

## FOLLOWING JESUS - IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

**Discuss with a neighbour:** How does the world define love? How does the Bible define love?

### Introduction:

- Today: love, sex, relationships – from God as He has revealed in His Word, the Bible
- A topic where we are all failures in need of our saviour Jesus!

### 1. Love that looks upwards

- God teaches us what love is: He is Love, He is a Covenant God, He gave His Son.
- God's definition of love is "covenant": a rock-solid commitment to bind Himself to unfaithful people, redeem and sanctify them. Contrast with world's definition of love!
- God's design for brotherly/sisterly love: *strive* to love each other, more & more
- God's design for romantic love:
  - For it to reflect God's love for us – a picture of the gospel (Ephesians 5:22-23)
  - Sex is a good gift from God - to be enjoyed within the lifelong commitment between one man and one woman (i.e. in marriage)
  - All other expressions of sex are wrong - flee these most urgently

**Discuss in small groups:** "*I wish I knew God's will for my life*" – how does 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-7 answer this? Are we surprised where Paul goes with the answer?

## 2. Love that looks forward

- What is Jesus' ultimate aim for us? For us to mature as Christians, grow in holiness, be effective in ministry and persevere to the end
- Implication for love, sex & relationships:
  - Don't idolise or idealise marriage (whether married or not)
  - If you marry, marry a Christian
  - The vital importance of killing off sexual sin

## 3. Love that looks outward

- Modelled on Jesus, love that focusses on serving the other person, not self (not easy!)

### **Tips:**

- The better your relationship is with the Lord, the better a spouse you will be
- Communication: listen to your spouse and talk to them (not about them)
- Will you lay down your life (or at least your preferences) for your spouse?
- Be quick to forgive / admit – be proactive (Eph. 4:26)
- ... within a backdrop where separation is not an option

## **Discussion / Questions**

1. In the New Testament letters, sexual (im)purity is at the start (or near the start) of almost every list of sins to avoid – why is it such a big deal?
2. Jesus has designed Church as a family made up of all kinds of people (married, single, young, old etc.) What do you think you could do to foster unity & inclusion?
3. In 1 Corinthians, they seemed to be using Christian "slogans" to justify impure sexual behaviour ("all things are lawful to me" – 1 Cor 6:12). We observe the same approach today (e.g. "love is love" to justify same-sex marriage). How can a Christian respond?

## **Recommended resources:**

- *What did you Expect? Redeeming the realities of marriage*, by Paul Tripp – book, audio book, youtube
- *Real Masculinity and Purity*, by Paul Mallard. Seminar at Word Alive: just £1, see [wordaliveevent.org/media](http://wordaliveevent.org/media)