

LEARNING TO LOVE OUR SPOUSE

LESSON ONE: WHAT IS LOVE?

Perhaps no word is more used and yet misunderstood than love. It has inspired more poems, songs, and movies than any other subject. Everyone is looking for love, but as one song puts it, they're "looking for love in all the wrong places".

What does it mean when one person tells another, "I love you."? What does "I love you" mean when a boyfriend says it to his girlfriend or a girlfriend says it to her boyfriend? What does "I love you" mean when a husband says it to his wife or a wife says it to her husband? Answer first from the viewpoint of the world, then from the viewpoint of a Christian.

With this lesson, we begin a series about love. We want to especially apply the Word of God about love to the relationship between husbands and wives, though the principles we discuss should enrich all of our relationships. Why? Biblical love is the key to success in all our relationships. Our text for these lessons will be 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. From this passage we make the following overall observations about love which we will be stressing throughout all the lessons:

1) Love is much more than an emotion. The world seems to think that love is a feeling you get, so you get married and a feeling that you lose, so you get divorced.

Comments: _____

2) Love acts/does not act in a certain way. Love is not an emotion to find, to fall into, to be overwhelmed by, but rather something to be done. It is active, not passive. While dating, a man or woman should be looking for someone whom they wish to show the actions of love to for a lifetime, a person whom they trust will show the actions of love to them for a lifetime as well. Maintaining love in marriage is not about you looking for your spouse to talk, dress, and kiss in a way that will keep you "floating on air" (keep you "in love"), but rather about you behaving in a loving way toward your spouse.

Comments: _____

3) Love is learned. Since love is a behavior it follows that, as all behavior, it must be learned. Just a glance at what one must do or refrain from doing in order to love shows us that we are not born with these behaviors, but we must learn them, develop them, and grow in them. This is why husbands are told to learn from the example of Christ and the church (Eph 5:25) and the older women are told to teach or train the younger women to love their husbands (as well as their children) (Titus 2:4).

Comments: _____

4) Love is hard, never ending work . Again, just a glance at the task set before one who loves, is enough to see the difficulty of the assignment. Those who wish for their marriages not just to survive but to flourish, to be the blessing which God intended when He began the arrangement, must never stop working on their relationship. Specifically, they must never stop working on themselves, improving their attitudes toward their spouse and then changing their actions, truly loving them more as the days and years go by.

Comments: _____

Another emphasis of this series of lessons will be our need to become like Jesus. What is the best way to come to an understanding of how we should love our spouse? By studying the perfect example of Jesus. What will improve our marriage? Our becoming more like Jesus. And, if our spouse is doing the same, how our relationship will grow! Every way in which love should act/not act is found in the life of Jesus as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and as commented on by the writers of the N.T. letters.

Find N.T. references which exhort us to follow Jesus' example (especially in love) and also references which comment about His love. Jesus never married. How can the example of this single Man help His disciples who are married?

LEARNING TO LOVE OUR SPOUSE
LESSON TWO: LOVE IS PATIENT (SUFFERS LONG)

<p>✠ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION</p> <p>✠ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY</p> <p>✠ LOVE IS LEARNED</p> <p>✠ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK</p>

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. Define "patience" or "longsuffering" as used in 1 Cor 13:4.. How does this first action of love relate to the last one mentioned, "love never fails" (13:8). What will happen to marriage (or to any other relationship) if patience is not shown? Why? What action comes from patience which is crucial to having a close and long lasting relationship?

2. Discuss Jesus' patience (longsuffering) toward the following people. In each case discuss: 1) how Jesus was wronged, 2) how hard it would be for Him (or anyone) to endure such wrongs and want to continue to have a relationship with the one(s) who did them, and 3) How Jesus responded to those who wronged Him in a way which allowed for the restoration of the relationship.
 - a. Peter (Lk 22:31-34, 54-62; Mk 16:7; Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5; Jn 21:15-17)
 - b. His crucifiers (Mt 26:59-68, 27:20-26, 27-31, 35-44; Lk 23:34, 1 Pet 2:18-23; Acts 2:36-38)
 - c. Paul (Acts 9:10-16; 1 Tim 1:12-17)

3. Compare the love shown above by the patience of Jesus with the "love" of those who want to end their relationship with their spouse over "burnt toast" or other such "offenses".

4. What happens in marriage (or any other relationship) when we don't exercise the patient restraint of Jesus and we answer insult with insult, mistreatment with mistreatment? Are we careful to apply Rom 12:17-21 to everyone but the one we profess to "love" most?

5. Write down any comments which you would like to share with the class about showing patience in the marriage relationship.

<p>When somebody has been so unkind to you, Some word spoken that pierces you thru and thru, Think how He was beguiled, spat upon and reviled, Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.</p>

LEARNING TO LOVE OUR SPOUSE

LESSON THREE: LOVE IS KIND

- ✧ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
- ✧ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACTS IN A CERTAIN WAY
- ✧ LOVE IS LEARNED
- ✧ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. Look up "kind" in a dictionary or Bible dictionary. Then tell what it means to be "kind" in your own words.
2. How does Jesus' parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:29-37) illustrate what it means to be kind?
Do we see our husband or wife as a "neighbor"? Do we show kindness to our spouse or too many times do we "pass by on the other side"? How do acts of kindness cultivate our relationship? What does "passing by on the other side" do to our relationship?
3. What phrase did Peter use in his sermon to Cornelius sums up Jesus' life as a life of kindness? (Acts 10:38)
(He practiced what He preached)
4. On each of these occasions, what moved Jesus to acts of kindness? Mt 15:32-38; 20:29-34; Mk 6:30-34; Lk 7:11-15 How can we develop this quality?
5. Describe a busy day of kindness in the life of Jesus (Mk 1:21-34) and meditate on this quote:

"It is not strange that after days so marvellous as these, it was impossible for Jesus to find due repose. From early dawn on the mountain top to late evening in whatever house He had selected for His nightly rest, the multitudes came crowded about Him, eager to share His miracles, eager to listen to His words. There was not even time to eat bread. Such a life is not only to the last degree trying and fatiguing ... but simply maddening, unless the spirit be sustained by boundless sympathy and love. But the heart of the Savior was so sustained"- An Englishman writing in 1874.
6. What was Jesus' ultimate kindness and why did He show it? Jn 10:11-15; Phil 2:3-8
7. List a few ways husbands can show kindness to their wives.
8. List a few ways wives can show kindness to their husbands.
9. Practical application: Think about how you can be kind to your spouse this week. Put your thought into action. At the end of the week reflect on what this has done for your relationship. Now do this every week for the rest of your life together.

"He spent His life in doing good, I want to be like Jesus,
In lowly paths of service trod, I want to be like Jesus."

LEARNING TO LOVE OUR SPOUSE

LESSON FOUR: LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS, DOES NOT BRAG

- ✦ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
- ✦ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY
- ✦ LOVE IS LEARNED
- ✦ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. Love is not self-centered. When there is a lack of love in marriage or any other relationship, the parties involved are acting toward each other in a way that is selfish. All of the descriptions which tell us what love is not or what it does not do in 1 Cor 13:4,5 emphasize this point. Write down in your own words what it means to be "jealous", to "brag", or to be "arrogant", "act unbecomingly", "seek its own", "provoked", "take into account a wrong suffered" using "I", "me", or "self" in each one. How well will the marriage relationship work if one or both spouses are self-centered?
2. Jesus did not have a handsome appearance, money, or power. He had fame at times, but Jesus knew it was shallow. He ate with the rich and spoke with the powerful. But, despite what he did not have and others had, is there any record of Him being jealous? Though many deserted Him, did he live His life with an unhealthy fear of losing men's affection? The Pharisees were His spiritual rivals, as He and they both sought to make disciples of the people. They were resentful and bitter and such jealousy led to His death. But did He have the same attitude toward them?
3. In what ways can jealousy rear its ugly head in marriage? What problems does it cause? How can one overcome jealousy?
4. When Jesus performed awesome miracles, he did not brag. In fact, what he said was quite the opposite. What did Jesus say after He performed miracles? (Mt 8:1-4; 9:27-31; Mk 5:35-43; 7:32-37). How is this in keeping with the character of the Messiah, as predicted by the O.T. prophets? (Mt 12:15-21; cp. Isa 42:1-4)
5. What harm does bragging do to marriage? How does Prov 27:2 serve as a solution?

LET "SELF" BE CRUCIFIED AND SLAIN, AND BURIED DEEP; AND ALL IN VAIN MAY EFFORTS BE TO RISE AGAIN, UNLESS TO LIVE FOR OTHERS.

OTHERS, LORD, YES OTHERS, LET THIS MY MOTTO BE, HELP ME TO LIVE FOR OTHERS, THAT I MAY LIVE LIKE THEE.

LESSON FIVE: LOVE IS NOT ARROGANT; DOES NOT ACT UNBECOMINGLY

✨ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
 ✨ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY
 ✨ LOVE IS LEARNED
 ✨ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. What does it mean to be "arrogant" ("puffed up"- KJV)?
2. That Jesus humbled Himself enough to become flesh is remarkable (Jn 1:1-3, 14). But, that the Creator of the world did not walk around puffed up because of who He was and expect men to serve and glorify Him staggers the imagination.
 - a. Whose glory did He seek in all He did? (Jn 5:41,44; 8:50; 17:4)
 - b. Did He take the chief seat? (Lk 14:1,7)
 - c. Why did Jesus come to earth? (Mt 20:28)
 - d. What example did He set? (Lk 22:24-27; Jn 13:12-17)
3. In what ways can arrogance rear its ugly head in marriage? What problems does it cause? How do Rom 12:3 and Phil 2:3-8 serve as a solution?
4. Does the husband's authority over his wife mean that he is more important- that she must serve him, but he should not be expected to serve her?
5. What does it mean to "act unbecomingly" ("behave unseemly" KJV)?
6. What was Jesus able to say about His behavior? (Jn 8:46)
7. What connection did Jesus make between a lack of love and rude behavior? How important are "manners"? (Lk 7:44-47)
8. What kind of "manners" will the arrogant have? (Lk 14:7-11)
9. How was Jesus treated "unbecomingly" and how did He respond? (Mk 15:16-20, 29-32; 1 Pet 2:21-23)
10. In what ways can a husband or wife act in a way which is "unbecoming" to their spouse?

Why did my Savior come to earth, And to the humble go?
 Why did He choose a lowly birth? Because He loved me so!
 Why did He drink the bitter cup of sorrow, pain, and woe?
 Why on the cross be lifted up? Because He love me so!

LESSON SIX: LOVE DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN

- ✧ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
- ✧ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY
- ✧ LOVE IS LEARNED
- ✧ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. What does it mean to "seek its own"? How does the world look at living life this way?
2. Whose interest did Jesus seek as He went about His work? Jn 4:34; Mk 3:20-21
3. Whose interest did Jesus seek in His death? Mk 14:36; Jn 10:11-15
4. Notice Jesus' statements on the cross which show that even then His focus was not on self. Who did his first three statements show concern for? Lk 23:34, 43; Jn 19:26-27 When did He say anything about His own spiritual and physical agony? Mt 27:45-46; Jn 19:28-30
5. What are those who are to be disciples of Jesus called on to do? Contrary to popular opinion, what is the pathway to joy? Lk 9:22-25; Phil 2:3-8, 17-22; Heb 12:2; Acts 20:35
6. How are husbands to love their wives? Eph 5:25
7. How are wives to love their husbands? Prov 31:10-11; 27-31
8. Who should husbands and wives seek to please? 1 Cor 7:33-34
9. Give some practical applications of love "not seeking its own" in the marriage relationship.
10. Concentrate on pleasing your spouse instead of yourself this week. Note the affect on your personal happiness and upon your happiness as a couple. Now, continue to apply yourself to this over a month, a year, a lifetime and see what happens.

"No man is a Christian who lives for himself alone; or who makes it his main business to promote his own happiness and salvation. No man is a Christian who does not deny himself; or no one who is not willing to sacrifice his own comfort, time, wealth, and ease, to advance the welfare of mankind."

-- Albert Barnes

LESSON SEVEN: LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED

- ✧ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
- ✧ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY
- ✧ LOVE IS LEARNED
- ✧ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. In the context of the Scriptures, what does "love is not provoked" ("easily provoked- KJV) mean? Does being angry show a lack of love? Is it a sin to be angry?
2. Was Jesus ever provoked? What provoked Him? What did He do? Jn 2:13-17; Mk 3:1-5, 8:11-13
3. How was Jesus different than James and John ("the sons of thunder", Mk 3:17)? Lk 9:51-56
4. Despite all the Jews and Romans did to provoke Jesus as they sent Him to the cross, how did He respond to their ill treatment? Isa 53:7; Mt 26:59-63a, 27:12-14, 27-31; 1 Pet 2:23
5. What words of wisdom do the Scriptures give us concerning our temper which will help us to control it with our spouse (and others) as Jesus has set the example for us to do?
 - a. Eccl 7:9; Prov 14:17,29-
 - b. Jonah 4:4,9; Prov 17:14-
 - c. Rom 12:18-
 - d. Jas 3:17-18-
 - e. Prov 15:1,18-
 - f. Eph 4:26-27; Prov 30:33-
6. How will applying three other descriptions of love to your life- *being patient and not being arrogant and self-centered*- keep you from being "provoked" by your spouse (and others)?
7. What are some things which commonly cause anger (with resulting strife and contention) in marriage and how should these be handled by disciples of Jesus who truly "love" one another?

"Angry words! O let them never From the tongue unbridled slip;
May the hearts best impulse ever, Check them ere they soil the lip.

'Love one another', thus saith the Savior
Children, obey the Father's blest command.

LESSON EIGHT: LOVE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED

- ✧ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
- ✧ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY
- ✧ LOVE IS LEARNED
- ✧ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. What does it mean to "take into account a wrong suffered?" ("to think evil" KJV) This characteristic of love is the opposite of what other one in the list in 1 Cor 13?
2. Did Jesus "take into account a wrong suffered" with these men? Lk 23:34 & Acts 2:36-41; Lk 22:31-32 & Jn 21:15-17; Acts 9:5, 15 & 1 Tim 1:12-17. In each case, did Jesus forgiving attitude come before or after men's repentance? What's the lesson for us?
3. What has the Lord done for us? What should we therefore do for others? Eph 4:32; Col 3:13 How many times? Times a day? Mt 18:21-22; Lk 17:3-4 What if we don't forgive? Mt 18:23-35; Mk 11:25-26
4. What is love able to do? 1 Pet 4:8
5. What will happen to us as day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, we keep record of the times our spouse has wronged us? How will this record-keeping affect our relationship with our spouse?
6. What will happen if we quietly keep track of our spouses wrongs and never tell them we feel they have done wrong? (perhaps with good intentions- in our mind we are thinking to "keep peace" by not saying anything or perhaps with evil intentions- we are just "saving them up" wrongs as ammunition to make a bigger attack on our spouse or to defend ourselves against their attack on us)
7. If we keep bringing up our spouse's wrong after it has been discussed and resolved, what does this show?

"Vengeance is having a videotape planted in your soul that cannot be turned off. It plays the painful scene over and over... It hooks you on its instant replays. Each time it replays, you feel the pain again...

To forgive is to put down your 50 lb. pack after a 10 mile climb up a mountain; To forgive is to fall into a chair after a 15 mile marathon; To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you...

Forgiveness is completed when two alienated people start over again, beginning where they are, though it is not an ideal place for a reunion." -- Lewis Smedes

LEARNING TO LOVE OUR SPOUSE

LESSON NINE: LOVE NEVER FAILS

- ✧ LOVE IS MUCH MORE THAN AN EMOTION
- ✧ LOVE ACTS/DOES NOT ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY
- ✧ LOVE IS LEARNED
- ✧ LOVE IS HARD, NEVER ENDING WORK

One of the most celebrated things about "love" is its endurance. How many love songs talk about "forever"? One such song, popular several years ago, said, "So what's the glory in living, doesn't anybody ever stay together anymore; if love doesn't last forever, tell me what's forever for?" In a world where one out of two marriages end in divorce, it is obvious that endurance is the missing ingredient. Love never fails, but people fail to show love.

(Answer the following on the back or on a separate sheet of paper to allow yourself space to comment fully)

1. In 1 Cor 13:7, four descriptions of love are given which lead up to "love never fails" in vs. 8. These four descriptions tell us the reason that the marriage relationship and all relationships continue despite difficulties. Why does a person who loves keep on loving, come what may? Meditate on the four descriptions of love, "bears all things", "believes all things", "hopes all things", and "endures all things" and then comment briefly on the meaning of each phrase. Tell why, if a couple practices things things toward one other, their love will not fail, but will endure to the golden anniversary and beyond.
2. Comment on Jesus' unflinching love for His apostles despite their many faults. What did Jesus have to deal with in His relationship with them? (Mt 8:23-26; Jn 14:8-9; Mk 9:30-34; Mt 26:36-46, 47-50, 56, 69-75). Yet, what does the Scripture say about Jesus' love? (Jn 13:1). What was the end result of Jesus' unflinching love with all but Judas? (cp. Acts)
3. Comment on Jesus' unflinching love for those who rejected Him. What did Jesus have to deal with, especially from the Jewish leaders, as He taught and worked miracles? (Mt 13:13-15; Lk 11:53-54; Jn 12 37-43; Mk 8:11-12). Yet, what was His attitude? (Lk 19:41-42) Ultimately, what did the Jewish leaders and the people ask for? (Mt 27:20-26) Yet, what did Jesus say as He hung on the cross? (Lk 23:34) What was the end result of His unflinching love toward those who rejected Him? (Acts 2:36-38, 41; 6:7)
4. Why is it so hard for husbands and wives to continue to love each other for a lifetime? Why is it so common for them to stop loving one another and divorce?

"I have one deep, supreme desire That I may be like Jesus
 To this I fervently aspire That I may be like Jesus.
 His Spirit fill my hungering soul His power all my life control
 My deepest prayer, my highest goal, That I may be like Jesus.