

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## TRUE LOVE?

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True love has become the dream of many young girls and boys. For girls there are stories of love and romance from a very young age. The idea that everyone has a soulmate and once you find that soulmate, you'll be happy forever. For boys it's much more sexual and more about getting what you want physically. Adverts are constantly over sexualised and putting into our heads that sex (and whatever the product is) are all we need. Sex is the highest goal. Both of these lies, true love making you happy and sex being all you need, don't line up with the bible. They have aspects of truth, but don't show the whole picture. Let's see what the bible says about marriage.

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### **“But I wish everyone were single, just as I am.”**

Firstly, I want to say that the primary way our culture has got this wrong is the importance it puts on love. It can be a wonderful thing, but it also often means you are more tied down to a place or to other people. Paul said “But I wish everyone were single, just as I am.” Paul found freedom in being single. He said it's good for people to marry because it stops sexual sin but if you can do without it then do. He saw the real purpose of his life was to serve God and in his case that meant staying single.

Now I am also not condemning marriage and relationships. It brings great joy and new life into the world and sometimes that is God's plan for us. But we should be focussed on God's plan and whether that involves us being single or married rather than finding true love and happiness. However, there are some principles in marriage that help us in all of our relationships, be they family or friend, and it's a picture of God and His church so it's still worth looking at, married or unmarried. Marriage was made between man and woman in the garden of Eden. When God took Eve from Adam's rib

in Genesis 2 Adam said ““At last!” the man exclaimed “This one is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman’ because she was taken from ‘man’” This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife and the two are united into one”

Marriage is meant to be one man and one woman being united. The fairy tales almost got it right. You are supposed to commit to one person and that commitment is lifelong. But, it won't always make you happy. There will be times when it seems you've made the wrong choice. There will be times when the other person lets you down and there will also be times when you let them down. Marriage involves a lot of forgiveness and grace. It's choosing that, no matter how you feel, you will stay with this person and work through the challenges.

This shows us something of Christ's relationship with the church. The bible refers to the church as the bride of Christ. He has forgiven all, so whenever we forgive, we are being Christ-like and whenever we are forgiven, we can understand a little more of what it means to be forgiven. Now, I am not saying we should wrong each other on purpose, but that when it inevitably happens, forgiveness isn't a negative thing.

Marriage is also not between soul mates. There isn't a person out there that can complete you. God is the only one we should look to for perfect love and fulfilment. Doing God's will for our lives is our purpose. We shouldn't make our partner an idol, because then they're not in the right place and neither is God. God should always be number one in everything we do. Our partner is there to pursue God with, but they don't complete us. They help us and guide us, but they aren't all we need.

This puts life for single people into perspective too. We are all the same, living for God's will in our lives with Him at the forefront. We are not pursuing a perfect relationship with another human that completes us, we will never find that. We are pursuing God and striving to know Him better.

Marriage is also meant to be sexual. When you are married you are meant to have a sexual relationship. Now that doesn't mean that you have to get the Karma Sutra out every night, or that you go against each other's will. It has to be done lovingly and

consensually, but it is a part of marriage. It helps build intimacy and trust and is unique to marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul says “Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband. The husband should fulfil his wife’s sexual needs and the wife should fulfil her husband’s needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. Do not deprive each other of sexual relations unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer.”

Part of the reason marriage exists is to stop us having sexual desires where they don’t belong and part of it is to create children. A stable marriage is the best context for bringing children up, and this has been shown in studies outside of Christian organisations. So, sex is a really important part of marriage. This doesn’t mean if you can’t have sex or can’t create children that your marriage is any less valid, but it is important to keep in mind that sex was designed for marriage and designed to improve intimacy.

This brings us to the second lie our culture has taught us. We have been taught that sex will make you happy and it doesn’t matter how you have it. This is not true. Many people have been very hurt from sex outside of marriage and even those that have had more positive experiences still sometimes speak of regret. We were designed to have sex with one person so going against that natural order is not good or beneficial for us or for society. Sex isn’t shameful or wrong, but it should be done in the right way and in the right context.

The last lie I want to debunk was from our culture originally but has become more of an issue in the church. This is that the man is in charge of or over the woman. St Augustine said that God made Eve from Adam’s rib so that they would be equal and stand side by side. He didn’t use the skull to create woman to avoid the woman ruling over the man and he didn’t use the toe bone to create woman to stop the man enslaving the woman. He used the man’s ribs. Now, this topic is massive, and I could be here forever just talking about this. If you want to discuss it with me further, please feel free to chat to me on a one-to-one basis but I’m afraid that if I go down this

tangent, I'll be here all day. The upshot is, the man should not rule over the woman, but neither should the woman rule over the man; they are equal partners together in marriage.

So how can we have strong marriages (or friendships) that show the world the way that God loves His church? There are a few really helpful ways to do this. The first has been mentioned already and that is to forgive each other. None of us is perfect and forgiveness has to be what we do first in almost every situation. Communication is key and we need to be open with each other when we think the other has hurt us, but don't hold onto resentment. Let it go. This includes forgiving yourself. Let it go when you've messed up. God forgives you, so you should too. Serve one another and be humble. Ask yourself what would be best for the other person in your decisions and put them above yourself. Do what you can to help them and be there for them, even when you don't feel like it or it isn't bringing you any happiness. Commit to them, even when they mess up or you don't feel how you want to or you don't have everything you want, because marriage can't work without effort and sticking by the other person no matter what.

Secondly, respect that sex is for marriage. Don't be seeking, or let yourself fall into, sex outside of marriage, whether you're married or not. That will just hurt you in the end. Sex is designed to create a kind of intimacy that's only in a marriage relationship, a relationship that will not end. So, don't look for it anywhere else. It won't make you happy or satisfied, that is a lie that we are told. Do it how God intended you to do it. Third, put God first. This will help in any walk of life, but in marriage specifically, we shouldn't be looking to find everything we need in a spouse because it's not there. No person can fulfil everything you need. But God the father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and the sea and all things, can...

**As it says in the old hymn:**

**What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!**

**What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer!**

**O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,**

**All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.**



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