

Lesson 24

Teacher's Manual

BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP - PART II

READ & MEDITATE ON: Ephesians 5:21-33 MEMORIZE: Philippians 2:2
Colossians 3:18-21

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a partnership where a man and a woman can develop character, as they earnestly strive to meet each other's needs. Through their total commitment to Jesus Christ and each other, God can work to refine them and develop their full Christian potential. Building a partnership is a lifetime project. There is an intense worldly attack on the marriage bond today, and many subtle devices are being used to destroy the family. Constant maintenance must be done to preserve the unity and strength of the marriage relationship.

CHART-15 I. INFATUATION

Carefully examine and compare your feelings with those of your spouse, concerning some facts about infatuation and love. Both infatuation and love are REAL, so it is extremely important to know the DIFFERENCE.

Infatuation means, "to be inspired or possessed with passion." Because it is an inspiration, it is a sudden inclination—an attraction. Infatuation is self-centered; always involves two or more persons; presents a false sense of security to disguise personal insecurity; causes a loss of ambition, appetite, and interests in personal goals; produces daydreams about unattainable things; ignores real problems; is attracted only by physical appearance and contact; is impulsive and unpredictable; presses for

immediate obligation—"going steady"; continues to press for a more secure commitment—"marriage"; is unable to be deprived; and demonstrates little or no real affection.

CHART-16 II. LOVE

Jesus gave us the order of divine love when He reviewed the first and second commandments with a Jewish lawyer:

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Matthew 22:37-40

The divine order of love is presented here as upward love for God, inward love for ourselves, and outward love for others.

A. Upward Love

"What is love?" Love is an emotion that defies definition. Ask ten people and you will receive ten definitions of love. The Bible says God is love. (See I John 4:7, 8, 16.)

The attributes of love can be read as they are clearly listed in I Corinthians 13:4-13. The supreme example of love was displayed in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since we must learn of God, it follows that love is learned. Love grows. We do not fall in love, we grow in love. It never stands still—it must go forward or it dies. Our love for God must be carefully nurtured, or we lose it. We become like the church at Ephesus which had "lost its first love." However, lost love may be found if we will repent (change our mind), remember how things used to be, and go back and do the things that once kept the love light burning. (See Revelation 2:5.)

to work for the benefit of the other; desires to earn the respect of the other person; spurs the ambition to plan and save for the future; inspires dreams that are reasonable and attainable; causes one to face problems squarely and try to solve them; is consistent; makes physical attraction a lesser part of a relationship; gives physical contact greater meaning, thus making it more pleasurable; is enduring; does not press for a wedding date without sufficient time and planning; and finally grows into an expression of tender affection.

D. Three Types Of Loves

A marriage needs three types of love.

1. Eros

This was the Greek goddess of love and from her name we have derived the term "erotic" which has a connotation of legitimate sexual relations. Eros is the love that seeks sensual expression. It is a romantic, sexual love that is inspired by the biological structure of the human nature. A husband and wife, in a happy marriage, will love each other romantically and erotically.

2. Phelio

In a good marriage, the husband and wife are also good friends. Friendship means companionship, communication, and cooperation. This is known as phelio type love. It involves total togetherness in areas such as communication, business, finances, in-law relationships, common interests, and social living. Herein lies the essence of working together in total teamwork.

3. Agape

Agape love is a self-giving love, the love that goes on loving even when the other person is unlovable and unwilling to return love. Agape love is not just something that happens to you; it's something you make happen. Love is a personal act of commitment.

Agape love is a preference for the other person; to wish only well for them; to be ultimately concerned for their welfare. It expresses affectionate reverence and grateful

A. Selfish Motives For Marrying

1. Some Men's Reasons

There are many reasons why men marry, other than finding the will of God for a life partnership. Some marry for the sole purpose of physical gratification. They haven't bothered to survey marriage in light of sickness or pregnancy and child-birth. This is a narrow, selfish expectation of marriage.

Others marry to gain a free and reasonable housekeeper. They want someone to clean the house, wash their clothes, and take care of the manifold responsibilities around the home.

Some marry because of the social peer pressure against being single. Fear grips them and they panic at the thought of becoming an "isolated bachelor." Marriage, for them, becomes a way of gaining social acceptance while escaping the classification of "prude."

Still others marry for strictly business reasons. It may be to their advantage for promotions and raises in salaries, to project the wholesome image of being a "family man."

Yet other men marry because they need an agent to tell them what to do and how to organize their lives. They're grown up boys who have not accepted responsibility and, therefore, need a strong mother image.

2. Some Women's Reasons

Women also find reasons to marry that are not legitimate. Some are looking for a meal ticket. They get tired of the routine of working jobs after the novelty wears off. Many women long for someone to take care of them. Some want an escape from home. Others don't like the "old maid" tag. Many women marry because of the subconscious desire to give birth to a baby. This is not at all uncommon among women as they respond to natural maternal instincts. Strangely, some people enter into the venture of marriage for solely that—an adventure. It is nothing more than that to them. It is simply a trial and error type arrangement and when they tire of it, they break it up with divorce.

D. Willingness To Change

1. Maturity

Spiritual maturity and emotional maturity go hand in hand. Normally, the emotionally immature child is also spiritually immature. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the emotional growth of the child of God, so that the inner spiritual nature may grow as well.

The emotionally mature person relies on himself; takes responsibility for his own acts; learns from experience; adjusts to others; respects others' rights and property; works toward realistic goals; and has self-respect. Maturity has taught him to live with or wisely avoid things he cannot change. He condemns no one for mishaps. His greatest concern is getting things done properly and in order. He is strong, courteous, tolerant, and able to bear stress and strain. He is true to his own ideals, while at the same time, working with others in spite of occasional conflicts. His self-image is healthy because he has learned to be grateful for his strengths, and depend on God to help overcome his weaknesses. Flattery is not sought after. He has no need to control others. He can be a winner while losing, because failure is no disgrace when he has done his best. He can accept criticism, disappointment, or grief. He can perceive, understand, and sympathize with other points of view. He is flexible enough to change his own views when convincing evidence is presented. Last, and perhaps most important, he has a genuine capacity to love, because he knows God loves him in spite of his own human frailties.

2. Immaturity

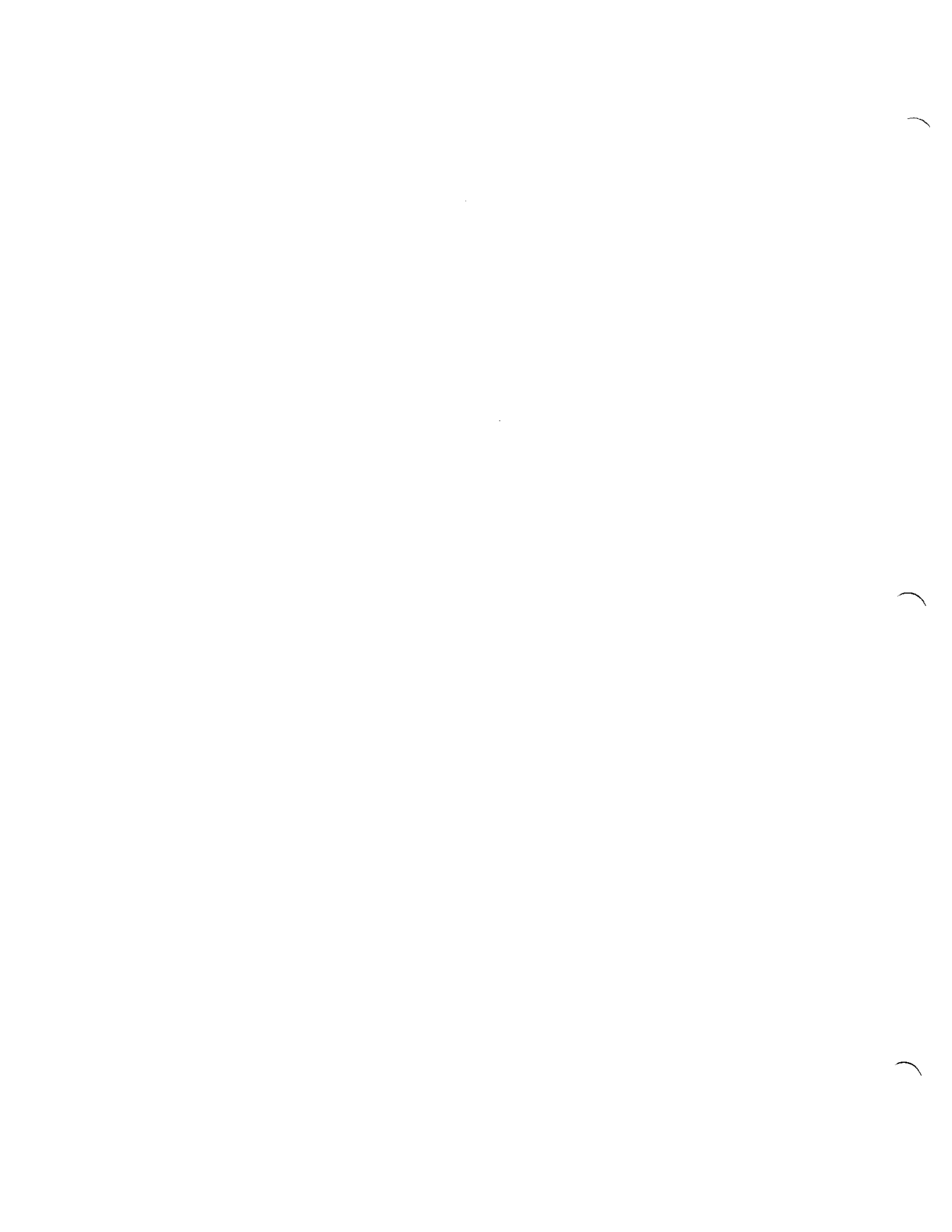
The immature individual does not learn from experience; rebels against the past; remains dependent on other people; loses his temper when he doesn't get his own way; has little or no regard for the feelings of others; has poor judgment; pities himself; cannot tolerate criticism or aggression from others; vents his feelings on himself and others; can't keep a job; chronically needs attention; and is incapable of loving others.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I Peter 1:6, 7
(New American Standard Bible)

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him."

James 1:12
(New American Standard Bible)



3. Spiritual And Emotional Stability

The need for God in the selection of a mate and marriage is of utmost importance today. Spiritual and emotional stability are essential in both spouses in today's world of abortions, rebellious youth, drug abuse, drunkenness, and violence. The presence or absence of spiritual and emotional stability in the home determines whether the children of a marriage will follow these vicious life-styles. God is keenly interested in spiritual and emotional maturity.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Hebrews 5:12-14

Frustrations and disappointments are part of life, but how they affect us is primarily our choice. We can allow disappointments to hamper us, destroy us, and even ruin our marriage.

Another response is to accept the disappointment, endure the hurt, discover what we can learn from the distasteful experience, and then make some new plans or alternatives. Consider the following scriptures:

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

*James 1:2, 3
(New American Standard Bible)*

B. Enchantments

Many couples enter into marriage with the feeling that the other person is responsible for his or her happiness. This is one-way and lopsided. Marriage is not the often repeated fairy tale cliché, "and they lived happily ever after." They visualize life as being like the outward trimmings displayed in others, without the strain and stress of everyday living.

The public exposure and fanfare of popularity in the entertainment world has deceived many unenlightened newlyweds. What they visualize marriage to be, and what married life is really like, is quite different.

There are three very common expectations that couples have for their marriage. Couples expect:

1. Their marriage to work out and never end in divorce.
2. Fidelity (moral faithfulness) to each other.
3. Their marriage to progress smoothly without any major upheavals or adjustments.

Fulfillment of these expectations will not just happen naturally or accidentally, but will take consistent effort, change, and maturity.

C. Disenchantments

After marriage, each spouse soon discovers that the other person is just that—another person. As long as they live together, the male will remain a male and the female will still remain a female.

It doesn't usually take a spouse too long to realize that they can never completely change their partner to be like themselves. God did not make them the same. He made them to complement each other. That which is the same cannot complement. Imagine the boredom if we were alike. Variety is the spice of life. The BEAUTY OF DIFFERENCE lies in discovering and accepting, in others, the uniqueness of God's creation. Marriage is not the carefree life of irresponsible youth, but rather a responsible, yet rewarding, life for mature adults.

recognition of the other person for the privilege of loving. It involves prizing the pleasure found in the other person above all things in one's life. It is a living desire never to be without the other person. It is the deep "long for" the other person above and beyond the association of anyone else.

The greatest expression of agape love is found in the Ephesian epistle:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Ephesians 5:25

There is no greater love than this:

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:7, 8

Christ's giving of Himself was a total giving for the benefit and welfare of His church. His giving was other-person-centered (John 3:16, 17). It was outgoing. He expected nothing in return. God, who instituted marriage, described His sacred relationship with the Greek word "agape" when He commanded,

"So ought men to love their wives..."

Ephesians 5:28

The relationship of a man and woman in marriage was intended to be no less—it must be one of AGAPE love.

B. Inward Love

If I am going to love my neighbor as myself, I must first be capable of loving myself. This may sound trite, but the degree to which I learn to love myself, will be the degree to which I am able to love those around me—especially my spouse and children. Learning to accept myself as God's unique creation will produce a healthy self-image. I must not hate that which God loves (John 3:16; Acts 10:14, 15). Thanking God for my strengths and asking Him for help to overcome my weaknesses, allows me to approach others with this same loving tolerance (II Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13). We're all undergoing change. God is attempting to bring us all into perfection (completeness) even as He is perfect (Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 4:11, 12).

C. Outward Love

When I have learned to love God, I will simultaneously learn to love myself. When I have grown to love myself and realize my self-worth, I am then ready to obey the commandment to love my neighbor as myself. This is precisely the principle invoked when Paul asks husbands to love their wives as they love themselves. (See Ephesians 5:28, 29.)

It has been said that love is an emotional desire that one feels for another person, greater than the emotional desire felt for himself. It is a desire to fill the needs of another person and make them happy. Giving of oneself in love requires four basic concepts:

1. Strict attention to the needs of another person.
2. A feeling of responsibility for the emotional needs of another person.
3. Highest respect for the uniqueness of another person.
4. Possess a thorough knowledge of the person to be loved.

Acorns and leaves fall, but love GROWS. Love, like the little oak sapling, grows and growth requires time. Love grows out of evaluating the characteristics of the other person. Love is other-person-centered; is outgoing; results in sharing; focuses on only one person; gives a real sense of security; inspires a feeling of trust in the other person; causes one

