

# More than MAFS: Channel 4 must answer for harmful content

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[christianconcern.com/comment/channel-4-must-answer-for-its-safeguarding-failures](https://christianconcern.com/comment/channel-4-must-answer-for-its-safeguarding-failures)

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**The rape allegations emerging from Married at First Sight UK are shocking — but they should not be surprising. Steve Beegoo of Christian Concern connects the dots between MAFS, Naked Education, and a broadcaster that has lost its moral bearings.**

Recent revelations surrounding Channel 4's Married at First Sight should give every Christian serious pause for thought.

What has been exposed is not merely a disturbing television format, but a deeper problem in our culture. The allegations relate to episodes in 2023 which featured emotional manipulation, coercive control and inadequate safeguarding processes, leading even to rape.

But – assuming these events happened as stated – these occurrences are not simply the unfortunate side-effects of unreality television. What is coming to light was quite predictable. These are the fruits of a culture that has lost its moral bearings when it comes to sex, intimacy and human dignity. Such experimental programming on Channel 4 has even involved children.



## Marriage stripped bare

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Married at First Sight claimed to explore relationships and commitment, yet it did so by stripping marriage of its traditional meaning. It turned human vulnerability into

entertainment. It platformed a sacrilegious interpretation of marriage. Participants were matched, and then apparently pressured in highly artificial circumstances, with sexual intimacy accelerated for the sake of ratings.

When things inevitably went wrong, as has been alleged, the harm is borne by real people, not just characters in a soap opera. This is what happens when sex and relationships are severed from their Christian foundations of covenant and responsibility enshrined in Christian marriage and is devalued into mere entertainment.

## **Naked Education**

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In that same year, Channel 4 aired Naked Education, with segments that claimed to address teenage body image, but involved children being exposed to naked adults for the televisual titillation of the masses.

As well as the voyeurism which tantalises the viewer, it was the emotional reactions of the children that became the entertainment. The adults and presenters involved enjoyed commenting about their sex lives, smiling, laughing, and connecting emotionally, while posing frontally naked before these minors. Emotional manipulation seems yet again to be in evidence. Christian Concern was at the forefront of highlighting that this programme was unacceptable at the time, warning that it crossed a clear safeguarding line and represented a dangerous confusion between education and grooming.

Deep concerns remain as to what safeguarding protections from Channel 4 were actually in operation for the children involved. At the time Ofcom inexplicably refused to carry out an in-depth investigation despite over 1,200 complaints, many of which raised safeguarding concerns. Ofcom simply said that it was happy that the show was 'educational'.

## **Pushing boundaries**

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Taken together, Married at First Sight and Naked Education reveal the same underlying trajectory. Once sex is detached from a Christian framework of marriage, commitment and self-giving love, the entertainment in our culture has inevitably degraded further, pushing boundaries to sustain interest. What once shocked us becomes normalised. What was once unacceptable is reframed as bold, progressive or a necessary social experiment. In that process, the exploitable are inevitably harmed as they are emotionally manipulated by producers.

## **Publicly owned, publicly accountable**

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What makes this especially troubling is that Channel 4 is a publicly owned and, supposedly, a publicly accountable public service broadcaster. With that unique status should come a heightened responsibility to uphold safeguarding. Yet again, and again, we

see filmed scenarios defended that would never be tolerated in other contexts. The boundaries being pushed have got to an intolerable extreme.

Christians cannot afford to shrug this off as “just television”. Scripture calls us to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and to expose what harms rather than heals. It is a Christian responsibility to raise complaints with public broadcasters, engage regulators, and challenge public institutions when boundaries are crossed and the vulnerable are harmed.

When we see impressionable children or vulnerable adults sexualised, manipulated or exploited for entertainment, we must raise our voices. Channel 4 must answer for harmful content, and Ofcom must *fully* investigate every issue of safeguarding regarding children.

If we do not raise our voice, the boundaries will increasingly move, with the cost being paid by those least able to protect themselves.

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