

# Husbands and Wives

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're doing a very short series on relationships, just three Sundays, and relationships are always important! It's the stuff of life, isn't it? But relationships are very complicated these days. There are so many versions of ways in which people relate to one another.

They're confused and mixed up and messed up, perhaps, by social media. So people are adrift in so many ways on these matters, and Christian people need to get their moorings good and straight as to what relationships in God's eyes should look like.

And we started two weeks ago with the thought that God is relational. It's an amazing thought.

There are many religions in the world that have multitudes of gods. We're not talking about that.

We're talking about a God who is one. There is one God who made this world. There's one God who sustains it. But this is God who has revealed himself as one God in three persons.

It's an extraordinary thing. It's a mystery. It's a mystery that we can't get our heads around. How do they mean one God in three persons? And yet that's a consistent testimony of the Bible. And it flows in so many natural ways from the reading of the Bible.

[ 1 : 21 ] And the Church of Jesus Christ, in the very earliest days, had to recognise this, had to realise this. And so in the creeds and statements of faith, this is clearly spelled out.

God has revealed himself as a Father, as a Son, and Spirit. And this is how he operates in the world that he has made.

And it is our privilege, if we're Christian people, to know God as Father, Son, and Spirit. So God is relational. And that's important. So there are monotheistic religions, in Islam in particular, which have God as one, but really stumble and are upset by this idea of this revelation, which they will not receive, that God exists in three persons.

So God is one. But then that makes a God who is rather distant. Whereas the God of the Bible is a God who is so close and relates to himself in these three persons.

God is relational in creation. We have this very seminal and very important verse in Genesis 1, verses 26 and 27. There it is on the screen.

[ 2 : 38 ] Then God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

It wasn't enough for God to be able to relate to the sun and the moon and the stars, as brilliant and amazing as they are. Nor can he relate to the animals that are made, as wonderful and diverse and as funny and as curious as they are.

There's something more is required. And so there's a deliberate diktat which comes out of this. In the rest of Genesis 1, it just says he does these things.

But there's almost a deliberate point where God says, let us, in the councils of the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, let us make man in our image, in our likeness.

And let them do the things which are God-like, which is to rule and to be fruitful. And that's exactly what he does. In the image of God, he created them.

[ 3 : 40 ] Male and female, he created them. We'll come back to this verse later on. And then God is relational in salvation. And it may seem like an obvious thing, but it's not obvious at all.

Why should God love the world? Why should he care for this world in such a way when it has rebelled against him? Why should he not, as a potter, sort of discard that piece of clay and start all over again?

But he doesn't start all over again. He starts with the world that is messed up and in need. And he loves this world so much that he gives his one and only Son for this rebellious world.

That whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. And that is what we stand on today, isn't it? We're Christian people. We're reliant on the fact that God is relational to us.

And that despite, one might say, his disappointment and distress and upset at the fall, which is described in the book of Genesis, that God has had an internal purpose to love a people.

[ 4 : 46 ] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. The Trinity works splendidly in bringing about this relational salvation.

And the Church of Jesus Christ is relational. And Ben was helpful for us last week in describing the intensity of relationship, which should be the pattern which is reflected in the visible Church of Jesus Christ.

There is an invisible Church. There is an invisible Church, which is meeting now around the throne of grace in heaven. And there is an invisible Church, which is all the other congregations that we're not with today.

But this is the visible Church. And it is the visible Church, which is to make manifest the love of God in his people. So please turn to these two passages, because they are just a needful reminder to us this morning.

Ephesians 4, verses 1 to 6. As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

[ 5 : 56 ] Let me just pause at this point and say to you, this is a letter which is written to a gathered congregation of God's people. I suggest, or we don't have firm evidence on these matters, but the way in which individuals of churches are named in these letters suggest that these churches are not mega churches.

They're not big groups of people. They might have been exactly the same size as we are today, meeting here today. And here is the Apostle Paul, and he's just talking to the Church, and he's giving a message to the whole Church.

Every one of them. Not giving a message to the elders or deacons only, saying, every one of you, I want you to hear this. This is God's Word for you. These are the things that should characterize your life together as a Church.

Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient. Bear with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

[ 7 : 08 ] Well, the words slip on, don't they? We're very familiar with these words. He repeats it again to another church in Colossae.

So let's turn to that. Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 to 17. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you are called to peace. And be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. It's a lovely picture, isn't it? And Paul is saying, you people, that's for you.

[ 8 : 29 ] I'm giving you this message. This is how we are to be together. You could just linger on something like verse 12, and you say, dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

When you encounter a church with Jesus Christ that has those qualities, it's something very special. Because we can't produce that kind of behavior.

We need the help of God. And this is what God is able, and does do, and so willing to do, as we call upon him. But we do it together, don't we?

Sometimes, it does happen, that there are people who are resistant, and reluctant, they're maybe living in some sinful situation, but we still bear with them.

We still carry on with them. We forgive them where we can. We look out for them. We don't shun them. We're one body together. And, you might say, well, it's obvious, but is this put into practice? [ 9 : 37 ] So, it's something that is 24-7, isn't it, for all of us, to be living in that way. And, dear brothers and sisters, I find encouragement in my heart, because I see much of this, within this particular fellowship.

And that's encouraging, because it tells us something about the Lord being with us, and the Lord looking after us. But we're urged not to be complacent, maintain the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace.

It's a responsibility for all of us, together. I hope you don't find that, a sort of an irksome responsibility, but rather a joyful one, just to think, what a thrilling thing it is for us, to have the privilege, of being able to, be a body of Jesus Christ, where he is the head, and we are his body, and we are presenting him, as ambassadors to the world around us.

Whether we're together, or whether we're apart, we're still that one body, aren't we? We're going to talk about husbands and wives, this morning, and we've come to this last, because in a way, everything we've done before, is the background, the backdrop.

And, I think it would be almost unhelpful, or even risky, for us to start with this, and to have just omitted the rest. So, who is this for?

[ 11 : 05 ] Well, I've just told you that, when Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, he had it clearly in mind, that it should be read out loud, probably on a Lord's Day gathering like this, and that everyone should hear.

Remember, many of them were not literate, they wouldn't be able to read. They needed to hear it vocalized. And, the passage that we read, in Ephesians 5, about husbands and wives, was read to the whole congregation.

They probably would have actually had children present with them. I don't think they probably had Sunday Club in those days. The children, in Jewish fashion, they would have been present also in that gathering. Well, of course they were, because, it comes to mind, Ephesians 6 tells us children, don't obey your parents in the Lord.

So, the whole congregation is there, and they don't just cut out bits from the Bible, that letter, and say, okay, I've detected a few husbands and wives here.

This is going to be really helpful for you. Rest, go to sleep. It doesn't work in that way, because this is something that the whole church needs to know about.

[ 12 : 15 ] So, I could just leave it there, and just say, actually, that's important. I know people get a little bit irked at this point, because they say, oh, husbands and wives get sort of more press, families get more press, than those who are single, or those who are bereaved, and so forth.

And I'm sorry, if we ever get that balance wrong, but we are one family, and I would hate to think that we sort of separate ourselves into sort of distinctive groups, in any way.

so, husbands and wives, I deal with a sort of light touch. And I just say, that's just one of the groups of people who are together in the church. But, there are specific things to be said about husbands and wives.

And there are specific things to be said, because the issue of this topic, marriage, is under enormous threat and pressure today. So, it would be fair to say that, in this country, that there's, a sort of lack of foundational understanding, amongst so many, about, what is marriage?

Why is it there? And, importantly, we're not going to look at it from a traditional point of view. We're not going to look at it as how the Victorians did it. We're not going to look at it from the way society tackles it today.

[ 13 : 37 ] We're going to look at it from the point of view of what the Bible says. I'm really glad, and I'm happy, and safe, going down that route. Because everything else, we'd just be in a fog and confusion.

And if I was to just sort of bring you some sort of relativistic ideas about husbands and wives, and say, let's have 20 minutes of questions afterwards, we would just be in total confusion, wouldn't we? But, praise God, he's given us some direction in his word. We're not left ignorant. He's given us enough knowledge through the word of God to be able to understand this topic.

So, please turn back to what was read to us earlier, the creation plan, Genesis 2, 15 to 25. It's interesting the way that Genesis runs.

So, Genesis 1 deals in a broad brush sense with the first six days of creation. All the creation happens on those, it's spelled out in Genesis 1.

[14:52] And then Genesis 2 goes into more detail, in particular, about the first man and the first woman. And I find that significant and very important.

Because, as we said earlier, as wonderful as the world is, God has made, he doesn't relate to the stars and the sun and the animal, as he relates to these two frail, weak people of the earth, as it were.

He's made them in his image. And so, there's a lot of care taken through the description given in Genesis, chapter 2, of God's purposes, with the man and the woman.

And what's very interesting, I'll just refer you now to that footnote there, Genesis 1, 31 and 2, 18. So, you know that in Genesis 1, everything that God has made, he says it's very good.

He keeps on repeating that phrase. It's a very comforting thing, isn't it? It's very good. He's very pleased with it. Can't be improved upon. He's very happy with it.

[16:04] But in Genesis 2, 18, there's something that isn't quite perfect and right. It's not good for the man to be alone. It's not good. using the same word there. It's almost as if there's a process that's taking place.

And God is taking us through his own thinking. He gives the opportunity to the man to firstly discover that he needs a helper.

God knows he needs a helper. He doesn't make Adam and Eve at the same time. He just makes Adam. And then he points out to Adam, it's not good for the man to be alone.

So what will we do? So the animals are paraded, as it were, before the man. And the man is given the opportunity to name them. And he gives them names. But rather tellingly.

But for Adam, verse 20, no suitable helper was found. God had made the animal kingdom. I suppose that was the nearest, that could be the equivalent or a helper for Adam.

[17:13] Well, a horse is helpful. Donkey's helpful. Cows are helpful. You know, they're helpful in different ways. But they're definitely not going to be a soulmate.

For Adam. And so in this chapter, rather, rather sweetly and kindly, we see the way in which God leads the man through the process.

And shows him something. That's no good. That's no good. That's no good. That's no good. This is what I'm going to do. Causes a deep sleep to come upon the man.

Takes a rib from his side. It sounds extraordinary, doesn't it? And a woman is made. And then in verse 23, the man said, this is now bowed in my bones and flesh in my flesh.

She shall be called woman. She was taken out of man. In the original Hebrew, this is not said in a very sort of quiet and measured way.

[18:16] it said with exuberation. This is now bone of my bones. Flesh of my flesh. She should be called woman. She was taken out of man.

Adam knows at that point that there is something extraordinary that has taken place. And God has provided that helper for him. And so we see in this passage something of the goodness of God.

Something of the realization that God had that it wasn't good for the man to be alone. That it was necessary and right and proper that there should be a helper for him.

Someone who could stand alongside him. Someone who could answer to him. Someone who was going to be absolutely appropriate through every stage of his life.

And the rest of the Bible has a great deal to say about when that works out well and when that works out badly. It works out well when people follow the maker's instructions and it works out badly when they just follow the inclinations of their own heart and the significant inclinations of their heart.

[19:30] Well, everything that we see in Genesis is just the building block, the initial building block for what is revealed in far greater measure in the New Testament where we have the picture of Ephesians chapter 5 so please turn to that.

So the point is here that the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is able to build upon what has already been expressed in Genesis because there has been a revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God which was only extremely shadowy throughout the book of Genesis but has now been revealed in full measure by the incarnation, the righteous life, the sacrificial death and the victorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ now seated at God's right hand and he dies upon the cross for a distinct purpose to win a people for himself and he dares to name them as a bride and this is for us the heaven drawn picture the heaven drawn template is Jesus Christ and his

church the bride anything that we have to say about husbands and wives needs to be based upon that picture that is the main picture which God has given to us it's the heaven drawn template Ephesians 5 32 this is a profound mystery but I'm talking about Christ and the church so Paul is saying I don't want you to be confused about this I'm not saying that the way you are if your husbands and wives together you know you could make a parable out of this and talk about the relationship of Jesus and the church no no the perfect husband wife relationship is Jesus Christ and his bride the church that is the perfect relationship you always come back to this if you start anywhere else you're bound to be in a position of some weakness and incapacity but you won't be in a bad place at all quite the opposite if you'll just lift your eyes heavenward and say this is the picture that we need to follow every single one of us needs to follow when we think about this topic Ephesians 5 32 and seven times this is repeated in this particular passage seven times

I'll just pick up the first two verses 23 for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church verse 24 now as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything and so he goes on and he's saying there's a direct parallel that I want you to take from that heavenly picture and here are the big themes in that particular passage there is love but it's love with a purpose so we read verse 25 to 30 husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless in this same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies he who loves his wife loves himself after all no one ever hated his own body but he feeds and cares for it just as Christ does the church for we are members of his body so how much does Christ love the church we know how much he's loved the church he died for the church and that sacrificial love is what every husband is called the standard is that high to love our wives so much and to love our wives with a purpose

Jesus did not die randomly but he died with a purpose he died not only that people should be saved but they should be sanctified and brought through life so that their sins were washed away they would be transformed and become beautiful and fit for his presence join the glories of heaven husbands we're to be co-workers with Jesus Christ in that wonderful task but we're to have that purposeful relationship with our wives that whether we've been married for a year or 20 years we still have an intense sacrificial love that wants the very best for our wife and that we're seeking to find out what that very best is and we will not give up on that but we will love them in that measure in a 24-7 way it's love with a purpose and people have sometimes said is it just husbands who are meant to love what about the wife where does love from the wife come in it's not actually mentioned here at all but 1

[ 25 : 07 ] John 4 19 gives us a very helpful picture of how this operates because it describes the Christian as someone who lives a life of love because we have first been loved when we receive and recognize the love of God in Christ that encourages us to love back we love Jesus because he first loved us 1 John 4 19 we love because he first loved us we wouldn't be able to love him if he hadn't first loved us but the measure of his love for us softens our hearts brings us to a place where we want to express our love to him how can I love you today Lord Jesus and wives if your husband loves you in the way that Jesus loves the church I hope you'll be wanting to say how can I love you today how my husband can I love you today how can I explain and demonstrate you're precious and you're beautiful and I've got only eyes for you how can I do that when I'm 70 as well as when I'm 25 that's what I'm called to that's not being soppy and sentimental that's actually very hard-nosed but it's bible-based and what a beautiful thing it is to see when that does get reflected in people's lives and you do see couples who are so in love with each other because they practice this behaviour in their lives if you're sitting there and you're feeling disappointed and sad because it's not your experience

I'm sorry for you because I'm only giving you the heaven-drawn picture I'm just saying this is what we should aspire to and Christian people this is all our calling and I would also say don't give up don't be discouraged to the point of giving up but take this word and allow it to speak to you and husbands you make it your resolve today to love your wife as Christ loved the church and wives as you see that love being demonstrated I'm sure you're going to find all kinds of ways in which you're going to please your husband there is the issue of headship which Ephesians 5 tackles here just as Christ is the head of the church so the husband is the head of the wife and we don't shy away from this we say this is absolutely remarkably correct and right it's just as it should be because that's the

way

God has set it this has nothing to do with sort of male hierarchy or sort of ancient tribal customs and so forth nothing to do with that at all this is Bible there's a headship process that takes place and for husband and wife relationships where that headship issue has not been sorted there is usually a problem so we're not going to march to the beat of the drum of the world we're going to listen very carefully we're going to have to ask how this works out in our lives if we can take this point that here it is in the Bible that's what it says there is headship right how does it work out well it works out in the context of the love that the husband shows to the wife so that the wife is then able to be trusting and respecting of the husband and there are many situations in life well some situations in life where the husband definitely needs to take a lead he's like the priest in the home he should set the standard for the spiritual life of the couple that's why it's so hard when wives are actually forging ahead spiritually but the husband is lagging behind it's very hard for that headship idea to be expressed in those situations maybe wives have to just hold back a bit to encourage the husband to grow in the things of the

Lord Jesus so he can take his proper role and authority as a head in that situation men husbands we tend to be a bit lazy in these matters you have a solemn responsibility you need to think about that how does that work out in practice for you and there needs to be agreement between yourself and your wife that that is the way it's going to be and it will express itself in different ways according to this different personalities and characters and backgrounds and so forth but the bottom line is there is a hierarchy there is a headship and ultimate authority within that family needs to be with the husband so church people we need to pray that husbands will be able to adopt the role that God has given them wives you need to be given grace that you may be able to receive this because you're living in a world that doesn't receive this and people may mock this and find this ridiculous but I want to say the most beautiful relationships in the world are those relationships that have grasped this idea and are living with the reality of it which leads us on to the issue of submission which again

Ephesians tackles straight on here verses 22 to 24 wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church his body which he is the saviour now as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything now I think the issue of submission is something which again crops up from time to time but it's not the sort of thing that has to happen sort of every night at six o'clock there's an issue that sort of crops up if this issue of submission is cropping up all the time then something is going badly wrong in the relationship I'm talking of something much more natural than appropriate much more easy and straightforward a willingness on the part of the wife to accept the headship of the husband a prayerfulness on the part of the wife to enable her to have that spirit within her and there is a beautiful oneness that's referred to here in verse 31 for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh this idea of oneness and leaving others is so fundamental that the bible is extremely negative about the concept of divorce and particularly negative about things that meddle in the relationship like adultery not only is that just poisonous and dangerous it is so anti-God's purpose it's such a fearful thing if you are meddling in a relationship which God has established with that perfect unity one flesh you're in a very dangerous place you might find it strange for me to be even talking about the issue of adultery to a church there could be some people here who might be tempted into that area but I'm afraid the story is that there are plenty of situations in churches where adulterous relationships have happened where people have meddled in other people's lives that oneness so you need to hear that warning and if you're in that position stop it stop it now don't entertain the thought don't let it come into your mind don't lust after another man's wife don't be spending inappropriate time and behaviour with somebody else's husband don't do it if you have been doing it stop it now whatever it costs please stop it you'll cause such damage you'll come on yourself under such judgment and condemnation you're going to wreck so many lives don't do it and if you're a husband and wife in a situation and your eyes are going in another direction if you're in a workplace situation there's just someone who's paying too much attention to you you need to create a distance you need to stop it stop it now don't wait don't wait for a more convenient moment this is one of those situations where as Paul says to

[ 34 : 53 ] Timothy flee temptation flee it flee it don't try to reason it through just flee it you're in a covenant relationship with your wife or your husband you're committed to them until death do you part there's no basis for you to be leaving them at all there's every basis for you to be doing exactly

the things that Ephesians 5 talks about and you are made one and that's how God sees you these are the big themes these relationships are appropriate what I mean by appropriate is that they fit like a hand in a glove with God's purposes as revealed in his word as displayed beautifully and perfectly in Jesus Christ and his church if you just keep coming back to that picture you're going to be very helped if you're going through a sticky patch in your relationship in a husband and wife relationship come back to that picture don't avoid it it's easy to avoid it it's easy to sort of run off to a counsellor and so forth but you're a Christian person so you're going to be fed by the word of God and helped by this word and you can you don't have to be standing back from this and closing your eyes and just blinking at it but just open eye embracing it and saying this should be our prayer

Lord Jesus Christ I want all of this to be in my marriage relationship whatever it is now I want all of this to be true about my marriage relationship and the church could pray those prayers boldly and I hope every married couple would be very happy to receive that sort of praying on their behalf that we should be Ephesians 5 21 to 32 people do you agree it's assumed it's assumed Paul does not give categories for different people suggesting that there should be some different gradations according to who we are he's just addressing every husband and wife I find that delightful really we all come with into our life situations into a marriage situation with baggage issues problems secrets things to be unraveled what do we do with it we just come back to Ephesians 5 and as we bring this sort of passage before the

Lord and say please work these things out he will help us to work these things out in our lives every single one of us which is the reason why we can have such big ambition such wonderful ambition for one another for ourselves and for one another what an outrageous plan the Lord Jesus had from all eternity to die on a cross and to have a people for himself how outrageous that is who could have thought it how could it be possible how outrageous it is there could be such an idea that there could be a man and a woman that come together and something so beautiful is created that it is a bit like Christ and the church and when people see that marriage they say wow I know you're Christian people but I see the way you live tell me more about Christ tell me more about the church how this functions it's supernatural isn't it this isn't done in the energy of flesh it's completely supernatural and when people see it operating it's so beautiful that one would hope that they would actually ask the further questions they would be stunned by it the world has got nothing to compare with what God offers to us in this way I make two or three applications marriage is in the Lord a Christian can only marry another Christian a Christian can only marry another Christian this passage itself gives us hints wives submit to your husbands as to the

Lord a clear assumption there the wife is a Christian you're living a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ you're to live with your husband in the same kind of way in verse 30 we are members of his body we are members of his body 1 Peter 3 7 is a rather lovely picture husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers the only way you can understand that verse is to see that there is a husband and wife who are both!

[ 40 : 36 ] Christians they are heirs together of the gracious gift of life the 2 Corinthians 6 passage which is often referred to as a sort of stopping point on this I think is actually referring to bigger topics or wider topics in a way do not be yoked together with unbelievers for what do righteousness and wicked have in common or what fellowship can light have with darkness so the context suggests that Paul is talking about a bigger picture about not getting into unhealthy relationships with people it could be in a work situation a business situation a leisure situation but I think the general principle holds good but I'm not going to hang my hat on that what I'm going to hang my hat on this is simply the point everything

I've been saying up till now can you possibly conceive that this could be possibly worked out Ephesians 5 21-32 in any other way if one of the parties is not a Christian people how is it how is it possible how is it possible for a marriage to reflect Jesus Christ and his church if one of those people is not a Christian person why do I need to say this today I need to say it because there are too many Christian people who are shutting their eyes to the clear teaching of the Bible.

And they're saying, I'm a special case. God knows. God will sort it out. You have no basis, no authority on the basis of the Bible to be suggesting that you could possibly go into a marriage relationship with a non-Christian person and think that God has his blessing upon that.

And it's just not the case. And you may find that very hard to take because there are people who have gone down this route, but we can say through sort of bitter experience, bitter experience, that

by doing so, they've put themselves into an almost impossible position to be reflecting Ephesians 5, 21 to 32.

It's disobedience. Do not think any one of you, you should be able to come to the elders of this church and receive any blessing or encouragement if you are entertaining an exclusive relationship with a non-Christian person.

[ 43 : 38 ] We will not entertain it. We will not encourage it. Whatever your situation, we will not encourage it.

Rather, we will say, God knows your situation. If you're feeling as a woman, your time clock is just ticking, you need to be in a married relationship soon, and it's making you a bit desperate, making you a bit uneasy, making you needing to almost take risks and just go to the edge of things to say, well, this guy, he'll come to church.

You know, we can have conversations about Christian things. I think he's quite near. But that's not good enough. You need to be confident of these things.

You need to be utterly sure. And one of the things that we say to folk who are starting to go out with each other is, are you reading the Bible together? Are you praying together?

If you're not doing those two things, that's an automatic telltale sign that something has not got the right priority in your life. If you can't do that happily, joyfully, with enthusiasm, in a way that encourages one another, you've probably got the answer already.

[ 45 : 08 ] So I particularly address women because proportionately there are more women in churches, in evangelical churches, than men. And there are more societal and hormonal and other issues that can take place.

You know, without breaching confidences, I had someone come to me and say, I need a baby. I must have a baby. How am I going to have a baby?

How am I going to have a baby? I just need to marry someone. I could go down IVF or some complicated route like that.

But, please see that that's putting a cart for all the horses. It's completely the wrong way around. God knows what you need. He'll look after you for the whole of your life.

He'll provide for you just what you need. So please do not reject the word of God on this matter. Please don't try to argue with the word.

[ 46 : 25 ] Put yourself into some complicated philosophical corner that is just your place. You're saying, yes, well, I see all that, but it's going to be different in my case. How many people have said that?

How many people have said it's going to be okay for me? It'll all work out. Don't go down that route. So younger women, please hold fast to this.

Please be very clear in your mind. Please make it a resolution. Write it down. Sign it. Date it. I will not get into an exclusive relationship with a non-Christian.

If I marry, if that's the Lord's will for me, I will be married to a Christian man. You covenant with the Lord on that. Don't leave that issue open.

Just say, that's what I'm going to do. I just want to emphasize again, this is a top-down template.

And the reason why we can how this works is to understand that this is to do with God's picture and how he sets it before us.

[ 47 : 39 ] And embrace the highest ambition. Have the highest ambition. It's not everybody's calling to be married. Some people are not called to be married.

But if you are brought into that position, then just have the highest ambition for it. And the highest ambition is what's expressed here. Yeah?

To receive the word of God and to act on it. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, please receive what's been said today.

I do pray that you would help each one of us to be obedient to what your word says. Let's pray.