

Message Transcript

BATTLE PROOF MARRIAGE | EQUIP FOR BATTLE
CHAD LUNSFORD | JULY 20, 2025

Hey as we continue to worship at all of our campuses, would you stay standing for just a moment? You know, it says in James 4:8 that when you draw near to God then God draws near to you. It's part of what we do when we are worshipping, we lift high the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes and dwells among us.

But I also want you to consider today that as we gather as one church in six locations all over this city and we lift high the name of Jesus that we're calling down the Holy Spirit, not just to us, but to our city, to Indianapolis. We're calling down the Holy Spirit to everyone.

So, here's what I want us to do at all of our campuses one more time with all that you've got, give Jesus the highest praise. Come on. Amen. Well, thank you for worshipping with us. You can be seated at all of the campuses.

What a joy to be with you today. As you're getting seated let me do a quick introduction. My name is Chad Lunsford. And some of you may know that I had the privilege of launching the Fishers campus just over a year-and-a-half ago. And can I just tell you, church? God is moving in incredible ways over on the northeast corner of our city.

Yeah, just get ready for this. Right now, as we speak, I actually brought along a progress photo, we are building a brand-new auditorium, a new lobby, we're expanding the parking lot—not only to accommodate those who are coming, but to get ready for what God is continuing to do up on the northeast corner. Here's a photo of what the building will look like as it gets finished. Come on. Can we just celebrate what God is doing over in Fishers? Incredible.

Hey, here's one of the things I love about the Fishers campus. The Awaken initiative that we've been doing for the better part of the last two years, the Awaken initiative launched Fishers and it's so incredible that we both launched Fishers through it and now the Fishers campus gets to be a part of Awaken. And I just want to encourage you, maybe you've been around and on the fence or maybe you are newer and you've heard about Awaken—today is the day to jump in. God is doing so much all over our city. You can just simply go to the brand-new Traders Point app, click on the Awaken button at the top to not only learn more but to join in with us today.



Hey, back in January I actually had the privilege of joining our executive team here at Traders Point overseeing our campuses and our ministries, which means that each and every week I get to bounce all over Indianapolis and visit all of our campuses.

And I'm just so excited to report, not only is God moving on the northeast corner, but God is moving Downtown, He's moving in Midtown, He's moving in Plainfield and Carmel and right here at Northwest. God is doing incredible things all over our city.

I love our city. I love what we get to do. I love our church. I'm so grateful for our lead pastor, Aaron, who was texting me to let me know that he is praying for all of us today. Could we just all together, at all of our campuses, can we just thank God for all the ways that He is moving right now? Come on. Yeah.

Well, it's so fun for me to be able to jump into our battle series that we've been doing over the past few months. And one of the most striking phrases for me from Pastor Aaron is this idea that you and I, we are born on a battlefield. And here's what I've been learning through that. That as followers of Jesus we may not have chosen the fight, but we are ready for the fight. God has equipped us for it.

And in this July series we want to equip you to battle proof your relationships. Last week Bart did an incredible job helping us battle proof our parenting. Week one Ryan did an incredible job of helping us see how prayer can be the foundation to every one of our relationships.

And there is this continual verse that has been the thread to this whole series. It comes from Nehemiah, chapter 4. And what I love about it is the image that Nehemiah gives us that as the people are taking back ground for the Kingdom, they are rebuilding the wall that had been torn down, there is a hammer in one hand but then there's an enemy that's surrounding them so they all have swords in the other.

I love that picture. And I think it's a good image of what we are doing. In one hand we are living our lives, we're in our homes, our places of work, our schools and on the other hand we recognize that we are in a battle. It's a spiritual battle. We want to equip you for it.

And here's what Nehemiah says in verse 14. It says:
"Then as I look over the situation I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, 'Don't be afraid of the enemy!'" That might be a good reminder for somebody today, "Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!" (NLT)



And here's what I want to do today. I want to equip us to fight for our marriages. The reality is, you didn't choose the fight, but you can be equipped for it. In fact, if you go back to the beginning of Scripture, in Genesis, chapter 3, we see the enemy back at the very beginning and he's picking a fight with the very first couple, Adam and Eve.

Now, what we're going to discover today is that's not a coincidence. The enemy knows God's plan for marriage and he's trying to go after it. So, the question I want us to begin with today is this:

What does it look like to battle proof your marriage?
What does it look like to battle proof your marriage?

Now, I want to recognize from the beginning that there are thousands of people who are going to get to hear this message and that means that there are thousands of you who have very different experiences and perspectives with marriage, whether you are married or not. So, I understand there are a lot of emotions that could come into a message like this.

There may even be many of you at our campuses saying, "Well, this message isn't for me today," and I just want to caution you with that, because I believe that this message is for each and every one of us, even though I want to highlight marriage.

In fact, there are three things that I want to point out today. The first one is this. Regardless of your status, married or single, if you'll lean in today I believe with my whole heart that God will meet you here, that God will have something for you.

The second thing I'll say is throughout our time together, I have four big points that I want to underscore, they are especially true for marriage. But listen. They are also critical for all followers of Jesus in each of your relationships. So, every one of my points is transferable for all of us.

Here's what I'm trying to do, this is the third thing I'd say. What I'm trying to do today is help us to see that the gift of marriage is so core to how God wants to unveil the gospel, that if you're a follower of Jesus you have to understand this message today.

So, even if you have hurt and confusion and frustration with marriage, I want us to see today that God's design is good. And the better we understand God's design for marriage, the more we'll see God's plan for the world.



So, the request I have for you is, regardless of what you might be bringing into this message today, would you go on the journey with me. My hope is to show us God's plan and help us see how we can align ourselves with Him.

I brought along some images today to kind of kick us off so we can have a better understanding of where we are going to end up today. On Monday of this week, my wife, Katie, and I actually celebrated 24 years of marriage, which was a lot of fun. Thank you. All credit goes to her.

And a few years ago for our 21st anniversary we actually took a trip of a lifetime. We went over to Italy. We were in Florence. And when you are in Florence, you've got to go see Michael Angelo's masterpiece called David. So, we went and we saw it.

And one of the things we learned while we were there that I love is that when Michael Angelo would look at the block of marble he said that he could see the form within the marble. It was really his job, as the artist, to knock away the pieces that were not David.

I love that. I think it's a great metaphor for marriage, which is simply two people helping each other remove the excess pieces that are not like God. What I also love is that in the exhibit right next to David, you can see both at the exact same time, you can see the masterpiece and then in a hallway beside it there are several sculptures that are unfinished, also by Michael Angelo. They happen to be called The Prisoners. And when you look at the images you can see why that is. It's like they are stuck in the marble and they can't get out. Now, some people are wondering, "Was Michael Angelo trying to make a statement?" And the answer is: No. They are just unfinished. They are just incomplete. He ran out of time with his life before he could finish all of the projects that he wanted to do.

It's striking when you stand between the two, the masterpiece on one side, the unfinished pieces on the other—you kind of have to ask yourself, "Are there opportunities in my own life? Will I finish this race looking more like the masterpiece or the unfinished work?"

Which I think is a great question today when we think of our marriages, "When I stand before God, will my marriage look more like the unfinished work or the masterpiece that God knows that it can be?"



Now, here's where we are going today. We're going to be in Ephesians, chapter 5. If you have your Bible, you're welcome to turn there. And Ephesians will help us get to the masterpiece.

What you need to know about Ephesians is that Paul is writing Ephesians very differently than when he writes all of his other letters to the churches. All of his other letters are a reaction, as response, to something that is happening there at the local church. And you get to understand his argument for what might be going on.

Ephesians is different. In Ephesians he's writing to say, "Hey, this is God's ideal. This is what the church is supposed to be." And it's not a coincidence that he puts marriage into the middle of it. In fact, marriage, we will see, is a key way that he will show us Jesus and the church because he's going to show marriage and how God designed it.

What he's going to tell us is, "Don't shape marriage around what you think love is. No, no. Understand God's design and then shape your life around it." He spoke Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 1 this way: "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children." (NLT)

Now, in this chapter you're going to see over and over as we go, he's going to constantly say, "Imitate Jesus in a certain way." In fact, he does it in verse 2. He says this in verse 2:

"Live a life filled with love," you see it? "following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God." (NLT) He's saying, "This is what it means to be the church. Jesus offered Himself to the Father and we do the same when we offer ourselves to God."

Now, here's what I want to do today. I want to draw several illustrations for us to help us see that there are some big picture, theological principles that Paul wants us to understand. So, I'm going to draw them up here for us.

They are going to be kind of rudimentary, so if you're not a fan of my drawing, here's what I would do. Email me at Ryan Bramlett at traderspoint.org. It will get right to me. I promise. In fact, let me erase this one just a little bit. I was ready for the punch line of my joke so I messed that up. Alright, here we go.



In the beginning is there is the Father, put a "F" here for the Father. And we also recognize that there is the Son. The Scriptures tell us that Father and Son are equal to one another. They are equal in status. But the Son willingly submits Himself, voluntarily, to the Father.

Now, here's what I love. If you go look in the New Testament, unless you know this you won't be able to unsee it, every time we see the Father He's pointing to the Son. And every time we see the Son He is pointing to the Father.

Now, in Genesis 1 and 2 we know that this is the creation story and at the pinnacle of it He's creating mankind. What does it say? "Let us make man—let us make man in our image." And then it goes on to say, "It's not good for man to be alone." So they also created woman. In fact, if we jump to the end of Ephesians, Paul will go back to the beginning. It says this, this is a direct quote from Genesis, chapter 2:

"A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." (NLT)

What Paul is saying is that the Godhead, as they are one, they are to be one with us and they are to be one with one another. Now, what we know is that in Genesis, chapter 3 the enemy comes, he picks a fight with the very first couple and it breaks our relationship with the Godhead and with one another.

Fast forward to the New Testament. What happens? Jesus, who has willingly submitted to the Father, comes down to us. All who call on the name of Jesus will be saved, which means we can now be in relationship with God and we can now be in relationship with one another.

Paul wants us to understand that this is God's design. Marriage is a part of His unveiling. In fact, he says it like this:

"This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one." (NLT)

Now, when he uses the word mystery that may not be the best English translation. He's not saying, "This is unknowable," what he's saying is that it is so important that you should seek it out.

In fact, think about this. He's saying that the mystery is that God created marriage at the beginning, catch this, to be an image of Jesus and the church. Marriage came thousands of years before Jesus and the church but God had a plan even in the beginning.



Take this even further. The pinnacle moment of the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2, is the marriage between man and woman. So, in the beginning of Scripture, there is a marriage. If you fast forward to the very end of Scripture, in Revelation, there is also a marriage between Christ and the church, the two are supposed to mirror one another.

When God was creating the world, He had the gospel on His mind and He said, "Marriage is going to be My pinnacle sign that as we are one you will be one with us and you will be one with one another."

This is really important. If you are taking notes, write this down. Your marriage is designed so that when you love your spouse you are pointing eyes up to Jesus. That's what marriage is designed to do. In fact, the first thing I want to underscore is this:

A battle proof marriage is committed to God's design for marriage
A battle proof marriage is committed to God's design for marriage. The world says it's a relationship that can be anything that you want: there is no design, do what seems good to you. God says, "No, no, no. I created marriage on purpose, between a man and a woman, to be a sign of My grace. Within My design you will flourish." That's God's heart.

Now, I want to give us another illustration to help us to understand. So often we want the blessings of God but we don't want to commit to the ways of God. In fact, let me show it for us here. There are going to be three circles. I need to highlight the fact that only two of these circles are actually theologically accurate, alright? So, let's begin. If you don't understand at the end and you have emails for me, Ryan Bramlett is your guy. You can just email him right away. Only two of these are theologically accurate, but one of them is often how we functionally live as Christians. Alright? So, this circle represents us. I'll just write the word self up at the top. This is our throne. We're sitting on top of it. And before Jesus is in our lives, we rule our lives, we call the shots.

When we accept the Good News of Jesus into our lives, and we become Christ followers, we no longer sit on the throne, Jesus does. He calls the shots. But so often, what we do is we actually live in a third chair where we are on the throne and Jesus is still part of it. Are you with me? It's the equivalent of saying that Jesus is our Savior but He's not our Lord. "I want the benefits of Jesus in my life; I just don't want to commit to His ways."

But a battle proof marriage is committed to God's ways, not the ways of the world. There are a lot of things that we have made intimacy. Come on, we all know this. There are a lot of books, a lot of songs, a lot of movies...



But God's plan says that marriage was created to unveil and reveal the gospel. If it's built on anything else it's settling for less. The things we often make marriage: romance, physical intimacy, friendship, compatibility all good things but they are to be the by-product not the foundation. If those things are what we are building a marriage on, those are false foundations.

Here's what I've come to realize. When anything can be a false foundation in our lives, we will start believing lies. We'll say things like, "Well, we need to know if we're sexually compatible before we get married." Or, "We're going to live together for a little while just to try it out and see if it will work for us." Or, "I'm going to do what feels good or seems good to me."

Can I just say this in all love and grace? All of those lies are faithless acts, not trusting God's good design. God has a good design for all of us. In fact, Paul says it very clearly in verse 3. It says:

"Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people." (NLT)

Now, what is Paul talking about? He would call himself the worst of sinners. He knows that all of us fall short of God's glory. All of us sin. What is sin? Sin is living outside of God's design.

What Paul is trying to say here is when Jesus is not on the throne, but you're calling the shots, you're living unconfessed of your sin, you're living actively in sin, he's saying, "Those things have no part among God's people." You are living life in the third chair, "I want the benefits of Jesus; but I don't want the ways of Jesus."

And what Paul is saying is, "No, no, no. He's the Creator. He knows how He designed us." And sin is essentially saying, "No, thanks. I will try it my way." So, Paul goes after it. He talks about sexual immorality and impurity and greed. Why? Because each of these things will wreck our life.

So, we recognize that God designed sex for marriage, the uniting, the becoming one, signifying unity. Sex before marriage is actually playing marriage, which is backwards (do you see it?) from God's good design.

Greed would be the idea of desiring more in our lives. In the context of marriage it's saying, "Well, my marriage isn't fulfilling my needs so I'm going to go outside of my marriage to get sexual fulfillment." It could be anything from porn, to affairs, to lots of things around and in between. And what Paul is teaching us is that sex is God's idea, expressing love and commitment to mutuality and selflessness.



But you and I know that the Bible and our lives are full of examples of how these things, when we do them our way, bring far more harm than good. And Paul is not saying this to shame anyone but to help us to see God's good plan so we can align our lives with Him.

When he talks about impurity it's the idea that we would take the good things of God and we would actually twist them into what we want them to be. So, in love and clarity, Paul is like, "No, no, no. You need to know back in Genesis when He created us, He created male and female. Two distinct beings that would be complimentary to one another."

He would say that man would leave his parents and be joined to his wife. God's good design for marriage is a man and a woman. And as we'll see in the verses to come, there are these special differences that uniquely, together, display the gospel. He's very clear on God's plan.

But let's also be very clear on God's heart. If you have a same sex attraction... Perhaps today one of our campuses you are in a same sex relationship or maybe you have a loved one who is sitting in one of those two categories, let me be clear as well. God loves you. God has a good plan for your life. And I want you to know that you are welcome here at Traders Point. And we will walk along side you and continually, day after day, help you get closer to Jesus. That's true.

And Paul, I'm telling you, doubles down on this. He wants us to be really clear. He says this in verse 6. He says:

"Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins,"
That's what we see happening all around us in the world where people are trying to call sin good.

"for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him." (NLT)
Why does God care about this? You've probably had a conversation with someone like this. "Why does God care about what happens in our bedroom?" Because He designed you. He knows what is best for you. And He wants your life to glorify and honor His Son.

Paul goes on in verse 10:

"Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them." (NLT)

Take no part in them. Don't act like they are not there. Instead expose them. It's what we are doing right now by looking at the Scriptures.



Listen. Right now if you are living outside of God's ways, God doesn't hate you. In fact, He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you. He desires that you would receive Christ's forgiveness and live into the fullness that He designed you for.

In fact, today, if you are living in chair one, you've never put Jesus on the throne of your life, that's your next step. I want to invite you into that today. As we go forward, Paul says this in verse 17. He says:

"Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit..." (NLT)

Don't come under the influence of anything except the Holy Spirit. In that time there were certain groups who would use wine as a means of getting inspiration. And Paul is contrasting that with the Holy Spirit going, "No, no, no. This is how you imitate Jesus."

In fact, I would say that this translation right here where it says be filled kind of like one time is a poor translation of the original Greek which would say, "Go on being filled up with the Holy Spirit." It's an opportunity and an imperative. Keep doing this. So, the second thing I want to underscore for us today:

A battle proof marriage is supplied by God's strength through the Holy Spirit
A battle proof marriage is supplied by God's strength through the Holy Spirit.
Think about it. The world says, "Love comes and love goes. If my marriage isn't meeting my needs, I can move on." God says, "My Spirit supply is endless and I will fill you up to selflessly love your spouse. There is no end to what I can give you."

In fact, if you think about it like this. This isn't a full trinitarian theology. There is more to this. Just to give us a snapshot of it, for centuries one of the ways that theologians have explained the differences between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to explain what the Holy Spirit does inside the Trinity.

The way that the Father shares His love with the Son is through the Holy Spirit. And the way that the Son shares His love with the Father is through the Holy Spirit. Now, it's important to know that for them, but it's also important to recognize it for us. That's also how God shares His love with us, through the Holy Spirit. We get caught up into this trinitarian Godhead because the Holy Spirit comes down to us.



And, what Paul is trying to get us to see is this. The only way that we can share love between us is to go on being filled up with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is doing a work in us that allows us to leave self so that we can go and serve the other. And the only way that's possible is to go on being filled up with the Holy Spirit.

Let me give us one more drawing to help us understand this. If you were to sort of cut us open, not like our body, but our being—if you were to cut us open, there are three parts to us, if you'll go along with my circles (they might look more like squares) there are three parts to us.

The most inner part of us would be the spirit. Every one of us has a spirit. What we've learned is that before Jesus came down to us, our spirits were dead and there was no way for us to commune with God. So, when we begin to follow after Jesus, our spirit comes alive. And now, moment by moment, day by day, we can go on being filled up and communing with God.

The second part of us is our soul. You might think of your soul as your mind, your emotions, or even your desires. It's the way in which you commune with yourself—your thoughts, the things you want, the things that you feel. Now, what is important about this is, we are designed so that the Spirit is giving truth to our mind, emotions, and desires so that we are speaking truth to what we see in the world around us.

So often we get messages from the world. And our bodies, how we commune with the world around us, so often we are getting messages from the world, "You need more. You should be more. You should get more." All of these lies are coming into us and little by little they begin to affect our mind, our emotions, and our desires. And little by little what happens is we begin to suffocate the Spirit within us.

See, when we live from the Spirit, that's called living inside out. And the Spirit affects everything that we do. When we feel like we need more and have to be more, we say, "No, no, no. I'm not overcome by the world; the overcomer lives inside of me."

But what we know to be true is so many people in the world actually live outside in.



Which way do you think we are designed to live in our marriages? Obvious. Right? Inside out. That we would get filled up with the Holy Spirit first, and then we can go on to be selfless to one another. That's how God designed us. We are to be selfless with the people around us.

One of the most important parts of marriage, and I'm going to argue is actually one of the hardest parts of marriage, is to be selfless. In fact, if you find yourself in an argument with your spouse or somebody else, you might just want to ask the question, "Hey, in what way am I being selfish?" There might be an answer to that question for that very fight.

And what Paul is going to teach us as we hop into the marriage section is that the only way—this is his assumption as he teaches us how to be married—the only way to do this is to go on being filled up with the Holy Spirit. It's imitating the life of Jesus to one another, to go on being filled up.

Maybe you've asked the question, "Well, how do we do it? How do we get filled up with the Holy Spirit?" There are a lot of ways but let me give us two just for today. One would be obedience—obeying God.

See, if you're living in chair one or chair three you cannot be filled up with the Holy Spirit because you're not walking with God. So, obedience is recognizing when you've not been living under God's design to come in alignment with Him, confess and repent, and then begin obeying Him.

Secondly would be the idea of daily pursuit, daily pursuing God. If you and I were to take a course on who Jesus is and what it looks like to imitate Him—day one, course one, would be every day, every morning Jesus got up, He went to a solitary place and He prayed. He was being filled up with the Holy Spirit as He communed with His Father.

Let me be so bold as to say this:

The level of your spiritual discipline determines the ceiling of your marriage
The level of your spiritual discipline will determine the ceiling of your marriage.
Think about it for a second. The more you commune with God and obey Him
the more you're filled up with the Holy Spirit, you're living in that second chair, the more that you can encourage your spouse.

And by the way, this is really important, if only one person in a marriage begins doing this, it's enough to shift the atmosphere in the marriage, even if only one person starts living like this.



In that first section, it's God's design it's the what. What is marriage? In the second section, it's God's strength supplied by the Holy Spirit. That's the how. Let's jump into the why. Why does God create marriage? Here's my third point I want to underscore:

A battle proof marriage is fixed on God's mission
A battle proof marriage is fixed on God's mission. The world will say relationships and marriage exist for my fulfillment and my happiness. But God says, "No, no, no. True fulfillment is helping your spouse reach their fullness in Jesus."

True fulfillment is helping your spouse reach their fullness in Jesus. Let's look at what Paul says in verse 21. Now, this is the precursor to the marriage section in Ephesians 5. He says:

"And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (NLT)
Now he's saying this is for all people at all times. This isn't just for married people. In fact, before Katie and I are husband and wife, we are also fellow believers. So, we submit to one another as all believers do.

And then Paul wants to dive down into the marriage relationship. He's going to say, "Marriage gets to show us something unique and special as part of God's design. He says:

"For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord."
Wives, as Jesus submits to the Father and as the church submits to Jesus, you submit to your husband. He goes on in verse 23:

"For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything." (NLT)
Now, wives if that feels heavy just get ready.

"For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church."
What did He do? "He gave up his life..."

Husbands, your call is to die for your wife, to model that Jesus died for the church. Why? Here's the answer to the why, verse 26:
"to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word." (NLT)
Right here he unveils the purpose of marriage. The purpose of marriage is that both of us would live, doing our part to live in this way, so as to help each other reach our fullness in Jesus. He goes on in verse 27:



"He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault." (NLT) See the secret that Paul is talking about when it comes to marriage is this—marriage is both a sign of the gospel and it's a means for our transformation. Marriage is actually helping us as a spouse look more and more like Jesus. See, what's supposed to happen when two people stand before each other on their wedding day, what they are supposed to be recognizing is, "I see everything that you could be in Jesus and I'm all in for the journey. I'm all here for it to help you get there."

Now, someone might argue, "Well, I thought marriage was for my happiness." And I'll just say, "That's true." But happiness is a by-product. The point of marriage is actually your holiness.

Listen. If you shoot for happiness, you miss holiness. If you shoot for holiness, you get both.

See, marriage is supposed to be a man and woman committing to a life-long Christ likeness for the other. And what you get in the end is a deep, abiding friendship. See, some people get stuck on the roles of what a man and a woman are supposed to do in the relationship. But you need to recognize they are there to highlight God's beautiful plan.

As Jesus does, husbands you do that. And as the church does, wives you do that. It's the picture that we had at the beginning with Michael Angelo and the statues. There is the masterpiece and then there is the work in progress. You see, when I'm saying, "I do," I'm committing to helping you become a finished work. It's looking to the end when we both stand before God and we are like, "Here he is," and "Here she is," and we are even better than we found. That's what God wants us to do.

How do we do it? Well, here's what I love about the Scripture. There is no one way to do this. The Scriptures point us to lean in together as a man and a woman and to learn together.

It could look like this. Husbands, you set the spiritual tone of your home. You're gonna say, "We're going to pursue God. We're going to serve God. We're going to disciple others. We're going to give our first and our best financially." Wives, it might look like, "Hey, I recognize it must be hard to bear the weight of this responsibility. I'm going to come beside you and hold up your arms," together, it's each of us playing a part.



Here's a small example of how I've seen this work out in my marriage. When Katie and I got married we were very young and I was still relatively young in my walk with Jesus. And when we got married I'd never even heard of tithing. I never understood the spiritual principle of it. No one had actually shared that with me.

So, when we got married and we were talking about how to view our finances, I remember Katie saying, "Hey, I think we should do this thing called tithing. We should give our first and our best 10 percent back to God as His."

And I remember looking at her like, "I'm not great at math, but it's not adding up in the check book." Right? Because that's when we used a check book. It was not adding up. And for many years thereafter, Katie would just at times come along side of me and say, "Hey, I don't think we are doing our finances God's way." And I'm just being honest. I didn't get it. Until one day I actually heard a message and I was like, "Oh my goodness, you mean that first 10 percent is Gods? We're supposed to give it back to Him through the storehouse, the church, and the church uses it to take care of the community. I've been robbing from God."

And when we started giving back to God what I noticed in our lives is that God just kept pouring out His blessings on us—not just financially. That was one way I recognized that I was actually holding our family back.

I mention this to story to say this. Never once did Katie come beside me and say, "I told you so. You should have been doing this all along and if you would have listened to me, God's blessing would have been on our family much sooner than this."

No, no, no. See, what Katie taught me is this. None of us can be a perfect spouse, but every one of us can be a praying spouse. Every one of us can be a praying spouse.

A battle proof marriage is fixed on God's mission. Which leads us to the fourth and final point. This is where we will land the plane today:
A battle proof marriage is a powerful sign of God's grace

A battle proof marriage is a powerful sign of God's grace. The world says, "Failure is final. My marriage is too far gone. My past determines my future. I'm just destined to remain in my hurt from the past. I'm not going to move forward in a healthy relationship." But God says, "No, no, no. When Jesus was in the tomb, people thought the story was over, but I was just getting started."



You see, during this message, I recognize as we are looking at Ephesians 5 and it's like the ideal relationship, it's the ideal of what God wants for us, it's highly likely for many of us, we are like, "I don't know if I can do this. In fact, I'm quite certain that I've been falling short along the way." And if that's you, I understand that.

Maybe you're here today and you're like, "I don't see this kind of relationship in the future for me." And I just want to say to you today, regardless of where you are with your marriage, a battle proof marriage is possible for you. It's not easy, but it is possible for every marriage within the sound of my voice.

Regardless of where you are today in your journey of being married or single, I want you to hear this. I wholeheartedly believe that the goodness and mercy of God are running after you. Regardless of the challenges that you might be facing today, I want to go back and talk about grace. Let's go back to what Paul said in verse 32. It says:

"This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one." (NLT)

He wants our marriages, our relationships on the whole, to point to Jesus. Think about this again. When God created marriage He was looking ahead and seeing Jesus on a cross. When he created marriage, grace was on His mind. Marriage is such a powerful sign of the gospel because the only way that you and I can win in our marriage is with loads and loads and truck loads of grace. Right?

I mean, God willing this person that you say yes to, you're going to be together for decades. You're going to share one roof and one bed and you're going to talk about money. And for a lot of marriages there are going to be kids involved. I say all of that to say this, you're going to drive each other nuts. It's just part of the journey. Right? It's going to require grace. It's going to require Christlikeness and these three words over and over: I forgive you. If you've been married for more than five minutes, one of you has already messed up. Right? And at times you're going to offend one another. But, come on. Think about what we, as married people, get to represent.

Romans, chapter 5, verse 8 says that while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us. Why is that important? Because we weren't lovely at all. We were detached and rebellious and in our shame. When Jesus went to a cross it wasn't because we were attractive, we were compatible with Him, we were fun to be with. No, no, no.



It says in Hebrews 12:2 that Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. He looked ahead and He saw what we could be, not what we currently were. This selfless act made it possible for you and for me to live into His fulness.

Maybe you're wondering today, "Can my marriage get there? Is it too late? Is the shame of my past going to hold me back?" Maybe you're here today and you are wondering, with anxiety, whether you'll find the right person. Maybe you're here today and you are in an unmarried relationship and there is some conviction here for you. I want to end with two things. One is just in general for every one of us. And then I want to end with some specifics for some of us in the room.

In general, for all of us, I want to go back to Michael Angelo and David. I left out one of my favorite parts of the story. The marble that Michael Angelo used to carve maybe one of the greatest masterpieces of all time (I love this) was deemed too flawed and too imperfect by two artists who tried to use it before Michael Angelo. They thought it was defective and they threw it out. Including, by the way, Leonardo da Vinci, one of the greatest artists of all time.

I love this. Two artists looked at a piece of marble and said, "Too, flawed. It's too imperfect. Can't use it." Another artist, remember, Michael Angelo, said he could look at the marble and see the form of David. He didn't see too flawed and too imperfect; he looked at it and saw a masterpiece.

Listen to me. Regardless of where you are today, maybe in your mind you are like, "There are too many flaws; there are too many imperfections," God sees a masterpiece in the making.

Your marriage is made to mirror the Good News of Jesus. Think about this. when Jesus was dying on the cross, when Jesus was dead in the tomb, it was the darkest, the worst day of human history.

But when Jesus breathed that first breath in the tomb, it was the most vocal moment ever, which means for all of us, our faith is built on an empty tomb. Which means, regardless of the way that you are walking in with today, anything is possible. Anything is possible. And if your marriage or your future feels too far gone, I pray today that you'll just see it as an opportunity for God to show you just how powerful and how gracious He is.



So, here's what I want to do at all of our campuses. Would you stand to your feet? Would you stand to your feet at all of our campuses? Here in just a moment I'm going to give us an opportunity to actually move out of our seats because I would love the opportunity to pray over you. There is something powerful when we move and we get vulnerable with the Holy Spirit.

I want to ask you to consider three things. These are specific things I want to press into. If you are here today and you're married, you might say, "We're doing well." Or you might even say, "No, I think we might be in some trouble." The question I have for you today is, "What do I need to do to fight for my marriage? What do I need to do today to fight for my marriage."

And listen to me couples. Whether you're doing great or maybe you've got some troubles, the first thing that you might need to do is to come forward and be prayed over, to recognize that you don't have to do this on your own. There is a church family who wants to stand with you. So, in just a moment I'm going to say, "Get ready. Come forward." I would love to pray over you.

Maybe you're here today and you're single. Maybe you're single on purpose or at some point in your future you desire to be married. My question for you is, would you ask yourself, "What do I need to do today to fight for my heart, that my heart would stay aligned with God regardless of what is happening in the world around me." In a moment I'm going to invite you to come forward. I want to pray for you.

And for others of you, maybe you're here today and you're in an unmarried relationship. But, at some point, during the reading of the Scriptures you recognized that your life is not aligned with God. There is some conviction. You recognize, "I need to get straight with the Lord."

So, here's what I want to do. Right now, at all of our places, at all of our campuses, in our seats, would you just come forward right now wherever you are.

It's going to take somebody to be bold. At all of our locations, whether your marriage is doing great or you actually recognize, "No we're in some trouble. We need some help." I would encourage those who are mature believers in Jesus, would you just come forward first? You're just going to model for somebody else. You're going to pray for others around you. Would you come forward at all of our locations: married, single, in a relationship and you recognize that you need support?

At all of our campuses, people moving forward, would you just put your hands together and celebrate those who are moving toward God's betterment in their lives?



Come on. Let's pray together. And as I'm praying you need to continue to move forward. If you are here today and you're married would you just whisper this prayer to God?

God, today I want to fight for my marriage. God, I want to live with a hammer in one doing the work, I want to lift the sword in the other fighting that spiritual battle. I recognize that the enemy is coming after my marriage, but I'm not going to stand for it. No, I'm not going to be afraid of the enemy. I'm going to remember the Lord and I'm going to fight.

If you're married today and you feel like your marriage is in a tough place, whether your spouse is here with you or not, would you just commit to say: God, I'm going to do my part. I'm going to be filled up with the Holy Spirit. I'm going to remember, God, the mission of marriage which is to help my spouse reach their full.

If you are here today and you're single and maybe you're feeling some weight and some of the ways in which the world will often talk about singleness, would you right now:

I'm going to fight for my heart.

Paul, who was single, was the one who wrote Ephesians and said, "I wish that all of you would be single just like me." Would you recognize right where you are, you are a masterpiece in the making. Would you just hear that from the Spirit of God today?

If you are here today and you are in an unmarried relationship and you recognize you need to align yourself with God, would you just say: God, I'm going to fight today to make sure that when that wedding day comes that I'm standing ready. I'm not going to allow the things of earth to wreck my marriage. I'm going to stand with God.

For all of us, if you are here today and you recognize that you're living in that first chair, you're calling the shots and Jesus isn't even in your life, would you, right now say:

I want to come up under the authority of the One who came down from the Father to give me life. I'm a sinner in need of a Savior.

And today, would you say it right now?

Today I want to follow after Jesus.



God, would You hear the prayers of Your people. Would You come and inhabit the praises of Your children? It's in Jesus name that we pray. Come on, at all of our campuses, we say together: Amen, amen, amen.

Hey, listen. At all of our campuses listen. I know that the opportunity is often that we want to leave, but can I just argue that one of the most important things we do on a Sunday is right here in this moment, when we just say, "No, I'm going to stand here. I'm going to fight to do battle with the Holy Spirit as He fights for us."

So, at all of our campuses if you want to stay right where you are, if you came forward, and worship you can do so. If you stayed in your seat, I want you to know that there are going to be prayer partners at all of our campuses. You can come forward and be prayed over.

For all of us, stay in this moment, let's lift up our arms to God and let's fight together. Come on.

