

How Does God Feel About Divorc...emarriage - Podcast - Feb 2024

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SPEAKERS

Jeff Leake, Dave Leake

D Dave Leake 00:02

Hey everybody, welcome to the Allison Park leadership podcast, where we have culture creating conversations. I'm one of your hosts. My name is Dave.

J Jeff Leake 00:10

And my name is Jeff and we're glad you've joined us. So, Dave and I, of course father and son and I'm the lead pastor at Allison Park church. Dave's the campus pastor at the Northside. And do we have any shoutouts today for Yeah, those who are our listeners some quick

D Dave Leake 00:24

gratitudes for those that have left us recent five star reviews on Spotify, or not Spotify, excuse me on Apple podcasts. So thank you to Dr. Alien. That's a great name, by the way. Pts mats, which I feel like we've so PTS massive, you've left him several reviews. Good for you. Yeah. Appreciate that. And then Dana gig, I think Dana gig is a is a that data gig. So thank you for your kind reviews. And if you'd like to get a shout as well, we would love to have you do that. If you just go on your Apple podcast app, you can leave a five star review that we'd love to shout you out. You could also do the same thing on Spotify. But unfortunately, we can't see your name. So but either way is super helpful to us. And if you haven't done that, but your faithful listener, thank you as well for being a part of this. We appreciate, you know, you've been a part of the show, I guess we call this and so yeah, thank you for that. So all right. Want to get into today? Yeah, let's

J Jeff Leake 01:19

go for it.

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Dave Leake 01:20

So we've kind of had this topic on the radar for a little while. But it's just, this is another one of those very sensitive ones that sometimes falls off. This

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Jeff Leake 01:29

is a really sensitive topic. So we did a couple last year that were, you know, highly sensitive this will be for season five, probably one of the most, because it's so impacting people's personal life. So

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Dave Leake 01:42

go Yeah, so So basically, yeah, today we're gonna be talking about how does God feel about divorce and remarriage? The idea how does God feel about divorce and remarriage? I think to, to like a simple answer. At the baseline of it all is obviously, you know, the the rate of marriages ending is obviously something that I think nobody's surprised to hear that that sounds the heart of God, but there's a lot of ramp and divorce, not just among the general population, and among Christian community, it's,

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Jeff Leake 02:13

I don't think that's just Christian, I think anybody who has walked through divorce, no one gets married thinking, wow, hopefully, we can last a year. Right. Right, everybody gets married, thinking that they're gonna last a lifetime. And so, but I think there's less people getting married because of so much marriage failure, I think there's probably less of a faith in the concept of marriage in the popular culture. I think there's more people who have experienced divorce than ever before, in in our society. And I think that there's a lot of things that have changed in our culture, both church culture, I don't mean just Allison Park, I mean, overall, and and Western culture when it comes to the view of divorce, and marriage and covenant and remarriage and, and so it's one of those, again, intensely personal things, because if you've been through it, or are going through it, it's so we have this sort of combination, and we're looking at going to look at objective truth, according to the scripture, and we're going to do that through the filter of personal experiences. And yet at the same time, we want to do it without compromise. And so that's, that's the challenge of this particular topic, and many others as well.

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Dave Leake 03:26

And, and the issue with this particular topic, is that and we won't start here, right away, I think we should start by talking about covenant, which actually is a sermon series you're gonna middle of right now, by the way, right? So but I'll say quickly, the challenge with this is, there's probably more that Jesus has to say on this topic than it's often talked about in Christian circles.

J Jeff Leake 03:46

Yeah, well, Jesus is very radical when it comes to marriage. So don't go there. Yeah, don't go there. Yeah. So that's what makes this so a lot of times, what makes the scriptures complicated is we see that the Old Testament is pretty radical about some things. And Jesus gives us a view of it. That that gives a little bit of grace. But actually, Jesus's comments on marriage are pretty, pretty intense. They're pretty as intense as anything that you'd read anywhere else in the Scripture. So why

D Dave Leake 04:15

don't why don't we start by talking about let's let's just build our foundation of theology with marriage and covenants in general. Right now you're in this series. We're

J Jeff Leake 04:26

calling it fine print. And basically, there is a hidden code in the scripture that has to do with the word covenant. And Jesus when he introduces communion, Luke chapter 22, he says, This is the new covenant in my blood Do this in remembrance of Me we divide the Bible into two sections, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, better said maybe the first covenant, which is the covenant made with Israel, and the second Covenant or the new and final covenant, which is the covenant made through Christ to all people. So the by Bible's divided in terms of covenants. And we see Jesus introducing his concept of relationship with us through this covenant language. But Western culture doesn't do covenants. In fact, I think the only covenant relationship we actually have in Western culture is marriage. Almost everything we do in our culture is contracts. Contracts and covenants are very different.

D Dave Leake 05:22

So can I start by defining this word covenant? Good. So there's just in the English language, covenant means an agreement to do or not do or a particular thing or to enter into a promise or to enter into or promise something by a covenant?

J Jeff Leake 05:39

Yeah, that's a that's a very, very simple to definite about

D Dave Leake 05:42

this, about this. I'm looking through a pact or binding agreement between two or more parties. Yeah.

J Jeff Leake 05:48

Which which, which then, according to Eastern ancient biblical culture, is a two death. Commitment. Right. So the phrase in the marriage covenant, for better for worse for a for richer, for poorer in sickness and health until death do us part. So covenants word binding unto death, often they'd involved cutting the shedding of blood, as a reminder how serious it was, yeah, right. So

D Dave Leake 06:18

a covenant between two two guys to business people to become Blood Brothers, you would make a cut on your palm, they would, they would do the same thing. And you would shake hands and intermingle the blood together, right. And that would be a sign that now we're more than family. And if anybody attacks you or your family will come to your aid, and vice versa will become one. Yeah, our daughters would often Daughters and Sons of intermarry, we were our two,

J Jeff Leake 06:44

our two families, our two lives are now intertwined, and we are inseparable. And you see this great moment, I love the phrases of this, were Ruth says to her mother in law, so both of them had lost their husbands. Ruth is a from the nation of Moab, Naomi, from the nation of Israel, they're both grieving. Ruth is young and vibrant, and could have married again. But she says to her mother in law, don't urge me to leave your turn back where you go, I will go, Where you stay, I will stay, your people will be my people, your God will be my god where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried may the Lord deal with me Be it ever so severely of anything, but death separates you and me, this is covenant. That's the that's the oath of a covenant relationship. She says, I'm bound to you for the rest of my life. And who you are is who I will be, and I'm going to be where you are, I'm going to die when you die. So I've actually had people in a marriage ceremony read this, like this is this is what we're saying to each other. When we make covenant together. So

D Dave Leake 07:49

what's the difference between an American business contract and an ancient eastern covenant the way we're talking about it,

J Jeff Leake 07:59

so a business contract is, you do this, I'll do that. And this is binding, as long as we both fulfill the conditions. If the conditions are violated, then the relationship is over, we tear up the contract, and maybe I sue you for the breach of contract. So it's it's conditional. Covenant relationships or unconditional covenant relationships are this is not based upon, you're performing your side it is binding. Well, this doesn't say, I'll be with you, Niobe. For the rest of my life, as long as you treat me properly, that would be a contract. Like, let's decide together what the terms of this agreement are. And we'll be together as long as like, that's why the marriage the marriage covenant says things like, for worse, for poorer in sickness, right, okay, no matter what. We are bound together for life. Now, I know that's, that's the radical version of

it. But that let's just take it out of marriage for a moment and just say that was the concept of covenant. And when we're talking about this day, this is what's so incredible. What's at stake here is less about marriage. And it's more about how God wants us to understand his commitment to us. Yeah, like so God's concern over the integrity of covenants that are made is less about human interaction, and it's more about his interaction with us. Well, it's probably about both thing and it is But primarily, he wants us to understand how dead serious he is about a relationship with us. Yes, that he gets into relationship not based upon contractual terms, but based upon His covenant will

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Dave Leake 09:39

let me add some thoughts to this definition a little bit because I think I have some more of another facet to talk through. I think the other part about covenant that stands out to me is that a contract is transactional. It's often done over one specific, like item like so we're making a contract over the detail land or to a house or a business contract. Whereas a covenant is a store of relationship. And it's an identity. Yeah, it's tied to who I am. It's tied to my honor. It's tied to like that I as a person, I'm going to be in relationship with you, not over something. What was the word transactional? Yeah, temporary, temporary, transactional, we'll do this and we'll complete it. This is a forever permanent relationship, that for However, things go in life, we're together, we're together. And I think I think what you talked about when talking about God with that, it's powerful to understand the covenant that we enter into with him, but it's also probably healthy for us to look at that, you know, sometimes I think it's easy to think of salvation, or this relationship with God as being we pray a prayer, and then he's committed to us no matter what, but really the covenant if we're entering into a real covenant of Goddess, and I'm committed to him, no matter what, you know, if, regardless of what this brings on my life, even to death, even to death. Yeah, I will honor this covenant,

J

Jeff Leake 11:06

knowing knowing that the terms the basis of how we relate to each other is really important. So, for instance, historically, one of the major tragedies in the settle settlements of the United States of America is that Westerners Europeans came over to this United States, right? What is now the United States, and the made relationships with Native Americans, Native American peoples tended to be by nature, covenant covenantal people. And Europeans tended to be contractual, transactional people. Yeah. And so when the European settlers would make agreements with Native American tribes, the tribes thought we're now forming a binding agreement, that forever this will be a relationship that we'll have. And the Europeans obviously saw, we're doing some a transaction that could change in 20 years if the conditions change. And so the Europeans continually broke the covenant covenant that they had made, simply because they weren't viewing it that way. And so and that has caused reverberating tragedy, right over the over the timeframes. So, yeah, that and so knowing what kind of relationship you're getting into with God or with other people is really important, especially when you're getting ready to get married. To know the kind of relation this is actually often what I'll ask a couple, when they approached me to say, will you officiate my ceremony? I'll ask the question, how do you view this relationship you're getting into? Because I want to know how they're looking at it, if they're seeing it from a contractual or covenantal?

D Dave Leake 12:46

Yeah, without getting into all the details. By the way, marriage was always intended to be a blood covenant. Like, yeah, you know, because when the marriage is consummated, if people have waited until marriage, there's some blood that happens during the consummation of marriage. But that's, that's, that's 13 Verse. Yeah. Version, right? No, but that's that. I mean, I believe it's how God designed it to work. It's actually a blood covenant between two people that till death, this part like this is so serious, that yeah, you know, that it's this sort of a gravity and commitment that I'm making in my life to define the rest of my future based on this person. Yeah. And

J Jeff Leake 13:24

if we go back to the beginning, God, God Institute's this covenant relationship, so it makes covenant with Adam and Eve, between the two of them, right, Adam and Eve and God. And then he says, For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. And this institution of marriage becomes the foundation for the most important entity that God ever created, which is the family where children will be born and raised. And so, so God, this is after creating the world, he gave us the institution of marriage and family, based upon the concept of oneness, which is that you sort of lose your own individual identity, and are merged together into a oneness that is based upon this covenant, oath based promise. Yeah,

D Dave Leake 14:14

and I think I think one thing that's sometimes hard to understand from our western, you know, American perspective is like we we all think of our each other as individuals, right? I'm not defined by my family or my country, or by what I'm defined by my own

J Jeff Leake 14:31

choices and decisions and more and more my feelings and

D Dave Leake 14:35

my own version of truth and my experience and whatever else I choose to define myself by is what I'm defined by, but the way that

J Jeff Leake 14:44

infinitely can change depending upon the way the wind blows, but a biblical

D Dave Leake 14:48

perspective is actually that we're defined by our covenants Yeah. In addition to our own

individual. In fact, there are some consequences that are talked about Bible that are actually swear And you can think of those covenantal consequences because of Sins of fathers or grandfathers are great grandfather's, you know, down three or four generations, there can be consequences. But God says He blesses those 1000 generations, you know, because he's so good and merciful. So like, there's this viewpoint of, we're not just defined as individuals, obviously, when it comes to like our own personal choice, to enter into this covenant relationship with God. We're saved by grace through faith individually as individuals. So even if your family has turned from God, that doesn't mean that you are now not able to access this covenant that God's allowed us to enter into. But if you do enter into the covenant with God, you're now covenant brothers with other brothers and sisters in Christ, and God is your God and your his people, you know, his people, you're a part of that people, we are as people, right? Yeah. So that's, I think it's important to talk about this, because when we're talking about marriage, and then we're talking about divorce, and remarriage, we have to start with the framework of how God is viewing it. You know, this is one of those things. To me, that's interesting, because like, you know, Paul, Paul talks about being transformed through the renewing of our mind, which sometimes is realigning our brains and our default ways of thinking, with the way that God sees things and thinking through truth that way. So even if our understanding of covenants or marriage or whatever else in life is not aligned, we can actually, through understanding and knowledge begin to think more like God thinks and make different decisions differently. So we need that foundation to start with.

J

Jeff Leake 16:37

And you know, when society strays from God's designed plan for the world, you see the consequences of it. And so our culture is seeing the consequences. You have fatherlessness? Which is a huge problem. When you have a young man or woman growing up without a dad and in their life, right? You have the fracturing of family, you have isolation, you have loneliness, you have the wounds and traumas that come from the breakdown of the marriage or the family

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Dave Leake 17:06

and diseases. Yeah, you know, that are passed because of this transactional type of thing that happens between men and women. Right. Right.

J

Jeff Leake 17:16

Right. And so, and then you have a lower, lower potential for fulfillment. So I, I just saw a little clip about, you know, there was someone saying, the higher the body count, you know, which is a phrase that's used for how many people you sleep with, before marriage, the less likely you are to find fulfillment in marriage or lasting marriage, I think the stat that they were saying is when a young woman has more than five, or as her body account, right, there's less less at less percentage that she's going to be happy in her marriage. So we start to stray away from God's designed for how things are supposed to function. And you see the impact all throughout society. It's because of that, you know, consequence. So I think now, now, that's the the objective theological side we just described. In an ideal world, everybody should get married and stay married, and be in love. And God intended it to be like that way. But we live in a sin

cursed world with people who are selfish and do ridiculously hurtful things. Yeah. And so then you have people who are, they got married with a covenantal mindset, they wanted to stay married for the rest of their life, and then their partner did something that maybe perpetually wounded them, or abused them. And now they're in a situation where they're, their covenant is breaking down. And so now the question becomes, how do you apply this objective, beautiful standard of covenant in a broken, sinful, hurtful, fractured world? And how do we mix the ideal with the real, and we can do it in a way that still pleases Jesus. And

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Dave Leake 18:57

we do a quick tangent that I think, is a part of the foundation. And we'll get into that, because I think we're really close now, to examining scripture, or what Jesus said. But I just think one important part of this to examine is just the way that the sexual revolution has sort of devalued this covenant act of sex that God made to be in marriage, right? Because like the the world's viewpoint is that the only way for us to be truly happy, is to be truest to yourself to have whatever experiences bring you pleasure and happiness and the more restriction or restraint that society or culture puts on less or god yeah, then the less happy you're going to be. But the Think

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Jeff Leake 19:43

as if happiness is the ultimate goal, yeah,

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Dave Leake 19:45

right. That's the thing. The thing that we should all strive for in life is to be as happy as possible, which should be being as true to ourselves as possible, as true to your own feelings, with as little restriction or restraint from those in power. Our are from those who are trying to put restrictions on what's the alternative biblical view, the alternative biblical view is that God is the one who designed these things such as sex and marriage. And we should stick within the boundaries that he set up for it for healthy covenants for stable relationships for stable families, because the long term goal is stability and happiness and a life of fruitfulness. But

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Jeff Leake 20:26

it's more than that they there is, there is a virtue that comes with sacrifice, right? So actually, the Agape covenant based love says, I will love you to my own hurts, yeah, I don't have children because it fulfills me, I have children because I want to invest myself in the next generation, I don't get married, because it makes me happy. Yeah, I get married, because I want to give my life for my wife. And I want to live a life that is filled with virtue of being a good husband, to the woman that God places in my world, a lot of people have flipped it around, I have kids to be fulfilled, I get married to be fulfilled, this is to serve me, rather than the outcome really, which is the Jesus way to lay my life down for the purpose of pleasing God by doing the things that are righteous in serving the world that I live in. Now, the byproduct of that often is happiness. So the more I love and serve my wife and family, the often more long term contentment and fulfillment again, x actually, you know, if you seek to save your life, you lose

it. If you seek to give your life away for the cause of Christ, you gain it. So marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, life satisfaction, actually, I think improves, the more that you do it God's way. However, that's not the motivation. The motivation isn't to have a satisfying life. It's actually to, to love in the way that God taught us to love. And the byproduct of that, and

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Dave Leake 21:58

to live a life of integrity. Yeah, right. Exactly, exactly. And submission to Jesus. So this is the background. So to recap, God has made a covenant with His people, which is entered into now through salvation, Jesus Christ. And that covenant is replicated in different ways. But it's a similar type of serious covenant within the bounds of marriage, where God has made sex and marriage to be with one partner that lasts for a lifetime, that produces family as its own little covenant group of people, you know, blood relatives, right. Okay. So that's sort of the framework that the the Ancient Near Eastern Jews, including Jesus would have viewed things through. And I think it's still probably the biblical framework we need to really try to align our lives with today. But we're going to we're going to talk about Jesus's views. Yeah. On what's the Old Covenant, he talks about what the law says the law would have been the initial covenant given to God, you know, through Moses to the people of Israel, that at the time that Jesus came onto the scene that they would have been living, it was the legal law, but it was also spiritual and moral. And so Jesus references this law, but then sort of expands on it to change our thinking in this new covenant that we now live in. Post the cross. Yeah.

J

Jeff Leake 23:18

Okay. So let's go there. So, Matthew 19, the Pharisees who were religious Jews, who were very devoted to the law, as they often did, would bring a question to Jesus to test him to see what his rabbinical view of the world was, and whether or not he was legitimately qualified to be the Messiah. And they love the question to him that we're talking about today on the podcast, some Pharisees came to him. This is Matthew 19. Three, and they asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? And notice what they say here for any and every reason? So they throw out what's, what's the standards in God's eyes for legitimate divorce Jesus? Is there? Is there a restrictions here? Is it just because you decide you don't want to be married anymore? And Jesus says, haven't you read that at the beginning, the Creator made them male and female. By the way, that little phrase right there is pretty radical in our culture. Jesus said, the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, For this reason, a man will leave his father and be united and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but are one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. We use this language in our wedding ceremonies. The final thing that we say, just before we say You may now kiss your bride, right? And so basically, Jesus throws down and he says, You know what it says, right? You're not You're not to your one. How can you separate what God has put together? You can't. So they say, can you get divorced for any in any reason? So how could you separate this? Yeah, God puts you together. You're in a covenant relationship. Yeah. And then they say, Why then did Moses command that a man could give us his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away because Moses is the one who penned down the law that God gave. And Jesus replied, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you, anyone who

divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality and marries another woman commits adultery. Okay. So there's a response that the disciples have, but do you want to give commentary on what we just heard there?

D Dave Leake 25:29

Well, I'm not even really sure where to start. Why don't you talk to the response first, okay. And then so after

J Jeff Leake 25:34

they saw Jesus basically asked him first, can you get divorced for any any reason? Jesus says, How can you separate what God's put together?

D Dave Leake 25:40

Let me let me say this, let me say this commentary. Yeah, we're seeing we're seeing the terms of covenant here. Yeah, again. So this is a permanent and Jesus's view, a permanent joining of two people were there one flesh, meaning one per so you

J Jeff Leake 25:53

gotta rip away this joining together that God has brought brought into being this is what he say, how can you do this? This is

D Dave Leake 26:00

a severance not not not just, it's not like how, as if as if it's impossible. It's like almost like a Why would you do this? Right. This is like, brutalizing up something that God did. That should be beautiful.

J Jeff Leake 26:12

Yeah. And that so the Pharisees come back and say, but it's in the law. There's exceptions in the law. Yeah. And Jesus said, Yeah, but this is not God's original intention. Actually. The provisions for divorce are only because you'll love the way God loves. Your hearts are hard. He says, God loves you in a way that he's never going to divorce you but we get it. Humans aren't that unfair. So therefore there isn't allowance for divorce based on sexual immorality. And so if someone commit sexual morality, that covenant can come to an end. And the disciples it says, verse 10, having heard this, say to Jesus, that the Pharisees, the disciples, right, if this is the situation between husband and wife, it is better not to marry. And Dave, this next response of Jesus is the most intense thing reference where we read, okay, Matthew, chapter 19, verse 10,

the disciples hear Jesus, you know, basically describe how intense God feels about the covenant relationship. And they say, this is the situation between the husband and wife, it's better not to marry. If

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Dave Leake 27:16

you can't get a divorce, and less their sexual immorality. There's unfaithfulness that happens

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Jeff Leake 27:21

and you shouldn't then who would ever want to marry? Because this is way too binding? Yeah. So this is James and John and Peter and Andrew. are like, that's crazy. How can anybody pin themselves down to a woman that they could never get rid of? Because what happens if there are some extenuating circumstances this is, this is what the disciples feel? Yeah, honestly, this is what we all feel like, there has to be some other outs. Because I know a friend who had this happen and right, this is what they're asking. Yeah,

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Dave Leake 27:53

they married a person. And they weren't the same person. They were when they were Yeah. And it was so unhappy.

J

Jeff Leake 27:58

I've had 1000 examples, right. Yeah. Okay. So I agree with the disciples question. Sure. And this is one of the most radical things Jesus has ever said. They guess it was on his response to the disciples is not everyone can accept this word, but only to whom it has been given. There are Unix. Okay, little description here. This is someone who has had their sexual organs removed

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Dave Leake 28:19

to castrate if castrated. Yeah. All right, so that they could tip typically

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Jeff Leake 28:23

was done so that they could serve a king and take care of the Queen. And they be no threat. Yeah. Okay. So there have been eunuchs who have been born that way, and others who've been made Unix by others, and those who choose to live like UNIX, meaning that they weren't castrated, but they live single for the sake of the kingdom of God, the One who can accept it should accept it. So my interpretation here is Jesus says, if you get married, and it doesn't work out, if you got to cut it off, you got to cut it off. Me.

D

Dave Leake 28:56

I think he's more saying it is so serious that you have the ability to live single, it's better to live single, yes, rather than risk the potential divorce because of how intense and serious like goodness, right Would you say it's interpretation? So better to be single?

J

Jeff Leake 29:10

Can you get so Jesus teaches a radical version of monogamy? Uh huh. And he never ever waivers from them. In anything that he says,

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Dave Leake 29:20

Can I Can I clarify this for a second? I think off. So here, here's where I think like the church at large and America would often it would make my thinking go here, we would go. And he does this because marriage should be so serious, that it's so it's so toxic to you or your family to get divorced. But his point here isn't about like the cost benefit ratio. It's not like oh, no, it's not like because divorce can be so harmful to you. It's divorce is such a like almost like a sin against God if it's done for the wrong reasons contrary

J

Jeff Leake 29:57

to the concept of covenant. It's kind of To the concept of marriage in general, because the marriage in general is designed to be on unto death brought blood idea. Okay, now in case some of you are listening to this right now and you're like, give me a little hope your pastor Jeff, I've been divorced and remarried or I'm in a situation that's really not easy right now. It wasn't my Okay. There. There are some other scriptures that mitigate the questions that we have

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Dave Leake 30:25

some questions that we have some.

J

Jeff Leake 30:27

But I think I think it's good for us just to start with how dead serious this is to Jesus. Before then we get into the way that we that we navigate moving forward, because there is hope, okay, if you're in a situation, that's not easy, and you're trying to please Jesus with your life. And so maybe some things have happened, maybe some decisions that have been made, maybe some decisions have been made by you, this doesn't pin you down to a lifetime of feeling like you're a disgrace in the eyes of God, there's just a lot of times what people feel. But I think it's good for us to talk about this day, because the pendulum of convenience based marriage thinking has swung so far, to the it's no big deal side, that we need to I think contrast that to the way that Jesus thought about it. Because we have a rampant epidemic of marriage breakdown in our society, partially because we have left this rooted pillar of idea of marriage covenant, from the way that the New Testament teaches it, and if you've never been married yet, maybe

you're listening to this and you're a young adult, and you're thinking about it. Number one, make sure the person you get married to someone you want to be in a covenant with number two, go into that marriage with a seriousness about your marriage relationship, because you want to view this from God's perspective. But let's talk about the nuances now. Okay, so, so the first one is mentioned by Jesus.

D Dave Leake 32:01

Yeah. Wait, wait, when you say nuance, we're talking about reasons that Jesus would give

J Jeff Leake 32:07

the New Testament has given us some scriptures that indicate when it is okay to accept a divorce as an outcome that is not sinful or hold on to a compromise. Right.

D Dave Leake 32:22

Okay. Can I quickly frame where this conversation probably will go? Yeah, we're going to talk about some of the nuances of other reasons for why marriage could end that Paul, or the New Testament talks about then we're going to talk about remarriage,

J Jeff Leake 32:38

remarriage, which is even more complicated than the divorce. Uh huh. And

D Dave Leake 32:42

ultimately, like, the reason we're doing this, I just need to frame this again, I don't think this gets talked about a lot. But it's such an intense statement by Jesus. We can't gloss over or walk past this. And I think like everybody needs to understand what the Bible actually says, like someday all of us are going to stand before God and have to give an account of our lives. And so we should know what the standards are that Jesus outlined for us. And it's intense, but it's good to know. So yeah, there's going to be a degree of some grace and some nuance that comes in but it's not. It's not really dismissed. But I just want to give you the framework for this before we go in.

J Jeff Leake 33:23

And we may not get to it all in one episode, we might have to do a second follow up episode to see where we get Yeah, we got time we will go as far as we can go with this. Yeah. Okay. So let's just talk about what was in Matthew chapter 19. And the things that Jesus said, First, he says, The one who can accept this should accept it and it kind of gives you the feeling like this would probably be the most ideal and highest calling way of approaching this to be single. Yeah, after a divorce, that might happen or, or whatever. But in

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Dave Leake 33:52

this context to this type of said, it's better not to get married. So yeah, after a divorce or before a marriage,

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Jeff Leake 33:58

it's invest. So I guess that's one thing we should say is, if you find yourself single god, the Scripture does not look at singleness as incomplete. No, not at all. It doesn't look at as a secondary strata of society. Like the married people are the blessed ones. And the ones that are single, actually singleness in the New Testament, according to what Jesus said, and later when we might get to it. And first Corinthians chapter seven is the higher way of living where you devote yourself 100% to the purpose of God. And so if you're single, you are in no way lacking something. You don't have to have the romantic version of life to live a fulfilling, complete, contented existence. Okay? So but Jesus says, Not everyone can accept that assignment in life. Right. Paul says later in First Corinthians seven, it's better to marry than burn with passion. Yeah. Okay. So yeah, the second thing he says is the exception that Jesus mentions is a lifestyle of adultery if you are being cheated on perpetually by the person you're married to. And that situation is grievous. Beyond what can be repaired, that in that case it is acceptable to, to get a divorce. That's what it that's basically what it says there. Right? So that's one exception to the covenant clause that, yes, adultery. Because we may not necessarily love the way God loves is one of those acceptable off ramps.

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Dave Leake 35:34

I've heard a talk before I remember learning this and when I was in Bible school, that the phrase the phraseology of the way he puts it, I guess in Greek, actually, like sort of leans into the idea that versus except in the case of sexual morality, because at that point, the covenants already been broken. Okay. It's not just that it's a reason to break the covenant. It's a broken can

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Jeff Leake 35:55

disappoint does include here in this sentence. Let me just read it again, verse nine, Matthew 19. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery. What seems to be implied in the statement is if there is sexual immorality, and there's a divorce, that that implies potential for remarriage. It's not. So there's a difference between things in the scripture that are directly stated, and things that are inferred, right? But we never get is a direct statement of when remarriage is good fact. We get other scriptures of pulling up now Romans chapter seven, says like this verse one, don't you know, brothers and sisters, I'm speaking to those who know the law of God. That law has authority over someone as long as that person lives. For example, by law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he's alive. But if he dies, she's released from the law that binds her to him. So then if she has sexual relationships with another man while her husband is still alive, she's called an adulterous. But if her husband dies, she's released from that law, and

is not an adulterous. So this basically says if your former spouse is still living, but we combine that with Jesus's statements about sexual immorality, there does seem to be some implication that, like you said, sexual immorality breaks the covenant, and therefore, there is the idea that remarriage potentially could take place. Again, it's a complicated balance of these two passages together. Right, so So that's the first exception, I guess you'd see. There's another passage. That's a very key passage for this discussion. And it has to do with First Corinthians chapter seven, where Paul has this long discussion about marriage, and singleness. And in this particular passage, he he begins to talk to married and unmarried people, right? So shall I read these verses? Go ahead, sure. First Corinthians chapter seven, verse 10, to the married I give this command, not I, but the Lord. So he levels it up a bit, wife, monks, not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled her husband and husband must not divorce his wife. That's pretty clear. To the rest, I say, If a brother has a wife who's not a believer, and she's willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. So basically saying being, you being a Christian and your spouse not being a Christian is not it's not enough for the covenant to be broken. So like to say, Well, I've now entered covenant with God and my husband or wife has not so therefore this marriage is over. Now. If you're if you get saved while you're married to somebody, you're expected to honor that covenant. If a woman has a husband who's not a believer, he's willing to live with her, she must not divorce him, for the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through believing Husband, husband, otherwise your children would be unclean. This is a really complicated verse it is, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so the brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances, God has called us to live in peace. And then he says, but how do you know wife whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know husband, whether you save your wife? So you want to comment or you want me to give some thoughts about this? Well,

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Dave Leake 39:30

that's one of those things again, which doesn't actually talk about remarriage, but it does talk about a divorce in the case of abandonment. So he seems to give a he seems to give exceptions in a case of where, especially especially if two people get married before they're Christians, right. One person becomes a Christian and the one who is not a believer takes off abandons leaves their family that says

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Jeff Leake 39:55

they would not be bound by that covenant promise, which would imply it infer that in that situation, you could not only accept a divorce, but potentially could get

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Dave Leake 40:04

remarried. Yes, we have to do a little bit of inference. It's

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Jeff Leake 40:08

inferred. It isn't directly stated that way, right. Now, let me give you a story. So years ago, Dave has many years ago. I had a woman that came to the church and she gave her life to Jesus. She

has many years ago, I had a woman that came to the church and she gave her life to Jesus. She was married. Her her and her husband had not been getting along for a long time. And they were they were living separate. They had actually been, I think, separated for over 10 years, but they had never executed the divorce. Right? She came to me and she said, now that I'm a Christian, he's not a Christian, is it? Okay, if I go ahead and divorce him? Because there's another guy here in the church that I'd like to marry? And I was like, Well, let me read you these verses in First Corinthians chapter seven, because it basically says that there is this tie between a husband and wife that when one person gets saved, and the other person is not saved, that that husband is sanctified or wife is sanctified by the, by the believing spouse, meaning that there is an influence, the Holy Spirit has to bring them to God. And the kids. If that marriage stays together, the believing spouse brings this holy influence into the lives of the children. Right? So I said to her, you know, before you just quickly move to divorce, maybe we should pause for a moment and ask the question now that you're a Christian, maybe your faith, maybe there's a tie between you and your husband spiritually. And we should give some space for God to work, because maybe you're going to be a part of winning him to Jesus. Yeah. And she was mad. Ooh, she stormed out of my office. She was so how dare you say this to me. I don't love him anymore. We've been separated for all these years. I don't feel like my covenant is valid anymore. I like this other guy. And I was like, Man, that's hope I did the right thing by telling her this. And then a couple weeks later, she came back and she said, Okay, I think you're right. I'm, I feel like the Holy Spirit has spoken to me that I'm going to give it a couple of months. And I'm going to pray for him every day. And I'm going to just ask God to bring salvation to my husband. And if he gets saved, he's going to have to change my heart because I don't even love him anymore. Well, two weeks later, he came to church, he came forward and gave his life to Jesus. God answered her prayers. And so they started to go through through some marriage counseling. And they renewed their vows. And they got married, and they're married today.

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Dave Leake 42:35

Wow. That's amazing. Yeah. So

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Jeff Leake 42:40

the first that we read in First Corinthians chapter seven, and the power of the tie of that covenant is, is a force that we sometimes don't recognize how impactful it is, yeah. So if your couple is going through a marriage struggle, and one person is leaning into God, and praying and forgiving, and asking God to restore, there is a pole that the Holy Spirit uses through that covenant relationship. So it's like, you're connected to heaven, and you're also connected to your spouse, and there's a heavenly pull. That sucks. You know, you, your spouse, and your family towards God, when you're living in that surrendered moment to him. Yeah. Now, sometimes, even in those situations, not everything works out, like the story I just told you. And sometimes, the unbelieving spouse, or the one that's lost their mind are filled with rage or living in trauma or is bipolar, or whatever the situation might be. makes it impossible for the relationship to continue, and they choose to walk away. And in that situation, just like with adultery, it does seem like abandonment is an impact. Now, I'm going to do something to hear that. I don't recommend that even though, if this is correct. When I mentioned this to you, you were like, Well, where do you get that from? Like, so

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Dave Leake 44:04

frame it, frankly? Why don't I try it? Why don't I try to do framing this show you? So this to me, I know what you're gonna say? And I don't disagree with it, really. But I'm trying to frame it. What you're gonna say now is probably something that we're like, doing, you're doing as a pastor, concern of your people. Right? And you I would even say for this, it's probably because scripture is the foundation for our life. Use this with caution. Yeah, this is not a quick thing to do.

J

Jeff Leake 44:34

But but this one actually might be more obvious. Culturally today. Yeah. The other two that I know so if we said the Bible gives this permission for adultery, and for abandonment, to be covenant ending situations. Yeah. The one that I'm going to mention is abuse. Now, let's let's step back from that word for a moment. I have seen people use the word abuse so casually like emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and then when you really get down to it, you ask What exactly have they done or said that word is being. So that word is like pressing the nuclear button in the relationship. So anytime somebody says, well, he's abusing me, or she's abusing me, that's like, boom, all conversation ends because it's now entered a stage of something that almost feels like a crime. Yeah. Okay. So anytime someone throws abuse around, I always say qualify that. What specifically did they say? What specifically are they doing? Can we actually define it as abuse? But now let's just talk about some a husband is beating up his wife repeatedly. And as risking the lives of the children in the household. Yeah. Okay. First of all, immediately, there should be some separation, no doubt, no steps taken to create protection from abuse orders and let the police know. And yes, and there should be no reason resumption of living in the same space until there's a long period of proving when life changing, because now we're putting people at risk? Yes. Okay. No doubt. I think abuse could become an extension of abandonment in a way, because it really is not just I'm leaving you, which is an easier way of ending the relationship. This is I'm leaving you because I'm putting the situation in relationship, your physical body, your wellbeing at risk perpetually. And therefore, there's no way for you to stay present in the situation. And again, let's go back to that phrase, in First Corinthians chapter seven, it says, For God has called us to live at peace. Yes, yes. So where there is this lack of physical and emotional peace, you would have to say that that could also qualify? Sure, even though there's never a time in the scripture where that one is mentioned. I actually think that it fits within the spirit of what we hear being said in these two passages of Matthew 19, in First Corinthians seven. Even in that situation, I don't think we rushed to the legal action of divorce, I think we take all the other actions of separation and protection. And divorce becomes maybe an eventual thing that we would move to

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Dave Leake 47:18

that sounds. That's probably sounds radical. But again, let's frame this with the seriousness of the covenant. So you enter in Yeah, I

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Jeff Leake 47:25

don't think we ever rushed to divorce. I always think it's good to realize that there there is an option before divorce and that separation, and you can actually separate from your spouse and

work on yourself with the potential of thinking that maybe one day we might be able to work on the marriage. And a lot of times what the only thing divorce really gets you is the potential to start to date and remarry. Yeah. So it's better to separate and wait and pray and see what God does and work on yourself. And then eventually, divorce can be something that you may accept, in these cases in these cases, but don't don't think we rushed to it. Okay. Now, here's the situations that are completely obviously unacceptable,

D Dave Leake 48:09

meaning, so let's say acceptable.

J Jeff Leake 48:12

I'll paint the picture I have, I have seen this so many times have personal friends, pastors, they're married, their wife is a Christian. And they just decide, I don't want to be married anymore. I don't want to be your husband, I'm gonna break this covenant, I'm gonna go on, I'm gonna find another person. And I'm gonna divorce you and marry them. Because they make me happy and and I'm still going to call myself a Christian. And I'm going to still want to serve in ministry, but I'm just out of personal emotions and convenience and lack of attraction and preferences, going to end the marriage and just move on with my life to someone else. To me, that is clearly a violation of Scripture in the Bible would say that that is it's as if you're committing ongoing adult rewind

D Dave Leake 49:01

for a second, let's let's really draw what it is. So no, it's great. It's great. But let's let's let's define what like it said, this would be that'll make me happy anymore. We don't want the same things. They want this. I want this. We fight all the time. We don't get along. They're not the same person I was when we got married. There's all these different things. And typically it revolves around this person is sapping my energy, they're killing my joy. We can't get along. This seems like it's an unworkable contractual relationship. In a sense, it's not covenantal thinking. So based on that, those are not valid reasons.

J Jeff Leake 49:39

They're not valid no for divorce. So okay. I realized that if you're in that situation right now, and you're lonely and hurting that this is not what you want to hear. Right? Right. You want to you want to hear that there's an out okay, and I get it. Maybe maybe your spouse is really annoying, and maybe they're really miserable. And maybe they're a huge jerk, you're there you're you are, you are tied to somebody. So when you think for better, for worse for richer, for poorer in sickness and health until death do us part and you got worse, you got poor, you got sickness, maybe it's not even physical, it's mental and you're tied now to this person. And okay, it's, it would be better this way. This used to be an option that people would pursue to live single and separated then the doors it would be better to be to live single and separated, then to divorce.

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Dave Leake 50:38

So let's let me let me ask this question

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Jeff Leake 50:40

a different way, by the way, horrible, horrible, horrible situation. Yeah, but singleness unto God. Again, let's go back to the Matthew 19. Jesus advice statement here isn't a second best. isn't an easy situation. But it isn't a second best. In fact, in this season of your life, God may do more through you and in you than what you've ever thought about. But the covenantal ties don't break in worse and in poor and in sickness. Yeah, they break potentially, there can be this potential for accepting the end of something for the three things we mentioned adultery, ongoing adultery, abandonment, and abuse. Those are the three that we would put the category and so now, let me let me circle back. Let's say you made a series of bad decisions, and you're now in a covenant relationship with someone new. And you look back and you say, I wish I had this information. 10 years ago, what do I do now? One of the things that said repeatedly in First Corinthians Chapter Seven is when you come to salvation, or an awareness of what the Scripture teaches, let's just say you remain in the state in which you are, you know, so if you're in a marriage now, that's your covenant. Don't look back, don't carry guilt. move on from this moment forward with the right mindsets, okay. And whatever state you're in, Paul says, if you're single, don't seek to get married, okay? If God brings around the right person, and there's someone you want to come in with, great, if you if you feel like you're gonna burn with passion, and you need to get married to deal with it, okay, get married. But if you're single, don't see that as second best. If you're married, and you're married to someone that isn't a Christian, stay there and be faithful in it, you're married to someone who's not going to leave you in isn't committing adultery, and you stay there and trust God to do a miracle in that situation. If you made a series of bad decisions, and you're in that situation you're in now, stay there and be faithful to God in the midst of it. And don't live on don't live under a sentence of guilt and judgment for the past. God wants you to help you move on from here. But if you're navigating through these waters, these kinds of things should help inform your choices.

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Dave Leake 52:50

Oh, again, the reason why I wanted to do this topic, I know this is so sensitive and so painful. And this can be like the rock bottom of somebody's life, and it's like a punch to the gut. But shouldn't you at least want to know what Jesus says if you're following Jesus, at least I would want to know this. I'd rather I'd rather know like, it's at least at least then at Sure. Am I going to choose to follow Jesus?

J

Jeff Leake 53:13

Well, this is one of those separators true followers of Jesus, do not make happiness, the guiding principle of their life. Yeah. True followers of Jesus, make obedience, the center of their life. And what makes Christians different from the rest of the world is that we are not in the constant pursuit of happiness. Yeah, we're in the constant pursuit of the pleasure of God, and living for His purpose, even if it makes us completely unhappy. Yeah. And that makes us different. Yeah. And the world is puts happiness on the altar. It's an it's made it the God of Everything. And my

personal fulfillment and satisfaction is the be all and end all. And if you if you if raining on my parade, or undermining my happiness, somehow you're victimizing me. And listen, that's not how Jesus followers think, no, we do not make decisions through the filter of what's going to make me most happy. And I'll just say it you see in the movies all the time, what I want for my kids is I just want them to be happy, not me. I want them to be people of character, I want them to be great. I want them to be virtuous. I hope that they're happy too. But I know that in their lives, they won't always be. And they have to have something more to hold on to than their own happiness. And if they're just chasing down their happiness all the time, oh, my goodness. Those are the most miserable people on Earth. Yeah, you have to live for something greater than yourself. And I know that that's the backdrop of this. And so but then if Dave, if you go to Ephesians five, you see how Paul describes how husbands should live their wives and how wives should respond to their husbands. And then he says, and this is a mystery and it's not just the mystery of a husband and wife. It's how Jesus responds to his Church, what's at stake with the image. And the metaphor of relationship, which we see in family and marriage is how God looks at us, and how we're supposed to look at him. Yeah. And the great news here is that God is never going to divorce you. Yeah. Even on your worst day, even when you commit adultery against Him and worship other things, he will not divorce you he is, he is not a man or woman that will betray you, he is going to be faithful unto death. That's the way God loves us. And that's his ideal for relationships in society.

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Dave Leake 55:35

And in order to keep our side of the covenant and follow Jesus, sometimes it means having these hard conversations where we decide whether we're going to die to ourselves, yeah, and carry the Cross, which is what Jesus said, carry our own cross, to follow in his footsteps and actually submit to Him, which is what being a Christian means I missed in these inconvenient hard things to say I choose this. Yeah, even against what I want.

J

Jeff Leake 56:02

I should have researched this earlier. This is a great story that this has happened years ago, now, president of a Bible college called CBC, we went to a CBC and Dave and I, but this was a CBC in South Carolina. He had just reached the pinnacle of his career, right. He's been elected to the president of this Bible College. He's thriving in every area of ministry. And then his wife got early onset Alzheimer's. And he had that make the decision of what am I going to do now? With my life, obviously, that isn't a happiness situation. But his covenant vow to his wife was for better for worse for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health to death do us part. So he resigned from his presidency, and took on a job that he could do so that he could give full time attention to his wife. And for the rest of his life. His highest calling was to be her husband. Wow. And obviously, that isn't a recipe for happiness. It isn't a recipe for success. It isn't a recipe for advancement or promotion. But it was a it's a God honoring covenant honoring virtuous way to live. Yeah. And so. And when we think about that, we think that's gorgeous. That's beautiful. Yeah, that's the kind of marriage that I want to I want to have Yeah, yeah. And so I say that to Mel now, like, what, we're, we're married 36 years, I say, I'm in it till we die. Like, whatever that means, if you get sick, if you lose your mind, I will be by your side. I know, I know what you like, I know what you're afraid of. I'll protect you. I'll stand in there with you. And I and I hope, and I know, she says the same thing to me. I mean, isn't this what we want? We want to have that kind of lifetime commitment to each other. So yeah,

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Dave Leake 58:00

there's something too, I this is a separate conversation. But when I've been thinking about something too, about just like a person making a decision like that, that speaks of like, honor, that I think our culture doesn't think about, well, you know, we're always, you know, our current culture. So sacrilegious and, and irreverence is the word I'm looking for. There's no reverence, but like hearing somebody who makes their life a sacrifice like that there's speaks to something on the inside of me, you know, it's like it resonates with like, that's the kind of person I want to be who sacrifices for the right things and lives, you know, according to principles and standards of submission to Jesus. And, you know, I think at some point in the future and upset an honor would be interesting to me. But anyway, yeah, well, I realize this is a very difficult conversation to have. Yeah, and if you're weird stalling this one, like, it'll come eventually. Well, in

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Jeff Leake 58:52

some ways, this is more of an issue than the pride and pronouns situation. We talked about surance season. Sure, it's a little bit more sensitive. And, and, and I think, in some ways that what's at stake with this is as important as anything when it comes to sexual integrity and the view of marriage and family and Because oftentimes, we talk about only the issues that have to do with LGBTQ, but this is probably a more common problem and challenge that

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Dave Leake 59:25

we have worse and remarriage from an unbiblical perspective, right, which is not living. It's not submitted to Jesus this way. And it doesn't get talked about very much, and it probably shouldn't be taught more often. So, you know, at least this is a start to uncover the

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Jeff Leake 59:40

truth. You are in a situation and you're not sure what to do. And you just heard this in this podcast, and you need to talk to somebody we our podcast is not so big and our lives are not so crazy that we don't have time for you, and we will make time to have an individual conversation about how you need to process If not Dave, and I, someone qualified on our team, we'd love to be able to be in your your world. And I'm serious about that you just let us know that you want to talk and we would be happy to do so. And

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Dave Leake 1:00:11

the last, let me just end with this thing of hope as well. There is something that that is given to us, which is God's grace for following difficult decisions. And when you choose to follow Jesus, he does provide what you need the grace and the consistency and the patience and provision and finances. God takes care of us when we choose to honor his word. And sometimes you have a story like that lady, you talked about who and I will

J Jeff Leake 1:00:38

tell you I watched one husband be cheated on by his wife repeatedly, they separated, then he chose to pursue her. They got, you know, their vows renewed. He suffered, oh my goodness, how he suffered in the midst of learning all the things you need to learn. But he went from being a baby Christian, before all that happened to him to becoming a giant man. Like I saw lean into God and learn how to pray and grab hold of the promises of God and make the hard decisions. And he became someone that I was ministering to. And he just was transformative, someone that I greatly admired. And oftentimes, it's the painful places in life that builds you into the mass of man or woman of character God wants you to be not, not not not that the suffering itself is intended by God to do that. But there is a crucible of relational pain that sometimes builds us into something more. That's

D Dave Leake 1:01:39

awesome. Yeah, so that's that's a good way to end on hope. Why don't we just use what we pray for anybody who's in difficult situations like this right now?

J Jeff Leake 1:01:46

God, we pray, you know, James says that if we lack wisdom, that we should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault in and to be given to them? So we pray, wisdom and revelation we pray, comfort and grace, we pray for clarity and peace. And we ask Lord for a way forward one step at a time. Relational healing, yes, but we pray just that we would be able to find the god pleasing solutions, and whatever complicated situations were in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

D Dave Leake 1:02:17

Well, thanks again for joining us. On the Alpha Park leadership podcast, we appreciate you as always, and, you know, we would love it if you would just take a second to do one of the following help us spread the word you can, you know, if you're listening, if you're watching on YouTube, you can, you know, subscribe, and like this video, you can always share this on social media, you can leave us a five star review on whatever platform that you're that you're listening to this or watching this on. And that just really helps us to, you know, help more people as we're able to so we appreciate you so much. Hope you enjoyed this episode. We'll see you guys again next time.