

- One of the first things that I ask a prospective husband or wife or a couple that has problems in their marriage is “Do you love the other person?”
  - As we see in (Ephesians 5) God commanded the husbands to love their wives, we all know how important it is to have love in the marriage relationship.
  - Our first true sign of commitment in the dating relationship is when one of the people says those three words, “I Love You” hopefully they are met with the response “I Love You Too”.
  - Think about it, the relationship has to have this exchange before it can materialize into a long lasting relationship. That’s how important love is.
  - Without true love the marriage is in danger and can never be as fruitful as it should be.
  - Throughout the marriage relationship and even the dating relationship, this phrase “I love you” is continually repeated as a commitment or vow. Sometimes it is said as a pure expression of love, sometimes it is said in order to check the response of the person that you are telling it to, and sometimes it is said because we feel we need to comfort the other person.
  - We need to know also that this phrase “I love you” is used as a cover up. We think that we can say it when we don’t show it and it will make everything better.
  - What I think we really need to know that will help us in our marriage relationships, and dating relationships and our person to person relationships is what love really looks like and what love feels like so that we can identify it and work to strengthen it.
  - Why is love so important? Because everyone has a desire to be loved and if that person is not having that desire filled, then they will not feel fulfilled in the relationship and they will never truly be happy. We also have a desire to love someone, to feel this strong feeling towards someone that reinforces the feeling of completion when we are around them.
  - First of all we need to define love. The definition of Love - A powerful emotion felt for another person, manifesting itself in deep affection, devotion or sexual desire.
  - The Bible tells us to love one another, so we know if we use this definition of love, it doesn’t apply to all relationships; after all we know God doesn’t want us to express our love to all of our fellow church members and friends and family by expressing our sexual desire.
  - So we need to see that the bible speaks about three different types of love: Eros, Agape, Philos
1. Eros Love is a Greek term which means to desire or to long for. Eros is the name of the Greek god of love and it is referred to as erotic love. This love is a selfish kind of love and it is associated with sexual love. Eros love is based on the strong physical feelings that we have for someone and it is driven by our desire to fulfill our longing to feel something physically. (1 Corinthians 7:9) This kind of love usually develops during the 1st stage of a romantic relationship and if it is not tempered by the presence of the Lord, then it can become destructive because it is a possessive love that seeks to fulfill a fleshly desire and ultimately causes us to want to control or conquer someone else.
  2. Agape Love is the love that represents the divine love of the Lord. He had this love for his son Jesus and He also has it for all of mankind. (John 3:16). Agape love is an all inclusive love, an unselfish love, a love that is not based on words, but actions. Agape love is a giving love which makes it unique. It doesn’t ask for anything it only wants to serve and give and sacrifice. Jesus displayed this supernatural love on the cross. This love is an action and it is represented in (Romans 5:7-8)

3. Philos Love - This is the kind of love that you have for a friend or companion. It refers to loving someone like your brother or sister because you feel an attachment to them. This love is usually a product of shared experiences with someone else or something that you have in common. This is the kind of love that many Christians practice towards one another. This is an unselfish love also that makes you want to serve or do something for someone else. This love is the love that Jesus told us that we need to have for each other as friends and brother and sisters in Christ (John 15:12-19)

- So what kind of love does a marriage need to have? The marriage relationship needs to have a healthy blend of all of these.
  - It needs to be a Philos love that is the love that you have for a companion. It needs to have Agape love that is the love of giving and is actively trying to serve someone else by showing extreme unselfishness and it needs to be a love that fulfills the physical desires of both individuals which is Eros love.
  - So many times people mistake the love that God commands a man and woman to have in marriage or dating with one of these types of love when actually it requires a unique blend of all three.
  - The key to strengthening your love in your marriage is to find the kind of love that you are lacking in and work on that area.
  - A person without love can be an empty person, but a marriage without true love is always going to be an empty marriage.
  - In (1 Corinthians 13) God tells us what love is. I think this is one of the greatest tools that we can use to strengthen our marriage. What we need to do is use this scripture to measure our love. We can use it for our relationship with God, with our husband or wife or with our person to person relationships.
  - Notice that we didn't say parent/child relationships because the love that a parent has for a child unless they are truly a self absorbed, selfish person is a great picture of love because they are designed to care in such a way for the person that is a product of themselves.
  - Read (1 Corinthians 13:1-8)
1. (vs 4) Charity suffereth long - Love is Patient - Love doesn't have to have immediate gratification, this kind of love is willing to endure, it is willing to work, it is willing to go the distance.
  2. Love is kind - Love has a gentle spirit, it is giving, not mean, but shows kindness.
  3. Charity envieth not - Love does not envy - This love is not jealous of their spouse's good fortune or benefits, this love is happy for them not jealous.
  4. Charity vaunteth not itself - Love does not boast - This true love does not esteem itself over their spouse to say they are better.
  5. It is not puffed up - Love is not proud - This is arrogance, this true love is not arrogant in the relationship always pointing out how much better they are.
  6. (vs 5) Doth not behave unseemly - Love is not rude - Rudeness is an aggressive act of total disregard for the other persons feelings.
  7. Seeketh not her own - Love is not self seeking - True love is not selfish. All of these attributes of love can be based on this attribute.
  8. It is not easily provoked - Love is not easily angered - Love does not go to anger as the first emotion of disappointment.

9. Thinketh no evil - Love keeps no record of wrongs - Love doesn't keep score. This is one of the greatest problems in marriage, husbands and wives are keeping score. A husband and wife are on the same team, only opposing teams keep score.

10. (vs 6) Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth - Love does not rejoice in evil but rejoices with the truth - This love celebrates the good and doesn't look for the bad.

- (vs 7) Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, it always protects, always trusts, always preserves.
- (vs 8) Charity never faileth - Love never fails.
- This kind of love is the kind of love that we need to aspire to have in our marriages and dating relationships.
- If your marriage has this kind of love it will not fail.
- We also need to remember not to become distracted in our marriages, by letting something replace that first love that we are supposed to have for our husbands or wife. (Revelation 2:4) is our example of where God was telling the church at Ephesus that they had left their first love.
- We see a great example in Jesus' letter to the church at Ephesus of how easy it is to think that you are doing the right thing and get so caught up in trying to do the physical things, that we fail to do those things with the right intent.
- We see here that Jesus compares his relationship with those in the church at Ephesus to the relationship that a man and woman have when they are in a love relationship together. This speaks to husbands and wives as well as those who have been dating a while.
- He says in (vs 2) "I know thy works and thy labour". There were works and labor in this relationship and many of us can also say this about our own relationship with our spouses. He says again in (vs 3) "they have borne, and hast patience and for my namesake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."
- Translating this verse, He is saying you have persevered through troubles and you have endured hardship while we have had our relationship, you have represented your position and you have not grown weary.
- But in (vs 4) we see that he condemned this church at Ephesus on one major thing. (vs4) "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." What does this mean? - "thou hast left thy first love"
- This doesn't mean that they didn't love Christ, it meant that they were not acting out of love towards him. They were still serving and doing but they were not motivated by their love. They had become motivated by their duty.
- This is huge so pay attention - this is what happens to so many marriages and even dating relationships that have lasted for years. The man and woman are still going through the motions and assuming their responsibilities and doing them, but their actions are not motivated by love, they are motivated by duty.
- What Jesus is actually saying is that you aren't acting toward me the way you were when you fell in love with me. You used to want to do for me and want to be around me and want to give to me and want to serve me because you loved me. You used to express your love to me, because you wanted me to know you loved me, but now you put your time in with me and you persevere through our challenges but you are not doing it to prove to me that you love me, you are doing it because you feel like you have to .

- What Jesus is saying is, “I can tell that you are doing those things without the zeal that you used to have when you fell in love with me.”
- I see this happening in marriages today. It’s as if we have begun to be mechanical in our relationships. We turn the marriage machine on in the morning and do all of the requirements and then turn it off at night once the day is completed and then turn it back on the next morning.
- This is not the way a marriage relationship is supposed to run but it seems to be common.
- We tend to get so caught up in the product that we think we are supposed to produce, whether it be raising children, or securing our finances or improving our homes, that we literally turn the marriage machine on and we stand at it doing our duty so that we can produce this product that we desire to have.
- This process might give you a product, but it will never truly give you happiness. What is missing? “LOVE”
- I’m not saying you don’t love each other, I’m saying that you are no longer using your love as the motivation for you works and it should be easy for us to see, because it feels different to do something because you want to instead of because you have to. Examples - Remember when you used to want to do things for the one you loved?
- Women - Maybe cooking something because you want to show an act of love, and you know that he will really love it.
- Men - Maybe fixing something because you know they really need it or want it, and you know that she will really love it.
- Giving gifts to each other because you know the other person would love to get the gift. This is different than the way people tend to give gifts today. They say, “I have to get them something because it’s Christmas or their birthday” instead of saying “I know they will love to get this and it will make them happy, so I want to get this gift for them.” The best gifts are the gifts that are given out of love not duty!!!
- This is what happened to this church at Ephesus. They didn’t fall out of love with Jesus, they just stopped acting out of love and started acting out of duty.
- Sometimes as our relationships mature with time, we begin to become so busy trying to fulfill all our responsibilities to the other person that we forget why we are responsible to them. We are responsible to them because we promised them to love them and they promised us that they love us. That is the first responsibility, to love them and act out of love.
- Ask yourself; are my actions towards the one that I say I love motivated by love or by duty?
- Now lets go back to (Revelation 2) Jesus was saying that this motivation of love is important to him. He condemns them because they have left their position of acting out of love.
- As it pertains to husband/wife relationships or dating relationships there is also another danger that can be put in the category of leaving your first love. This happens when you begin to make something else in your life a higher priority than the thing you say you love the most.
- Think about it, if your spouse sees that you would rather be doing something else that doesn't relate to them more than you do something that relates to them, what would they naturally think?
- When a hobby or a job or even another person brings you more excitement or anticipation or they see that your main focus had shifted from them to that other thing, they are going to see by your actions that they are not in that first place of love in your life.

- This doesn't mean that you can't have other interests in your life, but it does mean that we need to remember that we have vowed to give that person the first place of love in our lives. Would you want to know that you lost your priority as someone's first love? We need to know that the one we have vowed to love doesn't want this either.
  - What do we do if this happens? Go to (Revelation 2:5) "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works."
  - Jesus tells them to remember where you started. You started on the mountain of love, but you have fallen. Remember what made you fall in love with that person, remember what you felt, remember when you wanted to please that person, remember when you wanted to do for that person, remember when you wanted to give to that person, remember when you expressed your love to that person freely?
  - And then Repent!!!! - This means change your direction. Stop falling off the mountain of love and start climbing the mountain of love to get back to the place where you were when you realized this person is the one for me, the person is my soulmate. This person is what I am looking for and I have found them.
  - This is going to require effort, it always takes effort to climb but when you get back to the top you will see the beautiful thing that you saw, when you realized I love this person and they have my first position of love.
1. Do the works of love, let your actions be motivated by love not duty.
  2. Make sure that person you love knows that they are in first position.