

# Couples

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[0:00] We've been going through, hey, there's more seats at the front.! In fact, the front is really fairly free.! Family.

You realize that a church is really just made up of all the relationships that we have here. And we better get good at relationships. Otherwise, things can turn south fairly quickly. You can start turning off each other.

You can start arguing with each other very quickly. Because people, quite frankly, are annoying. And so we've been figuring out, okay, so what does it mean? Why did God choose us to be together, to be in this place at this time?

And what does that mean? And we went through different ones. We went through what your relationship with your family looks like. And how that impacts you and your relationship with the people here. And the relationship with him. Then we talked about singleness.

Then we talked about friendship. And now we're going to be talking about marriage as just one of these topics that actually we're finishing upon. And then next week we're going to summarize. If I was to sum up everything I'm going to say in the next 20 minutes.

[1:16] And we've got some other people, which I'm really excited about, who are going to come up and share a little bit of their journey. If I'm going to sum up everything I'm going to say. And if you need to fall asleep, then listen to me for the next 10 seconds. And then you can fall asleep. And that is this.

Marriage is not about you. Marriage is not about you. Okay. And I want to tell you why a little bit more about that as we go. I said singleness is a gift. I said marriage is a gift.

What's the purpose of a gift? If you're like, well, I didn't want the gift of singleness. Or I don't want the gift of marriage anymore. What's the purpose of a gift? The purpose of a gift is to build up the body.

And that's why it's not about you. It's not about you. And actually in 1 Corinthians 12, it talks about this. He talks about the body. This is the body of all the different parts of all the different gifts.

And the whole point is to try and build up the body to point to God. The problem is in the church in Corinth at the time in 1 Corinthians 12, he's writing to these people going, these are talented people.

[2:14] These are passionate people. These are gifted people, but they're arguing all the time. And he starts to talk about different parts of the body. And he's saying if this part's hurting, then this part's going to be no good.

This part can't say to that part that it doesn't need you. I'm learning this as we speak as I have an Achilles that has been sutured back together. But it's going to take a lot of time.

And actually I've witnessed, and I'm not going to embarrass him here. I've witnessed in my house how one part of the body hurting or being utterly useless has caused the other parts of the body to step up.

My older two children have just been heroes on top of the superhero that is my wife. And you watch the body just compensate and just work around that. And then they ask me, oh, how long is it going to be till you get back?

I mean, it's going to be four to six months till I start walking, jogging, something like that. Nine to 12 months before I start the crutch life. I see you. I see you. Nine to 12 months before I can play any sports again.

[3:11] And it's probably going to be four years until I can start washing the dishes. And maybe I'll never touch a vacuum cleaner ever again. You watch the body just compensate around you.

And it's beautiful. And we see it. And I came and I saw Ken today who is just two months ahead of me in the injury. Again, we're needing players for next year.

If anyone has a strong Achilles, come and join us. But my heart just jumped for joy seeing Ken. Because he's in his two shoes now for the first time. And I'm like, man, that's so fun. It's literally my heart just filled with joy as I then limped back over here myself.

But they've been just superheroes for our family. Just everything that they had to go through. And then they get to pass it to us. So in the best case scenario, body is great.

But in the worst case, and as is often the worst case when people are around each other, there are problems. So he stops at 1 Corinthians 12 and then he moves into 1 Corinthians 13, which is this famous passage about love.

[4:20] And it's funny because I went away with Cubon a couple of weeks ago just to spend time with the Lord. And I felt the Lord tell me, hey, actually, read that and then actually memorize it. And actually, if you're considering scripture memory and you found it hard, I've never done one as easy and as impactful as 1 Corinthians 13.

It's just three simple stanzas. It's the best. I highly recommend it. And that completely just took me to a different place. And it's just been stirring in my heart all this time because the Lord used it to convict me.

And I knew I was coming to talk about marriage. But here was my dilemma. 1 Corinthians 13 is not really about marriage. It's probably the most commonly used passage in all weddings. But it's not actually about marriage.

It's about church arguing with each other. And I want us to remember that context because it isn't actually about arguing. It's the wrong context if we use it there, but it can be applied very much, very much to marriage.

So it's not exclusive to marriage, but it can be applied to marriage. So actually, if you will allow me, I will still use this passage today because I think there's something that the Lord taught me in how I deal with my relationships, especially with how I love my wife.

[5:30] And as we even think about this topic of marriage, I do think it has a lot to offer here. Because why? Relationships are hard and you need love. And marriage relationships are probably the hardest.

Grace is just like, preach it. Yes. Happy birthday, Grace, by the way. Happy birthday. And Darren as well. These two people are having their birthdays and they're serving with us in church.

How cool is that? How cool is that? But man, marriage is hard. Relationship is hard. And that's why we need love.

That's why we need love. There's a couple of books that if you've thought about, if you're married or you're thinking about getting married or it's just an interesting topic to you. There's two books that have really impacted me.

One is You and Me Forever by Frances and Lisa Chan. And the other one is The Meaning of Marriage by Tim Keller. Both have given me just sound advice and reminded me of what really the purpose of marriage is.

[6:28] And again, marriage is not about you. That's what I'm learning. But marriage does very much expose a lot of things about you. There's one quote that Frances says here. Marriage is one of the most humbling, sanctifying journeys you will ever be a part of.

It forces us to wrestle with our selfishness and pride. But it also gives us a platform to display love and commitment. It was 1 Corinthians 13 that the Lord used to convict me of how I wasn't loving my wife enough.

Actually, it so happened that Alex and Kara had their disputes. And I was talking to them these last few weeks. And actually, that was the same passage the Lord used for them too. When Alex committed a crime and needed to seek forgiveness from Kara.

And Kara, out of love, forgave him. So it's not about just marriage, but it can be applied to everything. And as I look at this passage, I want to share three quick points before I bring up some people to talk a little bit about it.

And the first point is this. Marriage exposes your motivation. There is nothing that exposes your motivations more than marriage. He says this. If I can speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I have not love, I'm a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal.

[7:36] He says, if I have prophetic powers. Can you imagine someone? He says, if I have prophetic powers and I understand all mysteries and all knowledge. And if I have faith so as to

remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all that I have and deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Those are strong words.

Have you met someone who has prophetic powers and who understands all mysteries and all knowledge? But that person does nothing if they don't have love. Have you met someone who can speak in tongues of angels and of men and isn't of this world, but they have not love?

They're a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. Have you met someone who's given away all their money, all their possessions, even sacrificed themselves and martyred themselves. But if they didn't have love, they would gain nothing.

Marriage exposes our motivations because it's not about what we do. It's about our heart. It's about our heart.

[8:44] It's about love. But have not love. Francis carries on and says this again. Our marriage problems are not really marriage problems. They are heart problems. They are God problems.

Our lack of intimacy with God causes a void that we try to fill with the frailest of substitutes. Like wealth or pleasure. Like fame or respect. Like people. Like marriage.

Marriage isn't about us, but it exposes what's actually in our hearts. You find out how selfish you are when you get married.

Because then you realize that you cannot get your own way. And I had a moment where I was in a discussion. Civilized, sophisticated discussion with my wife.

Where she was revealing to me truths about me. But man, it says, love is not irritable. It does not insist on its own way and is not resentful.

[9:42] And I was like, man, yeah, I am insisting my own way. I am irritable and I am resentful. It is showing my heart. Marriage exposes your motivation.

Absolutely exposes your motivation. And there's a difference here between what the world considers relationships to be. And we talked about this last week with friendships. They're user friendships. They're contract friendships.

Whereas we're going to enter into an agreement because we're going to be friends. Because you can do something for me and I can do something for you. But marriage is not that. Marriage is covered in a relationship that is saying, basically, I'm going to love you no matter what.

What's the perfect example of this kind of love? Jesus, yes. But on earth, what's the closest thing? Maybe the only real closest one, because the husband is failing loving his wife.

The only closest one probably is the love that a mother has for the baby. Because a baby, I'll tell you, does nothing for the parent. Like zero. Absolutely zero.

[10:40] But yet, you just keep loving. A baby is completely, utterly selfish. Only interested in their own needs. But yet, a mother will just keep giving. Just keep giving.

And they'll look at this baby and still say they're beautiful. Most of that is hormones. But they'll look and they're like, oh, you're so beautiful. And in my head, I'm like, really? He looks like an alien.

But it exposes your motivation. Actually, all our relationships expose our motivation. And here he's saying, but if you don't have love, then you are nothing.

I think there was a turning point in mine and Christina's marriage where we finally got to understand what marriage was. When we could look at each other in the eye and go, you will never completely satisfy me.

She said that quicker than I did, admittedly. That's the point of a marriage, actually. Because so often we've bought into the idea of what society thinks marriage should be.

[11:42] That you should find someone who is a perfect complement to you, who will satisfy every single one of your needs so you will feel complete. And if you don't feel complete, you'll start writing songs about them and albums about them and become a female global superstar.

But what is that? That is when we put all our hope into someone else, worshipping someone else. And then they disappoint because they do. And time and time again, we still do the same thing.

Theologians actually say that one commentator said, actually, we often confuse love and hunger.

We confuse love and hunger. Love is the covenant love that you would give unconditionally. Hunger is just that you just want your needs to be satisfied. Hunger is similar to lust.

You just need someone so you don't feel as lonely. You just feel someone so you can order the meal for two at the restaurants. You just need someone so you can take advantage of the buy one get one free.

[12:41] You just need someone so you feel better about yourself. That's hunger. Love is different. Love is one that I'm going to keep giving to you.

Stephen's going to keep giving and keep giving and keep giving to his daughter, regardless of whatever she does. Marriage exposes your heart. It exposes our motivation.

Secondly, marriage is a medium to display God's love. It's not about you. Marriage isn't about you. Marriage is about giving you a platform, an opportunity, so that you can display God's love, which is what?

Which is patient. Which is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable. It is not resentful. It is not arrogant. It is not rude. It does not keep record of wrongs. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing. It rejoices with truth. Your marriage. Those of you who are married. Those of you who will be married. Those of you who are not married. You need to hold those who are married accountable and go, Hey, your arrangement between the two of you is not about you.

[13:48] It's to point us to God. So can we see patience in what you have between the two of you? Can we see kindness? Can we see you rejoicing at truth? Can we see two people who are just gracious, who are bearing one another, believing in one another, enduring with one another, hoping with one another?

You hold us accountable to that because that's what it's for. Marriage has been gifted to you so that you can point people to God. Marriage is not about you.

If I was to summarize all those words that he says in those four verses, four to seven, it is love is selfless sacrifice. Love is selfless sacrifice. It is not about you.

It is agape. Tim Keller says this because often you don't feel like loving. You don't feel like selflessly sacrificing. In any relationship, there will be frightening spells in which you, when your feelings of love dry up.

And when that happens, you must remember that the essence of marriage is that it is a covenant, a commitment, a promise of future love. So what do you do? You do the acts of love despite your lack of feeling.

[14:54] You may not feel tender, sympathetic, and eager to please, but in your actions, you must be tender, understanding, forgiving, and helpful. And if you do that, as time goes on, you will not only get through the dry spells, but they will become less frequent and deep, and you will become more constant in your feelings.

This is what can happen if you decide to love. He says this later in 1 Corinthians 13. He says, When I was a child, I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child.

I spoke like a child. But when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. What are childish ways? Childish ways is, I want this.

I want that. I'm not happy with this. I'm not happy with that. That's not the kind of love that marriage has. Marriage has a kind of love which is a mature, selfless, sacrificial kind of love.

Not just so two people can then have a harmonious marriage. Not just for that, but that harmonious marriage would point people to God because marriage is a medium to display God's love.

[15:58] It exposes your motivation, and then it is a medium to show people God's love. Finally, and then I'll get the people to come up.

Marriage is a metaphor for God and humanity. Your marriage is not about you. Your future marriage is not about you. When you get together with someone, that love that you have is actually just a metaphor.

What's it a metaphor for? It's a metaphor for God's love. That's what it's there for. It's to point people to God. Because it says this. It says, for now we prophesy in part and we know in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

Marriage is part of that partial. He's talking about gifts. He's talking about spiritual gifts that will pass away too. But marriage, singleness, all the relationships we have here are part of that. When the perfect comes, everything else will pass away.

The partial will pass away because we have the perfect. And that is when Christ comes. Your marriage, my marriage, our marriages are simply metaphors for something that is to come.

[17:06] They said this. Many people will tell you to focus on your marriage, to focus on each other. But we discovered that focusing on God's mission made our marriage amazing. That's what Francis and Lisa said.

And actually, we have the pleasure of meeting these people and hanging out with them and spending time with them. And actually, they say something very funny, which is something that I've always heard first growing up in a church.

When you get married, cut off all kind of service to church because you just focus on you and your spouse and just the two of you for one year. That's what we heard.

The challenge was these couples would then leave, spend time just one year retreating from community, spending time just the two of them. And then before you know it, what happens when two married people spend just only time together?

They end up having a baby. And then they go even further away from the church into the back of the crash. And before you know it, they're gone. They're not focusing on anything but the family that they've created. And that's become all that there is.

[18:06] Actually, they were saying that that's actually bad advice. Because a real marriage, a true marriage, is one where two people aren't looking face to face, but they're holding hands, standing side by side, looking towards the future.

Looking towards God. That's what a marriage is because your marriage is merely a metaphor. It is not about you. When the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. Now we see dimly, but soon we will see face to face.

Real love, the Bible says, instinctively desires permanence. That's what it's about. So those of us who are not married yet, who are not dating yet, I'd encourage you this.

Marriage is not the end. Some of us think that. Some of us feel as though as soon as that love story comes to an end and you found your person and that curtain goes and you go happily ever after, that is the end.

That is not the end. Should the Lord gift you with a marriage, it is for the purpose that it would be a metaphor for him. The purpose is that it would be a medium to display his love.

[19:12] To expose your motivation and to expose your heart. That's what marriage is really about. For now we only see in part, but soon we will see in full.

When I came in and I saw Ken, my heart just jumped literally because I saw he was wearing two shoes. Now the rest of you take that for granted. I know you do. But I was like, Ken, you're finally wearing both shoes.

You can walk. Well, he can't walk. He can stand. Man. For now I am walking in part, but soon I will walk in full.

But actually even he is not the end product. As much as he tells Hillary he is the end product of mankind. But he is not the end because one day he will not only walk, he will run and he will dunk in heaven.

Well, maybe. I don't know about that one. But now we see in part, soon we will see in full. Our marriages are not meant to satisfy all of us. It's not meant to satisfy every part of us.

[20:19] Can our marriages, can those who are married here just look at each other and go, you will never satisfy me and that is okay because we only have one person who will satisfy us. Let's stand side by side and run towards him together. And let's let our arrangement be a display of his love for us.

That's all that marriage is about. Marriage is not about you. Now, that's almost the theory behind it as I open up the word and go, okay, that's what the Lord reminded me about what love is.

It's patient and it's kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not arrogant or rude. But what does that actually look like in real life? If we keep telling you, hey, marriage is hard, then why is it hard?

And how do we get past it? I want to bring four people up who actually, I want to have a little bit of a conversation. Actually, you've heard from two of them already. Grace and her lovely husband, Danny.

Where's Danny? Danny hiding. Come up. Can we bring those two stores up as well? And then, of course, Aaron, our service leader and his lovely, lovely wife, Rebecca. I'm going to invite the four of them up. Thank you.

[21:23] Because this one thing is true. Now, we've had the pleasure of doing pre-marriage counseling with quite a few people here in this room.

And we've gone through content. And we say, hey, you've got to communicate. You've got to forgive. You've got to do this. You've got to do that. And then once it comes to it and once it actually happens, that's when the problems come.

It's like, oh, it was fun to talk about it over the dinner table. But once we actually had to get down to it, man, marriage is really, really hard. But here we have a few people. He hates being put on the spot.

But I'm going to do exactly that just to kind of get that demon out of the way. I had a little bit of trouble convincing Danny to do this. But I'll tell you one thing. Danny is one of my favorite people in this gathering.

You're not supposed to have favorites. But he is one of my absolute favorites. For one simple, silly reason, I'll tell you why. You'll notice this now that I've said that everyone will notice.

[22:23] Once this service finishes, it is chaos, I know, right? But then people need to, the chairs need to go away. Who puts them away? Danny puts them away. Look at these.

And man, he's been such a loved part of this community. And he loves, and he loves fiercely. And of course, he's got to be a strong, patient man because of the person he's married to.

So Danny and Grace have been a huge blessing to us, of course, married. And Rebecca and Aaron, again, huge, huge blessing just to watch the two of them be together.

Maybe, actually, let me pass some mics around so you guys can share. Maybe the first question is how long you guys have been married for? Why don't we throw this one right? We have been married for, I was doing the math before I came up.

Full disclosure. We've been married for 16 years. Wow. Married since they were five. Almost.

[23:36] For 16 years, are you guys? We've been married for, it's the seventh year this year, but we dated for 12 years. So it's our 19th year together. Wow. Half our lifetime, exactly today.

Now, I also want to acknowledge that there are people in this room who have been married for much longer. Probably longer than we've been alive.

That is probably true. Some of them. Some of them. Some of them. And I think all five of us will be the first to tell you that we don't have all the answers.

But I'll tell you why I brought these four people up. Because I know for sure they don't have the answers, but I see them working together to come up with the answers together. And they're on the same page.

And sometimes they read the page differently. I think a lot of the time. And they read at different speeds. But they're on the same page.

[24:37] And that's something that actually is almost all that we can ask, right? But so I wanted just to maybe just to start with the simple question. Because what I did, I asked these guys to read 1 Corinthians 13 with me and pray 1 Corinthians 13 with me and see really what the Lord brought up.

Maybe I'll start with the orders over there. What came up for you as you look at this passage and then you reflect on marriage and you reflect on what God's been showing you? I'm just looking for my Bible to see.

Thank you. I think it says, for me, one of the things that stuck out was all the things that it says love is.

But it never says, like, love is happiness or eternal fun or, like, like, I'm not saying you're not eternal fun.

What did you say? This is getting real. Hashtag real talk. Just for context, a couple of weeks ago when I did singleness, I said, hey, the single people want to get married and the married people want to get single.

[25:48] And Rebecca had the loudest resounding cheer. But I think for me, when I look at this and if this is what love is, it reminds me actually how far I am from showing Christ's love.

Rebecca, can you share with us how far short Aaron is, and in what ways? Can you tell us a little bit about that? Well, no, I can completely agree with Aaron.

We come from families of divorce. And so on both sides, we come from that. So we can tell you all the ways that love has not worked for our families.

And we are doing our very best to correct that. And so when I look at these scriptures and I say, like, love is patient, love is kind. Aaron's the first one to admit, wow, he needs to work on that.

But I meet him 50-50 and I'm just the same. And so that's what sticks out to me when I look at that. Thank you for sharing. And we said, actually, the relationships that we've experienced from our families and impacts the way we go.

[26:56] Is there an example that you can share with us that how you've actually tried to go, hey, that was what my experience was, or that was how we experienced it, but we will not be like this?

And what did that look like, just practically? I think the first one for me is love doesn't yell, and it sits down and it talks it out.

Looking at my family history, that didn't happen. It was a lot of huge, explosive arguments, slamming doors, parents going the separate way, and then it was never figured out.

But for us, we sit down. Sure, my arms are crossed and I'm really angry. But we sit down. Our love talks it out. Our love sometimes has to say, you know what, we need to pause because I'm so furious and we're not getting anywhere.

But can we commit to coming back to it in a few hours tomorrow? Can we commit to that? Because, yeah, the love that I saw didn't do that. And so that's something that we work really hard at trying to make right in our relationships so that we can pass that on to our kids.

[28:06] Because, yeah, our kids see us get angry. Our kids see us disagree. But we commit to talking it out and not yelling. Thank you. Danny and Grace, what do you guys fight about? Oh, Danny, give me the mic.

Where do I start? No, I think the biggest one is just understanding each other's dreams and how each other works.

I think, you know, both me and Grace, for those of you that know us, you know, we have very different types of lifestyles, different types of, even our level of passion and dreams is very different. And just being able to give up or put aside what we want individually, but just figure out how to support the other side.

I'll tell you how we fight. So we're both physical touch, okay? That's our love language. So we found that when we were really pissed off each other, we hug each other really hard.

We're like, oh, I'm so mad at you. And you're like, look at my WhatsApp emoji. It's like this girl drilling her head into the guy's chest.

[29:24] And sometimes I'm like so angry. I'm like, ah! But I realized, like, for us, it hurts so much more that when we don't even want to touch each other. Like when I'm like, just get out of my face type of anger, that's, it hurts us a lot more.

And then so we found our ways to deal with anger. And then also, like, a lot of wisdom when you just need a timeout. Like, hey, you know what? Let's talk about this in a few hours or let's talk about it tomorrow.

But can I answer the 1 Corinthians thing? Because, yo, God is so profound. I'm telling you. So when I used to study 1 Corinthians 13, I'm like, I stopped that patient.

I was like, love is patient. I was like, God, I'm not there. That is the hardest thing for me. Being kind is a thing. And then just envy, boast, being not proud.

I was like, God, I'm really, really far away from love. And then when James was telling us to study it, I was like, whoa. So if I'm saying, like, Danny is patient, he is patient.

[30:38] Is Danny kind? He is kind. He's not envy. Yes. He does not boast. He is not proud. I was like, bro, you, you.

He is not rude. He is not self-seeking. He's not easily angered. I don't know if he keeps no record wrongs. But we all work on that.

Yeah, we need to work on that. I was like, babe, you're like, you accomplished like half of 1 Corinthians 13. I was in shock. I was like, besides myself.

And then like the second half, I was like, oh, you need to work on this. But then I found that I was quite weak on the first half. But then second half, I was a bit stronger. Like, I don't delight in evil. I rejoice with the truth. I protect. I try to trust. I always hope. I always persevere. And then I looked at him. I think we looked at each other. We're like, wow.

[31:35] So God has put two people that are very different in their components of love. I don't know how you say this. And he has put us together so that we can learn from each other.

So that was like, whoa. What she said. What she said. That was like an epitome.

Is it epitome? Epiphany. It's true. Well, they say opposites attract, right? And I think we are almost probably polar opposites, which is great. But it also brings many of its own difficulties.

So can you tell us how you're polar opposites? Just like an example. Simple, creatively artsy. Rebecca is like super gifted musically and artistically. I do not touch anything with the arts or anything with the music whatsoever. You don't want me to touch it.

[32:40] I think emotionally we express ourselves in two different ways. I'm very, I've got a lot of words. And Aaron has a lot of like, hmm. Yeah. Hmm. Hmm.

Yeah. I feel that too, babe. Hmm. Whereas I'm like, let me tell you in all the ways I feel it. And so even in how we seek after God, our relationship with Him, I think are very different in how it looks and how we spend time with God.

Just everything is completely different. And just to carry on with you guys for a second, you've been married for a good amount of time. Do you ever need to remind yourself of the decision right from the very beginning of why you're here?

Like, is that something that crosses your mind often? What's that? Like the choice to marry each other? Yeah. I think sometimes when you get along in it, sometimes you forget you actually chose to marry each other.

Like it was a choice. Like we wanted to marry each other. We were excited about it. There were all of those feelings along with it. And it's like, we chose this for ourselves.

[33:49] But as you get further along, life throws curveballs at you. You go through the hard stuff and all of that. Yeah, it is important to look back and be like, oh yeah, we chose to be together. There was something we saw in each other that attracted us to each other.

And so, yeah, we need to remind ourselves of that. Yeah. Nice. And I think that choice, because I don't want to give marriage a bad name, like, oh. But I think that choice genuinely shows up after 15 years of marriage when my mother passes away and I'm in the depths of despair trying to figure out what does it mean to be completely on my own in life in my late 30s.

That choice shows up when Aaron comes beside me and helps, you know, pick up the broken pieces of my life. And sure, it's not so romantic. It's not a dozen roses. It's not all the butterflies. But it's a true, genuine commitment of, hey, we chose that back when it was butterflies and roses. But I choose it now when you're suffering depression.

I choose it now when you're grieving. And that's something that is just so much more powerful. So we sit here and we say, oh, we've been married forever. It's hard. Yeah, it is.

[35:02] But it's also just such a really beautiful thing if you allow it to grow over the years. It's beautiful. And that's what it says. Yeah, round of applause for that. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

It's a choice. The most romantic thing that Christina and I did this last week, we've had quite a lot of things happen to us. But we had this moment where I had one leg and she had one arm because she was breastfeeding.

And we needed to do the laundry. And I was like, I've got to help somehow. I'm literally useless. So she was like, how are you going to do it? I'm like, I don't know. We'll figure it out. So I crawled to the washroom. Anyway, the most romantic scene was the fact that I had one leg and she had one arm, but we did it together.

And we lifted the clothes out. And you know what? There's so many. It's not what you say yes to at the very beginning. But actually, this is what a yes looks like. Right? When you stand at the altar and you say, oh, through sickness and in hell.

But actually, this is how it looks. This is what it looks like. Danny, I want to ask you something. You guys got together. But then you actually had a long distance relationship for how many years?

[36:13] Twelve. Twelve years. Where were you and where were you? I was in New York and Grace was over. Just being able to see each other physically. Back then, you know, just out of school, working, pretty entry-level job.

Didn't really have many opportunities to go see Grace. So me and Grace would see each other maybe twice a year for like a week, a week and a half at a time. Because you only have like two weeks holidays and stuff and you got to travel and fly.

So yeah, so just me seeing Grace twice a year, you know, for probably a good like almost like 10 years. Yeah. Yeah. And of course, given the work that Grace, you came here to do, it's an industry that's not easy.

And it has lots of demands and pressures. You would often just temptations. And you would just see her on TV. Like how did you process all of those things?

And how did you still have that sense of trust and assurance and peace? Yeah, I think trust played a really big factor in us being able to even get through that season.

[37:21] Because as you can imagine, we're both physically apart. You know, we all have our kind of own lives. Mine in New York, hers in Hong Kong. And outside of, you know, just being able to catch up every day or every other day, you know, when we talk on the phone, I really don't know what's going on in her life, nor does she for me.



And I think that's where we also grew the closest together and just lean to God on it. I think for me, it was, and for her as well, it was just having faith in God and trusting in God. And also just reminding ourselves that, you know, that I could see how much Grace has grown during her time in Hong Kong, especially in her passion and her love for God that I find comfort in knowing that she doesn't answer to me.

Because she could just be doing whatever she's doing in Hong Kong and I wouldn't know anyway. But she fears and trusts God. And she answers to God. And knowing that her relationship with God is growing and strong and she's committed to it, that gave me a lot of comfort, especially during the challenging times.

I think some examples were just, you know, when she's working with, you know, other actors or, you know, in her line of work and stuff like that. And then she would, like, openly tell me, like, oh, you know, this guy is quite attractive and stuff like that.

And just sort of allowing that level of vulnerability. But also being honest and saying, like, what kind of safeguard she's going to put in place so she doesn't let any of those temptations kind of, like, you know, go astray and stuff.

[38:48] So that gave me, that also gave me more reassurance just to see how much effort she's putting into our relationship as well. Yeah. So you're saying the trust that you had wasn't necessarily trust in just Grace, but it was actually in the God that was behind her, the God that she was chasing.

And actually, she's ultimately, if her eyes are on him, then you're okay. You know? Yeah. Yeah. No, that's huge. That's good. And you're very attractive. Rod, there's one final question.

If I was to ask you what the purpose of your marriage is, what would you say? And then I'll ask you guys the same question. It's a good question.

And I think when we got married, we probably would have said fulfillment and happiness and joy and happily ever after. And I think 16 and a half years in, I would actually say, I think the purpose of marriage is to make me become more like Christ.

Because marriage is like a mirror. You find out all of the areas you're not good in. And it's a reflection of how much like Christ I'm not. And so as we look at 1 Corinthians 13, I believe that as God changes me and makes me more like him, it actually then affects my marriage.

[40:11] And our marriage becomes better because of that. And so, yeah, I would say it's ultimately not my happiness or my joy. It's to become more like God. Wow. And isn't that just the purpose of life full stop?

Marriage is not about us. Grace, what about you guys? What's the purpose of your marriage, would you say? I think when we first, like right before we got married, we did premarital counseling.

And then like our counselor asked us like, what do you think is marriage? And we're like, seriously? Like, isn't marriage just two people making each other happy, like for the rest of your lives and stuff?

And then so when they spoke about a covenantal relationship, it really like it didn't dawn on me until then. And I was like, wait, so you mean that I need to do my half and do my part no matter what he does?

Because contract is just like, if you screw up and you don't do your part, this contract is void, right? Right, right, Queenie? And all the barristers. Oh, no, never mind. But in a confidential relationship, it's almost like whatever happens on the other side, I'm going to keep going with this side of the agreement, which is I have to choose Danny over any other person for the rest of my life.

[41:34] I have to choose him every single day, and I have to lay my life down for him. And that really changed us, especially when things get tough, because we're so different in personality and passions and speed and everything.

I really feel like every time the thoughts come, we're like, I don't know if you guys ask, like, oh, did I marry the right person? Sometimes when things get tough, you're like, could I have married someone that was a bit more compatible and this and that?

But then you remember on your wedding day, like, the things that you promised to the other person, which is, you know, I'm going to be here for you no matter what, you know, through rich, through poor, through sickness and death even.

Yeah, and that really helped us to be there for each other. And also, I think for us, even though we love God, we have different experiences with God.

I really feel like, oh, I need to go evangelize and do the Great Commission, and I'm really passionate to share Jesus with everyone. Danny just wants to love people around him. So even in the midst of all that, sometimes it's like we don't force each other to go the other person's speed. [42:52] And in the tough seasons, it's like we kind of just pray and like, Lord, would you humble me? Would you help me? You know, or just praying for the other person, but separately and not wanting to change him and not wanting him to be this and that for you or whatever.

Just, yeah, just sacrificial love, learning what is unconditional and sacrificial love. And actually, if that's the purpose of marriage, then the question of, oh, did I marry the right person or is this the person to marry, almost goes out the window.

Because it's almost, actually, the whole point of this arrangement that I have with this person is about him. So it's not about how I'm going to be completely satisfied in having all my needs met. But it's about, actually, and actually, I've seen this in all four of you.

It's just when two people are focused on God and getting closer to God, they inevitably get closer to each other. And I've had it described to me that it's like a triangle, right? Like when two people are getting closer to God themselves, they actually end up being closer together.

And just seeing that and just thanking God for that and knowing that you definitely don't have all the answers. We're still figuring all of that stuff out. But our marriages are not about us.

[44:02] It's a metaphor for God's love to make us more like him as well. Thank you, the four of you. Can we give them a round of applause? Thank you, Danny. Can I say that this is like sacrificial love right now?

Danny's actually wearing like a T-shirt with Jordans. Grace and I give Danny a lot of trouble with his fashion sense. But he's been getting better.

I want to finish with this. Again, 1 Corinthians 13 is not exclusively applied to marriage. That was not the purpose and context of this passage.

It was for relationships full stop. It's just that it so happens that it's used for marriage because marriage relationships are the hardest ones, at least in my personal experience. And as we all look at 1 Corinthians 13, whether you're married or not, you look at it and you go, man, do I have this kind of love?

And I am the same. Actually, before I tried to memorize this, I could mumble my way through all the different ones in the wrong order because I never got past patience either. Christina would be the first to tell you, I don't have patience.

[45:16] Patience is long suffering. Can you walk alongside someone who is really slow? That's something that you would prefer. Now, the Lord is teaching me many lessons about patience right now.

But as you go through this, as you look, you actually, love is patient and kind. Love does not envy and boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable. It is not resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing. It rejoices with the truth. Do I have that kind of love for the people around me? Do our marriages in this church have that kind of love?

And the answer is, man, it's hard. And it is actually impossible. Because if you think about why the Apostle Paul writes this passage, it's not to tell you, hey, you must be patient.

You must be kind. You must not envy. You must not boast. You must not insist on your way.

Because he knows that's exactly what we do. It's human nature. The purpose of him writing this to remind the church of Corinth is not that you must be these things, is that God is these things.

[46:22] That it is no longer you who should live, but Christ who lives in you. If we want this kind of love, there is only one way to get it. And it is not through sheer will and motivation.

The only way we can get this kind of love is if we stick close to the source of love or the one who is love. God is love. Can we be a group?

Can we be a church? Can we be a family that shows this kind of love, not through our own actions, not just through our own actions, but because we all in unison are pointing to the one who has that kind of love.

Because there was one who gave all that he had. There was one who delivered up his body up to the cross so that we could gain everything. That is why we love.

Because Jesus, he could speak in the tongues of men and of angels. He had prophetic powers. He understood all mysteries and all knowledge. He could move mountains.

[47:22] He gave away all that he had. He delivered up his body so that we would gain everything. By losing his life, we gained ours. Our love.

And then he tells us, look around you. How I loved you. Now you love each other.

Marriage is just one of those ways. Let us not idolize marriage. Let us not trample down on marriage. Because I know society is actually turning away from marriage itself. Singleness, marriage, friendship.

They're all just gifts. So that we could all point to him together. That's the only point of all of this. We're finishing here now.

And again, I've run out of time. But can I just finish this with a word of prayer? And can I ask you, as you hear those words, those famous words that you've heard a million times, Can you ask the Lord, how must I love?

[48:27] What would love have me do now? Whether it's in my marriage, whether it's in my friendships and my relationships, what would love have us do? Let's pray. Father, Lord, we know when the perfect comes.

The partial will pass away. For now we know in part, but soon we shall know fully, even as we are fully known. Lord, you know us.

You know the sickness within us. You know the sin within us. You see us through and through, and yet you loved us. And you laid down your life for us.

And you are patient. And you are kind. You do not envy and boast.

You are not arrogant and rude. You did not insist on your own way. And you wiped our record of wrongs clean.

[49:42] So would you show us how to have that kind of love, that mature, selfless, sacrificial, covenantal kind of love?

And we can say right now, we can't do it by ourselves. There are colleagues that are so hard to love. There are spouses that are so hard to love.

There are friends that are so hard to love. But thank you that it is not just by our own power and might that we love them, but we love them through your love for us.

We love because you loved us first. How beautiful is that truth? So we thank you.

And as a community, we ask you, can you show us who else that we can love? The people who are not in this room. Maybe people who annoy us the most outside.

[50:48] Can you remind us tomorrow morning or this afternoon to love us and to love them in the way that you want us to? Thank you, Lord.

We thank you for the sunshine. We thank you for the rain. We thank you most of all for you. We love you. We trust you. We worship you.

In your name we pray. Amen. Hey, after a moment of just quiet reflection and enjoy lunch and grab lunch and let's all go have lunch with Aaron today.

Enjoy.