

A Biblical View of Love & Romance Selected Scriptures

Introduction

I was going to give today's sermon on February 13 as a precursor to Valentine's Day in praise of the relationship that God wants men and women to develop with each other in marriage and also as a critique on the destruction of the actual meaning of love in Western societies since the rising of the secular ideas of the "Enlightenment." However, since Chad Dexter was able to confirm being able to be here, we took advantage of the opportunity and had a wonderful time with the Dexter family as we heard first hand of their participation in God's work in the Philippines. A work that has continued on despite the difficulties imposed by the draconian restrictions that have been implemented in that nation. They are in Buffalo this weekend and then head out for the even colder environs of places like Montana and then eventually back to Los Angeles in late March where they will wait to see when current restrictions will be lifted so they can return to their work in the Philippines.

This morning I want to address the very important topic of "*The Biblical view of Love and Romance.*" In some ways I would consider myself a romantic in that I like stories of boy meets girl, they figure out they are good for each other, they commit themselves to each other, get married and live successfully ever after. You will notice I said "successfully" and not "happily" ever after because I find that the great flaw that has developed in Western societies concerning romance since the time of the Enlightenment is the increasing emphasis on personal happiness instead of success in life. And while a successful life includes learning to be joyful in all circumstances, a life focused on happiness tends to sabotage success and loses happiness in the process. The vast majority of romance stories follow the same script. Boy and girl develop a mutual attraction, they "fall in love," they overcoming some hindrance to the pursuit of the budding romance culminating in marriage, or in more modern stories, shacking up together. The underlying consistent themes are "follow your heart," and "marry for love." More accurately stated that would be, "follow your emotions" and "marry because of mutual attraction," or more bluntly, lust. No wonder marriages fail so often. The average age of a first marriage is about a decade older than it was a century ago, and an increasing percentage of the population does not bother with marriage. Relationships built on emotion and mutual attraction are inherently unstable since both of those factors fluctuate over time. Among the ungodly, these elements decline over time leading to a breakup unless there is something stronger to hold them together such as societal and family pressure or fear of financial ruin.

This morning I want to point out to the better foundation that God has given to us which forges unbreakable bonds and in which the elements of emotion and mutual attraction grow over time despite the normal ups and downs that are part of normal life. The foundation is translated into English as love, but this is not the love of romance novels. It is far deeper and richer in both meaning and expression and its own foundation is God Himself in carrying out His eternal plan and purposes.

The Failure of Romantic Love

Leon Morris in his book, *Testaments of Love*, (Eerdmans, 1981), does word studies on both the multiple Hebrew and Greek words that are commonly translated as love in English. His eight page conclusion is powerful as it succinctly summarizes his study and points out the confusion and tragedy caused by the broad meaning of the English word, love, and especially its concepts when applied to the relationship between a man and a woman. The Biblical elements of love as a choice are replaced with

romantic ideas of love as an irresistible attraction of passion. Among the definitions for the verb, romance, are “1. to try to influence or curry favor with especially by lavishing personal attention, gifts, or flattery.” “2, to carry on a love affair.” It also means to “exaggerate or invent detail or incident” or “to entertain romantic thoughts.” People “fall in love” instead of choose to love, yet that is a more modern idea, not an ancient one.

Morris comments about the ancient Hebrews, Greeks and Romans that “parents usually arranged marriages. Love was not so much an overmastering passion as it was a feeling that developed from responsibility and respect.” He quotes from De Rougemont in *Love in the Western World* that “The cultivation of passionate love began in Europe as a reaction to Christianity (and in particular to its doctrine of marriage) by people whose spirit, whether naturally or by inheritance, was still pagan.” Morris then comments, “the Christian concept of love is not the passionate concentration on one person as a sexual object that so often masquerades as love today” . . . “If we look to modern novelists or modern western society to define love, we will not understand Christian love.”

That is a critical point and a major problem within the church today since that is exactly where most professing Christians are picking up their ideas about what to look for in a spouse and what marriage is supposed to be like. The concept of love in Western society is, as Morris puts it, “an impoverishment, a love with severe limits because it shuts out everything and everyone but the beloved.” He also points out that it is vastly inferior for it “strips life of its greatest good and replaces it with what at best is selfish, tawdry, and defiling.” None of this is to suggest that there is not a place for passion in marriage, but it is to say that passion - the modern western idea of love - does not constitute Christian love. It is a terrible substitute for it for it leads to selfishness which undermines the relationship resulting in competition and conflict instead of harmony and happiness.

Tragically, even a few of the couples to whom I have taught these truths in premarital counseling have still fallen into this common trap of substituting the romantic idea of love for the Biblical love God commands in marriage. The result has been the destruction of their marriage as they turn away from their vows to pursue their own selfish desires. I warn every couple in the marriage ceremony prior to taking their wedding vows that God takes no pleasure in fools, so keep your vows. Yet though they promised “for better or worse” and vowed “for richer or poorer” and pledged “in sickness and in health,” they would have been more honest about their selfish quest and said to each other, “if it is not better for me, it will become worse for you,” and “it will be richer for me or I will make you poor in the divorce,” and “if you get too sick, I will protect my own physical, mental and emotional health by abandoning you.” The emotional passion of romantic love is selfish instead of sacrificial. It is the opposite of the nature of the Biblical concepts of love that should mark the way every Christian lives and particularly so in their marriages. Our foundation for relationships is true love, not romance.

It is not surprising that poll after poll over the decades consistently shows that is practicing Christians that are the most satisfied in their marriages including its elements of passion. In a godly marriage the security of the commitment to the relationship allows for greater openness and vulnerability which is needed for its development. The relationship between husband and wife can become stronger over time despite the emotional ups and downs that are part of normal life. In an ungodly marriage, the selfishness that is part of the western idea of romantic love ends up undermining the relationship causing it to decline over time often leading to a breakup. Divorce is tragic in every sense, but it is also sad to see couples that have been married for decades become more distant from each other instead of growing closer together. The difference is the pursuit of the Biblical concepts of love.

Biblical Love: the Foundation for Relationships

There are four Greek words that can be translated into English as love, two of which are found in the New Testament. I want to briefly examine each and relate them to the role they play in human relationships.

The first I will mention is ἔρος / eros which is not found in the Bible but was a strong element in Greek culture that reflected their wide spread immorality. The underlying meaning of ἔρος / eros is found in its foundational characteristics of being a “*love of the worthy*” combined with “*a desire to possess.*” It is directed at something or someone who is thought to be worthy, desirable, attractive, and it wants that person or thing to become his or hers. Plato even used this term to express a love of good. When used in association with humans, it would be equated with either romantic love or sexual love. The proper place for ἔρος / eros in human relationships is in marriage as expressed in the Song of Solomon or the fact that husband and wife do belong to each other as stated in 1 Cor. 7. Within marriage it can and should be beautiful and valuable. Outside of marriage it can quickly become tawdry and descend into immorality. So ἔρος / eros has a proper place within the Christian life, but it does not define Christian love.

The second word I will bring up is στοργή / storgā which occurs in the New Testament only in its negated form, ἄστοργος / astorgos (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3). The term refers to natural or family love. This is the normal love that exists between family and extends outward to extended family members and relatives. It is a glue that helps hold families together, for while conditions of living in close proximity can create affection, it can also create repulsion. I think anyone with a sibling can understand how irritating a brother or sister can be, especially when you are young, yet because they are member of your family there is a loyalty and affection also given to them. This idea of love can extend farther to those who may not be kin, but are so familiar by their presence they are treated the same way. Family is important in the Christian life, yet since the word is not used in the Scriptures to describe Christian love, then Christian love must be much deeper than this.

The third word group I want to bring up is φιλία / philia along with its many cognates and compound forms. This is the love of friendship. It can and should exist alongside ἔρος / eros and στοργή / storgā, but it extends into much wider circles outside family and relatives to those in which you participate in the same activities (school, work), have common interests (hobbies, sports, etc.), or have similar values and beliefs (social organizations, politics, church, etc.). You can be friends with people with whom you hold one thing in common, yet who are very diverse or even the opposite in other areas. The level of friendship can vary greatly from casual to intimate and along with that the intensity of love and what your willing to give to it. That can range from minor inconvenience to great sacrifice.

Having friends and being a friend is very important in life and part of what Christians are to be and how we are to treat others (Titus 3:15; 3 John 15). We are to love the Lord and not the world in this manner (John 21:15-17; 1 Cor. 16:22; James 4:4), and yet this love of friendship is not adequate to describe the love that should mark Christians. That is love defined in a fourth Greek word.

In John 15:13 Jesus states, “*Greater love has no one that this, that one lay down his life for his friends*” The word for friends here φίλων / philōn, is the plural masculine form of the φιλία / philia word group, but the word translated as love in this verse is not φιλία / philia. It is ἀγάπη / agapā. This is a love that can encompass all of the other types of love - an affection for someone or something deemed

valuable or a relative of some sort or a friend because of something shared in common - but it goes beyond them. It is a love that will sacrifice itself in the best interest of the one loved. That is why Jesus uses it here in John 15:13 because it takes this kind of love to sacrifice yourself for a friend. But it is a love that goes even beyond that for it is this word group that is consistently used to describe God's love for sinful man. That is a love that sacrifices itself for the benefit of the one love without regard to worthiness, family relationship or having something in common. It is summarized best in Romans 5:8, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

It is only in understanding this concept of self-sacrifice on behalf of others that we can understand the many commands to us that use this word group. Jesus Christ is the example to us of this kind of love, and His sacrifice was supreme. Jesus is the second person of the triune God-head that took on human flesh and lived a sinless life in order to become the perfect atoning sacrifice for man's sin when He willingly died on the cross of Calvary. He did it solely because of God's love for the world (John 3:16) and not because of anything in us for He did it while we were yet sinners who were at enmity with, hostile toward God (Romans 8:7). His resurrection and ascension proved that all His claims about Himself and promises are true. There is forgiveness of sin and adoption into the family of God for all who will believe and place their faith in Him.

All the types of love will be part of a Christian's life, but ἀγάπη /agapā is what is to characterize us. First, it is the type of love we are to have for God. When Jesus answered the lawyer's question about what is the great commandment in the law, He answered, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind"* (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). The word love in those verses is ἀγαπάω /agapaō, the verb form of ἀγάπη /agapā. Jesus uses the same word in describing the second great command, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27).

This second command is made even more pointed in the new commandment that Jesus gave to His disciples in John 13:34-35, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* Jesus' sacrificial love is to be the love that we are to extend to every other Christian. Jesus repeats this command in John 15 and it is repeated in the writings of Paul, Peter and John. Please note carefully here that loving others in this manner is independent of any emotions, personal relationship or even sharing anything in common beyond being a follower of Jesus Christ. Note as well the importance of verse 35 that it is this sacrificial love for other believers that will demonstrate to all men that you are a disciple of Jesus. It is this concept of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others seen in Jesus and His followers that makes the Christian use of the ἀγάπη /agapā word group significantly different from the Greek usage of it and from all other words that carry concepts of love. I must point out as well that 1 John 2:10 marks this love as evidence of walking in the light, and 1 John 4:20-21 mark it as necessary evidence of also loving God since someone that claims to love God but hates his brother is a liar.

Tertullian, ~A.D. 155 ~ 220, noted in Apologeticum that pagans noticed this love remarking, “*See, said they, how they love one another; and are ready to lay down their lives for each other.*” It is sad that this same love is so often missing even from churches that claim Biblical orthodoxy. It is understandable that heretics would lack such love, but correct theology should result in correct living. The lack of love reveals a faith of intellectual assent instead of converted hearts. Those who have this kind of love for Jesus will also have this kind of love those who share that same love for Jesus.

The Christian can experience and express the three kinds of love common to mankind. ἔρος / eros which is a “*love of the worthy*” combined with “*a desire to possess*” that makes up romantic and sexual love. You find your spouse attractive and want them to belong to you alone. στοργή / storgā which is the natural love between family members and relatives. φιλία / philia, the love friends have due to common experience or interest or shared beliefs and values. But Christians are also to be marked by ἀγάπη / agapā type love. A love that seeks the best interest of the one loved even at great sacrifice. Paul describes that in the command in Philippians 2:3–4,³ “*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;*”⁴ *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*” ἀγάπη / agapā love is what sets believers apart as followers of Jesus Christ.

What is true for the Christian in general is also to be true in specific for Christians in their relationships with one another and in particular the husband and wife relationship. This is to be what makes Christian friendships, a Christian’s search for a spouse, and a Christian marriage relationship different from those in the world. It is the difference between true love and romance in Western culture.

Love vs. Romance

The quest for romance dominates the concepts of love in Western culture to the detriment of the actual relationship for all the reasons I have already stated. The primary reason is the selfishness that is at the heart of it. People look for someone that will please themselves in some way rather than seeking someone according to God’s purposes in such relationships and what is best for the other person. Romance seeks to gain. Biblical love seeks to give. The purpose of romance is self-fulfillment according to your own purposes. The purpose of Biblical love is to bring about the fulfillment of God’s purposes in life and relationships. For the rest of the sermon I am going to describe how ἀγάπη / agapā love is to direct the Christian in the development of his relationships including how it should direct in the search for a spouse and how it should direct and dominate the actions and attitudes within a Christian marriage.

As already noted, the concept of romance that has developed in Western cultures since the Enlightenment is a reaction against Biblical Christianity which places the priority on the will of God instead on the desires of man. The purpose of life for a Christian is to glorify God and fulfill His will. That is the starting point for our relationships with other people in both outreach to people we do not know and in developing our friendships. For those reasons we want others to know the Lord Jesus Christ and learn to walk with Him. That defines and directs out ministry to others. We also want to be close

friends with people that will help us in our walk with God. While there will be an inherent element of selfishness in that since there is consideration of self in it, the underlying reason is so that you can be better able to glorify God and carry out His will. That is the purpose of the church as described in passages such as Ephesians 4:11-16 and the nature of true spirituality as described in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Friendships are to be cultivated with those goals in mind.

These truths should be especially followed in fostering the growth of a relationship that you wish to develop into a marriage. When such a godly quest underlies the developing relationship, there is still much joy over a friendship that has been established even if it does not result in a mutual desire for a marriage. When it is just romance that is pursued, then a block to that quest can quickly flip what was thought to be love into hatred due to the anger of not getting what you wanted. It was love for self, not love for the other person. A friendship built on ἀγάπη /agapā love wants what is best for the other person even if it means attending his or her wedding as a grateful guest instead of as the happy bride or groom. The pursuit of God's will over our own results in joy even when personal desires are not fulfilled you had hoped.

Keep in mind that the idea of a young man and young woman "dating" to determine compatibility and desire is still a new concept that took off with the invention of easy methods of transportation. You pick the girl up and go off to some other place to be alone instead of spending time with each other at the family homes. The man came "calling" on the girl and would "court" her at her home. "Alone time" was sitting on the porch swing or in the parlor. Hand written letters were important when you lived too far away to easily come by to personally visit. Family and close friends would be advisors in the relationship so that wisdom, not emotion, would prevail in determining if a marriage was in order. This would include making sure each partner understood the responsibilities of their God given roles and were well prepared for them.

Men and women should be seeking to develop the characteristics of godliness in themselves while searching for a potential spouse that is doing the same. The quest is to be able to establish a new household in which husband and wife will glorify God by mutually helping each other become more godly and fulfil the roles He has for each. That easily occurs when ἀγάπη /agapā love is the foundation.

Men, make a study of Psalm 15 and make it your quest to develop the character qualities of the man that can dwell on God's holy hill, or even better, use the requirements for a church leader in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 as a guide. Ladies you do the same to know what kind of man you should be looking for.

Ladies, study Proverbs 31:10-31 and make the qualities demonstrated in that incredible woman your quest. Men, you also study it to see what kind of woman you should be looking for while keeping in mind that you are looking for the character traits and not the skills of the Proverbs 31 woman since she is unusually talented and those skills take time to develop.

When it comes to marriage, God gives specific instruction about its purposes and the roles of both husband and wife in the marriage. Going back to Genesis 1 & 2, God makes man in His image to be His regent over the earth and marriage enables the fulfillment of the mandate given to man to "*Be fruitful*

and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). The woman was specifically fashioned from one of Adam’s ribs so that man would not be alone and would have a helper suitable or corresponding to him (Genesis 2:14, 21-22). Eve was the perfect complement to Adam. In all future marriages the man would leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife and they would become one flesh (Genesis 2:25).

Other Scriptures passages that address marriage simply expand on the specifics of these roles and responsibilities and how they are to be carried out. Proverbs is full of practical wisdom. There is the description of the “excellent wife” given in Proverbs 31:10-31 as already mentioned, and there is also advice on the wisdom needed to build a home and lots of warnings about foolishness that would tear it down (Proverbs 14:1). (See Proverbs Sermon Series). There are many laws within the Mosaic code that give protection to marriage by giving guidance in the proper treatment of a wife and that prohibit ungodly behavior. Jesus repeats some of these in His teachings including those on immorality and restrictions on divorce (Matthew 5:27-28, 31-32; 19:3-12).

The Apostle Peter’s specific guidance on marriage roles in 1 Peter 3:1-7 is considered a curse to most women in modern Western societies due to the influence of feminism, but that is because feminist philosophy is thoroughly ungodly. In rejecting God they reject His plan for the family, and in rejecting His plan for the family they reject God believing they are wiser than Him. Peter addresses the wife in the first six verses. ¹ *“In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. ³ Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴ but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. ⁵ For in this way in former times the holy Women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.”* He then addresses the men in verse 7, *“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”* There is no question that the task given to a godly woman to win an ungodly husband by her chaste and respectful behavior is difficult, but so is the assignment to godly men to figure her out. I know you ladies think that should be easy, but frankly, it is quite difficult for a man to understand how a woman thinks and why she does what she does. It takes us years to figure it out. Why should women and men do these difficult things? Because there is a higher purpose in pleasing God and fulfilling His will. Godly women want to have the qualities that are precious in the sight of God while also wanting what is best for their husbands. Godly men want to honor their wives for they are fellow heirs in the grace of this life and it keeps them from sin which would hinder their prayers.

Two passages that especially clear on God's design for the husband and wife are Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-19 both of which also bring us back to the centrality of true Biblical love in marriage. Paul states in Colossians 3:18–19, ¹⁸ *“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.”* The word “subject” here (ὑποτάσσω / hupotassō) is willing submission to the authority of another, and it is qualified here that it is *“as is fitting with the Lord.”* This does not require unquestioned and absolute obedience to a husband. Obedience to the Lord always comes first even if it requires resistance or opposition to a husband. But notice that the requirement for the husband is to love his wife. This love is ἀγαπάω / agapaō.

Ephesians 5:22-33 gives even more detail. It also starts off with instructions to the wife. *“Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, as to the Lord,”* with the verb being supplied from the previous verse, *“and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”* This is the same verb (ὑποτάσσω / hupotassō) as in Colossians 3:18. The next two verses explains why she should do this. ²³ *“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”* This is God's order for the family and it reflects the relationship of the Church to Christ. So the purpose reflects something much bigger than just the husband and wife.

In verses 25-33 the husband is specifically commanded three times to love his wife. Each time the verb for love is ἀγαπάω / agapaō. The first command in verses 25-27 ties the husbands directly to same kind of love Christ has for the church. ²⁵ *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”* While the husband will certainly gain from loving his wife in this manner, its purpose is focused on her benefit. He is to love her sacrificially with the express goal of helping her to be sanctified, holy and blameless that she will glorify Christ.

The second command in verses 28-30 gives a pragmatic reason for this love which is also then tied to Christ. ²⁸ *“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body.”* This is a direct and practical application of the fact that in marriage the two become one, so a man who loves his wife ends up loving himself too. He is to nourish and cherish the same way Jesus does the church. Again, the love reflects something greater than just the husband and wife.

In verses 31-32 Paul states directly the greater purpose in marriage. ³¹ *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”* Ultimately, marriage is to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. That means that God is always on the side of seeing marriages pursue holiness and the fulfillment of the respective roles of husband and wife. It also

means that God is always against the break up of a marriage. As Malachi 2:16 directly states, *“For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says the Lord of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”* Jesus explained in Matthew 19:18 that Moses permitted divorce only because of the hardness of heart. That hardness was both in the lack of repentance of sin and the lack of forgiveness toward those that do repent. Either can sinfully break up a marriage.

Paul concludes in verse 33 with a repeat of the general commands. *“Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”* It is this lack of love and lack of respect that tears at the foundation and fabric of marriage. I must quickly add here that the general command for Christians to love one another as Christ loved us applies to a wife loving her husband in this same sacrificial manner of ἀγάπη /agapā.

Conclusions

That being said, it is very fair to say that love for God is the foundation for marriage because the quest to know and please God enables you fulfill both the general commands He has given and the specific commands relating to your role in your marriage regardless of what your spouse does. Certainly it is easier if your spouse is working at it too, but if not, your pursuit of godliness is to be a blessing to your spouse and your children. Paul even goes so far to say in 1 Cor. 7:14 that *“the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”*

The foundation then is love for God and the structure for a solid relationship with other people and in particular with other Christians and with a spouse is this ἀγάπη /agapā love that sacrificially seeks the best interest of the other person that they also may know God and walk with Him. If you are struggling in your marriage, then begin by considering what its foundations is built upon and of what its walls are made. If it is the ideas of romantic love common in Western culture, then turn from that and start laying the proper foundation in your own life and build upon it by following the Lord’s commands to love in this sense of ἀγάπη /agapā. Look in the mirror to see how well you are carrying out God’s commands to you in general and in your specific role as a husband or wife. Confess where you have been failing, and commit yourself to follow His commands entrusting yourself to the Holy Spirit to do what might otherwise seem impossible for you. Since marriage is to reflect Christ and the church, we can be confident of God’s will for you in your marriage.

Sermon Notes - 2/27/2022
A Biblical View of Love & Romance - Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Romance stories

Relationships built on emotion and mutual attraction are inherently _____

The Failure of Romantic Love

Testaments of Love, Leon Morris, Eerdmans, 1981

Definitions of romance

Ancient ideas of love replaced by _____

The weakness of romance as a _____ for true love

Committed Christians consistently poll as the most _____ in all respects in their marriages

Biblical Love: the Foundation for Relationships

ἔρος / eros - a “love of the worthy” combined with “a desire to _____.”

στοργή / storgā - natural or _____ love

φιλία / philia - the love of _____

John 15:13

ἀγάπη / agapā - it can encompass all other types of love but goes beyond as a _____ love which sacrifices

Romans 5:8 - God’s love in Christ

We are to love _____ with ἀγάπη / agapā love (Matthew 22:37)

We are to love _____ with ἀγάπη / agapā love (Matthew 22:39)

John 13:34-35 - our love for other _____ - as Christ has love us

Tertullian, ~A.D. 155 ~ 220, noted that the _____ took notice of Christians love for one another

Christians can experience and express every kind of love, but they are to be _____ by ἀγάπη / agapā

Love vs. Romance

Romance dominates the ideas of love in Western cultures, but its _____ is detrimental to relationships

Romance is a reaction against Biblical Christianity placing the will of _____ over the will of God

Glorifying God and fulfilling His will is the _____ and foundation for a Christian’s relationships

The quest to help others know and walk with God and them to help you fosters strong _____ friendships

When romance is blocked it can quickly flip what was called falsely called love into _____

“Dating” is a relatively _____ concept

Singles should first seek to be _____ themselves & then search for a potential spouse who is doing the same

Psalms 15; 1 Timothy 3:1-13 - characteristics of a godly man:

Proverbs 31:10-31 - characteristics of a godly woman:

Genesis 1 & 2 - God’s original purpose for marriage:

Proverbs - _____ advice and warnings concerning the roles in marriage

1 Peter 1:3-6 - Peter's commands to women in marriage:

1 Peter 1:7 - Peter's commands to men in marriage:

Seeking to please God is the _____ purpose in fulfilling the Biblical roles in marriage

Colossians 3:18-19 - "subject" (ὑποτάσσω / hupotassō) is _____ submission to the authority of another

Submission is _____ that it is "*as is fitting with the Lord*"

Ephesians 5:22-24 - Commands to the wife:

Ephesians 5:25-27 - Husbands to love wife as _____ loves the church

Ephesians 5:28-30 - Husbands to love wife as he _____ his own body

Ephesians 5:31-32 - The greater purpose of marriage - a reflection of _____ love for the church

Malachi 2:16 - God hates _____

Ephesians 5:33 - Husbands _____ your wives, Wives _____ your husbands

Conclusions

True Biblical love for God is the _____ for marriage

The structure of marriage is then _____ with ἀγάπη / agapā love

Those struggling in marriage need to evaluate the foundation and structure - and _____ it to ἀγάπη / agapā

KIDS KORNER - Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. **Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - 1) Count how many times the word "love" is said. 2) Talk with your parents about the different types of love and the type of love you should have for God.

THINK ABOUT IT! - Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What are the common themes in romance stories? Why are relationships built on emotion and mutual attraction inherently unstable? How have you seen this demonstrated in your own experience / observations? What is the definition of romance? What factors led to good marriages in ancient societies? When and why did Western societies start to reject the Christian concepts of love? What do you think most people should say in their wedding vows if they were being honest? Why would Christian couples be the most satisfied in their relationships? Define ἔρος / eros. What is good about it? What are its dangers? Define στοργή / storgā. What are its blessings? Why is it an insufficient description of Christian love? Define φιλία / philia. What is good about it? Why is it an insufficient description of Christian love? Examine John 15:13. Why does Jesus use the term ἀγάπη / agapā instead of φιλία / philia? What is the greatest demonstration of God's love for man? What kind of love is man commanded to have for God? For neighbors? For other believers? How is Jesus the model for this love? What is the evidence that a person is a disciple (follower) of Jesus? How does Philippians 2:3-4 reflect Christian love? How would the quest for romance be detrimental to a relationship? What is the purpose of the Christian life? What is the relationship between that purpose and Christian love? In developing relationships? Compare true Christian love with romance as a basis for a possible marriage relationship. What is "dating" and when did that come common in Western societies? What are its weaknesses? Examine Psalm 15 & 1 Tim. 3:1-13. Why are those good characteristics in a possible husband? What areas do you need to improve? Examine Proverbs 31:10-31. Why are those good qualities for a possible wife? What areas do you need to improve? Examine Proverbs for advice and warnings about marriage roles. What Proverbs are helpful to you? Assess yourself in light of 1 Peter 3:1-7? What can you do better? Examine Ephesians 5:20-33. What commands are given to the wife? To the Husband? How is marriage to be a reflection of Christ and the church? How can you better fulfill your role? How will that improve your marriage? What should you do if you are struggling in your marriage?