



INTO THE FIELDS

Part 8 of The Peasant Princess

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Song of Songs 7:11-13 | November 16, 2008

You are listening to the Peasant Princess Sermon Series, where Pastor Mark Driscoll takes us through the poetic book Song of Songs. For more audio and video content please visit marshillchurch.org.

Well, Howdy, Mars Hill. Back to work. We're in Song of Songs Chapter 7 Verses 11 through 13 this week; going to deal with a very short section of Scripture. Let you know where we're at and going, and, if you're new, my name is Mark. Good to have you. We're going to finish up Song of Songs in November, and then we've got something special for you coming up in December. On Saturday December 5th, we're going to host at the Ballard Campus a resurgence event and we're bringing Dr. Don Carson — D. A. Carson. He has written or edited more than 50 books in the art of theology in New Testament. He is widely considered one of the leading New Testament and Biblical scholars in the world. He's a very good friend of mine.

I've taught with him all around the country and, in fact — as well overseas and spent some time with him various nations. Great guy, brilliant, humble. I can't confirm it because he's so humble, but he won't tell me, but I have heard that he is fluent in six languages and has memorized the entire New Testament in Greek. So he is smart, and he loves Jesus, and we've asked him to pull out what he feels are some of the most important sections of the whole Bible about Jesus and to teach on that. So we're flying him out from Chicago. He'll be at the Ballard Campus all day Saturday, December 5th. The cost for this is very, very minimal. This is a very inexpensive, accessible event. You can go to the resurgence, www.theresurgence.com. There's also a link there off of the main page of marshillchurch.org, and he will be joining us on Sunday, December 6th.

Since he's here I'm going to have him preach, and we're greatly honored to have a world-class Bible teacher with us, and I know you will enjoy him and pray for him as well. He'll take everything he's teaching on Saturday and Sunday. He'll be publishing a book with us through Re-Lit and the Crossway Line, as well. So that's what's coming up there. Then he'll have a short Christmas series through the holidays, and then, in January, we're going to start into the books of I and II Peter. Most of 2009 will be spent going through I and II Peter. The Christians there are suffering and I felt that would be good in light of the fact that we've been talking so much about marriage. Just continue our study. I'm going to go ahead and pray and we are going to get to work, and I'll just tell you in advance.

This is probably — at least in my memory — the most practical sermon in the history of Mars Hill, and if you are a practical person, this will be helpful for you. So Father God, we do thank you for being a good God, a loving God, a gracious God, a relational God, and by grace, our God, and we thank you Lord God for Scripture. We love your Word because through it, you speak to us so that our lives can be changed. As we open your Word today Lord God, it is our heart's desire to learn more about you and your love for us. To learn more about us and our love for you and how we can love others well. Particularly, those that we are in relationship with; dating, courting, engaged to and or married to, and so, God, I pray against the enemy, his servants, their works and effects. I pray that our time together would be pleasing to you, would be profitable to us.

And we ask you Holy Spirit as our great God and guide to teach us in Jesus name, Amen. Well I'll start with one big idea, and then we'll have an application regarding marriage, and that is, throughout Scripture, God's relationship with his people is spoken of in a metaphorical way of analogy that God — Jesus Christ — is like a groom and his people ~~the church~~ they are like a bride. That means that our relationship with God as God's people — the church — is prototypical. It establishes what a good healthy normative relationship should be in general, but, in particular, pertaining to marriage, which is the subject of the Song of Songs. I'll give you one example of Scripture that articulates this. I'll read from Ephesians 5 beginning in Verse 28. "In the same way husbands' should love they're wives." We're going to talk about a lot about how to love your wife today.

"As their own bodies, he who loves his wife loves himself." A husband and a wife are one Biblically and that's what he is referring to. "For no one ever hated his own flesh or body, but nourishes it and cherishes it just as Christ does the church," because we are members of his body. The church here is referred to as a body with many parts. He then quotes Genesis' creation. "Therefore, a man shall leave. His father and mother hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Verse 32 of Ephesians 5 Paul then says, "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 big idea is this. The best way to understand marriage is to be a Christian who's actively involved in their church.

Because if you're a Christian who's actively involved in their church, you will grow in your understanding of how the church is like a bride and Jesus is like a groom, and that the church respects Jesus and that Jesus lovingly, humbly, sacrificially, generously, graciously protects, provides for his people, the church, and so if you want to understand marriage, you don't immediately look toward married couples. That's secondary. The first thing you look toward is Jesus and his relation the church. Let me give you a few cautions with this analogy however. First of all, there's no sexual connotations between Jesus and the church. So it's not 100-percent consistent with marriage. Marriage has physical intimacy that is totally appropriate, but when the

church is spoken of in a metaphorical way in relation to Jesus like a bride and groom, there's nothing sexual there.

And secondly, the concept of God's people as his bride is not individual. It's corporate. It's corporate that we as God's people are like a bride, okay? But individually, this wouldn't make any sense right? Every guy here is like, "I'm Jesus wife?" No. That would be very awkward. Lead you down all kinds of confusing paths right? So it's not that we're each individually the bride of Christ, but corporately the church collectively, is like the bride of Christ, and that's why heaven is spoken of as having an inauguration that is like a great wedding feast. In Revelation 19 where God — the Lord Jesus Christ — and his people — they entering into eternity — have a huge feast and celebration that is like a marriage feast. Now that's the big idea, and we've come together on this day to worship God as his people and this is our day of Sabbath.

One of the ways that we as the collective bride of Christ nurture our relationship with Jesus and one another is through Sabbath. So let me explain this as well. Sabbath is based on creation. The six days of creation God worked on. The seventh day, he rested, Genesis records. Exodus 20 proceeds forward to say that, "Because God works six day and rested on the seventh, the seventh day for us is a day of Sabbath rest." And so for a few millennia, God's people then celebrated Sabbath on Saturday, and they worked six days a week and they Sabbath on Saturday, and the Sabbath was to rest; to worship God; to gather as his people; to get time to cultivate your relationship with God; to get time to cultivate relationship with family, friends. Practice hospitality. Get to know the neighbors. Enjoy God's people and worship; those sorts of things. Proceed forward.

This continued until the coming of Jesus Christ. Our eternal God Jesus Christ entered into human history as a man out of time in a place. He lived without sin. He went to the cross; died in our place for our sins. He was buried three days later. He rose. He conquered our enemies of Satan, sin and death, and then early Christians began worshiping not on Saturday as they had, but on Sunday, because Jesus rose from death on Sunday. So that became what the New Testament calls the Lord's Day. Fast forward. Eventually, it became the official day of off: day of Sabbath; Sunday, the day of Jesus resurrection. That's why most Christian churches meet on Sunday. It came to our own nation and there was a debate. Should we honor the Saturday Sabbath of God's people in the Old Testament? Or the Sunday Sabbath of God's people in the New Testament?

And we lucked out — or we're Calvinists. We "sovereigned out" and we got both. We got both. God gave us through our leaders they said, "Well Saturday or Sunday, great." So we get the two-day weekend, some of us. I work Saturday. You may have noticed Sunday is kind of a workday for me, and there's been much debate over the years regarding Sabbath, but Jesus says, "It's a gift that God gives us." We're not built to slavishly obey the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is a gift given for us to enjoy, and so _____, "I thought we were in the Song of Songs." Last week she was dancing. That was much better. We're going to talk about that again. No, but here's how it does relate.

If Jesus is like a groom and the church is like a bride and what nourishes the relationship is getting a day of Sabbath to be together, that's prototypical for all good healthy relationships, especially Christian marriage. The point is this. You need to Sabbath to connect with God, those you love — particularly your spouse — and to enjoy the people that God has put in your life and rest from your labors, and as this applies to our Earthly marital relationship — husbands and wives or boyfriend and girlfriend or whatever it might be. Fiancée — you can get so busy working; get so busy doing other things that you don't Sabbath. You don't take time to be together; to cultivate; to nourish; oneness; love; unity; memories; connection and joy. If you don't take your Sabbath with God, you're relationship with him will greatly suffer.

If you don't Sabbath with your spouse — the person you love — that relationship too will suffer. Now, that sets up Song of Songs Chapter 7. What we see is that they are a very busy couple. He's the King of a nation. He and his wife have innumerable duties. They cannot keep up with all that is expected of them, and she, I believe, being considerate and observant, recognizes they haven't been Sabbath well. They're not getting they're time with God and one another, and so she takes it upon herself to lovingly invite him and to plan out a Sabbath holiday, Sabbath holiday. So we'll pick it up in Chapter 7 Verse 11. She speaks to him, "Come my beloved. Let us go into the fields." Some of your translations will say, "Countryside". She's saying, "Let us leave town. We've got to get out of town."

In our day this would be, "We need to turn the cell phone off. We need to turn the email off. We need to get out away from work, away from home. We need a break. We need to go out to the countryside where the pace of life is slower, where we can get a Sabbath. We need a break and lodge in the villages." Apparently there's somewhere that she wants to go. Maybe they've been there before. "Let us go out early to the vineyards. It's probably spring. See whether the vines have budded. Whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There, I will give you my love." There's two ways to try and get your spouse to go on holidays with you. The first is to nag them. "We never take a break. We never get any time together. We never have any fun. We never get to travel. We never get to rest."

That's not much of an invitation just so you know, all right? What she's says is, "Let's go to the countryside and make love outdoors." That is a completely different sales pitch, all right? Now some of you are saying, "So should we do this?" I will say two things and then proceed forward. Number 1: if you do, don't get caught. Number 1 — and Number 2: if you do get caught, don't tell the media that I told you to do it. Okay? Those two things; true story, but it is in your Bible. It is in your Bible and that's what she says. "We're totally stressed out. Let's go to the countryside. Let's find a nice bed-and-breakfast. It's springtime. I think it's perhaps warm enough to go into the countryside and have a little marital fun." Amen.

Verse 13: "The mandrakes give forth fragrance and beside our doors are all choice fruits. New, as well as old, which I have laid up for you, oh my beloved." When you've been married for a while as they have at this point, there are certain things that you know please your spouse. The joy this. They like that. They're excited about this. This gives them pleasure. What she says is, "I know what you like. You know what I like. We'll do that for one another, and there's some other things that we haven't tried. Maybe things we've talked about. Maybe things in the past I wasn't ready for. Maybe things that we were a little scared of. I think it's time to experiment." This is a great invitation by a very considerate, loving free wife; telling him, "Let's just get out of town and be together; let's get some time together." Again, we'll call this the marital Sabbath.

So what I'm going to do from this point forward is just give you tons of practical ways to think through marital Sabbaths. If you are single, this will be helpful so that you won't be single forever. This will be helpful. Okay? Some of you are dating or engaged. This will be helpful. If you're married, this will be helpful. A couple of things that I will say; many people in hearing the teaching of this book will think, "This is amazing. I want my spouse to do those kinds of things; physically be that free." First thing I would say is — and it comes from my friend C. J. Mahaney, great Pastor who wrote a great book on some of these issues, and he says, "For the husbands," — so I'll speak from the husband's perspective, but I believe it pertains to husbands and wives — "That you need to touch your wife's soul and her heart and her mind before you ever touch her body."

All right, too many guys will read this — especially last week — and say, "Wow, she danced. Yes. Let's do that." Well if you don't touch her heart, she's not going to feel safe and loved. If you don't touch her mind, you're not going to have any real depth to the relationship. If you don't touch her soul, it won't be in a way that glorifies and honors God. See, the touching of the body is the result of those who in marriage have been careful and prayerful to touch the mind; to study together; to read together; to learn together; to grow together; to touch the heart; to romance; to love; to encourage; to forgive; to bless; to cherish and to touch the soul; to pray with them; to pray for them; to worship God with them; to study and discuss Scripture with your spouse. I give this to all of the husbands.

Its seemingly little things like at the end of everyday, this is what I do. I'm not boasting, just giving you some practical thoughts. Gracie and I, we go to bed at night and I love snuggling with her. I always have. We been together 20 years, married 16, and she always has to lay in the same position because I, for just some reason, I can't fall asleep unless I'm snuggling with her in one particular way. She's gracious and accommodates me, and I like to end the day by asking her, "Is there anyone or anything I can pray for and praying for her." And just gentlemen if you want to touch your wives' soul, if you want to touch her heart, you want to touch her mind; it's holding her and praying for her. It's reading Scripture with her. It's discussing what she's learning and you're learning.

And it's saying, "We're going to read this book and on Tuesday nights after the kids go to bed, we're going to talk about what God's teaching us in Scripture in some of our reading." It's capturing the heart. It's capturing the mind. It's capturing the soul, and then you will be able to capture the body. So that's the first thing. It's not just about, "How do I get them to do this particular physical act?" Number 2: Touch — when I'm talking about touching their heart, their mind, their soul before you touch their body, it's communication. We see that throughout the book: the whole book in interpersonal communication. A husband and a wife speaking to one another and writing love letters to one another. That means in our day, your face-to-face talking means when you're separated by travel or the like, your eye chatting because you can still see each other.

It means you call one another on the phone. It means you text message. You email. It means you send letters. You leave letters. You send cards. What is it? I'm going to touch your heart, your mind, your soul. I'm going to speak into your life. You're going to speak into my life. Conversation will be the building of all kinds of intimacy. So let's say Mom is at home with the kids and Dad is at work. Emails, text messages, love letters, phone calls should occur throughout the course of the day. It should not be that there is no connection for long hours, shouldn't be. Number 3: become a devoted student of your spouse. This is true for husbands and wives. Again, this is a principal from C. J. Mahaney — dear friend, good pastor. Too many people know too little about their spouse.

They get to know their spouse and they assume that their spouse will always be like that. Your spouse will change: their interests, their desires. So you need to keep studying. There'll be other things that unless you're attentive, you'll completely overlook and miss, and what, to me — this is really important — what happens is Christians who want to understand how to practically love their spouse, they tend to read books which aren't bad. I like books. I have a few. Thousands actually, and I love them, but no book will tell me about my wife. It may tell me about Scripture and women in general, but not my wife. For me to understand my wife, I've got to study my wife. I've seen this for example with Christian wives who love their husbands. They want to figure out how to practically love them. So they buy books written by other women.

Those women telling they're stories about they're husband and here's all the things I do for my husband and here's the ways in which I love him, and then they read the book, and then they go do those things and they're disappointed because they're husband isn't appreciative. Well that's because he's a different guy. He's a different guy. I've got a buddy of mine — I'll give you an example. His wife — they got married. She read all the books and all the books said you know, "My husband loves it when I cook a huge meal." So she'd spend all this time in the kitchen cooking huge meals. This guy could care less. He's just happy to eat take-out. He wanted to sit down with her. He wanted to snuggle up with her. He wanted to talk with her. He wanted to read with her. He wanted to connect with her, and she would always tell him, "Not now. I'm cooking."

She should've asked him, "Sweetheart, what do you want? Let's order take-out and hang out." That's what he wanted. It's an issue of studying your spouse. Not studying books written by people who have studied their spouse. That can be okay, but it's studying your spouse, and this means you are carefully attentive. You're listening. "Oh, they like that." Pay attention. They laughed. "Oh, okay. Note to self. Say that again sometime. We went out to dinner and after we were done with dinner, they said, 'That was the most amazing meal.' Oh, they liked that restaurant." Make note of that. You gave them a gift and they said, "Oh, this is thoughtful." And they cried. Not in a I-want-a-divorce way, but in a I'm-so-blessed way. Write that down. Do that again. Or you did something, and it hurt their feelings. Okay, then don't do that again.

You're being rude, or they're mean or inconsiderate, and it's hearing their dreams or their hopes, their fears, or, "I've always wanted to," — it's asking leading questions; listening. That leads me to my fourth point. Write down your observations. One of the greatest things you could do just to get your life in order — too few people do this — is just have one place where you record everything. I put this in a moleskin journal. I keep these things and I write down everything. So chores and things I'm learning; and prayer requests and needs and to do lists it all go — everything goes in the moleskin, and I jot down little things I observe about Grace. "Oh, this made her happy. This made her sad. This is her favorite flower. These colors look good on her. She's always wanted to go to this place. It's been a dream of hers."

Huh, when I watched the kids for those few hours and she got to go out with all her gal friends, she came back, gave me a big hug and a kiss and had a big smile on her face and said, "Thanks." I apparently need to do that more. It's writing it down, writing it down, writing it down because you're only going to capture bits and pieces of your spouse as you pay attention. You collect them all in one place. There's a list of places over the years that Grace has told me that she wants to go. Now, my wife never asks for anything, and if I ask her, "What do you want?" "Nothing." "What do you need?" "Nothing." She's very selfless. She's very simple when it comes to spending money. She doesn't want to waste a lot of money. She doesn't want to spend it all on herself. So I have to pay very careful attention.

So early on when we were dating, she once had let it leak out. I said, "If you could go anywhere in the world, where'd you go?" "Oh, I've always wanted to go to Australia." We went last year. It took me almost 20 years to get it nailed down, but I made a note. She told me early on — we were having a Bible study one day — and she said, "Have you ever been — you ever wanted to go to Israel?" I said, "Yeah. I've always wanted to go to Israel." She said, "Me too." So we're going to go next year. We're going to lead a tour. We're going to Israel. Sometimes it's big things. It takes years to put that together. Sometimes it's little things. She likes — I can tell you the flowers. My wife likes tulips and gerbera daisies. Okay? So I'm always looking for those. If it's in season, that's what I need to find, and it's sometimes little things — big things.

Paying attention to your spouse; being a good student of your spouse, and writing down what you learn about them. I'll give you one crazy example. Years ago, we were living in one home and we were getting ready to move in somewhere that we'd settle in more permanently. Gracie and I talked and we put together a list of things that would work for a, you know, family of our size and entertaining, and me working from home — some all these variables. Then we picked out certain neighborhoods, and so I took her driving through these particular neighborhoods and said, "What do you think of this house? What do you think of this street? I'm just trying to get an idea of long-term you know? When we land, where we're going to land, what is that's in your heart? What would you like?" And I'll never forget.

We drove down this one little dead in street, and they had just built a home and Grace looked at me, and she never let's this kind of information out. I have to pay careful attention. She said, "Oh look at that house." She said, "I would love to live there." She said, "I know we can't afford it but someday, I'd love to live there, a house like that." It was a little throwaway line, moved on. So literally for five years, I was trying to figure out how to buy that house. I was trying — got to get that house, and so, eventually, it came to pass that I bought that house. It took me five years to figure this out: how to get it done; equity. Get your credit score up. I mean I've got this whole quiet plan. She doesn't know I'm working this plan, because she'd feel bad. We moved into that house.

I remember being in the house with her and I remember looking at her and I said, "Well, I got you that house." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Like five years ago, we were driving down this street and I pulled into this driveway to turn around and you got this big smile on your face and your eyes lit up, and you said, 'Someday, I'd love to live in a, that house.'" She said, "Well that was just a thought, and that was just a throwaway line and I shouldn't have said that." I said, "No, no, no. I bought that house. We're moving in. That's where we're going to raise our babies. If that's what you want, I love you. I figured it out, that's what we're doing." Now some of you say, "I can't execute on everything I write down." You don't have to. I don't either, but how will your spouse feel if you're a good student of them? You pay attention. You write things down.

And you're really working on plans to try and execute ways to practically love them. Even if everything on the list doesn't get done, boy, they feel loved right? Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. That's what we read in Ephesians. This is what it looks like. Jesus is attentive to the church. Jesus is a good student of the church. Jesus lovingly serves the church. Jesus is very generous to the church. That's what it's talking about for Christian's husbands, and this reciprocal — Christian husbands and wives. Moving on, Number 5: make Sabbath plans with your spouse. Okay? Once you've studied your spouse, you know their likes, dislikes. Make Sabbath plans with your spouse. What does date night look like? What do getaways look like? What do vacations look like? What do holidays look like?

Because if you don't plan those out and you don't coordinate those together and you don't agree on expectations, one of two things happen. They fall apart, or, worse, you fight; fighting on your vacation. You're fighting on your date night. You're fighting on your holiday. Grace and I, we meet every Monday to sync up our lives and we look down the road: holidays, vacations, getaways. Date nights. We didn't do this early on and we had massive problems. Grace was working full-time. I was working full-time. We'd both just graduated from college. We assumed that the other one was figuring out the holidays. I'll never forget early on in the church plant. I was working a job planting the church. She was working a job full-time, more than full-time. We didn't have any kids yet. We came home. It was Christmas Eve. We didn't have a tree.

We didn't have an ornament. We didn't have a present. We missed it. My wife felt terrible. Got a red bow and put it on this big plant that I didn't even like. I think it was a Begonia or something to try and make it look festive and she started crying, and I said, "Honey, we both failed to plan. We didn't love each other well. We weren't paying attention as we ought." I said, "That's okay. We'll just eat dinner." All we had — true story — was cereal, cereal. Sat down and ate cereal. Merry Christmas, all right? Christmas Eve, and this was early on, and you know what? Those kinds of thing happen on birthdays and holidays and anniversaries and date nights and vacations unless you plan for them. Be a careful student of your spouse. Write everything down, and make plans. Some of you don't plan. Spontaneity is great for those who plan.

If you have a plan, you can always veer from the plan. You can always add to the plan. If all you do is spontaneity, you're not really loving your spouse, because you're not being thoughtful. You're not being prayerful. You're not being careful. You're not hearing their needs. You're not setting up the budget. You're not organizing the schedule. Additionally, Number 6: you have to, have to, have to write your plans down, and then you have to execute on them, and then you evaluate how successful it was based upon how the relationship was in light of that experience. Meaning: did you get closer to Jesus? Did you get closer to one another? Some people say, "We had an amazing trip." Yeah, but how was it at the end? "We wanted to kill each other, but we saw a beautiful country." You know? Well, it's nice to travel. It's nice to do things.

But at the end of the day, you evaluate things based upon whether or not you felt closer or more distant as a result of being together. Now as I say this, let me give you a few options. These are different ways to have marital Sabbaths. The first is to set up your home in such a way to grab an hour or two as you are able to Sabbath together at home maritally. What does this look like? This looks like setting up your home with some quiet spaces. At our house, we have a formal living room. There is no television. There is no radio, and it's for reading. It's for discussing by the fire. Conversation and in theory, there are no toys allowed. I say in theory because the nearly-three-year-old boy, he hasn't totally figured out marriage dates and the rules around them just yet.

So there's toys in there occasionally, but that's a quiet room for talking and praying and hanging out. This includes, as well, off our bedroom. We've got a little nook. It's private. Our flat-screen TV, fireplace, couch — it's our place to hang out. So the kids can go to bed. We can get an hour or two to read; to pray; to put life together; to catch up; to snuggle up. It's just — it's a place to capture many marital Sabbaths. For some people, it's a great master bedroom or it's a tub. I'll never forget early on in ministry, I had this conversation with a wife who was very frustrated because her husband had a lot of toys. He's the guy who golfs and who fishes and hunts and works on his car and has a motorcycle, and all she ever really wanted was a decent bathroom with a big tub, because, for her, sitting in the tub was a great Sabbath.

I'm meeting with this guy and I'm like, "Why doesn't she have a tub?" He goes, "She's got a tub." She says, "Yeah, it's really old and it's cracked and it's all slimy, but I don't want to be in that." And I was like, "That's good. I'd feel unusual if a wife wanted to be in a cracked, slimy, dirty tub." I said, "Dude, why _____?" "We can't afford it." "What do you — can't afford it? You got a garage full of tools. You got extra cars. You got a motorcycle. You've membership at the club. You're kidding — no. You have money for it. You're just selfish. You're not a good student of your wife. Every night she thinks, 'Man, I want to lay in the tub,' and you never paid attention, and you never wrote it down. And you never made a plan and you never got it done. You need to love her better than that."

For some, this looks like a fire pit outside or a place to sit at the house. It's just getting some time to be together. Setting up the bedroom so that you could actually be together, connect, relax, marital Sabbath, and it's a plan. It's actually going through your house with your moleskin. My wife has one. I have one. They should now send me free ones. It's a commercial endorsement, but I do like the moleskin, and so it's got a little pocket in the back and you can put things in there. It's got a placeholder. It just works for me in my funky little world. Nonetheless, Grace and I both have them, and we recently did this. We went through the house. In these rooms, what do we need to change? How does this work? How does this not work? What else can we do with our bedroom? Those kinds of discussions. In addition, you need places near your home.

Is there a place you go for walks to? Is there a little café you meet to drink coffee and chat? Is there a favorite café or restaurant that you like to go grab a bite to eat at? Is there a park nearby that the two of you like to go for a walk to and just talk on the way and hold hands and get there and visit? It's Sabbath in the home; Sabbath around the home; Sabbath near the home. A couple of other things as well: weekly date night. Grace and I have been going out on Friday night since 1988 — 20 years — and when we got married, we established very firmly, "Friday night is date night." And it's cemented in stone. No birthday parties. We're not going anywhere. If you've got something going on, God bless you. You won't see us if it's Friday night, because that sacred, set apart. Otherwise, families schedule things. Friends schedule things.

Work schedule — and you know what? Next thing you know, you haven't been on a date in a couple of years, and so Friday night is sacred for us and this started back in college when we were married between our junior and senior year, and we were absolutely flat broke. So we had to find creative ways to do cheap dates, but it's date night every week and we still do date night as long as I'm in town every week and we plan them out. Additionally, and we'll get to that in a moment, a little more practical things on weekly date night. Doing overnights as a couple, one or two nights just getting a little mini-marital Sabbath. This could be near your home. You don't want to travel too far if it's a brief time. Grace and I in the last year, we stayed a hotel downtown. Went up to Suncadia up in the mountains; went over to Salish Lodge.

I mean, when we were first married, it was on the cheap. You're married a little bit longer, you got a little bit more discretionary income, and I'll just say this, too. If you don't talk about expectations as you go on these one or two night overnights, you end up fighting. We did that at Salish Lodge: beautiful place, gorgeous. Sitting by the fire, fighting. I looked at Grace and I said, "We could fight for so much cheaper than this. You know there's so much cheaper places to fight." And we were fighting and sort of didn't talk for a few hours, and finally she looked at me and she said, "Okay, what are you so mad about?" And here's — true story — I said, "I don't remember, but when I do, I will let you know. Until then, I'm mad, but I have no idea why I'm mad."

That not — if we didn't talk about it going into it — there were scenes, I think ultimately underneath it all, I don't even remember the details. I think she wanted to do something and I wanted to do something else, and we never talked about it, and we both felt like it wasn't well put together and we got all frustrated with one another. A night or two away, a night or two away; early on this was very hard with little kids. We'll deal with that in a moment as well, but, in more recent years, my rule is when I travel for work, the elders require that I bring someone along for accountability to have a boring testimony which is always my goal. So usually I bring a male assistant, but sometimes I'll bring Grace and they'll pay for her. The organization I'm speaking with. So we went to Vail, Colorado. We went to this last year — went to Manhattan.

Went to New York City, and so we get a couple of those as well. Talk on the plane. Hang out. I've got to do a few things but at least we're together sometimes, and I think I'm in a season right now in the middle of travel. I was in Philly last week; Dallas next week writing a deadline for chapter for John Piper. The holidays are coming and it's a little chaotic and I'm out a lot. So Gracie put together a plan to go downtown and stay at a hotel and once I get back from my last trip to Dallas for the year, we're going to do an overnight and be together. She gets the Song of Solomon principle. I really appreciate that, and this includes, as well, then, vacations. Getting your vacation; not bringing your cell phone. Not bringing your laptop. One of the weirdest ads I saw was going to serve us at Downtown Campus recently with my family.

And they had a big billboard for Hawaiian airlines, and it's a woman in her bathing suit on the beach sitting in a chair returning her email for work. What? And it said, "Work as little as you can." I was like, "That is not my idea of Sabbath." By myself, returning email at a beautiful location in my bathing suit. I mean, I just, you know — you've got to turn off your email. Turn off your cell phone. Turn off your responsibilities and actually think through how to get your vacation together, together. Now as soon as I say all of this, immediately objections and excuses come into existence. Okay, the first one is, "We don't have enough money. We can't afford it. We go to Mars Hill." Right? "We got married young. We got 57 kids. He's the only one who works and we don't have any money. We don't have any money at all." Okay? Now, that may be true.

Grace and I, when we got married, we, maybe between our junior and senior year in college, Friday night was date night. We would eat at home. Go for walks. Go to the park. We'd go for drives. We had no money. Our big nights when we would go out would be to go to a movie at the second-run movie theatre: \$0.99 — \$1.98, and that was a huge deal. Some of our time together was at the laundry mat, and we'd play board games, which I don't like, but I like her, so I liked board games. So we'd play board games, and it was just being together, right? So there are cheap ways to do it, and I posted it online this week. I said, "For the married couples at Mars Hill, give me some thoughts on how couples — particularly young couples — can do date night, or mini-vacation and do it on the cheap." Here's what they said, "You can rent a movie."

That's not much money. "You can play games." Not much money. "You can go for a walk, a hike, a bike ride or even a drive up to the mountains." "I love Highway 2 in the fall." "I love snow in the winter." Some couples said, "Just go to a coffee shop. Spend a couple of bucks buying a cup of coffee, and just look each other in the eye and talk to each other." Some said, "Go to a second-run theatre." That's what we did in college, cheaper movies, and I would say this, "Don't make all your date nights movies, or concerts." You can't talk and connect. It's totally fine to go veg out and do that sometimes, but if your whole marriage is, "We watch TV and then we go to the movies." That's not much connecting at the heart, the mind, the soul, all right? So, you're welcome, ladies. I said it.

Don't watch TV all the time and don't take her yet to another movie. Pay attention and ask her, "What do you want to do?" Number 6: read to each other. Some said that. "Read Scripture. Read books to each other." Some just said, "Stay home." Right? Just turn everything off. Maybe shut the blinds. Send the kids away and be home. You know where everything's at. It's quiet. It's peaceful. Some said, "You can go camping." I didn't marry that girl. I married bed-and-breakfast girl. I did not marry tent-and-campfire girl, but if you've got a spouse who's into camping, camping is certainly an alternative. You could borrow someone's vacation home. You got family, friends who own vacation homes or timeshares. You can borrow those. Some said, "You could house swap." Let's say you got friends or family out-of-state or out-of-area.

You go to their house while they go to your house and you swap houses. Housing then is free, and you go on adventures and exploring in the place where they live. Some said, "Pack your own picnic meal." Grace and I used to do this all the time. There was one park we loved when we were initially married in college. She was sweet enough to often pack a picnic lunch and we'd go to the park and feed the ducks and go for a walk and watch the sunset, and those were great. Some said, "Order take-out." It's cheaper and easier. One dude loves the entertainment book where they got coupons for everything. That's cheaper meals, cheaper bowling, cheaper billiards, whatever your thing is

Some said, "Rack up credit card mileage, not debt. Pay it off every month. Your groceries and such, put them on a credit card so that when it comes time for vacation or an overnight, you've got points for a hotel or points for airfare." Some said, "Make all your gift money count. Meaning, if it's your birthday, and everybody asks, 'What do you want?' I want gift certificates to dinner. I want gift certificates to a movie theatre. I want something that we can use later on date night." Christmas comes. Holidays come. When we were planting Mars Hill and we were flat broke and struggling, this is what I did and Gracie did. Our families asked, "What do you want?" Gift certificates to restaurants; tickets to movie theatres; maybe an overnight at a hotel. If you guys all want to come together and do stuff, do that.

So then we've got this little file of cool sort of nice date nights and getaways for the rest of the year. This is a gift that can last for a while. Others said, "Book your hotel locally at the last minute." You want to do a quick overnight? Book it the day of because that's when the prices drop, and, if it's local, you'll still be able to find something. The point is this. You need to make plans. You need to write them down. You need to execute on them. Otherwise what happens is: it's date night. You jump in the car, "What do you want to do?" "I don't know. What do you want to do?" "I don't know." This is going to be awesome, isn't it? Two indecisive people with no moleskins on a journey, you know? Or you go on vacation and you get there and you're like, "Okay, what do you want to do?" "I don't know. What do you want to do?" "I don't know."

"Well, what's around here?" "I don't know." "Well, what are our options?" "I don't know." Didn't make a plan; I didn't write it down. Now the second excuse why you don't do marital Sabbath is: we have children. "We don't have money and we do have children," and those are related. "We don't have money and we do have kids. We did the Mars Hills plan: be fruitful. Multiply. Increase the number. Fill the earth. So do it. We called dibs on that first, that's ours. That's what we're doing. We're making babies." Okay? Kids are awesome. We got five. Love them. We had a miscarriage; otherwise, we'd have six. Love kids. Do kids make it harder to get marital Sabbath? At home date night, vacation? Yeah. So you've got to be creative. A couple of things to think through: first of all, whoever watches your kids, make sure they're safe.

Last thing you'd want to do is go away for marital time and have harm come to your kids, but here's what some people said on the city as well. They said, "Form a date night co-op with other families in Mars Hill. Get connected to the church. Get in your community group." And even if you've got four families, and you rotate watching kids on date night — you all take date night let's say on Friday or Saturday, whatever it is — the way it works is every family watches the kids once a month at they're house. That means you get three date nights a month, and that means one night, you've got a bunch of kids at your house. Okay? So you just load up on Red Bull and just live through it.

You know, just get it done, and it's a play date for your kids and everybody comes over, and then all the other families if they want, they can go back to their house or go out on date night or whatever it is they want to do. And date night is not for running errands. It's not for shopping. It's for

connecting. Additionally, some said, "If your relatives live nearby, ask them to watch the kids." If your relatives live out-of-state — maybe grandparents — when they come in to visit, ask them in advance. "Hey, you're coming in to visit, could you watch the kids for a day or two? We're going to go to a hotel. We're going to get a little marital Sabbath." Set that up. Some said additionally that, "If you're in a Mars Hill community group, a lot of times, single people are willing to pitch in and help out."

And married are willing to pitch in and help out, and if you're a family that can't afford childcare, if you're actively involved in the church, this is part of what it means to be the people of God. We work like a big extended family and help one another out, and if you can afford it, yeah, pay for a sitter. It's totally great, but for a lot of couples, they just don't have that kind of resourcing. Now, I'll give you a couple of testimonies and then a few practical points.

One guy, David, he says, "My wife's birthday is Christmas Eve, so we rarely get to celebrate just the two of us. Last Christmas, we were in Oregon with my in-laws and able to leave our son with Nana for the evening. Well, my wife and I got a hotel room for one night in downtown Portland. We went out to a nice romantic dinner, just the two of us. Caught a movie, even did a little Christmas shopping. Got up the next morning, had breakfast and walked around downtown Portland before heading back to Nana's house. It was barely 24 hours, but it felt like a week." That's a great. That's a thoughtful husband. There's a gal Lisa. She said that the two things she loves is: "Getting all dressed up and getting her husband dressed up, because they used to get all dressed up and go out and court and date and romance one another."

Then they got married and you don't do that unless you make a plan and execute on it. She also said, "For me, it's so much easier to be intimate when I'm not at home because I'm not distracted by all the things that need to get done." I don't know why men. See men have one-track mind. All roads go to the same place for guys. Women, they're thinking about other things. Like, you know there's chores and tasks and projects and things that are undone. For some reason, been married awhile — I'll just confirm this as fact — you get the wife out of the house, and she's not thinking about it. She can focus and it gets a little more exciting. I'll just leave it at that. Okay? And you guys may think back on that and go, "Yeah. When we went away, yeah we connected and we talked and we were more together and were more free." Why?

Well there wasn't any distractions in the way. One gal Jill says, "They like to go to nice campgrounds and rent a campground even if it's just for the evening and their not going to stay the night. That way they could sit by the beach or they could sit up in the forest." She said that, "There are it's 45 bucks a night, even during the winter," that they enjoy on a tight budget. It could go on and on and on. A gal Danielle gave a great idea. Take a book and she records highlight memories throughout the course of a year for their marriage, and then when they go out for their big anniversary away time, she shows her husband the book and they get to reminisce the big memories and photos and highlights of their year together with Jesus; just a great idea. I could go on and on and on, but I'll bring Gracie out to answer questions.

It's probably the most practical sermon I've ever preached. Some of you are sitting here and you're thinking, "Did we need to do this at church today? Isn't this sort of soft and self-help and practical?" All right, and the wives are thinking, "This is very important." Paul says it this way too. A guy names Timothy in the New Testament, "Watch your life and your doctrine closely." So yeah, there'll be weeks you come to Mars Hill, we're going to hit doctrine: heavy, weighty theological concepts, and sometimes, we need to hit life. I've met a lot of guys — I'm speaking of the men and it's true of some men and women — they can argue the doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement. They can argue the Doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inerrancy, and they don't know what their wife's favorite flower is, and they don't pray over her.

And when date night comes, they don't have any plans, and they're really bad practical theologians. They're really good theoretical theologians, but they're really good only at theoretical theology. They fail at practical theology. I've met guys who pay so much attention to books and I love books, but they need to also study their wife. There are women who study about all kinds of topics: nutrition and children and theology, and they also need to study their husband. We need to excel at doctrine, absolutely. We are a theological driven church, but life — do you love one another? Do you pay attention to one another? Are you good students of one another? Do you write down those things that you learn about one another? Do you make plans to care for and to serve and to cherish one another? Do you execute on those plans?

Do you love, gentlemen, your wife like Christ loves the church? Ladies do you respect your husbands like church respects Jesus? Because he's respectable. So yes, we are a church that believes in Penal Substitutionary Atonement. Verbal Plenary Inspiration and date night: all of it, and that's what it means to be a maturing, faithful Christian, and I just — this is my heart for the husbands — I don't want us to just have a great theology of marriage. I want us to have wives who are well-loved. Who are observed. Who are studied. Who are cherished. Who know that they are priority. I'll give you a few questions for discussing with your spouse — your community group. The first is: what is your favorite Sabbath memory or memories with God? Was it prayer walking? Journaling? Bibling? Bible reading in the woods? What was it?

Your favorite Sabbath memories with God. Number 2: how's your Sabbath time with God today? Do you have a plan? Are you executing it? Are you getting your time for worship? For church? For community group? For Bible study? For prayer? Number 3: what is — if you're married — what is your favorite Sabbath memory with your spouse? "Boy that date night was awesome. That day we were home, that was great. When we went on that overnight, I love that. I think about that all the time." Number: how is your marital Sabbath time today? So highlight with Jesus and highlight with your spouse if you're married. How is it with Jesus today and how is it with spouse today? Bring Gracie out, but my heart behind all of it is this — and we covered a just a few verses tonight. We've covered a ton in the Song of Songs.

James says this, "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves." Do what it says. It's not enough to say, "Yeah. I believe that you know, we should love each other, or I believe we should pay attention to one another." You need to do it, and my exhortation this week is to write stuff down. Talk it through and make a plan. Talk it through. Make a plan. Hi. How you doing babe? You didn't get a nap at all did you? Gideon, our almost three-year-old has been sick. He was up coughing and puking all night, and I just flew in from Philadelphia. So we're a little bit gassed. I thought Grace was

flirting with me and I felt something in my ear at about 4 and I rolled over. It was Gideon's toe. It was kind of a disappointment. We'll take some questions.

Mark Driscoll: "Is this a closed-handed issue, the weekly date night?" Well we're not going to bring you up on church discipline if you don't do date night, but what we're saying is this. You should make an effort to go and be together as a married couple once a week. Are there weeks the kids are sick? Are there weeks that something happens? Totally. We're not trying to be legalistic. Legalistic is where you obey the letter and ignore the spirit of something, but I would say is this. If you don't want to be with your spouse, that's an indication it may not be going so well. If you go weeks or months without getting alone time, that's not going to be good for the relationship. I don't know. Do you want to add to that? I mean I can imagine having little kids. Most moms wouldn't be against a little bit of fun time and getting out of the house.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. I mean I think the idea of it is important, and whether you go out or stay home and just do something simple. It's the time together that I think we're really trying to emphasize here. It doesn't have to be a nice dinner, dressing up going out every week kind of thing, but just desiring to get that time that's not interrupted by people or kids is really important. I know early on it was you know, every week we would get this and it was just really simple because we didn't have a lot of money but it was something that I really looked forward to during the week, especially if the week was chaotic, or he had to travel or whatever. I always could look forward to a couple hours on Friday night for just us to kind of decompress and get to know each other more, and I think that's something that we're trying to express here, and start somewhere.

Grace Driscoll: If every week seems like a lot, start somewhere. Start once, once or twice a month, but don't just do nothing because it feels like too much.

Mark Driscoll: You're so sweet about it. All right, next one, from Shoreline: "How do I get my husband to connect when all he wants to do is play videogames?" Pastor Steve will take care of that. You men just think that through, right? Videogame, wife; like, you can't figure out which one is funner to play with? Like seriously? It's not like, "I don't know." _____. This is easy. Videogames are not a sin, but let me say this. Let me say this. I don't play them for this reason. I think guys got to be really careful about their hobbies. If you're — if you say, "I want to be a Christian in church, in community groups, serving, giving. I want to be a good husband. Pay attention to, love, pursue my wife; father. Look after. Invest in. Raise my kids; employee. Work a good job. Feed my family. Pay the bills." You're not going to have a lot of time left.

It's not a sin to get time with the guys. It's not a sin to have a hobby, but that's going to be your last priority and it's not going to be something particularly _____ when you're newly married and or your kids are little, you have a lot of time for. The worst guys are guys who make their hobbies their priority. So it affects their job, their date night, their kids, their time with their family, because why? Because they're golfing; because they're hunting; because they're fishing; because they're working on their project car; because they're trying to become a guild leader on World of Warcraft, I mean, and a guy's got to know his priorities.

Jesus, wife, kids, job: that's a full-time very, very high level of responsibility, and it's not a sin for guy to play videogames, but if it gets to the point where the wife feels like his hobby is crowding out his higher priorities, if he's more excited about World of Warcraft than is about Bible, wife, kids, huge problem. It may actually be an addiction or an inversion. I don't know. I could say a lot more but it wouldn't be very nice. Would you like to try?

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. I think that definitely it could become an addiction. I think, I mean she asks, "How can I get my husband to connect?" I would think that you know maybe walking up to him in lingerie or something like that would, would be helpful and —

I would hope so.

Grace Driscoll: ~~—distract his—~~

Not now.

Grace Driscoll: — yeah. To be really good at videogames is not a great goal or highly respected goal.

Do women find that sexy? Is that a good opening line?

Grace Driscoll: I mean, I don't personally, but I guess.

Are there women going, "Oh Jesus, you answer prayer." Like I don't know.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Yeah. I mean — just, I mean you can also nicely confront him if you're feeling uncared for and he's just looking at the screen, but I would be creative and maybe play with that a little bit and then confront it along the way, but, yeah. Don't want that to become an idol for him.

That's a good idea. Okay, next one. _____: "When you are touching your spouses mind, heart, soul and body, does it need to happen in that order?" No, I don't care. It's weird. "We read footnotes, and then we prayed together and then," — no, I don't care. I'm just — I'm saying overall in the course of a day throughout your relationship, if you don't have a mental connection, you're going to have a weak relationship. If you don't have a heart connection or a soul connection, those are different ways to connect with your spouse and you're investing in each of those avenues.

Grace Driscoll: The point is if you're always touching her body first and never investing in the others, that's — that can make her feel unloved.

Mark Driscoll: Yeah, and used and taken advantage of and not cherished. I'm going to spring one on you. They've run out of questions. In our times together, date night, holidays, overnights, what have been your favorites? Your, the times you've — I'm trying to figure out how to say this — the times

that were most memorable for you? And then how come? Since it's just you and me.

Grace Driscoll: I enjoyed our times early on marriage when we were flat broke and had to be creative and just had simple time together. Playing games: I now know that you were serving me that.

Unless it was Scrabble; I'm really good at Scrabble.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, because you always win.

Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: Then I'm serving you.

Well, thank you.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. I mean we've had some amazing opportunities with travel when they pay for my way to go. Australia was great when we were on the beach in Sydney and celebrating our anniversary. Things I never thought were possible, that we'd ever be able to do them.

You said you wanted to go.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. I mean even just simple you know, walks downtown during the holidays. Looking at the lights, just I really enjoyed just spending time with you, and so whatever we're doing it's usually fun unless we're fighting, but, yeah. I'm just — I'm really simple with — it doesn't — I don't like go, go, go. I just like to be with you and learn more about you and you know talk and enjoy you're company. So I think just a lot of our intentional outings that we've planned, sometimes the spontaneous ones don't go so well, but even just you know, going to the Mariner's game and that sort of thing are fun for me too.

Mark Driscoll: Because we could talk. It's not like there's a game to watch. Not this year. I wanted to thank you for giving your Sundays. I know with the five kids, we've got a couple weeks left. I just want to thank you. I know Giddy was up all night. I was gone all week. I'm leaving again tomorrow. We're in a rough patch, and you're taking care of six — five kids. I'm the sixth, and they're sick and thank you, sweetie; so maybe if you could close our time in prayer and we'll hand it over to the campus pastors.

Grace Driscoll: Dear Lord, thank you that you have given us so much. Thank you for opportunities to serve each other through planning, outings and just learning how to love each other. I pray that in our relationships and in our marriages we would desire to figure out those ways that we can serve each other and to enjoy each other. That we would be intentional about what time we spend together and that you would honor those conversations and hours that we spend during the months and years together, so thank you, in Jesus name, Amen.