

Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Marriage
Can't You Fix Our Marriage Fast?
Learning to Love Rather than Looking for a Quick Fix
Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Nov. 2, 2003

Gary Thomas writes, "I believe that much of the dissatisfaction we experience in marriage comes from expecting too much from it." He says, "I have a rather outdated computer—a 486—so I know there are some things I simply can't do with it; there's just not enough memory or processing power to run certain programs or combine certain tasks. It's not that I have a bad computer; it's just that I can't reasonably expect more from it than it has the power to give. In the same way some of us ask too much of marriage. We try to get the largest part of our life's fulfillment from our relationship with our spouse. That's asking too much." **Sacred Marriage**, Gary Thomas, p. 25

Later on he writes, "We can work at making our home life more pleasant and peaceable; we can explore ways to keep sex fresh and fun; we can make superficial changes that will preserve at least the appearance of respect and politeness. But what both of us crave more than anything else is to be intimately close to the God who made us. If *that* relationship is right, we won't make such severe demands on our marriage, asking each other, expecting each other, to compensate for spiritual emptiness." **Sacred Marriage**, Gary Thomas, p. 24

#1 You Must Choose to Love Your Spouse by Giving rather than Taking

2 Tim. 3:2 "For men will be **lovers of themselves, lovers of money**... unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving... **lovers of pleasure** rather than lovers of God..."

1 Cor. 13:4ff "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, keeps no record of wrong... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails..."

A good basic definition of biblical love is: Giving for the needs of another expecting nothing in return.

You see 'loving' and 'giving' are connected all throughout the Bible.

Gal. 2:20 "For I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who LOVED ME AND GAVE Himself up for me."

John 3:16 "For God so LOVED the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Eph. 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also LOVED the church and GAVE Himself for it"

This real love can only be gotten from God – if you don't know God you can't love this way for long.

1 John 4:7-11 "Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is of God**; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. HE WHO DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT KNOW GOD, for God is love..."

Eph. 3:16-19 Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Gary Thomas writes, "Let your relationship with your spouse point you to what you really need most of all: God's love and active presence in your life. Above all, don't blame your spouse for lack of fulfillment; blame yourself for not pursuing a fulfilling relationship with God.... Marital dissatisfaction, on whatever level, is best met with the prayer "That's why I need you, O God." We are reminded of the transcendent ache in our soul that even this one very special person can't relieve entirely on his or her own. As odd as this may sound, I have discovered in my own life that my satisfaction or dissatisfaction with my marriage has far more to do with my relationship to God than it does with my relationship to Lisa. When my heart grows cold toward God, my other relationships suffer, so if I sense a burgeoning alienation from, or lack of affection toward, my wife, the first place I look is how I'm doing with the Lord. Lisa is, quite literally, my God-thermometer." **Sacred Marriage**, Gary Thomas, P. 237

#2 You Must Choose to Love Your Spouse by Obeying God's Commands rather than Being Led by Your Feelings

Some of you are thinking, "I don't feel like working on it any more. I don't love him anymore. I don't love her anymore. I'm dead inside. I've been hurt too much. I don't feel like it."

What should you do when you don't feel like working on your marriage?

Two things: pray and obey. You pray, "God, give me the feelings again." And then you step out to obey, saying "I'm going to do the right thing whether I feel like it or not." Do what God says anyway. That's a mark of maturity. That's a mark of Christian character. Do the right thing whether you feel like it or not.

Feelings always follow action. It's a lot easier to act your way into a feeling, than it is to feel your way into a right action. If you wait for the feeling to come to start being nice to your husband/wife, it isn't going to ever happen. Feelings follow obedient action.

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return..."

Now don't get me wrong... God designed us with feelings to enjoy... BUT nowhere does He tell us to **live by our** feelings... and be **led by** our feelings... and be **ruled by** our feelings... or to be **limited by** our feelings.

C.S. Lewis says that the state of being in love is a significant, wonderful human experience. But then he makes the startling statement that being in love does not last, nor is it intended to last. He says, "Being in love is a good thing ... it is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling ... no feeling can be relied on to last to its full intensity... feelings come and go."

He then goes on to say that the intense feeling of being in love ought to change to a deeper, more mature kind of love based on the will as well as on feeling. He says, "ceasing to be 'in love' need not mean ceasing to love ... Love in this second sense --love as distinct from 'being in love'-is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit..." Lewis says a couple can "retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be 'in

love' with someone else." Lewis asserts that being in love brings people together and motivates them to promise commitment to each other, but it's the quieter, deeper, and more mature love helps them keep their promise. ***The Question of God***, Dr. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr., p. 142 & 143

Love is a choice to give and do good for the other... you can PUT IT ON!

Col. 3:12,14 "...But above all these things PUT ON LOVE, which is the bond of perfection..."

The Message "... And regardless of what else you put on, WEAR LOVE. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it."

Matt. 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Start making investments into your spouse! Start giving. Start investing your time, energy, money, thoughtfulness, loving deeds, notes, random and purposeful acts of kindness... and your heart will follow. Watch love grow.

Let me say something you've heard me say before: Genuine, biblical love puts you at RISK. That's right; it's not safe, but Oh it's good! It's not safe because you're opening up your heart to another and giving and risking, expecting nothing in return.

2 Cor. 12:15 Paul said, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved."

C.S. Lewis "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket -- safe, dark, motionless, airless -- it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.... The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love... is Hell."

You might say, "How can I love the way the Bible talks about?" "How am I supposed to be able to serve... and give... and sacrifice like that?"

Phil 2:13 "God, who is at work within you, will give you the will and the power to achieve His purpose."

Whatever God ASKS you to do... and EXPECTS you to do... He'll EMPOWER you to do. If He says, love your spouse and give expecting nothing in return, then He'll give you the power to do it.

Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Marriage

BIBLE DEFINITION OF LOVE

I Corinthians 13:4-7 gives us the Bible's definition of love. These verses tell us that love consists of many elements—negative and positive. Consider the elements of love. Give an illustration of how each should be applied in your marriage. Be specific.

1. Suffers long—endures of tenses, is not hasty, waits for the Lord Co right all wrong.

I will love _____

2. Is kind—not inconsiderate, seeks to help, is constructive, blesses when cursed, helps when hurt, demonstrates tenderness.

I will love _____

3. Is not envious, but content—is not jealous of another person's success or competitive.

I will love _____

4. Is not arrogant, but humble—is not haughty, but lowly and gracious.

I will love _____

5. Is not boastful, but reserved—does not show off, try to impress, want to be the center of attraction.

I will love _____

6. Is not rude, but courteous.

I will love _____

7. Is not selfish, but self-forgetful.

I will love _____

8. Is not irritable, but good tempered.

I will love _____

9. Is not: vindictive or wrathful, but generous.

I will love _____

10. Does not delight in bringing another person's sins to light, but will rejoice when another person obeys the truth.

I will love _____

11. Is not rebellious, but brave, conceals rather than exposes another person's wrongdoing to others.

I will love _____

12. Is not suspicious, but trustful, not cynical, makes every allowance, looks for an explanation that will show the best in others.

I will love _____

13. Is not despondent, but hopeful, does not give up because it has been deceived or denied.

I will love _____

14. Is not conquerable, but invincible—can outlast any trial, reproof, and problem.

I will love _____
