



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Text 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

1 Corinthians

“On Getting Married”

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark. One of the things that we do at Believer’s Chapel is preach through books of the Bible. Occasionally we take topical studies, but generally we preach through books of the Bible, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. And so in our study now, which is in 1 Corinthians, we come to chapter 7. Which brings us to a new topic in the book, and that’s the subject of marriage, and we’re going to look at 7:1-7.

“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word and our time of study together.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for this opportunity we have to gather as your people on this Lord’s Day. You instruct us to do that, and we know that was the practice of the early church from the very early days, to meet on the first day of the week, the day that honors the resurrection, and fellowship together, fellowship around your Word.

And so, Lord, we pray that as we do that this morning, you’d bless us; that you would build us up in the faith; that you would teach us your truth. That you would take a text, this text, give us understanding of it, help us to see how it applies to us specifically, according to the subject that Paul takes up, but also broadly how it applies to us. One principle of a broad nature that we can see from this is the principle of love.

And how we are to treat one another with love and respect, generally, we’re to do that; generally with all men, most especially with your church, with fellow believers, and even more especially, with our spouses. Father, may we come away with that desire to be loving and helpful toward one another. Build us up in the faith. Teach us your Word.

This is a critical moment in the week for all of us, because we join together in studying the Word of God, and that affects our life. That affects our spiritual condition, our way of thinking. And so, Lord, shape our thinking for the day, for the week. May this have an influence on us for our lives, because it is through your Word that we’re sanctified.

So we have the great privilege – and it is a great privilege – to be able to gather together, to sing hymns together, to pray together as we’re doing, to come to the throne of grace and seek your help in time of need, and to study the Word. But our study will be of no benefit if you are not in it, if the Spirit of God is not directing our thoughts, if he is not illuminating our minds, if he’s not giving us an understanding.

And so that’s what we pray for – teach us. Build us up in the faith. We have other things to pray for as well, Lord; the material concerns of life. They are real concerns. They are important concerns. Our daily bread – that sums up a great deal.

That's the material things of life, and you've instructed us to seek your help for those things.

We're really dependent upon you every day for everything that we have, every material possession that we have. And so we thank you for the provision you've made for us all of our lives. We thank you for the provision you will make that we pray for. We ask, Lord, give us what we need. And we pray for those that are in special need of your mercy. For those who are sick – we pray for them.

We pray that you would give healing in the midst of their difficulty. We pray that you give them encouragement. We pray that you would encourage them with the great promises that we have. In fact, I pray that for everyone who is in difficulty, that whether it's a difficulty of a physical nature regarding their health, or the lack of employment, or just the stress of work, or stress in the home.

Encourage them with the promises that you've given us. We suffer briefly in this life. These trials are passing trials, and soon all of this will be over, and we will be with you for all eternity, where every tear is wiped away. Where there's no trial, no difficulty; nothing but joy unspeakable, unlimited, so Father, may that be an encouragement to be steadfast in the midst of affliction.

Encourage your people. Remove difficulties, where that's your will, and provide employment, and certainly, Father, give us reassurance of our situation. We have every reason to be confident in the midst of difficulty, because you're faithful, and we give you praise and thanks for that. We pray for those who are away. Some are traveling; this is a time of vacations. We pray that you'd give those who are traveling safe travel.

Bring them home safely, and may they have good rest and refreshment. And we pray that for ourselves, for our souls in this hour. Refresh us through the ministries, through the singing of hymns, and through the time of study together. We commit it all to you. Pour your blessings upon us now, in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject this morning is marriage, an institution that an old divine once described as both honorable and onerable – which is an old way of saying burdensome. And that's true. In fact, many people today would say it is mainly onerable. Matrimony is a repressive tool of civilization; it is suffocating, it is old-fashioned and irrelevant. Those aren't my descriptions. They come out of a recent book about marriage.

It’s a secular book, titled *Committed*, and it’s subtitled “A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage.” A lot of people have a hard time doing that – making peace with marriage – even people in the church. That was a problem in Corinth, and one that Paul deals with here in chapter 7. Chapter 7 begins the second half of 1 Corinthians, and a new section of the book, in which Paul answers a variety of questions that the Corinthians had.

They had written him a letter, asking him about a wide range of topics. The issues that they raised are marked off by Paul; they’re identified by Paul with a phrase, “now concerning.” “Now concerning the things about which you wrote,” he says in verse 1, and then he gives an answer, and we see that all through the book. For example, we see it in chapter 8 that begins, “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols.”

Chapter 7 begins, “Now concerning spiritual gifts.” Some men came to the apostle Paul when he was in Ephesus, and they brought him a letter from the Corinthians. They also brought him news about the condition of the church, and so you remember from chapter 5, he writes, “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you.” So evidently these men not only came with a letter, but with other information of their own, talking about the condition of the church.

And he has been answering that, and now he turns his attention to this letter that they had written with their various questions, the different subjects. And the first question that he deals with, the first subject he takes up is that of marriage. In fact, all of chapter 7 is about that subject, and the first concern the Corinthians had was should we marry? Now, the reasons for their hesitation were different from those of modern skeptics.

But Paul’s answer applies to us today as much as it did to the Corinthians so long ago. What he says is marriage is good. Marriage should be observed. And marriage should be enjoyed. Now, this comes, appropriately, after correcting the problem of immorality in the church. Really, from chapter 5 through chapter 6 immorality has occupied Paul’s attention. There were people in the church who advocated free love, and there were people who advocated total abstinence.

Paul has dealt with that first group. Now he deals with the second. There has always been an influence of asceticism in the church; the idea that severe self-denial is spiritual, and that’s a pagan notion. It is not Christian. But it was in Corinth – people who believed that sex was bad and people shouldn’t marry. The spiritual avoided physical pleasure and practiced celibacy. That was being taught.

So Paul now shifts from the subject of sexual irregularities in the church to that of marriage in the church. Is it good for two people to get married? And Paul, who opposed asceticism, surprises us with his answer. He writes, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” Now, the New International Version, some of you may be reading that, translates this, “It is good for a man not to marry,” and I think that is the right idea.

There’s some division of opinion about that, and what exactly Paul means, but I think that fits the context. So what he’s saying here is it is good for a man not to marry, and I say that’s surprising because that seems to oppose what we read elsewhere in the Bible. In Genesis 2:18, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Is Paul contradicting that?

Well, a common explanation for this – because there does seem to be a tension between what Paul says and what Moses writes, and what God said – a common explanation is to interpret this statement, it is good for a man not to touch a woman, or it is good for a man not to marry, as a quote from that Corinthian letter. In other words, it’s not Paul’s statement. Paul is simply repeating the statement that was being made by this group back in Corinth.

And so he is responding to that, he’s not giving his own statement. Now, that’s a very common explanation in the commentaries, and yet it’s speculation. Paul doesn’t identify this as their statement, and he doesn’t indicate any disapproval of the statement. So in my view – and I’m giving you my view on this – we should take this at face value. We should take it as Paul’s teaching.

But we shouldn’t understand that by accepting celibacy, Paul was rejecting marriage. It’s obvious that he wasn’t, and it’s obvious for a number of reasons. In the next verse he advocates marriage. He tells people to get married. In 1 Timothy 4:3, he denounces those who forbid marriage, and he calls their teaching “doctrines of demons.” The whole notion of asceticism is wrong. It is ingratitude, and it is a denial of God’s grace.

We are to enjoy the good things that God has given us, whether it is food, or sex, or whatever. They are not bad; they are good, when enjoyed in the proper way and in their proper place, within the proper context. Now, that’s what Paul teaches elsewhere. He teaches that in 1 Timothy 4:4. He says, “Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude.”

If it’s received with gratitude – if it’s practiced, and used, and enjoyed in its proper context and its right way. And that’s what he teaches here in the next verses. What he is

saying here in verse 1 is that there are great advantages to the single life for the life of service to the Lord. For that reason, it’s good to be single. Paul doesn’t mean it’s morally better to be single. He doesn’t mean that in any way. He doesn’t mean it’s spiritually better to be single.

But it is expedient; that is, it is good in a pragmatic sense. It is advantageous if one is seeking to serve the Lord. A married person has responsibilities to his wife that restrict his ministry. His interests are divided between the Lord and his family, and all of that properly so. And Paul will speak about that later, in verse 33. So it is good for a man not to marry for that reason. But that is the exception, not the rule.

And Paul indicates that in verse 7, when he says that it is possible only for those that are so gifted, and most people aren’t so gifted. They don’t have that ability, that spiritual ability to remain single. The norm is marriage, and that is the good life. In fact, it is necessary for a complete life. God said that in Genesis 2:18, and Paul teaches that later, in 11:11. A man needs a wife; a woman needs a husband. That is the norm, and that is necessary.

Marriage is the way to personal fulfillment, and it is an important safeguard against sin. That’s the specific reason that Paul gives for marriage in the next verse, in verse 2. Under certain circumstances, it’s good not to marry. “But”, he tells them, “because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman to have her own husband.” Men and women naturally have sexual desires.

I’m not telling you anything you don’t know. It’s the way we were made. It is normal. But in Corinth, that was like lit matches near gasoline. It was a city full of temptation, with lots of prostitutes and a low standard of morality. Many of the Corinthians were saved out of a very immoral life. Many of them carried that baggage with them into the new life. They’re new creatures in Christ.

Every one of us who is born again is a new creature in Christ, but we still have sin in our members, as Paul said in chapter 7 of the book of Romans. We still struggle. And some of those old practices become difficulties for us that we have to deal with every day, and that was the case with these people in Corinth. They were saved out of an immoral life, and the temptations were all around them to continue in that life, and the temptations were very strong.

So Paul encouraged marriage as the solution. The first solution he gave, in chapter 6, was flee immorality. It’s as basic as that; just flee it. Have nothing to do with it. Flee

temptation. Don’t let yourself be near temptation. That’s important. That’s necessary. But the best solution is not negative, it’s positive, and the positive solution to immorality is marriage.

Now, protection, purity is not the only reason for marriage, and it’s not the highest motivation for marriage. Paul is dealing with a specific question and a specific problem. Calvin commented on that. He wrote that “What is at question here is not the reasons for which marriage has been instituted, but the persons for whom it is necessary.” Paul is not dealing with marriage in principle, but a particular issue.

He’s not dealing with things generally; he’s dealing with things very specifically. He’s dealing with particular people. So this is one reason to get married, and those who are made for marriage will know it by their desires. They’ll want to be married; they’ll need to get married. But it’s not the only reason for marriage, and it’s not the highest reason. The greatest motivation for marriage is to be a witness for Christ to the world.

And Paul teaches that in Ephesians chapter 5, where he explains that marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Those who think that the apostle Paul had a prejudice against marriage don’t understand the apostle Paul; haven’t read everything, at least haven’t read it carefully. One turns to Ephesians chapter 5, and we see the greatest explanation of marriage that’s given in the Bible; the highest explanation.

It is a witness. It is a picture given by the church to the world of the relationship between Christ and his people. So a proper Christian marriage is one of the greatest witnesses to the world – maybe the greatest witness by example that the church can give to the world. Marriage is the norm, and a good marriage is a good witness. The reformers understood that. One of the first things that happened in Europe where the Reformation took hold is that the nunneries were emptied and the priests got married.

Martin Luther married Katie von Bora, who was a runaway nun, and if you read about their marriage, you realize it was almost pragmatic. It wasn’t based on romance at all. I don’t think it was based on any kind of physical attraction. But they got married because they knew that it was necessary; it was the right thing to do. And that marriage relationship grew into something very significant. They truly loved one another; had a wonderful family.

And it was a wonderful example. In fact, Luther’s favorite epistle in the New Testament was the book of Galatians, and he called that book his “Katie von Bora.” Well, they had a very good marriage. Not only they, but the other reformers; Zwingli in Zurich

got married, Calvin in Geneva was married. All of the reformers were married. They understood that the practice of a celibate priesthood is not Biblical, and it’s dangerous.

Paul’s counsel here is very practical. “Each man is to have his own wife, and each woman to have her own husband, to promote purity.” That’s Paul’s point. But this text also has implications about the very nature of marriage, or the structure of marriage. It is one man and one woman. It excludes polygamy, and it certainly rules out same-sex marriage. I don’t think that idea even came into the mind of the apostles, or anyone, for that matter, until very recently.

According to the Bible, marriage is monogamous. It is heterosexual. It is between one man and one woman. That I would even say that is surprising to me – that obviously should go without saying. But we live in an age when there is confusion even there. Even in this most fundamental of relationships, that between a man and a woman, there’s confusion.

And there’s confusion because when men reject the authority of the Bible – and we have lived in a society for some generations now where the Bible has been rejected as our authority, in which there’s really no moral authority anywhere. It’s every man doing what’s right in his own eyes. But when we do that – when we reject the authority of the Word of God – we’re cast adrift, so no wonder there’s confusion.

There’ll always be confusion in that condition. A man and a woman are to marry, and in marriage, both are to have a concern for one another. There are duties within marriage that must be observed. That’s what Paul says in verse 3. “The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.” What he means by duty is conjugal rights; the rights of the marriage bed. They are not to deny each other.

Now, that’s good advice, but it’s not clear why he gave that advice. It may be that the celibate party in Corinth, the party that promoted asceticism, were calling for a suspension of physical relations in marriage. They were telling people not to get married – that’s the reason for the question here in this letter – and telling those who were married to live as though they weren’t married; to have something like a spiritual marriage, not a physical one.

We have something of this in our own American history. The Shakers had a doctrine like that, of total abstinence. We know the Shakers from their furniture. They were excellent craftsmen. But they considered sex to be the cardinal sin, so they didn’t

procreate, and obviously, the natural consequence was they died out. Well, it's really the heretics, the unorthodox, and the pagans that denied the virtue of sex.

That's not Christian. That's not Jewish. That's not Biblical. Sex was created to be between a man and a woman, in marriage, and for pleasure as well as for procreation. And there should be no guilt or reservation about sex in marriage. Paul advocates it here. He does that not by simply encouraging an active sex life between a husband and a wife, but by commanding it.

He's not just saying, “This is a good idea.” He says, “This is something that is a duty of yours.” In fact, in verse 5, the word that Paul uses for depriving one another is a word that means defrauding. In other words, you're cheating the other person – it's that serious. Now, I'm sure some of you think this is a rather delicate subject for a sermon. I think it's a delicate subject for a sermon. But here it is.

As I said at the beginning, at Believer’s Chapel, we preach through books of the Bible, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and this is what Paul gave me this week. And he gave it to me because the Spirit of God gave it to him. This is what the Spirit of God wants us to consider, and I can only conclude that's because this is an essential subject for all of us. Marriage is not for one purpose.

Paul emphasizes purity here, but that's not the only, or really the main reason for marriage. Marriage is first of all for the purpose of procreating the race. “Be fruitful and multiply” – that's what God said in Genesis 1:28. That's the command that he gave to the couple. “Be fruitful and multiply, and subdue the earth.” That is the basic purpose of marriage, and that's the basis of the family, which is the foundation of society.

It is by producing children and caring for them, nurturing them, raising them in the grace and the admonition of the Lord, that society is built. A well-ordered society is dependent on a well-ordered family. But for that to occur – for the family to be well-ordered – the family must stay intact. The breakup of the family has had a destructive effect upon modern life, upon the social fabric of this nation of ours.

So marriage is not only about procreation; it is about partnership. Intimacy is God's ordained means of strengthening that partnership, making that partnership companionship. It's essential for a healthy marriage, and both the husband and wife have equal obligations in this. And Paul adds that in verse 4. “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”

There is equality in the marriage bed. Marriage is not one-sided. Women are not chattel. They, too, have a say in things. Now, that may not seem consistent with Ephesians 5, where Paul talks about marriage, and there in verses 22 and 23, he says, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands,” and then states that the husband is the head of the wife. So this may seem inconsistent with that, but it’s not. They are consistent.

The Bible teaches both male headship and the essential equality and dignity of the sexes. The best illustration of that is the trinity itself. You wonder how theology is practical, well, here’s an example of it. In chapter 11:3, we’ll come to this subject of the trinity, but there Paul says, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”

The Father and the Son are equal in essence. They are one. But the Son has put himself under the authority of the Father in the present time, during his mediatorial kingship, his mediatorial reign. He has put himself under the authority of the Father. That’s the trinity. There is one God, who exists or subsists in three persons. Each person of the Godhead is equal with the other in essence, in power, in glory, but they have different functions.

And in regard to Christ, without the two – that is without equality and submission – there would be no salvation. We needed a Savior who is God, so that we would have a sacrifice that is of infinite value. Every sin is of infinite weight in its guilt, and it would take an infinite sacrifice to remove just one sin, and certainly an unlimited number of sins. That could only be done by God. Only he is sufficient to do that.

So we needed a Savior who would be of infinite value and power, but also one who is man, so that we can have a substitute for mankind. Only men can substitute for men. Only a human can be a substitute for humans. And so we needed that combination of God and man to bring about salvation. But to act as our substitute, which he is, this is the theanthropic person, bringing those two natures together in one person.

In order for him to do that, to carry that out, to carry that essential work out for our salvation, he had to be submissive. And Christ was that; he put himself under the Father’s authority, while remaining equal with the Father and the Spirit. Well, in marriage, the husband and the wife have different functions. The husband is the head of the wife; he is the final authority, but the two are equal in person.

And Paul is saying here that they are equal in the marriage bed. They don’t have equal authority everywhere, but they do there. Each has an equal claim on the other. And

Paul is also stating emphatically that physical love is an indispensable part of marriage. It's not unclean. It's not unseemly. It's not an option. Paul and the Bible know nothing of a so-called spiritual marriage. Marriage is physical, and marriage is intimate.

So in verse 5, Paul says, “Stop depriving one another.” That may seem spiritual to do that, that may seem otherworldly to do that, but it's not. It's a violation of God's design for marriage. You're depriving yourself of an important aspect of marriage that brings you together and makes you close companions. I think we have a good example of the right attitude toward marriage from a very unexpected source, and that is from the Puritans.

There's probably no group in history that has been more misunderstood and maligned than the Puritans. H.L. Mencken was one of the leading journalists of the first half of the 20th century, and he was a skeptic, a religious skeptic. He hated Christianity. He hated just about everything, I think, but he particularly hated Christianity, and didn't like the Puritans. And he called Puritanism “the haunting fear that someone somewhere may be happy.”

It's a humorous statement, but it's completely wrong. It's the popular idea of Puritans and Calvinists, but it's far from the truth. They followed the Bible, and they enjoyed life. And they took Paul's instruction here very seriously. For example, the First Church of Boston – and this would go back to the 17th century – was a Puritan church, a Calvinistic church.

The First Church of Boston expelled a member named James Mattock on the charge that he denied what they called “conjugal fellowship” to his wife for two years. Now, they had severe laws for sex outside of marriage, but within marriage, they not only encouraged it, they enforced it. According to Yale historian Edmund Morgan, the Puritans had just one limitation on sexual relations in marriage.

The only thing that could interfere with it was worship – he actually said, “Religion,” but what he meant, what I would interpret that to mean from their perspective, was worship. He wrote, “Man's chief end was to glorify God, and all earthly delights must promote that end, not hinder it. Love for a wife was carried too far when it led a man to neglect his God.” But that was the only restriction, and following Paul's instruction here, they encouraged a proper physical relationship within marriage.

They followed Paul's instruction, and he says here there is a time for abstinence. It's when both agree to devote themselves to prayer. But he says, “It's only for a time.” In other words, this is not to be an indefinite arrangement. It was to be for a prescribed period of

time, maybe a week, for example, and there must be a mutual understanding about it. But the reason for doing that, the reason for taking this time of abstinence, was for the reason of some spiritual burden, which is undefined and unexplained, but it would be an issue that requires urgent prayer.

It is a spiritually urgent issue. It could be an issue in the church that requires a great deal of prayer. It could be an issue of health; maybe it’s sickness. It may have something to do with personal failure and repentance. There could be a variety of reasons for that. Even so, that is not the norm. It is unusual, and it does have this warning, this caveat. Paul says, “Come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

It’s worth noting that temptations are often strongest after some spiritual experience or triumph, because it’s often in that situation when we become over-confident, or we become unguarded. And a person can come out of an experience like this, where they set time aside for prayer, for fasting, for soul-searching, and refreshed, and they feel triumphant about what they’ve done, and they’re unguarded.

And that’s a possibility, but Paul also gives this warning here, because people are always vulnerable to temptation. There’s never a time when we’re not. Listen: there is never an excuse for falling into sin. There’s never an excuse for falling into sin, but there are reasons for it. They don’t excuse it, but there are reasons, and one reason is the weakness of the flesh, or the strength of the flesh, is probably a better way to put it, and the weakness of our spirits.

Paul recognized that. Paul understood the human condition. He understood human nature. And the way to deal with it is not to deny it, but to face it, and to give no opportunity to the flesh. So relations are to be resumed. Then Paul adds in verse 6, “This I say by way of concession, not command.” In other words, he was allowing, but not commanding, the suspension of intimacy.

If both the husband and the wife wished to practice abstinence for a short time in order to give themselves to prayer, that was permitted, but not commanded. Paul recognized the importance of intimacy in marriage. It is God’s means of strengthening the relationship. If we’re going to have marriages that stay together, and strengthen society, this is the means of doing it; one of the means.

Not the only means, but an important means, a God-given means of strengthening that relationship. And so Paul is very cautious about interrupting it, even with a matter of prayer. But his own preference was that people be as he was. “Yet I wish that all men were

even as I myself am.” And this takes us back to the beginning, back to verse 1, should a person marry? Well, Paul was single, and he’s saying, “I wish that all men were as I myself am.”

Now, he was single certainly at the time he wrote this letter to the Corinthians, but that doesn’t mean he was never married. Some, in fact, think it most likely that Paul, earlier in his life, was married. Jewish men were expected to marry. Rabbis especially were expected to get married.

And if Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, which is suggested in Acts 26:10, because he explains that he went out to Damascus to arrest Christians under the authority of the chief priest. He was their arm. He went out in their authority, which suggests that he was one of their members. If that were the case, then he would’ve been required to be married. If so, then he was either a widower, or as some have speculated, his wife may have left him when he became a Christian.

Either way, he is a single man when he wrote this letter. He recognized the advantages of that for the ministry. He recognizes the advantages of marriage, the importance of it, but he recognizes that there are special advantages of the single life to the ministry. But again, he didn’t impose it on others. He said that each man should live according to the gift that God has given to him, or to her.

“However, each man has his own gift from God.” That is, he may have the gift of celibacy, or he may not. He may have the gift to be single, or not. That’s going to determine whether one lives a single life. Celibacy is not a morally or spiritually superior state. Few are gifted to be single, and it’s foolish to try and live a single life when a person isn’t gifted for it, and Paul certainly wouldn’t be encouraging that.

Not after everything that he said about a reason for getting married. Most people are made for marriage, and that is where they will find their greatest fulfillment and completeness. Marriage was instituted by God. Whenever I do a wedding ceremony, I make that statement. Marriage was instituted by God. And while, as that old divine said, marriage is both honorable and onerable, it is the norm; and even though it is onerable at times, it is the good life.

People today are very interested in the good life. They pursue the good life in lots of ways – in sex, in food, in entertainment, in relationships, and probably don’t find all that stuff completely fulfilling. Marriage offers us the opportunity to be truly fulfilled; to build a

family, and to love another person, and help that person live well and serve God. Marriage is a sanctifying institution.

It's iron sharpening iron. It's one person bringing out the best in a person, and correcting other things. It's a sanctifying institution. It's not easy. It's not all bliss. It's putting two sinners together in a relationship. It's always going to be difficult. But by the grace of God, and as we look to him, and take our responsibilities seriously, it is the good life. It's our way to demonstrate Christ to the world; to reflect the relationship of Christ and his people.

And it's the way God intended for us to live, and if we live it rightly, faithfully, as I say, it's a powerful witness to the world of the greatest relationship of all, that of Christ and his church. Well, do you have that relationship with Christ? Do you know him as your Savior? He's the only Savior of the world. He died for sinners as a sacrifice, so that all who believe in him would have eternal life.

So that they would escape the judgment to come, and the judgment to come is coming. The way to escape that is through Christ. He's the way to eternal life, the way to heaven, the way to the kingdom to come. So if you're without him, believe in him, and you who have him, you who have believed in him, live for him. Live for him in everything. Paul ended chapter 6 by saying, “Glorify God in your body.”

We're to glorify God in everything we do, and in every aspect of our life. We're certainly to glorify him in our marriages, and all of our relationships. We can do that by the grace of God, so may God help us to do that – to enjoy our marriages, and to use them as a way of reflecting the grace of God in our lives. We can do that only by his grace. So let's close with a prayer for that grace.

[Prayer] Father, we do ask you to bless us with the grace that will overcome the selfishness that we all bring into a marriage. And we can speak more broadly than that – bless us with the grace to overcome the selfishness that we have in all of our relationships. Make us selfless people. Make us men and women who seek to serve you in everything, reflect your grace with all –