

# When It's Not Always Sweetness And Light

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Is heaven a place? If it is, where is it? Hmm, that's a good question. Good. Okay, thank you. That was amazing. Well done. Moving swiftly on.
- Can we have a bigger tech budget? Can we have a bigger tech budget? Why does no one else in my class go to church?
- Why does no one else in my class go to church? Hmm, that's a good question.
- Okay, hold on. Why did God choose the Israelites to be his people?
- Oh, that one's mine, right? Sorry. Why did God choose the Israelites to be his people?
- [ 1 : 0 6 ] That's good. Okay, quickly, is war wrong? Is war wrong? One more time. Is war wrong?
- Okay, quickly, where do the gospel writers get their information? Where do the gospel... When do, where do the gospel writers get their information?
- Okay. Um... And cut. How can I cope... How can I cope... What should I do when my friends swear at school?
- Ready? What do I do when my friends swear at school? Good. Stop moving. Um... And then, why did Satan turn bad if he was an angel?
- Good. Good. Okay. Get up. Great job, Kathryn. Go sit. Quick. All right. I want you to say, can we have a bigger tech budget? Can we have a bigger tech budget? Good.
- [ 2 : 0 7 ] Good. Good. And then, say, um... Why do we usually sing at church? Why do we usually sing at church? Well, where's heaven? Is it a place?
- Is it a place? Is it a place? Well, where's heaven? Is it a place? Well, where's heaven? Well, where's heaven? Well, where's heaven? Well, where's heaven? Well, where's heaven?
- Well, where's heaven? Is it a place? Where's heaven? Is it a place? One more time. Where's heaven? Is it a place? Good. All right. Very good, guys.
- Thank you so much. I think we're done. Here's a test. The 15th of November. I hope so.
- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 5.13 I'm quite sure we have often said the words, I hope so, when speaking about something we would like to happen, good weather for a barbecue, a happy outcome for an operation, and so on.
- [ 3 : 2 8 ] It's easy to say, I hope so, even when we may doubt that the happy outcome will come to pass. Hope is one of the great Christian words. In the world of the New Testament, it was a very common Greek word, but in its Christian setting, it has become one of the very key words in the vocabulary of those who follow Jesus Christ.
- The first thing to say, then, is that Christian hope is not wishful thinking. For the Christian, hope is a forward look at a distant goal. End Turner.
- And I will tell you why it is such a great Christian word. Hope comes to us based on the gospel, all that Jesus has done for us. It keeps our eyes on the eternal God and his eternal promises.

Hope always has its feet planted in the grace, mercy, and love of God, so that, even in the difficulties of life, we have the assurance that God does not forsake us or leave us to flounder in our own efforts.

God is the God of hope. All of this means, as Paul says, we can have joy and peace in believing, and can abound in hope. It is God's gift to us, keeping us looking forward at the great goal ahead of us, the hope which is laid up for us in heaven.

[ 4 : 43 ] Colossians 1.5 And a prayer. Dear Lord, please keep my eyes on you and the hope of eternal life with you. Amen. The 16th of November, God's special river.

Psalm 46.4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. I have been reading the story of a man who walked the whole length of the River Nile.

An amazing journey. Also in the news was the journey of a young man made walking the 4,000 miles of the Yangtze River in China. These rivers are two of the greatest rivers in the world.

But if you go to Jerusalem looking for a river, you will be disappointed. There is no river there. Why then does Psalm 46 speak of a river whose streams make glad the city of God?

This is a poetic picture of the great blessing which there is when God is in the center, not just of his city, but in the center of our lives as well. Verse 3 of Psalm 46 tells of the chaos that can happen when God is not in the center of things.

[ 6 : 02 ] Verse 4 shows the big contrast when he is. This is a picture that the prophet Ezekiel used when he had a vision of God's new city. Really a picture of heaven.

And there was a great river flowing out from the temple of God. In the book of Revelation, this picture is taken up again in chapter 22. Here this great river is flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb and on its banks grow the tree of life and all sorts of fruit.

A beautiful scene of blessing and plenty. All of it because it comes from God. So this picture of God's special river is one that he wants us to take seriously.

When we trust in him, there is life in abundance. A prayer. Dear Lord, help me to realize that there is abundant life in your salvation.

Amen. The 17th of November.

[ 7 : 04 ] A life-changing question. So they called Rebecca. Are you willing to go with this man? They asked her. And she replied, Yes, I will go. Genesis 24, 58.

New Living Translation. I am sure that one of the most important questions any man can ask is when he says to a woman, Will you marry me? And he feels really relieved when she says, Yes, I will.

The story we read in Genesis chapter 24 didn't quite follow that same practice. Abraham sent his servant to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac. And when, in answer to his prayers, the servant found a suitable girl, her family gathered to discuss this proposal.

No doubt the girl Rebecca was listening in. Eventually, she herself was asked if she would go with Abraham's servant to become Isaac's wife. Although she had never seen Isaac in her life.

Will you go? She was asked. Yes, I will go. She replied. When they met up, Isaac and Rebecca became happily married. Just as Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, God sends out his servants into the world to find people to become followers of Jesus Christ.

[ 8 : 21 ] Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Matthew 4.19 And so God's servants go out, and one of the great life-changing questions they ask is, Are you willing to go with Christ?

For those who say, Yes, I will go, Life will never be the same again, because Jesus changes us from the inside out. A new life. And a prayer.

Dear Lord, help me to say, Yes, I will go with Jesus. I know you are the only Savior. Amen. The 18th of November.

This is why John wrote his gospel. Now Jesus did many other signs which are not written in this book, but these are written, that by believing, you may have life in his name.

John chapter 20, verses 30 to 31. The author of Ecclesiastes says, Of making many books, there is no end. Ecclesiastes 12.12 Perhaps I feel the truth of that when looking along my bookshelves and see several biographies of the same person, several books on the same subject, and ask myself, Are they all really necessary?

[ 9 : 46 ] And then here I am, writing another one. The apostle John had a very clear purpose in writing his book that we know as the Gospel of John. He had selected several particular signs, miracles, which showed clearly the purpose he had in writing the Gospel.

He tells us that he had many other signs he could have chosen to use, but these, he says, show just what he wanted them to show, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

That is the most important reason anyone could have for writing a book. And of course, John was helped in his writing by the Holy Spirit, so that all he has written is in very truth the Word of God.

Now that raises the question, what do we do with this word that John tells us is so important? We can't honestly just treat the Bible as a book of interesting stories or as good literature.

That's not why John wrote. He wrote, so that you and I might believe in Jesus, the Son of God, and have life in his name.

[ 11 : 01 ] And a prayer. Gracious Lord, help me to believe in Jesus, the great giver of life. Amen. Amen. Amen. The 19th of November, marriage as God would have it.

Genesis 2, 24, NIV. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Sometimes you feel as if the order of things has been turned upside down.

The way things used to be has changed in so many ways. One of these ways is how people think about marriage and the family. The Bible treats marriage between a man and woman as of the utmost importance.

Jesus said, the scriptures record that from the beginning God made them male and female. And he said, this explains why a man will leave his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

Matthew 19, 4-5, NLT. While in our increasingly secular and godless society, people may reduce the value of marriage even as some were doing in the days Jesus lived on earth, Jesus himself and the rest of the New Testament show just what a strong and loving thing a good marriage is.

[ 12 : 35 ] The apostle Paul even used marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church, a relationship of love, purity, caring, and faithfulness.

This is what a good marriage should be like. After quoting the verse at the top of the page, Paul says in Ephesians 5, 33, So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Christian marriage is especially important today, as it was in Paul's day, in order to show the non-Christian world the wonderful difference Jesus makes to a Christian home.

The world needs to see that. And a prayer. Dear Lord, we thank you for marriage and for Christian homes. Make them examples of godliness, love, and purity.

Amen. The 20th of November, when it's not always sweetness and light.

[ 13 : 58 ] And there arose a sharp disagreement, so they, Barnabas and Paul, separated from each other. Acts 15, 39. One of our ministers used to have a saying, the best of men are mere men at best.

That is true of Christian men too. It's hard to think of two better men, better Christian men, than Barnabas and Paul. Yet here we read that they had a sharp disagreement. No doubt tempers flared.

Why were they fighting? It was about a young man named John Mark. Mark had gone with Paul and Barnabas, who was probably his uncle, to help them on part of their first missionary journey.

But he turned back and went home. Did he think it was all too dangerous? Or was he homesick? So Paul didn't want to take Mark with them next time, and Barnabas did.

So the disagreement ended up with Barnabas taking Mark to Cyprus and Paul took a man called Silas on another visit to the churches that had been planted on his first visit. Happily all came right in the end, as Paul came to value Mark's work.

[ 15 : 05 ] And he spoke well of Barnabas too, and the gospel continued to spread. Christians still fall out at times, and it is never a good thing. Indeed, it can make us look really bad in the eyes of the world, when they might say, these are the people who are supposed to love one another.

It is a bad witness and should make us ashamed, unless the disagreement is really over a vital matter of Christian truth. Jesus does want us to stand up for the truth, but always in a gracious way.

And a prayer. Dear Lord, help me to be a person of peace, but always true to your word. Amen.