

## **Season 6, Episode 5: Real Love (3:12-4:12): A Conversation with Andrew Sach**

*The following is an uncorrected transcript generated by a transcription service. Before quoting in print, please check the corresponding audio for accuracy.*

**Sarah:** This episode has been sponsored by Crossway, the publishers of the ESV Prayer Journal. That's been a real gift of an encouragement to me over the last few months. Within its pages are explorations into six key passages over six weeks that draw out the heart of the gospel. There's space to annotate and journal alongside, and Ruth Jackson, our Simons, has done some beautifully meaningful artwork to go alongside. I wondered whether I'd find it a bit dry, but nothing could be further from the truth. The more I've gone on, the more I've been reminded of how limitless and beautiful the Gospel is and how necessary it is to be dwelling on and shaped by this most precious good news each day. It would make the perfect gift for a new Christian, as it takes you through some of the big gospel words like justification and sanctification. But as I found it's no less beneficial to someone who's been walking the Christian life for a while, pick it up wherever you get your book.

**Felicity:** Welcome to Two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Felicity, I'm here in the States. I'm here with my sister, Sarah. We have a special guest with us, Andrew Sach, and today we're going to be digging into our next bit, chapter four of First Thessalonians. But we're also going to be thinking a bit more about these Bible handling tools that we've been talking about all through this season. Welcome, Andrew. Great to have you with us. Thank you for being here.

**Andrew:** Hello. Nice to meet you all.

**Felicity:** Just tell us a little about where you are, who you are, how you spend your time.

**Andrew:** So my fun fact is I live in Greenwich in London, southeast London, and actually the zero degree longitude line goes through Greenwich and actually through my house. So some days I wake Eastern Hemisphere and some days on the Western Hemisphere.

**Felicity:** Wow. That is very particular.

**Andrew:** Tourists stand outside to photograph themselves on the line and then it goes through my living room, pretty much. I passed that of a church plant called Grace Church, Greenwich. We're seven years old and I'm also a tutor on the Cornhill Training Course, which is a course to train Bible teachers in the UK and across the world.

**Felicity:** Brilliant. And just on a very much more low key level. I know that at heart, you're a coffee man. I remember you having you have various equipment to make coffee, but how do you feel?

**Andrew:** I feel a bit uncomfortable about being on a podcast about tea.

**Felicity:** What is the feeling about tea? The kind of a lesser hot drink is that where we're at, our women's.

**Andrew:** Worker is of Indian origin and so she cares very passionately about tea. And I couldn't understand why for a whole year I say, Fiona, would you like a cup of tea? And she said, oh, no, thanks, and transpired it is because she doesn't trust me to make the tears flask. Probably made biscuits.

**Sarah:** Brilliant. What about biscuits, though? Have you got a biscuit of choice?

**Andrew:** Oh, yeah, I certainly do. I don't actually get them easily, I haven't eaten them for years. But Gary Baldi biscuits, I think are the best. I don't know if they have those in America.

**Sarah:** Do they listing they're squashed fly. Do they have them?

**Felicity:** No, not at all. They're on Bake off recently, weren't they? And I had some friends talking about.

**Sarah:** It and they were like, what?

**Felicity:** Is that good?

**Sarah:** An underrated biscuit, I think, but a solid choice. Well, Andrea, we've both benefited hugely from your teaching over the years, and particularly you've written a book called Dig

Deeper that introduces the reader to various Bible handling tools. And we've been showcasing one of these tools each week on our season in one thessalonians. So we'd love to ask you how and why did these books come about and how did you come up with the tools? Can you just share a bit on that?

**Andrew:** Yeah, it came up originally, I mean, it was years and years ago, I think maybe the year 2000, 2001. I had a small group at church in London with lots of students in it and I was trying to demystify the process of getting more out of the Bible. So I didn't want them to think, oh, my leader is an expert, or the preacher on Sunday is an expert, and they can magically find things in the Bible that I couldn't see myself. I do think God's given the church teachers and it's right that we look to mature leaders to teach us, but there's also a sense to which the Bible is for everyone, every Christian, and there's nothing magic that the seminary student does or the preacher does that in principle, every Christian can't learn to do. So the idea was that rather than us just saying, here's this special meaning, and they thought, okay, I trust you because you're the leader, it was, let me show you how I got there. Let me show you how you could get there yourself. Let me give you some tools so that just by reading the Bible a bit more closely, you can find more. And I think that's the conviction. They're not tools to unlock a secret meaning, they're just tools to help you look further and see more. So, you know, a child in Sunday school who loves the Lord Jesus can read a pass to the Bible and understand it, and an adult who's been a Christian for 30 years, who looks even more closely at the Bible can just see more treasure in a passage they know well. And it's just meant to be a stimulus to read more carefully and to notice a bit more, that's all.

**Felicity:** It's so helpful, even just having that perspective, actually, as we read more closely and therefore we see more, I think that's such a helpful thing that it's not magic, it is just what we have in front of us and then being able to access it a bit more. So you've written this book and there's a couple there are three books. There's one where you dig into, there's a general one and there's one that you dig into mark and Exodus. Is it?

**Andrew:** Yeah, the titles aren't very clear, actually. One which sets out the tools, there's one called Dig Even Deeper, which isn't that steer but Digging Any Deeper. But it's actually because of extras, which you wouldn't guess from the title, but it's basically taking the tools because we thought it's one thing to just pick your for example, one of the tools is context. And you can pick a passage where the context makes a massive difference to what the text means, and you can showcase the best possible example of each thing in the Bible. But then Christians think, yeah, okay, but what about if I'm just reading through a whole book, like, how do I know which tool to use when? And it's a bit messier and maybe you just chose an ideal example, but it was a bit more complicated. So we thought, well, let's just go through a whole book of the Bible using tools as and when they're useful. So we did it for exercise, we did it for Mark's gospel and God willing, we're going to do it for one and two kings.

**Felicity:** Oh, wow. Nice. But not only is it just books, we have thespian Andrew Sachs in Videos helping us. Tell us about the videos.

**Andrew:** Well, this is a lockdown thing. I don't know what you did with your lockdown. People learnt and I persuaded my friend Ben, he's a video maker. I mean, he had no work because they weren't filming any Netflix HBA sort of series. Well, Ben, you're free and you can have to use a camera, so let's do some crazy videos. And the idea was they're little sort of five minute videos. Apparently you've done some that are 1 minute error. So I'm looking forward to looking looking at they're kind of five minutes and they start with a silly sketch and it's meant to be a bit fun and playful and we hope people will enjoy them and share them. And then in some way the silly sketch illustrates a bifold tool. You can find them I'm sorry, shameless plug. You can find them on the website dig Deeper dot tools. So apparently they put out dot tools URLs and one of my friends said, we got to get this one.

**Sarah:** Very good. We'll link those in the show notes for sure so people can check these out. We're going to get into our next part of one thessaladians today. So we're looking at verses or chapter three, verse twelve down to four, verse twelve. So last week we explained to our listeners that we actually kind of had split Paul's prayer at the end of chapter three to show that it was the kind of hinge of the book. So we're going to be reading from verse twelve today. Philistine, do you want to read for us and then we'll get into it?

**Felicity:** Absolutely. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your heart so that you'll be blameless and holy in the pleasure of our Lord, of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living now. We ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus, do this more and more, for you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified, that you should avoid sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is wholly and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans who do not know God. And that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being, but God, the very God who gives you His Holy Spirit. Now, about your love for one another, we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sister, to do so more and more and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

**Sarah:** Brilliant. Thank you for listing. So, as we've been going through one thessalonians, we kind of explained that this next part of the book is yeah, it feels like a different tone. It feels like a different part of the letter that Paul's writing. Angie, I wonder whether you can just help us to get a feel on how you would first start to get into this passage. It can feel a little confusing. There's definitely like a step change going on. What does it look like to get into this passage for yourself?

**Andrew:** The first thing I always do when I come to passion the Bible I don't know very well is just try to become familiar with it. So I just want to read it more times and it seems so obvious, doesn't it? You think, I've read it once, why do I need to read it again? I can remember what it said. But it's important to read and just notice things. And I think our brains just take a while to get things into our heads. Ideally I try and read the same passage on lots of days of the week. So if I'm preaching on something two weeks time, I read it every day. I'll have read it 14 times before I preach. It turns out just by reading it more times you start to understand it more. So that's the first thing, just to read it and to pray. I mean, this passage, Paul, begins with a prayer. May the Lord make your love increase before he tells them to have their love increase. So I guess that reminds us that it's a privilege to read a book where the author is in the room with you by his Holy Spirit. So I'd read it, I'd pray, lord help me to understand and obey these words that you have given me. And then in terms of tools, the first tool I pretty much always use is the structure tool because we got a lot of verses here and we can't hold them all in our head at once. So if I could kind of break it down into chunks and then try and think how the chunks might fit together, that would be my first stage. I sometimes say structure, the structure tools are a bit like eating chocolate because the chocolate bar manufacturer has already decided how much chocolate you should have in one go and they put a little groove to show you where the chocolate should break. And I think the same story of the Bible, like the mouthfuls, are determined for you by the Holy Spirit. And if we look closely, we can find the breaks. And it's not always the paragraph breaks, it's always the verse breaks because they were added later, but where's the author sort of breaking it. So just as I look at this straight away I think, well, it starts with a prayer and then it has instructions. So that might be my first little section. And so verse twelve and at the end of chapter twelve and 13 in the chapter three is a prayer. And it's a prayer interestingly for some of the same things that he then instructs them about. So he prays for their love and then in verse nine he'll talk about their love and say, come and love each other even more. But he's prayed for it first. Or verse 13 is about their holiness. And then he's going to talk in verse three about them being sanctified in their sexual behavior, sanctified being made holy. So that's interesting. He prays for the same things he'll then tell them, not just that. And then, well, maybe verse one and two is a kind of headline how to lift a Please God. And then verse three to eight is about sex particularly. And then verse nine to twelve is about love. And practical love. So just looking very simply, I'll go, it's a prayer, a

headline, and then it's sex and then it's love. And I haven't I haven't understood loads, but I'm just kind of getting my head around it and I'm noticing the prayer is about holiness and love and the instructions are going to be about holiness and love. So just some bits of the passage but how they connect to each other would be my first step.

**Felicity:** That's so helpful and because I think sometimes I hear the structure too and I think, oh, it sounds a bit complicated, like what is the structure? But even just thinking about it in that sense, the simplicity of it, which then helps you then to kind of be able to dig in a bit deeper, doesn't it? Once you've kind of worked out that the next tool that I was then thinking about was the repetition tool, just even in that first of the headline section, verses one and two we've had in the previous three chapters, a lot of this is the Gospel of God. You are the people of God, we are the messengers from God. And here you seem to get the same sort of idea of the repetition there, of this is how you to please God, this is the authority of the Lord Jesus and then you are doing this in Jesus like kind of the grace field aspect of that.

**Sarah:** Well, it makes all the more sense, doesn't it, that he prays first for that, doesn't it? Because it is the work of God, isn't it? And the end of the letter he talks about the God who is going to be faithful to do it in them. But yeah, I was really struck with how much God is mentioned all the way through the letter. We've been talking about that, haven't we, so far? But particularly in this, it is God's will, it's the Lord, it's God, it's the Holy Spirit who's been given to you in so many ways. You're not apart from the Lord as you strive for holiness.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I latest that with repetitions, rather the Lord say in verse 12, may the Lord make your love increase in verse 13 when the Lord Jesus comes and then support us when we urge you in the Lord of Jesus. And then in verse six, the Lord will punish. Obviously Jesus is the Lord Jesus, but sometimes it's just called Jesus in the Bible, but the Lord Jesus is reminding us that he is our master and it's kind of yeah, the Lord will punish. I don't often think of Jesus as the judge here. It's him. Yeah. And then you get in the presence of God our Father, verse 13, and then you get discreet the Holy Spirit. So it's actually really trinitarian.

**Felicity:** It reminds me, I feel like the authority then that kind of authority of like this is under the Lord. Do this because of who you are. Do this. It kind of takes me back to two verse twelve encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory. And then this seems to be a kind of almost an outworking of what it is to be in that kingdom under the authority of God. Which then really helps I think because I think when I read this passage to begin with you kind of think it's sex. What are we going to do with the kind of the sexual immorality kind of aspect of it? And that helps us to kind of then see that God's will is authoritative in every part of our life that's kind of where I was then going.

**Sarah:** With it it does feel a bit random, doesn't it? It must be some issue in the Thessalonian context but he's zoning in on that do you think?

**Andrew:** Well I just think isn't it always the issue? What is the thing that grabs Christians and takes them off track and \*\*\*\*? Rex faith most often. I mean, it's sex and money usually, and the fact that the New Testament is often sex and money, I just think God knows our nature and this will be the thing that leads many Christians astray. Yeah, you're talking about repetition. My other favorite one, which is quite a distinctively thessalonians thing is this more and more phrase verse one, we instruct and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. And then verse ten, we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more. And what I love about this is he's telling them off because they're not doing something, but he's saying, yeah, you're gaining really well. You're Christians who honor the Lord, but just honor Lord even more. And so I think often we read about sex and we go, I'm being told off, and he's not really telling them off that there are churches that are just full of faith and love. But wouldn't it be awful then to be shipwrecked or diverted? Just carry on don't let sexual morality be the thing that shipwrecks you continue in the way that you're doing so.

**Felicity:** Well already yeah that's a helpful reminder because that's been the big thrust all the way through, hasn't it? Assurance and encouragement so there's no reason why that would suddenly shift at this point. Yeah, really helpful.

**Sarah:** Can you talk us through so particularly thinking about the authors purpose tool how much work do you need to do with the other tools to then be able to start to work out the purpose of why he's saying this here?

**Andrew:** Yeah by author's purpose all we're just saying is why did the Apostle Paul write this? What's it for? So it isn't just a textbook of theology he's written it for a reason and what is that reason? And it's I think in this passage is pretty obvious because he just says I'm praying that your love will overflow. I'm praying that you'll be strengthened, you'll be blameless. And so if I say, I wonder why he's written this after this video is there he wants us to live a blameless, holy life all the way through to the coming of the Lord Jesus to get to the finish line safely. So that's why it's here. And so as I read it and understand it, if it doesn't have that effect on me, then I've misunderstood. If this isn't somehow going to help me to keep gangs of Christian till the end, I've misunderstood that that's what it's for. And then I guess it's just asking that question of each paragraph, how is this paragraph going to help me to keep blameless and holy until the coming of Jesus?

**Sarah:** Yeah, that's really helpful. And it's really helpful to kind of make that connection through to our own hearts and our own living, isn't it? Because I think I know my own heart. My intention is to kind of find it satisfying to use these tools and then kind of stop rather than actually really drive it to the heart and go, no. What really is the impact for me right now and for us in our church family? And what is it like to wholeheartedly live this out.

**Felicity:** As you were in this passage or either of you, Sarah or Andrew, where is it hitting our hearts? Where did it hit your hearts?

**Andrew:** Well, I think it's interesting in a letter that, as you say, it's very encouraging and the tone is very warm all the way through that. Verse three to eight does sound quite stern and quite frightening, this warning about sex immorality. And actually, I can't think of another passage in the Bible where we're given so many reasons for the one instruction. So the instruction is avoid sex and morality, and then the whole of the rest of the paragraph is reasons for it. And why do you need seven or eight reasons for this? He just knows that we'll be tempted to not flee from it. And so it is a little bit frightening. So be holy and honorable because you're good to holy people. Reason one, don't be like the pagans who don't know God. I think the temptation to sort of calibrate our behavior by our society, I do what is accepted in my society and pause like that isn't a good guide because your society doesn't know God. So don't make the questions, what is normal for British people or American people? I mean, don't calibrate by them. And verse six, that you shouldn't wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. You know, sexual sin always hurts other people. It's just about you. It's always wronging somebody. Then the Lord will punish those who sin, as I warn you. And then verse seven, god didn't call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. If you reject this, you reject God himself. One of the tools is not just what is it saying, but how is it saying it? And at this point, he says it sternly and emphatically. And there's so many reasons, because beware the context is encouragement. You're doing so well. I really want you to get to the end as holy and blameless before Jesus when he comes back. So don't play with this sin. It's really serious. He's a doubly underlined or seven times a week.

**Felicity:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Sarah:** Yeah. It's really helpful just to see that laid out, isn't it? And as you say, what you've just been doing there for us is just modeling, just reading it, just reading it carefully, reading it through.

**Andrew:** That's what dignity.

**Sarah:** I've been struck by the more and more language, but the way all of this, his prayer for them to grow and be blameless and holy is very much linked to other people, how they relate to other people in the loving one another more and more in relation to sexuality, in relation to how they work as well. In the last few verses. It's a together thing. It's a community thing. Your US striving for holiness is not done in isolation. And I think that's both really great encouragement and also a kind of exhortation, okay, how am I doing this with others in the mix? That's what I've been dwelling on. Have a youth listing.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I think that and a part of that is taking us a step back from that in the sense of we are under the authority of God. And so we hear this command. And as you're saying, Andrew, rather than calibrating ourselves according to the world around us, which I think can feel authoritative, like what the world is saying, what our friends are doing and what

direction everyone is going, but actually to remember who we are, that we are set apart as God's people. And Paul has been making such a big effort to remind the thessalonians and persuade them that they are gospel authentic people. And this is what it is, then, to be those gospel authentic people. And I found that it's just a good reminder. And that's so helpful, what you're saying, Andrew, just laying it out. This is something not to play with. And whether you're married or not married, wherever you are in your stage of life, this is the warning for everyone. Because it's a danger. Danger for everyone. Yeah.

**Andrew:** And then it just becomes I love the unexpected bit. So do you think, okay, love. What does love mean? He prays they'll love each other. He tells them how to love each other. What does that mean? Number one, they mistreat each other sexually. Number two, mind your own business.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I was wondering about that one.

**Andrew:** Mind your business. I think it's not about gossip, which is how we use the phrase, but it's about work hard. Don't be a sponge on other people. Don't be always basically get a job or be industrial. So you're not just clinging on to other people that you're sort of leached for.

**Sarah:** Which is what he's been modeling, isn't it? The whole way through the letter so far, he's been modeling. I'm working hard for you night and day, working and also lovingly. And he's kind of praying for them and exhorting them to do what he's been doing for them, isn't he? Which I think is a helpful thing. Time has gone already. Andrew, would you be happy to pray for it?

**Felicity:** Isn't it?

**Andrew:** I'd love to pray again. I'm just going to pray what Paul prays. Because it starts praying, isn't it? The word I pray verse twelve and 13 of chapter three.

**Sarah:** Thank you.

**Andrew:** May the Lord make our love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as the apostle Paul did for the Theans. We pray, Lord, that you would strengthen our hearts, that we would be blameless and holy in the presence of you, our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all of his holy ones. Amen.

**Felicity:** Amen.

**Sarah:** Amen.

**Felicity:** Thank you so much, Andrew. So appreciate your info. I know it's a starter in many ways, but it's so valuable. Do? Grab a copy of Dig Deeper. It's published by Crossway in America and IVP in the UK. Grab it wherever you get your books, give it to others, read it, share it, do whatever. And it's better than our videos for sure. Check out.

**Sarah:** Way better.

**Felicity:** And Sarah and I will see you next time as we carry on in our chapter four. Bye bye.

**Sarah:** Bye bye. Thank you so much for listening. This episode has been sponsored by Crossway.