

## Love Thy Neighbour: What is love?

*7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:7-11)*



“What is love?”. It is a perennial question. And one of the most popular Google searches.<sup>1</sup>

In the West our vision of love has been profoundly influenced by Romanticism. Love is individualistic and feelings based; it's about sunsets, waterfalls, candles, romance...and Lionel Richie! If we don't feel something then it's not real love.

For others love is their god. We need to be free to love who we want. Marriages break up when the love is gone (that is, when the feeling is gone). We pursue work that we love; as the late founder of Apple Steve Jobs put it, “the only way to do great work is to love what you do”.<sup>2</sup>

But when you come to the Bible you find a radically different answer to the question “What is love”. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Love is not simply a quality that God possesses; it's a statement of his essence and being. For all eternity God has been and is “three persons united in love”.<sup>3</sup> Love is right at the centre of the universe because God is love. Forever the Father has loved the Son in the unity of the Spirit.

How do we know this of God? Because God has “showed his love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him” (4:9). God has demonstrated His love towards us in the greatest love story ever told; “not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (4:10). The perfect lover loving the unlovely.

So what? “Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (4:11). First and foremost John calls us to be people who love our Christian brothers and sisters. But when we know God as love and His extravagant love for us, the unlovely, we can love anyone - the annoying and unpopular colleague, the demanding client, the overbearing boss. We can love them even if we don't *feel* like loving them.

But in a world that is searching “What is love?” how can we not also tell our colleagues the greatest love story ever told, the perfect lover who loved the unlovely to the point of death. How can we not tell them of the God who is love.

1. Who do you find it hard to love in your workplace? How does God's love for the unlovely inspire you?
2. Share with others how God's love story impacted your life. How might you share that love story with your colleagues?

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<sup>1</sup> “What is love?” was the most Googled search term of 2012, and is frequently in the top three.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/772887-the-only-way-to-do-great-work-is-to-love>

<sup>3</sup> Glen Scrivener, 3-2-1.