

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?

