

Pursuing Love & The Great Commandment – Pt. 3

Loving Your Spouse

I. Introductory Remarks.

John 13:34 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

In this series of messages we have been looking at what it really means to pursue love in all of the relationships God has established in our lives.

In the previous message we saw how it is that we must pursue love with God. This is the foundation for which all of our relationships are based.

- We saw that there were four areas in which we are to love God.
- We are to love Him with our mind - the intellectual nature, with our heart - the emotional nature, with our soul - the willing nature and with all our strength - the physical nature.
- If we fail to love God in each of these areas we become unbalanced in our love towards God and it shows in our relationships with the people God has put in our lives.

In this message I want to talk about some of the practicalities of loving our mate. Marriage is the most intimate relationship God has established for mankind, aside from our relationship with Him. It is the primary relationship that has been given to us to work out the practicalities of learning to love as Christ has loved

Someone once said, "Love at first sight is nothing special. It's when two people have been looking at each other for years that it becomes a miracle." – *Sam Levison* –

The Bible has much to say about love and marriage.

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it...*

Ephesians 5:33 *Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

II. To Love As Christ Loved.

- To love as Christ loved must be the foundation on which our love for one another is based.

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- All other expressions of love will not endure the pressures of two persons coming together to form one flesh.
- A true love of intimacy between two individuals can only come as a result of Christ's love being poured into their lives.

1. The Process of Growing in Christ's Love.

- We must realize that growing in Christ's love is a process.
- Most of us were not drawn to our mate through the love of Christ. We were drawn to one another through our own natural and carnal desires.
- We were first drawn together through an affectionate or phileo type love.
- Agape love had very little to do with our initial attraction towards one another.
- The initial burst of phileo love or even eros love blinds us to all of the imperfections and differences that exist in each of us.
- They are invisible because of our overwhelming emotions of infatuation and affection for each other.

- During this stage it is easy for you to be kind and loving towards one another.
- The husband is not being rude and obnoxious.
- He's being kind, gentle and caring, still putting his best foot forward. He even brings home flowers and candy on occasion without being prodded to.
- The wife is taking care of herself to make sure she is always presentable and looking her best.
- She's still trying to impress him with her cooking and homemaking skills, etc.
- You both find it easy to forgive and overlook each other's faults and differences.
- You're not self-seeking, you are still trying to please one another.
- You don't keep track of wrongs because you are too in love to care. Love is blind!
- It sees no wrong! That's great!

Unfortunately this phase doesn't last forever. As time goes by the heightened emotional feelings of love towards one another begin to subside and reality begins to settle in. The blindness you experienced in the initial stages of the relationship is beginning to be lifted.

You begin to notice little things in each other that are irritating: Morning breath, rudeness, selfishness, cooking, bad habits. She begins to realize you really are rude and crude. He begins to see you as being too sensitive. You notice your opinions about many

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things are different.

It's getting harder to forgive and overlook things you once ignored or could care less about. All of sudden these are issues that are building walls. All of these things that you were once blinded to are now becoming glaring offenses that are causing your love to grow cold.

You begin to wonder... "Why did I even marry this person?" "Was he or she the right person?" How could it be? We're so different?" Remember love at first sight is nothing special. It's when two people have been looking at each other for years that it becomes a miracle. And it takes the agape love of Christ to produce the miracle.

2. Pursuing Agape Love with Our Mate.

Now is the time when you must begin to really pursue the love of Christ in your marriage. If you want to come to that place where you were at when you first fell in love, you must realize that it will take the agape love of Christ to recapture a love in which blinds us to each other faults.

God's agape love was first displayed through His forgiveness of our sins and His total acceptance of us. He received us in spite of how terrible we were.

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 15:7 *Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*

What happens when our mate's faults and other unpleasant things are glaring at us in an ugly way? Agape love will express a deep and constant love towards our mate even in their most unworthy state.

Agape love is an unconditional love that will always seek their welfare whether they deserve it or not. It's not based on merit. It will forgive as Christ forgave and receive as He receives.

III. How Agape Love is to be Expressed in the Marriage.

1 John 2:5 *But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.*

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Love becomes an act of our will rather than our emotions. Our love for our mate must be in response to God's love for us. Our love for God is manifested in our obedience to Him and His word. His word tells us to love one another. Our love for our mate will be practically expressed in the following ways:

1. Forbearance & Forgiveness Towards One Another.

Ephesians 4:32 *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.*

Colossians 3:13 *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

It is a love that continually forgives each other no matter how many times an offense has been committed and as it says in 1 Corinthians 13, "It keeps no records of wrongs."

- **Husbands need to take the initiative in forgiveness just as Christ did for us.**
- **Make it a habit to clean the slate each day.**
- **70 X 7 Principle of forgiveness.**
- **Love is not touchy nor easily angered - 1 Corinthians 13.**

2. We Must Love One Another Sacrificially.

John 15:12-13 *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

- **Love is not self-seeking - 1 Corinthians 13:5**
- **Again, it is the husband's responsibility to be the leader in this.**

Author Dwight Small writes on the application of agapic love to marriage: He says, "Agape is not born of a lover's need, nor does it have its source in the love object. Agape doesn't exist in order to get what it wants but empties itself to give what the other needs. Its motives rise wholly from within its own nature. Agape lives in order to die to self for the blessedness of caring for another, spending for another, spending itself for the sake of the beloved.

Esteem each others needs more important than your own - Philippians 2:3-4.

3. Agape Love Has A Deep Respect For One Another.

The Bible commands the wife to respect her husband. I believe that there must be a

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mutual respect for one another, but I also believe the husband has a greater need for respect as the wife has a greater need for agape love being shown towards her.

Let the wife see that she respects her husband - Ephesians 5:33.

There needs to be mutual respect for one another.

Josh McDowell writes in his book, "The Secret of Loving", "Respect is shown by giving the other person freedom to grow and mature. Respect says, 'You're OK and I admire you the way you are.' Respect encourages the one loved to be genuinely himself or herself and to grow and develop, not for the sake of serving the spouse, but simply for her own sake."

4. Agape Love Shows Affection Even When You Don't Feel Like It.

1 Corinthians 7:3 *Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.*

There are times when we don't feel like showing affection – Do it anyway! You'll be surprised at the results.

5. Love Believes In One Another.

If you love someone you will be loyal no matter what the cost. You will always believe in one another and expect the best from each other. Because of your faith picture for one another you are able to see beyond the natural hindrances that may cause disbelief in each other.

IV. Concluding Remarks.

There is obviously much more that could be said about how to love your mate. But I believe I have given to you some essential ingredients that will put the spark back in your marriage and cause you to experience the wonderful feelings and emotions that can come from the intimacy of love that is born out of the heart of God. The honeymoon doesn't have to be over.

Remember love at first sight is nothing special. It's when two people have been looking at each other for years that it becomes a miracle. And it takes the agape love of Christ to produce the miracle.