

Themes for a Growing Church

“Christ Centered Marriages and Families”

Ephesians 3:14-16; 5:1-2, 25-28

The second foundation is strong marriages and strong families, but seems apt on Father's Day. So we'll be looking at strong marriages and strong families and if you like to know what's coming -- The big idea is that marriage is a covenant, not a contract, and that all the relationships that God places in us in, in this world are ultimately founded on his good character, his good ways. God is a father. God is a husband to his people. And so if we want to know how to love, we look to him. We look to God the Father, we look to the Holy Spirit. We look to the example of Christ in the pages of Scripture. Jesus modeled what a good father and what a good husband does. His love, his patience, kindness, knowledge, and provision. So, that's what's coming. Let me read God's Word to you from several passages.

The first of them is from Ephesians chapter three. Paul says,

“...for this reason I bow my knees before the father, from whom every family or fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being.

And then Ephesians chapter four,

“...be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Switch for a moment to the NIV, which just has a smoother translation of the first few verses of 5:25 of Ephesians and following continuing God's Word.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it just as Christ does the church. Because we are members of his body. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and the wife see that she respects her husband.

Let's pray for a moment.

Heavenly father, we do pray that we would see how you have made this world for families, for love, for covenant, and the ways in which the best marriages and the best fathers can point us to you.

We ask it all in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated.

So there is a consensus today that marriage faces unprecedented strains in America. Now, there are a couple reasons for that. First of all, we expect more of marriage than ever. And the bonds that hold marriages together are getting weaker. Now, when I say we expect more, I'm going to describe it this way from a secular article I read a while ago, a woman looking for a husband is seeking a lifelong partnership with a man who is tall, dark, handsome, funny, kind, fit, sporty, great with kids, pulls a nice salary well into six figures.

He elicits the best from me with gentle encouragement and kind instruction. Coated in love. Anything else you want, ma'am? Now, that's not quite the way people used to think of it. Look, 100, 200, 300, 400 years ago, in the past, marriage was held together not just by affection and trying to find perfection in your inner being. Self-actualization through a partner that carries you along the path.

There was much more interest in carving out a life, building a home, taking care of a farm, having children, raising those children, and maybe marrying a person who's your age and respectable. But people don't seem to have expected something close to perfection. A couple hundred years ago than they do today. So people are seeking more. They're seeking security and prosperity and love and affection and self-actualization and a partnership and a glorious life together on the one side and on the other side.

The bonds that keep people together are getting weaker. By that, I mean that people are less committed to marriage today than, say, 100, 200 years ago, and in part or in large measure, because we increasingly in the West, in America, view marriage more as a contract than as a covenant. Contract is something where you work out your roles and your expectations and whether you'll live here or there, and how many children you may hope to have or perhaps not have children.

It's all negotiable. And if things don't work out, the husband and wife consider it an option. If for an extended period of time the contract isn't working out very well, then it's always open to the situation, the breaking of that contract. Our lives are negotiable. Now that sounds a little bit abstract or academic. Let me say to you a different way.

There was a few years ago, a farmer who was living in the upper Midwest. He was a dairy farmer, which requires him to take care of his animals early in the morning and again after supper every night. And he was about 60 years old and he was losing weight, losing energy. His

skin was pallid. And so they went to a doctor, and the doctor ran a few tests and said, I'm sorry, in this small town, I can't discern what your problem is.

You're gonna have to go to the big city. They're going to give you a battery of tests at the end of the battery of tests. The doctor says the results are somewhat inconclusive. We're not quite sure what the problem is. And then for a moment, he said, may I speak to your wife alone? And he said to the woman, actually, it's pretty clear to me what's happening with your husband.

He's working on the farm full time since he was about 15 years old. That's 45 years. He's worn out. He has lost his desire to live. He's just. He's just wasting away. And it's up to you to restore in him that desire to live. And so what you need to do, he gets up at 430. You need to get up before him and give him pancakes and bacon and eggs and grits and then at lunchtime when he comes home, give another meal with a big smile, turn the bed down, give him a 30 to 45 minute nap. Send him out with a kiss. When it comes back at night, another hearty meal served with a smile. Hand the clicker to him. Let him work through your options for entertainment. And after that, most nights a little bit of romance, if you know what I mean. This and only this will restore your husband's life to live there in the car, driving home to talk about the tests, inconclusive results and the husband says, honey, can you tell me, by the way, what did that doctor say in that moment? The woman said, honey, he said, you're going to die.

You know, you can judge for yourself if that's a true story or an almost true story, but that's contractual thinking. It would be too much work. I'm just going to let him die. That's what people say when they think marriage is a contract. But marriage, in fact, is a covenant. It's not a deal. It's not an arrangement. It's a commitment.

But it's not based on good looks and health and degrees and earning potential. All the rest is based on a covenant in Scripture. Marriage is a scribe, a call to covenant two times Malachi two. Proverbs 2 in 1. It addresses a faithless woman, and the other it addresses a faithless man. I'm going to read you the two passages.

Proverbs chapter two. An unfaithful wife forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God. Now what that means is, when you're unfaithful, you're not only forgetting your companion, the person you've lived with all these years. You are forgetting that God verified and stood as a witness to the marriage covenant which you swore before him. In Malachi chapter two, the correction is to a faithless husband says this the Lord is witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she has been your companion and your wife by covenant.

God makes husband and wife one by his spirit, and it concludes that none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. You noticed the two statements were both made. Youth three really?

Youth companion. Covenant expected to live together ordinarily from youth as companions, living together in a covenant sworn before God. Now why is marriage a covenant?

One answer. Maybe the best answer is that God is a covenant maker and a covenant keeper. If you know the Old Testament, you know that as soon as God started dealing with his people, one by one he spoke to a man named Abraham, and he said, I'm going to make a covenant with you. I'm going to bless you.

And through you all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And then various things happened, and God repeated his covenant, his promise. He said, I will be faithful to you. I will bless the nations through you, over and over and over. For this message, I counted that in chapter 17 alone of Genesis, God 14 times said, I have made a covenant with you.

And he kept that covenant, whether Abraham was faithful or not. Now later on, he repeats it to Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And then when the people of God are suffering as slaves in Egypt, he says the same thing. It says, I remembered the covenant. God remembered the covenant with his people as they cried out. And at the end of the book of Exodus, God says it yet again.

Chapter 34 verse 27 says exactly this I have made a covenant with you and the core of the covenant is always the same. You are my people. I am your God. We're in a relationship together. Now when Jesus comes, he also says, I am making a new covenant with you, a new covenant in my blood, shed for many for the remission of sins.

So God is covenantal. Now, in the ancient Near East, God's a covenant maker. Other people make covenants. And in the ancient Near East Kings mighty King Susans, they were sometimes called to make covenants with inferiors, with lesser kings, with regional authorities called vassals. And in those covenants there would be promises of blessing, and there were duty stated, and there was a price to be paid.

If you violated a covenant, you made be the mighty king. And the price of that violation was death. Now, in the New Covenant and in the Old Covenant, God's people make a covenant with God. God makes a covenant with them, and we violate the covenant, making us liable to death. But uniquely, in all the covenants of the world, the covenant maker, the faithful one, bears the consequences of covenant violation.

And God sent his Son to die in our place, the death we deserved. He suffered. That's the way God makes covenants. And marital covenants are an echo of that. And in fact, not only marital covenants, but all the covenants and all the promises we make. Now, just a few moments ago, we voted for a new pastor, and I'm gonna ask you to go back in time about nine months.

About nine months ago, we had elected a pulpit committee, but they were gathering information very slowly, and some people had the very strange and false idea that they were

doing nothing. They're just sitting around chatting. Their work was invisible. And during that invisible time, some people were getting a little bit antsy, and they came to me in a cluster in the early fall and they would say to me then, since it's clear that our pulpit committee is lazing about, eating pomegranates and drinking, I don't know, some cherry juice or something. And, and so we're in despair and we wonder if you might possibly be willing to stay longer for us. Maybe. Maybe you could be our pastor. Or maybe. Maybe we just have a long, slow process. You'll be our pastor 3 or 4 years because we're beginning to like you a little bit. And I said, well, I'm beginning to like you, too, but I can't stay. And I gave them four different answers, and only one of them worked. The first answer I gave was, look, I'm. We made an agreement. We signed paper. We said, I'll be here till the fall, until the summer, mid-summer of 25. And so we made an agreement and they said, well, you know, agreements are made to be broken or amended.

So we don't we don't have any interest in that bar. Answer number one. I said, well, you need a younger pastor. And they said, you know, you're old, but you're not that old.

And I said, you really don't know how old I am. The third thing I said was, I made a promise to the president of Covenant Seminary that would teach classes. They're counting on me to come back. And people said, no. And then I said, I made a promise to my children and to my grandchildren, all of whom live in Saint Louis, including four of them who live two blocks away.

And I said a promise made to a two year old and a three year old and a four year old is a sacred thing. And it's sacred because a four year old is counting on you to keep your word. They cannot enforce obedience upon you. It is incumbent upon the one who swears to keep their promise. When they promised a four year old and people said, got it because they understood, even if they weren't thinking, they understood the concept of covenant.

That is to say, we enter into bonds that are lifelong. We make pledges. We say, I will, I shall, I shall continue, and we must mean it. And the foundation of that must is not be a good person. The foundation is God is a covenant making God. He kept his promises to us when we violated our covenants. He kept his.

He was loyal as he said he would be. Now that, of course, is the moral law because God is our father in heaven. That, of course, is the model for all of our relationships in this world.

Specifically, we read things like live a life of love. I read it to you a few moments ago. Live a life of love.

Just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. How do we love each other? As Christ loved us in the same space? He says, be kind hearted, tender, forgiving, just as God in Christ forgave you. Jesus is the model for a godly life in marriage and in all relationships. And it's Father's Day. So I'm going to talk a little bit about Father's Day now.

And in Ephesians chapter three, verse 14, there's a little play on words that I hinted at when I reread the passage, and it says this in the most common translations, it says, I bow my knees before the father, from whom every family is named. But I said it could be translated fatherhood. I'm explain that to you. The Greek has a little plan.

Words. And the word for father in Greek is pater. So I bowed to the father pater, from whom every fatherhood patriarch is named. So there's Father Pater, and there's fatherhood. Patricia. He's saying that every form of fatherhood known to humanity is somehow based on the fatherhood of God, echoed in various ways. The most obvious echo is when you have a human father and a human father gives life.

Protection, direction and kindness and care and food, clothing and shelter. That's what a good father does. When a good father does those things, he is echoing the character of God. Now, I've had a couple of conversations in recent weeks with men who have been meditating Fathers Day season about their fathers, and there are really three options. One option is that you had a great father.

You celebrate your father. You can write a glowing Father's Day card. You praise God for your father is so good for you in so many ways. That chapter number one and many of you experience that. The second option is a father who's pretty good. Maybe. Maybe he fulfilled all of his material duties and was kind hearted, but, not a believer or not wise.

And so he's pretty good, but flawed. And the third option is a profoundly flawed father. In my conversations, it seems that men arrange themselves about one third, one third, and one third. Which means then, that a lot of men and we'd say a lot of women as well, have a deficit in their earthly father, and therefore we need fatherhood.

Fatherhood is a broader concept. Fatherhood includes everybody who acts in a fatherly manner towards someone else. It means the kids that come over to your house who seem a little bit lost, and you love them. Kids who maybe need a place to stay from time to time they come to your house. People who are on your work team or sports team who need some direction, need some encouragement, need some coaching and your father lead to them.

This is the blessing on Father's Day for people who are single. You can be father Lee and mother Lee to your nieces and nephews, to your neighbors, to your friends, to people at work, for people who are married and do not have the gift of children, you can be father Lee and mother Lee. And if you have a father hood motherhood drive God in this passage is saying you can fulfill it.

Do not lament your entire life. You hope to be a mother. Hope to be a father. You can be father Lee. You can participate in the Fatherhood of God because this passage tells us so. Every fatherhood is named after God, our father in heaven. Every father can be kind and

compassionate. Every man, every woman can be gracious and kind and loving, and so be fatherly or motherly.

But a strong family is not simply resting on fathers. It also rests on marriage. Now, marriage has a couple parts. There's the romantic side, and there's the life building side. The romantic side is described in the book Song of Songs or Song of Solomon, and it says things like this. It says, my beloved is mine and I am his.

That's what the woman says. Or I am my husband and his desires for me. Those statements are both repeated. We belong to each other. We desire each other. There is a passion, if I may say, the godly form of jealousy in which you want to be with your spouse to the exclusion of all others. We can we can even properly, if it's possible, resent too many hours spent at work, too many hours spent on hobbies, too many hours spent with male friends or female friends.

I want to be alone with you. I want time with you is a sign of a healthy marriage. Now, without covenant, that desire to be intimate, to be close, to say my beloved, is mine. There's a way in which I own our passage reflects that I own my spouse. My spouse's body is mine, and mine belongs to my spouse.

That that can become idolatrous. It's good in a covenant before God, and it's idolatrous. If we view our spouse thinking, you are mine, you are my beloved. You're the object of my affection, and I want you to be, as we said earlier, I want you to be handsome or beautiful. I want you to dress well when you go out.

I want you to behave well. I want you to talk when your mouth is empty. Stop talking when your mouth is full. I don't want you to embarrass me in public. You can embarrass me in private, but not in public. And. And I want you to fix your hair. And I want you to stop making dad jokes. And I want you to be perfect.

Because if you're perfect, then my life will be in order. And here's the word. No person is perfect. If you expect cosmic romance, eschatological romance, you will be disappointed. You will never find the perfect spouse you love, your spouse the only. Seek perfection in God. And then, of course, you go about living a life. Now I'm going to take a sidebar for a second and tell you that, in my humble opinion, I have three daughters and you know, by the age of 15 or 16, it was manifest to the world, so far as I could tell, that they were intelligent, athletic, beautiful, friendly, and in all manners worthy of male attention, which they received at

times. And these young men would come to my house, and when they came to my house, I would receive them at the door. And sometimes I received them kindly, and other times I would ask them questions. And some of those questions were very easy. what's your favorite music group? What's your favorite sports team? What's your favorite sport like?

Questions of that nature, but sometimes I would a little bit more aggressively ask them, who's your hero? And I want to know if they said, my mother, my father, my grandfather, my, you know, somebody godly in their life. I hope they give answers like that, which they did in surprising numbers. And sometimes I would ask them, if you could have any superpower, what would it be?

The most common answer was the ability to fly, which led to a up question. You know that gnats a mosquitoes fly 1.5 to 1 point eight miles per hour, two miles per hour. Maximum speed. They can reach a height of 20ft. You want to fly? That's what you want. You want to fly like a like a fruit fly or a mosquito or a net.

This is oh no, no, I want to fly really fast. And I would say how fast or I want to fly at the speed of light. That would be so helpful. I said, well, be careful what you ask for, because if you could move at the speed of light when you land, let's say in the city of Chicago, which nobody cares about all that much is you would destroy the city of Chicago, because if you move at the speed of light, as all physicists know, you have infinite mass and infinite impulse force, which means you would destroy the city of Chicago.

And believe it or not, perhaps the known universe. And they would say, well, I didn't mean that. So be careful what superpower you wish for. Why am I telling you this? Because in marriage, it's important to ask what superpower do I want? And to reject the easy and false option. And that is ease. 2 or 3 perfect children who never get sick, a spouse who lives just about perfectly and loves me and nothing ever goes wrong.

And that is that's not possible because, well, a man named Peter Kraft said it this way, and I will quote him, this world is a veil of soul making a great sculptor shop and we are his statues. To be finished, the statues must endure many blows of the chisel. This is not optional. Once we have lost our innocence, the way back to God must be hard.

This is true. We make our way back to God by enduring hardship and suffering, and we make our way back to God. When we allow Christ to form us through that, when we are. As these scriptures I read to you, I declare Christ formed Cristo morphic, formed by Christ and formed to be like Christ. We are made in his image and remade in the image of Christ.

We love as Christ. Love we forgive. We're tenderhearted. As Christ is tenderhearted, we love our spouse, and we seek not just their happiness. We seek their holiness because God seeks not just our happiness. He seeks our holiness. What do I mean? I mean, did in the passage you read, Paul says over and over again, God wants to purify the church, make it

He does not say he wants the church to be happy. Society says, I just want to be happy. I want you to be happy. My children be happy all the time. The Bible says, I want you to be holy all the time, and we become holy when we first of all behold God. So, for example, love each other.

Jesus says, as I have loved you. And when we're thinking about people who are fatherless, we remember that God is the father of the fatherless. And we think about love for people who are isolated and uncared for in this world. We remember that God says that he loves the alien and the outsider. He says this in His Word.

He says he wants justice for the fatherless and the widow and the sojourner. He wants us to give them food and clothing. Love the sojourner. The Bible says, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. Fear the Lord. He is your God. He cared for you and you were a sojourner. You take care of other sojourners, love the outsider, love the fatherless, love the widow.

Because I love them. Husbands, love your wives the way Christ loves. He loves the church to wash, to sanctify. Let me say it a different way. A while ago I read about ten marriage books really fast. because I was looking for the book I would use for pre-marital counseling with people and those books had a lot of really good Christian books, had a lot of, had a lot of really good yet shallow counsel.

And the council said things like this when you come home from work, smile at your spouse and pay them a compliment, because when you give a smile to them, they'll give a smile back and your whole demeanor will be better. And pay them a compliment because they'll be happy to see you coming. And they'll pay a compliment back and everybody will be happy.

And I thought to myself, it's good counsel. You should smile and you should say nice things. And by the way, also, this was my least favorite tell the truth, your spouse because you know it's going to come out anyway. And so you might as well tell it your way so it doesn't come out in a bad way.

This is. This is valid, but it's also manipulative. And it's seeking a shallow form of happiness instead of deep holiness and deep connection. The counsel isn't false. It's a shallow. The goal of marriage is not to fix your spouse. That creates idolatry. The desire to have always handsome, always well-behaved, always beautiful, always witty spouse is foolishness. What we have instead is a picture of the way Christ loved the church, and I will run through them quickly with you.

How does Christ love the church? Well, I have five. The Lord is faithful. The Lord is wise. Lord is generous. The Lord is patient. The Lord is sacrificial. These are all sweeping through the Bible.

How does the Lord behave? How is he faithful? Well, when the disciples failed Jesus and you know they did, he spoke to them, stayed in relationship with them, and won them back to

himself. You know that when Jesus was arrested before his crucifixion, the disciples scattered. When Jesus was crucified, all but one disappeared and he did not say to them, out, I'm done with you.

I'm tired of your nonsense. And you stayed with them. He ruled them. He won them back. This reflects his patience. The Lord Jesus was patient with his disciples. You know that. Jesus told his disciples many times he was going to die on the cross and then the hardest time imaginable taking it. In Luke chapter nine, verse 22, Jesus says this The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed.

And on the third day be raised. And then 22 verses later in Luke nine, verse 44, we read this. He says to his disciples, knowing they didn't listen last time he says, let these words sink into your ears. Literally could be translated. Put this in your ear. The Son of Man will be delivered, betrayed into the hands of men.

And then it says, they did not understand what he was saying. It was concealed from him. They did not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. So four times it says they didn't get it. So what did Jesus do? He told them three more times, so that when he died and rose, he could say, you see, I told you, and they're ready to receive it.

But he had to say it many times because he is faithful and he is patient. He did so. The Lord is patient with us. Be patient with each other. Lord is faithful to us. Let's be faithful to each other. The Lord Jesus is also wise and he knows his people. He knows his church. He says to his disciples from time to time, I know what you're saying.

I know what you're thinking. He'll ask them, what are you talking about? When he knows exactly what they're talking about, he's eliciting from them a confession because he knows husbands should know their wives as Christ knows the church wives the same. There's a period of time in my life when my exercise schedule is a little bit erratic, maybe a lot erratic.

When our kids were little and I would get, I don't know, irritable or grumpy sometimes. And Debbie in the middle of a conversation, which I was being a little bit grumpy, which is say to me, hey, how long has it been since you've been to the gym? And I would say, yeah, it's been three and a half days.

Go. She would say, go to the gym, burn it out, burn the poison out of your body. It was valid, it was correct. And men, men who are newly married sometimes come to pastors and say, pastor, I don't understand my wife. You know, he's married ten months and she's still bursting into tears for no particular reason. I don't get it.

And then they say these words I don't understand women. And the reply is to whoever told you were supposed to understand women.

You were a scientist. Men with a narrow field of inquiry. One woman you need to study her and know her and love her as she is. Don't plead ignorance. I don't know what's going on. Know the moods of your beloved. Even as the Lord Jesus knows the needs and the moods of his people. Let's see. We've covered faithfulness and patience and wisdom.

How about generosity? The Bible says that not a hair falls from our head, not a hair changes from black to white. Not a bird falls in the sky without the knowledge of God, who cares for his people and protects his people. And husbands have a responsibility to know their wives enough to provide for them. Now the provision, the basic provision is pretty clear.

The basic provision is food, clothing and shelter. That's material. But, you know, I'll just say, as a somewhat older man and I've talked to many men my age about this, for whatever reason, I hope no one's offended. I think it's true, though, for whatever reason, the upper body strength of men decays more slowly than the upper body strength of women, which means it is the solemn obligation, in my view, of men, to keep their upper body strength so they can lift stuff and put stuff up for their wives to take care of their wives physically.

And if you buy that, I'm going to add the harder part. It's a solemn obligation of a man to understand his wife spiritually and emotionally, to know and stay strong for your spouse and women. The same holds for you. Stay strong so you can provide what your spouse needs in all the seasons of life.

This allows us, you know, this allows us to break away from the idolatry that can sneak in when we have a church like this, that has so many excellent marriages, so many excellent children, so many people who are dedicated to the beauty of family. And I have to tell you, it is a delight to me to see not just the families with two and three and four kids.

We have families of five and seven and nine, and these families are sometimes all biological children, and sometimes people have biological children. Maybe they have three, 4 or 5, six biological children, and then they start adopting children, and then they start fostering children who need a place to stay for 2 or 3 years. It's magnificent. Keep it up.

But exactly when things are going really well, it's tempting to take a good thing and to make it into a God, an ultimate thing. I have to tell you, no matter how good your spouse is, if you make her or him into a god, you will be bitterly disappointed. And if you take care of your children, thinking to yourself that they're going to rise up and write you nothing but glowing recommendations on your annual Father's Day report.

They won't always, because you weren't always a good father, and they're not always a good child. There's only one from whom we can expect perfection. And when you start to make your spouse submit an idol, things go wrong because we get impatient and we don't want to seek

each other's holiness. We want to seek our happiness, and we let little problems become big problems.

Now, I'm not going to describe my wife's little problems because that's not the point. And besides, I would lose my joy. I would rather tell you that it took me 20 years to learn to hang up my towel straight on a consistent basis. That's a long time. That's a long time to wait for your spouse to master a really small task.

And if my wife were ever tempted to think I was perfect and trust me, she wasn't. If she ever had been, the towel issue would have burst her bubble. But the key again is this when you expect something close to perfection, you are courting disappointment. There is only one who will not disappoint you. There's only one that is Jesus Christ, and he teaches us how to love and how to care.

He teaches us how to love and care sacrificially in our family. In our family, we divide up the labor. And one of the jobs that falls to me is picking movies. And it's not easy because you disagree a lot about movies. And so, it's my sacred obligation to pick movies my wife will like, even if I don't like them.

As proof, I entered this exhibit. We watched sisterhood of the Traveling Pants one and two. Now, I drew the line at number three. There's I can only give so much, but it is good and right to sacrifice. And every time we sacrifice, every time we say, you know, you're you first. You're right. Let's do it. Let's do what you want to do.

We'll watch what you want to watch. We'll go to the to the place to eat what? We'll seek the leisure activity, the social activity you want. Every time we do that, we're in some small way, echoing the love of Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us. But one more time. We're not simply seeking happiness.

We're seeking holiness. Jesus wants us, his church, to be radiant and spotless and holy and suited for him. Our true husband, our true Lord, our true Savior. In him we trust. Our marriages are foundational. Our fatherhood is foundational when it's under the founder great father, the great husband of his church.

Let's pray together for a moment.

Heavenly father, I thank you for the ability to celebrate Father's Day and to give thanks for the beautiful, beautiful marriages and families in this church that are so common. We praise you for that. We praise you for making families, putting us in families. We praise you for giving fatherly ness and motherly ness to people who never married, or did marry and did not have children. And it gives them, Lord, a wonderful way to express their fatherly and motherly instincts. And

all this is under your good love, your good structure for this world. We thank you for it. We plead your grace when we fall short and we pray it all in Jesus' name.

Amen.