

<b>Theme &amp; Passages</b>	<b>Growing Together: Intimacy &amp; Commitment</b> Song of Songs: 1:15-2:17 and 4:1-7	Notes prepared by Steve Elmes & Paul Lambert
<b>Welcome (10 mins)</b>	Gary Chapman's '5 Love Languages' has been widely read. Put simply, these are <i>words, actions, time, gifts and physical touch</i> . Keeping it light, share your top love languages for giving and receiving love.	
<b>Working with God (15 mins):</b> Evangelism Discipleship Compassion Justice Creation Care	<p>This week we heard from John McCarroll in his frontline interview. John shared the transformation that he has experienced in his life through finding a deep relationship with Christ and the inner healing he experienced. God's love has transformed many of his perspectives and behaviours.</p> <p>In particular, John talked about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The value of reflecting on what God has done for him and others – thanking God for the deep changes as well as daily answers to prayer.</li> <li>• Living by the mantra "What would Jesus do?" and how it has made him much more proactive with friendships.</li> <li>• Moving from observer to active participant in change, taking responsibility for making the world a better place.</li> </ul> <p><i>What did you find most helpful in what John shared?</i>  <i>Spend a moment quietly thanking God for what he has done for you, your family and friends.</i>  <i>Reflect and share about a situation that you see unfolding (it might be with you, friends or a wider international situation like Middle East) where you can take some action.</i>  <i>What might Jesus do, through you, on your frontline?</i></p>	
<b>Worship (15 mins)</b>	<p>Ask someone in the group to read the poem below by George Herbert. After a brief time of reflection, invite the group to share their responses.</p> <p>LOVE bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,          Guilty of dust and sin.          But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack          From my first entrance in,          Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning          If I lack'd anything.</p> <p>'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'          Love said, 'You shall be he.'          'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,          I cannot look on Thee.'          Love took my hand and smiling did reply,          'Who made the eyes but I?'</p> <p>'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame          Go where it doth deserve.'          'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'          'My dear, then I will serve.'          'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'          So I did sit and eat.</p>	

**Word**  
**(20-25 mins)**

On Sunday morning, the reading from Song of Songs was brought by John and Britain. They did this beautifully, so you might like to call up the YouTube video for the service to listen and watch together. Alternatively, read the verses as a group.

*Share your responses to the reading.*

Steve talked about intimacy beginning with how God, our Creator, comes close to us. He went on to consider human intimacy in different relationships: parents and children, siblings, friends and lovers.

For much of the sermon, the focus was on the intimacy of lovers, where sexual desire finds its expression within the safe bounds of a life-uniting, lifelong relationship.

Speaking of sexual desire, Steve reflected on how the church historically has sometimes been rather wary or negative about this gift of God, and contrasted this with the celebration of romantic and erotic love in Song of Songs.

*Do you think that sex is still an awkward or difficult subject for Christians today? If so, why do you think this is?*

The Bible teaches that this gift of God is meant to be enjoyed with the safety of a life-uniting, lifelong relationship. Steve explored how we might call people to this live in these ways, via three themes:

- Fulfilled singleness
- Chaste Courtship
- Cohabitation to Covenant

*How can our church community encourage and support people to live in these ways? What kind of community do we need to be to do this?*