public.

They were not allowed to kiss in public. They were not allowed to have any sort of romantic touch in public. The only exception was little brothers and sisters. Little brothers and sisters could hold hands. Nobody cared. Little brothers and sisters could kiss one another. Nobody cared. I've got five kids. The youngest two — or Gideon, he's almost three — I call him Guppy — he's the little one. He's about this big, cute as a button, blond hair, blue eyes, looks like his momma, and then Alexi Grace, she's awesome. I call her Goose. She looks like Cindy Lou Who. She's just a little bit taller, blond hair, blue eyes, and she recently turned five. You know what they do a lot? They hold hands. She calls him Pooka. "Come on, Pooka." They're cute. They hold hands a lot. They sing a lot. They dance a lot.

They are total Dancing-With-the-Stars-minor-league-couple, that's what they are. They're always dancing, and oftentimes they'll kiss each other. She'll kiss him on the cheek. He'll kiss her on the forehead. They'll hug each other. It's totally cute. Nobody freaks out, all right? And that's what brothers and sisters, who are real little and really love each other in a non-sexual, you know, non-romantic way — they're just very affectionate. What she's saying is this. "When we're together in public, I wanna touch you. I wanna kiss you. Wanna hold your hand. I wanna snuggle with you. I wanna be romantic. I wanna be affectionate. Ah, I can't be. It's not culturally appropriate." And it's not. Even in our day. Aren't those couples disgusting? You're like, "Please, put your hands in your pockets." We don't want to see that, right?

What she's saying, though, is that she has continual desires to be affectionate with him, okay? So what do you do? What do you do when you're married, and you have these desires to be with your spouse, but you can't, because you're separated? You're in public. You're at the grocery store. You get arrested — stuff like that. What do you do? What do you do? I was gone in Dallas all week — I didn't plan this well — I was in Dallas all week, and I concluded my trip to Dallas with a Song of Solomon conference, preaching on sex, by myself, for a week. Terrible plan, you know, and I'd get up and be like, "Man, this — I have a lot of good advice that I can't use." You know. So what do you do when you're in those moments when you can't be together? You can't connect. You can't — you're not allowed to. It's — you're in public. You communicate.

That's what she does. There's a difference between being unwilling and unable. If you don't say anything, your spouse doesn't know which it is. "Do you not wanna be with me? Are you unwilling? Or is it that because of circumstances, you're unable." And some people, when they're unwilling, they don't say anything, and some people, when they're unable, don't say anything, but if you're unable but willing, it's good to talk. This is where text messaging, emailing, phone-calling, love letters, notes — communicating. "I'm thinking about you. I miss you. I wish we could be together. I wish I could hold your hand." I had one whole day in Dallas this week, I couldn't stop thinking about holding my wife's hand. That's all I was thinking about.

I'm in this mentoring group with young pastors — great guys, great time. They'd ask a question. They'd be like, "Well, what do you think about that?" I was like, "I wanna hold her hand." That's all I'm thinking about. "Well, what should we do in the recession?" "I just wanna hold her hand." That's all I'm thinking about is just holding Gracie's hand. So I sent her a text message, "I really wish you were here. I'd love to hold your hand." That ongoing communication is really important. Let your spouse know what you're thinking, what you're desiring. That's what she does. So it's not as weird as it first seems. Moving on. "I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother," — Verse 2 — "She who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate." Say, "Where's the pomegranate?"

Ah, you'll get married and find it. Anyways, what she's saying is this. She's saying when she was a little girl, her mother took her into the house and told her about sex, and about relationships, and about marriage. And about boys, and instructed her. Okay? And she's sort of playing with him here. She's being sort of playful and coy, saying, "You know, and I would like to lead you into the house and teach you a few things, as well." She's being very flirtatious, in a sort of a very cute, very coy, very appropriate way, and what I would say within this, as well, it's really important, as she is referring, for parents to be the ones who instruct their children about sexuality, right? What we have done is allowed schools to pick up where parents are supposed to instruct. Some of you, your parents still haven't had the talk with you.

I met one guy this week and the Song of Solomon conference. He's 47 with 6 kids, and his dad still hasn't had the talk with him. That's a little late, all right? So when should a parent talk to their children? I would say by age 10. Start having the conversation, and it's not a conversation. It's conversations, ongoing, right? You can't just say, at age 10, "Hey, wait until you're married," and then, like at 30, check in. "How'd it go?" Right? You gotta keep discussing it, and one of the things I love about this couple is they talk freely with one another. That will enable them to talk freely with their children. If you're a couple who can talk freely about life and sex and marriage and particular private issues, well, then you could talk to your kids, but if you can't even talk to your spouse, you're gonna have a really hard time talking to your kids. Talk to your kids.

Talk to you kids. Talk to your kids by age 10. Statistically the average boy looks at his first naughty website by age 11. The Number 1 consumer of online porn is boys 12 to 17. So what do you need to do? You need to start talking to them before they start getting their information elsewhere. Usually by age 10 is about right. If your child is real curious, may need to be a little younger than that, and the boys should be spoken to by daddy, and the girls should be spoken to by mommy. Now, mommy can teach the boys about girls and daddy could teach the girls about boys. I'm not saying that they shouldn't. They should. We'll get into this more next week.

But it is good for dad to be talking to the boys, and for mom to be talking to the girls, saying, "Okay, you're physically developing. Your body is changing. You're gonna have some interest. Others are gonna have some interest in you. You're going to learn a lot of things in culture, just picking bits and pieces up from media and conversation. I wanna be the first one to teach you about this Biblically. Here's what God intends for us. If you have any questions, come to me. I'm gonna be checking in for you." I've got a daughter who's 11. I love her with all my heart. We are super, super close. Email back and fourth; daddy dates; snuggle up; she leaves me love letters in my Bible or under my pillow. I mean we're really, really, really close, and I'm just checking in.

"Honey, how's it going? Anything I need to know at school? Any boys being boys? Any of them picking on you?" Which is usually like, 11 year-old boy way of flirting, is acting like a small terrorist, you know, and annoying the girls; you know, I mean, you know how this works. Just trying to continue to check in, see how things are going. She's being a little coy with her husband, saying, "When my mom was little, she sat me down and taught me some things, and I'd like to sit you down and teach you a few things, too." One of those is in Verse 3, and you guys will notice, she speaks first. She speaks last. She speaks most. I think one of the great myths for Christian women, is that they're not to have any passions and pleasures and desires. If they do, they're not supposed to articulate them. They should suppress them.

But within a loving marriage, a woman should be passionate, free, verbal, conversant. She should pursue, initiate, and if she has desires, she is welcome to articulate them without anyone thinking that she's ungodly, because this woman is very godly, and here she tells her husband what she wants him to do. "His left hand is under my head and his right hand embraces me." Say, well, is that okay for a wife to tell her husband, "I want your left hand here and I want your right hand here." Right? "And I want you to do this with your hands." Is that okay? Is that okay? Well, it's wonderful because — two things. One: men don't know what they're doing. We don't. Now we don't wanna tell you that because it's kind of embarrassing, but we have no idea what we're doing. If you tell us, that's helpful, because we can overcome our ignorance.

Now, our ignorance, we usually make up with confidence. That's why we're so confusing. We look like we know what we're doing. We don't know what we're doing. In addition, secondly, marriage, as I've told you repeatedly, is about being servants: serving one another both outside of and inside of the bedroom. A couple — here's a terrible marriage: someone who is selfish, and someone who is selfish. That's a disaster. Here's an abusive relationship: someone who is selfish and someone who is a servant. This person always gives. This person always takes. That's abusive. Here's a beautiful Christian marriage: a servant and a servant, both always asking, "What can I do for you? How can I help? What do you need from me?" Outside of the bedroom, "Chores, house, kids: what do you need? How can I help? I love you. I wanna serve."

In the bedroom, "I love you. I wanna take care of you. I wanna please you. I wanna look after you. I wanna be attentive to you. What desires, what needs, what curiosities, what pleasures do you have? How could I serve you?" This couple is at this point where she could just look at him and say, "Let me tell you what to do. I would really appreciate this." That's the sign of a mature marriage. This is not imposing or shoving or making demands. This is two people who love one another, regularly conversing. One day, she will say, "I need this." The next, he will say, "I need this," and they are in the habit of regularly serving one another. If you get anything out of this series, I think that's one of the really important, big ideas to get out of this series. Serve your spouse. Serve your spouse. Serve your spouse. Serve your spouse.

And if a husband and a wife will take on that posture of humble servants — they have a beautiful marriage, a beautiful wedding. I've done marital counseling for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of couples in conflict over the years. I can't remember one couple that I met with that would be described as two humble servants. Two humble servants don't have long conflicts. Two humble servants don't devastate one another. Two humble servants don't need a lot of input. Two humble servants tend to get along pretty well. So then she speaks to her single friends in Verse 4. It is very important within the church that Christian married couples have friendships with those who are unmarried. I don't think it's a sin to have age-specific ministry — junior high, high school, college, singles, marrieds, you know, young marrieds, older marrieds.

I don't think that's a sin, but, in some churches, those age divisions turn into silos where people don't have relationship across generational lines. That's not good. Junior high kids need to know high school kids. High school students need to know college students. College students need to know single people. Single people need to know engaged people. Engaged people need to know young married couples. Young married couples need to know families with kids. Families with kids need to know older married couples. Older married couples need to know grandparents. Everybody needs to look to see what the next season of life may look like, and whatever they've learned, they need to pass on to the seasons of life that are behind them, and this doesn't happen enough.

And so one of our great values at Mars Hill is, if you're single, it's great to have friends who are single. If you're married, it's great to have friends that are married, but just when you get married, don't automatically assume that it's wrong to have friendships with unmarried people. To be honest with you, some of my wife and I's greatest friends have been people who are unmarried. Right now, some of my wife's dearest friends are women who are unmarried. Some are widows. One of them recently got married but she was a virgin, single woman into her 40's: really godly, loved Jesus, and so this married woman, now that she is married, now that she is with her husband, her single friends are asking her, "Was it worth the wait? I mean, you were chaste when you got married. You didn't date around, play around."

She's already told us that her body is a private garden, not a public park, right? And that her single friends are asking her, "Is it worth it? Was it worth

the wait?" Here's what she says. "I adjure you," – Verse 4 – "Oh daughters of Jerusalem, that you do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." She reassures her friend, "Yes, God's way is the right way." Don't date someone that's not a Christian. Don't live with someone before you're married. Don't sleep with people before you are married, because here's what happens with unmarried singles: They tend to settle. They sort of start with God's vision and plan for chastity and purity and marriage and family, and then, at some point, they sort of give up. They say, "Well, that person can fog a mirror. Good enough. That's what I'm looking for."

Some of you, who are at Mars Hill, and are unmarried and single, you find this series woefully depressing. Every week is more things you can't do. Like, "That would be awesome, but not for me." Okay? And the question is: are you feeling pressure to settle? Are you feeling pressure to say, "Yeah, the Christian guys don't ask me out, but the non-Christian guys do. So I'm gonna go out with them. Nobody's asked me to marry them, but some guy says he'll sleep with me. Good enough." "Well, you know, she's a nice gal. I don't intend to marry her. I'm lonely. I'm bored. I don't know who I wanna marry. Maybe I'll just move in with that gal for a while and ultimately it'll just be something to kill time until I meet the one I love." This culture has massive pressure on those of you who are unmarried to settle.

I mean, you remember the movie, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*? What kind of movie was that? Was that a nice biography? Like ones we do on Martin Luther King, Jr. or JFK or Gandhi? Was it that kind of biography, like, here's an exemplary life that you should emulate? Here's a noble person that you should aspire to follow in their example. No, *The 40 Year-Old Virgin* was a comedy, because, in this culture, it's not a virtue to be chaste and single like Jesus. It's a joke. It's a joke, and there's lots of pressure to not be the butt of the joke, to not be the butt of the joke. So her girlfriends are asking her, "Now that you're married, is it worth it? Should we settle? We're tired of being the joke." What she says is, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it time." That time is marriage.

She's saying is, "Your desires are great for companionship, for pleasure, for connection, for covenant – those are great desires. Don't kill them, but don't allow them to lead you into sin. Channel your desires toward walking with God faithfully, one day being married, loving your spouse. Set that on your horizon as your goal, and if someone or something doesn't appropriate themselves toward that goal, then don't waste your time. Don't sin. Don't settle. Don't settle." I really am concerned for those of you who are unmarried. That you could have such an innate pressure that maybe even comes from being at a church like Mars Hill, where we're all about getting married, and we are. We love marriage. We love kids. We love families – we totally do.

Some of you may feel the pressure to get married prematurely, and rather than marrying the right person at the right time and the right way, to sort of settle or rush it so that you don't feel like the oddball. Let me just make this very clear. We do want to encourage people to act Biblically. We want to encourage people to remain pure and chaste before marriage. We want to encourage people that marriage is a good thing and that 90-plus percent of people do marry, and if you are going to marry, we want you to marry the right person at the right time, in the right way. We want you to have a good life and not be a devastating statistic.

But if you've felt any pressure through this series from me or us, that somehow you're lesser-than, or you're are second-class citizen because you are unmarried, I apologize and I would ask you to not give in to our pressure, or the culture's pressure, but to take the counsel we give to walk through the culture and to not settle or sin, to not settle or sin, all right? For some of you, that means you do need to pick up the pace, all right? I was teaching at a conference this week. This couple came up — true story. I said, "Oh, how long have you guys been together?" He says, "We've been dating for nine years." Nine years. You can't even be President for nine years. You gotta hurry up. I looked at her. I was like, "Nine years?" "Yes, he's very slow." You think? Nine years. Wow. Yeah, that guy needs a little pressure, all right? Some of you need to pick up the pace.

Some of you need to give yourself permission to not feel forced into a relationship; feel unduly pressured toward marriage; feel that pressure to settle, and that's what the friends are asking her. "Is it worth it?" And she says, "It totally is, but don't arouse or awaken love." Don't date around. Don't sleep around. Don't cohabitate. Don't get hooked up with people that you shouldn't. "Save your desires for the right person at the right time." She then reflects back on some of her most memorable moments of her life. She's thinking about their first date. Now, for those of you who are married, I want you to hold hands and think about your first date. Do you remember it? Do you remember your first date? Okay, think about it. Here's her recollection memory of the first date, and see, in a relationship, we build these memories. There are good memories and bad memories.

If you only feed the bad memories, you will sort of paint the whole relationship. It's always bad. You're always a disappointment. You never do that. It can cloud all your judgment. If you seek the evidences of God's grace and remember those times of joy, it helps then to paint a portrait of the relationship that is usually more accurate and more hopeful. Here is her recollection. "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" — their first date. He came to spend time with her, under the apple tree, which in that day was the sweetheart tree. Still kind of is, right? There is that song. I won't sing it. You're welcome – about being under the apple tree with no one but me. "Under the apple tree I awakened you." Under the apple tree, that's where they would get together and they would meet and they would talk.

Apparently, he would come to her house and they would be near this apple tree. "There, your mother was in labor with you — there, she who bore you was in labor." Apparently, this was the place of their courting. At the parents' home, there was this nice, big, beautiful apple tree. Maybe they had, you know, chairs set out, and it was a bit of a little park oasis and he would come and spend time with her there, and that's where they would visit. And they would discuss, and they would laugh, and they would snack. And there their love was awakened. It's like springtime for their heart. She remembers that place well. I'm wondering if this isn't a place that they would often go back to: sort of one of those anchor points in their life story of their romance. Do you remember your first date? I'll tell you about ours. 17 years of age.

Gracie and I went to high school together in South Seattle. 17 years of age. She was super curly. I mean, spring-like, curly blond hair. She got 'Best Hair' in high school, and then when we had kids, hormonally something changed and it's still kind of curly, but not like it was. I used to be able to grab

a curl, and then – boing! And it would just fly right up. I thought that was awesome, and I saw her in high school. We're 17 – blond hair, blue eyes – she was on the track team. I was on the baseball team, and I just thought she was so cute and looked so fun, and she was always smiling. And really kind of extraverted and sweet, and I took a Bible-as-literature class. I was not yet a Christian, and I was sitting in the Bible-as-literature class, and in front of me there was a young woman, really nice.

She's now a member of the West Seattle Campus with her husband. They're great guys and good friends. So she and I struck up a friendship, and we were talking, and she grew up across the street from and best friends with Grace. So she told me all about Grace, which was really helpful information, and she introduced me to Grace. Oh, and I totally was interested in Grace. So, I decided, after talking with her a little bit, that I would get her number and I would call her. So I called her up. We talked on the phone for maybe about an hour, and I think that's when she told me that her daddy was a pastor. I was like, "Oh, that's a complicating variable." And so, I decided I would take her out, and so I called her up and asked her, "Would you be willing to go out with me?" I think it was on a Saturday. It was March 12th, 1988. March 12th was our first date.

August 15th was our wedding. September 4th is her birthday. You men, you better memorize these kind of details, or buy a real comfy couch to sleep on. Those are your options, and so I went to pick her up, and she lived on this cul-de-sac. And because her daddy was a pastor and a preacher, I was a little nervous. I don't get very nervous, but I was pretty nervous. So I drove around the cul-de-sac a few times, sort of taking deep breaths, doing Lamaze; trying to work up the courage to pull into the driveway and take Gracie out. I had a 1956 Chevy, 60,000 total original miles, four doors. It was my first car. I bought it and started driving it when I was 15, before I had a license, and I sold it, and to this day I wish I would have kept that car. It was so wrong of me.

But anyways, I picked her up in my 1956 Chevy, and I went in and met her mom and dad, and took her out. And opened the door and took her out to our first date. So we were gonna go down town. For some reason, it was a sunny, warm day. I don't know why: the providence of God. Okay, I'm a Calvinist. God made the sun shine that day. So what we did, we went downtown and we parked, and we put pennies along the tracks of the trolley. And then we'd pick them up later in the day because they'd all be squished. I don't know if that's illegal, but that's what we did, with American currency, and then we went for a long walk along the waterfront — sunny day. Went into the little shops and little adventure; just visited, talked, played, but you know what we did? Before that, we had our first fight. We got out of the car.

Grace put her — left her purse in the car, and I had my key, and my money. We were going out for our time around Seattle, walking around, little adventure. Grace looks at me, she says, "Oh, I need to get my money out of my purse." I said – non-Christian, 17 year-old guy – "Money? I pay. It's my job to pay. We're going on a date. I asked you out. I pay." I know some of you go Dutch. Don't go Dutch. Men pay. That's the rule. So, she said, "No, no, no, no, I need to pay for my dinner. I need to pay for whatever we do. I need to pay for my half." And I'm like, "There's no way you're gonna pay for half." I mean, I really was smitten with her, and I was really interested in her, and my thought was, if this actually goes somewhere, we're not starting Dutch. We're starting me loving you.

So she came to me and tried to fight me. Now, she's petite, but she's quick. Okay? She's a – she tried to grab my key — my car key. I just had my car key. She tried to grab my car — I'm like, "No, you cannot." So we're sort of wrestling, play wrestling. I mean, it wasn't like she was dirty boxing, had me in the clinch and dropped a knee and a moi tai, you know? So — but she's trying to get my key, and it fell out, down the drain, six feet down through a manhole cover, into the public sewer system. That's where we started. At that point, you're like, "It only can get better." You know, like – and she started laughing, and I started laughing, which was a good sign, because actually this was kind of funny. And I was like, "We gotta get that key. That's my only key." I had one key to my car; brilliant, 17 year-old strategist that I was.

So then it's six feet down, can barely see it. So we went walking around, and at one restaurant we found a long piece of string and in another, we found a magnet. Next thing I know, we are doing like some goofy, redneck, carnival game, trying to get my key out of the bottom of like a six-foot drop, and you know what? I think it was made out of aluminum, because I finally got the magnet on it. Felt like I was a real man, like I was accomplishing something, and you know what? It didn't stick because it wasn't metal. It was like some aluminum thing, so it wouldn't pick up my key. My key's gone. Next thing I know, I gotta get a crowbar. I gotta take the manhole cover off the public sewer system – and there's nothing more romantic than this – jump down six feet. Get the key. There wasn't water or feces or homeless guys. It was just a hole. Got my key; got out.

And she looked at me like, "I'm sorry." I'm like, "This is funny? Someday this will be a good story." So finally I get to use it, but we then went on our date, and we hung out together. We went out for dinner that night at Red Robin downtown. You're 17. You do what you can, and I remember sitting there with her, thinking, "She's amazing." She was sweet. She was cute. She was nice. She was funny. She laughed at my jokes, sincerely – she still does. Not everyone does, and I remember, halfway through dinner with her, after we'd walked along the waterfront and spent the day together, I remember thinking, when I was sitting at dinner with her, I remember thinking to myself: "I could see myself with her for the rest of my life." And I got nervous. I don't get nervous. She remembers this moment. I asked her about it last night.

All of a sudden, just awkwardly, I got up and walked away. She says, "What are you doing?" I was like, "I'm gonna go to the potty." I was just totally awkward, because I got nervous all of a sudden and I'd never really been nervous, and I came back and she'd eaten all of her food, and she told me last night – I never knew this until last night – she said, "Well, I was nervous to eat in front of you, so I ate it all when you went to the bathroom." Just weird. Two weeks later, I was smitten with her. Oh, the rest of the date was cool, too. So then we got done – we spent the whole day together. I really enjoyed hanging out with her despite the whole key fiasco. We spent the day together, walked the beach, and then we found this little beach in another part of Seattle.

We stopped off and got ice cream bars, went to the beach and went just for a long walk on the beach, and lo and behold, there was a huge fire that someone left. And so we sat down by this pre-made fire and we visited for hours. I didn't hold her hand. I didn't snuggle her. I didn't try and get a kiss;

didn't touch her, nothing. She was just amazing, and I didn't wanna ruin anything. Took her home; opened her door. Walked her to the door – we talked about this last night – she said, “You stopped about 15 — 20 feet before the door.”

I said, “Yes, I did. Wanted to make sure you got in safe, but I didn't want to walk you to the door, because then there's that awkward moment, ‘Do I need to give him a kiss? Do I need to give him a hug?’” and I said, “I didn't want anything. So I just stood about 20 feet back. Walked you about that close to the door, and then you went inside and that was it.” Two weeks later, I told her, “I love you and I think I wanna spend the rest of my life with you,” – at 17, and we've been together now over 20 years. I still remember our first date and a lot of our other dates. You know, there's whole days of my life, there's whole years of my life – to be frank with you, there's not a whole lot I remember. I remember that day. I remember what she was wearing. I remember how she smelled.

I remember the first time that I made her laugh so hard that she snorted, and she got totally embarrassed, and I thought, “That was even cuter than the snort.” Do you remember your first date? Do you remember those amazing times when you first got to connect with your spouse? That's what she's talking about: their time under the apple tree. Now, looking forward into their future, she makes some requests of her husband, and it's perfectly fine to make these kinds of requests of your husband. Here's what she says. “Set me as a seal upon your heart.” There are seven aspects of love here that I'll share here before I bring Gracie out. The first, she says, is that love is personal. In that day the seal was your most treasured possession.

It was oftentimes a signet ring that would have your stamp and you would affix it in wax, and that's how you would do transaction of business, and so, this is like your — you know, your credit card. This is like a notary public and this like your social security number all rolled up in one with your driver's license. It's kind of everything. It's the key to your credit and your legal status and your voting and your business transacting and your land ownership and your credit. She says, “I wanna be sealed on your heart. I want your love for me to be singular and personal. I want to know that you cherish me above all, and that I am your most valued treasure.” Secondly, she says, “Set me as a seal upon your arm.” She's talking here about him being protective of her, right? I mean this is what we use, at least they did in that day, for conflict and combat and war.

She said, “I want to be imprinted upon your heart, and I want to be protected by your arm. I want you to fight for me, not with me. I want to be safe with you.” Right men? This means we're not harsh with our women. We never raise a hand or a voice in anger or in violence, and if we have, we repent with tears repeatedly and continually to earn back that trust that we've broken. This means that you are the guy who looks out for the safety of your wife. That she is safe with you. It is protective. Number 3: it is powerful. “For love is as strong as death, strong as death.” Death is irreversible. Death cannot be defeated. Death comes for us all, and what she says is, “I want to be our love — I want our love to be,” — rather — “As strong as death. You said you loved me. I want that never to change. I said I loved you. That will never change.”

Go on, “Jealousy is fierce as the grave.” Love is personal, protective, powerful, and here we see, Number 4: it is possessive. Jealousy; now there's a bad jealousy. Bad jealousy is distrust, mistrust; guilty until proven innocent. I'm always keeping an eye on you. I'm always assuming the worst of you. That's not what it's talking about. The Bible says that God is a jealous God. What that means is: he loves us and he doesn't want us to betray him, and he wants our relationship with him to be secure. In that way, I'm a jealous husband. I love my wife, adore my wife, am whole-heartedly devoted to my wife, but, you know what? I don't want her to have a relationship with anyone that is like our relationship. I talked to a guy not long ago. Not a smart guy. His accountability partner – he's married – is a woman who's married to another man.

They get together for coffee once a week to confess their deep dark sins and pray for one another, really? Do you juggle knives as a hobby, as well? I mean, that is suicide. If I wanna talk about my sin; if I want somebody to pray for me; if I want somebody to know me and walk with me, that's my wife. Jealousy; I'm not going to build that kind of emotional intimacy with another woman. Doesn't mean I can't have women friends. Gracie and I have couple friends. There's people that I know and love that are great gals and there's guys that she knows and loves that are great guys, but, yeah, if she said, “Well, could you watch the kids today, Hank's taking me out to dinner?” What? Hank can't make it. He's dead. You know, like? He's dead. “I'll take you out, but I gotta run an errand first. I'll be back in a minute.”

“Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.” Five: it's passionate. That this love that God gives comes from God; that God is love. Romans says that “God pours out his love into our hearts, because of Jesus, through God the Holy Spirit.” That's why the Bible can command us. In Ephesians 5, “Husbands love your wives.” Titus 2, “Wives love your husbands.” If it was just a feeling, if it was just an affection, an infatuation, you couldn't command it, but if it is a gift of God to be shared with your spouse, it can be commanded. You say, “Well, I don't feel loving.” Well, go to God. He'll give you love to share. Love comes from God through the Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit to love the spouse. It's passionate. It's like a fire.

Like a flame to be kindled with dating and romance and courtship and forgiveness and prayer; to be ignited and to be kept aflame, and she says that this passion comes from God, and I will guarantee you this. The devotion, the attraction that compels me toward my wife is supernatural. I'm not saying I'm the greatest guy in the world and I've never doffed it, but I am drawn to; I am compelled by; I am attracted to; I am interested in; I am infatuated with my wife in a way that I have never been with anyone else. That's from God, because we've had our fights. We've had our rough patches. We've had our moments of great trial and difficulty, but that love that compels me toward her, that is love from God. That is love from God, and I thank him for that. Number 6: it perseveres. “Many waters cannot quench love. Neither can floods drown it out.”

See, if love is like a fire, what he's saying is, even a flood as big as Noah can't put that fire out. How much hardship, grief, difficulty, conflict, sin, strife? All of that is water that's just continually cascading upon the flames of the relationship. What she is saying is this. “That flame won't go out because God won't let it.” This is perseverance. One of the most important things you need to remember about marriage is that it requires perseverance. “Perseverance”, “endurance”, “overcoming”: Those words, in the Bible, are huge theological concepts; very, very, very important. You may have heard of Calvinism. The fifth point of Calvinism is perseverance of the Saints. That true Christians keep going. It doesn't mean we're not sad. It doesn't mean

we're not limping. It doesn't mean we're not bleeding. It doesn't mean we're not discouraged.

It doesn't mean we're not crying. It just means we keep moving. We don't give up, and that is particularly true for marriage. You don't give up. Most marriages that end in divorce do so by year seven. If you're newly married, plant a flag at year seven and just keep going. Statistically, the average couple is selfish until years 9 through 14. Somewhere in there it goes from "me" to "we". If you're struggling, keep going. Some say, "Well, I'm gonna give up, marry somebody else." Then all you do is just erase all those years, start over with the worst years again. It's like saying, "I don't like junior high, so I'm going to start junior high over." It's not gonna be any better. It's still junior high. Get through it, all right? There are certain seasons of life that are hard. You get sick. Get through it. You have a baby. You get through it.

Tragedy, crisis come, you get through it. You find out your spouse was abused. You get through it. You persevere. You love one another. You get through it, and you go to God to make sure that the flame is never, never overcome by the trial and that the water does not quench it. She closes with this. "Love is priceless." It's personal, protective, powerful, possessive, passionate. It perseveres and is priceless. "If a man could offer love — if a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised." What she says is this. "You can pay for sex. You can't pay for love. Sex is something you can take. Love has to be given." I was reading this verse on the television, in Dallas this week, came in advertisement. There was a huge feature story with it as well about older men who are very rich.

The ad and the ensuing news coverage just called them "sugar daddies" who now have their own website to find younger women who are willing to be companions and do various kinds of sexual favors for rich old men. It's prostitution, and the gals got on and said, "Well, you know, hey, I get a lot of money; buys me a nice car. I get nice jewelry and you know, even if he's three, four times my age, it pays really well." You can pay for a lot of things, but you know what? That site did not guarantee love, because love is never bought. It's freely given. Not because it's cheap, but because it's priceless. The one thing you can't buy is love. It's a gift. In Christianity, we call it grace; amazingly enough, it's my wife's name. I'm reminded of this all the time, and this is all reflective of God's love. Do you know that God's love is personal? God's love is personal.

Do you know that God knows your name and that God loves you? Do you know that God's love is protective? He'll never leave you if you belong to Jesus. He'll never forsake you. He will defend you from Satan and sin and death and hell. God's love is powerful. Actually forgives sin; redeems us from an old way of life to a new way of life. God's love is possessive. Once you are Christian, you cannot lose your salvation because God will not lose you. It is passionate. God pursues his people with great passion. God perseveres with us. He hangs in there. He doesn't give up and he doesn't give in, and, ultimately, God's love is priceless. Our salvation was secured through the death, burial, resurrection of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gives us the love of God freely. Not because it is cheap, but because it is priceless.

And the price of our salvation is God dying in our place for our sins and rising from death for our salvation. All of these principles of love are all echoing the ultimate love of God for his people. Gracie and I want good for you. For those of you will marry, or are married, we want that flame to just continually burn brightly and our effort in this series is to just keep throwing logs on that fire; so I'll bring her out and see if she's got a little bit of time for some questions. Hi, sweetie pie. How are you doing? You're all dressed up and I look homeless. That's not good. Maybe the guys in the booth could give us the first question? We'll get to work. Ballard: "My husband provides for our family. I like my job and work fulltime while our child is in daycare. Is this sin?" Well, that's a nice way to start the day.

Grace Driscoll: I would say that, in Titus 2, we're given very clear description, as women, to love our husbands and children, to be self-controlled. Peter: "Working at home, kind and submissive to our husbands that the word of God may not be reviled." I would say, if you're not busy at home, but you're busy away from home, then that fits under the category of where your heart is being sinful. There's a lot of responsibility at home as a wife and a mom, and if you're okay with dropping your child off for someone else to raise, and then you get a few hours when you're preparing dinner and putting them to bed, we're instructed to train our children and discipline them and bring them up in the love of the Lord. All throughout Proverbs there's tons of Scripture on that, and I don't know how you can do that if someone else is doing that for you.

Grace Driscoll: So I would say, ask the Lord if your job is maybe an idol in your life. Talk to your husband and ask him if he truly agrees with you working outside the home, or if he just hasn't spoken up about it to you, but, yeah. I would definitely check your heart about all this because I know, even when I was in the corporate world, before we had children, the moms that were working that had young children at home, they would talk about their kids all day because they wanted to be with them, and that would be the natural desire of the heart for a mom, to wanna be with her children. So if there's an issue there where you don't wanna spend that time with your child, you need to check your heart in that and ask the Lord to show you where your sin is.

Mark Driscoll: Sometime, too, the thought is, well, if we get two incomes, we'll do better. There's was study on MSNBC that I've kept on my laptop over the last few years, and it showed that if you both go to work and put your kid in daycare; the cost of daycare, a second car, wardrobe, eating out, cell phone, dry cleaning, additional expenses, as well as increased tax bracket — they did a survey on this, as well. I think it was on 60 Minutes or 20/20 — they did a feature a few years ago, that, actually, unless a woman is brining in, I think the statistic, a couple of years ago, was at least 60-plus thousand dollars a year, the family actually has zero net gain for their bottom-line income, because of all the additional expenses and the tax ramifications.

So, part of it is, if you're looking at it from a fiscal standpoint, you're not just looking at your gross income, but looking actually at your bottom-line cost-of-living and tax-bracketing. The other thing I would say is — and this will seem strong — build your family system based upon your Biblical conviction, and if you read your Bible, you won't see any way to have daycare for a functional home where dad's, you know, gainfully employed and there's no injury, trauma or extenuating circumstances. Some will go to Proverbs 31 and say, "Oh, well she bought and sold real estate." She did when her kids were grown. That doesn't require a fulltime job. She's actually investing the family's financial resources. Is it a sin for a wife to work? No. Is it a sin for a wife to go to college? No. Gracie's got a degree. She worked for a PR company before we had kids.

When the kids are grown, you know, school or whatever, is it a sin to work part-time? No. Is it a sin to work when the kids are out of the house? No. Is it a sin to work — do something part-time from home? No, but what we would really encourage you, is to think through: he goes to work 40, 50, 60 hours a week. She goes to work 40, 50, 60 hours a week: Somebody else raises the kids. Somebody else raises the kids. We would not encourage that. Next one, Olympia: “What do you say to a teen that is not ready spiritually, emotionally or financially for marriage, but wants a serious relationship?” Same thing I’d say to a blind guy who wants to fly a plane: probably not a good idea. Next question, Sean.

Grace Driscoll: You’re not going to answer it?

Well, I just did answer it. “When talking to teens, how can I explain the consequences of fornication are not immediate but can hurt their future marriage?” That’s a good question.

Grace Driscoll: Sometimes the consequences are immediate. You can get pregnant. You can get —

A disease.

Grace Driscoll: ~~—s disease—~~

Mark Driscoll: And statistically, I’ll say this, too. For women, for young women that are sexually active before marriage – again, for this series I hired a professor — PhD at the University of Virginia in Sociology and Women’s Studies — and I said, “Pull up all the non-Christian statistics on pre-marital sex and depression and suicide and drug use and abuse, and alcohol use and abuse.” Teenaged girls who are sexually active: grades are lower; college entrance, lower; depression, lower; rates of suicidal attempt, lower; drug abuse, alcohol abuse; lower. I mean just statistically I just proved that even for — especially for teenaged girls, it’s long-term damage. It’s also short-term damage.

Grace Driscoll: — and the Scriptures that you talk about, “Do not awaken love before its time.” Also, some of the things we’ve done as we prepare our children – they’re not in their teens yet, but they’re approaching those years – is sharing parts of our story and the damage that was done by us being involved before marriage, and just sharing part of your story and the devastation of sin that — and the choices that you make. They can see how real it is and that you’re willing to talk through that stuff. They feel like they can talk through it with you. They see you’re not perfect but that God can heal things. That’s been an important part for us.

Mark Driscoll: Yeah, and for us, if — see, Grace and I, we were active before marriage — sexually active before marriage — which was a sin. I got saved. We stopped and then we got married and then had a marriage relationship, but it didn’t start at, sort of, zero. It started negative, because — just because — if you’re doing something all the time, and it’s sinful, and your conscience is convicted and you know it’s wrong, just because you get married and it’s right, doesn’t mean you all of a sudden feel great about it, because you’ve habituated yourself to feel bad about doing something.

So the thing I’ve told Gracie repeatedly is: what we did was not wrong, but when we did it was wrong, and that was very confusing, then, when we got married, because we would do things that Biblically we were free to, but we would feel guilty about it because that was how we had habituated ourselves. So how many years of our relationship, early on in the marriage – how many years of the marriage, I should say – do you think that negatively affected our freedom and oneness in that area? How long did it take to sort of fix that groove we’d gotten into sinfully?

Grace Driscoll: Probably about 10 years.

I’d say 10 years is about right. It’s 10 years that we were married and we loved each other, but we can’t get back. That we were doing things wrong; got married, and I would agree. It took about 10 years to start making healthy progress, and I regret that. I’m sorry for that. That was my sin. You know, when you’re single, you’re selfish, and you don’t think long-term, and you don’t think about God and spouse. And then when you’re married, you reflect back. You regret, tremendously, damage you’ve done and work that has had to be done to correct the damage that was done, so.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, I think building a trust in God and his Word, too, because we can go all the way back to Genesis and 00 where it talks about “Leaving and cleaving and becoming one flesh,” – that’s the order God intended, and as we explain that to our children, if they already are trusting the Lord and the Word, then they’re gonna wanna trust those Words that he asked, and that order. That there’s an intention that God had for that, and that’s the safe place for that sexual relationship to happen. So I think it’s kind of a combination of training of our children so they can see the full picture of why that’s necessary.

Cool. You guys have one more, or are we out of time? Bellevue: “Is it ok to get a HPV — human papillomavirus — public school STD-prevention shot?” You’re the naturopathy, health-conscious gal.

Grace Driscoll: This is a vaccination against a herpes that can cause cancer. There’s a lot of debate around it because people can get it and then freely have sex and not worry about getting the STD. So it’s kind of a tricky question, because obviously there can be some benefits of getting that to prevent cancer, if you believe that it does that. There can be some benefits, you know, of prevention in case hurtful things happen to you that you did not intend to do, whether it’s rape or things like that, but it’s a motive of the heart. Are you doing it so you can freely sleep around and not have to worry about getting a disease, or are you doing it honestly before the Lord, prayerfully, knowing that it’s to protect yourself health-wise for future? So it’s really not one way or another. It’s your heart, and why you want to do that.

Mark Driscoll: Good answer. I’ll pick up the teenaged kid’s question that I made fun of because the Holy Spirit finally kicked in a few minutes later. If you’re young, like teenaged person, who really does wanna be married, wants to be intimate, wants to have those adult pleasures, and graces, then

you've got to mature to the level of that you're ready for them. Like I always tell the guys, "Marriage is for men. It's not for boys, and boys who get married, they do man-sized damage." And so if you're a guy, it's an issue of, you know, doing well in school; figuring out your career; moving out of your parents' house; worshipping God; taking responsibility for yourself; and when you've demonstrated you're at that level, then it's pursuing a good woman in a good way for a good motive.

And if you're a woman, it is allowing those desires to cause you to walk faithfully with God. To look forward to the day of being married, but not to — in haste — get yourself into a relationship that is unhealthy, and sometimes women who are overly obsessed with dating and marriage and babies, they can conveniently overlook some glaring flaws in a guy, and just sort of naively paint him as prince charming. And then that is with devastating consequences in their future, for them and for their kids, and so those desires may be good, but you don't wanna act on them prematurely. You want to use those as incentive to mature and get ready, so that one day you can be married as God intends. I think that's it. We'll leave it for Campus Pastors. Maybe you could close our time in — Sweetie — in prayer?

Grace Driscoll: Thank you, Lord, thank you for your guidance. I pray that we would trust your Word and trust the way you have set up things in order so that we can live freely and sacrificially and serve each other. I just pray that you would impress these things on our heart in Jesus' name, Amen.

Mark Driscoll: Amen, thank you, baby. Thanks, guys.