

Familiarity!

- What's your favourite love song?
- I guess your answer would be different from mine!
 - different generation; different tastes in music; different experiences in life!
- Mine are songs that are associated with particular times and places, with particular people:
 - Marc Cohn songs, and an ancient Scottish lament that you can do a good slow waltz to!
- We all have different ones.
- But, I would hazard a guess, if I were to ask you to name a passage from the Bible that talked about love, I would get a fairly consistent answer: 1 Cor 13 (maybe John 3:16, or 1 John 3:16).
- Not so much a love song as poem about love!
- Very often read at weddings, even if that's not really the kind of love Paul was talking about!
- Rather it is his description of the way any true community, and particularly the church, should function:

If I.... but have not love!

- First part of this "song of love" is a whole series of "if I..." statements:
 - "if I do this great thing, or that great thing!"
 - if I can speak well, predict the future, even speak clearly for God, or if I am extremely generous, give up my own life...
 - in today's terms: if I am successful, have a good job, earn myself some security, if I am respected, even loved, if I go out of my way to help others...
- If I do any of those things, without love, then it is pointless and worthless!
- Basically: make sure you are motivated by love, and not selfishness, not a desire to better yourself.
- Apply to Summer Focus:
 - do a good talk, lead a good game, play the music well, cook a good meal, run a smooth cafe, get a big crowd, cut down a hedge speedily...
 - but have not love, then it is pointless and worthless

Love is...

- Having made sure his readers appreciate the importance of living by love, he goes on to describe what that love is actually like:
- Again, a whole series of similar statements: "Love is..."
 - patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, not a record keeper for wrongs, rejoices in the truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, never fails.
- Quite a list!
- Its often said that those we live with are the ones that know us best, know what we are really like when we are not pretending to the outside world.
 - particularly true of husbands and wives!
 - but I suppose in a close-knit community like a Summer Focus team...
- even if not yet, as the week goes on I'm sure we will all be able to think of folk on team who do not display those qualities!
- *We may even be right in thinking that!*
 - but our call as Christian people is not to complain and grumble about others, but to strive with God's help to live that lovingly ourselves...
- Re-read vs.4-8a
- Again, apply that to Summer Focus, to the situations you might face this week:
 - when will patience be asked of you?
 - when might you need to work at being kind rather than cold hearted?
 - when will you need to guard against being envious - of something someone else

- has been asked to do, and you feel over-looked? Or a talent or ability you see in someone else you wish you had?
- how can you avoid **boasting**, which is putting your own abilities centre stage, growing in humility, so avoiding **pride**?
 - when might you be **rude** - when you are tired, when you think you could do a better job...? How will you guard against that?
 - and what about **self-seeking**, about trying to in some way get ahead - I guess not make money this week, but aspire to some kind of influence or credit with others?
 - what could make you **angry** this week? Someone moving your stuff, interfering with something you've set up or sorted? Or not doing what they'd said - or you'd assumed - they'd do?
 - when will you have to actively **forget** and put to one side the things that someone has done or said to you that hurt, or misrepresented, or belittled you, **keeping no record** of them?
 - can you think of ways you might **rejoice with the truth**, of seeing what is good in a situation even when there is something evil there too?
 - how will you go out of your way to **protect**: people, reputations, honour, especially those who are least and last and lowest?
 - how will you go out of your way to **trust** people, to not doubt them or their integrity or their intentions?
 - and how will you **keep** doing all of that throughout the week? Will you still be seeking to apply this word from God to your living on Friday evening or Saturday afternoon?

Perfection

- Whole of the last part of the chapter/song/poem is a reminder that this kind of love is not just a decent way of life, something nice to aim at, but is the "**most excellent way**", the best possible path to follow:
 - all other paths are somehow limited or flawed;
 - even the best of the rest is only temporary, maybe limited to this world;
 - but love is the language and lifestyle of heaven, and if that's where we're heading, we'd better get practising living that way!
- *And its rooted in the Cross, in Jesus' example lived out and finally fulfilled on the Cross*