

Commitment Issues

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If you have a Bible, Joshua 24 is where we're going to be. And if you have a Bible, the verses are going to go up on the screen as Jennie reads them. The title of my message is Commitment Issues. Come on. Someone tell your neighbor, if you like it, put a ring on it. Commitment issues, and honestly, we're going to see within this passage probably the most important relationship tip you could ever hear, you could ever receive from God's word. Commitment issues, we've narrowed down a passage, Joshua 24, to some of the key parts. So let's read that together. Let's do it.

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem. Let's say that together and called for the elders of Israel for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers. And they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, thus says the Lord God of Israel, your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor dwelt on the other side of the river in old times. And they served other Gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the river, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt. And you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. So they cried out to the Lord. And he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan. And they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand and that you might possess their land. And I destroyed them before you. I have given you a land for which you did not labor and cities which you did not build. And you dwell in them. You eat of the vineyards and olive Groves which you did not plant. Now, therefore, fear the Lord. Serve him in sincerity and in truth. And put away the Gods which your father served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Lord. And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your father served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Thank you so much, Jennie. This is one of those passages that you only have to be mildly religious to have seen. Maybe I should amend that. You only have to have gone to a Christian's home at some point in your life, and you've seen this verse. This is always the one on the chalkboard on the Pinteresty cool, or the plaque. This is the stuff that Christian Facebook posts are made of. It's all over Pinterest. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Choose for yourselves this day. But I think it's so powerful, especially perhaps when it comes to the buzz word phrases from the Bible to really examine their origins in context to see what the real story actually is. And so for this one, there are four kind of key things I think that if we understand, will help us to accurately understand. And then we'll see this, apply what it means to our love lives.

So Joshua, you have to picture it, is standing in front of the whole nation of Israel. And they've just finished this whole siege for the Promised Land, because Moses brings them out through the Red Sea out of Egypt. And then Joshua takes him into the Promised Land. They fight all these incredible battles. And it's towards the end of the whole conquest of the Promised Land, that he now addresses the nation of Israel. And it's within that that he gives this epic line that's gone down in history almost like, I regret that I have but one life to give for my country, or one small step for man, one giant leap for, right? This is Joshua's moment to shine here as he gives this line that would echo in eternity. See what I did there? And so what he says to him is, choose for yourself this day whom you will serve. But know whatever you choose, as for me and my house, we're going to follow God and serve Him only. All right? But what do we need to cause these words to come to life? We need to know, first of all, the location. Location, location, location, location. Why?

Well, specifically, within the Bible, geography impacts history and informs theology. And that's why there's maps in the back of the book. Y'all, did you ever notice that there are maps? Did you think that was just because they were worried the Bible wasn't going to be long enough? Right? Why are there maps back there? It's because geography impacts history and informs theology. Now, battles are fought over and won or lost surrounding land. People want to get the river land. People want to take the hill country. People want to get the good land. So all throughout history, geography has impacted history. But within the realm of scripture, it also informs theology. Why? Because God's covenant always have to do with land. You see Adam and Eve getting kicked out of the place that they were given stewardship over. It was about that land. Then, of course, God raises up Abraham. And Abraham is given the promise. The promise was what? A Promised Land. It's not a trick question. It's literally a land of promise. And so we call it the Promised Land. We know of it as Israel.

So all of God's promises are connected to parts of the world. Geography impacts history and informs theology. Now, all of this that we're reading, it went down at a specific part of the Promised Land called Shechem. We had you say it out loud so it gets stuck in your head. Shechem is a significant part of the Promised Land that pops up again, and again, and again. And when you're reading the Bible, repetition reveals importance. Places that we come back to, things that keep getting repeated, a location that gets revisited, OK, this is important. Why? Because God's like your mom, if he says it a bunch, it's because he wants you to pay attention, y'all. Right? So Shechem, why are we always coming back to Shechem? For example, when Abraham got called to leave Ur of the Chaldees where he used to live before God got a hold of him and said, I'm going to give you a land. I'm going to make you a great nation. I'm going to bless the whole world through your descendants, which by the way, was a veiled promise about Jesus, the Messiah, coming to save the world from our sins, that through Abraham's family, there would be a person that could bless the entire world through him, that's Jesus. All right? But when Abraham left, he didn't know where he was going. God just said, I'm going to have you go. And Abraham literally was like, well, where are we going? And here's what God said, I'll tell you when we get there. How do you pack for a trip like that, right?

So Abraham and his wife, amazingly by faith, just went out. And they start walking. And where'd they stop? They stopped where God kind of spoke to them and got a hold of them, which was where? At a place called Shechem. Let me show it to you. This is Genesis chapter 12, verse 7: the Lord appeared to Abraham in Shechem and said to him, to your descendants, I will give this land. So it was while he was in Shechem that God first started to speak to him. And so what did he do? He built an altar there. And he started worshipping God. So he's got a promise. He's got a location. So now it's significant. And the promise gets further unpacked. You're going to have as many descendants one day as stars in the sky and sand in the seashore. But they're going to live here in this place. But God told Abraham, your kids: they're all going to have to live in a place of bondage for 400 years. And we know that as Egypt after the fact. So they're going to live in Egypt. This is all history. The nation of Israel ended up as slaves in Egypt. And yet, the promise, God says, as crazy as it sounds, they're coming back, back, you're going, going back, back to Shechem, Shechem. That's what God was saying back in the day. I got to stop that. I get so much hate when I quote rappers. All right.

So they're going to end up back in Shechem. I like big Bibles, and I do not lie. These other brothers can't deny. Right? So basically, time passes. Abraham does have a kid, as crazy as it was, because he was 75 when God gave the promise. And his wife was pushing 90 when she finally had their baby, Isaac, child of promise. Someone say, ouch. Right? That's crazy. Think about carrying a baby full term in a day with no anesthesia. My wife, for our fifth child, she said, I'm thinking about getting, what's that thing called? Epidural. I said, I'm thinking about getting one too, girl. What are you talking about? Watching you have these babies makes me hurt. But no anesthesia, Isaac, the child of promise, gets born. And Isaac and his wife have twins: Jacob and Esau. Jacob's name gets changed by God to Israel because he's like Prince, the artist formerly known as Jacob. He's now Israel. And the Bible says Jacob eventually came back to Shechem. His life was crazy. He was always cheating people, ripping

people off. He was like that friend who was always in multi-level marketing scams on the internet. And then he always had a shady angle and stuff and always knew a guy who could get you a deal on stuff.

Jacob was the worst. Some of these people God uses, you're like, how could God use any of these people? And then you realize God wants to use us. And we're like, OK. It makes sense. But Jacob, he was the worst camper anyone's ever heard about. One day he went camping, and he used a rock for a pillow. That's not REI. That's not a Bear Grylls move. He's sleeping with a rock under his head. And God gets a hold of Jacob. And guess what? He ends up in Shechem one day. And there, Jacob builds an altar. And Jacob has a meaningful encounter with God. And the Bible tells us that by that point, God was blessing Jacob's life to where he had lots of animals. And so in Shechem, Jacob built a well. And that well that he dug... what did he dig? He dug a well. And that well is there to this day. Now, let that sink in. This isn't like Hansel, and Gretel, and the witch that they pushed into the oven. These places, this is real. You can book a plane ticket right now and fly to Tel Aviv. And you can go to Jerusalem. And you can go to Shechem. You could go to these, these places are real places. And this is real stuff we're talking about.

I think, sadly, the mythology of Paul Bunyan that we hear while we're hearing about David and Goliath can cause us to almost feel like these are all just fables. But these are actual, real people. You're going to meet these people in heaven one day. And this is real stuff. And God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even this day. Even though they're dead, he's still their God. Because they're still people. He's not the God of the dead. He's the God of the living. Jesus used that to show that God is alive and there is a life after death. Come on, someone. There's a hope. This is real. We're not just dusting off some ancient history book to read some made-up story. So Jacob digs a well there. And that well is there to this day. And time passes. You know Jacob had 12 boys. They become the 12 tribes of Israel. And one of his sons is the most famous of them all. His name is Joseph. His brothers hated him because he was his dad's favorite. So they sell him into slavery. And he ends up in Egypt. Egypt, where through a series of events, he becomes, your campus pastor needs to read his Bible some more. Where he becomes, I set you up for that one a little bit, though. Shechem. He says, Shechem. Yeah. Joseph's adventures in Shechem.

Joseph's father told Joseph one day his sons were going to have a piece of land in Shechem. That was going to be the area that Joseph's sons would own one day, Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's two sons. But Joseph ended up in Egypt where he was basically the second in command, right? So Pharaoh is the top dog. Joseph was his numero dos. So if Pharaoh was rolling in Air Force One, Joseph had Air Force Two, OK? So he was in command. He was able to save his whole family's life during a famine. And that's how they ended up in Egypt for 400 years and eventually became slaves. But Joseph, on his death bed (when he died in Egypt) had one last request. Make A Wish comes in. They're like, what do you want? You're dying. What do you want? And he says my one last request is that you don't bury me here permanently. Now, I realize you got to bury me here temporarily. You can't be like Weekend At Bernie's. I can't be propped up in a La-Z-Boy. So you got to do what you got to do. But promise me when we leave (and this is faith) when we leave to go back to the Promised Land, when you all go, I don't care how long it takes, it would be 400 years. When you go, bring my bones with you. Bring my bones with you.

And would you believe it? These are his dying words. Joseph said, I want you to lay me to rest in Shechem. Abraham's first altar. Jacob digging a well, encountering God. Joseph longing for his bones to be laid to rest. 600 years passed from Abraham's first altar to the day that we're reading here, 600 long years. But would you believe that as Joshua stands before the nation of Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel before him, and he calls them on this moment to honor God fully and to fear him with an undivided loyal heart. They have the bones of Joseph with them. And after this speech is over, they're going to lay Joseph's bones to rest in Shechem, with the sound of Joshua's voice ringing out over the hills of the mountains as he

says, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Does the location help a little bit? But that's not even all. Because there's also this incredible emotion. You're like, what are you talking about? I'm already crying a little bit. There's some emotion when you understand two really key things. And they're both good things. Number one, the emotion sets in. And that's our second word if you didn't get it: emotion after location.

There's emotion because of how good Joshua's been and how they realized they're at the end of his life. We didn't read it, but in chapter 23 of Joshua, he basically told them, I'm about to die. Joshua says, it's over for me. And of course, that setting in for the people would be hard for them to hear because he's old. He's got game. But he's old. He's Yoda old. The dude's 110 years old. And he's been strong this whole time. But he's old. And as they realize, and it's setting in, oh, my gosh. All we've ever known is Joshua. Moses got us to the Jordan River. Moses got us to the edge of the Promised Land. But it was Joshua who brought us in. It was Joshua at Jericho. It was Joshua at Ai. It's been Joshua all these battles calling us to God, fearlessly following the Lord. And now the realization is it's going to be life after Joshua. It's going to be life after this amazing leader. So there would be a motion they would feel because of the loss of this good leader who led with integrity, and character, and he wasn't perfect. He made mistakes. But he was a good leader.

And so that would be emotional. But also at this moment was emotion because of the goodness of God. And that's far more important. And that's what Joshua was pointing them to. Because long after he's gone, God's still going to be good. Long after he's gone, God's going to be the Lord. And your connection to God is going to be helped by a lot of people throughout your life. But you must rely fully on God and not on any person that God uses. I hope your small group leader, I hope the team leader on your team, I hope the godly people in your life, who encourage you are a blessing to you. And I hope you honor the pastors and leaders that God brings your way in life. But I'm telling you: your faith has to rest solely on God. You have to trust in him because there's one mediator between God and man. And that is the man, Christ Jesus. So any pastor, any earthly leader is going to let you down in small ways or in large ways. But your faith has to rest on Him. And one person being revealed as being mortal as we all are cannot be enough to devastate your faith if you have built your life on the chief cornerstone, God's son, Jesus Christ.

So the goodness of God is what Joshua's pointing to. He doesn't use his last speech to just say, look how good I've been. He says, man, look how good God is. Look how good God is. And what does he do? He points them to the past. Because when you look to the past, what you find is evidence of God's goodness. Sometimes when you're present, it's hard to understand what he's doing because sometimes he seems absent. Because you're so close up to the canvas, you can't see what the colors are creating. So with time, you get to see. I figured this out in Life Church that the fingerprints of God are best observed in the rear-view mirror of life. So sometimes you get some distance, you realize, man, God is good. Because what does Joshua say? He goes, remember Abraham? That fool was an idolater. Now we call him the father of faith. He started out as an idolater. And now that's almost sacrilegious for him to be messing with Abraham. He's like, dude, Abraham? He's like, yeah, Abraham, that was weird how he was worshipping the son. Wasn't that weird, all those idols? In fact, some commentaries believe that Abraham's father owned an idol manufacturing business. What was the family business of father Abraham? All these little trinkets and idols that people used to worship sex, and worship money, and worship the God of the moon, and the God of the harvest, and all that. That's how Abraham started out.

And so what he's saying is, how good is God that he would use someone that messed up? How good is God that he would call him? And then he says, how good is God that he would use us? And then he just points thing, after thing, after thing to God's goodness. God's goodness. God's goodness at the Red Sea. God's goodness in Egypt. God's goodness 40 years wandering in the desert with y'all being a bunch of whiners. 40 years of the goodness

of God. And as the stories of God's goodness went out, this emotion of gratitude would rise up. They say if you take even just a few minutes once a week and write down five things you're thankful for, that your perceived sense of your happiness in life will increase by as much as 25%. Because it's easy to get into this woe is me. Life's so hard. I didn't get invited. This person got my promotion. But I'm just telling you, when you just look back go, thank you, God, for saving me, thank you, God, for life, thank you, God, for my car, thank you, God, for my kids, thank you, God, for this, thank you, God, for this, all of a sudden, it shifts something in your spirit, so this emotion of gratitude. And then he gets to his big crescendo. He's like, hey, look at this country we get. Hey, those olive groves, we didn't plant those. Hey, that city over there, we didn't build that. Hey, the town over there, we didn't plan that. God gave US cities to live in we didn't build, because he gave them victory over the enemies. They were driven out. And they got to live in cities that were fully built. They got to enjoy the use of land for which they did not labor. He's basically saying, God did it. God gave it. We just get to enjoy it.

How good is our God? You know what? I feel like that right now. Because I was looking into the past, into the records, thinking about how 100 and 110 years ago, respectively, someone decided to open up a hotel called the Hotel Montana. And 100 years ago, someone decided there needed to be a theater called the Liberty Theater. And every single brick was built. And God allowed it. And God permitted it. And God oversaw it only to a point. Because he saw in his mind's eye the day that this would be a house of God for his people to praise him. God gave us a hotel and a theater. We got to connect him. I know we did something. We worked hard on it. But you know what? God did it. We're here on this day not to say, look what we did. We're here to say, thank you, God, that you gave us a city to live in we didn't build. You gave us buildings that we didn't, you see, even back then, God saw what he was plan, God knew on the day the first brick was slid into place that this room would be filled with praise for his son and that lives would be saved here, changed here, healed here, made whole here, that we would walk in forgiveness here, that from here, he would launch a work that like the Continental Divide, would reach from coast to coast like the rain that goes to the east and goes to the west, that God will bless the country and bless the world from little old Kalispell, Montana. But God did it.

And we get to walk in it because we're a part of the only thing that will outlast everything: the Church of Jesus Christ. Names that are powerful today like Amazon, and Tesla, and Apple, and Coca-Cola, and Wells Fargo, I'll tell you what, a million years from now, there is one name being spoken today that will still be spoken. It's the name of Jesus. It's the name above every name. Whatever's big now, whatever's big 100 years from now, there's still a name above every name. And what we're a part of is what he's doing. And when we lose ourselves from focusing on just our little story and our life, and we lose ourselves as a part of something bigger, we get to discover that God, outside of time, what he was setting up. And then we get to play our little part in it. And we're a part of something so big. And here's the exciting thing for you and for me, just as he was 100 years ago planning this moment, what was he planning 80 years ago that we're going to discover 20 years from now? What was he working on 50 years ago? What's he doing right now that our children's children are going to walk in one day?

I'm telling you, we're not done yet. We need to keep fighting, keep growing, keep believing, keep dreaming, keep building. Come on. Salt Lake City's coming. I'm telling you. We've got work to do. We can't relax on our laurels. Yes, it's a celebration. But we don't relax. We just reload. Come on, someone. There's still more work to do. We have still more hurting people to reach. Just one more. Just one more. Just one more. There's emotion. But then with all that kind of setting the stage, he gets down to brass tacks. Joshua, he's old. But don't misunderstand what you're dealing with. Like Yoda, the cane is just for fun. He could still fight. Because he drops down this decision. He calls them, third word, a decision. It's a decisive moment. It's the gloves come off. And the gauntlet gets

thrown down when he says, yeah, there's reports that there's still idols in the camp. Oh, it got quiet up in there. It got quiet up in there. Yeah.

So I understand that there's still some idolatry happening. I understand some of you are still worshipping sex, and worshipping the sun, and worshipping the moon. Awkward. That's how we started. That's what God delivered us from. That's how Abraham used to be. Look at it. Let it sink in, the gravity of it when he says, you guys, you got to serve the Lord and put away the Gods that your father served. How are you still worshipping the Gods that people on the other side of the river worshipped? Are you telling me some of them snuck in and smuggled in in their carry-on luggage little Egyptian Gods? And they're still at low moments, they're showing up to church for sure, but at low moments, they still go back to their go-to God when they need validation, when they need security, when they need to hit, there's still these certain things that they're resorting to. And so they're worshipping God. But their hearts are mixed. Their hearts are not loyal.

And so what does he call them to do? He says, put that stuff away. You don't need that stuff. He says, instead, you should evaluate the options and choose for yourself this day whom you're going to serve. If you want to worship one of those Gods. Great. Go worship them. Go build a temple to them. Go gang busters. Get a tattoo of their name: Marduk, on your forehead or whatever you want to do. If that God's better than the God who's done all this stuff for us, then please go worship them. But if you're going to worship God, then worship God only. He's saying, pick a team, y'all. He's saying, I'd rather have you be 100% against God than just 50% for him. Because it's insulting for you to even bring any other God into the same conversation with our God. There's no God but our God. Any other thing you can worship, think about it. What else could you live for? Because everybody has a God. No, no. I'm an atheist. You have a God. You have a master passion. You have a controlling interest. It just might be you. And what a crappy God you are. You are not a good God at all.

But some of us are living lives as our own Gods. Our careers are our Gods. Or some achievements our God. Or some drug is our God. But when you have cancer and pray to that God, it's silent. Its mouth doesn't move because it can't speak. Its ears don't listen to your prayers. When you need it the most, whatever you look to: maybe it's your figure. Maybe it's your sex life. Maybe it's how powerful you are. Maybe it's the money in your bank account. But when you desperately need it, it doesn't say anything to you, does it? Because you're talking to a volleyball. So he says, that's a funny reference to Castaway. So he says, choose for yourself this day whom you serve.

Now, I have to point out just real quick that this fiery ultimatum, this moment of decision, it comes after he tells them all that God's done for them as his chosen covenant people. It doesn't come before, meaning he didn't say, choose, he didn't walk into the meeting, all right. There's idols in here. Give me your idols. Pass everyone through an idol detector or something like that. Beep beep. Start wandng people down for little Buddha statues or something. He doesn't do that and then say, and if you throw the idols away all the way, then God will give us olive trees we didn't plant. And if you really get rid of the sin in your life, then guess what? God's got a great building for you he wants you to live in. Because that's religion, isn't it? Behave, get saved. That's not our God. Our God says believe, and you'll receive even though you're unworthy, even though you still got your suitcases full of idols. Our God cleans his fish after he catches them. The amazing thing about grace, they don't want you to know this, is that God's righteousness is not based on you. It's placed on you because of Jesus' credit. So God just gives you lavish treatment, gives you heaven, gives you his calling, gives you his spirit, gives you his home, gives you his family, gives you gifts, gives you power, gives you everything that he has. It becomes yours. And then he says, now that you've been given it all, give it your all.

Now that you've been given it all, evaluate it. Look. What are these other things doing for you

that you still have with you? Do you have room for that in your life? And he calls you to shed the sin that so easily entangles and the weights that slow you down, and to cast those things off not so God will love you, but because he does and will never stop loving you. That's grace. And so he says, look how could God's been. What do you need those idols for? That's just going to keep you from properly possessing your possessions. Listen, there are things we have in our lives that will stop us from possessing our possessions. Having something is not the same as enjoying it. Something being yours doesn't mean you're going to get to enjoy the full use of it. So all the God's given to us, the things we should be looking at in our lives, going, this doesn't make sense for me anymore in this season. As God has called me who he's called me to be, this doesn't make sense for me. So we begin to shed those things not motivated by guilt, motivated by love, and motivated by grace, but a decision he gives them, nonetheless. Choose for yourself this day whom you'll serve.

And then I love it. He ends with maybe the most important part of it all: a demonstration. He demonstrates personally what he's calling them to. And every good leader does this. Why? Because leadership is not a title. It's a lifestyle. Leadership is not having authority to tell people what to do. It's about giving people an example to follow. So a good leader never calls someone to go where they're not willing to go themselves. So Joshua doesn't say, get rid of your idols. He instead demonstrates and says, as for me and my house, we're going to serve God. What is he doing? He's saying, I don't, yeah. Good. Excitement, I like it. He's saying, I love you all so much. But I love God too much to continue to allow your choice to determine mine. I love you with my whole heart. But no matter what you choose, I have decided to follow Jesus. And though none of you go with me, still, I will follow. And if you look at the nation of Israel's history, you will see them perpetually plagued by something called peer pressure. Their Achilles heel was a phrase used again, and again, and again, they wanted to be like the other nations. So why even now do they still have some of these idols? Because they wanted to be like the other nations.

Now, I know this doesn't affect us anymore today in the year 2019. None of us want to be like anyone around us. None of us do anything stupid to be like, I know none of you students have ever done anything, that was a joke. Right? So much of the dumb stuff we do is to keep up appearances, and to be like other people, and to fit in, and all that. But that was perpetually a problem. So he's demonstrating the cure. For him to just say boldly, here's what you guys should do. But no matter what you do, here's what I'm going to do. So he's not saying, do as I say. He's saying, do as I do. And I love it so much because it's just a show of steely resolve for him to say, as for me and my house, here's what we're going, I'm not waiting for you tell me how you like my talk. Here's what I'm going to do no matter what you decide. We are going to serve God. We are going to serve the Lord.

This week, I thought of Joshua's resolve a lot as I was watching a documentary film that so many people probably heard about for the first time after the Oscars. Of course, it won the Academy Award for the Best Documentary Film. And it's the story of free-solo climber Alex Honnold, who goes rock climbing with everything you need to climb rocks except for the rope, which is kind of an important part, really, if you think about it. But he's made his career and made a name for himself by doing normal rock climbing routes that you do, but the only thing he brings with him is climbing shoes and a bag of chalk. And the documentary film that I watched, Free Solo, was about his successful attempt to climb up El Cap in Yosemite, kind of the gold standard of rock climbing. Pull up some of these pictures. It's unbelievable. Here he is climbing. And you're like, where's the harness? There's not one. Where's the rope? Yep. That's the point. There's no rope. He is not held to the mountain at all. He's holding on just with his fingertips and his feet. Here's another shot that shows how high up he gets, literally climbs up El Cap, which at the top is 3,000 feet, and the documentary shows him doing it. You're wondering, how tall is 3,000 feet?

Well, here's a comparison to the Space Needle, to the Eiffel Tower, to the Sears Tower, and it's also tall taller than the Empire State Building. So he went from the very bottom to the very top of El Cap

completely unassisted. The film crews did not intervene whatsoever. And at any moment had he lost his grip, he would have fallen to his death. Someone said to him, but that'll be the most exciting four seconds of your life, though. And he said, actually, it'd be about 14 before I explode when I hit the bottom. So he realizes at any moment, should there be any misstep whatsoever, he falls. This is so intense. I watched it at the Oscars. I almost DVR'd right past it, actually. Best documentary, yawn. But then I saw something a little bit and ended up watching it. I was like, oh, my gosh. I think I've heard of this guy. And I realized a while back, I'd read a book by Stephen Cutler where he talked about his attempt to climb up the Half Dome. Before he mustered up the courage to climb up El Cap, he climbed Half Dome in Yosemite as well, unassisted.

And when I was reading that book, I excerpted this quote and had no idea it was connected to this. Here's what he says of free soloing in general: he says, it's the equivalent of an NBA basketball player under last-game-of-the-Finals pressure, having to execute 1,000 free throws, step back to the 3-point line and shoot 100 3-pointers, and then after all that physical and mental exhaustion, step back and shoot one half-court shot. And all the shots have to go in because any miss is fatal. So I grabbed the movie, gathered my family, and I wanted to watch it just for the inspiration factor. I sat on the edge of my sofa and sweated for the entire thing. My kids were just like, and Jennie falls asleep. She was there for the beginning. The moment he started climbing up El Cap, she just falls asleep and wakes up as he's pumping his fists at the top. I don't even know her anymore. Here's the part that got me, and you should watch the film. But please don't start free soloing. Please. I love you too much. He says this, he goes, the crazy thing about it, everyone says, your hands must be so strong. And obviously, they are. But he says it's not about my hand strength. It's all a head game. He says, because I just have to know that once I start climbing, at a certain point, he gets above a ledge, backing up, or quitting, or failure is not an option because he can't down climb. And so once he's in it, he is in it.

And as I was watching that film and thinking of Joshua, I realized that's the kind of resolve God wants from us. Because so many of us are tethered to this rope of this other God and this other thing. And we're trying to follow Jesus. But we're clipped in to so many other things that we think we need for our safety, we need for our comfort, but what God wants for you is for your faith journey to be a spiritual free solo, to follow Jesus totally untethered, to commit yourself to him, to burn the ships, to say though none go with me, still, I will follow. And to just completely cast yourself on God's grace and his mercy, and you will find his strength and power able to sustain you. Isn't that what Jesus said? If anyone desires to follow me, let him carry his cross, pick up his cross, and come after me. I'm telling you, you just got to go up that rock, and you will find that his mercy, there's nowhere you can go where the grace of God can't sustain you. That's Joshua's bold demonstration.

Now, you might be saying, that's all very nice. What does this have to do with relationships? There might be one or two of you thinking, as you remember this is a sex, love, and dating series. Thank you for bringing that up. There is one last Shechem I want you to see that I believe will bridge the gap and connect this moment here to what happens day in and day out in our love lives that causes us so much frustration. And in it, we'll find this relationship chip that is perhaps more important than any others. It's in John chapter four. And if you want to flip over there, you can. Do you remember what I told you Jacob dug in Shechem? He dug a well. Well, in John chapter four, we're told that the same place is mentioned in Genesis, all throughout that we studied, we're told that in verse five, Jesus arrived at a Samaritan village called Sychar near the field that Jacob had given to his son, Joseph long ago. Wearing by his long journey, he sat on the edge of Jacob's well. What does that mean? Jesus finally shows up. And one day, he goes to Shechem and sits on this very well. Why did he go there? Because he knew that not long after verse eight, a Samaritan woman was going to come and draw water.

Now, we only know a little bit about the Samaritan woman. But what we know comes from verse 18,

that she had been married five different times. And she was currently shackled up with a man who is not her husband. In other words, this girl had some serious commitment issues. And Jesus planted himself where he would bump into her. She would have felt like an outcast in that day, a pariah for sure, and Jesus engages her and begins talking to her. And basically, it comes down to a moment in time where he tells her this in verse 13: if you just drink from Jacob's well, you'll get thirsty again and again. But if you drink the living water that I give you, you will never thirst again. And you will be forever satisfied. For when you drink the water I give you, it becomes a gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit springing up and flooding you with endless life.

This woman had been looking to men to give her living water. And Jesus came there that day to say, honey, living water doesn't come from men. It comes from the son of man. And if you want to nail down your love life, what you need to do is nail down your first love. Make me the love of your life. Because the truth is you'll never be right with a mate until you get right with a maker. In our culture, there's this idea of she completes me. And we're hoping that one will come along: he or she will come along one day, and we'll be able to say, oh, my gosh. Love at first sight, she completes me. He completes me. But no human being can handle the weight and the freight of your soul. That's too much to put on anybody. You want to know why? Because we're all so screwed up.

People talk about compatibility. People talk about irreconcilable differences. You want to know the truth? Every single one of us is incompatible with every single one of us. You throw any of us into a cage match called marriage long enough, there's going to be blood. Right? I'm just saying that we're all messed up. And yes, of course, you want to find someone that you're attracted to. There's a time and place for all those things. But we're missing the point if we forget that what it should be is you follow Jesus. Let him fill the hole in your soul. And then you allow him to draw you to another person who's made Jesus the North Star of their life. And then together, you two get to imperfectly follow Jesus with grace, and forgiveness, and humor, and yes, even occasionally makeup sex. And you get to do that day in and day out on the journey together following Christ. Amen? Amen.