

On August 1, 2009, my wife and I were married at the very young age of 22 and 23. We had no idea what we were doing. We had no clue what we were getting ourselves into. How could we possibly know at that young age? But on that day, we stood before family and friends and, most importantly, God and took vows. A pastor, who was a mentor of mine, stood before us and said, "Kevin, do you take Lindsay to be your wife for richer and for poorer in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish for as long as you both shall live?" To which I replied, "I do."

We had no idea of the gravity of those commitments. There is an idealism of marriage at such a young age, which blinds you to the reality of the commitment that was said in those vows. Well, it wouldn't be long before we'd start to stretch the bounds of those vows. Just one month from this picture, I lost my job and had to come home to tell my new wife I was unemployed. We were in an interview process for a few other churches that I was hoping to go full-time in, but nonetheless, it pushed us to challenge those vows.

Fast forward through the next 16 years, and we've had career changes, moves, losses of jobs, life-altering events such as the arrival of our first daughter, which was a joyous occasion, but certainly stretched our commitment to one another. Following that, we had struggles with infertility for years and stretches of depression. We had a second daughter that God gifted to us, which stretched us as a family. We've had financial gain. We've had financial loss. We've had beautiful date nights and nights of many fighting hours.

There's something about marriage that you don't know at that moment. I would have a lot of words for the younger Kevin in that picture. Generally, around the idea of you're not as good as you think you are, quickly followed by, she's probably right because she tends to be. I remember the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer that he would say to young married couples on their wedding day. "Today, you are young and very much in love. You think that your love will sustain your marriage, but it won't. Let your marriage sustain your love."

Sixteen years ago, we were very much in love, and we stood before that crowd and before the Lord to enter into a vow, a sacred commitment. Something beyond what most of the agreements in our world offer. A vow between two married people and before God is language we're not accustomed to, but as I read those vows, you were familiar with them. For richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, till death do us part. There are very few, if any, commitments we make with that level of gravitas, but Bonhoeffer's right in that as love fades, the vow must sustain it.

We'll talk a lot about love in this message, and the difference between our cultural understanding of love and what Jesus is inviting us into. Generally, our cultural view of marriage that we bring and import a

little bit into the way of Jesus is some concoction between modern individualism mixed with a sentimentalized Hollywood view of love and romance. It's this mixed in with the fallout of the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Somewhere in between all of that, we've come to an easy divorce culture, so that it feels startling when we read a text like this.

Jesus' call will be quite significant to those entering into marriage, yet the modern church is confused by this topic of divorce, and so are many of us today. Because we're really confused as to what marriage is. Marriage confuses the church today because love confuses the church today. And love is confused because it's held through the lens of romance and personal fulfillment, self-expansion, sexual satisfaction, and whatever combination of movies and books we've read that somehow come together and smash into some view of marriage.

I recognize the sensitivity of this issue, and I know that there are many in here who have either been through a divorce or are at a low point in their marriage. Maybe you're the child of divorce. I just want to offer you that we love you, we are so glad you are here, and our love is just a small fraction of the love that God has for you. I hope that we can receive this teaching of Jesus from the posture of recognizing that every last bit of it is shrouded in the love of God.

**"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matthew 5:31-32**

You'll notice a familiar theme or paradigm that Jesus is using. Remember the past two weeks it's been, "You've heard that it was said, but I say to you." There's a very subtle difference here. Right there in verse 31, it says not that you have heard it was said, but it says it has been said, and that is a difference intentional by Jesus. The understanding of that is still a little bit unsorted. We're not sure exactly why, other than in the past two examples when Jesus says you've heard it said, he then directly quotes the Old Testament, but it's different here. It says, it has been said, and then Jesus goes on to summarize Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

It's interesting because what has happened here, which we often don't recognize, is that Jesus is speaking to a time and a place, right around the first century. And there was a debate that was raging around the Deuteronomy text that Jesus summarizes. It was built out of this question of when divorce is permitted and by whom. Later, in the Gospel of Matthew 19, this exact conversation comes back up in which the Pharisees, who were at the very core of that cultural debate at the time, question Jesus directly. Jesus gives a fuller treatment of this. So, I want to jump to that text in Matthew 19, and you'll see why it's all very similar.

**When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" Matthew 19:1-3**

Now, a few things to note. The Pharisees aren't seemingly interested in truth. They're coming to test Jesus. That would indicate that Jesus' response is entering into that cultural debate. It was raging, and they're essentially forcing Jesus' hand. The debate stems from the phrase, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" That phrase is very important, and it's been found in ancient documents on divorce certificates around the time of Jesus, where it states for the reason for divorce, they would write "For any and every reason." This is a phrase that stems from a fairly cryptic text in Deuteronomy 24.

**If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. Deuteronomy 24:1-4**

I'm guessing, there's something in you that cringes, because we tend to read this in our current time. When we read it from our egalitarian society, we think of it as regressive. But one of the things we miss is that God is writing to a people in a time, in a way in which it must work within. This is one of the philosophical struggles you have with a God who exists outside of time, but yet enters into time. He is then, in some ways, bound to that moment. So what we miss is that at this time, when Deuteronomy 24 was given, this was wildly ahead of its time. This was far more progressive, if we want to use that language, when this was written.

All the debate in Jesus' time came back to this line in Deuteronomy 24, "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her..." The struggle, and you can sense the ambiguity in there, is in "displeasing and something indecent about her." What does that mean?

That's why this debate would rage. So, two schools of thought were formed. The first school of thought that came out and interpreted this text was from a rabbi named Shammai. He held a very restrictive view of this text. He read it as the only thing that you could divorce a woman for was adultery. He would interpret adultery as something indecent. His take was that the only reason you could divorce your spouse was if they cheated on you, because in doing that, they would have ruptured the union between two flesh becoming one.

Counter to that was Rabbi Hillel, and he had a much more permissive view. He would interpret something indecent as simply any and every reason. His take on that turn of phrase, as was most of the first century, was that a man could hold the power of the relationship and then could divorce if they simply found the woman displeasing.

Disciples of Rabbi Hillel would at times cite this as saying that if one found someone more beautiful, fairer than one's wife, they could divorce her and marry the other woman. It was even said that if the woman messed up dinner, they could just divorce because that was "displeasing" to the man.

Here's the rub. Notice the language in the Pharisees' question in Matthew 19, it says he may divorce her. And this is important because in the ancient world, divorce was predominantly a one-way street. It was possible for a woman to divorce a man, but it was very difficult. So, as you can imagine, the most popular interpretation of this teaching was Rabbi Hillel's, where men would hold all the power, and for any and every reason, they could separate and toss a woman out on the street. This created a wild power differential, and in a patriarchal world, this left women quite vulnerable. They did not have the ability to even sustain or hold themselves.

The reason it talks about the certificate of divorce was that if a man let a woman out of their house without that certificate of divorce, she could never remarry, and she couldn't even enter back into her family's home. She had no way to take care of herself. There was an abuse that was taking place in this practice of divorce in which men were taking advantage of women, and Jesus was furious with this.

Let's see the way Jesus responds to the question of whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason, and hopefully, within that context, we can understand where Jesus comes out of this with a black and white teaching.

**"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." Matthew 19:4-6**

Now, this is a beautiful argument by Jesus. What Jesus is doing here is what ethicists would call building a foundationalist argument. And what that means is basically when Jesus says, "Haven't you read that at the beginning," he is going to make an ethical claim by going all the way back to Genesis 1 and 2. He will say that this is the foundation of what it means, not just to be married, but what it means to be human.

Any ethical argument that you make must be rooted in some foundation. That's why Jesus is doing what he's doing. Jesus is a brilliant philosopher, theologian, of course, much more than that, he's our savior. Also Jesus is brilliant. So he is now rooting this foundational argument in what theological ethicists call creation intent, meaning that whatever God intended from the beginning is the trajectory that is hoped to be throughout time.

Put differently, before you can ask about marriage and sexuality and if this behavior, relationship, or expression of sexuality is right or wrong, first, you have to ask, what is the human being, and what does it mean for a human being to flourish? Let me give you a much easier example. If you were to ask me if the watch I'm wearing is a good watch, you'll have to make some assumptions about what a watch is. Most of us would agree that a watch is best described as good if it tells time accurately. My watch is a good watch because it tells time accurately. So we could all agree upon the definition of a good watch. Now, of course, there are aesthetic qualities to it that can contribute, but those are what I would call secondary goods. The fundamental good of a watch is that it tells time.

So what Jesus is doing with these Pharisees is showing the foundation on which we understand what a human is, and then also what marriage is within that. Notice the first and second steps, and this is a bit of a caveat. God is not saying that to be a fully functioning human, you must be married. Quite the opposite. The next section in chapter 19 will talk about singleness and the validity of what it means to be single, and the flourishing life that you can have as an individual who is not married. He's talking about whether this is what a human is.

In the context of that, Genesis 2:24, *"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."* He's saying, what exactly is the intent of marriage? What are the different foundations that we hold for marriage? Because we have to understand what the self is in order to understand what marriage is, the Christian view of the self is that we were created to be formed into people of self-giving agape love that both receives and gives the love of God. That would contrast in our modern world, the modern secular view of the self is something like, we were meant to live individualist lives of personal fulfillment and happiness. So that's the foundation on both sides of this debate on what exactly is the purpose of marriage.

## Secular View

Suppose you're a modern secularist. You understand life to be nothing more than a glorious accident. There is no creator. Therefore, there's no creation intent. Life is random chance built on the survival of the fittest. The human story devolves into solely two things—survival and pleasure. So early on in humanity's history, you then created things like gender, marriage, and all those constructs because we needed to survive and take care of the vulnerable. So we've created these things for those two purposes, survival, and hopefully, pleasure down the road.

Later on in human history, after we established survival, it is asked why do we need gender and marriage anymore? Let's discard them, survival's taken care of, and so then all that remains is pleasure. So the foundation of the human self is to maximize pleasure—eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die.

Then, if that's the case, now map on something like marriage. Marriage, then, is inherently constraining; it inherently restricts you as an individual because that's what an exclusive union does. So what's the importance of marriage? That's just getting in the way of my acquisition of pleasure. In the secular view, there's no creation intent because there's

no creator. Therefore, you're free to live as freely as you deem fit, to maximize pleasure through uninhibited freedom. What I just described is a worldview. It has the majority opinion, and so it often masquerades as objective reality. But you have to see that what I just described is, in fact, a worldview. It is a reading on the data points of humanity and of history. It's a worldview, and that's okay.

## Christian View

We would argue as followers of Jesus that there's a different worldview that might be more hopeful, that might be a better picture of reality, and that is Jesus' view of the self. So, how does Jesus view the self? Jesus views the self as we are not animals, we're image bearers, and to be human is to image and reflect the triune God into the world.

Last week, we talked about the Trinity and how the Trinity is the essence of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, constantly in a communion of mutual self-giving love. God exists in a community in which each part of the Trinity is loving and giving of himself to the other. Therefore, the human is an overflow of that triune love. It was out of love that you were created, and therefore you are then born bearing that image of the triune God, and you are meant to receive that love, to be welcomed into the inner life of the Trinity, and then also to reflect that love into the world.

That's what it means to be an image bearer. You reflect it. So it means you receive it, but then you are also called to give it. Our understanding of the human is not built on internal desire or the reality of happiness, but an overflow of self-giving mutual love. We were created as male and female to experience that unity within that difference.

So marriage then, in that worldview, is about the two differences coming together. United, as the scriptures would say, two individuals becoming one flesh. And now if the goal is to both receive love and give love, marriage now makes a whole lot of sense because marriage is a constraint in which you learn the ways that you are unloving, but then you also find in the other who commits those vows, a place, a connection in which you can receive the very love that your heart was created for. Never perfectly, but it is a reflection of the love of God.

In marriage, the constraints of marriage in the Christian worldview are the point. It's the way in which you experience the exclusive love and then learn to be a person of love. In Jesus' worldview, that's the point, and it's meant to be a very different foundation on which marriage rests. If that's the different footing, now we can talk through what marriage means.

Just to summarize, the secular vision of marriage is built on the concept of individual happiness. So, to be married is only good insofar as that person makes me happy. But the Christian vision of marriage is built on the expression of mutual self-giving love. Which is why the vows don't read something like "I promise to love you till death do us part, as long as you still love me and make me happy in sickness and in health for richer and for poorer until death do us part." The vow, the covenant on which marriage is built, is exactly the same vow and love that God has

given to us, and we are trying to emulate, which means, regardless of the other's performance, we are committed.

I am called to love Lindsay regardless of how she reciprocates that and vice versa. She is called to love me regardless of how well I reciprocate. What's beautiful about that is when done in a healthy environment, it becomes a cycle of self-giving love in which I'm serving Lindsay and Lindsay is serving me, and we're constantly learning how to love the other in self-giving ways, not self-receiving ways. When that happens, what is generated is an intimacy and emotions and happiness that flow from that, but that's never the purpose or the intention. That is a by-product and not the ultimate goal. Let's go back to Matthew 19.

**"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." Matthew 19:7-9**

Now, notice the change in language here in Jesus' response. He states that Moses never commanded it. He permitted it. Moses permitted divorce because their hearts were hard. For Jesus, the only thing a marriage cannot survive is the hardness of heart. And there are a lot of different ways we can understand that text. In some ways, Jesus' nuance here is intentional, but in the broadest sense, a hard heart is one who is closed off to the other, and consequently, that means they're closed off to the very image of God. That is what a marriage cannot survive.

A marriage can endure a lot. I've witnessed it. I've sat in my office with couples who've been through an enormous amount of pain and grief, some self-imposed, others imposed on them, and yet they have survived because they found a way to keep their heart soft to each other and to God. Jesus said that Moses didn't command divorce; he permitted it because Jesus understood the brokenness of the human situation in which sometimes relationships just crumble and hardness of heart calcifies, but it was never the intent.

If I were to summarize Jesus' teaching, I would humbly offer this. Jesus never condoned divorce. He never commanded divorce. Jesus permits divorce in circumstances of hardness of heart, after all attempts at reconciliation have been exhausted. This is the invitation of Jesus into the marriage relationship. Your heart, which is hard, closes off to the other, and you cannot entertain the topic of reconciliation.

What do you do with abuse? What do you do if the other abandons you? Well, Paul talks a little bit about that. There are all sorts of questions that stem from that, and those are ones often better not done from a stage because I can't nuance it well enough. There are better ways, in pastoral circumstances, when I can walk alongside you, or some of our elders or other pastors can enter into your life to understand the complexity and the nuance. So I want to offer a few words, but I just want to caveat and say, I know whatever I say will not perfectly encapsulate your scenario, but I pray humbly that I'm trying to point to the image in

which Jesus has offered. Jesus offers this image, this very strict, narrow, seemingly black and white thing.

Read what Dale Allison, a New Testament commentator, wrote, "Jesus' purpose was not to lay down the law but to reassert an ideal and make divorce a sin, thereby disturbing the current complacency" (Allison). Because Jesus is responding in the midst of this cultural battle, this cultural debate that's raging between Shammai and Hillel. So Jesus does take a side here, although he chips away at a little bit of both, but he gives an angle.

He does say that sexual adultery is the only means for divorce. But, and this is me stepping away from scripture, that within the context of what we understand he's saying, of the two options, I fall with Shammai. But notice the conversation around the hardness of heart is also a chip at Shammai that says, there are other things that take place there in which an individual is calcified against the other. So there are circumstances in which divorce is afforded, namely, hardness of heart.

Jesus is stepping into a very difficult circumstance, and I believe he's taking a side. But let's now go back and return all the way to Matthew 5. Here's where we begin to see the heart of God and the heart of Jesus come through. So Matthew 5:32, *"But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."*

That word victim, if you were to go to the Greek, isn't there, but let me explain why it's the right move. I was listening to someone on the translation committee for the new international version, and they made this case. They said the verb commits adultery or make to commit adultery is in the passive tense, which means it's an action that's happening to the other. And so Jesus is saying that when this exchange, this divorce takes place and you divorce them except for sexual meaning, "any and every reason," you make her commit adultery, is what some translations will say.

I like the topic of victimhood because that's what Jesus is getting at, that the adultery is happening to them because the woman doesn't have any power. So the man is making her a victim of adultery. Which is why Jesus takes this hard stand to say, "Listen, this is the oppressive nature of the practice of divorce in the first century," and Jesus is having none of it.

Just like he did last week, and he'll do this week and on and on, because it's at the very heart of God. His heart is for the vulnerable. The reality is in the ancient world as well as in ours, and this is speaking in nuance, typically divorce impacts the woman more than it does the man. Now, in the ancient world, it was quite obvious because it was a patriarchal society in which men had more means to advance.

In our modern world, it's maybe a little bit more nuanced, but typically what happens is that men are perceived from our cultural standards, which are faulty, just to clarify, more desirable when they have more status and prestige, which, over time, as you age, generally develops.



Whereas, in our broken cultural standards, a woman's value has more to do with physical appearance, and as they age, that decreases in our cultural standards. So I would make the argument that even in the modern world, generally divorce disproportionately impacts women more than men. Now, I say this with a lot of humility because every circumstance is different. But it means that Jesus' heart is for the vulnerable. He's trying to protect women in this circumstance.

He's calling marriage back to what it was intended because the intent, the heartbeat of God, the ideal in which all of it is moving towards is that these two would become one flesh, and they would be united under the covenant vows that would sustain all the complexities that life could offer. Marriage is an expression of the triune God, a small place in which you taste it and then reflect it into the world. What's wrong is that we often come to this text and we're looking for reasons to justify divorce, but that's not the intent of what Jesus is after. Scott McKnight, another New Testament scholar, wrote.

**If we come to this text looking for reasons to justify divorce, we miss the whole point. What this text does is redefine marriage and anchor it in the new community of Jesus, a community that will make possible both the single life and fidelity. Jesus calls his followers to a better way, to the way of love and marital faithfulness. Scot McKnight**

This is what Jesus is teaching. He's saying that this is the image we desire, and so, however we understand this, we're trying to move in that direction. That's the heartbeat that God is offering.

I do want to talk just briefly on the topic of reconciliation. God's heart is for reconciliation, and that's why in that main point I gave, I said that all avenues of reconciliation should be exhausted. Now I recognize that reconciliation and those attempts must be done in a way that's safe for all parties. Meaning if you're in an abusive marriage or if you're in an abusive relationship, Jesus is not asking you to stay in that place. He's not asking you to be in that physical location. More than likely, you will need to remove yourself to get out of that relationship, where it is safe, and an effort at reconciliation will likely not mean that you need to go directly to talk to that person.

Part of what I understand Jesus' teaching is the formation of a community in which you can come around and allow others to come into that moment and help you navigate that. To say it very clearly, Jesus is not asking you to stay in an abusive marriage. That is hardness of heart, if I've ever seen it, and Jesus would invite you out.

I believe divorce is then permitted if that individual will not receive the confrontation of the church and the elders who could step into that space, and their heart is hardened to that. Jesus does not forbid divorce absolutely, but he makes it very clear that divorce was never God's intent for men and women in marriage. We know this intuitively.

I've had the honor of performing some 20-plus weddings in my day. Not once have I ever spoken to a couple and hoped it ended in divorce. Of course, this isn't Jesus' intent. Divorce is a concession to the brokenness of this world in which he affords that possibility. And then he even

has the navigation around what exactly remarriage looks like. That's a whole other sermon. In short, the way I would define it is if the divorce takes place for permissible reasons, given the teaching that Jesus gives to us, remarriage is possible and warranted, but those things have to be there, and reconciliation has to be pursued and exhausted in all of its attempts.

**"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. Matthew 5:33-37**

In the ancient world, it was an oral culture, and so the way that you would give some oomph to your commitments is you would say, "I swear by God's throne, or I swear by the earth." Jesus is saying, if you live a life of integrity, your word's enough. Yes, yes, or no, no. Just offer your word in a way that holds its validity. The call is to integrity. The invitation for all of us is to live in such a way that the way you interact in every sphere and influence, no matter the words you say, the circumstances you're in, there's a consistency within your verbal expression of yourself and your internal character.

Marriage has the ability to refine that character in ways unlike any other commitments you make. It will form you into that person of love if you let it, if you yield to the process. Jesus is saying, just let your yes be yes and your no be no. I'm extrapolating here. I don't think Jesus is explicitly saying this, but in the context of marriage, could it not just mean if you're going to say those vows, you better think through the depth of them because it means you are spending a life giving it away for the sake of the other. That's the call to marriage. To give your life away for the sake of another. That's the invitation. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Obviously, you could begin to see what this means for us in a broader sense. First marriage is a covenant, not a contract. We're used to contracts in our world. All of you have a contract with AT&T, Verizon, or T-Mobile, or whoever it is. Which means we pay this a monthly amount and they provide this service, and at any moment if we don't hold up our end of the bottom, they can sever ties and vice versa. If they don't hold up their end, we can sever that contract.

Contracts are based on mutual self-benefit. I benefit and T-Mobile benefits, or whoever it is, but once that benefit is gone, the relationship between the two ends. That's not how marriage works. Marriage is built on vows. Marriage is built on self-giving love, not self-benefit. Now, the beautiful thing is when two people enter into that, they both benefit from it, and the Lord works in that, but it's not the foundation from which it's built.

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract, which is why you say those vows that you'll love the other, regardless of circumstance. It is a covenant

relationship that you are freed to love, and we are released from our own constraints to benefit solely ourselves. Contracts are based on desires—what I want, what I need—but a covenant is based on agape love. To put the good of the other above ourselves. Marriage is a covenant, not a contract.

Second, the invitation for us is to stay within our commitments. We live in a world where it's easy to run from the commitments we make, to just ghost the other person and not respond, to just quietly quit and not show up, or, in the context of marriage, an easy divorce culture. But the invitation is for us is to stay in our commitments, so far as it's safe and so far as we can continue to work towards reconciliation. The invitation, whether it's marriage or otherwise, is to stay within our commitments.

In another context, we're a church of quite a few people, and we're all broken and messy. I'm broken and messy, and all of us are falling on the grace of God. The reality is that in this room, the commitment that we hold to one another is quite fragile because we break down all the time. We screw up and make mistakes, but what would it look like to stay within a commitment?

The ethos of the day is, "Hey, if it's not working for me, I'll just split and go over there." What would it look like for a church to stay within their commitments that recognizes the brokenness and frailty of all of us as individuals and sinners and says, "Hey, I'm not going to push away from the table at the first sign where it didn't work out for me; I'm going to move closer towards reconciliation because that's the heart of God. It's the heartbeat of the New Testament. It's trying to reconcile this gospel that's to both Jew and gentile alike. So marriage is a covenant, not a contract. Stay within your commitments.

And lastly, for all of us, we must rest in the grace of God. I recognize the nuance of the way each one of us comes to this conversation. I'm certain I haven't said everything the way I would've liked to say it. And I hope for the best of my ability and humility, as I spent a lot of time praying this morning that I would just reflect the heart of God to you. But I fall on the grace of God. And wherever you are on this journey, please fall on the grace of God.

The beautiful thing is that divorce is not an unforgivable sin. Why would it be? Nothing separates us from the love of God. Grace resounds and wherever it is that you've experienced this, whether you've been inside that and it fell apart and broke, and you realize, you look back and say, "Man, how did we get here?" Or whether it happened to you, or you are the recipient of it or the child of it, fall in the grace of God. Paul, in Romans 8, says this, and this has been my heartbeat all week as I've been prepping for this sermon.

**For I am convinced that neither death nor life,  
neither angels nor demons, neither the present  
nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor  
depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be**

**able to separate us from the love of God that is in  
Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39**

The invitation is to faithfulness to Jesus, but nothing will separate you from the love of God.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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