

Whole Singleness

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. Thanks so much for coming. We're in the second of our Real Asianships series. Last week we looked at friendship. That was a struggle.
- This week we're looking at singleness. And that eclipsed last week's difficulty. Writing a biblical talk on friendship paled was easy compared to putting this together.
- I hope it's helpful to all of us. That's been my prayer. I've redrafted this talk five times. And the first three went in the bin and started again.
- So I hope that it's been refined rather than diluted as it's gone through its many iterations. Singleness is a tricky subject to write on for a great number of reasons.
- I read about seven books this week on the Christian view of singleness. I would say six of them were basically dating advice for single people clothed in Christian language. It's hard to write on because single status encapsulates a wide variety of people.
- [1 : 0 9] Those that have never been married, those that are divorced, and those that are widowed are all at present single. It also encapsulates a wide range of ages.
- I'm sure there are different struggles if you're single at 20 than if you're single at 70. I also think there's a difference in gender.
- I think perhaps single women think differently about their singleness to single men. I can't say that for sure, having only got one perspective in my life. Singleness also varies between the individuals.
- Some single people see their singleness as a great blessing, whilst others see it as a great burden, and many find themselves somewhere along that spectrum, depending on the days.
- Some individuals have a real desire to be married, but yet remain single. Others, for varying reasons, value and relish their single status. Others started out with a desire to be married, but over time have learnt contentment in their singleness.
- [2 : 1 6] Yes. I'm also very conscious that I'm speaking about singleness as someone miraculously who got married, which is more to do with the grace of my wife and the wisdom of God than anything to do with me.
- I found myself ironing this afternoon. Thus was the sanctifying influence of marriage. I thought to myself this would never have happened unless Aileen was gracious to me.
- I'm also very conscious that while writing this, I don't want to be glib or patronising or to diminish what can be a very real struggle or a very great blessing of being single.
- So having prayed, wrestled, read, ruminated and redrafted a lot, I hope that what I share this evening might be of real help. It might bring blessing and be an eye-opener for all of us, no matter our marital status.
- And we will leave enlightened, better equipped and with greater hoping in all that we have in Christ. All of us have at one time been single.
- [3 : 2 3] And even if we're married, half of those people will perhaps leave this life single. So it is perhaps more relevant than you would imagine. So let me pray and then we'll get to work.

Paul writes, and he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Father, when it comes to this subject of relationships, Father, when it comes to this subject of fulfilment and romantic love or lack of it, Father, our world is saying one thing and your word is saying another.

And so I really pray that we might think about this subject not from a worldly point of view, but we would see your wisdom, we would trust in your grace. And we would love your son most, over and above all things on this earth.

So Lord, speak to us and help us guide our thinking, change our lives, courage us along the way in our pursuit of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

[4 : 39] 2007 was the year in the UK where the number of single people, number of single adults for the first time outnumbered the number of married adults. We are now a majoritively unmarried culture.

Marriage has been on the decline since 1971 and is projected to fall below 35% of the population by 2031. That only a third of adults in 15 years' time will be married.

These statistics are slightly more in favour of marriage within the church, as you might expect. But single adults are a significant minority of most congregations.

Many in our churches are single and we are ministering to a majority single culture. So thinking theologically about this subject is of vital importance.

Our culture and its pedestalling of romantic love makes the challenge and perception of singleness worse in our eyes. Where would Hollywood be without the boy meets girl storyline?

[5 : 46] How many songs would be in the charts if it wasn't for our fixation with romantic love? What would people sing about if it isn't? The longing for a love you don't have, finding the love you long for, being rejected by the one you love or losing the love you once had.

In the eyes of our world, all you need is love. And for that, in their eyes, you need a lover. If you type online dating into Google, you get 145 million hits in 0.31 seconds.

It seems the only happy ending society can stomach is one with a couple walking hand in hand along the beach. And that couple is made up of two people who have found the one.

Growing up, we give Barbie to our children for their birthdays and give them Ken for Christmas to make the picture complete and palatable.

One of the most excruciating things I've ever had to do in ministry was speaking to an after-evening service Bible study, which was lovingly called the Fellowship of the No Rings, which was this collection of single people gathered from across three churches who basically got together in the hope that they might be saved from their single status.

[7 : 09] It was excruciating. The way this group was spoken about by those not in the group was utterly embarrassing and so dismissive and diminishing of these people.

It revealed just how much culture would shape people's thinking about personhood, contentment, and completeness. Our surrounding culture sees people, 30 in their late 30s, who are still single, and their question is, what's wrong?

Many of the books that I read simply said, if you're still single, it's your fault, you're too picky. Lower your standards and get on with it. So patronizing and so badly thought out.

So what does God have to say about singleness? If we develop a biblical theology of singleness, how does that shape our thinking from God's Word about how to think about this subject, how we value and live out the truth of God's Word in our lives?

Well, I think the first thing that I want to say is that the New Testament in particular speaks about singleness in a way that is revolutionary compared to all the other world religions.

[8 : 26] Astonishingly different. Whilst the vast majority of monotheistic religions of the world all share similar family values and sexual ethics, Christianity is worlds apart from these on the subject of singleness.

In Judaism, marriage is considered a commandment and celibacy is deplored. In the Quran, the practice of celibacy is considered as exceeding the law of God.

Whilst marriage is akin to divinity in Mormonism, where celestial marriage is necessary in order to enter heaven. In traditional cultures, you are a non-person until you're married.

In modern cultures, you are unfulfilled unless you have a partner, husband or wife. Christianity, however, not only affirms singleness, but goes further describing it as a gift and a highly valued lifestyle within the believing community.

However, there is a lot of work we need to do to see that in all its radicalness. I want to spend the first bit of time developing a biblical theology of singleness, which I assure you is a lot more exciting than it sounds.

[9 : 50] And then I want to see a few things that we can take away from that to think about singleness. So here we go. The creation, mandate and singleness.

I wonder, what is the first commandment that God gives to his creation in the Bible? What is the first commandment that God gives to his creation in the Bible?

Be fruitful and multiply. And who does he give that commandment to? He gives it to the fish of the sea and the birds of the air in Genesis 1, verse 22.

In Genesis 1, 28, that same command is given to Adam and Eve with the added command to subdue the earth, to be God's vice-regents over creation.

Therefore, in Eden, before the fall, reproducing oneself is a fundamental and natural task commissioned by God for all creation, including human beings.

[10 : 57] To achieve this end, it was necessary for the alone Adam to find, to have, to have created a bespoke companion for him, a helper.

And so Eve is created that that creation mandate might be carried out. Therefore, we can conclude in the creation mandate, singleness was neither present nor appropriate, as the need to procreate was intrinsic to obeying God's command.

See also in Genesis 3, as God is cursing them for their disobedience, how fundamental offspring are to the redemptive promise that God makes to Adam and Eve amidst the curses.

So in Genesis 3, 15, And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

Therefore, the creation mandate continues, And these two set of offspring will continue a struggle down through the ages until one offspring will finally stamp out evil literally forever.

[12 : 09] And therefore, descendants and procreation continue on. Be fruitful and multiply in Eden. As they're kicked out of Eden, be fruitful and multiply seems to continue.

After the flood, this mandate, be fruitful and multiply, is repeated to Noah twice, in Genesis 9, verse 1 and Genesis 9, verse 7.

So after the fall, once God presses the reset button on creation with the flood, the creation mandate still stands. The necessity to be fruitful and multiply.

Therefore, who's in the ark? Noah and his wife. Shem, Ham and Japheth and their three wives. Because to fulfill this mandate, you cannot go it alone.

If procreation is commanded, then singleness is not viable. Then we get to Abraham, Genesis 12. In Genesis 12, God makes a covenant with Abraham that is primarily involved in progeny, in offspring.

[13:17] So in Genesis 12, when the covenant is made, Now the Lord said to Abraham, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation.

And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you, I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

See that the core of this covenant surrounds the promise of children. Becoming a great nation requires the multiplying of descendants in order that the nation will be large and great and spectacular.

And this idea to have a great name in a Semitic culture is to be remembered and venerated by your descendants. Abraham will have a multitude of offspring through which the world will be blessed.

It's intrinsic there in Genesis 12. A few verses later, this is made more explicit. As Abraham looks out over Canaan, God says in verse 7, To your offspring I will give this land.

[14:31] This Abrahamic covenant is repeated and developed upon five different occasions in Genesis. And across the five, the promise of offspring is explicitly mentioned 12 times and illustrated using three different metaphors that Abraham's descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth, as numerous as the stars in the sky, and as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

This dependence on offspring emphasizes the provision of God in overcoming Sarah's barrenness. If procreation is necessary in obedience to God, then Sarah's barrenness will be a real problem.

So will Rebecca's in the next generation and Rachel's in the generation to follow. In the old covenant that builds from Abraham onwards, God is focused on Israel as an ethnic people and therefore the emphasis on marriage and reproduction is universally the norm.

We get to the law and the law is bound up with children as well. By the time we get to Exodus chapter 1, we read that Israel were fruitful and increased greatly.

They multiplied and increased exceedingly. They seem to have at least taken that command of God quite seriously. And then in Deuteronomy 7, when God is laying out the stipulations of the covenant, he writes this about the blessing that will befall them if they're obedient to him.

[16:05] You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers.

He will love you and bless you and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.

You shall be blessed above all people. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock. And then at the end of Deuteronomy, where this covenant is reiterated, the curse is the complete opposite.

That if they're disobedient, barrenness will be the punishment. There's also throughout Deuteronomy, this concern about inheritance. That somebody's name will not be blotted out or cut off from the land.

There's exhaustive stipulations in the law that people's inheritance, which is necessitated by offspring, will not fall into the wrong hands. So in the year of Jubilee, you get everything back.

[17 : 20] If you're a man and you die without male offspring, you have a Leverite marriage where you marry, your wife marries your brother.

Failing thought she got a bad deal the first time round. That's what we see in the book of Ruth that we read from earlier.

That Ruth is a single lady, a single Moabite lady going back to a foreign people has very little prospects. But Boaz, in the end, that great Boaz, comes forward as the kinsman redeemer who performs a Leverite marriage, not to Elimelech's brother, but to a very near relative.

The law of Moses, when you drill down into the detail, gives no value or affirmation to singleness. It's just not there. Which brings us to David.

God makes a covenant with David, which again is centered around offspring. He's promised that he'll have a great name like the name of great ones of the earth.

[18 : 31] But further down, the Lord says, I will make you a house, a dynasty. I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. In the Old Testament, this is what I'm trying to show, singleness is not value.

It's not a fact. It's not a norm. In fact, as far as I can see, in the Old Testament, there were six groups of people that were single, widows, but most of them would have got married again.

Eunuchs, a most unenviable position in ancient Israel, seen as non-persons, those that are diseased. Those with a divine call, the people like Jeremiah, in Jeremiah 16, is told not to marry, as a visual metaphor for how Israel has behaved.

The divorce, the stipulations in Deuteronomy 24, about grounds for divorce, and young people are waiting to be married. So you get Isaac in Genesis 24, and Samson in Judges 14, both waiting for their parents to arrange a marriage.

[19 : 50] Further demonstrates how undesirable singleness was as regards the Old Covenant, and how unusual singleness is in the Old Testament.

It's not been a greatly encouraging talk so far if you're single. But it does get better. It gets radically different. And we start to see it in the prophets, particularly in Isaiah.

There's something very unusual against the backdrop of negative singleness being foreshadowed in the prophets. The winds of change are blowing through the scriptures as we move from old to new.

And so we get the fourth servant song, the one that we love, the end of Isaiah 52 and 53. This foreshadowed description of the Lord Jesus.

Says he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

[20 : 58] By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. It is clear that this character, this suffering servant, dies with no offspring.

Who can speak of his descendants? No one. He was cut off that Hebrew idiom about not having anyone to carry on his name. Yet towards the end of the psalm, in verse 10, something remarkable happens.

He has put him to grief. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. We have a servant who dies without any natural offspring. And yet once he's made atonement for sin, he has offspring that he sees and is satisfied by.

[22 : 11] We have a figure in the future who will be single and yet have offspring. What sort of offspring will they be? Well, remarkable offspring.

A very different kind of offspring because in Isaiah 54, we have the song of a barren woman and this is what she sings. Sing, O barren one, who did not bear, break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor.

For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married. Says the Lord, enlarge the place of your tent and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out.

Why? Because there's lots more offspring. You need to upsize. This little barren woman is told, do not hold back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left and your offspring will possess the nations and will be people and will people the desolate cities.

[23 : 13] We get a servant who dies alone and yet has offspring. We have a barren woman who has no descendants and yet sings rejoicingly over new offspring.

Just to make it even better in Isaiah 56, once this servant has come, for thus says the Lord and let the eunuch complain, I am only a dry tree.

And let no eunuch complain, I am only a dry tree. To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbath, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. So the eunuch, because of this servant, is now welcomed in God's temple, will have a everlasting name that won't be cut off and have a name greater than sons and daughters.

Just to bring it full circle, in Isaiah 56, the foreigner has many children and a great name and a wonderful inheritance. So through the old, so though the old covenant centers around ethnic Israel, is marked by offspring and therefore makes marriage implicit and singleness cursed, the picture in the prophets, particularly Isaiah, offers new hope and stands in stark contrast.

[24 : 44] Suddenly singleness is reinterpreted and the covenant revolves around a different kind of access. Not a physical access, but a spiritual access.

Not about being Abraham's descendants by race, but God's spiritual offspring by grace. By trusting the sufficient seed, the serpent crushing son, the obedient servant and the forever king, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. Suddenly it is not about your human birth or pedigree or credentials. It's not about whether you're married or not. The sole way life now finds worth is not about whether you were born or birthed your own children.

It's whether you were born from above and regenerated by the Spirit. Which forms a backdrop to our New Testament. And in the New Testament, singleness is not only viable, but affirmed.

It's not only an option for some, it is a venerated pursuit for many. John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, some of the disciples, and Jesus himself are all single.

[25 : 57] If Jesus, the most complete human being who ever lived, was single, then that is a stunning endorsement as to the value of that status now in the New Covenant.

If the Apostle Paul, the most prolific writer of the New Testament and pioneering church planter of the known world, was single, then we have to say that things are markedly different in the now present kingdom of God.

If John the Baptist, who is described by Jesus as the greatest of all men born of woman, if he were single, we must see that there's a markedly different way of life at the inauguration of God's kingdom.

Jesus says only two things explicitly about singleness and neither of them are addressing the subject head on. Both of them are in debates with people trying to trap him. So in Matthew 19, as the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, he states that Moses condescended to give them divorce in the law because of their hardness of heart.

It then says, the disciples on the back of that where Jesus says that marriage is to be honored and obeyed, the disciples say, if such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.

[27 : 20] But Jesus said to them, not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given, for there are eunuchs who have been made so from birth. There are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men.

And there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it. It's quite tricky to know exactly what Jesus is saying there and many people have taken those teachings badly to their detriment in church history.

But over and against the negative connotations of being a eunuch, what Jesus says is suggesting that in his kingdom there is credit, viability, and blessing to not being married.

There is credit in being a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom. There is advantage to some and the kingdom as a whole in some remaining single for spiritual reasons.

The second reference is in Matthew 22 where this time Jesus is trying to be trapped by the Sadducees with the riddle about the seven brothers who all end up marrying the same woman and he's then asked well whose wife will she be in the resurrection.

[28 : 35] And Jesus says you are wrong because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels of heaven.

So Jesus seems to be saying that in the consummated kingdom in resurrection life singleness will be the universal state and marriage is a reality in this life only.

This again seems to diminish the necessity, importance and eternal value of marriage and in fact frames union between husband and wife as a transitory reality.

These assertions are further elaborated on by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 which is a great text to go to as we think about singleness. In 1 Corinthians 7 it's important to remember the context of Corinth that this is a very licentious people that seem to be going a bit wild.

So we don't want to make sweeping generalizations but at least seven times in one chapter Paul places singleness alongside marriage and frames them both as good gifts from a good God.

[29 : 52] Paul also seems if you read the whole chapter to commend singleness at times above marriage. He seems to show bias towards being single.

Many times he says I wish you were all single as I am which is a stunning thing against all that we've read in the Old Covenant and against the culture that Paul and we live in.

So in 1 Corinthians 7 at the beginning it is good for a man not to marry but since there is so much immorality each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

It is good for a man not to marry. I'm sure they would have read that chapter several times as they thought about it. He says in 1 Corinthians 7 I wish that all of you were as I am single but each of you has your own gift from God.

One has this gift another has that. gift there is about the status not the ability. So he's not talking about the ability to be singleness as a gift he's saying singleness is a gift both ordained from the hand of a good God.

[31 : 12] 1 Corinthians 7 verse 8 Now to be unmarried now to the unmarried and the widows I say it is good for them to stay unmarried as I do but if they cannot control themselves they should marry for it is better to marry than to burn with passion but later on in the chapter are you unmarried?

Do not look for a wife verse 28 those who marry will face many troubles in this life and I want to spare you this I look back on my single life I didn't have iron shirts but life was quite simple now with marriage and two people's point of views having to be taken in and decision making one car that needs to be juggled around lifts here and there can't just get away with a microwave meal for one anymore that definitely needs to feed two people life is more complicated I wouldn't say it's many troubles and I'd be disappointed if Aileen heard the recording and I didn't set that straight but life is certainly more complicated 1 Corinthians 7 32 to 35 it makes quite a long winded argument which paraphrased that married person has complex and compromised affections whereas someone who is single can live in a right way with undivided devotion to the

Lord 1 Corinthians 7 39 a woman is bound to her husband as long as she lives but if her husband dies she is free to marry anyone she wishes but he must belong to the Lord in my judgment she is happier if she stays as she is that is now single there's no getting away from the truth that in the New Testament singleness is no longer cursed but seemingly blessed and greatly blessed in the New Testament the expectancy of procreation is diminished and the now spiritual family birthed in the Lord Jesus is a whole different thing it revolves around a whole different axis it has a totally different value system a totally reconstructed relational matrix and a covenantal contract that supersedes the need to procreate and have progeny that it seems that now in Jesus is reframed and what was formerly true is now obsolete conscious that that is quite a long winded way of addressing the subject but I think there is value in showing us that things are now new in the kingdom of Jesus Christ things are radically different from how they were as weight to the revolution in relationships that Jesus inaugurates where a singleness was a tragedy in the old covenant it has the potential for great blessing and eternal fruit for the acquisition of a great name and to do great good and bear great fruit for the Lord in the new covenant so to finish

I want to say a few things that are practical and hopefully helpful on the back of what we've been looking at the first is this I think it is good if we are all conscious of the struggles faced by single people you can't get away from what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 that if you are burning with passion it is good to be married that there is real real urges real desires within us to have a companion to have a partner even though Paul says singleness is viable and valued he still says there is real struggles the struggle of loneliness to not have that special someone to wake up alone every day it is hard that is

I am sure a real struggle for many and therefore it is important for all of us to be open to walking closely with single people to making sure that they are involved in life to involve them in our family lives that if as Jesus inaugurates churches a totally different kettle of fish then it is important that we reframe the way we think about each other and particularly look out for those that are single if what Paul is saying and Jesus is saying about singleness is true the great struggle would be sexual immorality and again that is going to be overcome by having good friends by having people invited into their lives so there can be accountability it is the same for everyone sexual immorality is not a problem for the single alone but it is only going to be overcome if we support each other and encourage one another amidst our sex obsessed culture that is ready to trip us up and snare us at every opportunity with singleness

[36 : 45] I think comes very real struggle but very real struggle if we can forge great relationships that we can certainly bear each other's burdens and help each other through secondly I think there's very real dangers that we do live in a culture where the dream of young boys and girls is to go through life to find that someone to have that big wedding day to have 2.4 children although how you manage 0.4 I'm not sure so there's a real danger if our lives as Christians don't play out in the way that culture says we should for bitterness to grow for resentment to grow for frustration to take over and for us to doubt that God knows what he's doing and he's somehow given a second best therefore we've got to affirm each other in our status and help each other through when those things are rearing their ugly head we don't allow bitterness to grow into gangrene and then become detrimental to our health and relationship with the

Lord Jesus there's also a real danger that we form for ourselves functional saviors that if I am a single person who longs to be married then my functional hell is to remain single for the rest of my life and therefore I'll create for myself a functional saviour which will be somebody to lift me out of that functional hell and the problem is the minute we frame it like that it's destined to all go wrong because there's only one proper saviour and his name is Jesus and if we have all of our identity tied up in what anybody else can do for us we'll always be disappointed and we'll always be let down you can do that with anything if your functional hell is driving to work in a clapped out car then your functional saviour will be a new car and then when that rusts and needs to go to the mechanic you'll be crushed so there's real dangers in singleness but I think there's real opportunity

Paul is very clear in 1 Corinthians 7 that singleness offers the opportunity for undivided devotion to the Lord great opportunity great opportunity to serve the Lord to be all out for Jesus without a compromise diary a great opportunity to put on display to a watching world that actually Jesus is all I need and that I find my identity in him and I'm complete in my relationship with him it's an opportunity to trust God it's an opportunity to trust God if you're married or single Paul says both the gifts of God and therefore we can be content and we need to strive to be content in whatever our marital status is in the season that we're in if we can even if we're single be complete in Christ then that is going to be the best foundation if God in his sovereignty bring someone along for us to share our lives intimately with it's a real challenge a real challenge as I already said about the plausibility of church as a real family not just a buzzword that we throw out to make us all feel warm and fuzzy but there is plausibility to that idea there is tangibility that people don't just silo our family life that yes we gather for church and then it's all the children in the car and off we go compartmentalize that part of our lives but who can we invite in who can we journey through life closely with who are the people that we befriend and invest in even though they're not blood relatives

I think we also see in the challenge in the New Testament so many people are referred to as spiritual sons and daughters Paul talks about Timothy and Titus and Onesimus as spiritual sons in the faith he writes in Romans 16 about Rufus' mother and how he is his mother how she is Rufus' mother and his just think about being the spiritual mother of the apostle Paul how proud would you be and so whereas in the old covenant the idea was to be fruitful and multiply physically what does Jesus tell us in the New Testament go and make disciples make spiritual sons and daughters now there's no reason that your physical sons and daughters can't also be your spiritual sons and daughters as you live out the life of faith before them and invest and point them to

Jesus all the time but let's be clear in the realm of eternity the only thing worth anything is spiritual sons and daughters spiritual brothers and sisters through faith in Jesus Christ and we come into land with this and I think it's a helpful place to land there's real hope because whether you're married in this life or not whether you have that big wedding day with the big dress feeding loads of people that most of whom you don't even know whether you have that or not there is the great hope in Jesus that everyone will be present at participate in and be central to a wedding which will blow all other weddings out of the water revelation 19 verse 6 then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder crying out hallelujah for the

[42 : 58] Lord our God the almighty reigns let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready it was granted her to clothe herself with pure linen bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints and the angel said to me write this blessed are those who were invited to the marriage supper of the lamb and he said to me these words these are the true words of God that's where we're all heading to that wedding day where we are not only invited but also involved and so all other marriages are just a foreshadowing and a warm up act for that day so whether you have one or not in the light of eternity it will not matter let me pray father god thank you that Jesus makes everything different that he makes everything new that he brings sure and certain hope father that it means that in him we truly are family and because that is true no one's missing out father no one's getting second best but lord if we have Jesus we have all that we need father thank you that you bless us in an innumerate number of ways father you give us each other father you give us every good and perfect thing so at the end of this day no matter where we find ourselves the status we're occupying at present father we want to say that we trust you father we love you and that our heartfelt cry is that you would have your way with us lord whatever you planned and chosen we want to sign up to that and say that is call with us and father that you would take us and bring glory to your name through whatever we do whoever we're with whatever that looks like father may

Jesus be our all in all and everything else be framed in light of that father bless us and help us to be church father bless us and help us to love you most we pray this in Jesus name who is our ultimate who is the one who's loved us more than we could ever imagine and the one in whom we find all our completeness and all of our joy Amen