

From Fire to Fridge

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, well, thanks so much, Aaron. Great to see everyone. My name's Graeme. I'm the pastor here. Great to welcome you this morning. This is your first Sunday with us. Maybe you're visiting. And because that's true, you may be thinking, what on earth are we reading in the Bible this morning? Consciousness for a lot of us, we're joining halfway through this series. And just to put you at ease, we don't do this every Sunday, okay?

But it has been fantastic spending some time in the Song of Songs over the last couple of weeks. We're kind of at the halfway point. We've got two more to go. This portion of God's Word in the Bible that's wisdom literature. It's all about how we live in God's way, in God's world, for our good and for his glory.

And this is a book that celebrates the marital and sexual love that exists between a man and a woman in a covenant relationship of marriage. And it's been fantastic just to hear how God has been at work in our lives as we've traveled through this letter together, this letter together, this book together. It's a song. It's the song of songs.

So we're excited to get back into chapter five today. 17 years ago, I was an usher at a friend's wedding in Vancouver in Canada on a place called Thetis Island, which is just off the mainland. Now, I found a picture of it online. This isn't the actual wedding I went to, but it is the exact venue. Do you want to see it? You ready for this? Promise you won't get envious. Look at that. Isn't that amazing?

[1 : 2 8] It felt like a celebrity in a kilt over there. It's incredible. To this day, the most stunning wedding backdrop I've ever seen. The weather was everything that you'd expect from North America.

Everyone was looking fabulous. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as the couple were at the front making their vows to each other. And once everybody had composed themselves and sat down, the pastor then proceeded to give his message to the couple on their wedding day.

He said, Dave and Amanda, as you set out on your married life today, I want you to know straight off the bat that there's two things wrong with your marriage.

And he pointed at both of them and he said, you and you. Now, let you react to that for a moment. I wonder if somebody said that on your wedding day, how you'd react.

Two things wrong with this marriage, you and you. And what he perhaps lacked in reading the moment and going with the Disney-esque setting to this wedding, he more than made up for in his loving pastoral insight that he wanted to share with this couple who he'd walked with in the weeks up to their big day.

[2 : 5 1] Here's what he proceeded to say. He said, don't let this day in all its beauty, that's really just a decorated doorway to the rest of your lives, lull you into thinking that married life is going to be this constant stream of marital bliss.

It's not always slow dancing in the kitchen to Michael Bublé. Roses don't arrive every day from Interflora. Valentine's Day does not become the new Groundhog Day when you get married. Because marriage is two sinners living side by side in a Genesis 3 world. And because that's true, you will experience times of frustration, of miscommunication, not seeing eye to eye, and your married life together will be, at times it's going to be really, really hard.

Less like fire and more like fridge. There's going to be times when it's red hot. There's going to be times when it's cool.

And it's hard. And that's precisely where the couple in this song are at today. They're in one of those seasons. And I really hope, just if you're thinking about tapping out at this point, let me give you two things maybe to help you tap in for the rest of this over the next 20 minutes or so.

[4 : 15] I hope this does two things for us today as a church family. Because we're all at different seasons in our lives when it comes to this stuff. And this series, as it's tracked along, has maybe spoken into different seasons of our lives.

And particularly maybe today, it's speaking to those, particularly of those of us who are married. And here's the first thing I hope this does. I really hope this helps some of us come up for air. And here's what I mean by that. So often I think we feel like we have to come in these doors on a Sunday, maybe during the week, maybe your growth group, whatever it is you go to, and pretend everything is great.

And that four-letter word that we always use to describe how we're doing, we're doing fine. And I hope this is permission for many of us in this room today to know that it's okay to not be okay. I always love what C.S. Lewis said about friendship. To paraphrase, he said, Friendship is born at the moment when one person says to the other person, What, you too?

[5 : 23] I thought I was the only one. And so may this passage today help us as a church family make and find friends who know what it's like.

And the ultimate friend is the Lord Jesus. And this is the second thing I hope this helps us see today. It helps us see that this point's beyond married life.

And it shows us, secondly, where to run for help. Right? And here's what I mean by that. If what I'm saying, if this whole less fire, more fridge, it is easy for us to do that in terms of our love for Jesus. And what this is going to do today is help us see how wonderful, how willing, how available, and how brilliant a Savior Jesus is. Ready for this?

I'm going to go with that silence and go for yes. Okay? Brilliant. Come with me to the passage. Let's see how this works together. Last week, we saw this couple on their wedding day.

[6 : 33] Do you remember it? JT did a wonderful job taking us through that last section. That wedding day, a moment that ended, if you see the text, verse 1 of chapter 5. Do you see it?

With their friends egging on this couple to eat, drink, and be drunk with love. And that sounds like Taylor Swift lyrics if ever I've heard them, right?

Eat, drink, be drunk with love. And you could almost picture them, couldn't you? Setting off into the sunset in their car, tin cans rattling in the back. I don't know whether people still do that or not today, but with the words just married emblazoned on the back windshield.

And they're there in the car, and they're taking a selfie of themselves, the couple sharing it on Instagram. Everyone's liking it, heart emojis everywhere. And I thought to myself, wouldn't that be a great place to end the song?

No. Because maybe like you, like me, I remember reading that the first time I came across it, and I'm thinking to myself, seriously? From the west of Scotland, cheese factor 100.

[7 : 41] I thought this was church, not Disney. Surely this is way more idealism than it is realism. Well, if you're like me, if that was maybe your thought when we did it last week, this today is life after the honeymoon.

And picking up the song again at verse 2, to quote that 60s classic, they've lost that loving feeling. Now, what does she tell us?

Come with me to the text and see it. She says, I slept, but my heart was awake. Do you see it in the text? Which I think is her way of telling us that she's had another dream.

Remember she had a dream a few chapters ago? Here she is having another dream. And given this is a dream, it's quite hard to work out exactly what's going on here, but here's my best shot. I think her dream is revealing what's playing on her mind.

You ever had a dream like that? Just your subconscious kind of brings stuff out in a dream, and it's really weird, but actually it's what's going on in your mind. I think that's kind of what's going on here.

[8 : 47] Her dream is revealing what's going on in her subconscious, what she's worried about.

And in her case, it's revealing a tension that I think she senses in the back of her head is snowballing and developing in their relationship together.

Come and see how this works. She says, In her dream, my beloved knocked. Do you see it? Which is just another way of saying he's in the mood for love.

However, look at how she responds to his advances. Verse 3, he's knocking on that door. You've got to clock that knock for where we're going to finish.

He's knocking on that door, and she responds, verse 3, I put off my garment. How could I put it on again? I'd bathe my feet. How could I spoil them again?

Which is her way of saying, for whatever reason, I'm just not in the mood. It's too much hassle.
[9 : 50] And by verse 5, do you see by the time she does feel in the mood, and notice the three times repeated phrase, but, there at verse 6. But, but, but, her man was no longer there.

And again, remember, likely still in this dream, she goes in this all-out search for him, around the city, no one's seen him. Where is he?

And I think the beating that she's described as having received at verse 7, friends, I think it's a metaphor. Remember, this is a dream, that it's expressing the fact that this tension in the relationship is making her feel like the stuffing has been completely knocked out of her in life. Right? My kids love the bear factory. Have you ever been there? Princess Street, you know, it's still there. You just get these bears who are just lifeless. Right? Just all this stuffing has been taken out. That's what she's saying. She feels like life has just knocked the stuffing out of me. So, do you see what's going on? Put these two things together. He wants to spend time with her. She's not really up for it.

[10 : 58] But then she wants to spend time with him. And he's not there. Which, bring that together, means Houston, we've got a problem. And let me just pause at this moment and make two quick applications as we see this tension in their marriage.

And here's number one. And it's to those of us who would maybe love to be married, but aren't. Let me, let you hear me say, friends, those desires are not wrong.

But, they are misguided if, deep down, you think that getting married is going to be the answer to all your problems. I think in Christian circles in particular, we can subtly elevate marriage as the thing to which we all aspire.

I think we've got to be so careful, haven't we, that we never project that idea even subconsciously in our church culture. It is not the be-all and end-all. Particularly when you think about where this is going to end this morning.

It's certainly not where we find our identity. Speaking as one who is happily married, and you do the math, so there's one punching well above his weight.

[12 : 14] I remember when I got married, just discovering a whole host of different problems in my life, 90% of which was just my own sin being revealed in new ways. marriage isn't going to solve all your problems.

But here's number two, speaking particularly to those of us who are married. You know, there will be seasons in married life when it's harder to find time together, right?

Been there, done it. And there's all sorts of reasons why finding time to be together is going to be difficult. Maybe it's a really busy season at work. Maybe it's just night shifts galore.

Maybe you're traveling a lot. Maybe it's looking after family members. It's one of those seasons. Maybe kids have come along and your energy levels are taking an absolute pounding and it's just baby brain everywhere.

Different seasons come and go in life. But that said, if in our marriages we keep finding ourselves using the phrase, the one on the screen, you know the one that we always use, like ships in the night, is at least worth asking ourselves the question, is this a season or is it a pattern?

[13 : 35] And, I'm speaking from my own mistakes here, be aware that you might not see that as a problem. But it is entirely possible that your spouse might.

And the encouragement here is to talk to one another. You know, we live in a world that is increasingly saying that if you're in a marriage to someone and you're no longer feeling it, it's no longer doing it for you, it's no longer scratching that itch, then it might be time to start looking elsewhere.

And I think that's why that the statistics are telling us that more and more people in our world are delaying marriage or even dismissing it as a viable option entirely because why would you want to restrict yourself like that?

I'm so conscious I still like to think I can kick it at 39. I'm still on my football team WhatsApp group. There are, I think, almost just short of 80 guys on that group. I'm so conscious that there are maybe three or four of us that are married in that group.

And I'm certainly the only one I think with more than one kid. But it's what's going on in our world isn't it right now? Statistics will tell you that. But come to Jesus and hear him say that if you're primarily in a relationship for you and what you can get out of it rather than in it to serve the other person sacrificially then you've got it the wrong way around.

[15:03] We follow a saviour who calls us to die to self to take up our cross to follow him. It's not about self-serving.

Remember we thought about this in week one what this book is telling us is marriage life is not about self-serving it's about radical self-giving and the promise that Jesus makes that it is there as we follow our saviour as we die to ourselves as we live to serve him and live to serve his people that that's the place that we'll find ourselves.

And that's why because that's the the noise out there that is why remember we said this a few weeks ago we need to turn down the world's song and we need to turn up the voice of God as we hear it in the song of songs.

Out with our affection for and our walk with Jesus is where we're going to finish. There is no more important thing than we can be giving ourselves to if we're married than investing in the health of our marriages and so this is an invitation to get proactive to get creative in stoking the fire.

Here's a question for you if you are married and I ask myself that all the time because Alex's love language is time when was the last time you spent quality time together?

[16:26] You know we are so grateful for the many people in this church family who over the years have babysat for Alex and I and have allowed us just to go out for a meal together.

You know often those meals are based around cheap it is on deals with a burger because we're British and we love a bargain but do you know what they have proved to be priceless times for our relationship and if you're here and you may be thinking actually we'd love a bit of that reach out for babysitters.

I love the fact that we're in a church family where people are so willing to do that and let me just say as well if you're here and you're thinking this isn't where I'm at remember we thought about last week don't think that this doesn't affect you because a church family we're invested in each other and so if you're maybe thinking I'm not married let me just say that you have got a stake in the health of the marriages of the people that are in this church family.

Thank you for those who pray for us. Because here's what I want you to see if you come with me to verse 9 on that note it's the input of her friends that change the game.

So don't think you've not got a role to play here if you're from the outside looking into people that are married in this church you've got such a role to play you have a stake and verse 9 tells you that you do. Remember this song remember the friends who are in the background of this song here's what they say how is your beloved better than others?

[17:57] How most beautiful of women question mark how is your beloved better than others than you so charge us? Do you see how that's not a closed question? Do you see how it's an open question?

One that invites a response. Can I paraphrase it? Tell us again why you love him. Yeah? Tell us what made you fall in love with him in the first place.

And see if last week was all about him pouring out compliments on her well from verse 10 she is now pouring out the compliments on him.

Now see them from verse 10 and remember this is a different generation from ours remember the images are very much different but go with it okay she says his heads so do you see what she says this guy's like a just for men hair dye model it is jet black his eyes his cheeks his lips so he's a just for men hair model he's a Nivea lip balm model as well do you see they are like the lilies they are red and kissable that's what she's saying his arms his body so he's clearly no stranger to the gym and just in case we're in any doubt verse 15 he's not skipped leg day either do you see it but do you see what she's doing do you see what she's conveying to all those who will listen she's using poetic language and this is so important for where we're going to finish poetic language to describe the strength the stability the majesty and the beauty of the man who's captured my heart but see what she also says and I love this what else is he to her verse 16 do you see it my beloved and my friend and so here's the thing as much as David Hasselhoff as this guy might like to be all that stuff's going to fade it's true in life isn't it all our looks are going to fade they're going to go turn 40 on Tuesday I'm so aware of it getting old but do you know what friendship won't and so her friends ask her again at chapter 6 where is he and I think we're meant to understand at this point from chapter 6 she awakens from her dream remember she's been in a dream she can't find him she's panicking she awakens from her dream and her man's been there the whole time and then we get that repeated refrain verse 3 I am his and my beloved is mine and we're meant to understand that there's a glorious reunion here they are back together and they're looking each other in the eye and so as we

see their union together just at the end here this passage invites all of us married or not however you would describe yourself today to something way bigger and so let me take you to the only place in the

[21 : 21] New Testament I think you can make a case that the Song of Songs is alluded to and we find it in Revelation chapter 3 and what's going on there Revelation chapter 3 Jesus speaking to the church these seven churches he's speaking to the church in Laodicea and in this church in Laodicea it is full of people who were once on fire for Jesus right all they wanted to talk about was Jesus but now with the passing of time they've just kind of settled for this cold orthodoxy orthodoxy Jesus is oh they still like him but he's kind of just this weekend hobby that is kind of the veneer on this religious looking life that's like one of those chocolate Easter eggs that just looks great on the outside but it's hollow on the inside their spiritual life's airplane mode is well and truly on not all that fussed with

Jesus remember back to where we started once fire now fridge yeah and to rouse them from their spiritual sleepiness Jesus says do you know how you taste to me lukewarm can you taste it lukewarm you know I love two types of coffee I love frappuccinos cold really cold incredible the other type of coffee boiling hot latte really really hot but you know what's the worst taste ever so you've got a really hot coffee and you've just forgotten about it for half an hour and then you quickly take a sip and bleh disgusting it's the same with the frappuccino when you've left it for half an hour and it's kind of warmed up a little bit bleh that's what

Jesus is saying can you taste it you're neither hot nor cold and maybe you're asking yourself how do I know if I'm lukewarm and I've asked myself that often over the years you know my greatest fear in life is that I get really good at this job I get really comfy in church and I just get bored with Jesus how do I know friends have you lost the joy of knowing him has bible reading become routine has prayer become token has coming to church just become a thing that kills and fills a bit of time on a Sunday morning have you lost maybe the joy of serving him have you noticed inside of you I often catch myself doing this there's a critical spirit that's developing inside of you you're so aware in church of the things that aren't going well the things that are lacking rather than looking for the signs of the spirit at work if you recognize any of those signs and you want to change then here's a great place to start and taking a cue from the friends in this song what made you fall in love with Jesus in the first place you know was it his his boundless compassion for utterly helpless people was it his unrivaled wisdom to any question that people put to him was it the way that people said of him that he does all things well was it the way that he saw and remember this for me was one that he perfectly diagnosed the human heart the world that he was describing was the one that I was looking in and seeing was it his unhurried love and pursuit of flustered people was it the barriers he was willing to cross to reach societies outcasts and nobodies was it his sacrificial death on the cross as he took our sin and shame on himself as he said father not my will but your will be done friends what first drew you to Jesus what made you fall in love with him

I've loved it the last couple of weeks hearing testimonies of people I love a testimony it is like hearing from someone who has just gone on their first date with the person they're going to marry in the future isn't it right I remember at uni having that experience my flatmate Ben came home we're up to like three in the morning telling me about this girl Nikki that he'd met and in the weeks to follow I could hear him on the phone tower in the bedroom doing the whole you hang up no you hang up I will come in there and hang on that phone if you don't hang up but what first drew you to Jesus in the first place do you need this morning some of us to regain that wonder at who he is just like in the man the man in the song here's the wonderful bit Jesus is knocking here I am I stand this is what he's saying to the church in Laodicea here I am I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and eat with that person and they with me he moves from warning why does he give them the warning because he then moves to wooing and this is the Jesus that we have today and you know what the wonderful thing is if you just take it straight from the text like the man in this song when the woman wakes and finds him right there with her do you know what we all need to know today when we turn back to him when we fix our eyes on who he is however spiritual sleepy we might be and whatever season of life we might be in we need to know that Jesus is going nowhere have you lost sight of how wonderful how brilliant how committed and how available a saviour we have in Jesus turn to him this morning turn to him you know I found so helpful over the last month or so just looking for a quick thing to do you know

[28 : 57] John's gospel 21 chapters days of the week 7 7 divided by 21 divided by 7 3 just found it so helpful every night during the week to read 3 chapters of John's gospel get it done in a week go back to the beginning read 3 chapters of John's gospel get to the end go back to the beginning and see the things that you notice in a book that you thought you knew I love the intentionality of this woman when she realizes he's knocking she's going she's looking I wonder if the Lord by his spirit would stir in us that same intention to pursue Jesus today you know just as we close let me just leave us with this thought because I think this is the the spirit inspired response that we need to make to this text today you know before Alex and I moved back to Edinburgh in 2012 we used to live in Bristol and there was a street in Bristol called

Muller Road and I had a friend called Amy who used to live in a big house in Muller Road and her and her flatmates nicknamed it Fruit Corner which if you know your yogurts I thought was quite funny but Muller Road was named after this man called George Muller George Muller famous Christian evangelist best known for building five houses for orphaned children in which 10,000 children were cared for before his death right he's celebrated in the city George Muller so many things going on in his life if you're looking for a biography to read of somebody maybe over the summer fantastic one to get your your hands on George Muller somebody once asked him with so many things pressing against his to-do list how he did it and he said this he said the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul happy in the Lord I love that have my soul happy in the Lord you know I've tried to be I want to be better at this first thing getting up in the morning putting away the phone and picking up the word here is the saviour who's knocking friends have you forgotten how wonderful he is today let me pray Jesus what a beautiful name son of God son of man lamb that was slain joy and peace strength and hope grace that blows all fear away Jesus what a beautiful name and so father I pray this morning whatever this has landed on our hearts and in our lives that you would help us Lord to lift our eyes to Jesus father thank you that there is more grace in him than there is sin in us and so father I pray for those of us here today who are married father who are maybe in relationships where it's tough lord I pray that you would help lord in those situations thank you that you are available thank you that we were singing at the start that you are a refuge lord you are a very present help in times of trouble but father we pray that you would lift our eyes to Jesus his greatness today father thank you for your word thank you that we have it in our language thank you that we can read it pick up understand and learn but father thank you most of all that through it we can know Jesus for ourselves so father thank you be with us just as we close our time together we pray in Jesus name amen