

Love In The Marital Relationship

Introduction. An unknown proverb says, “The easiest kind of relationship is with ten thousand people. The hardest is with one.” Aside from salvation, the second most wonderful gift ever given to man is the marital relationship. One of the most necessary, and at times the most difficult, elements of that marital relationship is love. Love is a complex emotion which bonds two people together unlike anything else. It demands correct action, and when a husband and wife love one another, the world knows. When everything is right, it is just about the most rewarding experience someone can have.

The love taught in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is to exist between the husband and the wife. God created, established, and ordained marriage (Genesis 2:21-24). Christ and Paul taught on the sacredness of marriage (Matthew 19:4-9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-39), and Paul used the relationship of Christ and the church to illustrate the marital relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33). If we learn the kinds of love in the marital relationship, and pay close attention to some important applications, your marriage can be better today.

I. Three Kinds Of Love In The Marital Relationship

A. Caring love.

1. This kind of love should always grow, becoming stronger day by day. Caring love will not be affected by anger or hurt. This love allows one to forgive and get past any hurt that might have been caused. This love always seeks the welfare of the person loved. This love is not contingent on the goodness, beauty, or charm of the person loved (Matthew 5:44; John 3:16).
2. Caring love is proved by action (2 Corinthians 8:8, 24; 1 John 3:16-18) and is measured by sacrifice (John 3:16; 15:12-13). This is the kind of love that shines in the greatest moments of duress, such as the care husbands and wives show one another in the closing years of their lives.
 - a) Traditional marriage vows say “in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity.” These are not mindless platitudes. They are descriptions of what life is really like.
 - b) And when you say “I do,” you are vowing that this is the person I want to face suffering with, and I am pledging to see it through to the end. When you have got a person like that by your side, you are richly blessed.

B. Affectionate love.

1. Affectionate love is not necessarily sexual, but it is a gentle feeling of fondness. Unlike caring love which is independent of feeling and passion, and always seeks the welfare of the person loved, affectionate love is based on delight and pleasure found in the person loved. It is more closely related to a warm friendship.
2. Women desire their husband’s affection (Deuteronomy 24:5). Leah had intimate love, but she longed for affectionate love (Genesis 29:11, 16-18, 30-31, 34). In fact, affection is the cement of the marital relationship.
 - a) So husbands, do not forget about this kind of love. Do not be afraid to show your wife affection. Let her know that you love her by those simple hugs and kisses, touches on her back, and the gentle holding of her hand.

- b) Wives, do not fail to show your husband affection. Women show more affection than men, but unfortunately I have seen instances where the husband shows affection and the wife does not. Do not withhold those affectionate touches from your husband. Let him know that you love him by simple touches on his back or the gentle holding of his hand.
- C. Intimate love.
1. This type of love should only exist between a husband and wife (Hebrews 13:4).
 - a) It is a love filled with passion and intensity, and should only be expressed in private.
 - b) According to 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, this love is one of giving, not taking. Each should consider the wants and desires of the other. No good in a marriage is ever done by demanding this type of intimacy.
 2. True intimate love will really only develop if caring love and affectionate love are in place, so husbands and wives have to show these to one another first.
 3. Intimate love is not to be used as a manipulative tool. Some men and women have been known to withhold sexual intimacy in order to get their way.
 - a) What is even more disturbing, Christians have withheld themselves physically and emotionally until the temptation for their spouse has become so great that they fall to temptation and cheat.
 - b) At that point, they can walk away, claiming to be the “innocent victim” and then search for a new mate. Sure, you may be able to fool the church, but God knows the heart and He will know that you are far from “innocent” (Hebrews 10:31).

II. The Application Of These Types Of Love

- A. The wife is subject to her husband.
1. Wives are to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24).
 - a) “Submit” means “to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection.” It is translated as “obedient” in Titus 2:5.
 - b) The husband is the head of the wife (1 Corinthians 11:3). The wife is to be gentle and quiet in spirit (1 Peter 3:1-4). She is never to be bossy, defiant, stubborn, rebellious, or self-willed toward her husband.
 2. Wives are to love their husbands (Titus 2:4-5).
 - a) Is your love for your husband unconditional, or does your love waver depending on how you feel in the moment?
 - b) Do you seek the welfare of your husband? When was the last time you proved your love to your husband?
 - c) When was the last time you made a sacrifice because of your love for your husband?
 3. A final admonition for wives is to remember that a husband is owed something, and his wife is obligated to provide it. He is not only owed it; he needs it. That is respect: “and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).
 - a) A wife who belittles her husband, cuts him down, nitpicks him relentlessly, withholds her affection — both physical and emotional — as a ransom,

nags him endlessly, criticizes him constantly, humiliates him in public and to her friends and in front of the children, and will not allow him to take a leadership position in the home, cannot be terribly surprised when he begins to withdraw and eventually wants a divorce.

(1) It is a catastrophe that we are not raising our girls to understand and appreciate that men have a deep desire for respect and admiration.

(2) Instead they learn, often from their own mothers, from the media, from television, advertisements, academia, and so on, that men are worthless oafs who should be handled accordingly until they prove themselves worthy of better treatment.

b) Look, you may not think he deserves respect because of the way he acts, but you do not marry someone in order to give them what they deserve. In marriage, you give them what you have promised. That way, he is challenged to live up to the respect his wife has for him.

B. The husband is to love, nourish, and cherish his wife.

1. Husbands are to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25).

a) Love is active good will (John 3:16; Galatians 5:6; 1 John 5:3) that is shown by sacrifice (John 15:13; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:3-8). Husbands, when was the last time you made a sacrifice because you loved your wife?

b) The husband is to seek the welfare of his wife (vv. 26-27) because she is a part of him (v. 31). This love is not to be contingent on your wife's beauty or health. This was your commitment when you made your vows!

(1) How does your wife know that you love her?

(2) What have you done that has proven your love for your wife?

2. Husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives (Ephesians 5:28-29).

a) Husbands are to love their wives "as their own bodies" (v. 28). If you do good to yourself, then you should nourish and cherish your wife (cp. 1 Peter 3:7).

(1) Nourish: give what is beneficial to building up (cp. Ephesians 6:4).

(2) Cherish: count as worthy or valuable (cp. Deuteronomy 22:6).

b) The mantle of leadership is, in large part, positivity. Look for the good in every situation and in every person in your household. Your wife does not want to hear your negativity, complaining, and insults. She does not want to see you explode in anger, cursing at her and the children. This destroys the caring, affectionate, and intimate love she has for you.

c) A final admonition for husbands is to stay away from pornography.

(1) Pornography destroys your wife's self-worth. And, it also makes you far less attractive to her.

(2) Pornography emasculates, and no woman wants an emasculated man. A wife finds her husband most desirable when he is making himself useful, serving, protecting, and providing for his family. If you want your wife to see you as a man and feel physically and emotionally attracted to you, do some yard work. Help around the house. Cook dinner. Bring home a paycheck. Read to your children. Help with their homework. Solve a problem. Lead your family in prayer.

C. Some final observations.

1. Meet each other's most important emotional needs.
 - a) For women, they are affection, conversation, honesty, financial support, and family commitment.
 - b) For men, they are sexual fulfillment, recreational companionship, attractiveness, domestic support, and admiration.
 - c) Furthermore, couples have to vanquish what kills a marriage, such as selfish demands, disrespectful judgments, angry outbursts, dishonesty, annoying habits, and independent behavior.
2. Identify the warning signs of how couples drift apart.
 - a) Touching each other less often and not prioritizing sexual intimacy and affection.
 - b) Focusing on screens instead of focusing on each other.
 - c) Making assumptions instead of truly communicating.
 - d) Facing struggles individually instead of tackling them together as a team.
 - e) Trying to fix each other instead of trying to understand each other.
 - f) Focusing on your spouse's flaws instead of his or her strengths.
 - g) Comparing the current difficulties in your marriage with a false fantasy of how "good" life could be if you were single or with someone else.

Conclusion. This sermon is more than just good ideas and suggestions. These negative behaviors that have been described are sins and God will judge them. You may feel as though it is not our business what goes on in your marriage, but it is our business to keep people out of sin.

Do you feel trapped in your marriage? Marriages are so disposable today, but please believe me — divorce is not going to solve your problems. We can show you the way back to the marriage you have always hoped and dreamed of, but you have to be willing to do whatever it takes.

That includes talking to people who are vested in your success, humbling yourselves, seeking forgiveness and not holding grudges toward each other, and taking the time to learn what you need to make your marriage a success. If you will give up your right to be right and determine to do whatever it takes, you will have hope.

Humility is choosing love over hate, kindness over harshness, and forgiveness instead of pridefully holding onto the past and refusing to work on the marriage in the present. Put in the time, and make small, intentional choices to love each other well every single day and you will be on the right path.