

# The High Calling of Christian Marriage

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[ 0 : 00 ] you know, there's a saying that says, everyone wants to change the world, but no one wants to do the dishes. You heard that? Everyone wants to change the world, but no one wants to do the dishes. So there's like the hard work of actually changing things. Dream big, which is great, but you know, sometimes the dishes just need to get done, and that's the important thing standing right in front of you. Marriage can be a little bit like that. We want our marriages to be fantastically good, and we want them to shine, and when we first get married, there's that initial flash of, this is going to be the best marriage ever, and then of course reality kicks in, and it's still a good marriage, but it takes hard work, doesn't it, to keep marriages going.

But one, so when we're looking at marriage, we want marriages to be good. We want them to stand strong, and you know, it's interesting. When we get married, and when we stay married, we immediately make a difference in the world, especially the modern world, and this because the world isn't a mess when it comes to marriage, and it affects society in every aspect of society. So today we're going to look at the high calling of Christian marriage, the high calling of Christian marriage, but just to make a point as to why it's such a distinctive thing in the modern world. So I've got two graphs for us to see. On your left is the declining marriage rates in the United States.

You won't see what it says, but the graph runs from the 1900s till modern times, and in modern times, it's nearly half what it used to be in the early 1900s. Yes, it peaked at some point, but since the 1960s and 70s, it's steadily declined. On the right is the skyrocketing number of divorces in the UK.

Okay. Back in, that graph, the UK graph starts in the 1850s, and they had less than 100 divorces that year. Up to more recent times, over 100, it's nearly 170,000, over 160,000 divorces. Notice, okay, it peaks after Second World War. That's just to show you that that's the divorce rate. You know, war has just, it's just got a terrible consequence, and it's got this splash over every aspect of life. It's not just the people that are dying out in the field, but it breaks up marriages as well. But notice how in the 1960s, you might not be able to see the dates, but in the 1960s, that's when the graph just does this, it just goes recheit op. That came about because of the sexual revolution in the 1950s and 1960s.

That's when people thought that they had found freedom, and they wanted to escape their Christian heritage, but all they got was pain. And so today, we want to look at the high calling of Christian marriage, and what role it plays in the Kingdom of God in bringing blessing to the world. So I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but marriage and families is one of the most important areas of Christian discipleship.

[ 3 : 01 ] Now, Jesus gives his teaching on marriage, but it's not made in a vacuum. He doesn't just start teaching about marriage. Remember Mark, the Gospel of Mark has a story. We've been following that story.

We've come to a turning point in Mark, and everything from Mark chapter 1 to chapter 8 was about establishing Jesus as the Messiah. And Jesus was about establishing God's Kingdom on Earth.

Do you remember Mark chapter 1? The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, and Jesus' first preaching in Mark? Repent and believe because the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Gospel. So Jesus is all about establishing God's Kingdom. So the first half of Mark is, Jesus is the King. He's here to start the Kingdom.

In this next section, Jesus begins to spell out what that Kingdom must look like. He begins to talk about the Kingdom ethic. He starts talking about how He wants His people to act in His Kingdom, and what difference He wants them to make in the world. He's teaching what kind of people He wants in His Kingdom, and how they to live. Remember we saw last week, Jesus wants disciples that are going to be distinctive in the world, distinctly different, that stands out because they follow Jesus. And here in this section, He expands that on how He wants His disciples to be distinct in marriage.

And He does that in response to the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees had got themselves into a proper mess regarding marriage and divorce, and had actually turned God's original intent completely on its head.

[ 4 : 40 ] See how that goes. Jesus is giving some teaching. Have a look at verse 1. Jesus is in the area of Judea and across the Jordan. Crowds had come to Him. As was His custom, He taught them. Now Mark doesn't tell us what He taught them, but something kicked the Pharisees off. Some Pharisees came and tested Him. Note that.

They're not just asking questions for information. They're pushing Him again. That word test, that's the same word that Satan did to Jesus. Satan tests Jesus. So the Pharisees are in, Mark is saying like, yeah, you remember Satan used to do that. Well, the Pharisees are doing the same thing.

Is it lawful for man to divorce his wife? Now they should know this because it is lawful under certain circumstances. But Jesus gives them a sort of a clap back, you know, hands it back to them.

Well, what did Moses command you? Well, they said Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. But the Pharisees are here making marriage and divorce, sorry, divorce far too permissible. The Pharisees' views and practice by the time of Jesus look no different from the world around them. And instead of following God's good plan for the world, they developed myriads of laws that allowed for divorce under nearly any circumstance. So they were testing Jesus about this thing. And Jesus quotes something from them from Deuteronomy 24.

But here's what one of the rabbis said about divorce. He says this Rabbi Hillel, one of the great rabbis that everyone knew about in that time. He says, a man may divorce his wife even due to a minor issue.

[ 6 : 22 ] Because, for example, she may have burnt his food. Or maybe she over salted his dish. And he says, he quotes then from Deuteronomy 24, because he has found something unseemly in her, or he has found some unseemly matter in her. In other words, she's done something wrong.

Meaning that he found any type of shortcoming in her. Another rabbi said this, a man may divorce his wife if he found another woman who is better looking than her and wishes to marry her.

So the woman had to be constantly on the lookout for other women who were better looking and make sure she was better looking. And if she didn't make sure she was better looking, that's grounds for divorce. Now, the important thing that the Pharisees hung on to was that you had to give a certificate of divorce.

So in Deuteronomy 24, it says you must give a certificate. That's a handed piece of paper. In some cultures, and even to this day, divorce is so easy, all a man has to do is say, I divorced you three times. It comes out of the Muslim culture.

At least in Judaism, you had to write it up. You know, there's a little bit of pause for reflection there. By the way, in modern laws, most modern laws, divorce laws, require some up to 20 weeks notice.

[ 7 : 35 ] You go to the divorce court, you say, I want to get divorced. They give you 20 weeks reflection before that comes into force. Those are taken away now under what's called no-fault divorce.

You can just walk in, sign a piece of paper, and you're divorced. It's far too easy. Now, this handing over the divorce thing, just to give you an idea of how the Pharisees used to think about that, so you had to hand it over.

Well, then they said, okay, but what happens if she didn't want to accept it? Well, they said, well, you can throw it at her. But, if you throw it, but now you're not with her, so how do you know she's caught it or not?

Okay, if it lands closer to her than to you, you're divorced. If it lands too close to you, you're not divorced. If it lands directly in the middle, you'll have to start all over again. There was another account where it says, okay, well, what happens if the woman is on the roof, and you throw it up to her?

They said, well, you know, because in brackets, women don't catch really well. Sorry, that's just... I don't know if that was there, that someone told me that. So, anyway. So, you throw it up.

[ 8 : 40 ] If she's standing on the roof, and if she doesn't catch it, that's okay. As long as a divorce paper goes past the parapet of the roof, it's in the airspace of the roof, done. So, they were far more interested in how to get divorced, and how to make sure it's legal, rather than saying, well, look, marriage is important.

Let's protect the marriage institution, and let's protect women. No, they were far too interested in protecting themselves. One of the laws said, if a man writes a divorce, and requires in the divorce for the woman to pay him 200 denarii, and he gave it to her, and she accepted it.

It's a binding contract. A, she had to get divorced, and B, she had to pay him 200 denarii. So, you had to read it before you accepted the divorce paper, just in case God told you to pay for your own divorce as well, on top of that.

So, Jesus here overthrows the Pharisees' ideas and practices, and points back to creation. He points back to God's good intention. So, let's follow Jesus' argument as he teaches about the foundations and distinctiveness of Christian marriage.

So, we're going to look at biblical distinctives for Christian marriage. Biblical distinctives for marriage. What makes marriage distinct and different? How does the Bible see it? And then notice what Jesus says from verse 5.

[ 10 : 01 ] Yeah, well, they say, oh, Moses permitted all these ways for us to get divorced. Jesus says, no, no, it's because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law.

But, Jesus goes back beyond Moses. At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. And for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

So, they're no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate. Alright, so Jesus takes us all the way back to the beginning of the world, to the beginning of creation.

To the start of creation. Now, what God is doing in creation is creating a design pattern. A blueprint, if you will, for how reality works. Okay, so when you look at the accounts in creation, you mustn't just go, oh, okay, let there be, and there was a sun, and let there be, and there was a moon.

And, oh, there's a man, and, oh, there's some animals. There was that happening. But it's a pattern of how God wants things to be. You're looking at how God wants his world to work, when you're looking at the accounts of creation.

[ 11 : 08 ] Anything that conforms to what God says, he calls good. That's going to work the best. Anything that doesn't conform to that design is not going to work well. It's going to be bad.

Do you remember how God says, it is good after each day of creation? Let the light shine, and the sun shone. It was good. Let the plants spring up. They sprung up. It was good. Okay, so that's the definition of good.

Goodness, according to the Bible, is doing the thing that God told that thing to do. Okay, now that becomes important when you think, when God says, let there be a man. He's got to be a man. Or, let there be a woman.

Okay, now there must be a woman. So, if marriage is to work well, what is the pattern that Jesus points out? What is the pattern that God sets up in creation?

Well, in this passage, we see three foundational truths that, if followed, whirls out in rock-solid relationships in marriage. So, let's have a look at them. I'm just going to mention them, and I'm going to go through them one by one.

[ 12 : 07 ] So, the first thing Jesus talks about is male and female, man and woman. And the fact that they were made different, or distinct, but they're actually made for each other. Now, open that up in a bit.

So, man and woman are actually made for each other, even though they're different. Then, secondly, man is to take the lead in the relationship. Man was created to lead, and so he's got to lead in the marriage relationship as well.

Woman is his help and support. Don't worry, we'll unpack that in a short while, ladies. And then, thirdly, they had to have sex. Remember what God, the very first thing God says to mankind in Genesis 1, be fruitful, increase and multiply.

If you put that in colloquial languages, God is saying, listen, go and have sex, go and have babies. But, that must only take place in the marriage relationship. So, that's one of the things that makes it distinctive. Okay, so let's look at those three separately.

So, first of all, there's to be male and female. Now, it's just a basic rock-bottom biological, physical fact. There are men and women.

[ 13 : 14 ] The only time, but in the creation account in Genesis 2, there's an important truth that needs to be uncovered there. And that's an interesting truth that man wasn't meant to be alone.

So, the first time in the creation account where God says, this is not good, was when he made man and he says, oh, he's alone. That's not good. I need to do something about that.

Man was incomplete. Ladies, you can make of that what you will. But, he needed help. And, you're the special person that he made to help us be complete.

Now, I'm not sure what God saw when he made Adam and he thought, ooh, I better do something. This guy's all alone. He's just doing crazy stuff down there. Do you know what guys are like when they're alone? And, Adam was naked.

I could just see him running through the fields, you know. Woo-hoo! Herding the dinosaurs. Oh, he's calling animals weird names. That's a stripy cat. And, God is like, no, I think that's a zebra.

[ 14 : 15 ] You know. Adam's just having fun. Just doing his own thing. Okay, I'm making that up a little bit. What I'm saying is, God saw that and said, no, it's got to have something that makes it complete.

So, what God saw that for man to work properly, he needed a helper. And, remember, God looked around the world. Couldn't find any suitable help of him. I need to make something special and unique.

I need to make something amazing that's going to work with man. And then he creates women. And so, he gave us the best thing he could. Someone who is opposite to us in just about every conceivable way.

But, God knew what he was doing. He knew that we would complement each other. We are stronger and better together. So, this means that men must respect women for being women.

And, women, likewise, must respect men for being men. And, isn't it true that that probably causes most of the friction in our marriage relationship? The fact that there's a guy and there's a girl and they think and act and feel differently.

[ 15 : 19 ] But, it also makes for the most fun and exciting times as well. Well, we should honor each other's distinctiveness. But, learn to work together. And, then learn to trust each other's strengths.

God made us a certain way for a reason. And, so, we've got to honor that. We shouldn't just try and change that dynamic between men and women in marriage to be together.

In fact, the modern world is trying to change that dramatically. And, trying to force us to accept that, A, it's okay. We don't need to be together in a marriage situation.

You can be a partner. It's much more loose. You can come and go as you please. We'll see just now that that's not good. Or, worse yet, you can have a partner with, a man can have a partner with a man.

Or, a woman can have a partner with a woman. Or, all kinds of combinations of stuff. This is to completely undermine a creation ordinance for how the world works and how human relationships are meant to work in marriage.

[ 16 : 21 ] And, when you do that, it becomes bad. It can only end in heartache and frustration and failure. So, the first distinctive, then, is God made us male and female separate, but meant to be together.

The second distinctive is that man is to be the leader in the home. You notice in Mark 10 that the man takes the lead in creating a new family.

In verse 7, For this reason a man will leave his father, so the man leaves, and be united to his wife. Or, leaves and takes hold, or holds onto his wife, is some of the translations.

It's the man who leaves his old family, and the man who holds fast to his wife. Now, I know this can also be controversial in Christian circles. It's certainly controversial today to say that the man must be the leader in the home.

The equality movement for men and women means that that's just, it's just anathema. We just don't, we don't even begin to talk about that.

[ 17 : 20 ] Now, I know why this is controversial. It's mostly because so many people have experienced abuse or neglect at the hand of a man. Be it their father, in their home when they're growing up, or maybe their husband.

But still, man was created to lead. Remember, in chapter 1 of Genesis, he's told to take dominion over the world, to rule over it.

But he's supposed to do that as a kind of underling under God. And if God is the high king, that makes man a prince. And if man is a prince, then the woman who's created to help him is his princess.

Which is actually a good way to think about who we are, who we're created to be. Remember that thing about, in the New Testament, we're created to be a royal priesthood? Now, these are very high callings.

If a man is a prince, then that makes women princesses. But, it's not the Disney type of princess, where they only sort of look pretty, but can't do anything for themselves. Think of the kind of women the Bible highlights.

[ 18 : 27 ] They were heroes, or heroines. I'm not sure you say that. Sounds like a drug. Heroines. Is that right? I'm going to go with that. But think of Rachel in Genesis.

Remember, we did that in our Genesis series. Remember, she helped to get Jacob his birthright. She fought for him. Made him get his birthright from Esau. That takes a strong woman to do that. Remember Ruth, who faithfully stayed with Naomi.

And then, by doing that, although she was an outsider to Israel, she was a Moabitesh, she was included, not just in the people of God, but in the line of David and of Jesus.

What about Esther? What about Esther? Esther? Esther? The book of Esther is about a lady who sticks her neck out literally to save the people of God. She could have died by going to speak to that king.

What about Mary, who humbly accepts her fate as the bearer of the God king and gets told, a sword is going to pierce your heart as well at the birth.

[ 19 : 29 ] And she humbly accepts that as God's will. So these are not sort of maid servants. Ladies aren't just servants to be used and abused. These are mighty women of God. Perhaps the best example, which we find in the Bible, is the lady, what's called the Proverbs 31 woman.

If you haven't read it, go and read Proverbs 31. And you see it's a woman who takes care of the affairs of the house. She helps her husband in business. She takes time to help the poor.

She raises her children. Now, you need to be seriously competent to be a helper of a prince. But here's where both men and women need to recapture their high calling, this high calling of being leaders in the home and being helpers there.

The man to lead and the woman to help. Men, we are to act as the people of King Jesus. We are to act as the people of King Jesus. We are his representatives on earth, which makes us his royal ambassadors.

We need to act and think and plan and respond in our marriage relationships as one who reflects our king. Now, for us men, here's some ideas of what that might look like in the home for us.

[ 20 : 39 ] Maybe, for some of us, it means less drinking, either at home or with your mates down at the pub. Maybe it means less shouting at home, or rather even no shouting.

But some men have to learn that. Maybe it means less worrying about the future and trusting God more. Maybe it means stepping up to your leadership position and laying down some laws in the house and saying, we do this, we don't do that, and just not accepting anything else.

Not making demands, but just laying down godly laws that you find in the Bible. Maybe it means making time to spend more time with your wife and kids, to invest in them, because that's a vital area of Christian ministry.

Ladies, you might need to learn to let your man lead. And I know what happens. They know that the guy's meant to lead, and they see he's not leading very well.

Well, then someone's got to lead, so I better do it. Now, you may not know this, but I did dancing back in the day. Ballroom and Latin dancing.

[ 21 : 46 ] And the interesting thing is the guy has to learn to lead. Women naturally can dance or move properly, but guys are like, you know, big, stumpy things. But anyway, so you've got to learn to lead properly.

And when you do that, you create the leadership in the lead role in the dance, is the man must create the frame, and the lady is the painting in between. So you create the framework, and you're strong, and you know what you're doing, and the lady can smile and enjoy herself.

But interesting enough, the ladies had to learn how to follow properly. Because the moment the guy doesn't take the lead properly, she wants to step in. But only once the man learns to lead properly, and the woman learns to trust him and to follow his lead, that's when they can dance together without stumbling and getting in each other's way.

And it's the same with marriage. How can that look, what does that look like at sort of everyday level at the home? Well, for some ladies, it may mean more prayer and less nagging.

Maybe what you need to do is nag to God. You know, he can take it. You know, guys get so frustrated when da-da-da all the time. Now, there may be a reason that you're nagging, guys. You know, if there's a squeaky, oily wheel, do something about it.

[ 22 : 59 ] But there's a way of getting things done. For others, it might mean being more vocal in your praise and encouragement of the man in your life.

You know, nothing makes a man feel more manly than when his woman tells him he's done a good job with something. You know, you just get that, yeah, thank you. I really appreciate that. I mean, he may not say that, but I can promise you he's feeling it.

You've got a woman, you've got a very, very powerful building up tool there by praising the man when he does something well. Now, don't overuse it and praise him just for, you know, getting out of bed.

But if you want something done, one way to do it is to say, hey, I really appreciated when you did that the other day. Thank you so much. All right, so men are to take the lead, and women are to support and help.

And then thirdly, we're to be distinct in how we handle sex. And the main thing is we must reserve sexual union for marriage. Notice Jesus says the two shall become one flesh.

[ 24 : 00 ] Now, you know, sex is not an accident. It's a unique gift given to us by God. But because it's a powerful gift, well, the thing that makes it unique and powerful is it's got the power to create life.

And because of that, we only need to use it within the confines of marriage. Any time sex is used outside of marriage, it leads to massive personal and societal problems. The big lie in our modern world is you can have sex without any consequences, and it's just not true.

One of the biggest social issues of our time is fatherlessness and broken families. In South Africa, the stats for broken homes is staggering.

I may have given these stats before. But here's one that says, less than 33% of children live with both parents. Less than 33%.

I mean, 77%. The vast majority of kids growing up in South Africa either live with just one parent or neither of them. They're staying with an auntie or a grandmom or something. We think, okay, that's fine.

[ 25 : 04 ] You know, nothing wrong there. Well, no. We see the consequences of that brokenness every day in our lives. There's a reason crime is so high in our country. Study after study shows that not having a home with both parents results in higher chance of living in poverty, higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, lower grades at school, increased behavioral problems, often leading to crime.

And then there's higher teen pregnancy and having children out of wedlock. And then that starts the whole cycle all over again. And many people give up on marriage before giving it a chance.

A good thing to do if you want a good marriage is simply to stay together. Strange as that may sound. You know, there's that famous saying by Billy Graham's wife.

They didn't think of... She says, no, we never thought of divorce, but I did think of murder a few times. But they stuck it out. And again, studies show that this... By just sticking it out, you're improving your chance of happiness in your marriage.

So there was a study done in the States where they asked couples to rate their happiness with their marriage. Okay? And they said, okay, give us a one for really, really unhappy to seven really, really, really happy with our marriage relationship.

[ 26 : 24 ] What they did is... They went back five years later to see, has anything changed? So here's the interesting fact. 77% of those who rated themselves initially as very unhappy in their marriage, if five years later they were still married, they rated themselves as very, very happy.

And the only thing different? They just stuck it out. Good old-fashioned eto-fumur. Holding on. Not just giving up the moment something doesn't look like it's working out.

But that's where the commitment and also the covenant of marriage comes in, which is so important. Now the promise for us to hold on here is that it is God who has joined them together.

See what Jesus says in verse 9. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. God doesn't do things by accident. If he made us to be joined together and to stay joined together, then we need to know that we can do just that.

We don't have to give up when the going gets tough. That joining together is an interesting word in the Greek. It means glued. And like it's that epoxy kind of glue that actually welds things together.

[ 27 : 36 ] I could be wrong about the epoxy glue. You'll know better than me, but okay. You know when you put... And it's just... It's fast on my car. You know what happens when you try and tear it apart? You tear it apart and the little...

I mean you can tear your skin off. The things rip apart. That's why divorce is so bad. It rips something apart that has become integral to each other's existence.

Which is why Jesus is so set against divorce. And it's because he has such a high view of marriage and its role in society. In our reading today in Mark, Jesus gives sort of an absolute blanket ban.

Look at verse 11. He says, Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery. But this is not the only word in divorce that Jesus gave.

In Matthew 19, where he's giving the same teaching, he gives an exception to this rule. Anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another woman commits adultery.

[ 28 : 37 ] So even though Jesus upholds God's original intent for marriage, he does allow for the possibility of divorce if there's been sexual infidelity. What he's doing here in Mark 10, he's fighting against the permissiveness of the Pharisees, saying, Ah, you, anytime you want to get divorced, as long as a woman actually holds it, or you can throw it at her, you know how they do it.

No, no. I'm not allowing that at all. Divorce is not option A. Divorce is not option B. I don't even want it on the cards for my people. Yes, it can happen, but that's not your first port of call.

And that doesn't make it okay. Now, just a word for those who might have gone through a divorce. You know, you would have dealt with so much pain and trauma, but you just need to know that there is redemption and hope.

Yes, we live with the consequence of our decisions, but in Christ, there's healing and forgiveness, but importantly, restoration. You mustn't think that God's purposes have somehow gone past you. You've just got a new way of living out God's role in your life.

Now, I know this can happen because I've seen it work in my own family. My parents got divorced many years ago, and the lady that, she didn't cause a divorce, but she was the person that my dad left my mom for.

[ 29 : 52 ] They are now, they're not friends, but my mom has said to her that she recognizes her as a Christian, as a sister in Christ was her words. The lady that caused a divorce, my mom can actually give her a hug and say, it's all okay.

I've forgiven everything. It's absolutely amazing. Not without hard work, but it is doable. But if divorce is not part of God's plan, what is the other thing that's going to help Christians, particularly Christians, be distinctive in staying married?

So we've looked at a few things that have God laid out in the creation account. What else in this passage helps us have, will help us stay married?

Well, the clue is in not being like the Pharisees. Do you know what Jesus says about them? Why are they so permissive in divorce? Verse 5, it's because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law.

And so the last thing we must look at is the Christian distinctive that's going to help us stay married and build strong marriages is having soft hearts, not having a hard heart.

[ 30 : 57 ] Now the word behind that hard heart is sclerocardia, the Greek word, sclerocardia. You know cardiac arrest?

That's your heart. And sclerosis is something that's hard. So we have it in multiple sclerosis where the nerve, the things that protect your nerves go hard and brittle and then they break and then your nerve is exposed and then your body stops working well.

Jesus is saying that the Pharisees have the same spiritual condition. They've got this hardness of heart. They've got cold, hard, stone-like hearts towards God.

Now we're not going to listen to God's reason for getting married and his help in staying married. We'd rather go and hunt for women. But we'll make it look legitimate by getting divorced and just making sure that the T's are crossed and that I's are dotted.

They're hard-hearted against God and they're hard-hearted towards his word about how to live as his people. And therefore, they're hard-hearted towards people.

[ 32 : 06 ] No, the woman can, I don't care. I want another, I want this one. Fine, you go, I've got this one. I don't care about how you're going to live your life. I know I made those promises, but you know, I just don't feel like making those promises anymore. You can only do that if your heart is hard.

That's why the Pharisees were more interested in divorce than in keeping God's original purpose for marriage alive.

And this is why us as Christians, as the new people of God, who's got new kingdom power coursing through our veins, pumping from out of our hearts, we've got a way better chance of making marriages work, marriages that can last a distance.

Christians, unlike the Pharisees, and unlike the world around us today, don't suffer from hard-heartedness. We've been cured. Do you remember that part of the gospel promise in the Old Testament is that God would send his Holy Spirit to do what with his people's hearts?

Take out their heart of stone and put what in its place? Note, heart of flesh. That becomes soft towards God, soft towards his word and soft towards each other.

[ 33 : 17 ] Christians are literally soft-hearted people. That means our hearts are soft towards God. What this means is we like him, we listen to him, we take his word seriously.

Soft here means responsive. When God says something, it's, oh, hey, oh, I need to listen to that. When something's happening at home, hey, I need to listen to that. We listen and respond properly.

We do what he says. We don't look for excuses or search for loopholes when he tells us things. We don't test him, we trust him. Our hearts are soft towards his word and particularly the teachings of Jesus.

And because our hearts are soft towards God and soft towards his word, it makes our hearts soft towards each other. This makes all the difference in a marriage. Soft hearts allow for give and take, for little mistakes, for overlooking the thing, for overlooking small things.

Soft hearts don't demand for my needs to be met, but inquire, how can I meet your needs? Soft hearts respond and say sorry when they hurt or upset or disappoint.

[ 34 : 25 ] Soft hearts drive us towards God's word to learn, how can we change? How can we do this thing better? It drives us to our knees to ask for help to change. And then soft hearts forgive and let go when the change that they want isn't as fast or as complete as they would like.

It looks for the good. In short, we have the power of Christ given to us through the Holy Spirit to help our marriages not just to survive but to thrive.

In conclusion, the world is in desperate need of Christian families and in particular of having dads, men, lead as Christians in the home but to have women to support and help and to follow well.

It's a high calling. It's a hard calling but we dare not get it wrong. And thanks to God we've got the power to get it right. Let's make sure that we obey Jesus in building strong healthy homes that will impact the world for the kingdom of God and for Jesus our King.

Well, let's ask him to help us do that in prayer. Dear Lord Jesus, your words are truth and your words are life. just as the creator God of the Old Testament what you say happens and Lord, you've promised to be with your people and to give them your Holy Spirit and to enable us to do the things that you want us to do.

[ 35 : 50 ] Lord, we've looked at how important marriage is and how we are to be distinct in our marriages and how we are to stick together no matter what. Lord, those are difficult things to do.

Give us the strength and the power and ability to do that. Give us the humility we need and the grace and all the benefits you give us in the Holy Spirit and through your gospel to enable us to build marriages that stand out that create havens of peace and truth and love and acceptance and building blocks for the kingdom for your glory and honor.

Amen.