

# Talk Notes

Title: Love is!

Meeting: Freshwaters

Date: 04/06/2017

## Introduction

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I am so privileged to have had the opportunity this morning to bless Julia and Dave in their marriage. In our day and age marriage gets a lot of bad press – but despite the increase in the divorce rate and the reduction in those choosing marriage, still it is the most likely way for couples to remain together and for children to have a stable secure environment in which to grow up.

Jesus said of marriage **Matt 10:6-9 But “God made them male and female from the beginning of creation. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”**

This special relationship between husband and wife is an image that appears a number of times in the last book of the bible, Revelation, to represent the relationship between Christ and the Church – now that’s not the building – that would be just weird, but with those who choose to become followers of Jesus.

Now the most outstanding feature of a good marriage is love and the most outstanding feature of our relationship with God is love.

I am going to take just a few minutes to highlight 4 aspects of love that are relevant to marriage and relevant to our relationship with God.

## Love is first

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Quite appropriately, the first thing I want to say is the love is first! Can anyone tell me what, according to Jesus is the first commandment? Yes, in **Matt 22:34-40 ‘Jesus replied, “you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”**

What Jesus was saying is that love is first – that if love was our first priority no other laws or regulations would be needed.

Love is also the first to speak – I don't know with Dave and Julia who first said 'I love you' – but love doesn't wait for the other person to speak first – it must declare itself, whether or not it is reciprocated.

This is what John, someone often referred to as the 'beloved disciple' because of His particularly close relationship to Jesus, said about God's love 'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' – God has spoken first in sending Jesus to clear up the mess of our sin – God does not wait for us to declare our love for Him – He has spoken and acted in love by sending Jesus.

## Love is freedom

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The second aspect of love that I wanted to emphasise this morning is that **'love is freedom'**. Now I know that I have just spoken about the first commandment, but as I have said, Jesus' point was that if love was our first priority, none of the other commandments would be necessary.

Now I am fairly sure that in Dave and Julia's first date neither began the conversation with 'my first commandment is you must love me' – You see the truth is that **true love is given freely**, it cannot be commanded, demanded or manipulated from someone. **For love to be true we have to have the freedom not to love.**

People often ask why God didn't just create us to automatically love Him – surely that would have saved so much hassle. However then we would only be able to simulate love, like a robot, rather than to choose to give it, or not to. God values true love so much that He gave us the freedom not to love Him, or others.

## Love is sacrifice

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The third aspect of love that I want to highlight is that **'love is sacrifice'**. One of the things that I suspect Dave and Julia discovered early on in marriage is that you don't always get your own way. Now our selfish nature says that our response should be to demand, cajole, manipulate or nag until we do. However anything gained in this way is not offered freely and so can't truly be love.

However love is more concerned about how the person loved feels rather than how we feel. It looks for ways to give rather than ways to take, even when, or perhaps especially when, it costs us dearly.

The most amazing and central truth of the Christian faith is that, as **John 3:16** declares **'For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.'** God the Father loved us enough to send His one and only son to die for us – Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to give His life for us – true love is sacrifice.

## Love lasts

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Finally I want to say that **true love lasts**. It is wonderful to be present at a wedding where the couple declare their intention to love one another through good and bad, thick and thin until 'death do us part'. However I think there is something even more special about what we have just joined with Dave and Julia in celebrating. Love that has been tested through good and bad, thick and thin, love that has survived the arguments and disagreements, the challenges and disappointments, the temptations and distractions – because it shows that true love lasts.

I have resisted until now the most famous chapter about love in the bible, **1 Corinthians 13** – I am not going to read it all but just want to leave you with its final verse – **'Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love'**.