

We are literally in the middle of a study on the book of Ecclesiastes, and tonight, specifically for what Solomon's going to unpack for us, I want to tell the whole story tonight. And so if you have your Bibles, grab them. Genesis 1 is where we're going to start. No piece of Scripture, no piece of this sacred literature of ours can be fully expounded on and fully unpacked outside of the story of Scripture. There is one story that run throughout Scripture. There is one one theme, one idea and it's broken apart in all these little books, but it's all a part of one story. So, no part of any part of this text is fully unpacked if it's done so outside of the kind of story that's in the Scriptures. And so, what I want to do tonight, specifically because of what Solomon is struggling with and what I think the weight is behind it, I want to tell the whole story. And so, that starts in Genesis 1. Genesis 1 and 2 is, to this point in history, the height of humanity, the pinnacle. It has never been as good as it is right here. No matter how smart we get, no matter how technologically savvy we get, no matter how educated we get, no matter how modernized things get, things have never been better than they were in Genesis 1 and 2.

And after we read this, we can think about that, we can even debate a little bit about whether or not this is true or not. But I know the Enlightenment brought a lot of good things to us, but I want you to keep in mind that since we started believing in the sufficiency of mankind, that has done nothing but lead us into the bloodiest 150 years in human history. And this is just historic fact. And okay, we've used our brain, used our technology to kind of beat some diseases, but the truth is most nations outside of the western world are still dying of things we get vaccinated for when we're children. And tonight, while I preach, I'm going to suck out of this little bottle of water. But the truth is, there will be 70 to 80 children who will die while we're in here because of lack of clean water. So, we know how to clean water, we know how to get medicine, but we're still so greedy and selfish that most of the world is dying for lack of those things. So, the Enlightenment was a great idea. It's currently failing miserably. So, we are very intelligent, and that helps smart people make a lot of money and build weapons to kill people more efficiently.

Genesis 1, starting in verse 26, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image...'" Very interesting here, because nothing's been created yet. So you've got a little Trinity action happening there for you. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." We've just read the pinnacle of human existence. God creates man and woman, naked in the garden and says, "Be fruitful and multiply." You know how that happens? That's another sermon. Now, God says "All that I've created in the garden is now yours. So, eat the steak, drink of the vine." There is an innocence here.

Sin has not entered the world. So, good things are not made ultimate things that lead us into destruction. And what I mean by that is wine doesn't lead to drunkenness, food doesn't lead to gluttony, naked man and woman doesn't lead to

lust. You have the world and the universe created and operating in the rhythm that God created it to operate in. In fact, Genesis 1 is so good, that Genesis 2 just repeats it. I mean, He literally finishes it up, looks at the crowd and goes, "Okay, I'll tell you again."

And He does it this time with a lot more detail, and I want us to go there. Genesis 2, starting in verse 7, "...then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Now, if you're not a person of faith in here and you don't believe in God, you're probably going, "Okay Chandler, you're an educated man. You have a degree. Are you trying to tell me that you believe, you honestly believe that God picked up some dirt and kind of made a Playdough animation dude with it, blew into it's nostrils and all of a sudden this dude came alive, and that's where we all came from?" Okay, the front end will be debated until Jesus returns and proves it. Let's talk the back end. So, since we can go, "Oh, is that how it happened or really did a monkey give birth to us?" let's just do this. We can debate the beginning but what cannot be debated scientifically is this: when you die (and you are 32 minutes closer to death than when you walked in), you will die like this. You will exhale deeply, life will leave your body and you will turn to dirt. Debate the front end all you want. What will happen to you is you will give back the breath that was loaned to you and you will turn back to dirt. But this is happy, Genesis 2, happy time. Verse 8, "And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." So, we've got the same story now in more detail. God picks up some clay, shapes it into a man, breathes life into it's nostrils and then begins to create plants and trees and oceans and suns and moons. He just begins to create all of this and puts the man in charge of it. Now look in verse 18. This is a very interesting verse. "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" So, now get this in your mind. The fall has not occurred, sin has not entered the world and God looks at the man and says, "My boy needs help. So, let's read, verse 19, "So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him." Now, I'm trying to fathom how long this would take. I know it's narrative, but this is the way it happens, so how long does it take to name everything? I mean, we've just got two kids and it took us 18 months. I mean, how long does it take to name everything that creeps, everything that crawls, every bird, every fish?

He names them all, and none of them does he find suitable. He's like, "Dog, I know he's supposed to be my best friend and all, but no thank you. Cow, no. Horse, no. Camel, no. Bird, no." And now after he names everything, which was monumental, listen to this, "So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,..." You want to see something interesting here? Now out of nowhere, we get poetry. So, he saw the sun and the moon and the stars and the ocean and all the animals and he's like, "Duck, bird, tree, mountain ocean." Woman shows up and man starts rhyming. I mean, out of nowhere, all of a sudden, he's moved, he's like, "I'm going to rhyme stuff here." So, now you've got poetry. "This at last..." Now, do you understand the "at last" piece not? I mean, here he's going, trying to find this connection, trying to find this piece that God's creating for him. I mean, he's naming everything. Nothing is suitable, and now he goes, "At last." "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Woman is the Hebrew idea "mine." "Duck, camel, goose...mine." So, since it goes down like this, listen to what happens. Because in verse 24, there's an institution born because the man says, "Mine. Out of me, this is the helper, this is the connection." So, look at what is born in verse 24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife." We haven't had a wife until this point in human history. Now all of a sudden, because the man looks around, nothing's suitable, finds the woman and says, "mine," God says, "Marriage is born. Man will leave his mother and father and cling to his wife." And

then, one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible, verse 25, "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." Alright, so this is a great moment. I mean, this is the pinnacle of the human existence, no war, no famine, no pride, no anger, no jealousy. Man and woman in this beautiful, unashamed, life giving connection, not only are they connected and in rhythm but the entire universe is in rhythm. You don't have anybody killing anybody. You don't have sorrow. There's this innocence to it all. It's really beautiful, and it lasts 9 seconds.

Chapter 3. Chapter 3 is going to reveal really the basic method of operation of humanity from this moment forward. You will see all the lies and all the deceit currently among us in Genesis 3. I'll point them out as they come up. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Problem number one: that is not what God said. You already have the woman adding to the law of God. That is not the command of God. I do not have time to get into this one in particular tonight. Go back and read Genesis 1 and 2. She is adding to the command. From this moment forward, man will add to the commands of God. Now, let's keep looking. "But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." Comical that verse is. "Here comes God. Hurry up and climb up in the tree, Eve." It's a comical verse. As if God's not going to be able to find them in the trees He created and sustains and holds together by the power of His word. It's a good try though. I would have probably picked a cave or something.

Verse 9, "But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree." Now, do you see what happened? In one chapter, we've gone from "mine" to "that chick you gave me." Now, I want to point something out here, and you can giggle at it if you want. I won't giggle because I've seen the pain brought out for it. From this moment on, when men are busted in their sins, they'll blame their wives. From this moment on, you let a man be lonely, you let him get frustrated, you let him get busted in his sin, and he'll almost always blame his wife. "If she would just... If she would just... If she would just..." And they'll justify their junk by pointing to the woman. Do you notice that he doesn't even answer the question? "Did you eat of the tree?" "The woman gave me a piece of fruit. I don't know." Let's keep reading.

"Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Perfect rhythm between man, woman, God and creation fractured in a moment to being beyond repair. Not only now is there a disjoint and a tear in the fabric of the universe between mankind and creation itself, but there is also a tear between men and women that's a part of the curse that makes the relationship between man and woman hold the power to be one of the most sorrowful, devastating things in the universe.

Ecclesiastes 7, let's talk about Solomon. Solomon's a very wealthy man, and he's trying to figure out life. Verse 25, "I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness." This is a very interesting text. Here's what he says, "I'm trying to figure out if there's any real deep meaning in life. I'm trying to figure out if anything is really significant, if anything will bring lasting satisfaction, but I keep running into the same problem...me. There is a foolishness and a wickedness in me that I can't get past. I keep trying the same things over and over again, hoping that they're going to produce this new result. I keep doing the same things over and over again, and I don't know why I do them. I'm doing things that I know are destructive and are going to harm not only my spirit but all those around me, but I just keep doing them." Have you ever heard anyone say, "No one really understands me." That's easy enough. We've all said that, right? Now, the assertion there is that you alone understand yourself. The thing about Scripture is Scripture's going to be clear. If there's one person you don't get, it's you. This explains why you can help other people with their junk while staying in your own. Have you ever wondered about that? How you can sit down with other people, and all of a sudden, you're Dr. Phil? "This is easy..." you're drawing diagrams, Scripture's coming to you, but you can't ever get out of your own junk, even if your junk is the same thing you're leading other people out of. Do you know why? Because you are the biggest mystery to you. Yeah, so this is Solomon's problem. He goes, "I keep trying to figure it out, but I keep being in the middle, derailing things." Now, I just want to be really honest and prepare you for this. Our boy Solomon, he's got some major, major issues, and they're about to come out. Verse 26, "And I find something more bitter than death..." So, he doesn't mess around. He's not like, "it's more bitter than rain on your wedding day" or "it's more bitter than the flu." No, he's like, "more bitter than death." There's nothing more bitter than what he's found.

Now look at what he says he's found. What's more bitter than death itself? Listen to this cat, "And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her." What did he find that was more bitter than death? Woman. I mean, I just want to hug him and be like, "What did your momma do to you, Solomon? What happened?" But here's what happened. Solomon, he sets his heart to the party. He parties beyond any of us does. I mean, he just parties, blows it up. He then just starts building houses. He's like, "Well, the party thing doesn't do anything for me anymore," so he just starts building and building and building and he can't build anything more or anything bigger. And so, he moves on and just tries to enjoy his wealth, and that brings no satisfaction to him too.

So he goes, "You know what's missing? A significant other. I need to find a woman who will love me, cherish me, build me up. I need to find the one." You college students who grew up in church know what I'm talking about. Yeah, the unicorn, the one, a mythical creature. "I've got to find her." And you know what he does? He marries a woman. And apparently it doesn't work, because he marries another one. Two wives now. I just went on a group date once; it freaked me out. Two wives. It doesn't work well, he marries a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth, a tenth, eleventh...I can't churn this out or we'll be here all night. He had 700 wives. Solomon ends up with 700 wives and 300 hookers at his house, and despite the fact that he's getting more play than all of us combined, he finds his soul as empty and as lonely as it's ever been. And now on top of empty loneliness, bitterness resides. Now, this is important for us. You want to know why? Because every magazine and every bit of popular culture wants to sell us that if we would be a good love, if we would figure out the techniques to being just a sex god of some kind, for males, for women, if we could figure out how to be sexy enough, if we could figure that thing out, then all of a sudden life's going to work for us. And Solomon's going, "I've got 300 hookers at my house, man, and I am as frustrated and as lonely as ever."

Do you hear what he's saying? I mean, there's this deep level of pain and a deep level of frustration here. "You know what I found more bitter than death? Women." "What? You have 700 wives." "I know." Now, look at what happens next, because what happens next is revealing and it will be my first of many rants this evening. Look at this, I was just astounded by this. "Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things-- which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." Okay, follow me. He says, "One man in a thousand..." I'm 32 years old. I don't know that at 32 years of age, I have had conversations with a thousand men. He's saying, "I meet one man among a thousand who is upright and just and holy and our souls kind of click." This is not sexual. He does not struggle with homosexuality. This is his way of saying, "One in a thousand that I meet, I connect with and can do life deeply with and there is something beyond just surface level conversation." Now, I think he's right. It is very difficult for men to have very deep relationships with other men. There are several reasons, two in particular:

Number 1, the monumental issue of pride that is honed into men from the day they are born. Like, have you ever listened to dudes talk? "What did you do last weekend, Bill?" "Went duck hunting. Got a couple. What did you do?" "I killed a pterodactyl. Yeah, man. I mean, he just flew and my gun jammed. So I jumped up and grabbed him and bit a hole in his throat, choked the life out of him and mounted him on my wall. But hey man, ducks are cool. I mean, I used to hunt ducks when I was 7, but that's great for you, man. Did you take your boy with you or something?" I mean, this is it, this is the trump game. It's like every conversation involving a group of males is like a game of spades, where everybody just has the ace of spades. "I spade that...I spade that...well, I spade that..." and around the circle it goes.

So, in the pterodactyl conversation, God forbid there be a third man who has to top killing a pterodactyl with your bare hands. So, you've got this pride issue. The other thing: we've been trained from day one by culture, by parents, by life that we can do it and we don't need any help and we're sufficient. And this is why if you ever pay attention to male conversation, it always revolves around events. That's it. Men talk about events. Sports, the gym, the church, this place, hunting, fishing, there's rarely, 1 in 1000 will get to that place where souls are bared and there's honesty, because we've been trained from day one that "We've got it, we can control it, we can handle it, we can get it done and if you can't, then you're weak and you're not a man."

And so starting very early on, this false sense of bravado takes over man, where all of a sudden, manhood is defined by camping and athletics. And so, that's our conversation. I know, it's pretty sad. I'm not kidding. Pay attention tonight at dinner. "Did you see the game this afternoon?" 45 minutes on what we should do with T.O. That's what it will be. Conversations about whether or not I was theologically correct or not, an event. "Let's talk about whether he did a good job or not...Never about me, never about what's going on in my heart, never about any of that. Do you know why? Because I'm alright. I got it." And men who finally get to the place where they can be honest and open, in my experience, most of the time, it accompanies tragedy. Let tragedy occur, and then all of sudden, we're like, "I can't." But until then, we keep up the facade, conversation is around events, and we continue to try to trump one another's stories. So ladies, I'm trying to get you to understand this too. It's not like we're dishonest, it's just that we haven't learned what's going on in there. It's not like we're trying to hide from you, we really don't know.

So, when you ask, "What are you feeling?," we're like, "Hungry. God, I don't know. I'm hungry. I want something to eat." It's because we really don't know ourselves; it's not like we're trying to hide from you. We just don't know. I mean, from day one, it's not what we do, it's not what we think. And then you've got this, any weird thing that happens to any young man who doesn't like sports or God forbid he like the arts or music or drama, you've got this weird chasm in society where he doesn't measure up to the male standard of athletics or camping. I mean, it's just a train wreck out there. "One man among a thousand I found," but let's get to the point, "and yet, I have never found this in a woman, this soul

connection." So you've got to step back at this and say, "Solomon, you've got 700 wives. Was there never like...did you date them? I mean, were they given to you for Christmas? How does this work? I mean, because surely you dated them and said, 'Not like her.'" I've got a theory. Here's what it is. I'll just unpack it for you. Solomon has sexual issues. You know how I know this? 300 concubines gives him away. Like most of us, we have the safety of internet porn, not our boy Solomon. He's got a bunch of hookers at his house, it gives him away. Let me tell you what's happening here. Solomon's desire to know a woman deeply is stymied by his lust, and women have lost their souls and are just bodies to him. And so, as he sits across the dinner table and a woman unpacks her hopes and dreams, he sees only her breasts, and he has, by his sexual addiction, damned himself to shallow, lust-driven relationships that has left his heart bitter and full of despair. This is why God wired things the way he wired them. This is why, in four years, I've preached four sermons on the three Hebrew words: *rayah*, *ahava* and *dode*, that friendship leads to commitment that then leads to *dode*, the mingling of souls, the sexual act. As believers in Jesus Christ and according to the creative order, men were not designed by God to have sex with bodies; they were created to make love to souls.

This is why pornography is so unbelievably destructive. "Aw, come on Chandler. It's just porn. It's just some naked girl. It's not destructive." Yes it is. It objectifies and removes the soul and the mind from women to the point that most college-aged males have a very difficult time relating to women in any kind of deep, intimate, honest way and tend to pursue the physical right out of the gate. And once the physical starts, it gets very difficult to get back in to what soul matters. Do you know why? What's easier, deep soul level conversation or making out? Yeah, making out is easier, and it's a false intimacy and it's a quick intimacy. And it's easier to feel close and connected making out than it is getting through really knowing each other. I was going to show this, but I decided not to. I showed it to some of the pastors, and they were like, "Man, it's just too graphic. I just don't think you could get away with that without maybe causing some people to stumble." But about 2 years ago there was this "20/20" episode where Diane Sawyer was interviewing this very well known porn star. And she was just talking about all the things she had done, and it was grotesque. It was hard to watch. I mean, they even showed like just stills, nothing that can't be on "20/20," but they showed stills of these sexual acts that she was in. She was just unpacking it, man. She was just, "I do this, and I do that and this was my first time to do that," and there was just this kind of arrogant "I'm doing this. This is great. I love this thing." And then, Diane Sawyer finally couldn't take it anymore after this. I mean it's like 20 minutes. And she says, "You're talking about things most women consider horrific, and you're smiling." By the way, the whole time she's telling this story about how she was involved in gang-bangs with 20 dudes, the whole time she's unpacking this stuff, they're showing pictures of her as a little girl, like in a softball uniform with little pigtails. So Diane presses the question, "How can you talk about these things and smile?" And then, she wouldn't respond. She just kept smiling. She just stared at her, she stared at her, she stared at her for about seven seconds, the most awkward seven seconds I've seen on film. And she looks down at the floor, and she starts sobbing. And the only thing she can get through her sobs is, "I hate myself." And I'm wondering to this day how many young men watch her on the net and have completely gutted her of any value. And do you know what I'm horrified about? I have a three-and-a-half year old daughter with a beautiful soul, and porn is so unbelievably rampant. I am terrified that someone might not see and love and cherish that in her. And so, I'm going to use our technology department here at the Village to hack into his computer and do all this stuff I can do to find out whether or not he's a dog. I don't know why you're giggling. I'll have him followed, investigated. Yeah, porn, it removes the ability for deep genuine intimacy. It's not just images. It will gut you of what you really want, men. "I really want sex." That's funny, because Solomon got a lot of it, and he ended up in more despair than he was before he even got any wives. Such tough days on this front.

Okay, Solomon's living out Genesis 3. You know how like common language in our day is a "post 9-11 world?" Solomon is experiencing "post Genesis 2." He is walking in and experiencing the world of post Genesis 2. But there's going to be something that happens in Jesus that begins to reconcile and make right this fracture that occurred. So, let's look at it in Ephesians 5. Genesis 1 and 2, the pinnacle of humanity. Genesis 3 fractures it. Solomon is proof of it in Ecclesiastes

7. Ecclesiastes 7 lives on today in those who are addicted to pornography. Ephesians 5, starting in verse 22. There's going to be something that happens in Jesus that restores. This is what it looks like. These are not popular words. I think they're not popular words because the utter failure of men to be the kind of men that Jesus has asked us to be and that wives find this next piece offensive because of the failure of men. But I'll say this. After we're done here, I want to make this challenge anytime I preach, if you're a woman in here and, after I finish preaching this text, you go, "I don't want that at all," then feel free to e-mail me. You will be the first I have ever met. I also want you notice that he's going to start here by talking to wives. Every time man and woman, as husband and wife, are addressed in Scripture, He always begins with the wife. He never begins with the husband anywhere in Scripture. This is because no man can lead a woman who refuses to follow. Let's look at it, verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." This is a really interesting text, and it's been used to abuse and confine and bind. The depth of it though is found in verse 24, when he talks about submitting to a husband like the church submits to Jesus. How does the church submit to Jesus? Joyfully. It's not begrudging and it's not fearful and it's not domineering. Jesus doesn't show up on the scene and demand begrudging submission because He's all powerful. Instead, He comes and He serves and He extends grace and love and nurturing patience, and the church responds in joy to that headship.

Now, I want to keep going here, and if you're a man in here right now, be really careful not to look over to your wife and go, "Are you listening to him, baby?" Let's get to your part dumb-dumb. You've got the bigger role. It's monumental, and it's hard to read. Verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." There are times when Scripture reads you. So, I enjoy reading Scripture. I don't like it when it reads me. This is a really interesting text that a man who loves himself will love his wife and a man who hates himself will hate his wife. It's been my experience that men, when caught up in sin, let's say they're having an adulterous affair, let's say they're addicted to pornography, let's say they're flirting where they shouldn't be flirting, let's say they're in chat rooms they shouldn't be in, let's say there's some kind of scheme issue, there's some kind of deep issue, they will always come home angry at their wives who haven't done anything. You don't hate your wife, you hate yourself. And when hate is at the core of yourself, you've got nothing to give but hate. That's what I'm saying. That's the crazy part about Scripture. Sometimes it will just start reading you. Okay, so let's get finished because we're on the male responsibility here in marriage. Verse 29, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife." Husbands, please listen to that. Now, your mom did a great job. Kiss her and go home. "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." The job of the man is to walk into his home and be the hands, feet and voice of Jesus in the home. So, the question is: what are the hands, the feet and the voice of Jesus? Nourishing, cherishing, empowering, self-giving, selfless, serving, this is what Jesus does to the church. This is the command of God on the man: to love his wife like Jesus loves the church.

This is wildly interesting when you compare it to how we preach and teach manhood and womanhood. Like, let me give you some example. My wife, she loves to sing. She's written a lot of the songs we sing. She was up here tonight, singing. So, she had to get here very early this morning to practice with the band in order to sing, which left me at home with the kids. Now this is, at the beginning for me today, a very long day. I mean, this is the fifth service for me. It is a very long,

exhausting day. I'll go home and climb into bed after this, suck my thumb and be gone. I don't watch a lot of TV, I mean I'm emotionally done after this. Since I've have such a long day and since I'm the man, shouldn't she get up this morning and make me breakfast? I mean, shouldn't she have some breakfast for me when I get up?

I have a long day. I mean, shouldn't she rub my shoulders while I eat the bounty and tell me of how I'm just going to get them today? Shouldn't she have my clothes laid out for me, pressed and clean? I mean, I have a long day today. You know what's funny? In all that I've read in Ephesians 5, I never find one command for her to serve me. I find instead, a biblical command for me to serve her. And she loves music, so we bought a piano. So, for her birthday last year, I got her this big journal and wrote a psalm in there and wrote her a little note, "Do it, write it, go." So this morning at 6:00AM, she gets up and comes up here, and I made some Halloween cinnamon rolls, put them on a princess plate, woke up my daughter, who then came down and ate the icing off of all three of them. I went up, woke up my son, and I put him in a real goofy looking outfit, because I'm trying to suppress the pride early on. He's so going to go to counseling. And 30 minutes before I touch the stage, I pulled up, dropped the kids off at the nursery and went back to the room, looked over my notes and got ready to go. Why? Because the Scripture says it's not about my gifting, not my gifting alone, but about me empowering the gifts that Christ has sown into my wife. Nourishing, cherishing. Now, I want to try to hit something off the pass, because here's what we like to do, here's what I like to do. By "we," I mean "me." The way I like to read this is this, "Okay, so if I do this, she does this. And if I do this and she doesn't do that, then I get mad. Huh? I'm doing what I'm supposed to do. Why isn't she doing what she's supposed to do? So then I'll do this. Well I won't do what I'm supposed to do anymore. You make the cinnamon rolls. I'll be at the church." Yeah, it's the game I play. The funny thing here is Jesus is saying, "What does this have to do with her? I told you to love her like I love the church. I never asked you how she responds. I just told you to love her like I love you. By the way, would like our relationship to work this way?" So then, I pretend like I didn't hear that. "How about we do it this way. How about every time you're not obedient and you don't respond like I want you to respond, how about I kick you out of the kingdom? How about if I withdraw from you and just not let you be aware of my presence anymore? How about we play that way?" And so, then I'm like, "That's not fair." Right? I mean, isn't this the game? Hear me. God, in no way in this text, says, "Love her like I love the church if she'll submit." And in the same way, He doesn't say, "Submit if he does that." So, this is monumentally difficult, isn't it? Even if you're single, you should be going, "Good Lord. Man, this is hard." I mean, you can't do this on your own strength. There's no way. So okay, something had to happen in Jesus to bring this about.

Something had to happen in Jesus that would make this a possibility, because what you're reading here is the reestablishment of Genesis 1 and 2 or at least the paths towards it. We're going past 3 back into 1 and 2. So, what happens in Jesus that enables a man to love his wife like He loves the church and enables a woman to receive that kind of love. Colossians 1, one of my favorite passages. I will preach it ever week if you keep coming back. Now, while you're turning there, let me talk specifically to the married people. I want to encourage you and I want to plead for your marriage to not play the Holy Spirit on the way home, which means on the way home, don't look over at your husband and go, "Did you hear what he said tonight? Hmm? Guess who's making dinner tomorrow night. You serve, I submit." If you do that, it's going to go bad for you. If you do that little game where you like leave your notes out near where he sits, "Maybe he'll see it. I don't know. God's sovereign." If you do that, it's going to go bad for you. I have never seen in any venue where a wife confronted her husbands failure in the car on the way home and had him go, "You're right." I have never even heard of it happening. I mean, I read a story where a sea was parted, and I have still never heard that story. So, don't play the role of Holy Spirit. Here's where I think you should land on this. You've got plenty to worry about yourself on either side of this. God's given you plenty to work through and plenty to wrestle with without worrying about the significant other. Okay, Colossians 1. How in the world is this possible? How can we love like this? How can we walk like this? I'm going to have to try to put a bullet in a popular idea in order for us to get where we need to go. Verse 15, "He is the image of the invisible God,..." Now, that's such a beautiful text. He's saying here anything you would want to know about God, how it pleases Him, what bothers Him, what He enjoys. If you want to know the character of God, you

want to know about God, Jesus is the image of the invisible God, this God that has not been seen, not been touched. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. "...the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him." Everything was created for Him. Every star, every tree, the wind, your house, money, body, everything created for Jesus. He is preeminent, He sits at the top, all things are about Him. Now, let's keep reading. "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent," top, nothing above Him, nothing else to gain, nothing else to get, the goal, the end, what it's all about is Jesus. Now, I'm going to try to combat something as best as I can in here. Following Jesus is not going to make you wealthy. Following Jesus does not guarantee that you're going to be healthy. The message of Scripture and the gospel of Christ is not that in following Him, everything goes right, but that He is enough no matter what happens. That's the message of the gospel, not that everything's going to be okay. And it's maddening to me that the prosperity gospel is so unbelievably popular among people who then have to completely disregard Scripture as well as Christian history. Every apostle in the Bible dies bad, I mean bad. They don't like to stumble in the street and get run over by a car. They get beheaded, they get crucified upside down, they get boiled in oil. They die poor and they're slaughtered. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, struggles with depression his whole life and then dies. Christianity has been built and has been carried through the generations on the blood of men, not on the wealth. This is an absurd idea that would make Christ not preeminent, but what He can give you. That is not Christianity. That is something entirely different, and it's heresy that would have gotten you burned alive 200 years ago.

It is a ridiculous notion. Jesus is enough. He's enough. We pursue healing, maybe we get it, maybe we don't. He's enough if we don't. This is the message, that Jesus is sufficient. Like in Acts. The apostles, they get arrested, and this court says, "If you don't quit this preaching stuff, if you don't quit talking about Jesus, we're going to beat you to death." And the response was simple, "Do what you think is right. As for us, we cannot help but speaking about what we have seen and heard." And they beat the mess out of them and released them, and they rejoiced. I mean, they got beat nearly to death. This was the fruit of the gospel in their lives, beatings. And they left rejoicing. They left, they were going, "Woohoo! You can see my spine! No, like literally, it's exposed. Awesome!" So, it seems like Jesus can transcend the most horrific of circumstances. This is not about what Jesus gets you; it's just about Jesus, preeminent, on top of the chain, nothing else to want, nothing else to pursue. He is enough. That's the message. So listen, I'm on you all the time, "Heal. Pursue healing. Pursue it because He's going to give it to some, not all." This is what Paul means when he says, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" Do you know what he means by that? "One day, I get to die and I don't have to struggle with this anymore." That's what Romans 8 says, "We groan." This is why you and I, we eagerly await the return of Christ, because that's when Genesis 1 and 2 is back in it's fullness. Until then, we're simply on the path. It's why we look to the east and say, "Come get us." And until then, we groan and we have the promise that He's enough, He's enough. And listen, for you U2 fans, this is what Bono means when he says, "You carry the cross that bore my shame, but I still haven't found what I'm looking for." He's not saying that Jesus didn't work, he's saying, "We're not there yet." It hadn't been all redeemed yet. We're not back there yet. But I've got hope and I've got faith, but we'll get to that in a moment.

Alright, Jesus is enough, wildly unpopular. If you don't want to come back, then fine. There will be plenty of people out there who will tell you that if you follow Jesus, He'll make you healthy, wealthy and wise. And life will teach you that that's not true, and those men will throw guilt on you and tell you if you just had enough faith or if you would just live right, then it would go well. They're liars. I don't know how else to say it to you. Verse 18, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile..." Here's our idea, to reconcile, to make things right. What is He making right? What was fractured in Genesis 3. "...to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven..." How does He make it right? How does He set us on the path towards 1 and 2? Look at it, "...by making peace by the blood of his cross." It goes back to the cross. Alright, so how do we live this thing out? What do we do from here? Look at what's

next, "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him..." I mean, this is shocking. Here's why it's shocking. I know the definition of those three words, holy, blameless and above reproach, and I know me. I am proachable. And Scripture goes, "I see only the cross. I see holy, blameless." In fact, the Scriptures just said that in this day, because of the cross of Christ, Jesus, God the Father looks at us and goes, "I got nothing. Great. Come on." Above reproach, this is an amazing idea. How does this happen? How do we walk the path through Genesis 3 to get back to 1 and 2? This next part is key. Most won't like this part. Some might even send me an e-mail telling me how I've gone back to the law. I haven't gone back to the law, I've just read the Scriptures to you. Here we go, "...if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard..." What's the gospel? Alright, let's go back to this. The gospel is that in the death and resurrection of Christ, by trusting and walking in obedience to the commands of Christ, He will lead me past Genesis 3, back into 1 and 2 and that He has given me all the strength and all that I need today to be obedient to those commands. How does Ephesians 5 happen? How does a man love a woman like that? How does a woman walk in love with a man like that? They do it by waking up and with faith and hope, knowing that the gospel promises enough strength for today to be obedient to Jesus, who's leading us back to Genesis 1 and 2.

And so, I got up this morning and made cinnamon rolls. Would I have liked to sleep in? Oh you bet. Would I have liked to get up and look at my notes? You bet I would have. Would I have liked to run to Starbucks and get a grande Americano? Mmm. Yes, I would have. But instead, I made cinnamon rolls. And my faith and my hope is that by walking in obedience, we'll get through 3 and get back to 1 and 2. And He's given me enough strength today to do what He's asked. And so, there are these days where I just can't wait to go to bed, because I know there's new mercies tomorrow and I feel like I'm almost out. And there are some days where I really get what David meant when he said, "You are better than life. Life is kind of this tiring thing. You're better than it." I get what John meant when he said, "Come quickly." This is the hope of those who profess Jesus. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, sickly, broken and poor or healthy, rich and put together, we pursue Him as the all sufficient preeminent in the universe, and we trust that He will give enough grace and mercy for today and lead us back to the rhythm.

Let's pray, "Father, I want to pray for my brothers in here tonight. I want to pray that if they walked in here tonight and have got struggles or wars with pornography and lust. I just want to pray for conviction and movement. And I pray that you would just shake up their soul and not make them indifferent to this any longer. And I pray that they would feel the weight of what they're damning themselves to and that it might create movement, whether that's Celebrate Recovery on Thursday night or that's stopping by the Center for Christian Counseling on the way out tonight. I pray for more than just confession, because I think one of the things that's happening among Evangelicals is that we're getting this confession thing down where we just come every week and confess the same junk but don't walk in the obedience that You command us to walk in. I pray that they would ponder, whether married or single, the commands in Ephesians 5 and what they look like. And I pray for my sisters. I pray for those who have been wounded and hurt by Solomons, who have been physically used and not cherished, nurtured or loved. I pray for restoration there. And I pray that You wouldn't let their hearts become fearful. And I pray that You would give them the courage and the strength to hold out as long as possible until they found a man who would love their soul. And I pray for marriages. I pray for where husbands have grown tired or indifferent or emotionally withdrawn, that You would speak through the Scriptures sufficiently tonight to stir and move. And more than anything tonight, I pray for hope, maybe through something that was said tonight the real pursuit of our hearts has been exposed. Maybe we're waking up tonight going, "Oh man, I'm following Jesus because I thought He would bring me this or because I thought He would do this or I thought so in the end we weren't pursuing Jesus at all, we were pursuing the thing we thought He could bring. So I pray that in that, You would convict. I thank You for grace that covers us as we stumble along in this thing. I love that song Bleecker sings, "Oh glorious day." I look forward to that day, Father. I don't know what else You're doing in here tonight, but I pray that You would stir and

convict and reconcile like You do. Help us relationally. We're all banged up, and we've got no positive messages of what it's supposed to look like. Help us. It's for Your beautiful, reconciling, Genesis 1 and 2 restoring name that we place our hope and our faith that we pray. Amen."

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