

Husbands and Wives

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[0:00] Ephesians chapter 5 and round there. We were asking the question, what is God aiming for? What does the holiness that he wants us to have look like?

And there are all sorts of versions of this. People might perhaps say that the spirit is most at work and the heart of the work of the spirit is to knock people over, which is a rather bizarre thing. People usually function best standing up. And whether the advanced work of the spirit is to produce miracles, that is to say, working not in the pattern that God normally chooses to work, using means, using time, using thought and so on, those processes.

And I want to draw our attention to Ephesians, the letter to the Ephesians, where Paul says, well, actually, what God's intention is to build loving and holy Christian communities, loving marriages, orderly homes, respectful employment and daily Christian living.

And you might say, well, God's got that wrong. He should be looking, you should be doing miracles and so on. Well, actually, I don't think Paul has got it wrong. He says, this is what God's purpose is.

[1:26] This is really his business. That's what he's at. That's what he wants for you. And so the aim of these sermons, as I've said on a number of occasions, is to end up with beautiful, useful, appreciative children of God as communities of churches, as witnesses, providing strong personal evidence to the world around us and indeed to the supernatural beings around us, that Christ is saving his people, that we should be beautiful and appreciative as husbands and wives, as families, parents and children, as workers and employers, and as spiritual soldiers in the ongoing battle.

And in the world to come, that we should be the beautiful bride that Jesus Christ has planned. So that's what we're, that's the context of what we're looking at.

And today we're going to look at God and sex. Now, it used to be the case in UK culture that people were too embarrassed about sex even to spell it.

So I saw, I actually saw a Muslim piece of literature in which it was, as you've got there, S, asterix, X, so it wasn't even spelt.

But that's far from the case nowadays. Our culture has become highly sexualized. If you compare it, say, with a rural Indian culture or a rural Sri Lankan culture and you come back to the UK, you think, wow.

[3:08] Because sex is all around us with advertising, with entertainment, with boundaries that other cultures might treat with great respect and caution, being crossed all the time, all sorts of crossing of boundaries.

With the talk being of liberation and freedom. And not far away is the whole thought of idolatry.

An idol is a God that's been made up. Just excuse me one moment. An idol claims to be a God, therefore claims to give you the whole meaning of life.

Claims to give the whole key to fulfillment and wholeness and power and satisfaction. And this good gift of sex expands into the area of being an idol.

To be worshipped. Dedicate your whole life to it, etc, etc. That's idolatry and the Bible says it's a very foolish thing to make idols.

[4:28] The God who truly is claims the right to give to humanity the wonderful gift of human sexuality.

So it's not something that's dirty or something that we treat with sort of neglect, ignore, as if it's an untouchable subject.

But God claims this and he says he has an order as to how this works. And he gives us the order. In order that sex should serve him, should serve his purposes and bring him glory.

And that's exactly what's being spoken about in this passage here. And that's exactly what's being spoken about in this passage. Specifically and wonderfully in marriage, which is what Ephesians 5, 22 to 33 is about.

So we ask God to help us with this because it's a very sensitive subject, a very important subject, and one that touches on many of our lives very deeply.

[5:41] So what is the way of Jesus Christ concerning sex and marriage? So let me say to you that what is being proposed here and explained here is a Christian pattern for marriage.

And you might be saying, well, I'm not a Christian. It's got nothing to do with me. And in a sense, there's truth in that. Because the people who are definitely signed up for this are the people to whom the letter to the Ephesians is written.

They're Christians. And if you're a Christian or want to be a Christian or want to go forward as a Christian, you are obliged to take on board what Paul says here.

But let me not concede that point too far because marriage is rooted not in being a Christian but in being human.

And in the passage that we've read, verse 31, it says, For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become flesh.

[6:54] And that isn't just a New Testament quote. Does anybody know where that quote comes from? Genesis. It's said right at the beginning of humanity.

It says it there. It must mean something. And it says that right at the beginning of being human, God gave this gift to humankind. So what he says about this does in that sense apply to everybody.

If you want to follow the maker's instructions, these are the instructions. So we could say that Christianity has a special insight into this matter.

And it's an enriching insight for everybody. For everybody who is thinking of being married, everybody who is married across the world, whether they're Hindus or Muslims or Buddhists or whatever that might be.

Marriage is marriage. It's what God has given. And the better we can understand his plan for it, the richer life will be. So it is the Christian pattern for marriage.

[8:09] What is this pattern? Well, there's a lot could be said, but we don't want to try and make it too big. We want to try and get to the heart of it. Christian marriage is a sexual relationship between two unlike entities.

So the model is Christ and his church. It's two very different things. And marriage, as God intends, is between the two unlike things of male and female.

If you aren't married, it will have dawned on you by now, perhaps, that your husband or wife thinks very differently to you. And what you thought was entirely logical to them seems completely stupid.

And you may even have the conversation on this subject. But there's two very different things that are built together into one. So it's between one man and one woman.

They're from different families. There is a definite, permanent commitment. So it's not sort of a haphazard thing. There is something committed.

[9:16] It is a permanent commitment. Till death us do part. And there's something definite about it. So you both know that you've made that commitment. It is a public, I put here, public societal unit.

In other words, it becomes a building block for society. People who are married live together. Their finances are intertwined.

Their lives are intertwined at all sorts of societal levels. They, everybody knows that they're together. And they're often treated as a unit.

So they might be invited out together. And so on and so on. So there's something public about this.

This isn't a secret. And if you think about it in the Bible, it goes right back to the beginning of the Bible.

There were no such thing as, there were no such thing as registry offices back in the beginning of the Bible. But people could still be married. So it's not originally a function of the state.

[10:23] And it's not originally a function of the church. Churches have relatively recent inventions, aren't they? The last 2,000 years. But before that, in the Old Testament and other cultures, people got married. You did not have to go to church to get married. You still don't have to go to church to get married. You are as married as married can be. You don't have to go to church to do that. And if God sees you as married, you don't have to go to church to do that. If you go back to the Old Testament, they didn't have the state. They didn't have a church. But they had something. And they would, a man would take a woman to be his wife. Perhaps he would take her from her father's tent to his tent. Everybody would know that this is what was happening. There would be a specific moment when this happens. And if you wanted a particular ceremony, the ceremony that most often happens is food.

[11:25] So they get together and everybody celebrates with food. And there is even somewhere, I couldn't locate it, an example of a, let's say it was a Jewish wedding in the past, where people questioned the legitimacy of the wedding because there had not been food.

It's an interesting thought, isn't it? So for some of us, people might be saying, well, I'm in a relationship. It's a sexual relationship.

Does that make me married? And to which I say, this is such a complex issue, I'm not going to try and answer that. But what I am going to say is, there are all sorts of sort of rather abnormal situations that exist nowadays.

And it's really a tangled situation to try and put right. But what I'm going to look at this morning is to say, okay, well, there are tangles. But let's look at what the untangled version looks like.

And then you might be able to work out whether, in a tangled situation, you can untangle it and get to the untangled version. So God defines the dynamics of marriage.

[12:45] And this is, so this is the untangled version. This is where married is. And how different people get to it from where they are now is probably a subject for a lot of long conversations.

But I'm going to stick to the simple bit. So before us, we have Paul talking to wives and husbands. And just, I'll show you what the structure of this is.

He talks to the wives, verse 22. There's a command to be in submission. There's a reason given. And then in verse 25, he addresses husbands.

And his command to the husbands is to love your wives. And he gives a reason based on what Jesus Christ did. And then he commands it again in verse 28.

In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. And he gives a reason for that. And then there's a sort of ending bit which says how serious it is and comments on what he calls, what he calls, verse 32, a profound mystery.

[13:52] So I'm going to try and follow that structure through as God helps us this morning as a little summary at the end. Which I actually forgot to do.

So I must try and remember that. So before we launch in, let me tell you that there are some pictures going on here. Some analogies, which I'll explain in a moment.

But let me first say, you might be thinking, he's going to be talking about something I disagree with because I think men and women are equal. And I'm going to say, I'm not disputing the equality of men and women.

But I am saying there's more to it than that. Paul assumes that men and women are equally in the image of God.

The whole Bible assumes that. So neither man nor woman is inferior in any way as regards the image of God. In fact, both of them are necessary to adequately image God.

[14:57] Men and women are equal in sin. They are equally sinful. If you're married, you're probably very aware of the sin of your partner.

Well, let me just inform you that you too are a sinner. So we're equally sinful. When men and women are saved, they equally need grace. That is to say, God's extreme kindness, which he gives to men and women equally.

They need equal forgiveness, which God graciously gives. He brings men and women into an equal blessedness. And they are equally precious to God.

So I hope in saying all those things, you won't think that I am promoting anything that is not to do with equality. There is equality in those senses before God.

There are analogies. And the analogies are varying likenesses of mutual caring closeness.

[16:01] And they look like this. Man and wife. So I've done there a very nice picture of man and wife. I like that one. I did that. It's a nice one. This was a little bit...

I did this a little bit more quickly. So man and wife. And there are relationships with the man to the wife and the wife to the husband. Yet the two of them are one.

And that feature crops up also with Christ and the church. So there's Christ. There's the church, which of course is many people. And there is a relationship between Christ and the church and the church and Christ.

And yet they are one. And he also brings in another illustration of yourself and your body. It's difficult to draw this one. But there's yourself.

And you look after your body. And you are very close to your body, aren't you? Aren't you? You're very close to your body. You care a lot about your body. You are one with your body.

[16:58] So it's difficult to draw that. But he does mention that. And there are actions and relations that work sort of in a circle, if you like.

Or in reciprocal ways. One to the other. The other to the first. So before we launch in, just a note to say. If you are a single person.

Please note that Jesus Christ was a single person too. On earth, Jesus was a single celibate man. He lived a full, rich, God-pleasing life.

If you are a single person, there's nothing to stop you equally living a full and God-pleasing life. Sex is not the only way to serve God.

In fact, the apostle Paul, as you will know, who was a single man, said, There are some very clear ways in which being single allows fruitfulness in a way that being married does not.

[18:03] So please don't think that the only way to serve God and the only way through life is to be married. It is not the case. God calls each individual as he sees fit.

Okay. Okay. So are we ready to go for the passage? Yep. Verse 22. He has said, Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, Submit, that's implied, to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the savior.

Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Okay. Does your Bible say pretty much that? Anybody sitting thinking, Oh, it doesn't say that in my Bible. Okay. So what does it say? It says, Wives, be in submission to your own husbands in everything.

[19:17] I think I've picked out the key parts there. So there's husband and wife, and this is the relation between the wife towards her husband. It's a relation of be in submission.

And he says, My reasoning for that is because of this analogy. It's like the church and Jesus Christ. And the church, verse 24, submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

So as Christ to the church, so wife to the husband. Now, let's think about something here. So here's a rather shocking truth about Greek language.

There is no Greek word for husband, and there is no Greek word for wife. There's a Greek word for bride, but there isn't. So does anybody here speak French?

What is the word for wife? How would you say my wife in French? Ma femme. And what is the word for woman in French? La femme.

[20:28] So when you refer to your wife, you say, so what, a woman is femme, la femme, and my wife is ma femme. My woman.

And you notice that the important thing there is not so much the woman, because she could be woman and unmarried, but the my. Did you see the bit on Downton Abbey, where, see, I'm going off

track now.

right at the end of Downton Abbey, what was the name of the Scottish housekeeper? Mrs. See, I'm completely on my own on this.

So there's this rather lovely bit at the end where the elderly Scottish housekeeper marries the elderly butler.

Anybody remember these names? Anyway. So he is, so they're newly married, you know, in their 60s.

[21:37] And some issue comes up in the Downton Abbey household, and Mr., if only we could remember his name, says, well, I don't think, I think we need to cope with it in such and such a way.

And his wife says, you're such a, fancy making that decision. That was a completely stupid thing to do.

And he says, oh, I'm sorry. She says, and she says, you're curmudgeonly and awkward, or something like that. You're a curmudgeonly and awkward man.

And he says, ooh, ooh, ooh. And he says, but you're my curmudgeonly and awkward man, which makes all the difference. The fact that he was my man.

You see, so that's, that's, in this, it doesn't say, all women submit to all men. It says, woman who is married, submit to your man, your own husband, your man.

[22:42] You see, that's going on underneath. You might not notice it. So, it's not talking about how you should operate a company if you've got men and women in it, or how you operate a school if you've got a lady head teacher, or how you operate a government if you've got a lady prime minister.

It is saying, if you're my curmudgeonly husband, this is how I relate to you. So, that's worth saying. Now, what is this submission thing? I can more easily say what it is not. It is not subjugation to a cruel tyrant.

I heard of a culture, I can't even remember where it was, where on, when a couple were married, the first duty of the husband, husband, when they were alone together, was to give his wife a good beating, to show her who was boss.

That is not what's being said here. I think that is just awful. That was the culture. And sadly, I was told that when people became Christians, they never questioned that bit of their culture.

[23:57] So, Christian husbands would beat their Christian wives. That's awful. That's not what it's being said here. It's a relationship like that of Jesus Christ and his church.

Does Jesus Christ beat his church up? Is Jesus Christ cruel, a cruel tyrant to his church? No. That's not what we're talking about. So, it's not subjugation to a cruel tyrant.

That's abuse. And if you're in an abusive relationship, that needs to be addressed as an abusive relationship. These verses here about submission are not to do with that.

Or at least not only indirectly. The submission is not forced. Now, here's a bit of grammar that I don't understand at all. I read it in the book.

It says that the verb is in the middle voice, which I don't know what that means. But I think what he's saying is, it is not a forced thing. It is not something that you have done to you, that you're beaten into submission.

[24:58] It's a voluntary thing. Be in a submissive way in this relationship. It is not implying inferiority in value.

Because if you were to look at it, and we don't have time to go into all this, Jesus Christ's characteristic relationship to his father is to be in submission to the father.

Remember how Jesus prayed, not my will, but thine. Do you remember that? In the garden. And this actually characterizes our great saviour's relationship to his father.

And it will characterize how Christ finishes salvation. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 28 says, when he's finished the work of salvation, he will put the whole world into the hands of his father and be in submission to the father.

So submissiveness is not the same as inferiority. Christ submits. Now, in verse 24, there's a word, Christ is the saviour of the body.

[26:11] And there's a little indication that, excuse me, the, Paul as he writes, is aware that this is not a perfect analogy.

Excuse me. Christ is the saviour of the body, but it is not simply true to say that the husband is the saviour of the wife.

There are analogies, but you can't just say it's like that for Christ and therefore it's like that for the church. And the reason I say that is that the word now in verse 24 is actually but on the other hand. Anyway, Christ is definitely the saviour. The husband is perhaps a bit like that, but you wouldn't want to go as far as to saying the husband is the saviour of the wife. But it does definitely give different roles to husband and wife.

Christ is the head of the church. And the husband is the head of the wife. And you can't get away from that. That's what it says.

[27:27] There is, if you look in four verse, didn't write it down, verse 22 is it? No. Christ is the head. It's actually four verse 15.

We will grow up into Christ. From him the whole body grows and builds itself up in love. Christ is the head. And in a marriage relationship, there is a headship that the husband has.

And it isn't just in one or two areas because in the end of verse 24 it says, wives should be in submission to their husbands. Did you notice this? End of verse 24 says, says nothing.

In everything. So I take that to mean that this pervades the whole way of relating. Every part of the husband and wife's way of relating includes this submission attitude on the part of the wife and the headship on the part of the husband.

So I've said sort of more what it doesn't mean. It's more difficult to say what it does mean. It is a way of partnership functioning in which one person says to the other, here we are.

[28:51] All my resources, all that I have and can do is for you. Any way I can help, any way I can support, any way I can watch you back, any way I can fall in with the way you lead for the general welfare of our family, that's where I am.

All that I am is for you. I think that sums up the spirit of this submission. So on the wedding day, the bride says to her husband, I am yours.

You are mine. I am yours. I am, all that I am is for you. And could you ever say a nicer thing to anybody? I don't think you ever could.

If we were to go back into Genesis, and we're not in Genesis just now, but you'll see that it says the man, it wasn't good for him to be alone. There are certain things that he can't see on his own, certain things he can't understand on his own, certain things he can't achieve on his own.

He needs the woman to help him. And God says, I will make a helper exactly matched to your needs. And this is the woman as she fits into this pattern.

[30:12] So I'm going to move on, but before I do that, I'll just say, Christian women, I hope you're up for this, because it is what the Bible says. I know Christian women, particularly perhaps younger women, growing up, will struggle with this.

But it is what the Bible says. And in case you were thinking, I'm up for that as long as my husband does his bit. It actually doesn't say that.

It starts off saying, wives, this is what you do. Now hopefully your husband will do his bit, but make sure you're doing your bit. Not talking about an abusive relationship, but we're saying how a relationship works.

Wives, be in submission to your husbands. Right, husbands, your bit now. You get a lot more words than the wives do, because you've got a more difficult job to do, and you're probably not as good at it. I'll just throw that in, wishing I hadn't.

It says, so this is for husbands, verse 25, love your wives just as Christ loved the church.

[31:20] Okay, this is the husbands bit. The wives are listening interestedly, because they're going to be on the receiving end of this, all being well. Love your wives just as Christ loved the church.

And when you pause to think about what that means, you realize what a huge agenda this is.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

And how did he love the church? It says, he gave himself up for her, verse 25, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as a radiant

church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

So I'm just going to go to the bit which says, he gave himself up for her. It's referring to the cross.

How much did Christ love his church?

How did Christ love his church? by sacrificing himself for her. That's how much he loved the church and that's what we husbands are called to do.

[32:35] Love your wife as much as that. Love your wife in that way to give yourself up for her.

So he sacrificed and in the short term he lost out. I know in the long term it's different but in the short term he said it's going to be very inconvenient, it's going to be very uncomfortable, it's going to be very painful, in fact it's going to be awful to die but I want to do this and I'm going to die sacrificially to his immediate loss at great cost and he did it for her.

That's what is commanded to the husband. I think you will agree it is a huge thing that we are faced with. It does not say wives submit to your husbands, husbands make sure you're submitted to.

What it does say is wives you're there for your husband, be that, do that. Husbands love your wives. love your wives so much, so sacrificially, the way Christ loved the church. so he's not, it's not saying make sure you're submitted to, it is saying lay down your life for the enrichment and benefit of your wife.

[34:15] What nicer thing could you do for your wife than to say to her, I am loving you and I am laying myself down as it were for your enrichment, for your good, for your beauty, for your development, for your good.

So on a very practical level, husbands, that means that the family finances are not first of all to my favourite whatever it might be, buy a new guitar, buy a new car, because I want a new car.

What is good for your wife? What is good for the two of you? Quality time. Now we're married, does the husband still go off down the pub with his mates to play snooker every night?

We can't do that. He has to lay down his life for his wife. That means a big change and in fact, in a way, a big loss. But time, you give time to your wife and your leisure and social life.

Well, I've always gone to football. I know my wife doesn't like football. I've always gone to football and I've always gone fishing or I've always spent the afternoon every Saturday in the shed with my motorbike or whatever it is.

[35:42] All of that has to be questioned. Maybe your wife will say that's fine, but it's all questioned. It's love your wife, lay down your life for her and you can tick that off as a job that you've done when and only when you have matched the sacrifice of Christ in your life, which I think is another way of saying you never can say job done on that.

It's always just this huge aspiration drawing us forward. There's always ways in which we can do more of this. Love your wife, love your wife as Christ loved the church.

Second address to husbands in verse 28, in the same way husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. So the own thing is to say you have my wife, you see.

So it's commanded again, put it a slightly different way this time. Love your own wives as your own body.

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.

[37:16] And he begins to go off on another tack at that point. But, love your wives the way you love your own body. See, here is a situation in which one person learns to be completely other-centered, and this person learns to be completely other-centered the other way, and the two function in this quite remarkable way.

Love your wives the way you love your own body. Care for it. So, there's somebody with their own body, there's Christ and the church, and these two words are rather lovely.

What do you do to your own body? You feed and care for it. So, we could enlarge on the translation that the first word is a nourishing word. You nourish, I think it's the same word as the nourishing children.

You don't you do that with your own body? You know, a little bit of this one on the skin and then a little bit of this one and to the gym and all this stuff.

Don't look at me to get the idea of that. But you nurture your body. You know, my knee's hurting a little bit, I'm going to put it up and just rub it, whatever. You nurture your body, and he says, nurture your wife.

[38:39] That's what Christ does to us. He nurtures us. And the second word, to care, has a little bit the implication of to put your arms around, to keep warm.

Now you do that with your body, don't you? If you're cold at night, where's that other duvet? Christ, well this is what we do with our body, we nourish it, and we keep it warm.

And he says, this is what Jesus Christ does to his people. He nourishes you, puts his arms around you to keep you warm. It's a very beautiful picture, isn't it? Just take that on board. How does Jesus Christ relate to me?

He nourishes me, he keeps me warm, he puts his arms around me. And he says, that's what Christ does for the church, and isn't it a comfort to know that that's how Jesus thinks of us.

You know, he's not a bad husband. You know, bad husbands would probably be off down the pub playing snooker and leave us all on their own, but Jesus doesn't do that. And sometimes we might think he does.

[39:42] The Lord hasn't done anything for me, hasn't answered my prayers, he doesn't know how I feel, but he does. Isn't that a helpful thought? And this is how husbands, are to care for their wives as their own bodies, as tenderly and attentively and sensitively and thoughtfully.

That's what it says. Now he goes, he's beginning to go off onto another subject, but let's notice that the direction he's going is on the direction of togetherness.

So he says, Christ and his church, husband and wife, is like a person in their own body. You're very united to your body, you've noticed that, haven't you?

You're almost as one. You never get invited out for coffee and then somebody says, oh, could you bring your body? Almost forgot to ask you that. I mean, because you are your body, you're as one, like a person in their own body.

And he says, this is how it is with Christ and his church. We're talking about the same sort of thing. Christ, we are members of his body. Did you notice that verse 30?

[41:00] We are members of his body. We are as close to him as that. And with human couples, he says, there is this closeness. These are all likenesses, yourself and your body, Christ and the church, man and wife.

So I'm afraid that, I tried hard with this, but this is a yin and yang. And what you have is that white shape. And if you copy it and turn it upside down, you could change the color, you get a black shape, which exactly matches the white shape.

You might even be able to see the little line there. Is that a total mystery or does that make sense? There's the black shape, it's the same as the white shape, only the other way around, and they just fit exactly together. And he says, this is, give us an idea of male and female.

Human couples just fit together. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

The word for united is almost like glued. Have you ever had this experience? No, you won't have had this experience.

[42:11] You take something to pieces, somebody in your household takes something to pieces, there are bits left, and you think, well, that's interesting, wonder where that bit fitted. And then you suddenly find, oh, that just fits on that corner, just fits exactly, that's obviously where it's meant to go.

So with male and female, God has made it so that male and female, a man can leave his father and mother, and do you know, guess what? When you put male and female together like that, they just fit together exactly.

He'll be glued to his wife, and the two will become like one unit. My example of it is like Lego bricks. You know Lego bricks, don't you? You know Lego bricks. You know Lego bricks.

And they're made so they've got the dimples on one bit and a bit where the dimples will fit, and lo and behold, you can fit them together, they just fit together just like that.

And then sometimes it's quite difficult to get them apart. It's always painful if you tread on Lego, I'll just point that out, but it just fits. And he says, actually this is what's going on in the world.

[43:25] There are these examples of things that just fit, male and female. They're walking around, and then suddenly they meet one another, and some sort of chemistry and magnetism occurs, and after a while, prince and princess, they just fit together, and the two become one flesh.

Isn't that amazing? God's made people like that. You know, they've just got like snooker balls going around, bumping into one another, and then suddenly, they just fit as one like that.

And he says, this is a profound mystery. This is a profound, but actually, he says, I wasn't talking about human, human male and femaleness, God's and the church, because in his mind, he says, this is actually where it all comes from.

I mean, he's saying that the idea, the very idea of being married, of human couples, fitting together like that and becoming one flesh, God always had in mind, I'll do that because Christ and his church are like this, and I want something in their human society that they can look at and say, oh, that helps me understand Christ and his church.

He says, this is a profound mystery. A mystery is something that is a wonderful thing that hadn't previously been disclosed. So he says, it's a mystery that the Gentiles are heirs to with the Jews in the kingdom of God.

[44:50] It's a wonderful thing that previously had been sort of hinted at but hadn't been fully disclosed. And here in the Christian gospel is the mystery of this analogy between Christ and his church marriage and married couples.

He said, this, previously hadn't seen this. I mean, it was there, hinted at, but now Christians have got this fantastic insight into marriage.

Christians can have fantastic marriages because they can see how this is all supposed to work. I was going to say something but I forgot what it was.

this analogy, this likeness, Christ's union with his church, yes, it bursts onto the scene and Jesus says this is how it's going to be. You would not have perhaps, if you read the Old Testament, you wouldn't have quite guessed the way this is all going to work.

It's fantastic. And when I've shown you this, marriage is going to be sort of revolutionized. In the Old Testament you had very sort of strange things happening.

[46:01] David had loads and loads of wives and Solomon had loads and loads and loads of wives. And that all went on. But now, reboot. Now I'm going to show you the way marriage really is.

It's one man and one woman. That's where it was in the beginning but God went in all directions but we're rebooting marriage. This is a profound mystery, a wonder previously not disclosed.

And you remember Jesus at the beginning of the Gospels there's criticism and he says there's criticism that his disciples aren't serious enough, they're not fasting and Jesus says how can they fast?

How can they fast when the bridegroom is with them? Had you known that this is how Jesus saves by taking a bride to himself, by making people so much one with him that they are blessed with all the blessings that Jesus Christ has?

We sometimes think in Christianity we're talking about sort of a quasi set of rules and things and disciplines and Jesus is a long way away. He says this is exactly not what Christianity is.

[47:13] This is the mystery of it. It's this oneness with Jesus Christ a bit like being married to him. That's what it is. That explains so much. That explains how his riches enrich us.

That all that is in him becomes ours. That explains why at the beginning of Ephesians he used the word in Christ so much because that's where we are.

He's blessed us with every blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. He's given us grace in the one he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood.

All of this because we're married to him. we are his and his promises and benefits are ours in him. That's how salvation works in this wonderful enriching way.

Who would have thought do you remember this one that Miss Elizabeth Bennett have I got to explain this. That's Miss Elizabeth Bennett so she's a penniless woman who has no fortune and she meets this millionaire guy who owns Pemberley House and to begin with they annoy one another completely but in the end they fall in love.

[48:32] Who would have thought that Miss Elizabeth Bennett would be mistress of Pemberley Hall but she is and they all live happily ever after etc. But who would have thought that we should meet a millionaire husband like Jesus.

Who would have thought that we would end up you know walking down the aisle with him as it were and all his brilliance and handsomeness and blessing and richness should become ours.

Just amazing. And one day the happily ever after bit will kick in. One day he will come back for us his radiant bride and take us to be with him forever.

I really commend Jesus Christ to you as a husband and if you haven't heard his invitations of love listen out and say yes to them. Let's pray.

Thank you Lord Jesus for the wonderful things about your way of relating to us. Thank you for your call to us to come to you.

[49:45] thank you for the rich proposition you offer to us in yourself giving us all the riches that you have. Help us to say yes to you but also help us in our own relationships on earth to model and mirror the mystery and richness of how you have graced us.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.