

Married to Christ

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[0:00] Marriage is a wonderful thing. It binds us together with a person for life. And there is a legal side to that relationship of marriage.

! The joining of a husband and wife together. When we get married, what's mine becomes ours. And what's hers becomes ours together.

And so marriage sometimes can be better on that score for one of these parties than the other. We both bring assets and liabilities to the marriage. And if we get married and I bring a load of debt to the marriage and she brings a load of savings to the marriage, that works out pretty well for me. Because my debt becomes hers, her savings becomes mine or ours together, and I can take that savings and apply it to the debt and make it disappear. And all of her or our savings are gone all of a sudden, but so is my debt.

I brought a liability and she brought an asset and they balance each other out. Or maybe it's not such a legal transaction like that. Maybe it's something else. I have zero social graces.

[1:09] I'm a buffoon. When I'm in public, I'm offensive to other people around me. But the wife, she is gracious. She is kind, has every social grace.

And she balances me out. People like to be around her. They enjoy her presence, her company. I bring that liability and she brings that asset. And it's good that she balances me in that way.

Marriage is much more than just a transaction. My bad plus your good equals our marriage. We also enter into a close and intimate relationship with one another that grows deeper over the years as our bonds of friendship and love deepen and develop and grow.

And so it is not just with marriage in this life between a husband and a wife, but think of it as the Bible does in the Christian life where Christ is our bridegroom and we, the church, are His bride. That's how God describes our relationship with Christ. That of a husband and a wife. Now, it's different.

[2:18] Because Jesus doesn't bring any liabilities to the marriage. There's nothing good I have to offer that's going to help Him. That's going to balance Him out and make Him a better person.

I bring only liabilities to the marriage. And He only brings assets to that marriage. This is what happens when we become Christians. Christ assumes our liabilities and graciously gives us His assets.

This is God's amazing grace. We not only enjoy legal benefits, we enter into a personal relationship that grows over time as we spend our lives with Him. We've been saying as we look at this book, *How People Change*, that change happens because of a person.

And the point of the chapter that we're considering today is that person. It's Jesus. And our close, personal, even intimate relationship with Him.

He is our hope for change. And so it's a good thing that we are in union with Christ. We're married to Him. We're bound closely to Him. Over here by myself, I have nothing. Nothing good that I can offer God.

[3:22] No hope for change. No hope for anything good in my life. But joined to Christ. He has everything good. Everything that I need. Everything for life and for godliness. He has the forgiveness that I need.

That I might be right with God. The power that I need to live this life. Over here all by myself, I'm hopeless. But joined to Christ in union with the one person that can bring change.

There's hope for me. There's hope for change. There's hope for growth. There's hope for defeating that sin that seems so impossible. Hope for the impossible relationship. Hope for whatever struggle that you are facing.

Good thing that we're joined in because without Him we can't change. And so, we want to think about being married to Christ today. Are you relying on that person for your growth and grace? For your strength? Now, when we tend to think about what's wrong and what's right and what needs fixing in our lives as Christians, we often focus on the means of grace.

[4:20] And that's good because God has given them to us as just that. The means of grace. Reading God's Word. Worshipping with His people. Praying. Hearing His Word preached. All of those things are channels by which the grace of God in Christ flows to us.

But if we begin to view them as ends in themselves. Oh, I've read my Bible today. So I should be fine. I went to church this week. So I should be okay. I did the things that I'm told to do.

And so I've done those things. And that's it. If we view them as ends in themselves. I did my duty. Then that won't bring change. We've got to remember that they are, as I said, a channel through which the grace of God in Christ flows to us.

And so, did your time in the Word and at church and in prayer point you to the person who changes you? Did you see Jesus as you read in the Gospels this morning? Did you see how He healed someone?

How He showed compassion? How He loved His disciples? How He took time with them? And then apply that to yourself and say, that's the Jesus that I'm joined to. He has all the compassion that I need.

[5:23] The grace that I need to get through today. The power to help me and to heal me. Just like He did for those people when He walked on this earth. Do you walk away from the means of grace with a sense of the person, Jesus, and the grace that comes to us through?

Or you just walk away and say, well, I went to church today. Good. I hope that does it for me. No, those means should point us to the grace of God. I'm married to His Son, Jesus.

And He has my very best interest at heart. I can make it through today because, not because I read my Bible, but because I'm joined to Christ. And because as I read, I was pointed to that Savior who is my hope for help and strength and change.

I can defeat this sin because of Him. I can change when I embrace Him in the midst of my struggles. So look with me at 2 Corinthians 11, verses 1-3, which speaks about being married to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11, verse 1, We know that we're married to Christ, or that we're promised to Him to be married to Him, that we're to walk closely with Him, and yet somehow we find that often our hearts are turned away from Him.

[7:01] You all helped me this morning. Why is that? Why is it that we're so easily led astray from Jesus to other counterfeit hopes, dreams, possibilities for change? What leads us astray from Jesus?

Why are we so easily led away from fidelity to our faithful husband, Jesus? In dwelling sin. There's things in our own hearts that are contrary to who He is that draw us away.

Good. Dale. Okay, same thing. We've got more in dwelling sin. We've all got some. Roger and then Dare. There. So much of our sin can be traced back to me.

We only think about ourselves and forget the one that we're joined to. Okay, good. There. Okay. We've got indwelling sin.

That's the flesh. We've got Satan. We've got the devil trying to tempt us and lead us astray. What's the third enemy that we face? The world. And the world with all of its temptations appeals to the flesh.

[8:11] Appeals to that indwelling sin. So there's all sorts of things that will cause our heart and our affection to turn away from Jesus to something else. Even sometimes things that are more legitimate.

Not necessarily something that's sinful or something that's wicked. We're tempted to look for companionship and help outside their marriage to another woman or to another man.

We often look somewhere other than Christ for help. We look to our sin to fulfill our need for pleasure. We look to secular pop psychology because we think Jesus doesn't really have the answers.

And the Bible doesn't really point us to how we can find hope in our helpless situation. We look to sleep or to food or to exercise or to pornography or to sports or to our career or to health or to perfect children or to having success in ministry or to the praise of men or to money or to all sorts of

other things for our help and strength instead of Christ.

And when you do that, and when I do that, do you know that it's like cheating on your spouse? Paul says he wants us to be pure, to be kept pure for our husband, Jesus.

[9:40] That's why God compared Israel to a whore in the Old Testament. They were his people, but they went after other gods. They didn't trust him. It's about spiritual purity and faithfulness to your spouse.

And when you seek help and change and hope and fulfillment anywhere other than Jesus, it's just as though you went out and cheated on your spouse. We've been talking about it in terms of idolatry, worshiping the wrong thing, wanting the wrong thing.

If that doesn't do it for you, think of it in terms of spiritual adultery. Think if you were to commit adultery and your spouse were to find out about it, what would that do to you?

What would that do to them? How would that make them feel if you were to betray them that way? And then think about the guilt that it would bring on you, carrying that secret around until it came out. And then the pain and the suffering that comes from a broken relationship like that.

You think about that for a moment. Maybe that's a little bit more vivid, a little bit more real than an idol of the heart, okay? Think of it then in terms of spiritual adultery. When you find hope and change and satisfaction in something other than Jesus, you're committing adultery.

[10:50] You're telling Jesus, you're not good enough. I need something else. Something bigger. Something better than you. This is on your handout here, this quote.

What does it mean to be married to Christ? Christ has made us the recipients of His affection. And in turn, we are to make Him the ultimate object of ours.

What false lovers entice you to forget your true husband and the faithfulness he deserves? We allow many things to eclipse the beauty of Christ. We devote our hearts to our jobs, other people, a state of mind like comfort or security, success, power, peace, or money.

We start looking elsewhere. Somewhere besides Jesus. And don't try to argue that, well, it's just the engagement. We're not actually married to Christ.

That comes at the wedding feast of the Lamb when we're taken home with Him. You can make that case. That's true. But think about Mary and Joseph and how the betrothal period, the engagement period, was just as sacred as the marriage itself.

[11:58] And we'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment. And the time leading up to our actual marriage to Christ should be just as sacred as the bond of marriage itself. There are all sorts of things that will draw us away.

It will turn our hearts astray to something other than Christ. Our author gives one example. And this isn't something, at least to begin with, that's sinful.

It's not some evil temptation. He says, his thing that he looks to instead of Jesus is comfort. I am easily enticed by comfort. After a hard day at work, I am ready for some downtime.

I tell myself that I deserve it. Comfort and leisure are good things. But when my personal comfort becomes more important to me than Christ, it impacts my behavior sinfully.

If I arrive at home to a house full of children who get in the way of my comfort, I rapidly turn into a very harsh person. I've placed myself in the arms of a false lover.

[12:55] My personal comfort. This can happen quickly. Even on the heels of counseling someone else to be wary of his own straying heart. The authors, as they tell us how we can change, aren't putting themselves above us, looking down.

They're right in the midst of the battle with us. And whichever one of them wrote that paragraph struggles with that. As do perhaps many of us. And so, again on your handout, under letter D there, remain sincere and pure in your devotion.

Guard, and that should say your, guard your heart against anything that intrudes upon that primary relationship. Fight against anything that calls your loyalty into question. Because it is so easy to stray, you must fight the temptation every moment.

My marriage to Christ is the most important relationship and circumstance of my life. I hope you all who are married spend time guarding your relationship with your wife. That you protect it. That you spend time together.

That you cause that relationship. You work at it to grow. And you put safeguards around it to protect other lovers, other false things from intruding on that marriage. That's good.

[14:05] Focus that energy upon your marriage with your spouse. That's important. But even more important is your marriage to Christ. You spend that kind of time and effort and energy on protecting that relationship.

On guarding it from anything that would intrude and draw your heart out away from Jesus. There's three realities.

Three things that should be true because we're married to Christ. Because of our union with Him. They're listed there on your handout. First, if I'm married to Christ, the core of my present life is not personal happiness, but spiritual purity.

Should be more concerned with purity than we are with our own happiness. Sometimes being married to Christ doesn't always result in happiness. Sometimes we need to be disciplined. And that's not happy.

And it's not pleasant. And it's not fun. But I should be more concerned about holiness than I am about happiness. And if I need to lose a little joy because I'm going through discipline because I've sinned, that's good for me.

[15:06] It's healthy. I need that. Sometimes devotion to our husband Christ brings some unhappiness. But if we want to remain faithful to Him, we won't just look for the easy way out.

More concerned about a good relationship with Him than our own ease. A second thing that's true. Our betrothal, our engagement to Christ has a now and a then sort of structure.

Our relationship has both aspects. And we should view our Christian life now as preparing us for that marriage supper of the Lamb. Then, in the future, when we're brought home to be with Him forever.

And maybe this will help us understand a little bit of that. When you were engaged, when you were engaged to your spouse, if you're married now, how did you spend that engagement period?

Did you say, well, I'm not married yet. So I'm going to go sow as many wild oats as I can. I'm going to get with as many other women as I can. Well, before I get tied down to the old ball and chain, I'm going to go live it up.

[16:11] Because I'm just engaged, I'm not married yet. So I live however I want. I hope that wasn't the case. And if you're not married yet, don't let it be the case.

When you come to the time of your engagement. No, we take our engagement period to get to know our spouse to be even better. To drive in closer to them.

So that when the marriage is consummated, it's a smooth transition. Well, not super smooth. Because there's certain things you won't know until you live together about each other. But it's smoother than it would have been if you hadn't taken that time to get to know each other.

And to draw closer together. And so it should be with Christ. Right now, in this world. I find it hard to believe that I'm joined to Christ. I don't see Him.

And this world is really hard. And He's way far away in heaven. So maybe that's a hard concept. But the reality is that He is present with you.

[17:10] By His Spirit. You're in union with Him even now. And as we draw closer and closer to Him now. Until we can be with Him in glory.

Face to face. And be like Him. We want to pursue that relationship now. So that when the consummation comes. When we're with Him. It won't be this radical shock. This radical change. Of course, it will be to some extent.

We'll go from having indwelling sin. To not having any. Being imperfect. To being like Jesus. But you want that to be. Like an engagement to a marriage. As smooth a transition as possible.

And if you've spent your life saying. I'm joined to Christ. But I'm going to live however I want. I'm going to let my heart run out after other lovers. I'm going to find satisfaction. And only in my work. Only in my personal comfort. In my sin. And then you get to heaven. And you're supposed to spend eternity. Finding satisfaction in Jesus. That's going to be a shocker. A wake up call. Maybe it should be a wake up call now.

[18:04] That you're not actually joined to Christ. If that's our attitude. We don't live however we want until we die. And then enjoy our marriage with Jesus. And now is getting us ready for the then.

And then the third thing about our marriage to Christ. Is that it's all inclusive. It touches on every aspect of our life. Everything we do. We do with our focus on Him. By His help. And His strength. Whether it's reading Scripture and worship.

And when I talked about the means of grace earlier. I don't mean to suggest we should forget those things. And stop doing them. No. Do them. But do them so that they point you to Christ. And so that you find God's grace flowing through those things to you.

So whether it's the means of grace. Or going to work every day. Or raising your family. We keep Christ at the center. Of our heart. Of our affections. In everything we do. We're married to Christ. Well, let's take a minute. If you'll turn over to Colossians chapter 1. To think about who that bridegroom is. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

[19:08] As Psalm 27 and verse 4 says. Let's see why this Jesus is worth our wholehearted devotion and love. Colossians 1.

Your handout says 15-24. We'll stop at verse 23. This is Jesus. This is your husband. He is the image of the invisible God.

The firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth. Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.

All things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things. And in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body. The church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead.

So that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him. And through Him to reconcile to Himself all things. Whether things on earth or things in heaven.

[20:10] By making peace through His blood shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God. And were enemies in your minds. Because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body.

Through death. To present you holy in His sight. Without blemish. And free from accusation. If you continue in your faith. Established and firm. Not moved from the hope held out.

Not in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard. And that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. Of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Just soak that up for a second.

And be amazed at the person that is joined in union with you. That has promised to be married to you. We live in this world.

And He's the one who created it. And so don't you think that He is able to take anything that happens in this world. The one who made it.

[21:13] And work it for your good. And all of it was created for Him. To bring Him glory. He is the preeminent one. He is the sustainer of all things.

You look around and say, Lord, how am I going to be provided for? Well, you're joined to the one who sustains all life. That's the person you're married to. He's the firstborn of those raised from the dead.

What's going to happen when I die? Well, Jesus rose from the dead and it means you will too. He is supreme. He is the fullness of God. The reconciler of all things. I've got a problem with sin.

I've sinned against God. I deserve judgment. God sent Jesus, your husband, to reconcile you to God through His body. Through His death. Why would we want to give our love and affection to anyone else?

Such an amazing person. This is on your handout there. Such an amazing person deserves to be preeminent in your life. Is Christ the center of your life?

[22:20] Do you demonstrate a sincere and pure devotion to Him in your family, career, friendships, marriage, eating, sexuality, ministry, thoughts, pleasures, time, and money?

Every part of your life centered around Him. You wouldn't want to be married to anyone else. Maybe sometimes in a moment of weakness or foolishness.

You say, man, I wish I could be married to somebody else. And you're thinking of your real spouse. And your spouse does have imperfections. They have flaws. They have things they need to work on.

We all do. But in the marriage with Jesus, it isn't like that. He doesn't have anything He needs to work on. He doesn't have anything that He needs to grow in.

And so any time that we begin to think, man, marriage to Christ isn't so good. I'm going to go over here. Then that's pure foolishness. There is nothing in this world that can compare to Him.

[23:20] There is nothing in this world that can even begin to hold a candle to what He offers us. And so we talked at the beginning about each bringing something to the marriage.

And there's a chart there on your handout just to draw out a couple of those things. We bring liabilities. He brings the assets. In human marriages, husbands and wives balance each other out. Where one may be strong, another is weak. With Jesus, it's similar except He brings all the answers and we bring all the problems. You say, that's sort of like my marriage. I've got all the answers and my wife's got all the problems.

Man, I brought a whole lot of assets and she brought a whole lot of liabilities. And good thing she found me. And if you say that about your marriage, you need a reality check.

You need a wake-up call because that's not how it is. But you know what? Jesus can say that. And He doesn't say it in pride like we would. He says it in love.

[24 : 27] I have everything that you need. We bring guilt and sin and alienation from God. And Jesus brings us justification, reconciliation.

We come foolish and blind. And Jesus is our guide and our wisdom. We come powerless and enslaved. And Jesus is our power and our freedom.

The Christian life is built upon the foundation of one, facing who you really are. And two, trusting who Christ truly is. And facing who we really are can be hard because that grates against our pride. We like to think we're something special. We like to think we've brought something to this marriage that's going to be useful to God and to His kingdom. Lord, look at what I can offer you. We'll see in a moment with Paul the folly of that sort of thinking.

But we have to face who we truly are and trust who Christ truly is. Everything you do will be shaped by the degree to which you act on the blessings that are yours in Christ. Do you believe that you're helpless and that there is hope in Christ, that He has everything that you need?

[25 : 37] Because if you don't believe that He has everything that you need, then you're going to go look somewhere else to find what you need. And you won't find it. And so this quote's on your handout.

If you accept the truth about the way Colossians describes you, you could be filled with guilt and shame towards your future husband. You know you can't be the spouse you need to be. You have two choices.

You can run away, overwhelmed by the prospect of failure, or you can comfort yourself because of the character of the person you're about to marry. Paul wants us to make the second choice. That's why in the middle of this passage you're called to live in daily fellowship and friendship with Christ, to celebrate your union with Him by pursuing Him every day.

He's talking about Colossians 2, 6. So then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him. Rooted and built up in Him.

Strengthened in the faith. We live in Him. Not on our own, and we look to Him occasionally when we're really stuck, when we're really in hell, but every day joined to Him and we live that way.

[26 : 45] Jesus meets where we are and gives us everything we don't deserve and transforms us. It's a really good deal for us. Be like a person from an abjectly poor family, marrying into a rich family.

Didn't do anything. Didn't earn it. He married into it. And all of a sudden, he's wealthy. He's got everything that you could want in life. His status has changed radically.

And that happens with Jesus. We are joined to Him by faith. Our status has changed. But more than that, we become righteous in God's sight. But more than that, He actually transforms us to become like Him.

This is our hope for change. He doesn't just say you're declared righteous in the courtroom. He brings us out into the real world and He begins to work holiness in us.

He begins to work righteousness in us. He begins to make us like He is. We become different at this deepest spiritual level. Christ's grace transforms our inner spiritual natures.

[27 : 47] We were once dead, but now we are alive. Our hearts, once hardened by sin, become soft and teachable. We become new creations. We're united to Him.

Spiritually joined to Him and He's working in us. What He wants us to be. And so all of our supposed assets, turn over to Philippians, just back a page in your Bible, Philippians 3.

What we think that we can bring to the marriage, what good we think we have to offer. Paul calls it rubbish. It's trash.

It's garbage. It should be thrown out. It should be flushed down the toilet. Trouble comes in our marriage to Christ when we think we do have something good to offer Him.

Look at Philippians 3, verses 4-9. We'll begin partway through verse 4. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[28 : 50] Circumcised on the eighth day. Of the people of Israel. Of the tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of Hebrews. In regard to the law, a Pharisee. As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For whose sake I have lost all things, I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.

The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. We can, like Paul, put our confidence and our performance and obedience instead of recognizing those things as good gifts that God has given us.

You know, the blessings that God gives us can become a source of pride for us. And that's the danger. And have we ever been guilty of this? Maybe not exactly like Paul, but perhaps similar. What would be on your list?

[29 : 59] You know, Paul's a Hebrew of Hebrews. Circumcised. He was righteous according to the law. What would be some of the things on your list? Some of the supposed assets that you bring to the marriage that make you good or useful in the sight of God?

Some things that we would put on that list. And just because you say it doesn't mean that we'll think that you're guilty of it. Okay? What are some of your assets? Yeah, me too.

Good for me. I've got Christian parents and grandparents going back on both sides of my family.

I've got that going for me. What else? Education.

You know, I went to a Bible college. I didn't, but... I've got this good education. I've got that going for me. I'm smart. God could probably use somebody as smart as me. Oh.

I'm a leader. People just naturally follow. I mean, I can't really help it. Yeah. Yeah. I'm not... This is hypothetical, okay? Okay? Because I know the pride in my own heart.

[31 : 13] Mike. Yeah. I work really hard at it. I try. I put my sincere effort and focus into it. Yeah. That's good. God can use that.

Anything else? Jim. Yeah. Yeah. I can't help that either. Yeah. They're just drawn to me. And surely God could use that.

I read my Bible every day. I go to church every week. When I look at the world, I see all the evil in it. And I call it what it is. Evil. Wow.

You really are blessed. That's true. God's blessed you with gifts. He's given you a Christian family. What a blessing. Let that be a source of humility.

And gratitude to God. But not a source of pride. He's saying, look, Lord. Look what I can bring you. Look how good I am on my own. You know, I need Jesus over here, but I don't need Him over here because I got that.

[32 : 12] I'm okay there. And this is also another quote on your handout as I try to give you a flavor of the book. It's under number two in letter D.

What strengths and assets pull you away from gratitude to pride. Whatever they are, they can be a liability that keeps you from seeing your constant need for Christ.

Let's say you're a parent who faithfully raises your children in a way that pleases God. Could these marks of grace become liabilities? Yes. You may think you're so capable that you lose sight of your dependence on God.

You become critical of parents who struggle to raise their children well. When you rely on your gifts instead of Christ, you fail to see them for what they are. And they blind you from seeing Jesus.

But Jesus comes to us with the real assets. And so if He's helped you in raising your children, you thank Him. You say, Lord, unless you help me today, I'm going to fail today. Unless you help me in this moment, I'm going to fail.

[33 : 17] Not all my strength and all my wisdom, all my education, all my background are going to help me. And so if blessings come, there are opportunities to thank God for His goodness.

If difficulties come, there are opportunities to grow more dependent on Him. The trouble comes, if we want to bring it home just a bit today, the trouble comes when we forget who we are.

And we forget who our husband is. When we lose our identity as followers of Christ. We saw in 2 Peter 1 the danger of forgetting what Christ has done and becoming blind. And that leads to unfruitful, unproductive lives as Christians.

The book gives several examples of what happens when we forget who we are. Who are you? What's your answer to that question? Who are you? The first thing we should think of for believers is, I am a child of God.

I'm one who is united by faith to Christ. I'm in union with Him. And no matter what else changes, whatever else happens in my life, that doesn't change. When we forget that, when we focus our identity, our hope, our focus on something else, that's when we run into trouble.

[34 : 36] He applies it here to chronic physical suffering, which some of you endure. We tend to assume that we will always be healthy.

And that physical pain will be temporary. Physical suffering is made much harder if health has been a source of security and well-being. I can get whatever I need to done in this life because I'm healthy.

At least I've got that. I've got a sound body. I'm physically well. And so that's your hope. What happens when that's taken away? In a fallen world, our bodies are always wasting away.

It is not wise to place our hope in them. What a difference it makes to know that the most precious things in life are not physical. Although poor health makes life difficult, it cannot rob you of your identity, your meaning and purpose, your joy, or your sense of personal rest.

When you respond to physical suffering with an awareness of your eternal union with Christ, you can say with Paul, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

[35 : 39] No matter what our physical condition, we are strengthened by new mercies every morning, encouraged by God's love and empowered by the Spirit. We would like to retain our strength and avoid chronic pain, but we can fix our eyes on the reality of our union with Christ and the resources He gives.

Remember who we are, who our hope is. They apply it to the loss of a job. In our culture, a well-paying job is important.

For some, it is the source of security and identity. I'm okay. I've got a job I can provide for my family. The loss of job not only brings financial stress, but it can rock one's entire world when people attach their identity and sense of security to something they have no guarantee will be there tomorrow.

In contrast, a believer can approach his career with a deep appreciation of his identity and security in Christ. The loss of a job may hurt, but the most valuable things in life are not at stake.

Because of your marriage to Christ, you have resources that go far beyond your own wisdom, character, and strength. Your husband controls the details of your life and has your good as his goal.

[36 : 55] This protects you from discouragement and gives you courage and faith in a difficult time. If I have hung everything that I am on the fact that I am a pastor, I'm a pastor of a church, I've got a job, the church supports me, and I've forgotten who I am in Christ.

I'm telling other people about Christ every day, but I've forgotten who I am. And to me, my whole world is wrapped up in being a pastor. What happens when that goes away?

When it's proven that I'm not fit to be a pastor? Or when the church can't support me anymore? And all of a sudden, everything that I've poured my time and energy and focus into, what happens when that is yanked out from under us?

For you may be something different. What's your job? You know, it can be being a parent. What happens when you lose one of your children? If we've tied up our identity, everything in that, that's where we've found our hope, our sense of meaning, our satisfaction.

And that's taken away from us. The world crumbles. But if that's just a part of who we are, and the central part of our identity is our union with Christ, that can never be taken away.

[38 : 15] So you take away all these other things that we find our identity in, our health, our job, our children. You can't take Christ away. You're married to the right person, to Christ.

And He's not going to leave you. He's not going to forsake you in the midst of the deepest and most dark waters that you will walk through in this life, whatever they are. You've hung your hat on that you're a good person, a holy person, and some besetting sin ensnares you.

And all of a sudden, you say, I'm not holy. What am I going to do? I've got to work harder. I've got to try better. And you've forgotten it. Your hope for eternity is not in your good behavior, but in Christ. So you have to go back and return to who you are in Christ.

It can happen with success, too. We don't have time, but you can look at Deuteronomy 8.

Deuteronomy 8, verses 10-20. You'll read it later. And God says, when you get in that promised land, and you're eating all this food, and you're safe and secure, you know what's going to happen or what could happen?

You're going to say, my hands have accomplished all this for me. Look what my hard work has brought me. And you warn the people of Israel. So it doesn't have to be difficulty that turns us away from Christ. Hardship.

[39:29] We've lost something. What am I going to do? We despair. Blessing comes. I don't need Jesus anymore. I've enjoyed all this blessing, all this prosperity. I did it. Just like happened to the people of Israel.

It's tempting to forget God and to grow proud and independent in times of difficulty and blessing.

But remembering your union with Christ reminds you that any good thing in your life is the result of His mercy and grace, not your own wisdom, goodness, and effort.

So here's the amazing reality. We're promised to Christ. The important thing for us should be spiritual purity, faithfulness to Him.

And so listen to one last quote. This one isn't on your handout. We've been chosen from the mass of humanity to live in an intimate union with Christ.

It is amazing even to be tolerated by God. It would be an honor simply to be invited to the wedding.

It is beyond comprehension to be the beloved bride of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

[40:37] When you understand this, you can't help but live life aware of the honor, privilege, and blessing that are yours. As part of the bride of Christ, you are connected to the most important things in the universe.

your union with Him gives meaning to everything you do and say. And that gives us hope for real, lasting change, for a life that is honoring to God.

You try to change on your own, you'll fail. You do it by the power of this Christ that we've seen today dwelling in us. Then you have every hope and reason for confidence that God can change you and make you more like His Son.

May God help us to cling to Christ, to remember who we are. We're His bride, that we're married to Him, in union with Him. And that's the most important thing about our identity.

Lord, we're dismissed.