

## Week 4: Free To Love

### 1. Relationships NOT Built On Love Will End Up Costing You What You Were Never Meant To Pay

- Read Romans 13:8-10 & 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

We all categorise love differently, so it's important look at what the scriptures say about love in order that we can determine whether we are genuinely loving people or not. Our views of love are often horribly warped.

Jesus is the definition of love. He has loved us and given himself for us, and this love, when received, is able to be given out to others. True love is not always reciprocated, and can even come at a great cost to you. Continuing to pour out Christ's love can cause us to have to put away our pride, selfishness, ignorance, resentment and anger. Because it was freely given, true love has to be given freely, and without expecting any form of return. It is a gift to be given, and it produces incredible fruit in the lives of those who receive it. Giving love is not safe, it should not be able to be earned or bought and it is never deserved. This kind of love can never be given if it has not truly been received, in our own hearts, from Christ.

- ❖ Q: Where do you think your own definition/expectation of love comes from and why?
- ❖ Q: How often do you think about the love you should be giving to others, rather than how much they should be loving you? (I.e. in your thinking, is love all about you?)
- ❖ Q: Why do you think it is important for us, as Christians, to make sure that we understand what true love is, from a scriptural perspective?
- ❖ Q: Why is it actually impossible for us to love this purely, without receiving Christ's love for ourselves?
- ❖ Q: Though many of us have encountered Christ's love, we still find it incredibly hard to love people well. Why do you think this is?

### 2. We Love People Far Better Relationally When We Understand Our Own Boundaries And Limitations

- Read Luke 10:27-36

Loving people well requires that we understand our own boundaries and limitations, which will look different for each of us. This should serve as a warning for those of us who find ourselves running to try and fix every need, or as a wake-up call to those of us who don't really reach out at all because we are far too self-absorbed, concerned only for our own wellbeing.

The story of the Good Samaritan serves as a great illustration for how to love in a healthy and bounded way. He went out of his way to help, to make sure that the man had what he needed, and then he went on his way. He did not take on full responsibility for the man or try to save him, nor did he get burdened or manipulated in the process, but he still took great care of him in a healthy and appropriate way. Having boundaries helps you to remain responsible for yourself, to care for others, and let go of things that are not yours to control.

- ❖ Q: Do you relate more to the self-absorbed person who does very little to love and serve others or do you relate more to the person who has poor boundaries, and takes on more responsibility for others than they should? Explain.
- ❖ Q: What is the difference between being responsible TO someone and being responsible FOR someone?
- ❖ Q: Why are boundaries important for loving people in a healthy way?

### 3. Jesus Loved The Right People In The Right Way At The Right Time - So Should We

- Read Matthew 16:21-23

Jesus demonstrated his love for God and Peter in a moment of conflict. In his rebuke, he laid down boundaries that were for Peter's good. Peter did not understand the bigger plan or how, in following God's plan to the cross, Jesus would be saving the world from sin. Peter's desire to save Jesus from death was well meaning, but eternally catastrophic. Jesus had to step in and stop Peter from imposing his view and his desires, for Peter's own good, and in order to obey God. Jesus did not mince words or try and pacify Peter; he spoke clearly and set things straight. Jesus was able to do this only because he knew who he was and what his mission was about.

- ❖ Q: Why was Jesus' firm rebuke an act of Love towards Peter?
- ❖ Q: What would have happened if Jesus had indulged Peter's strong objection to his execution?
- ❖ Q: Is there anything that the Holy Spirit is showing you about some of your patterns of behaviour with people that are not actually loving, but enabling of their comfort and sin?

### 4. Jesus Offers Something That Is Critical To Simpler Relationships – Forgiveness!

- Read Matthew 6:14-15

As forgiven people, Jesus calls us to forgive one another. It is a simple choice to make and yet not a trivial one. Some of us are reaping the harvest of resentment in our lives because we have refused to forgive and release offenders of their sin against us. Many people hold on tightly to ridiculous offenses, and need to let them go today, and move on. The Lord does not allow space for grudges. He wants us to be free of resentment and bitterness.

Some of us have been deeply wounded by the sin of others, and in God's "upside down" kingdom way, he has provided us, by the Spirit, with the freedom to forgive the perpetrator, in order for us to find freedom for our own souls. He will be there to pour his grace over those broken and empty places as we respond in obedience, forgive and let go.

- ❖ Q: On a scale of 1-10 (1 being terrible and 10 being perfect), how good are you at truly letting go of offenses, both large and small?
- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to realise that, as believers, unforgiveness is not an option for us?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think forgiveness leads to freedom?

#### Personal Reflection:

Consider your relationships right now and answer the following questions:

- Q: Who is one person you really don't like/ consider briefly which person brings up the worst feelings inside of you. Have their name in mind.
- Q: What is it that they have "done" to cause your resentment?
- Q: Is it a petty offense (or even just your own view on the situation) or is it a major offense?
- Q: How long you have been holding on to this unforgiveness?
- Q: What is God asking you to do?