

An Exclusive Relationship

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Preacher: Andrew Livingstone

[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on March 7th 1999 The preacher is Andrew Livingstone And his topic is an exclusive relationship Now please give your Bibles open at Song of Songs Chapter 4 verse 1 through to 5 verse 1 One of the things I'm hoping to say tonight is that The Bible has quite a lot to say about relationships and sex Pure and simple And it talks about it in a surprisingly passionate way Well it's happening all the time Melrose Place, VR, Chicago Hope People jumping into bed and out of bed Casual sex Casual relationships

Now I confess to being one of those 6,000 to 700,000 viewers Who each week switch on Bibles Now how does other people do Bibles?

Alright, nothing to be ashamed of Started back this year And when I think of two of the characters Maggie and PJ And as I reflect over the last two years of watching that program And how their relationships have developed I must admit I've caught myself at times Thinking it would be great if they came together Now for what purpose?

You see the media is very subtle And very pervasive in the messages that it gives to us About relationships TVs Magazines Billboards Newspapers Movies And the message is quite clear Casual sex and casual relationships are okay Learn a few sexual techniques And sexual gratification is guaranteed And without the necessary commitment Of an exclusive relationship The commercialisation of sex in our society I believe is built on exceedingly fragile And shaky foundations Does casual sex deliver?

Well I suspect that it doesn't And there are reasons for that Because we all yearn for acceptance We all yearn for relationships And are characterised by intimacy And love Is that what casual sex delivers?

[2 : 5 2] Take pornography for instance When I was 18 I received a My birthday card A Playboy magazine And like any Quite self-conscious 18 year old I couldn't help but open it up And have a look at it And indeed Having come from a fairly shelf of background It was an introduction to a whole world I didn't even know it existed Pornography Naked women It seemed to me There was an invitation As I delved into that world To enter into a world of fantasy There was a promise As I looked through this magazine Of intimacy And how can something so beautiful A naked female body Be wrong?

Well it basically comes down to The wrong concepts You see She was on view to the whole world And that which is Intended for a committed Lifelong relationship Had been thoroughly distorted Because think about What pornography is It is indeed The promise of intimacy But does it deliver Intimacy?

This promise of intimacy Is not intimacy at all Because this magazine Which has these pictures Or these pictures of females Can be bought by anyone Bought and sold As a product It's a weak substitute And does not deliver What it professes To be able to deliver It's listening It doesn't do that Now As we come to this chapter What a contrast What a difference we find As we think about The kind of relationship That's being described In chapter 4 And the first part of chapter 5 Of the soul of souls I suspect the background To this passage Is a husband Who is describing With delight His new bride As he thinks about her In all her glory And we see in this chapter

And we see in this relationship A genuine intimacy A genuinely exclusive relationship Where there is love And there is genuine satisfaction And passion And we see a relationship That delivers On the kinds of things We will learn from In relationships Well let's do two things Very briefly Let's look at their relationship And ask personally Why is it different?

And then secondly Let's think about How we can learn From this couple Now please Keep your Bibles open To chapter 4 As we start to look At their relationship Personally Why are they different?

[6 : 01] Well look at what he says About her In verse 12 Of chapter 4 You are a garden A garden is locked My sister, my bride A garden locked A fountain sealed A sealed fountain A spring enclosed A garden locked up You see These are all references To privacy These are all references To privacy And exclusivity In their relationship And notice It's in her relationship To him Her total allegiance Is to him She's not committed To anyone else Her desire is for No one else Other than her husband It is an exclusive Relationship But there's nothing Casual about it She is there For him Her allegiance Is for him Why are they different?

Well look at the first Seven verses Of chapter 4 As he starts to describe How wonderful And how beautiful This new bride is He's clearly Captivated by her And he's not ashamed To express How her femininity Totally absorbs him And captivates him And there's nothing Wrong with it How beautiful You are My love How very beautiful Your eyes are doves Behind your veil Your hair is like A flop of goats Moving down the slopes Of Gilead Your teeth Are like the flop Of sure news That have come up From the washing All of which Bear toys And not one Among them Is believed Your lips Are like a Prinsome thread And your mouth Is lovely Your cheeks Are like arms Of a pomegranate Behind your veil She goes on To talk about Her neck And her breasts Etc Don't you see

He's totally Captivated by her And whatever you Think of these Compliments This poetry And these Metaphors Are not so much Describing what She looks like But telling us How he feels About her We don't know What she looks like What we're receiving Is what She is In his eyes And in his eyes She is utterly Beautiful Your eyes Behind your veil Are doves Now the veil Of this context Is an allusion To mystery Here is a relationship Characterised by Mystery The veil Is a banner It's highlighting Her inaccessibility That is She does not know All there is to know About this person It's a picture Or an image Of a relationship That is progressively Developing As she learns More and more About her It's not an instant Fix type thing Where everything's Revealed No it's a relationship Characterised by History And wonder And awe As he learns More and more About her As she is Progressively Unveiled And we see In this relationship There is love Trust And commitment Your hair Is like a Plop of goats Descending From Mount Iliad Now imagine Saying that's An awakening And expect To get service Now what's he Really saying He's saying That from afar Her hair is like A mountain Is a beautiful Picture And I guess He's saying She's got Beautiful hair There's two Again Your teeth Are like A flock Of shawmuse

That have come Up from the Washing All of which Bear Toes She has Beautiful Bright teeth It's very earthly Isn't it She's got Bright teeth Perfectly shaped Her lips Her temple Her neck First of all Your neck Is like A Tower of David Built in forces On a can A thousand Buttons All of them Shields Of warriors It's a great Image Isn't it Her neck Is like A tower Tall and erect Elegant But surrounded Layer upon Layer And again Here we have An impression Of inaccessibility Her intention Is to repel Intrigues She will not Be shared She belongs

[11 : 02] To him Because this Is an Exclusive Relationship Your two Breasts Are like Two Fawns Twins Of a Gazelle That feed Upon the Limits Your Breasts Are Sprightly And playful And graceful And there Are these Images Of Gazelles Playing In the Field Browsing In the Field And their Softness And their Texture Are invitations To Caressing And fondly So it's Quite clear What he's Talking about Isn't it As he Describes This woman This bride That he loves And until The day Breathes And the Shadows Bleak I will Hasten To the Mountain Of Lord And the Hill Of Frankincense You are Altogether Beautiful Mother There is No Floor In You See He appreciates Her beauty He loves Her And he's Determined To go

To her To make Love To her And so She extends An invitation To him In Versa To his Beloved Come with me From Lebanon My bride As he speaks To her Come with me From Lebanon Depart from The peak Of From The Dams Of Lions From The Mountains Of Leppets So he's Talking to His beloved We don't Know whether She literally Resides in These places Lebanon Or Leppets But the Inference Is that She should Come from These places Of safety And security She should Come from These places That are Protected By lions And Leppets And come To him Why is This relationship Different Because he Loves her Because it's

Totally smitten With her Because of Her allegiance To him Because she's Exclusively His And within These confines There's beauty There's intimacy And there is love In all its fullness Verse 9 You have Ravished my heart My sister My brother You have Ravished my heart With the Glance of Your eyes With one Jewel Of your Necklace How sweet Is your love My sister My brother How much Better is Your love Than Wine Now in this Context The heart Is a reference To emotions He's

talking About how He feels He's saying That he's been Bowled over By her That one Glance From her Slays him Renders him Completely And helplessly In love There is emotion There is passion It's totally Bowled over So there is Love in this

Relationship There is also An anticipation In verses 12 to 15 She's exclusively His And the garden Which is described In these verses Is a reference To all her Virtues And all her Physical delights And he describes Her with an array Of spices And fragrances And perfumes This is a Luscious garden Kept exclusively For him She's not on Show to the world And even though The language Is becoming Quite a robbie The couple Still retain Their dignity In the midst Of all of it Because their Relationship Bees expressed Properly You see a far Cry from The nudity Of phonography Or the Superficiality Of casual Sex And so As we head Towards the end Of chapter 4 We reach a Culmination

In their expression Of their love For one another Look at the text Look at verse 16 As she speaks To him Awake O north wind And come O south wind Blow upon my garden That its fragrance May be rocked And abroad Let my beloved Come to his garden And eat His chosen fruits In effect She's saying Let the love Making Begin She invites him Into her garden And a relationship Which had been Characterised by Dstraint And self Control And one That still Had dignity Is now Allowed to Give full Expression As these two People Enter into An orgy If you like Of love Making For that is What is Happening In these verses She's enticing Him And he is Mad with Desire Here is an Appropriate Relationship Where the Giving and

[16:04] Receiving of Pleasure Can be Expressed Here is Genuine Satisfaction And genuine Intimacy Not the Pretend stuff Of pornography Now does this Surprise you To think that A relationship Like this Would be Expressed In the Bible And again The Bible Has hooks To say About relationships And about Sex And the Message That comes Through very Clearly In Song of Songs Is that Sex is Great And erotic Passion is Fantastic And that God is For it When it's Expressed In an Appropriate Context Within the Confides Of an Exclusive Committed Dignified Relationship Do you see The passion And the Desire That's Expressed Between These two People In these Lineses And listen To what he Says As we head Into Chapter 5 I have Come I have Gathered

I have Eaten I have Drunk You can Sense His passion Can't you Here is The expression Of sexual And erotic Intimacy Within the Context Of a Committed Lifelong Relationship And there Is no Guilt There is Intimacy And there Is dignity Which characterise Their relationship As they Enter into A kind of Intoxicating Origin of Lovemaking And there Is an Affirmation In 1B With regards To their Relationship By their Friends Which tells Us that There is Nothing Wrong With what Is happening These Friends Drink And be Drunk In love That's the Affirmation At the Start of Chapter 5 For what They are Doing Is good In the Sight of Their Friends And in The Sight of God Why are They Different Why is Their Relationship Special Because it's Happened In the Right Context Here is A Relationship That Promises Much And Delivers Here is A Relationship Where There is Love And Fear And Reven And Exclusive Relationship And we Can see How He Appreciated Her How He Loves Her And When It Is Appropriate How They Are To Satisfy One Another Physically And Sexually And Emotionally And yet All the While Maintaining Their Dignity And Their Intimacy So That's Why They're Different And The Bible And There's A Great Affirmation Of Their Relationship Well Secondly What Can we Learn From it When we Think About Our Consciousness We've Seen Their Relationship We've Seen The Quality Of Their Relationship What Can we Learn When we Think About This Passage Well I Think The Message For Us Is Simple Especially When we Think About The Kind Of Society We Live In When we Think About The Commercialization Of Sex And We Think About The Basement Of Sex When It Becomes New Technique And The Message Is Simply This One Don't Settle For We Substitutes Don't Settle For Substitutes Don't Settle For Second Best In Relationships Don't Settle For Those Things Which Will Compromise Not Only You And Your Relationships With Others But Also Your Relationship With God Because There Are A lot Of Things Out There Masquerading As The Real Thing And Yet Failing To Deliver Intimacy And Satisfaction In A Way Which Is Achieved Through This Relationship That We See In Chapter Four And Five Solar Songs Don't Settle For We Substitutes The False Promise Of Intimacy And Satisfaction From Pornography And Casual Sex Is A Lie And It Does Not Deliver What It Pretends To Deliver Boy Meets Girl Boy Gets Girl They Part The Message From The Message From This Relationship Is Don't Sell For We Substitutes Don't Settle For Those Things That Do Not Satisfone Sex Is Not Something To Play With Sex Is A Beautiful Gift From God

And it's beautiful because it flows out of the being of what we are and when expressed appropriately it is indeed a great gift from God indeed something that in the end praises God and gives glory to God and people have a prudish view of sexuality who think that for some [21:13] reason or other Christianity is against it just understand the nature of how God regards us and they certainly haven't read so of songs or reflected on the nature of their relationship God God God has a bigger appreciation of how we should express ourselves and our human in relationships and this couple is a reminder of how good a relationship can be especially when it's characterized by exclusive commitment through people focusing on one another satisfaction given and received within a proper bond what do you desire what do you long for in relationships do you long to be appreciated do you desire a life of intimacy do you want satisfaction well here's a model that can be expressed especially when it's in the context of a married relationship

A committed relationship something to work towards if you're already married and something to wait for if that's God's gift for you if you to be married in the future and at present to single here's a relationship with models all of these things in an environment where there is trust and commitment and lifelong love don't settle for anything less than this don't settle for weak substitutes don't settle for those things you promise much but to live your life you let's bow our heads now and thank God for the great gift sex and relationships that's great Lord God as we think about your word we thank you that you speak words of truth to us about every area of life we thank you for the great gift of relationships relationships with you and relationships that we need to others thank

you for this word of life this word of encouragement for us and how to express relationships and help you thank you for the example of this couple of solicons who loved passionately and rotically and yet did that with great dignity and have your blessing may they be a foster remind to us of how good relationships can be and the appropriate their sexual intimacy and love when expressed in appropriate context and help us to encourage one another as continued to to relationships you can do us one with another and with you for the S the S you so amen!

I know A A A B But Thank you.