

The Old Paths

Volume 13, Issue 6

April 9, 2006

“Love In Marriage”

Jarrod Jacobs

After last week’s sermon concerning dating and finding a spouse, I began thinking about the love seen between a husband and a wife, and examples of it in the lives of people today. Those who are not married yet are one day going to be the recipients and givers of such love, and so they need to look at those who are currently married to see what it is like to love someone and to live with them for the rest of their lives.

While we know that God has reserved romantic love for husbands and wives (Heb. 13:4; I Cor. 7:2-4), is this the extent of the love expressed between spouses? Of course, not! Those romantic feelings are fine and beautiful within marriage, but such feelings are a way to express a deeper love each person feels for the other.

I Corinthians 13 And Marriage

When reading I Corinthians 13:4-8, we read the definition of love, and often say that this love ought to be seen between brethren. This is a true statement, but shouldn’t such love actually begin in the home? When we read of love being “*patient ... and kind*”; when we see love not being “*envious*” or “*proud*”; when we learn that love does not “*behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but re-*

joiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” and “*never fails*”, we know we are witnessing something special!

Love needs to be seen in married people while they are young, and needs to continue as they age together in life. Beautiful expressions of love are seen in one’s youth; as a young married couple starts their lives as a family together. When children enter the family, their love grows for each other and for the children born to them. During these times, should we not see a love that is “*patient*,” “*kind*,” and not proud or selfish (I Cor. 13:4)? Absolutely!

Another aspect of love that is seen comes after the children and the vigor of youth; when love for a spouse motivates one to take care of the other when ill, or ravaged with the effects of old age. I believe such love is also described in I Corinthians 13 when we read of love “*never failing*” and “*enduring*.”

Good Examples In Marriage

I think back to those special couples I have known (and still know) who have lived together in marriage for 30, 40, 50 years or more, and they bear record to what true love is. I remember the dear sister in Christ who took care of her husband in his old age when he no longer knew who she was. I remember the husband who rubbed medicine on his wife’s bedsores as she laid in the bed dying, no longer able to move, and with bones so brittle she could not be lifted out of bed. I

remember yet another couple, who were not married as long as these folks, but certainly exhibited true love when, after an untimely heart problem caused the wife to be severely brain damaged, the husband sacrificed of himself to make sure his wife could stay at home and be comfortable in her remaining years. I have seen folks take care of spouses, not because they HAD to, but because they WANTED to, and because they understood, “*this is what you do when you’re married*.” They did not call attention to themselves, nor did they do the things they did to be praised by men. They did these things because it was the right thing to do, and they truly loved their spouse! They may not have realized that they were being an example to me of what husbands and wives do for one another — but they were! (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 2:12; Titus 2:7; etc.)

We who are married would do well to learn from those older folks who have lived together in marriage and have endured the storms, as well as celebrated the good times together. Some who are yet unmarried ought to pay even closer attention to the married couples. Why do this? It is because in observing them, one not yet married can see just what it takes to be married and committed to a spouse for the rest of one’s life.

My mother used to tell me that I ought not consider marrying any girl that I could not “*hold her hair back while she was throwing up*.” Graphic picture, true, but is this not a reality in marriage? It is easy to love people when they are “*loveable*”, smelling good, looking good, and doing all the “*right things*.” It is another thing entirely when we love people for who they are, after the make-up is gone! (This truth applies both ways!)

Lessons From Love

Why write about this subject and remind folks of love in marriage? For one reason, the Bible talks about such things. Certainly, this ought to be reason enough for the one who loves God's word! At the same time, we see another reason for studying about love in marriage is because of all the practical lessons we learn from marriage. Consider the following:

1) Those yet unmarried may look to married folks and realize that marriage is a life-long proposition (Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 7:1-2). Though it is filled with ups-and-downs, people can make things work, and can have a life filled with love. However, like anything else, those things that are worth the most to us require our best and most sincere effort.

2) Those of us who are married may take a lesson from those who have already gone before! If they can make it and love one another, so can we! (Matt. 5:16)

3) When we observe God's will for the family, and experience love in that marriage, we also get a picture of Christ's love for the church! In Ephesians 5:25 we read, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" Notice the comparison above. In marriage, a husband is to love his wife EVEN AS Christ loved the church! So, when we observe love in a marriage, do we not also get a picture of the love Christ has for the church? Bring it home: When we have true love in our own marriages, are we not ourselves *living* that picture of love that Christ has for the church? How precious the love of Christ is when He reveals that

we can get a glimpse of it on earth through the love a husband and wife have for one another!

4) A study of love in a marriage is needed so we can see the type of sacrifice involved in being married! I think back to folks who take care of one another in their old age (and in their "young age") and see that pure example of sacrificial love. In continuing the comparison of Christ and the church, did not Christ show this in its ultimate form when He died for the church (Eph. 5:25)? If this is the case, then what sacrifices are we making for our spouses?

Conclusion

Marriage is a special relationship with special duties. Within marriage, we see dedication, love, and sacrifice. In marriage, we see the continuation of our society, and the training of our future leaders. Within the marriage bond, we see that picture of Christ and the church. How special this relationship is, and not one to be taken lightly! For those unmarried who read this article, please do not be like the couples who are more prepared for the wedding than they are the marriage! Prepare now. To the married I say, look to the Lord for the answers to your questions and for ways to make even the strongest marriages stronger. (Matt. 7:12)

How Would We Feel?

Selected

- ◆ If God gave us the same amount of time and attention that we devote to Him?
- ◆ If God put as many things ahead of us as we put ahead of Him?
- ◆ If God offered as many excuses as we do? And if the excuses were no more justifiable than ours?
- ◆ If God's promises were no more certain than ours?
- ◆ If God withheld His blessings from us as we withhold our offerings from Him?
- ◆ If God loved Himself as much as we love ourselves and gave as little thought to us as we give to Him?

Editor's Note:

When you think about it, what a sad shape we would be if God did no more for us than what we often do for Him! How sad it is when we consider the fact that we, the creation, think less about our Creator than perhaps anything else in this life! Because God loved us He created us, and because of His love, He sent Christ to die for us (Rev. 4:11; Jn. 3:16)! Seeing all that God has done for us before we even asked, is it too much to ask that we lovingly give our lives in service to Him (Rom. 12:1-2)?

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Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs Elders: Paul Dubois & Jeff Lankford

Phone: (270) 683-5386