

On Monday February 8th I sat down with my cuppa for another Couples Talk, this month with Harry and Kate Benson. I was particularly looking forward to this one having read and really enjoyed Harry and Kate's book "What Mums Want (and Dads Need to Know)". The book tells the story of how they came back from the brink of divorce to a transformed marriage. When you are familiar with a story you listen to the 'in the flesh' version with eager anticipation of what is going to be said. In Couples Talk we like to hear people's stories, the fun, shocking, vulnerable and transforming elements, the *before and after*, the practical nitty-gritty of how that transformation came about, and how a relationship with a loving God is foundational to change.

Harry and Kate are interesting people, they have a good story to tell and they communicate it well. The *before* for them was a comfortable, functioning marriage with two young children, happy in their roles and materially secure. That all sounds pretty good! But as Harry admitted, it looked good from the outside but he was clueless about how to communicate affection and love towards Kate. As the years went on Kate became more discontent with the lack of friendship in their relationship. It led her to become critical of Harry and to look for that deep connection and friendship elsewhere. Discovering that Kate was on the brink of an affair, Harry's response was not what she had anticipated, she wanted him to fight for her and their relationship but he didn't. Kate wrote Harry a letter articulating what she needed from their marriage or it was over. This is when the lightbulb went on for Harry and the beginning of the *after*.

Harry wanted to be married to Kate and he resolved to make the changes in himself in order to keep her. He had to learn how to be her friend, to communicate his love for her in ways that she understood. Kate had to learn not to be critical. He took responsibility for the relationship and that is what he says is key, not only in their marriage but for all. Alongside their personal story and experience, Harry has carried out extensive research with the Marriage Foundation. This call for men to take responsibility and love their wives is backed up by empirical data which shows that when men make the decision to do just that, the whole family flourishes.

But this isn't a new idea! In the greatest love story between God and his people, the Bible, Paul writes "husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (Ephesians 5:25). Paul is talking about the sacrificial, unconditional love of Jesus. It's a high standard, but as Harry and Kate reminded us, the starting point is for a husband to love his wife, and she will love him right back, in that order.

*To read more about Harry and Kate's story and for more information on Harry's research, read "What Mums Want (and Dads Need to Know)". Or visit [The Marriage Foundation](#)*