

Infatuation Happens; Real Love is Built

Building Your Marriage--part 3

November 1, 2015

Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

DAY 1: Love and the "piece of paper"

1. In virtually every movie or TV show, the love that propels a couple to get married is portrayed as "passionate" love or "romantic" love. In Hollywood that's the "real" definition of "love."

2. It is no surprise that in our secular culture, you'll often hear couples say things like, "We don't need a piece of paper to show our love to each other." People are using this same definition of "love." People assume that "love" is a specific feeling, a romantic passion. "What can a piece of paper possibly add to that?!"

3. What people cannot distinguish is the difference between real love and what we call "infatuation." Infatuation masquerades as "love." It feels like love. Instead, infatuation is driven by two strong drives. (a) Physical attraction, and (b) How the other person makes me feel.

4. Infatuation has its place. It is certainly to be enjoyed, and it often gets a couple to their wedding! But infatuation, "passionate" love or "romantic" love is not a strong enough love on which to build a marriage. A deeper kind of love must be built in the years of marriage.

5. Biblical love is seen, not in what someone does for me, but in what sacrifices and actions I do for another. Under each of the verses below, underline the sacrifices and/or actions of love.

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

6. What stands out to you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Love as desire or duty? (or both??)

*Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and **be united to** his wife, and the two **will become one** flesh."*

1. The bible teaches that there is both a vertical love and a horizontal love that builds a marriage.

2. The vertical love component comes from God, as we rely on His love to fill our hearts.

*1 John 4:16 And so we know and **rely on the love God has for us**. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.*

3. The horizontal component of love is a sacrificial commitment for the good of the other. Think of this kind of love as the "**duty**" of love.

4. The problem in secular society is that marital love centers not on "duty" but on "**desire**."

5. It is God's purpose to unite "duty" and "desire", but He does it through the "back door." You build love through sacrificial actions (the duty of love) regardless of present feelings ("desire"), in the hopes that as you build "duty" love you'll find "desire" love trailing along in its aftermath!

*Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and **be united to** his wife, and the two **will become one** flesh."*

7. "Be united to" was once translated "cleave" which means to be glued to by a binding oath. Instead of waiting for the feelings of love to "trigger" loving action or relating, I am more caught up with taking the opportunities to express loving words, lovingly relate, and do loving actions regardless of *present* feelings.

8. God also tells us that "**the two will become one flesh**." There are three thoughts included in this phrase.

a. We become "one" in body, sexually.

b. Two independent people become one entity.

c. This is a process--a loooooong process.

9. Romantic love (desire) is simply not strong or enduring enough for this process. What God does in marriage is teach us the "duty" kind of love--which **builds** love.

10. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The promise of future love

*Malachi 2:14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have **broken faith** with her, though she is your partner, the wife of **your marriage covenant**.*

1. When couples write their own vows, you often hear sentiments of present love. It's touching. But vows in a wedding are about what you can expect from me in our future.

2. Romantic love assumes it will continue on and on. Lovely thought, but not living in reality. Your feelings will undulate like Pacific Ocean tides. Vows for "duty" love enable you to not only live through the "low tides" of feelings but to build a richer love than anything you've had in "desire" love!

3. What are some ways vows cement you to build love? Let's look at three benefits.
 - (a) Enables you to stick with it through the often rough first years,

 - (b) Makes the slow shift from consumer relationship to covenant relationship,

 - (c) Provides the security needed in which you can be open with your spouse without fear of driving him/her away.

4. Which of those three benefits strikes you as most important? Why?

5. Love as "desire" is partly built on some "illusions."
 - a. We idealize the person we are infatuated with.
 - b. We idealize the relationship we'll have. For example, you'll hear people say, "It can't take that much work if we really love each other."
 - c. We are relating from putting our best foot forward; and so is the other!

6. But after time, we realize there is another foot!! (not just the good one we put forward). We learn of the other person's weaknesses. As that happens, infatuation fades.

7. Real love is not built on idealized images of who we'd like our spouse to be. Real love is built on two people finding out about all four feet, and still being committed to one another's best. Vows help us during this transition!

8. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Helping romantic love fulfill itself

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

⁴⁴ *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

⁴⁵ *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

⁴⁶ *If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?*

⁴⁷ *And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*

⁴⁸ *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

1. As we said, many assume marriage to be generated by passion or emotion. If you don't feel the love, then to act loving is "not authentic," or "fake." As we've also seen, this will doom romantic feelings in the long run.

2. In today's verses, Jesus commands His followers to "love" their enemies! Do you think Jesus means we're to:

- a. Feel loving?
- b. Like our enemy?
- c. Only do something loving if we feel loving?

3. Do you think Jesus means to wait until we feel loving before we do a loving action?

4. Notice, that the pattern for this kind of love is God Himself!

It is a mistake to believe that you must feel love to give love.

4. If you assume 'love' depends on feelings of love instead of loving action, you will cripple your loving relationships. The paradox is that when you stress loving action over loving feelings, you set in motion a path where it is likely you'll have both!

5. How have you seen this paradox in any of your relationships?

6. What has been your biggest take away from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Deciding to love

Eph. 5:28 Ought to love their wives

1. Marriage kind of love, and any kind of love that has difficulties requires a love that decides to love.

2. If your definition of love is based on feelings, your relationships will never be strong enough to move through things like hurt feelings, misunderstandings, miscommunications, and the task of accepting things about others that are difficult to accept.

3. In a marriage, everyone has times of "falling out of 'like'."

4. In our verse for today Paul gives us the *ethical mandate* to love. It's in the simple word, "ought."

5. To love is an ethical decision. It is deciding you are going to act in the best interest of someone else even if it requires a sacrifice on your part. Does this sound familiar? This is what our Savior did for us!

1 John 4:9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

¹⁰ *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

6. What sacrifice did God undertake for us in v. 9?

7. What motivated God to make the sacrifice? (v. 9)

8. How does John define love? (v. 10)

9. When the feelings of love are present, rejoice! But most of your life is going to be about building love, whether or not the feelings of love are present. This is part of the gift of love (Anyone can "love" when the feelings are present).

10. Finish by asking God to make you a builder of love!