

'Til Death Do Us Part: What You Need to Know to Make Marriage Last Skip Heitzig

If you brought a Bible with you, I'm going to have you turn in Genesis chapter two. First book in the Bible, second chapter-- Genesis 2. Find your way there. And then, also, if you don't mind, make your way over to Mark in the New Testament chapter 10. So Genesis 2 and Mark chapter 10 is where we're going to be at today, in a message I'm calling Till Death Do Us Part-- What You Need To Know To Make Marriage Last.

Someone once said that marriage is like flies on a screen door. Those that are in want to be out. Those that are out want to be in. Now, I don't know if you're in or out. But if you're in a marriage, I'm praying that you'll stay in a marriage. And why is it that so many people who began a marriage relationship with such good intentions end up so miserable?

Now, they don't plan that. I've never met anybody who said, you know, my goal in life is to get into a miserable marriage relationship. I just sort of want to die that way, just in misery. And yet, so many people end up that way.

At my wedding day, I was a nervous groom. I was nervous on a number of levels, but especially when the pastor shared those vows-- for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, love and to cherish. And then here's the phrase-- till death do us part. When he said that, it was like, whoa, man, that phrase weighs a lot. Till death do us part. That could be, like, any moment now. Wow.

And he had just asked me the question, prior to that, will I take Lenya to be my God-given life as long as you both shall live. And again, it's like, wow. I mean, it hit me, the permanence of this thing. I had been thinking about the permanence of marriage a lot up to that day. In fact, to be quite frank with you, there were a couple of times where I had the fleeting thought that maybe I should just move to another country to get out of this permanent commitment that I was making.

And the reason I felt that way is because I had seen so much failure in relationships. It was all around me. The rate of divorce was skyrocketing. And since 1981, it has not gotten any better. It has deteriorated since then. I was on one website, a legal website, a website of a legal firm. They were putting out the statistics of this, because they deal with this. They reported there's one divorce every 36 seconds in this country.

One divorce every 36 seconds. That's nearly 2,400 divorces per day. That's 16,800 divorces every week. The average marriage that ends in divorce lasts eight years. That's the lifespan, average, eight years. Now, because we all know these statistics, we've heard them over the years, this is nothing new to us. We've sort of figured it's not getting better but worse. We know that.

But because of that, it is now causing some, especially social scientists and others who examine these trends, to wonder if the idea of marriage itself, over a long period of time, is even reasonable. That's the word they're using. Is it even reasonable to ask a young couple to make such a lifelong commitment when they have no idea what they're getting into? Is that reasonable?

Many say it's not a Washington Post editorial article said, quote, "A reasonable level of divorce may be a symptom of a healthy and mobile society." So now it's so normal that it's healthy. It's good. The writer of this article contends, "Long marriages are simply not natural." And he asks, "Is it not possible that the ideal companion for our younger, child-rearing years will not be the ideal companion for our middle and latter years?"

So this author, along with many others, are saying, it's just not reasonable. You can't expect people to make a lifelong commitment. This is why a lot of people are opting out of the marriage altogether, not even doing it. Just having a partnership of some kind. In one report put out by Pew Research, 40% of the people that were studied overall said they believed that marriage is obsolete, including 31% of married people.

Enough of the bad news. Let's get on to some good news. By the way, marriage research is typically all about bad news. If you want to get depressed really quick, just do what I've done the last few weeks and just

start studying marriage and divorce trends. That'll put you on a downer really quick. And I've just sort of noticed that most marriage research is about failures. It's all the reasons it doesn't work.

The good news is that though marriage is on the endangered species list, it is not doomed. I see, every week, plenty of good examples of solid, vibrant, flourishing, long-lasting relationships. But you need to know it doesn't just happen. It's not automatic. It's the deliberate result of determined people willing to make it work with God's grace and strength.

Genesis chapter 2. I've asked you to turn there. There's only a few verses I want you to notice today. Genesis 2 is called a passage of primary reference. A passage a primary reference simply means it's the first time it is stated or mentioned or a concept or idea is articulated, first time God says something about it. Genesis 2 is one of those. And we know that because four times in the New Testament, the author or the speaker will refer back to this passage of primary reference.

So we're going to look at that in just a few moments, this and Mark chapter 10. Now, marriage is the only game where both players can win. But how do they win? Well, they have to understand a few things. They need to understand what marriage is. They need to understand what marriage does. And they need to understand what marriage needs. And those are the things we're going to look at today-- what marriage is, what it does, and what it needs. We need to understand that.

So let's understand what it is. In Genesis chapter 2, in verse 22, God brings the woman that he fashioned to the man. And Adam said, it doesn't sound all that romantic, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." That's his opening statement, first date. "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed."

Now, in verse 23, Adam gets all poetic. Can you look at your Bible and tell me if it's the same as mine? It is put out in a poetic fashion. It is sort of a-- the phrases are stacked up. It's different from the rest of the narrative. That's because verse 23 is the first poem in the Bible, the first

poetic couplet. And then, after that, it goes back to a narrative form.

Now, interestingly, scholars have noted that there is a rhythm to it. That is, the first line has a two-beat rhythm. This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. And the second line has a three-beat rhythm to it. I'm not going to do it for you. Come on, man. She shall be called-- I can't do it. I'm not going to do it.

So that's just interesting. I don't know, it's sort of like this is like post-creation rap. He sees this woman brought to him, and he starts breaking out in hip-hop and like sings a song for her. I like that. Now, I mentioned that the verse is not too romantic. You say, really? This is the first thing he says to her? "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Does not sound like a great opener.

That's because it's hard to translate, we are told, from the Hebrew into English to capture the emotion of this. There's an emotional component that is missing from the translation that the Hebrew seems to capture. So a very loose translation would be as soon as God brought the woman to the man, Adam said, wow. Now, this is it. This is the one that will complete me.

He gets emotional. He sings to his wife. His song is, basically, it's not just Adam anymore. It's Adam and Mrs. Adam. We're the Addams family. That's his song. John Calvin translates that verse this way. "Now, at length, I have obtained a suitable companion, who is part of the substance of my flesh, and in whom I behold, as it were, another self." I love that. I'm looking at another self, the counterpart to my personality, the one that will complete me.

Now, look at the next verse, and you'll understand marriage comes in three parts. First of all, leaving; second, cleaving; third, weaving. That's a marriage-- leaving, cleaving, weaving. Let's begin with leaving. Therefore, a man will leave his father and his mother. That's how marriage begins. Marriage begins by severing one relationship to solidify another relationship.

What does it mean, leaving father and mother? Does not mean abandon father and mother. It does not mean say, you're out of here, Mom and

Dad. Never want to text you. Never want to write you. Never want to email you. Don't come over. You can't see the grandkids. That's not leaving and cleaving.

It means to cut the cord of dependence on Mom and Dad. It means to establish a new first loyalty. Have you ever heard that term, first loyalty? So young man and young woman, you're getting married today. That means, from now on, your new first loyalty is not to your mom and dad. Your new first loyalty is to each other. So it means to establish an adult relationship with your parents. It means your parents are going to give you space to solidify that relationship.

I always ask young couples, same question, what do your parents think? Usually, it's, oh, they love him, or they think she's great. Every now and then, when I ask the question, I'll get that, eh, Dad kind of thinks he's a creep. OK, what are you going to do about that? Well, I'm still going to marry him. That's fair. That's your choice. Just understand that your parents' view is going to complicate your relationship.

How so? Well, when you get into a fight, things get really rough, you're going to think back to the ideal image your parents had of the perfect guy you should marry. And you may want to change or try to change-- good luck trying to actually change-- him into that image. It's just going to add stress to the relationship.

I've discovered that some kids never leave their parents emotionally. They're still attached to their parents emotionally, sometimes dependent upon them monetarily. And sometimes, a marriage is even held hostage by parents. So just a note to parents who have kids that are about to be married-- release them. Please release me. Let me go.

So in the marriage ceremony, there's going to be a ceremonial component that illustrates this. As the bride and groom come up, the preacher's are going to say, who brings this woman to be married to this man? At which point, you will say, I do, or we do, or her mother and I do. Really do that. Really release them, for their benefit. Give them space to leave.

Then, the second one is to cleave. It is leaving, but it is also cleaving. Now, notice the verse, "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and

mother and be joined to his wife." So marriage requires a deep, determined commitment of permanence. That's what joined means. Now, I'm reading to you from the translation that I have chosen, the New King James version. And it's probably the most common word used in most versions, to be joined together.

Let me give you my opinion. It's a weak translation in this verse. To leave father and mother, and then to be joined is just a little too weak. It does not capture the Hebrew meaning. [SPEAKING HEBREW] is the Hebrew word. And if you have-- anybody here have an old King James version of the Bible? OK, so shout it out. What is the word?

Cleave.

Cleave, thank you. That's a better-- that's a strong translation, to cleave. Leave and cleave. Leave and be joined, weak. Leave and cleave is stronger. Because the word [SPEAKING HEBREW] literally means to cling to or to impinge upon. That's strong. Or to follow hard after or to stick on.

The idea is permanence, an indissoluble union. You are glued. You are welded. You are stuck. That's how people feel. I'm stuck. Uh-huh. Glued, welded. Now, that always brings up the question, does that mean there can be no separation under any circumstance? No, there is one circumstance where that union can be dissolved. But never without damage. Never without damage.

Show me one divorce where somebody is not damaged. I have never heard of one. I've never seen one. Think of it this way. It's been helpful to me. If you took two pieces of paper and literally did what it says here, glued them together, and let the glue dry, you now have one flesh. You have one unit. If, the next day, you looked at that thing you made, gluing two pieces of paper together, and you said, you know? I've changed my mind. I want to separate them.

You could do it. You could get a razor blade and very deftly and slowly cut between the paper and remove it. But let me ask you a question. By the end of the day, once you have taken them back apart, are they the same as they were? Have they been changed dramatically? Yet, they don't

resemble the first entity. You can't do it without damage. They're not the same.

The idea of leaving and cleaving is that they become one now. There's a permanence there. Today, the idea of permanence is all but gone. God has given us His blueprint. It's here. We have come along and redrawn the blueprint and added a back door, a divorce door. So yeah, a couple still say their vows every week. They still say they promise to be faithful until death. But with some, it's like I can hear under their breath, almost, unless there's a glitch.

But cleaving means that that husband is saying to his wife, I am faithful to you, even when you lose the first blush of your early beauty, even if you are untidy around the home. And she says, I'm going to be faithful to you even when you bulge around the center and get bald on top and we get poorer instead of richer. I'm in it for the long haul. That's the idea of cleaving.

So that's what a marriage is. It is leaving. It is cleaving. Third is weaving. Leaving, cleaving, and weaving. And that comes at the end of verse 24. It continues, "and they shall become one flesh." Please notice the word become. It does not say they will instantaneously be, on their wedding day, after their vows, one flesh. No, you become that. That takes time. It takes a lifetime.

Lenya and I are, in many ways, similar. In other ways, polar opposites. We have similarities. We both have relatively strong personalities. We're both leaders. We both have kind of that A-type communication skill thing going on. We're teachers. We lead organizations, both of us.

But we're opposites. I'm very spontaneous. She is not. She's very planned. I'm messier. I would just say I'm messy, but I've been married now a number of years. So that's diminished maybe a notch. So I'm messier. She is much tidier. I am mostly right. She is always right. Missed it by that much.

Now, when it says they'll become one flesh, at the basic level of interpretation, it's speaking of the physical sexual union-- coming together, producing a child. That child is the one flesh amalgamation of

those two. But one flesh carries a greater meaning. It means that you share everything.

You share your bodies. 1 Corinthians 7 says the man's body does not belong to him anymore. It belongs to her. The wife's body belongs to him. You share bodies. You share possessions. You, hopefully, share insights with each other. That's one flesh.

Wayne Mack, in his excellent book on marriage, said, and I'm quoting, "It is the type of relationship that is shared with no one else other than one's mate. It is a partnership in every area of life, for as long as both partners live. In other words, there is absolutely nothing about which one spouse can say to another, that's none of your business. The wife has complete and unfettered access to every area of her husband's life, and so, also, the husband to every area of his wife's life. There are no locked doors or secret hiding places."

Now, again, this is not instantaneous. It is a lifelong process. Take a guy who throws his socks in the sink. Mate him up with a woman who irons paper napkins and get them to be on the same page. Good luck with that. How does that happen? It happens by weaving. By weaving.

I want you to put a picture in your mind. Maybe this will be helpful, maybe not. It's helpful for me. Put this picture in your mind. Your marriage is like the Eiffel Tower. The Eiffel Tower is pretty cool, right? It's iconic. It's in Paris. Everybody who goes to France wants to see the Eiffel Tower. Hey, did you know that the Eiffel Tower was originally built to last 20 years? 20 years. It's way beyond that.

So it made it through year after year beyond that. It made it through World War II, when Adolph Hitler said, tear it down. And his governor in the area refused to do it. It has withstood year-- decade after decade, it stands. Why? Because there are people who work on the Eiffel Tower every day, all the time, adding a weld here, adding a weld there, tightening or replacing a nut and bolt here, tightening and replacing a nut or bolt there. They're constantly adding points of strength.

So I learned this years ago when I visited with my wife the Eiffel Tower. I wanted to go up, and I noticed there's a work crew. And so I said, what's

up with that? They said, there's always a work crew. All the time. We always add a weld or a nut and bolt. So what that does, it produces longevity. Over time, it becomes immovable.

So husband and wife are like two welders. Guys like this illustration. Chicks, not so much. I'm a welder? Yeah, in the sense that you are going to spot weld over here and tighten that bolt over there, and you're going to make your relationship immovable. You're going to hold it together. That's the weaving over time.

A marriage is not held together by chains. I've heard guys say those stupid remarks before their buddy gets married. Oh, you're getting married? Getting the old ball and chain. You're a prisoner of war. A marriage is not held together by chains. It is held together by threads. Tiny threads woven every day, every week, every month over years that make that absolutely immovable and strong over a lifetime. So understand what a marriage is-- leaving, cleaving, weaving.

Second thing to understand-- understand what marriage does. What all that leaving, cleaving, and weaving produces is this-- intimacy. That's the goal-- intimacy. If done right, all those things will produce intimacy. Verse 25 is intimacy. It says, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." All the guys liked that versus. Oh, they're naked.

Naked means to lay bare. It has a reciprocal idea of being bare, naked, with another person and before another person. But the idea is intimacy. Don't focus on the naked as much as what the naked is symbolic of. They are open and unashamed before each other. That is intimacy-- closeness, openness. Intimacy is way more than sex. I know some guys go, it is?

Yeah. What intimacy is is the deep and rewarding connection between a husband and wife physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially, all those levels. And by the way, intimacy is what everyone longs for. Everyone longs for real intimacy. Some guys might say, no, sex is good enough. No, it's not.

What you really want in your heart of hearts is intimacy-- an open and unguarded relationship where you have nothing to hide. There's no self-

consciousness. You're transparently sharing everything. You're sharing discussion, shared silence, shared joys, shared sorrows, a shared history.

Marriage is infinitely rewarding at its best, but indescribably oppressive at its worst. And what makes the difference is intimacy. If you have intimacy, it's rewarding. If you don't, it's miserable.

So here's Adam and Eve. They're at the pinnacle of shared intimacy. Doesn't get any better than this. Naked and not ashamed. All is good. Leaving, cleaving, weaving. It's not going to last long. Very next chapter, sin enters the relationship. It's marring them. Now, it's all about a cover-up program. Give me some fig leaves. Why? What happened? Sin destroyed intimacy.

So understand what marriage is. Understand what marriage does. Now, third, and we'll close on this, understand what marriage needs. What do we need to make it last? Mark chapter 10, would you turn there now in your New Testament? Mark chapter 10. You're going to notice that Jesus quotes what we just read, and he makes an application.

Mark chapter 10, verse 1-- "Then He arose from there." That is, Jesus arose from there. "Came to the region of Judea." That's down south. "By the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again." He was always teaching people. "The Pharisees came to him and asked him, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? testing Him. And He answered and said to them, what did Moses command you? And they said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and dismiss her."

We looked at Matthew's version of this few weeks ago. And remember we told you that the assumption was to dump his wife, all the guy had to do was get two witnesses, write a certificate of divorce, done. A wife couldn't do it, but a man could do it any time he felt like it. So they ask him about.

Jesus answered and said to them, in this world of no-fault divorce, He said to them, "because of the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason--" Now he's quoting Genesis 2. "For this reason, a

man shall leave his father and mother," be joined to his wife. "The two shall become one flesh so then they are no longer two, but one flesh."

Picture the paper glued together. Now they're one. They're one flesh, not two any longer. Verse 9, "Therefore--" Here's my concluding remarks. "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Now, when I was getting married or in that time all my life, I knew people where I worked, at the hospital I worked at an Orange County, say to me, well, why are you doing this? I mean, marriage is just a ceremony and a piece of paper. Ever heard that? So I remember when that ideology sort of was popular, and it gets kind of popular every new generation. I've heard that for years. It's just a piece of paper.

Oh, no, it's not. It is infinitely more than just a piece of paper. Now, what I want you to notice here is that Jesus links a human experience with a divine covenant, and I want you to see it. In verse 7, he is quoting Genesis 2. "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be--" What's the next word in your Bible?

Joined.

Joined to his wife. Stop there for a moment. That's what people do. Hey, you want to marry me? Sure. OK. Set a date. Do it. When they do it, they join themselves. That's their decision, their volition. It's their experience. But now look at verse 9. "Therefore, what God has--" what?

Joined.

Joined together. "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate." So here's the deal. When a couple gets married, they need to understand what just happened. And what just happened is this. Their decision to be joined invites God into the process, who Himself then joins them together.

They may start with just this commitment, hey, let's get married. God raises it up to a higher level called a covenant. Higher level. Marriage is to be seen as a sacred union, not a piece of paper. It makes all the difference in the world. It's not just a ceremony or a piece of paper. This

is why the English Book of Common Prayer, written in 1622-- still used today. When I say this, you're going to go, I've heard this before.

Book of Common Prayers, 1622, the preacher addresses the audience by saying, dearly beloved, we are gathered here, in the sight of God, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony. God's in it. It's a holy union. So marriage needs this recognition. It's a covenant.

What's a covenant? An agreement between two or more parties to perform certain actions. And a covenant-- you know this from your study of the Bible. You know that covenants are used throughout the Bible-- old covenant, mosaic covenant, Edenic covenant, Abrahamic covenant, new covenant. God always makes covenants. He raises marriage up to a covenant level.

In Malachi chapter 2, verse 14, the prophet says to husbands, "The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth. She is your companion and your wife by covenant." Now, let me give that to you in the NSV, the New Skip Version. I'm going to make it a little easier so I can understand.

God is saying, hey, you guys decided to get married. Great. I'll be there. I'm coming to your wedding. I'm going to witness your wedding. I'm going to be there, and I will be joining you together when you join together. It's a covenant.

Proverbs 2, verse 17, the author refers to the wife and, his words, "her husband" and the covenant that she has made before God. So you see that when you regard it as a covenant, it raises it to a sacred level. Different level, higher level, higher accountability. So what does marriage need to last? It needs the recognition, the regard, that it's a sacred union.

Second, it doesn't need to just be regarded. It needs to be guarded. It needs to be protected. It needs to be shielded. You say, shielded from what? From outside forces, or from outside people who would want to tear it apart. You say, well, who would want to do that? Look at verse 9. "Therefore, what God has joined together--" look at the last phrase. "Let not man separate."

Let not man separate. Don't let anything or anyone drive a wedge between you and your spouse. Listen to it in a new translation called the message translation. Been out for a few years. "Because God created this organic union of the two sexes, no one should desecrate His art by cutting them apart." That's God's art. That's God's idea. God brings them together. Don't desecrate His art by cutting them apart.

Now, let me drill down. Don't let man separate. Don't let people drive a wedge. Don't let your parents drive a wedge. You're newly married. You have a father-in-law or mother-in-law who's really nosey and kind of poking their way in. It's like, hey, let me tell you a few things. Just politely, lovingly, separate. Build a fence. Build a wall. Hang the privacy sign out, sweetly saying, none of your beeswax. This is us now. First loyalty's here.

Fortunately, I have a father-in-law and his wife who have always been great. So we got married, Lenya would ask advice. Call her dad, Dad, what do I do about this? He give advice very, very sweetly, tentatively. But he'd always say, now, sweetheart, I'm your dad, but Skip's your husband. Makes sure that what I am saying matches up with what he is saying, because he's your head, not me.

He's always in for service every week. I thank him, to this day. Thank you for being that kind of father-in-law. Thank you. So don't let your parents drive a wedge between you and your spouse. Don't let your children drive a wedge between you and your spouse. If you let them, they will.

Now, over the last two decades or so, there's been an approach to parenting that psychologists call child-centered parenting. It's a disaster. It's where, well, we're married, but now we have children. So us, we kind of get put on the shelf, because now, it's all about our children, what they need and what they want. It all revolves around them. That's a disaster.

It's a disaster because you're going to produce very narcissistic children with no coping skills in life and no ability to persevere. No, it's not your home, child. It's our home. This is our covenant. It's not a child-centered relationship. It's a God-centered home. This is what we do. We love each

other, and you're a part of that, but it's not all about you. Because listen, if you make it all about them, they will let you.

Not only that, but it will put a strain on your marriage. You will suffer as husband and wife because of it, because your kids have been placed above your spouse. Do not let that happen. Let not man separate. Don't let parents drive a wedge. Don't let children drive a wedge. Don't let friends drive a wedge.

Every single relationship in life, once you get married, takes a backseat. Or take them out of the car all together, even. Let them hitchhike. Don't let hobbies and interests drive a wedge between you and your spouse. I think you get my drift. Once you get married, marriage re-prioritizes everything, everything and everyone.

A wise person once said, "A successful marriage demands a divorce. That is, a divorce from your own self-love." So ask yourself the question, what or whom are you letting separate you. If you're feeling seeds of that separation, are you letting things or people separate you? Could be a computer screen. Could be a phone. You're sitting at the table. You're never looking at each other talking. It's like, I'm mesmerized.

Well, I'm going to end on a higher note. We've looked at the text, but let me add a few tips, OK? Think of these as Skip's tips on making your marriage last. I could give you 30 or 40 or 50 of them. I'm only going to give you four, four tips to add to all of this to help it, to make it last. So to make it last, I'm going to give you an acronym on the word last, L-A-S-T.

So the L stands for the first attribute to add, and that is laughter. Boy, I hate it when I hear couples say, yeah, in our younger years, we had so much fun. And we laughed together. And we played together. Well, bring that back. Bring laughter back into the relationship.

One neuroscientist said, "Laughter restores the emotional connection between two people. Couples who laugh are couples who last." Virtually every scientist who studies this will say, laughter is good for you personally and relationally. Laughter. That's the L in LAST-- laughter.

The A in LAST will stand for absolve, or forgive. Forgive. You know why? You go, that's what I do, all the time, I forgive. Good. Keep doing it. And here's why. Have you figured out that marriage is the union between two sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God, including yourself?

So I was talking to one of our young pastors this week. And I said, so, in your period of being married, what are the things that have really gotten you through to the next level to keep this thing going? He said, well-- and I love this term. He said, we are relentless forgivers. What does that mean? We keep doing it all the time.

Let it go. Move on. It's over. Forgive. Really forgive and be forgiven. So because a marriage is a union between two sinners, it ought to be a union between two relentless forgivers. So laugh, absolve. L-A.

S in LAST stands for study. You mean like studying my Bible? Yeah, but no. I mean, do that, but that's not what it means. It means study each other. Study each other. Discover each other. This is what you find when you get married. You get married and you think you know the person. You don't. Oh, you'll discover who they are, over the next few months and years. And it might be shocking what you discover, but look at it as an adventure.

I like adventure. It's like, wow, I didn't know you thought that. I didn't know you did that, that you liked that, that you listened to that. You make a discovery. And discovery is better than change. If you think, well, we're getting married. I'm going to change him. Ha ha. Got another joke? How about just accept what you got into and discover that.

By the way, husbands are commanded to do this. Did you know that? In Peter's writings, he said, "Husbands, dwell with your wives with understanding." Discover them. Study them. So by now, I should be a PhD at Lenya-ology. I should have studied her enough that I kind of got it figured out. S stands for study. So L-A-S.

And finally, T in LAST stands for time. Time. Marriage takes time, and marriage takes top priority of time. Not like, well, yeah, here's my-- I'm a chemist, or I'm a dentist, or I'm a doctor, I'm a metal worker, or I work in an office, and I also have a wife. Oh, I'm married, too.

Make marriage a top priority-- regular date nights, cultivating common interests. Even though opposites attract, find something that you like and do together. Go on a new adventure. L-A-S-T, that will help your marriage last.

For better, for worse, back to those vows. I remember them well. I was asked, between services, do you remember still, I mean really remember, the details of your wedding day? Yeah, because, ugh, the weight of those words. I mean, I remember that day a lot. Now, couples, for better or for worse. More couples will survive if they understand that the better may come after the worse.

And so it's like, man, I've been married a few years. This is hard. That's OK. This feels like worse, because we're like figuring each other out and setting parameters and solutions to problems. That's OK. Go through the hard work and let the worse be upfront. Because when you do that, it will get better and better and better. And then the intimacy kicks in, and it's like, this is always good.

Father, Your word is what we look to. And in looking at it, as always, our passage of primary reference and interest. We're very interested, since it is Your idea, what is Your blueprint? What are Your ideas about next steps and about making it last? Even though we know we live in a culture that looks at this as not natural and unreasonable. We care far more about what You think and say and what Your words are than the notions that are ever changing in the world around us.

But we also understand that life is hard and that when we're in the pinch, it feels different to us. And You know that, as well. That doesn't take You by surprise. It's been that way for thousands upon thousands of years. Lord, help us to understand what You intended in leaving and joining and then weaving those threads, applying those spot welds to different parts to just keep that thing good and strong over time, lasting more than a few years.

Lord, help us to see where it's leading, what it can produce-- an intimacy of companionship that is really good. And I pray, Father, that we would apply regarding it as a covenant and guarding it from any force or any

person that would seek to drive a wedge in it. Lord, we believe this will honor You. We pray that it would. In Jesus' name, and anyone who agreed said--

Amen.

--amen.