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## *Marriage: God's Great Idea* BY PASTOR JOEL SUTTON

Marriage was God's great idea. Therefore, marriage is to be celebrated. When God fashioned Eve and brought her to Adam, they celebrated (Gen. 2:22-25). When Ruth and Boaz were united, there was jubilation (Ruth 4:14). In Song of Songs, we find a love poem between a bride, the Beloved and a bridegroom, the Lover, as they rejoice in their love and relationship.

Proverbs 5:18 says: "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth." "Rejoice" means to reel as though intoxicated. No doubt about it! God's talking about celebration!

Rejoicing in your "coupleness"—celebrating your oneness—(beyond the wedding day) is an action that demands choices. If the Holy Spirit lives inside you, you have the power to turn your marriage into jubilation.

How do you do that? Let me suggest three actions you can start with in order celebrate in your marriage.

### **Keep Accounts Short**

The psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart... see if there is any offensive way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24). That is a good practice for all of us to do - whether married or not. But in marriage it is especially important to keep your consciences clear before each other. If you have hurt the other person, then humbly seek your mates forgiveness. In other word, keep short accounts with each other.

Since God is the One we are to imitate in the way we forgive, we need to understand how He forgives us. God

does not withhold forgiveness. On the contrary, He forgives completely, with no remembrance of our sin. He says He hurls all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). He never brings them back up to hold over our heads.

Seek forgiveness from each other quickly and regularly. Keep accounts short with one another and with God.

### **Give Honor To Your Mate**

Husbands, be sensitive to your wife's needs. Ask what she needs; then listen carefully. Pay attention to her when she talks with you. Accept her feelings. You may not understand them, but you must respect them as real and viable.

Wives, magnify your husband's strengths, not his weaknesses. Do not review past failures, and love your husband for who and what he is right now. Celebrate your relationship by giving honor to one another and by giving honor to your marriage. God wants you to see your husband through the eyes of Jesus, with all the potential He sees.

### **Live in God's Presence**

The key to fellowship with your mate is for both of you to live in God's presence. When you and your wife are both committed to Christ and what He's doing in the world, you'll

be naturally drawn together. Spiritual unity enhances romance.

God wants you to have oneness. Romance was God's idea. The Bible says two shall become one - intellectually, emotionally, physically, recreationally, and spiritually. When you are only having oneness in three of those areas, your marriage isn't fully what God wants it to be. But when you and your spouse connect in all five areas, that's when you find real, honest oneness.

Do you and your spouse pray together? Do you do ministry together? Do you share what God is doing in your life with your spouse, and vis-versa? Make those things a part of your time together, and you will celebrate together!

This month of May we are preaching a four week series on love, relational intimacy and marriage from the Old Testament wisdom book, Song of Songs. In a world like ours, where the disintegration and devaluing of marriage has left many wondering whether lifelong vows are worth the commitment and what true love is supposed to look like, it is good for us to look for God's wisdom and get God's perspective on this important topic. After all, marriage was God's great idea. 🙏

## New sermon series

### *Marriage: God's Great Idea*

May 5 • True Love

May 12 • A Holy Longing

May 26 • A Wedding Night

June 2 • God's Great Idea



VELOCITY  
STUDENT MINISTRIES

GRAD  
NIGHT  
2024

May 15 @ 6:30 P.M.



VACATION  
BIBLE CAMP

JUNE 17-21, 2024



Registration is open for kids and volunteers!  
Use the QR code or go to [firstfreechurch.org/vbc](http://firstfreechurch.org/vbc).



Visit the Donation Station in the foyer to  
find out what items you can contribute.

## Our Mission

TO HELP  
INDIVIDUALS BECOME  
CHRIST-CENTERED &  
CHRIST-SENT TOGETHER

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## Retreat46

We had a great weekend at Retreat46 this year! The weather was so nice it felt a little bit like summer camp. First Free had 53 people attend Retreat46. Our group was 39 students and 14 leaders, including three high school youth leaders. Our time was spent eating lots of food and snacks, playing games, doing shooting sports, hanging with horses, going on hay rides, doing low & high ropes courses, worshiping by singing, and hearing from a great speaker in the chapel services. The campers were challenged to recognize that in Jesus Christ they are known, they belong, they are loved, and they have a purpose.



## District Blitz

Velocity Student Ministry had a great time in Duluth for District Blitz Youth Conference! 39 students and 10 leaders went up and participated in general sessions, large and small youth group breakout sessions, and topic based workshops. The theme for the weekend was *Romans: Road to Salvation*. Speakers focused on the blessed process of salvation on that road which includes a clear understanding of how desperate our need is for being saved from our sinful fallen state. They then honed in on the saving power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ to bring us back into fellowship with our Creator and Father. Additionally, there was free time for fellowship, connection, and checking out the fair city of Duluth.



## Sabbatical for Pastor Paul

Sometimes when I reflect on my twenty-year journey in vocational ministry, it brings to mind the ol' Johnny Cash tune "I've Been Everywhere." In total, I've been on staff in five different denominational contexts in two decades. From Pentecostal churches filled with dancing and shouting to Lutheran churches that wouldn't even clap when the children's Christmas program got done because they didn't want it to go to the kids' heads (a joke courtesy of Garrison Keillor)—that and just about everywhere in between, I've been everywhere, man.



The latest destination on this wild journey of unexpected grace brought me to First Free. At the time, I was helping churches that were experiencing a leadership transition, and First Free had a short-term interim need that I thought I could help with for a couple of months. After about a month of being here, my wife Keri and I said to each other, "We really like this church. Wonder if they'd let us stick around longer?" That was six years ago.

This summer, the Church Council and our community have blessed me with the opportunity to take my first sabbatical. This blessing affords me dedicated time to reflect with gratefulness on the years of ministry God has given me thus far, to rest and recharge with my family while our children still live under our roof, and to come back with a fresh vision for fruitful ministry in the exciting new season our church is heading into. In my absence in June and July, our worship arts ministry has a team of leaders ready to step up and take on additional responsibilities.

I thank you all for your financial support of the church, which allows us to ensure that our pastors remain healthy and equipped for the purposes God has called them to. I also thank you for your prayers during my sabbatical. I will miss worshipping with each of you in the summer but look forward to what's ahead together. 🙏

## Pastor Jason Update

Pastor Jason has submitted his resignation as our Student Pastor effective July 31, 2024. Last fall, he felt called to begin pursuing a Masters of Counseling degree at Bethel University. Here is a portion of his resignation letter to the church:

*"I am grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from the church staff, volunteers, and congregation during my time here. . . Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to serve alongside such wonderful people in fulfilling the mission of helping individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent... I will continue to keep First Free Church in my prayers as you move forward into this new chapter, and I trust that God will continue to build His Kingdom here."*

This summer, before Jason leaves, we will have an opportunity to say "Thank you" to both Jason and Emm for their impact on our lives and the lives of our students. Please be in prayer for both of them during this transition. 🙏

## Church Family News

🎉 Congratulations to Sam and Kirsten Fulk on the birth of their son **Benjamin Clyde Fulk** on April 5.

**ANNUAL CELEBRATION**  
(+ Business Meeting)  
**SUNDAY, MAY 19 @ 10:30 A.M.**  
Ministry & Budget Forum May 12 during Fellowship Time

## Summer Schedule

### SUNDAY WORSHIP

Sunday worship moves to 10 a.m. from May 26 through September 1. Community groups, Creekside Kids, and Velocity Students will not meet. There will be Children's Church during the service through the end of June. Fellowship (donut) time will happen after the service at 11 a.m.

### PICNICS

All picnics follow morning worship.

- » **May 19** • Picnic & kite flying at Todd park.
- » **June 30** • Picnic at Triangle Park.
- » **July 28** • Picnic and baptisms at Lane Nokomis.
- » **August 25** • Picnic at Triangle Park.

Summer Book Club

We will be reading *God and Money: How We Discovered True Riches at Harvard Business School*  
Beginning June 9 • 11:30 a.m. @ First Free  
For more information visit [firstfreechurch.org/events](http://firstfreechurch.org/events)

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