

Love in the Marriage Relationship

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Marital love is designed to reflect the love that Christ has for the church (Eph. 5:21-32). To illustrate the depth of the love that is required to sustain a marriage I present the following acrostic:

Faithfulness. The person who is faithful to God will be faithful to God's plan for marriage. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:24; cf. Matt. 19:1-9). Marriage is a sacred trust that demands honest stewardship. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1Co 4:1-2). Marital love requires faithfulness to God and to one another.

Integrity. Marital love requires that the individuals that make up the marriage be honest with God, themselves and each other. Such spiritual maturity will wield a powerful influence on the marital partner and provide opportunity for God to bless the relationship. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1Pe 3:1-7). Marital love exemplifies integrity.

Devotions. Marriage that is governed by faithfulness requires devotion that will generate a mutually submissive and respectful spirit. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col 3:18-19). "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Eph 5:31). Marital love demands devotion.

Edification. While encouraging the Thessalonian Christians to take confidence in and stay focused on their relationship with Christ, Paul exhorts them to, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1Th 5:11). They were to build each other up by reminding one another of their blessings and responsibilities in Christ. Nowhere is such edification more needed than in the marital relationship. As heirs together of the grace of life a married couple should dwell together according to spiritual knowledge and commend each other to God and His Word (1 Peter 3:7; Acts 20:32). The ultimate goal of marital love should be spiritual edification.

Love. Both the husband and wife have received inspired instructions to love their mates. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. . . Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself..." (Eph 5:21-33). In Titus 2:4-5, Paul

told Titus to instruct the aged women “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Marital love is mutually shared.

Investment. For a marriage to be strong and survive, both husband and wife must be prepared to make consistent sacrificial investments toward its upkeep. “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (1 Co 7:3-5). Marital fidelity requires an investment of time, energy, and effort.

Trust. The beautiful Proverb that describes the virtuous woman records the following assurance: “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life” (Pro 31:10-12). In like manner, such a trustworthy wife ought to be able to have confidence that her husband will initiate and influence such an environment for her to experience. “Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Pro 31:31). Without a mutual trust marital love will wane.

You. The final and yet indespenible ingredient of marital love is you. When you say “I do” mean it. When you say “for richer or poorer... in sickness and in health... for better or for worse” practice it. When you say “with this ring I thee wed” honor it. When you say “until death do us part” prove it. Marital fidelity depends on you, the two people who promised it.

When all the necessary ingredients of marital love are properly blended, marital **FIDELITY** will be produced.