

Building and Intentionality

Building a Relational Tool Box—part 6

July 18, 2021

Our relational tool this week is blueprints. When contractors are building massive buildings, they must stick to the blue prints. To not do so could be fatal. On the other hand, if you are trying to build a simple birdhouse for your back patio, you can “wing it” without blueprints. If you’re trying to build relationships that have some strength and beauty to them you have to follow God’s blueprints. “Winging it” won’t work.

DAY 1: Three kinds of love.

1. Some relationships start out as “a match made in heaven.” “We just had instant connection.” What people mistake for “love” is only one kind of love, the lowest. Emotion-driven.
2. One Hollywood starlet lectured everyone else after falling in love with the “love of her life” she had been dating *three months*. “If you have to work at your relationship it’s not ‘real’ love.”
3. Hollywood stars and starlets say such simplistic things; so do mid-life crisis folks who long for the feelings of love. They are in the elementary grade school of love.
4. The Greeks identified three kinds of love.
 - a. “Eros” – This is emotional, passionate love, the “we just fell in love” love. It is associated with sexual love. This kind of love just *happens*. Eros love is fickle. You can feel this love one day, but on another day the feelings flutter away. Most couples get married committing to each other for life, but what they really mean is “we’re committed *as long as we love each other*.” They are describing eros. When the feelings of love slowly evaporate so does their marriage.
 - b. “Phileo” – This is *brotherly* love, the love you have for a friend, a family member, classmates, etc. It also often begins with some kind of emotion, usually centered around a common affinity or interest. People become friends through sports, eating out at hip places, co-workers, or people at similar stages of life—young marrieds, parents of teens, retirees, etc. But because of our sin nature, this kind of friendship love gets tested. Differences appear, disagreements on important issues arise, or the character weaknesses of your friend may be a turn off.

Phileo then becomes a choice. Will I continue to love my friend even though sometimes it’s not easy? Phileo continues and deepens through a shift from loving out of feeling to loving out of commitment to your friend.
 - c. “Agape” – This is sacrificial love. It is a love that is willing to sacrifice oneself for the betterment of someone else. It is a love that continues to love the beloved through thick and thin, through good times and bad times, through disappointments and hurts. It is a love that is driven, not by the beloved, but by your commitment to the beloved.
5. When you think of “love” which of the three loves do you usually mean?
6. Who do you know who exemplifies agape love? Why?
7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Love is rooted in God's character.

1. The essence and purity of love is only seen in God. He loves perfectly. Why?

*1 John 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.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.*

2. What observations about real love do you see in these verses in 1 John?

3. Real love is *demonstrated* in loving action.

*Romans 5:8 God **showed** His love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

This love expresses the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects.

4. God loves in spite of the rebellion and sin of His beloved.

Ephesians 2:4 Because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

Agape "is not an impulse from the feelings,
it does not always run with the natural inclinations,
nor does it spend itself only upon those to whom some affinity is discovered.

5. This kind of love is sometimes driven by a deliberate choice to love.

Romans 15:2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.³ For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

6. This kind of love sacrifices self for the benefit of another.

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

7. We have the best opportunity to love like God only when we *experience* the love of God for us. To those who turn away from God or minimize Him, they cannot love like God does.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: “One Another” commands.

1. The bible has over sixty “one another” commands. Under each of the commands below, jot down what strikes you about that command. Perhaps you can rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on how well you carry out each command in your life.

a. Love one another. (John 13:34)

b. Accept one another just as God in Christ accepted you. (Romans 15:7)

c. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)

d. Be devoted to one another. (Romans 12:10)

e. Build one another up. (Romans 14:19)

f. Live in harmony with one another. (Romans 12:16)

g. Admonish one another. (Colossians 3:16)

h. Serve one another. ...

i. Bear one another's burdens. ... (Galatians 6:2)

j. Forgive one another.... (Eph. 4:32)

2. Where were you strongest?

3. Where were your weakest?

4. A question to ponder: why would God have to *command us* to do these things we already know we should do?

5. What struck you personally from this list?

DAY 4: The richness of committed love.

1. Why do wedding ceremonies contain vows? Is it just “that’s what you’re supposed to do?” Is it to just provide a “feel good” moment at the wedding?

2. We say vows at weddings for deeper reasons than that.

a. We know that marriage is not easy. To rely on simple feelings to build a lifetime relationship is unsustainable.

b. Building *long-term* relationships requires character and commitment.

c. Building *loving* relationships requires character and commitment.

d. Building a growing marriage depends on each person generating unconditional love, not waiting on loving feelings to occur. This kind of love originates in the lover not the beloved.

3. There are different depths of love. Conditional love may start out feeling like “love” but eventually each person realizes that the pressure to perform is now a requirement of staying together. This is “Junior High love.”

- I’ll love you if ...
- I’ll love you as long as ...
- I love you because ...

4. People hunger for something deeper in relationship than just the feelings of love. We hunger for a kind of relationship that has the following characteristics. Next to each one, jot down why these characteristics matter.

- Security -

- Permanence -

- Strength -

- Faithfulness -

- Trustworthiness -

- Dedicated -

- Loyal -

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

1. 1 Corinthians 13 is often called “the love chapter.”

2. The true nature of love is spelled out in these simple verses.

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

3. How many of these traits are character qualities?

4. How many of these traits are intentional?

5. How many of these traits can be anchored back to “this is the kind of person I’m committed to becoming”?

6. How many of these can be counted on to be sustained by emotion?

7. Which of these love traits have you experienced from someone who has been in your life?

8. Which of these traits are strong in you?

9. Which of these traits are weak in you?

10. As we finish up this week’s “blue prints” of biblical love, I am reminded of just how shallow love is portrayed in the movies and on TV shows. That kind of love is flimsy, and has very little ability to help us deal with the realities of life, and very little power to meaningfully touch the soul of someone else.

11. Summary of the week:

DAY 1: Three kinds of love.

DAY 2: Love is rooted in God’s character. He is love.

DAY 3: “One another” commands

DAY 4: The richness of committed love.

DAY 5: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

12. What will you take away from this week’s study on love?