

A PLACE FOR YOU

What is the most romantic thing you've ever done for someone else or that you've ever had done for you?

Everybody has their own ways of expressing love for another person. In 2014, one man in China reportedly purchased 99 iPhones to propose to his girlfriend. The man assembled his stack of brand new iPhone 6 handsets in the shape of a heart. Then, standing inside it with a bouquet of flowers, he asked his girlfriend to be his bride while a crowd of family and friends watched on. Unfortunately for him, his girlfriend declined his proposal before walking off, leaving the man heart broken and \$100,000 poorer!

When Jesus was here on earth, they obviously didn't have iPhones to propose with but there was a rather romantic process a man would undertake to make a woman his wife. After having spent time in an exclusive courtship relationship with a woman, the man would propose and, assuming the answer was yes, would go away to live with his family for a period of time. He would comfort her with the promise of his soon return and the assurance that he was only departing for the purpose of preparing a place for her in his father's house. Once the preparations were complete, he would return for his bride, marry her, and take her to the place prepared for her to be with him for the rest of her life.

In John 14, Jesus had a conversation with His disciples that has clear reference to these customs. Read [John 14:1-3](#).

In this text, what connections do you see with the marriage customs of Jesus' day?

Jesus was saying that He would go away to prepare a place in His Father's house for us and, once He's ready, He will come, get us and take us with Him. This is exactly what a man would do for the one he loved in Jesus' time. Could this just be a coincidence? No way! Jesus is deliberately likening Himself to a bridegroom. [Why do you think Jesus might be doing this?](#)

Jesus is doing this because He wants us to know that He will definitely return to earth. It's highly unlikely that a man would've ever gone away to prepare a place for his wife and never returned to her. Why? Because he loves her. That's the whole point of preparing a place for her in the first place! Jesus deeply and passionately loves us and wants to spend eternity with us and because of this, He promises to return to Earth to take us to the place He has prepared.

This place isn't just any place. This is a place in the Father's house, which is clearly referring to heaven! We must be careful though not to visualise heaven as some earth-like place. Since we are bound by limitations of space, time and even language, our concept of heaven is limited. Heaven is so far beyond our finite thinking and so the best we can do is to describe it in metaphors. This is what Jesus is doing in John 14 when He refers to heaven as a "home" with "rooms". What we do know about heaven though is that we will be with Jesus. That's a certainty and, in fact, that's the whole point. Have a look at verse 3 again. Jesus says that He will take us to the place He has prepared "so that" we can be with Him! Forget the food and friendships - they're going to be great - but what is going to be incredible is being with Jesus who is totally obsessed with us.

How does this hope for the future affect your present reality?

Have you ever walked into a meeting or a class or an important conversation halfway through and you've missed the first part which gives the context to what you're now hearing? It's so incredibly annoying! Well this is kind of what we did when we read John 14:1-3 before. We jumped in halfway through a conversation

that Jesus was having and we discovered some pretty awesome stuff but we missed the first part of that conversation that actually frames what we read. So let's read [John 13:31-38](#).

When the Bible was written, there were no chapters or verses. They were added well over 1000 years after the last books of the Bible were written. For this reason, sometimes we see chapter breaks in places where there shouldn't be chapter breaks and they break up the flow of a passage. This is one of those examples. John 13:31-38 and what we read in John 14:1-3 is all part of the same conversation so we must treat it that way. [How might John 13:31-38 enrich our understanding of John 14:1-3?](#)

In John 13:31-38, Jesus is with His disciples celebrating Passover which was a Jewish festival commemorating the time God rescued the Israelites from approximately 400 years of slavery in Egypt. While they were gathered, Jesus breaks it to His disciples that He doesn't have a whole lot of time left with them before He goes away and where He is going they can't go. Simon Peter doesn't like the sound of this and so he pipes up, saying that he will do whatever it takes in order that he may go with Jesus to wherever He's going. Jesus then predicts that Peter will deny that he knows Jesus three times. In the very same breath, Jesus then encourages Peter and His disciples with the beautiful words of John 14:1-3, assuring them that He will go and prepare a place for them before returning to take them to be with Him forever.

Woah! Did you catch that? Jesus literally just said, despite the fact that Simon Peter would stuff up big time and deny any form of relationship with Him, He would go and prepare a place for Him in heaven and come back at some point to take him there!

[What does this tell us about Jesus? And what hope does this give you?](#)

Jesus isn't coming back to find those amongst us that are perfect so that He can take them with Him to heaven. Jesus is very aware that, as humans, we make mistakes and we do things we shouldn't. But that doesn't change the fact that He loves us and wants to spend eternity with us. So do we need to worry about whether or not we've been good enough for Jesus take us with Him when He returns to Earth? No way! Jesus says in John 14:1 to not let our hearts be troubled and that we should just trust in Him. This is so good. We can look forward to Jesus' second coming with excitement, knowing that the One returning is loving and gracious.