

chapter one



BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES OF LOVE

Introduction

The word *love* is used for a variety of meanings both in the Bible and out of it. Love is used to describe the highest actions of commitment and sacrifice as well as some of the most base and immoral actions of selfishness and lust.

In spite of its wide use and misuse, the word *love* continues to be a fitting and proper term to describe the attractions and commitments in Christian relationships. Christians love God with a reverent and tenacious devotion of the highest order in response to His own great love for them. In the church, Christians are committed to each other in a love which overlooks faults and works through differences. In marriage, likewise, there is this same selfless love coupled with the intimate, heart-stirring

love between a man and a woman.

It is this marital love—the attraction between man and woman and particularly the physical expressions of it—which is the focus of discussion in this workbook. So much has been made of this love by the world, and so many are the perversions of it, that Christians can easily be caught in either of two errors. First, they may be carried along with the world's sexual misconceptions and cheapen what was intended to be wholesome and rich. On the other hand, they may react to sex with a false sense of propriety and miss what God intended for them to appreciate and enjoy in marriage.

These lessons will present a frank but Biblical discussion of marital love. Some knowledge is such that at the right time it is invaluable, but at the wrong time it is dangerous. With that in view, these lessons were not written for those who are curious about marriage, but for those who are either married or engaged to be married. They are also designed for those responsible for marital or premarital counseling.



Marital Love Is Right.

Genesis 1:27, 28, 31 *“Male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. . . . And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”*

Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”*

Hebrews 13:4 *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”*

God made male and female with both physical and emotional differences which attract them to each other and equip them to join in marital union. What God did was good. The physical differences between men and women are right and good. Sexual intercourse between a married man and his wife was designed by God and is an honorable and pure act of love.

This is not to say, of course, that all the sexual desires and actions of a married man and woman are right. One may be self-centered in marriage. One's sexual drives can become perverted and inordinate. But the Scriptures are clear that God made men and women sexual beings and that in marriage, sexual relations are proper and good. A married couple, then, has no need for embarrassment or guilt in enjoying the intimate and pleasurable experience of lovemaking.



For Further Study

1. Assess your view of sex. Have your feelings been generally negative or positive?
2. Read Genesis 4:1. What word is used to describe the sexual relationship?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 7:4. In the KJV the word *power* is used twice. Using another translation (such as the NASB) or a source for word studies, check the meaning of the original Greek word. What is it?

4. In marriage each partner yields to the other the right to the privacy of his or her body. In anticipation of being so “known” by another, any single person may have a very proper sense of reserve or even apprehension. Panicky feelings, however, or undue dread indicate misunderstanding. If you think you have undue fears, you should discuss these with an older, mature Christian. You may be able to write out your fears—clarifying our negative feelings is often an important step in overcoming them. Dread of intimacy should be resolved before marriage.
5. Read Hebrews 13:4a. The word *bed* is used here as a figure of speech. Which of the following most nearly states the thought of this verse?
 - a. God blesses every marriage.
 - b. Sexual intercourse in marriage is not dirty.
 - c. Marriage is the right thing for everyone.



Marital Love Is More Than Sex.

Ephesians 5:25 “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*”

Titus 2:3-5 “*The aged women likewise . . . that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands.*”

Marital love in many people’s minds centers around physical intimacy. And it is true that physical intimacy is a primary and very perceptible way of

expressing love in marriage. The root love, however, is deeper and centers around the considerate and committed union of two persons. Where a husband and wife cherish each other as persons—appreciate each other, adjust to one another, sacrifice for one another, and enjoy one another’s companionship—the sexual union is a natural and beautiful expression of that love. For such a couple, the pleasure of sexual intimacy has its roots in their underlying oneness, and that oneness consistently deepens their pleasure and satisfaction in one another through the years of their marriage.

Where there is not the root oneness, sexual union focuses on the physical and remains shallow. A primarily physical relationship sooner or later loses its cohesion. Instead of underlying oneness, an underlying hostility develops which makes short work of the feelings of love. From there on the work of staying together is all uphill.

In later lessons we will see more specifically how love outside of the bedroom provides the foundation for sexual intimacy. For now the basic point is that marital love is much more than physical union.



For Further Study

1. In your own words describe the kind of love married people ought to have for each other.
2. Tell how you think a husband will eventually feel if to him marital love means primarily sexual relations.
3. Tell how you think a wife will feel if her husband thinks this way.