

**Word Notes Sunday 23/04/17**  
**Clare Reed – Pop(ular) Idols: Love**

**Summary** (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday, listen to the podcast if you missed the talk <http://www.newmarketcommunitychurch.co.uk/podcasts.htm>)

**Key Text: Gen 29:15-20**

Maslow's (1943, 1954) *hierarchy of needs* is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs: Physiological, Safety, Love, Esteem and Self-Actualization (see over). If those needs are not met or one is taken away then we are motivated to fill the need. In our society, with its media emphasis on romance, love and sex as the ultimate desire of all, the desire for a love relationship can become an idol rather than trusting God to love us and fill that need. That is not to say a romantic relationship is a bad thing but that if we make that our highest priority and rely on it for all our other needs then we make it an idol and one which will ultimately fail us. The story of Jacob and his desire for Rachel in the book of Genesis helps us understand where we might take a wrong path.

Rachel was “lovely in form and beautiful”, Leah had “weak eyes” - ie not great in the looks department [*how shallow we men are – Tony*]. Jacob gave 7 years’ labour for Rachel, which was way beyond normal bride price. By any normal estimation, we must conclude that Jacob is obsessed. Jacob measures his worth in getting his girl - his goal is to marry Rachel, and the ‘benefits’ that provides. Having completed his work, in verse 21 he demands his prize: “give me your daughter I want to lie with her!” Normal conversational boundaries may have slipped at this point! Would we cross boundaries to get what we want? Modern examples might include sending naked photos on messaging apps as an attempt to get a boy/girlfriend. Label, Rachel’s dad, substitutes Leah, which Jacob didn’t notice until the morning!! Still obsessed he works another 7 years to get Rachel. What can we learn?

- We can be blind to reality. When eventually we get through the veneer to the chipboard underneath trouble awaits if we have built the person of our desires into an idol.
- Unrealistic expectations. We should not look to one partner to meet all our needs. That is not an encouragement to promiscuity, rather to having a breadth of relationships, most of all a primary relationship with God.
- Place of risk. If we make a love relationship the rock in our lives we end up at risk of being treated badly or staying in an abusive relationship. Young kids need love and belonging more than physical need and will accept an abusive relationship because they want to feel loved. This can be true for adults as well as children.

Scripture then switches to Leah’s story in verses 31 to 35 to show the real answer to our needs:

After Jacob has married Rachel, Leah is shoved on the back burner. She wants to be loved by Jacob, which in her culture is expressed by the greatest gift she can give – children. God hears her cry and blesses her with offspring while Rachel remain barren. The children’s names are Leah’s testimony and show us her journey of hoping for Jacob to meet her need to seeing it met in God.

- Reuben – “Behold a son”. Now Jacob will love me, but he doesn’t.
- Simeon – “Heard”. God heard me for Jacob to love me, surely he will love me now.
- Levi - “Joined”. Surely now after 3 sons he will join with me.
- Judah – “Praise the Lord”. Finally, she understands that God fills her love need.

Leah’s love need isn’t being met by Jacob, but it is being met by God. Love relationships are good – but if we look to that romantic partner to meet all our needs we are in danger of making that relationship an idol and risk not being able to hear when God is reaching out to us and see when He is meeting our needs. The Bible tells us the depth of God’s love for us in Jn 3:16. In Rom 8:38 Paul tells us he is convinced that nothing can or will “separate us from that love”. God’s love will not fail.

**Application** (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

- 1) What examples from our culture (media, advertising, soaps, friendships etc) can you suggest which direct us towards expecting romantic love to meet all our needs.

- 2) Read Romans 8:38.
  - a) How does that compare to our everyday experience of romantic love as seen in the world at large?
  - b) How is God's love superior to any we might seek with another person and how does it allow us to love in return?
  - c) Can knowing the love of God enhance our love for a romantic partner or detract from it?
  
- 3) Clare said more than once that romantic relationships are not bad but they should not replace allowing God as the primary source our love need.
  - a) Using Maslow's "*hierarchy of needs*" as a model (picture below), is it possible or even appropriate to rank the various relationships we can have, eg with romantic partner, friendships, family (close and wider), church, work colleagues, neighbours etc. Try to come up with a "hierarchy" and say why you put them in that order. (One simple model might be: "God, Family, Church".)
  - b) What might that ranking mean in real life when faced with decisions and challenges?

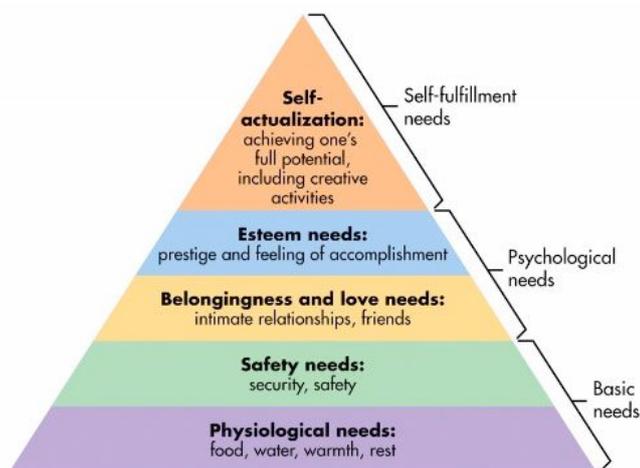
Go Deeper (private study).

- 4) Read Genesis 30:1-4 and further to answer these questions.
  - a) Does Jacob's infatuation work out well for him? Think in terms of his culture and then in terms of our own.
  - b) What "fruit" has Jacob reaped from his earlier life, his relationship with his parents and his deceit in gaining his brother's blessing?
  - c) How does it all work out with his sons and what does that tell you about God's faithfulness as opposed to man's fallen nature?
  - d) How does that give you hope?

**Witness** (*this is the bit where the cell talks, plans and prays about how to share the Good News*)

Build your romantic relationship on a deep shared love for God and let that shine to those around you.

**Extra info** (*to help understand the points and in the discussion*)



Maslow's (1943, 1954) *hierarchy of needs*  
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>