

Mysteries and Riddles

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[0 : 00] Excellent. Well, I need some water, of course, so I'll get some water. No, no, I need hot water. Cup of tea?

Oh, I need some space. Ah. This feels wrong to move the communion stuff, but forgive me. I need the flat space.

And I need some helpers. And I also need my Bible. What have you done with my Bible? Ah, there we are. Oh, great. Well, Richard made some cake last week at the family service, so I thought, oh, I'm going to have to have my favorite water and sweets.

Yeah? And I managed to find children who aren't so bothered about healthy eating. Skills. You like skills? You like skills?

You don't like skills? Well, it's just as well I do. Does anybody like skills?

[1 : 26] Your dad likes skills. Yeah, never mind. You can still arrange things, can't you, for me?

Yeah, absolutely. Here I go. I need that. So, these are prayer skittles.

So they're quite special, holy kind of skittles. So you can eat these and not feel guilty. So I've got to open them, and then I'm going to tell you how you can use a bag of skittles so you can pray.

And that will make you feel better about eating sweets. So here we go. Let's see what colors we have. Oh. So we need an orange, and you need to put it there, like as if you were making a clock face.

Yeah? Well. So that's orange. Now, orange, I got this from America. I thought this was a good idea, but they call it Thanksgiving. It's a special day they have once a year to thank God for providing them with land and with prosperity and health and peace and everything else.

So these skittles are meant to remind you. So if you had a bag of skittles, and you opened the bag of skittles, and you picked out an orange one, it helps you to pray and give thanks to God for everything he's given you.

[2 : 48] All right? So orange, everything he's given you. Yeah? Thank you, God. What about yellow, Rory? Yellow?

Yeah, you put that round there. That's it. Oh, very good. That's like one o'clock. There you go. We'll go into that a bit, bit closer. Yellow. That helps you to pray for someone in your life who you can be thankful for by name.

Somebody important to you. So who's important to you? Somebody by name. Millie? Not really.

Not Millie. Sorry, Millie. No, Millie's asking. What about mommy? What's your mommy's name?

Hannah. That's a good idea. Hannah, you're important to your daughter. That's good news, isn't it?

So you can pray for your... So whenever you get a yellow one, you remember to do that. Now, we want green. Come on, Georgia. Now, green, that's to pray and ask God to show you how you can give to other people in need.

[3 : 56] So do you know anybody who's in need? Anybody who's poor or needs friends or needs help? Know anybody? Anybody? Well, you can keep looking out for somebody, can't you?

Yeah? Yeah, so I've got a bad elbow. Yeah, it hurts me in the morning when I get up because I lie on it. It hurts me. So you can pray for my elbow to get better.

Is that a good idea? Very good. Very good. It's all working. Purple. Oh, these... Ah, yeah, these are doing well in my handies.

Purple. Purple. So purple. Pray for those who may have... How do we put that?

Pray to... Sorry? Not have. Yeah. Pray for those who may not have food or clothing. So very poor people may be living in...

[4 : 54] What countries might they live where they don't even have food or clothing? What countries? Any idea? Okay, some very poor countries in the world, maybe in Africa or parts of Asia.

They're very, very poor. Okay, and then red. Red. So red reminds us to give thanks for Jesus. Do you think you know why that might be? Red. Give thanks for Jesus. Well, if you're very clever, you'll know that some Bibles have the words of Jesus in red, but I don't think that's the reason. Red reminds us of something you have in your body that comes out when you cut yourself. What's that? Blood, that's right. And what did Jesus do?

He went to the cross and he shed his blood so that our sins could be forgiven. That's good, isn't it? Yeah, excellent. Right. Now, what you need to do is just take some more. Get the colors out of there.

[5 : 54] Take some more. And just spread them around and make a clock face. And I'll eat these while I do. See that?

You get a magic trick with that. I made them all disappear. They're very nice, actually. Yeah, keep going. Keep going. That's it. That's it.

Spread them around there. That's it. We'll spread that out. Keep going. It's all right. We'll get one of them on there. We'll get a different color.

Mix it up. You're doing really well. Do you want to eat any? You don't eat any. You're missing out a treat there. Are we out with that?

A few more. Maybe that'll do. Maybe put those just two up there. So we're praying for all of these things. And we're waiting on God to answer.

[6 : 54] When God answers our prayers, he does amazing things. We already heard. More than we can imagine or even think about. So we're going to wait and see, aren't we?

But on the screen it says, This is the confidence we have in approaching God. That if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. So we know that when we ask God to do something for us, we don't necessarily know what the answer is going to be.

But we know that if he's pleased with what we've asked for, then he'll give us what we need. It's good. So we're going to wait and see what happens. But what we're going to do is take this water. And then we're going to pour it on here.

A bit of that. A bit of that. A bit of that. Think that's enough? Hmm? Hmm?

We'll wait and see. So you're going to come back and we're going to have a look. Excellent. Round of applause for my brilliant helpers. Let's go sit down. Oh, I can tell you're all excited.

[8 : 08] I'm going to take a photograph of this. Can I have my phone out, Andy? Just write this down. Note it down. Yeah, yeah. Well, there you go.

Look at that. That works. Wow. Right. Do you want to come out? Come on. Round of applause for Rory and Georgia. Look at that.

What do you think of that? What do you think of that? Wow. What does it look like? It looks like a rainbow. They're going to come and show you in a minute. You see what it says there?

This is the confidence we have in approaching God. That if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. So whether we're praying for people we love, whether we're praying and thanking God for Jesus, what color was that skittle?

Red one, that's right. Whether we're praying for people in need in the poorest parts of the world, or just somebody we care about who's got a particular need. When we bring all of our prayers together, God does something amazing with them.

[9 : 14] He releases his power through our praying into this world because he wants his kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. And that's why he encourages us to pray.

It's amazing, isn't it? God could just say to him, you don't need to pray because I've got it all in control and you don't need to worry. I'm just going to do whatever I want. But he doesn't say that, does he?

He says, you should pray because when you pray, you are helping me. And that's amazing. And I don't understand that. That's a bit of a mystery. It's a bit of a wit riddle. You are working with me, helping me to make my kingdom come.

That makes prayer very powerful, doesn't it? So would you do something really amazing and take this round and show people the rainbow? Just have a quick glance. Go down the middle there. Have a quick glance as you go by. See? Soon as it moves, it becomes a mixed sort of rainbow. Have a quick look.

[10 : 15] A quick look. Look at that. Look at the interesting. Look down from the balcony there. That's it. Don't fall over, though. Wow.

Amazing. Look at that. You can try that at home. You know, the last one I did with the ward, Estella tried them. Oh, the rainbow's disappeared, hasn't it? But it'll settle again. It'll settle again. And these people out there, you know, they'll be looking forward to having a skittle or two.

I think I'll have a red one. So I can thank God for Jesus. Would you like to take some round and offer them out? Yeah. Go on. Just help yourself. Try to look for younger ones, you know, people who are young.

Start with the children and then go on. That's it. Well, didn't they do well? Absolutely fantastic. It's hard to talk with a skittle in your mouth.

So, once I've finished it. Anyway. Estella tried the water one at home, didn't you, Estella? Where are you? You didn't. Did it work? Yes. You didn't soak Tony's head then?

[11:20] No. Very good. So then, we're going to continue thinking about riddles and mysteries while they take skittles round.

You can even, can they take them upstairs? Yeah, it would. We've got some children upstairs too. So if you'd like to meet your mom and dad upstairs, if you can make sure they don't fall down or anything, that'd be good.

Anybody not got a skittle who wants one? All right. That's fine. Whatever's left, bring back to me. I can manage. All of that coloring, it's going to make me hyper all afternoon.

Riddles and mysteries. Here's some riddles. What has a face and two hands but no arms or legs?

Go on then. Oh, Clark, you're really clever. What's your name? Sorry? Faith. Faith. Great name.

Faith. Great name. Do you know any verses in the Bible that have to do with faith?

[12:28] No. Wow. Yeah. Jesus talks about faith a lot, doesn't he? Having faith in him, that's good. Faith.

Oh, it's a very old-fashioned version of the Bible. Faith. Move mountains. Small as a mustard seed. The substance of things hold for. The evidence of things unseen.

Sorry about that. That's the one I remember from Hebrews. It is faith. Right. Another riddle. What does a house weigh? A dress. A dress. Well done.

Yeah. Absolutely well done. All right. What creature is smarter than a talking parrot?

What? What creature is smarter than a talking parrot? A spelling bee. All right.

[13:27] All right. It is American, that. Number four. I travel all around the world but never leave the corner. What am I? A stamp. You are very clever. You are.

A stamp. A stamp. Jim is six feet tall. He works at a butcher's and he wears size 10 shoes.

What does he weigh? Ha ha. Ha ha. Ha ha. Meat. Meat. Meat. Ha ha. You're quite right. It is meat. All right.

Well, they're little riddles. Not too hard to crack. Huh? What about the next one? No. What am I? I am old but also new.

I may seem rather strange but all of me is true. It's not Andy Lloyd, by the way. I am 66 inside. Well, it might be. I am 66 inside but really only one.

[14:27] I can be pocket-sized or sometimes weigh a ton. All of me is about a person you really ought to meet. He often signs his name and each story is his treat. I am a world of bestseller but sadly seldom read.

Perhaps you've seen me on a shelf or lying by a bed. What am I? Sorry? The Bible. That's right. It's the Bible. That's right.

The Bible. An amazing book. Next slide. An amazing book. Collection of writings from approximately 40 separate authors written on three separate continents comprised in three separate languages compiled over the span of an estimated 1,500 to 1,600 years.

And we have it in one book form. And it's a book that transforms people's lives in amazing ways. It is the Bible. The Bible. We call the Bible the Word of God.

And the psalmist says, Your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you. The Bible is not just a book with information to help us kind of, you know, get an idea of perhaps some wise philosophy.

[15:43] It is the maker's instruction, God's instructions to us about the best way for us to live.

Soren Kiergaard, who was a Swedish philosopher, more philosopher than theologian, but a very good theologian nonetheless, said, To read the Bible as God's Word, one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tiptoe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God.

To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter to read, then one reads it as the Word of God. That's the way to read the Bible. As a love letter from God, the maker's instruction to teach us how to best live. Now, next slide.

So the Bible contains many, many interesting things and many things which are quite mysterious, quite what we might call riddles, some strange sayings that you find in the Bible that it's hard for us to understand, and yet strangely, deliberately done by Jesus to get us to think, but more importantly, to get us to pray.

Because the amazing thing about being a Christian over many, many years now is I've discovered that it isn't necessarily the cleverest people with all of their degrees and PhDs and everything else who understand God's Word.

[17:19] It is people who maybe educationally have not had a high education, they've not been to university, they've not maybe even got GCSEs or A-levels, and yet they have a profound understanding that many, many clever people don't have at all.

Because the way we see God's Word is by faith, not by our intellect. Paul, when he was speaking about preaching the Gospel, said, pray also for me that I may speak words given to me so that I will fearlessly make known, notice, the mystery of the Gospel.

His point was that there are lots of people who don't understand what the Bible's all about. They don't understand what the Gospel's all about. They can't understand how it could be possible that one man could die for the sins of the world.

They don't understand how it could be possible that God would accept us not by the good things that we do, but by faith and trust in Him, accepting His gift to us of salvation rather than trying to earn it ourselves.

People say, well, I can't possibly believe that. They can't understand a God who can do miracles. So the Bible feels like something they just don't like.

[18:36] They can't accept. It doesn't align with their intellect. And so they brush it aside. But those who have faith in Jesus believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

Jesus once said, before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. And for the disciples, that was a bit of a riddle. What does he mean?

What does he mean? The world won't see me, but you will see me. How is that possible? Well, they saw Him with the eyes of faith. There were lots of people who saw Jesus, both before and after His death.

But then after His death, in His resurrection, He was seen only by those who were His disciples. They didn't necessarily believe in Him fully, but they had enough faith to know that it might be possible.

Remember Thomas. He had enough faith to at least go to the upper room, but he doubted whether anybody could rise again. But even that mustard seed faith was enough for Jesus to appear to him and for Thomas to fall down and say, You are my Lord and my God.

[19:52] He believed in Jesus and so he saw. Seeing is believing. Seeing is believing. Yeah?

Or, do we see what we believe? Different people read the Bible. Different people hear the gospel. Some people believe.

They have faith. They trust in Jesus. And some people read it, pick holes in it, and cast it aside. Faith gives us sight to believe.

And if you have faith and you can say, Yes, Lord Jesus, you are my Lord and my God, then you are a true follower of Jesus. You remember when Jesus in Mark 8 came across a man who was blind? And, he reached out to heal the man. He put mud on his eyes, remember, and then he said, Open your eyes. What do you see? And the man said, Hmm, I see people like trees walking around.

[20:59] So then Jesus reached out and touched him again. And then he could see clearly. And people say, Why did he do it twice? Did he fail the first time? Or just, Was it not quite good enough? No, no, no. It wasn't anything like that.

To understand why he did it twice, you have to see the context. Just before he healed that man, he had fed 4,000 people. And it had been no problem for him.

He had a few loaves and some fish. He managed to multiply those with a mighty miracle. And all of those people were fed. And then he got into the boat with his disciples.

Or, sorry, the Pharisees. The Pharisees came along and said, Well, you show us a sign so that we will believe in you. You've just seen like 4,000 people fed with such a small amount of food. You need another sign? See, their problem, they didn't really want to believe. And then he went with his disciples into the boat and they said, Jesus asked them about bread.

[22 : 01] And they were thinking, Oh. And so he said, Beware of the leaving of the scribes and the Pharisees. Beware of their influence because leaving makes bread rise.

Beware of them. Their faithlessness. And they thought, Oh, he's cross with us because we didn't bring any bread. Bit dumb. He's just managed to feed 4,000 people with very little.

He's not going to worry too much about bread. But Jesus was really saying, Beware of those people who won't see. And be careful not to be partially sighted.

Yeah? Don't be content with merely believing. Move to that point where you clearly see Jesus for all his worth in all his beauty.

See him fully as that magnificent Messiah, Savior, Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you.

[23 : 05] Have the eyes of your faith opened, which is what Fiona started with today. The eyes of your heart opened. Paul's saying that to Christian people. Don't be content with the level of knowledge you have about Jesus now.

Don't be partially sighted. Move on to full vision. See him transfigured, lovely, just as those who saw Jesus transfigured in the mountain saw him in all his glory.

Okay, next slide. Another riddle that Jesus speaks about. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

It's a kind of unusual statement to make, isn't it? I mean, God created me, made me in his image.

I'm important to him. How can my life, how can I hate my life when he made it?

And how can I gain my life if I lose it? It's a bit of a riddle, a bit of a mystery. But it's important for us to grasp what he's saying.

[24 : 12] He uses an illustration of a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying. It has to die alone. But when it dies, it bears much fruit.

We often think of death as being an utter waste, a loss, tragic. But sometimes death can give rise to something quite amazing, quite magnificent, something you could never have expected like the death of Jesus did on the cross.

We thought he was going to be the one to redeem Israel. Oh, they had very little understanding. The seed died alone, but he gave birth to billions of people who now own him as their Lord and Savior in the world.

Isn't that amazing? throughout history. And Jesus says, likewise with you, if you give your life to me, if you give up your life and your ambitions and you lay them at my feet and you choose my way rather than your own way, your life will be quite wonderful.

If you try to hold on to it, keep it for yourself, ultimately you lose it. But if you give it to Jesus, you can never, ever lose. that's the amazing thing.

[25 : 36] Open your spiritual eyes to see your value in Jesus and to see that if you want to follow Jesus, you have to lay down your life for him and serve him that you may truly gain the life that he wants for you, eternal life in his presence.

And then another mystery. Next slide. You must be born again. You've heard that statement, haven't you?

Nicodemus found this really tricky. Came to Jesus at night and he wanted some understanding and Jesus left him a bit in the dark. That wasn't what he bargained for. Come on, show me how you can enter the kingdom of God and Nicodemus, Jesus said, Nicodemus, well, you have to be born again and he says, I can't do that.

I'm too old. My mother's probably dead. She would have been dead, I guess. And I can't enter into my mother's womb a second time. Come on, Jesus, get real here. This is not going to happen.

He says, you don't really understand, do you? Think about the wind. Where does it come from?

Where is it going? You hear the sound of the wind, but you cannot tell where it's come from or where it's going.

[26 : 55] So is everyone who's born of God. Jesus is saying, look, you need two kinds of birth. People are born of water naturally by birth.

People are born of the Spirit as God's Spirit comes into the heart and the soul and life of individuals and they are transformed from the inside out, a bit like the life cycle of a butterfly.

Do you know about the butterfly? Yeah. Yeah. It starts as an egg because some butterfly flies by and finds a nice leaf and lays the eggs on the leaf and then the caterpillar is hatched and when the caterpillar is hatched, it eats the leaf.

Very, very efficient use of food. No waste there. And then it crawls around for a little while, not very long. They don't have a long life. Well, various species have various lengths but the common butterflies we see, they don't have a long life and then it decides, it finds a nice twig and it kind of hangs upside down.

Yay! I'm having a great time here. And it stops eating when it's ready and it starts to spin a kind of chrysalis made out of silk in the inside.

[28 : 08] And in the inside of that chrysalis there's some nice little cells and those cells attach themselves to the caterpillar and they make wings and other clever things that it needs.

And then it comes out beautiful. Nothing like it. What? Miserable, ugly looking caterpillar. Very hungry caterpillar. Somebody should write a book about that. And then it becomes a beautiful butterfly and it flies off and guess what it does?

It finds a leaf and lays eggs and then it dies and okay, goes around again. Fabulous. That's called a metamorphosis and that's a Bible word for the transformation that takes place when we are born again by God's Spirit.

Completely changed. Be transformed from one degree of glory to another. Perhaps at the moment you look a little bit like a butterfly or perhaps you're hanging upside down on a twig somewhere spiritually speaking in your progress but one day you're going to be a magnificent butterfly.

Sorry, a caterpillar. A little bit like a caterpillar. but you knew what I meant. That's a ribble though, isn't it? Jesus is in the business of changing us from the inside out and then this slide.

[29 : 26] This is my last one. Whoever drinks of the water I shall give will never thirst again. I love that little girl there kind of leaning over and getting in the water.

You know what it's like to be thirsty, don't you? Especially on these hot days. You're desperate for some water. I'm dying of thirst. I need some water. Jesus said to a woman at the well in Samaria, I have water to give you that if you drink you will love it so much that you will never thirst again.

You won't need anything else. This is the most important drink you're going to have. It's really, really better than tea. Water that I can give you.

And you know what amazes me about that story is this is a woman who had five husbands and was living with a man that wasn't a husband so she had a really bad life. She'd been a, she'd got a bad reputation.

She was a real sinner and Jesus could have come to anyone in that town, anyone at that well and he picks her and he says, you, you can have water that I can give you that will mean you'll be satisfied forever, for all eternity.

[30 : 37] And I think that's just absolutely wonderful. And it's a reminder to us of the really, really magnificent thing that the gospel is. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, Paul says, of whom I am the chief.

Some people say, I can't be a Christian because I'm too bad. Uh-uh. Paul was the worst and he's been saved so you can never be too bad. So let's get rid of that excuse.

And I don't know what your reputation's like in your community but it would have been no worse than this woman. So let's get rid of this, that excuse. And let's be prepared to receive from Jesus the water that he can give that will make you live forever.

How marvelous is that? C.S. Lewis once said, if I find in myself desires which nothing in the world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.

You see, when you kind of say, well, I must have that house because if I have that house, I will never need another house. It'll be the best house in the world and it's the only thing I need to make me happy, eventually it will disappoint you.

[31 : 53] The furniture will not be quite right, the wallpaper will need changing, cobwebs will still attach themselves to the corner of your ceilings, the kitchen will need changing over, the bathroom will need doing, it will never satisfy.

Or, if only I have that perfect woman there or that perfect man there, there isn't such a thing, if only I had that, if only they were mine, I would be happy for the rest of time and I would never need

anybody else until he leaves his socks on the floor or he's untidy or she snores or whatever might be the case.

Of course, this is not autobiographical, he says. If only I had that job and I had all that money and I could fill my bank account and I would never need anything, if I had everything that I could have, life will be wonderful.

But you notice something about rich people, they're never quite happy enough, are they? They're never quite rich enough. The truth is, only Jesus can satisfy because there is an itch, a God-shaped hole in our lives that can never be satisfied unless God fills it.

He meant it to be that way. And there's this mystery in life that we strive and strive and strive just to be happy and then discover the only way we can be happy is by surrendering our life to Jesus.

[33 : 35] Now none but Christ can satisfy no other name for me. There's love and life and lasting joy Lord Jesus found in thee.

And I'm going to end with a quote from somebody I don't often quote, but a very good quote nonetheless, John Paul II, former Paul. It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness. He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you. He is the beauty to which you are so attracted. It is he who provoked you with the thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise.

It is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life. It is he who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle.

It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives. The will to follow an ideal. The refusal to allow yourself to be something you are not.

[34 : 44] Now none but Christ can satisfy. Jesus has water to give you. If you drink of it you will never ever thirst again. Why not try?

Why not drink? Why not receive him? Let us pray. Let us pray.