

Take Off the Gloves



Genesis 2:24-25

We're six days in. How many of you have already blown at least one New Year's resolution that you made? Anybody? I said I was going to jog every single day and on January 2nd, I forgot to jog. Yeah, it's like right out of the gate it is automatic failure. I don't know why New Year's resolutions are so popular. If you're on social media, it is like every other article is about how you need a New Year's resolution. I feel like it's because the new year is approaching and you look at yourself and think there is probably more to me. You look in the mirror and you think this body was meant for more. I think it's time I invest a little bit more in this body, so I think I'm going to eat right, exercise, and try to get healthy. Usually it happens for a little bit and then it fails. We kind of look at ourselves and our lives and think there should be more. I'm going to make plans, make it happen, and then about the first week after, it's like 2020 sounds great; the new me is going to be awesome!

I don't know how many of you have actually thought about this coming year, just thinking about your marriage. For those of you who are married, I just want you to think just for a moment about your marriage. Maybe some of you are looking at your marriage thinking the same thing. You know, when I said I do, I was expecting something a little bit more. Don't tell your spouse that now if you're thinking that, but just subconsciously keep this to yourself. You're thinking it was supposed to be grand. It was supposed to be this honeymoon forever. Your life together was going to be great. We had all these dreams and plans, and we were going to thrive.

Now I feel like we're more surviving. You think I know what marriage could be, but we're not experiencing that right now. What can we do differently in 2019? I don't want you to make any New Year's resolutions when it comes to your marriage because you're probably going to set yourself up for failure. What I do want you to see in your marriage is I want you to have a different mindset when it comes to your marriage. So it's not a New Year's resolution, but a change of mind, a change of thinking when it comes to the way you view your spouse.

So in order to get you into this new mind change, we're going to have to go into a movie. I'm a kid of the 80's, so Rocky was one of my heroes. I want you to go into Rocky IV. If you haven't seen it, you can just trail along. So you have Rocky, this boxer. He's a world champion and you have this Russian named Drago. He's kind of the new guy, and he's this Olympic champion. They're going to have this fight. You have this scene where the training happens. It's what most of us run to on podcast, the Rocky music. It inspires us. Rocky is in the snow, he's got a log over his shoulders, he's climbing mountains, he's training on the farm, he doesn't have any resources; he's just got grit and heart. Then you have Drago, the Russian, who's got all of the resources he could possibly have. He's hooked to machines, you've got scientists, there's the subtle hint of performance enhancing drugs; this guy is 6'4, 265, and Rocky is no match. Then you get to the end of the movie to the actual fight scene where they are going to go twelve rounds, and Rocky is just getting demolished. There is no way he's going to last thirty seconds, but he just keeps going, keeps going, and keeps going. Of course, the end of the movie you have that epic scene where the crowd in Moscow starts cheering for Rocky. Everything changes and you sense he's going to win, and before you know it, Rocky delivers the knockout punch and wins the day.

Here we have Rocky, that great movie, I love watching, I love the boxing analogy; I love the ring. Here we have Rocky fighting the enemy; and what I want to say is that makes a really good movie and a pretty cool sport, but it makes for a terrible marriage. A lot of you, in marriage, that's how you're doing marriage. You're inside of a ring, you're putting your boxing gloves on, and your spouse on the other side is the enemy. Because you got

married thinking I'm going to be happy, this is going to be great, then this person came who is supposed to make your world perfect and great, and all of a sudden, they have these little things that just annoy you. Now, they're under your skin. Now, they're causing you to get angry. I had a guy just this week over breakfast say you know, I thought I was a patient guy until I got married, and now I'm just impatient all the time. How did that happen? so we think I'm this really good person, then we get married and think wow, all of a sudden things are not going the way I planned. That person that God gave me; they are the enemy. So what we do is put our gloves on and we go to war with our spouse. We get in the ring with our spouse. They say an unkind word to us, so what do we do? We jab right back. You want this? I can come at you. They get home late, when they walk in, you let them have it. They forget to do the chores, you come right back with a jab. They jab you, you jab them; it's a boxing match and your goal is to knock your spouse out so that you can have some happiness in your home and marriage. That's how you're living your life. Your spouse is the enemy, you've got your gloves up, you're just waiting, and when they jab, you jab. When you jab, they jab. You retreat and you attack, but it's constant war, a constant fight with your spouse. Here's what you're doing; you're fighting with your spouse all the time and things aren't getting better. So here's where the change of mind comes; get out of the ring. Here's the big thing I really want you to remember when you walk away. When it comes to marriage, I want you to take off the gloves, just take them off. You're not in a fight with your spouse.

Think about that scene in Rocky where you have Rocky, the American, going against Drago, the Russian. You have them both with their boxing gloves, they're fighting each other, but the camera often pans to another person, and the other person is the guy in the corner. The other person is the coach. The coach does not have boxing gloves; the coach has a bottle of water. When the coach looks at Rocky, he's saying you got this! Go, fight, hit, go; attack! When Rocky comes to the coach's corner, what is the coach doing? He's taking water and putting it on Rocky's head, he's getting the blood off, he's getting him a drink, he's empowering him, and he's filling him up so that he can go to war on the right person, who is the person he's boxing against. Here's what I think is happening in marriage;

we're fighting against the wrong person. Here's what I want to remind you of; in your marriage, the enemy is not her, not him. The enemy is it. The enemy is the power of sin. So here's what has happened in your marriage; you have to believe yes, I'm in a battle, I need my gloves on. Yes, I'm in a fight, but I'm fighting sin, not my spouse. When your spouse comes home after a really bad day and says really unkind things to you, you've got to remember; ok, hold on, this isn't just about me. There's something under that's going on. It's the power of sin, and what I can do is jab back and make sin worse. I can bring the gloves and I can go on the attack and we can make this whole thing a lot worse than it has to be, or when my spouse comes in and says that thing or does that thing that I should react to, I should be really mad about, I can remember; hold on, I'm not really fighting her. I'm not fighting him. We're both warring against sin. What you can do is get the water bottle out, not the boxing gloves, and instead of fighting with your spouse, you can fight for your spouse. Instead of getting in the ring, toe-to-toe with them, you can get in the corner with prayer, encouragement, kindness, grace, love, and mercy, just like God does with you. Your temptation is oh, you're coming at me; I'm coming at you. The reaction needs to be; you're coming at me, hold on, there's something else going on here. There is prince of powers at work right now. There's spiritual darkness at work right now, and what we need to go to war against is sin in your unredeemed flesh. What we need to do is help each other put to death the deeds of the flesh so that we can walk in the Spirit. That's not going to happen by boxing each other. That's going to happen by getting in one another's corners and fighting for the other person, not with the other person. That's the mind shift I want us to have this morning. Put down the gloves, get out of the ring, grab the water bottle, get in their corner, and fight for them, not with them. If you do that, it will change your marriage for the glory of Christ.

So we're going to go to Genesis chapter 2 because we're going to watch the first couple who are given marriage, but then treated very poorly. Some of you are like, I'm not married; why did I come this Sunday? I get that. Yes, this message is going to be primarily to married couples, but here is the reality. We're going to be dealing with sin and how to fight sin, so this can apply to any relationship you have when it comes to sin. How

do you need to be with your friends? How do you need to be with mom and dad? You don't need to get in the sin cycle we're going to talk about. You need to break it with grace for your own life and for your friend's life. so if you're married, we're going to have specific application to you, but if you're not married, this is any relationship that you're in. you're going to struggle with sin, so quit fighting with people, fight for people so that we all can be built up in the glory of Christ. So here, we have Genesis chapter 2. If you have your bibles, stand out of reverence for the Word of God. The words will be on the screen. We're going to be at the end of chapter 2. Here's what it says in verse 24.

Scripture

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

(Prayer)

Father God, I pray that you would help us to truly live out marriages that are like that, marriages that are truly naked and unashamed, that glorify you and that are good for one another. God, we pray that you would give us grace so that we stop fighting with our spouse, but we start fighting for our spouse. We pray this in Jesus good name, amen.

The Purpose of Marriage

As we walk through that text, what we first see is therefore, so we've got to stop. We're students of Bro Ricky's, so we've got to stop and look what it's therefore. If you look in the beginning of Genesis, God creates the world out of nothing, and on the sixth day, He created human beings. He created us uniquely different. He created us male and female, He had a unique plan for these two engendered human beings, and that was that they would come together. The man would leave his mom and dad, the woman would leave her mom and dad, and they would come together in what's called marriage, this beautiful one flesh relationship. Before we get

the picture of marriage, God had already given them a mandate. He told them; you are made in My image. As men and women, you image Me, you show who I am, you display My glory. He said go and fill the world. Be fruitful and multiply. Make babies and spread out all over the world. What's He doing? He's taking His glory, His image, and spreading it all throughout the earth. That was God's intent for marriage; that His glory would go all throughout the earth. So the purpose of your marriage is first and foremost to spread the glory of God throughout the world. As you and your spouse interact with one another, people are seeing the goodness and the glory of God. But in the New Testament, we have Paul connecting the 'therefore' to the gospel. He says what's also taking place is not just the image of God spreading, but we have this picture of the gospel that husband and wife, husband representing Christ, wife representing the church, as they come together, we see a display of the gospel. So your marriage is first about spreading God's glory to the nation, but secondly it's about telling the truth about the gospel to the nations. That's what this marriage is about; and this community and all over, the purpose is the glory of God.

The Design of Marriage

We not only have the purpose of marriage in this little verse, but we also have the design of marriage. Here's what marriage is supposed to be--a husband and a wife who are naked and unashamed together. That's the beauty of marriage. That's what it was meant to be. That's physical, but it's also more than that; it's holistic that here a man and a woman together, the two will become one flesh. They will have a relationship that's unlike any other relationship on the planet. Those two together will be naked and unashamed before each other. I think what God is getting at when He's talking about one flesh, naked and unashamed, is in this relationship the design is that in your marriage, you would be fully known. That's naked, fully known, completely exposed. You're thoughts, your motives, your desires are fully known to this other person. At the same time, even being fully known, you're also fully loved. Imagine that; being fully known and being fully loved. Some of us are afraid to be fully known because we think if we're fully known, then we'll get condemnation. We'll be shut out, shut down, shamed, and thrown away. But the covenant of marriage says no,

you'll be both fully known and fully loved for always. That's the glory of marriage; that you'll be fully known, and even though I know you fully, I'm going to love you fully and I'm going to love you always. There's this protection and safety that God has given to the first marriage and to our marriage. The purpose is the glory of God spreading, and the good design is that we would be fully known and fully loved for always. That's the design in our marriage.

So we have this purpose and design and some of you are saying that sounds good, but that doesn't look like my house. My house looks more like the other example where we've got the boxing gloves. Everybody is yelling and blood is flying everywhere. That's what mine looks like. There's a reason that some of your marriages are experiencing more of the boxing analogy, the naked and unashamed analogy, and it's because there's also a problem with marriage, and the problem with marriage is not him, it's not her; it's it. The problem of marriage is sin. Something has gone terribly wrong. Sin has been introduced into our lives and into our marriages. We are going to walk through this first couple, and they're stumbling into sin and the fall. If you're married, we're going to apply it to your spouse. If you're not married, apply it to yourself.

Here's what's happening to you and all those relationships around you. Here's what we see in chapter 3, verse 1-7, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." Here we

have this marriage. They're in the presence of God, without sin, naked and unashamed before God, naked and unashamed before each other. They're fully known, fully loved for always. Everything is wonderful, and then we see that sin enters the picture. We have this ancient serpent who we know from the end of the story that it's Satan and he comes in and begins to speak lies to this first couple. He begins to deny God's Word. He begins to doubt God's Word. Did God really say? Are you sure? Are you sure you read those commandments right? Are you sure that's what He said? They were like yeah, we're pretty sure He said do not do that. It's like here's the deal. If you do that, there's really not going to be consequences. God's not going to do what He said He's going to do, instead, there's going to be joy and freedom. There's going to be fulfillment. You're actually going to be like God! You don't have to worship Him, serve Him, or be under Him. You can be God. So there's this little subtle whisper that comes into Adam and Eve's ear. Don't submit to God, worship God, and be under God. Do whatever you want to do. You're in control of your life. Follow your heart. Whatever you say is right is right. Whatever you want, go for. You are in control. You do you, and let all the chips fall however they fall. It's this promise that if you'll just go with what you want then you'll find out that God's really bad. He doesn't want you to be happy, and here's the ticket to happiness. It's not following God; it's becoming your own God. Adam and Eve believe a lie. They believe it. Their creator who made them, they're now turning to one of His creations and listening to it rather than the creator. They're supposed to rule over creation, not listen to it, and submit to it. But here we have this lie that turns into behavior, and they believe it, grab the fruit, and take a bite and they eat. I can imagine Adam and Eve were so excited. They had those butterflies in their stomach. They were like this is going to be good. I can't wait to see what happens! They bite it thinking fulfillment, joy, happiness, and pleasure. I can almost bet that in a moment, there was that; they're like whoa, a whole new world! All these things I can see, and then the moment of pleasure turned into guilt and shame right off the bat. All of a sudden, the high went to an extreme low. All of a sudden, these people who were made to worship and love God are now feeling awkward in His presence. Now they look down and realize I'm naked, and I don't like that. So they start putting fig leaves, covering up.

They're running from each other, running from God. They're covering up trying to hide, and immediately what happens is when they sin, they feel shame and guilt. So what do they do? They try to cover themselves up.

When the covering doesn't quite work, it says in verse 8, "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God..." They were made for a relationship with God, now, in their fig leaves, they're not running to their Father; they're hiding from Him. They're running away from His presence. They're not enjoying His presence, which is what they were meant to do. It says they hid among the trees of the garden, and then, "But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."" So here Adam and Eve who were supposed to love God, live under God, and enjoy His presence forevermore, that was the goal of creation that God would share His glory, share who He is to creatures and they would enjoy His presence and live under Him, now when the God of the universe comes to His created people, they're running, scattering; hiding. Why? Because they sinned, and sin brings shame. Sin promises freedom and joy, but it only brings shame and guilt. In their shame, they all of a sudden have fear, not proper fear, not a reverence to God, but a terrifying experience with God. They're fearful. They're running. They hide. They cover. Here we see Adam and Eve; they grab what they shouldn't have. They sin. They believe a lie and sin. It leads them straight to shame and guilt. They're running; they're covering; they're hiding.

Notice what happens next. We're going to see that they're hiding and shame ultimately leads to blaming other people. It says this, "He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."" Immediately as they feel guilt and shame because of their sin, when they're found out, when they're exposed, instead of confessing and receiving grace and mercy, they blame shift.

Adam says it's the woman's fault, and you gave her to me. So really it's your fault. Things were great when I was alone. I talked to one of my buddies this week over break and said I was a really patient guy until I got married, and now I realize I'm not so patient. I'm losing my temper, and I never lost my temper when I was by myself doing what I wanted to all the time! So now that I'm losing my temper, it must be her fault. She's the problem, not me, not my selfishness because I was great alone! When I get with people, I'm angry at the time. It's them, not me. It's blame shifting. It's her problem. It's her fault. Then God goes to her, and she says it's the serpents fault. He made us do this. He tricked us. It's not us. It's circumstances, it's someone else, it's that guy, or it's this girl. All of a sudden, they go into blame shifting.

The Sin Cycle

Here's what I want you to see. This suddenly or not so suddenly happens all the time in our marriages. It's what we're going to call the sin cycle. This is what I think is going on in Genesis chapter 3, this cycle of sin. Basically, Adam and Eve sinned they believed lies and sin, their sin leads to shame, their shame leads them to blame, and by blaming others, the others are now offended, and so they get offended. What do they do? They attack the other person so they sin, they feel shame, they now blame, and they offend the other person and it just keeps going over and over again. This is what we see in the text and what we see in so many of our own marriages. We believe a lie. We believe that God's way is not best. God's way is not going to make me happy. Loving my wife like Christ loved the church just doesn't work. I've tried it; it just doesn't work. Submitting to my own husband definitely doesn't work whatsoever. I'm not doing that. I'm trying something else. We do all these other things, and we get in these shouting matches, these fistfights with one another, and we often end up sinning against our spouse or just sinning in general. When we sin, what happens? We automatically feel guilt. We feel shame.

Last week we went over to a friend's house. We had to deliver something to him. His wife was gone; it was just him. He's got several kids and they were running around they house. Me and my wife walk in, and we've never been to his house before so we want the grand tour. So he's taking us

around, and his kids were running around and he was trying to bounce one, give toys to the other, which is totally normal to us with all of this. We've got four, so loud noises don't even phase me. But we're walking around the house and all of a sudden, we're in the kitchen and this little two-year-old lets out a bloodcurdling scream. Not like a fussy someone took my toy, but like I'm about to die sound. It was one that got our attention. You know immediately, this isn't just a play thing; this is a real thing like what happened. The guy looks down at his two year old, and all of a sudden, he can see a big knot already forming on his forehead. The two year old is barely able to breathe, trying to catch his breath. This is not going good! So the dad looks around and nobody else is there. It's just two year old all alone in the middle of the living room. The first thing the dad does is to yell the name of the older brother, who just so happens to be upstairs, completely away from anything that happened. All of a sudden, you hear the footsteps of older brother, who is four, coming down the stairs. Older brother comes in front of his dad with that look, like ah oh; this is not going to be good. Four year old looking at screaming two year old and dad is like, what happened? The four year old says, "I threw a train and hit him in the head." His head was dropped to his chest, would not look up...just knew I'm so busted right now. I know what I did and I see my little brother crying, I see dad's face; I'm in big trouble! Immediately, whatever the thought process was of 'train at his head is going to be fun,' when the sin happened and he got caught, it was just shame and guilt. Ah oh, I'm in big trouble. I'm going to go sit in the chair. Things are not going to be well when this nice couple leaves my house. You could just see the panicked look in his face, like this is to going to go good.

But that's what our sin does. Even as four year olds, when we sin, we feel shame. That's what's happening with Adam and Eve. They break God's commandments, and they immediately feel shame and guilt, so they try to cover up. They try to fix it. They put fig leaves on, and that's what some of us do in our marriages and relationships. We know we've blown it, so instead of confessing and repenting, which is what we should do, we just try to do better. We know we broke our promise. We knew we said we were going to be home at 5:00 and we got home at 7:30, and it really

wasn't a good excuse. We know we just blew it, and instead of saying I'm sorry and confessing, we just promise ourselves that tomorrow we'll get home on time. We have this self-salvation method where I'm just going to do better, try harder, but then we often fail the next day and the next day. Instead of dealing with our sin, we try to cover it, we try to fix it, and we often run in shame and guilt and hide from our spouse. We distance ourselves from them. We don't want to be in their presence, so we avoid them. We work longer. We do other things. We hang out with friends because I don't want to see you because you remind me of the sin that I just committed against you. So what happens is our sin leads to shame. Shame, we either try to fix it or cover it up, run and hide in fear. What happens is we often get caught. It comes out and when we get caught what do we do? We blame. In marriages, we often blame the other person. It's your fault! If you wouldn't have told me I had to be home, we wouldn't be having this argument. If you had taken out the trash, this wouldn't be a fight. If you would have picked the kids up, they still wouldn't be at school and the teacher wouldn't be calling me; it's your fault! You are the one that did this, so we go and attack our spouse for what is happening. All of a sudden, we've got found out. Our anger, our words, our actions, we knew they were sinful, we feel guilty and shameful for them. When they get called out, we blame. It's circumstance, it was my momma, it was my daddy's temper, and you know I can't help it. We blame all these external things for our sin, and when we don't take ownership of our sin, when we blame our spouse or something else, do you know what that does to our spouse? It offends them. So our sin and shame and blame now offends our spouse. And guess what happens usually when we offend our spouse. They say oh, we're in the ring now; ok, I'm going to get my gloves on. Let's go buddy! Do you want to try this? Now you jab. Then your spouse jabs because your sin has offended them, and now they're coming with a left jab and a right hook right back at you. That unkind word, that distancing, whatever it is you do, you do it to them. What you do is end up sinning against them. When you sin against them, guess what happens. It doesn't solve the issue. You don't get to say I told you so. No, you know what happens; you feel shame. You feel guilt. Then when you get called on it, guess what happens. Oftentimes, what comes out is blame. You blame

circumstance, you blame them, and they get offended, and they come right back at you with sin, and then they feel shame, and then they blame, and then they offend, and then you come right back at them. It goes over and over and over again. Our sin leads to shame, leads to blame, leads to offend, the offended party comes right back at us, they sin, they feel shame, they blame, and then they offend, and it's just over and over and over again. It's round one, round two, round three, round four; we box, we box, we box, and we think if I can just knock my spouse out, I'll be happy. That's the goal here. I'm just going to keep slugging until finally one of these punches are going to set them right. One of these punches is going to help them understand what I've been yelling at them and they're going to change. It doesn't. A punch doesn't change. A punch comes back with another punch. What we need to do is to break this crazy sin cycle. We have to break it, and the only way to break it is not with boxing gloves. The way to break it is with the water bottle. The way to break it is by getting in the corner with your spouse, not fighting with them, but fighting for them. The only way to break it is through grace. When you're attacked, you don't attack back, you give grace, you give love, you give mercy because you realize your spouse blew it, but they're not blowing it just towards you, there's something under the current. That thing under the current is sin that they're still struggling with. So I'm not going to fight with them, I'm going to fight for them so that we both attack sin rather than each other. It's through the grace of God. It's through the grace of the gospel that we get out of this crazy sin cycle. We take off the gloves and we give grace to one another. That's exactly what God does. Notice what God does. God doesn't get offended and attack them; God goes after them and He asks questions about them. He says what are you doing? Where are you at? Why are you hiding? Who told you you were naked? He is getting to the real reason. This issue is not just hiding. The issue is not just fear. This issue is they have sinned against God. That's the issue, and what we need to get in our marriages is to the issue. The issue is not just their temper, it's not just their laziness; the issue is sin, so we need to get at that and we get to sin with a water bottle, not with a boxing glove.

Notice what God does. He goes after this first couple. He says first that it's a promise to them. He looks at the serpent and says, "I will put enmity

between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." It's this beautiful picture of the gospel that God says to the serpent, yes, you've created chaos and now sin's introduced into my world. But there is one coming from the woman, whose name by the way is Jesus Christ, He is the serpent crusher. He is the one who is going to reverse the curse. He's going to reverse the fall. He's going to make all the wrongs right. He's going to get rid of sin and death. So God tells Satan what you have caused to become undone through the man and the woman, I will make new through My Son Jesus Christ. It's this promise. For you in your marriage situation, you need to grab that promise and know that if there is strife and envy in your marriage, it's a result of the fall, but there is a gospel that you have to lean into and believe because Christ has already defeated the power of sin so you don't have to walk in it. You don't have to live in it. You've already been delivered from it, so you can live in the power of the Spirit, so when you sense your spouse in a moment of weakness, go after sin and not them. Come with a water bottle, with prayer and grace. Come to their side in their corner and be a person who ministers to them, not a person who fights with them. It's going to cause you to grow; it's going to cause them to grow so that those sins can be put to death through the cross of Jesus Christ. His death, burial, and resurrection, does away with our sin; it doesn't just cover it.

There's this beautiful analogy of the gospel that happens at the end of Genesis chapter 3. Do you remember what Adam and Eve did? They felt guilty so they sewed fig leaves for themselves. They covered themselves up. They become the first fixer uppers. Things aren't bad, let's just get the hammer out, and fix this problem. So they covered themselves with fig leaves, but the coverings didn't work. They still felt guilt and shame. What they covered up, we're going to see God actually clothes. Here's what it says in Genesis chapter 3 verse 20, "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." Just think about that...the mother of all the living. God said if you sin, you'll die. They sinned and they should be dead, but instead, now He is saying you're the mother of the living. In other words, they got what they didn't deserve. They're getting life rather than death. God is giving them grace, not law. He goes into it,

and here's what God does in verse 21, "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." So what's the difference between being covered with fig leaves and being clothed in garment skins? Think about it. With skin, what has to take place with garments of skin? You can use your imagination. An animal has to die for there to be skin. So here you have in the garden this paradise picture where death would not reign. All of a sudden, now you have a dead carcass laying in the garden, possibly the vultures are already circling overhead. Adam and Eve are alive and well in the presence of God, clothed in this garment of skin, but they're looking at an animal that's dead. Something died so that they could live. That's what the gospel is. It's God putting this little picture of how all the Old Testament is going to go. You're going to be with Me, but things are going to have to die all along the way. There's going to be blood spilled all along the way because the only way to be in My presence is through blood because you deserve death. I have to give you what you deserve, so I'm going to have to give death, but He provides a way so they get what they deserve, but also give grace, what they don't deserve, which is life. Ultimately, it culminates into His own Son taking on human flesh, living the life we couldn't. Why? So that He could die the death we deserve so that He could die on the cross so that our sins wouldn't be just covered, they wouldn't be swept under the rug, but our sins would be clothed over with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We would have His righteousness imputed to us, fully forgiven so that before God, we can be fully known, fully loved for always. That's what the gospel gives to us, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So what is the application? Take that same gospel and apply it to your marriage. Yes, your spouse deserves you to retreat from them. Yes, your spouse deserves a night on the couch. Yes, your spouse deserves for you to yell right back at them. But you deserve death and so do I, but I didn't get death. I got life. So what your spouse deserves, they don't have to get because you can be an agent of grace. You can give what you got, which is grace and mercy, and at the right moment when the fight is about to happen, when the ring is getting heated up, when the boxing gloves come out, do you know what you can do? In that moment, you can say this is not my enemy. I'm taking off the gloves. I'm not fighting with her or with

him; I'm fighting it. He's fighting it. She's fighting it. We're going to war against sin, so we're going to put the gloves down. I'm not fighting with you; I'm fighting for you. I'm getting in your corner and I'm going to be Rocky's coach. That's different in that fight scene. Rocky in that corner had the coach, and the coach is saying you've got this. You go. I'm in your corner. I'm for you. I'm not trying to knock you out. I want you to knock out the other guy. That's what we've got to do in marriage. Come to our spouse with grace, giving them what they don't deserve because the moment you give them what they deserve, then you'll feel shame and blame, and you'll offend and it will be this crazy cycle over and over again. The only way to break that cycle is in the moment when sin happens. Don't repay it with sin. When sin happens, repay it with grace. Take off the gloves, take out the water bottle, walk with them because you want them to put to death sin so that both of you can grow in the goodness and love of Christ.

I hope this year, 2019, you're not making a New Year's resolution for your marriage; you have a new mindset. The mindset is this; my spouse is not the enemy, so I need to get out of the ring. I need to put the gloves down. I need to get a water bottle, get in their corner, and go to war for them, not against them. I need to fight for them, not with them. So in 2019, we can start together fighting the right thing. It's not our tempers, our time, and our temperament; no, it's sin. So let's go after the right things so we can be made more into the image of Christ. One of the things we have here at our church is called Grace Marriage. We're having signups this morning. It isn't a have to thing, but it is a really great thing. My wife and I have been in it going on four years. Most of the staff are going through it, so it's not like if you have a bad marriage you probably need to sign up for this. No, I think we have a great marriage, and that's why we're signed up for this. When I go into a gym, it's not like all these people are in the hospital. Why would they go to a gym? No, usually in shape people go to the gym because it keeps them in shape. Grace Marriage is going to the gym, not the hospital. It's trying to look at each other and have conversations so that you keep progressing. You stay out of the ring, keep the water bottles and you fight for your spouse, not with your spouse. Grace Marriage is once every quarter. So once every ninety days, you meet

up with other couples from this church and we go through half a day. It's about five to six hours with childcare, snacks, coffee, and lunch. It's almost like a date every ninety days on a Saturday. It's really, really great. Even if you're watching paint dry, it's a good day. You get to go through workbooks. In the workbooks, I love the first thing. It is called the eye examine. For twenty minutes, you have to write down all the ways you're thankful for your spouse. After that, you look into your spouse's eyes and read the list. I tell you what, every ninety days to hear my wife write a list and tell me all the reasons she's thankful for me is worth the whole deal! It's amazing! How many times has that happened in your life where your wife just takes ten minutes to tell you how great you are? It's this idea where we're not going to throw the law at each other; we're going to throw grace on each other. We're going to love each other and pursue each other and fight for each other. The idea is to create space so that we can have good conversations and talk about the things that really matter and pursue each other well. We're going to start a little different this year. On the first Grace Marriage, we're going to do a conference. It's going to have teaching about marriage and then we're going to go through the workbooks, and it's going to be amazing. What we would love to see is for you and your spouse to look at each other and think I don't know that we're quite thriving how God wants us to be. Maybe Grace Marriage could be the thing that lights our fire and really causes us to pursue each other in 2019. If you want to change that mindset, a really great way to keep that going is Grace Marriage. If you want to sign up, go into the foyer. It's \$250 for workbooks, childcare, snacks, lunch for the entire year. The church pays about half the fees. It's a really good deal and I think you will love it. If you decide not to, please just take this mind shift. Get out of the ring and pick up the gloves. Take out the water bottle, apply the gospel, and fight the right thing. It's not him or her; it's sin. That's the problem. That's the issue. Let's get to that and not just have marriages that survive, but marriages that truly thrive.