

# Humanity as Male and Female.

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, we're just going to turn straight to that passage, and we're going to just move into! our sermon just now, and we'll be sharing the Lord's Supper later on as part of our service.

So, please do turn back to Ephesians chapter 5, and we're going to read again verses 31 and 32. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. As many of you will know, in our evening services, we are doing a series called The Real Us. We're nearly finished it. The topics that we've been looking at are the creation of humanity, the nature of humanity, the purpose of humanity, humanity as the image of God, humanity as male and female, humanity as a blessed covenant creature. That was the basic plan. We've kind of jumped all over the place in terms of parts. I can't even remember what part number we're on now. It's definitely not six, probably about nine or ten. Anyway, it's all, I hope, been helpful stuff for us to learn. We are nearly done, and tonight we come to the second last topic, humanity as male and female. Now, this is a fascinating and hugely important area of theology, and there's so many ways in which tonight I'm only going to be scratching the surface. There's tons more that we could say. It's also a hugely relevant issue because this can be an area of controversy, both in society and in the church, for lots of different reasons, and it's, of course, something that directly affects every one of us because as we come together at church, we come together as men and women, male and female, and all of that has a lot to teach us about our relationship with one another and with God. I want to start by saying that as we are thinking about the creation, the nature, the purpose of humanity, a key part of that from a biblical point of view is that we are made male and female. So it's a fundamental truth about biblical teaching regarding humanity, but as I said, it is an area of controversy both in the world around us, and we see lots and lots of controversies around that issue today, but it's also been an area of controversy within the church. I feel that I should give two warnings as I start my sermon tonight. One is my sermon's too long, so I've tried very hard to shorten my sermon.

[ 2 : 36 ] I've cut out everything that I feel I can cut out, but it's still going to be a teeny bit long, but don't worry, there's a reward for you afterwards. There's a surprise in the kitchen for you if you endure it. If you walk out, you don't get the prize, but there is a reward for you, but we might have to just, it'll be five minutes longer, and if I stop rabbiting on, it'll be four and a half minutes longer.

The other thing is that I'm conscious that when we talk about male and female, particularly in biblical positions, roles of the church and stuff like that, not everybody's going to agree with my position on things, with our church's position on things. That's absolutely fine, and I'm not, you know, that is not a problem at all, and if you're listening to what I say today and you think, well, I don't think the same way as you on this, Thomas, that's totally fine, and if anyone wants to chat afterwards or ask questions later, that's totally okay. It's an impossible thing to talk about it without it probably not aligning with what everybody thinks and maybe even sounding offensive. I hope it doesn't, and I hope that one thing I'm able to do tonight is just set out a position in a way that's clear so that you can see what we believe as a church and why, and as I said, we can chat more about that anytime. So that's my kind of big caveat for the whole thing.

I'm tempted to put caveats in all the way through, but just carry that caveat with you through the whole sermon. So we're going to look at this together, and as we do it, we're going to do my usual, which is we're going to make a wee diagram to help us think about this a little bit more.

So let's go. First of all, I want to start with an absolutely crucial point. At the core of the biblical understanding of humanity is that men and women are created equal but different. Equal but different. And so that's vital for us to remember. So in the creation of humanity, humans are put in a totally unique category. We've seen that lots of times throughout this study. Humanity is placed in a

unique category. Humanity has a dignity and a worth and a specialness that no other part of creation has. But within humanity, there is no further subdivision in terms of worth or dignity or specialness. There's no grading within humanity. All people are image bearers. All people are of equal value, dignity, and worth. Now, it's so important to recognize that that's the biblical position because that contrasted so much with the mindset of other ancient cultures. It's fascinating. If you read Aristotle, one of the most famous and influential Greek philosophers there was, he actually describes the female as a kind of deformed male. That's how he describes females. So there's this built into a lot of these alternative viewpoints in the ancient world was the idea that men were superior, women inferior. And that's influenced cultures all over the world right up to this day. The Bible does not endorse that position. In God's eyes, men and women are always, always equal. But they're not identical. Men and women are equal but different. And together, these two sexes make up the human race. And so we're going to look at this together. We're going to think about, first of all, men and women collectively, our collective role. Then we're going to think about man and his specific role, woman and her specific role. And all of this is going to tie in with what the Bible teaches about creation. But even more importantly, it's going to tie in with the gospel. And it's going to tie in with eternity. So first of all, thinking about men and women together, male and female, as the image of God.

[ 6 : 33 ] The Bible insists that it's male and female together and collectively that is the image of God. So together, we are the image of God. How does that work? Well, there's lots that we could say. I want to just highlight three things. Unity, distinction, and relationship. So first of all, in regard to unity, the key passage is Genesis 2. The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh, and the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Now, this is part of the creation narrative. Now, different creations have different viewpoints as to how literally to understand this. We're just going to be highlighting some of the key emphases that are being made and what it teaches us about men and women side by side. So some points to note. First, the woman is taken from the man. And the big point there is that woman's not made from something separate or something different to man. And that's why there's absolutely no ground whatsoever to say that there's a kind of inherent inferiority between male and female because we're made, we have the same origin. We are the same in that sense. And it's interesting to note as well that man in this narrative is completely passive.

So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. The man does nothing that's of any use, doesn't contribute in any way. The woman here might be saying, well, nothing's changed since then. But the man is passive. In other words, woman's not the creation of man for men to own or control. Woman is the handiwork of God, just like man is. And this is emphasized by that declaration when the man says, this at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman. And so the man immediately recognizes a common identity. What he sees before him, he immediately knows and connects with. And so male and female is a subdivision of one united equal creature. So before we come to the distinctives, we want to emphasize the unity that's revealed to us in scripture. We share a common material makeup, common structural capacities, common image of godness. And that guards us against two great errors. It means that a man can never look at a woman and think you are less than me.

A man can never do that. And that's marking a prohibition against any devaluing or domination or abuse of women by men. A man can never look at a woman and say you're less than me. At the same time, a man also must not look at a woman and think you're more than me. Because just as much as history has seen horrific examples of men mistreating and abusing and suppressing women, there's other examples of women, maybe not women as a whole, but individual women being treated like a goddess, worshipped as though they are, there's like a kind of cult of femininity. And you've seen that in many different cultures. And so this is guarding us against idolizing the opposite sex. That can happen in any direction. Men can do it towards women. Women can do it towards men. That's also an error that we're being protected against. And these two errors are still a massive problem. So women are idolized.

Women are abused. You see it all over the world today. And sometimes the reason women get abused is because they've been idolized and men have sort of obsessed over women and then gone to do awful things. And I mean, I don't need to kind of fill in the gaps. You know, you know

from the news and everything. And maybe even, maybe even in your own families or in your own experience, you've seen examples of this. And the Bible is taking us back to the fundamental truth that we must hold on to, that men and women are equal. Now, as you read through the Bible, you will find many examples of people who fail to treat them equally. But these instances are exactly that. They're failures.

They're sins against God. They're a failure to conform to what's been established from the very beginning. So sometimes you might hear people say the Bible's anti-women. It's really not.

[ 11 : 38 ] From the very beginning, this has been set out. And sometimes people have used the Bible to mistreat women. That is, that is an utter blasphemy against God. And it's horrendous.

There's a precious and beautiful unity between men and women. There's also distinction. And these are revealed in Genesis 2 as well. And the key words here are this and she and her.

And the key point there is that for the man, this woman is another. So what that means is that he's not presented with a duplication of himself. He's not presented with an extension of himself. He's presented with a distinct person. She is a distinct person, a counterpart, but not a clone. The man was alone, but another has been brought to him.

And that's addressing the not good that appears just a few verses earlier. The Lord God said, it's not good that the man should be alone. I'll make a helper fit for him. And, you know, the solution to that not good is not another Adam. It's not another man. It's woman.

Not identical. Instead, one who's perfectly complementary to him. And it's so important to just see the immense significance of this verse. This is the Garden of Eden, where you have to imagine the most glorious, beautiful splendor that you've ever experienced. That's what's been presented to us, that the environment for what God wanted for humanity was a paradise. And yet, everything was good apart from one thing. It was not good that the man was alone. And that not goodness could only be solved by the creation of the woman.

[ 13 : 42 ] On his own, the man was lacking. And the man can only be complete and wholly one when he stands before another, when he stands before the woman. So they're united as the same kind, but they are distinct as the opposite sex, and together they're complete. And so, male and female brings, it reflects a unity and a distinction in humanity. And the big point I'm trying to get to in this first part is that that unity and distinction balance is actually part of the way in which we are the image of God. Part of the reason that we're image of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, in Genesis 1, God says, let us make man in our image. Let us make him male and female. That us of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that us who creates humanity as male and female is imaged in the us of men and women together in the human race. In God, you see perfect unity and yet distinction. Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit, one God. In humanity, the image of God, you see an image of the same thing. And that's only possible because he made us male and female. So there's unity and distinction. All of that ties in with the relational aspect of being the image of God. We've looked at this over the last couple of weeks.

Male and female makes relationship with one another possible. Because that's true for two reasons. One, because the first man meets his companion in the woman. And whatever your views are regarding the origin of humanity, the age of humanity, lots of different opinions about that. But whatever your views might have been, there has to have been a first man. There has to have been a first woman.

However, that's understood. There's lots of different views that could be held on that. But there has to be a first. There has to have been. And so here, the first man meets his companion in the woman. So there's relationship there between the two. But it's that male and female relationship that allows for the growth of the human race, that allows for the establishment of every other human relationship.

relationship. And so as the human race grows, then all the other relations that humans enjoy with one another become possible. So in male and female, you've kind of got a, you've got, there's a, there's a beautiful, broad aspect to this, a beautiful, narrow aspect to this. Because male and female has very, very, very broad relational consequences. Because it's that distinction that allows humanity to grow.

[ 16 : 35 ] And it's through that that every relationship becomes possible. But within that broad relational purpose, of course, is, is an extremely narrow and specific relationship. And that is the deep, intimate connection of a man and a woman, a husband and wife united in sexual intimacy.

And that, that allows not only for the human race to grow, but it also allows for, for humanity to experience a depth of closeness and connection that's only possible through the distinction of male and female united as one. And all that ties in with what we've been calling the relational mandate given to humanity, that God's made us to be in relationships. And that ties in with the fact that as the image of God, we resemble God, we resemble God, we represent God, and we also relate to him and to one another.

And, and even as we think of, of, of the depths of intimacy and closeness and togetherness that we can experience, that too displays the level of closeness that God intends to have in his relationship with his people. So in the male-female relationship, we're getting a glimpse of God. It's part of being in the image of God. We see a reflection of the eternal relationship within God himself. In the triune God, there's perfect unity. In the triune God, there's absolute equality. In the triune God, there's beautiful relationship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All of this is seen in humanity through the distinction and unity between male and female. And that's, of course, why the abuse of a relationship, the breakdown of a relationship, that's why all of that's damaging.

These things, these things hurt, these things are hard, these things are so difficult and serious and painful. That's why they're painful. Because, because we're moving, we've moved away from how God established things to be. So we're looking at things at a broad level. And so that's the first part of our diagram. One key aspect of being male and female is that together, in unity and distinction, we display God and we enjoy relationship with him. So I'll give you a couple of quotes from theologians that probably sum up what I've said better than what I've just said. One's from Wayne Grudem, and he said, the fact that God created two distinct persons as male and female rather than just man is part of our being the image of God because it can be seen to reflect to some degree the plurality of persons within the Trinity. And then another quote from John Frame, a fundamental principle is that everything we are images God. Therefore, especially since our body itself, I think that should say participates, sorry, that's a mistake from me, autocorrect, auto-incorrect, that was, participates in the image is what that should say. We would expect that our sexual and social diversity also would picture God in some way. So that's summing up what we're trying to get at. So this is collective humanity. However, this is only one third of the diagram. There's more. There's something to be said about the distinctive roles of men and of women. Now, you might think I'm going to start talking about, you know, jobs and homes and stuff like that. Not really. Not really talking about that at all.

I'm talking about something much, much bigger. What I actually want to talk about is what we call typology. Now, typology is a theological category which is basically saying that there are various things things that are signposts to something bigger. And this is part of how we understand reading the Bible, that in the Old Testament, there are many things that happen that are a type or a shadow of the true fulfillment. So I'm trying to think of a good example, but the example popping into my head right now is toy cars. If you've got a wee toy car when you were wee and you've got this lovely Lamborghini that's in your bedroom, that's a type of a real Lamborghini that one day you will buy when you're rich and famous. In the Old Testament, you see lots of things that are functioning as types of the full reality that comes in the New Testament. And so that category of typology is really important for us in reading the Bible, and it applies to male and female. And I hope that I can show you how that's the case. In many ways, the bottom part of the diagram, image of God, is kind of looking back because male and female's distinctives side by side together is looking back to the God who's made us.

[ 21 : 39 ] Typology is looking forward. It's anticipatory. It's anticipatory of God's great purposes being revealed through His Son, our Lord Jesus, as He comes to save us. And so what that means is that the distinctive attributes and roles of men and women, particularly as these relate to marriage, are looking forward to what God is going to do as our Savior. So men and women are typological. And in particular, we're going to say that the distinctive attributes and role of the male is a type of Christ. And the distinctive active roles of the female is a type of the church. Okay, so let me explain why I'm saying all of this. So first of all, thinking about this side, the man as a type of Christ. In the distinctives of manhood, as opposed to womanhood, we see a type of Christ, the Savior of the church. And lots we could say here, let me just categorize it under these two headings. It can be seen in terms of leadership and in terms of the responsibility that's invested within man. In terms of leadership, as you look at the Genesis narrative, you can see that a leadership role is given to the man. This is revealed especially in the naming of the woman. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. So man does not make woman. So he

does not have superiority over her in that sense at all. But he does name her. And that is a hint. That is, well, it's more than a hint. It's evidence of a leadership role for him in their relationship. And that's repeated throughout the Bible. We read in Ephesians 5, it says the husband is the head of the wife. And that's speaking of a leadership role for the husband in a marriage. Not a controlling role, not a kind of dominating role, none of that, none of that at all. But it is speaking of a leadership position for the husband in the marriage relationship.

With that leadership comes responsibility. In the Bible, leadership always carries responsibility. And leadership that does not bear appropriate responsibility is not leadership, it's tyranny.

And so leadership in the Bible always carries responsibility that is solemn and profound. Part of that responsibility is to lead a family well and wisely. A key part is to provide protection.

And this is a crucial aspect of what's been emphasized, that the comparative biological strength of man is never ever to be used to subdue a woman. Never. It's to be used to subdue a woman.

Never. It's to be used to subdue the world around us, to protect the woman. And included in that is providing for them. The man's placed in the garden to work it and to keep it. And again, that's not to say that women shouldn't be working. You'll see in a moment that the Bible has a big, big emphasis on the work, the vital work that women do. Most of all, it involves a husband loving his wife.

And you see that, we saw that in Ephesians 5, you see it again in Colossians 3. Husbands, love your wives. Do not be harsh with them. Never ever use that superior biological strength to subdue them or control them. Another quote from John Piper, he summarizes it as follows. He says, at the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships.

[ 25 : 30 ] So that's man as a type of Christ. There's a leadership, there's a responsibility. We'll come back to this in a wee minute. Let me say a little bit about woman as a type of the church. Now, all of this, I'm conscious, for many people is something that they're not entirely comfortable with. And the language, even the language of that diagram, some people might think, well, that's giving women a raw deal. I really hope that I can show that that's not the case. In the distinctives of womanhood, as opposed to manhood, we see a type of the church that Christ has come to save.

Now, in unpacking that, there's two or three key things to note. First of all, although in the creation narrative, we see indications that there's a position of headship and leadership given to the man, there is also a sense in which it's the creation of the woman that marks the crowning point of the creation narrative. And there's lots of things that indicate that. First of all, she is the last thing to be created. And so there's a sense of climax in the creation of the woman.

As we said a moment ago, even though the man had been made, there was still a not good about the Garden of Eden. Once the woman is made, the not good is gone. And it's interesting that the man is made from dust. The woman is made from man. You see that if you, I don't think I put the, did I put these slides up? I don't know if I did. I'll just read it out for you. Yeah, I'll read it to you. Just listen carefully. Sorry, I forgot to put it on the screen. It says, the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground. But then as we read a wee minute ago, that in the forming of the woman, it was the rib that he'd taken from the man and made into a woman.

There's also different verbs that are used in making the man. It's the verb to form, which is like the work of the potter. But for making the woman, it's actually the word that means build. It's the work of the architect, of the master builder. And once made, the woman is brought to the man, not as a commodity for him to pick up and put down, but in a sense of an astonishing gift.

The thing that he was lacking and needing, searching for and yearning for, is now here. And all of this raises two distinctives about the attributes and role of women from a biblical point of view. And we can summarize these under the two headings, delightful and helpful.

[ 28 : 14 ] When the woman is brought to the man, he bursts into song. Sorry, I got that the wrong way around. He bursts into song. I've missed out that verse as well. Sorry. Disorganized. He says, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. And that's poetic. He's bursting into celebration.

And the rest of scripture repeatedly emphasizes that there is something utterly delightful about women. Now, that's not meant in a superficial, demeaning way, not in that way at all.

The Bible's using that language to speak of women in the highest terms. And scripture frequently emphasizes the beauty and light and splendor and preciousness and stunningness of women. Best example of that, Song of Solomon. You've captivated my heart, my sister, my bride.

You've captivated my heart with one glance at your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride. How much better is your love than wine and the

fragrance of your oils than any spice. There's many, many other examples. Of all the stuff that's been created in the world, there's something unique, precious, and spectacular about the beauty of women. Now, I don't just mean physical, external beauty. That's part of it. But it involves all aspects of being a woman. The Bible elevates women as the crowning point of creation. The Bible's making it very clear from the very opening pages that there's something incredibly special and important about women. So there's this delightful emphasis. There's also a helpful emphasis. So Genesis 2 teaches that women's made to be a helper, fit for the man. Now, again, that can sound offensive. It's not meant to be like a helper, like a slave, not at all. The key thing to note is that helpful presupposes capable. And it's solving the fact that there's so much that man cannot do and accomplish on his own. And you read through the rest of the Bible, you'll see that the woman made by God is phenomenally gifted and capable. A great example of that is Proverbs 31.

One, this is a poetic description of a wife of noble character, an excellent wife, as it's sometimes described. Let me just read these verses to you. An excellent wife who can find, she's far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax and works with willing hands. She's like the ships of the merchant, and she brings her food from afar. She rises when it's late at night, provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. She considers a field and buys it. With the field of her hands, she buys a vineyard. She dresses herself with strength, makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. That's just a wee selection.

[ 31 : 15 ] There's more in that chapter. Often, you know, people will say, oh, well, the Bible, that's going to say, you know, stay at home, do dishes, cook dinner, stuff like that. That's not what that's describing. That's describing a businesswoman. That's describing a craftswoman. That's describing a logistics project manager. That's entrepreneur. Somebody who carries big decisions. Somebody who looks after herself and those under her care. That's describing a grafter. I don't know if I should say this, but sometimes we think that, you know, that the Bible's description of women is like a kind of everything.

That's not what it is. So somebody who's just meant to be like, I don't know, doing next to nothing while the man does everything. That's not what that describes. And so, you know, and you're all examples of that. Women who have been so gifted and who've used those gifts in wonderful careers in wonderful ways. That's just echoing what the Bible teaches. So it's just, it's just, Proverbs 31 is a great chapter. It's really good. Key point is that that whole idea of helpfulness is just opening up a whole new level of capability to humanity. And of course, the creation mandates that we've looked at before, the things that God wants humanity to accomplish, are only possible now that the woman has been made.

It's impossible for man to do them on their own. So there's just a beautiful and inherent interdependence between man and woman. That's true biologically, but it's also true in family, in culture, in work, in everything. Now, a couple of important things to say. In that diagram there, you've got the man as a type of Christ. You see that in leadership and in carrying responsibility. The woman as a type of the church. You see that in delightfulness, in helpfulness. I want to suggest and say that all of this is true to our experience. And it's true when you look at history. If you look at history, the best examples of men have led well. The best examples of men have carried responsibility for all those under their care, especially for their families. Women have been a source of astonishing delight, not just to husbands, but to children, to siblings, to families.

Grandparents have been astonishing sources of delight. So many ways in which women have been a source of just so much joy and so many ways in which women have provided astonishing and outstanding help. So you see these things in history. We see it in life. But equally, throughout history, all of these things have been abused. So power gets exploited by men. At the same time, responsibility gets abdicated by men. Women have been objectified and abused. Their helpfulness has been undervalued, sometimes restricted. There's also been times in history when women have been controlling and manipulative in their own conduct. And so we see all of these things. But the key point is this.

[ 34 : 41 ] If those things are wrong, it's because something else is right. And what's right is the balanced intentions that God sets out for us in the Bible. So all of this is real to our experience. Secondly, and this is the big thing I want to get to, all of this is teaching us something massively important. All of this is typological because it's teaching us about Christ and his church. Because

man as biblical man is a type of Christ. Woman as biblical woman is a type of Christ's church. Christ is the bridegroom that leads his church and takes responsibility for her.

And the church is the bride that Christ delights in and who actually helps him in all that he seeks to do.

In other words, in the best of manhood, you see a glimpse of everything that Christ wants to be. In the best of womanhood, you see a glimpse of everything that Christ wants to have.

So in man, at his best, you see leadership, strength, and responsibility. All that's a glimpse of Christ. He's the leader. He's Lord. He's the one we follow. He is strong. He is the one who's conquered sin, risen in power over death. He takes responsibility. He takes that responsibility for his bride all the way to death on the cross. And in woman, you see delightfulness. You see preciousness. You see helpfulness. And all of that's a glimpse of the church. We help Christ. We're following him.

We're serving him. We're precious to him. And maybe the most astonishing thing of all is that he delights in you. You are a crowning, beautiful, delight-inspiring gift given to Christ.

[ 37 : 01 ] And the language of the rest of the Bible reinforces all of this. The shadow of the church in the Old Testament is the nation of Israel. And that nation is repeatedly described in feminine imagery in the Old Testament.

And all too often, that imagery is used to describe an adulterous bride because the people of Israel turned away from God and went after foreign idols. In the fulfillment in the Old Testament, the same language is picked up.

The church is described as the bride of Christ. And so the bride, the church, you, you are the one that meant the Son of God left heaven and came and sought her.

The bride is cleansed and purified by the cross because Christ came and gave himself up for her. You see that in the passage that Ken read for us.

In Ephesians 5, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. The bride is presented to Christ in splendor, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

[ 38 : 19 ] And the whole of the Bible culminates in the words that we read at the start, where heaven is described, the new heavens and the new earth is described as the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And so here's the description. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. This is what all of history is moving towards. From a biblical point of view, this is the destiny for all the Lord's people, that the earth will be remade and restored.

And this is the vision of it that we have recorded in Revelation. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband.

And this means that for all the women here, you can look at the best examples that you have seen in men.

Now, you've probably seen many, many bad examples, but there will have been times when you have seen brilliant examples. And when you have seen the best examples of a man, in the biblical sense, you can say that's a glimpse.

[ 39 : 32 ] That's a glimpse of what Christ has become for me. And for men, we can look at the best examples of women. And maybe there's been times in your life when you've had your heart broken by a woman.

Maybe you have. But leaving the negatives aside and thinking about the best examples that you've had of a woman, whether that's a wife or a mother or a grandmother or a sister or a friend or a colleague or whatever it may be, you can look at them and you can say, that's a glimpse of what I have become for Christ.

And this is why when we think about heaven, so often the language is that of a wedding. And you think to yourself, you know, will I be there?

And you think, well, if, you know, if I'm believing, I believe that I'm a Christian, I think, oh, wouldn't it be amazing to be there? And you think, there's this vast crowd, you know, and you think, oh, well, I mean, obviously, you know, I'm a bit of a nobody in Jesus' eyes.

But maybe I could be in the back couple of rows, maybe. And you think of like a huge football stadium or whatever, you know, and you're thinking, oh, maybe there's just room for me in the

corner because I don't even deserve that.

[ 40 : 53 ] And so we think of ourselves, maybe I'll be at the marriage supper of the Lamb and I'll be up there in the corner. That's a completely inaccurate view of the marriage supper of the Lamb because for everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus, you're not simply going to be in the crowd.

You're going to be the bride. And so we have this beautiful balance that what God has made in humanity in male and female, yes, it's imaging God, but it's also teaching us all the time about what God wants for us in Jesus.

Now, there's loads of implications for this, which I don't have time to talk about in any detail, but I'm just going to say them. And again, if anyone wants to talk more about them later or another time, that's totally fine.

But it's on this basis that there are lots of things that we as a church believe regarding men and women and marriage. So this is why we believe that marriage is between a man and a woman because of what it's speaking to.

It's speaking of Christ and the church. This is why we believe that marriage should be entered into with the expectation that it's going to be for life. Now, I know that there's often times when that doesn't work out.

[ 42 : 14 ] I've seen that in my own family, and I know that affects so many of us. But our position is that that's what the intention should be, that it should be for life.

This is why we believe that sex belongs within the boundaries of marriage, that Christ is utterly faithful to his bride, to his one bride.

He does not have multiple brides. He has one bride. And so we believe that the intimacy of sex belongs within the security of marriage. That's what we believe.

And that's because of how precious it is. This is why we believe that male and female are categories of human identity that we're born with and that we can't move away from.

And I know that that puts us at odds with how many people think around us today. This is also why we believe that there's different roles for men and women in the church. This is why when you read through redemptive history, you'll see that men and women, men and women, have utterly crucial roles in the outworking of God's plan of salvation.

[ 43 : 29 ] God works out his plan of salvation across history. In the Old Testament, there's several times when that plan of salvation hangs by a thread. And at virtually every time when God's plan is hanging by a thread, the key thing is a woman.

And you see that as you come into the New Testament and as it recounts God's plans being unfolded, you see the mention and the recognition of key women in that role.

And the two together are crucial to God's plan. This is why if you are a man, as a man, then you can point others to the glory of Christ.

And if you are a woman, then as a woman, you can point others to the glory of Christ's church. It's all pointing to something bigger and something beautiful. But the other crucial consequence of this is that this is also why getting married isn't everything.

It's not everything. Because, I mean, getting married is amazing. It is. It's really amazing. But it's not everything. And it doesn't happen to everybody. It's not everything. Because it's pointing to something bigger.

[ 44 : 40 ] Sexual fulfillment is not everything. Yes, it's immensely special, but it's not everything. The world around us will try to tell you that it's everything. It's not everything. It's pointing to something bigger.

Having children isn't everything. It's precious and wonderful. It's not everything. Because all of these things are pointing us to something bigger.

They're pointing us to Jesus. And knowing Him is everything. Everything that we have just now, the very best moments in life that we have just now, they're pointing us to eternity.

And this, I guess, is the big choice that we have in terms of how we think of the gospel. Without Jesus, if we say, right, I'm not going to follow Jesus and I'm not interested in Jesus, then the best of everything that you'll ever have is temporary.

Everything that we have is one day less. And it's slipping away. But the promise of the Bible and what Jesus wants you to have is that the best of everything you have now is a foretaste.

[ 46 : 13 ] A foretaste of the fullness of joy and love and delight and togetherness that we shall have forever with Jesus if we trust in Him.

Amen. Let's pray.