

From Broken to Beautiful  
A Primer on Marriage Counseling  
Week 12 – In Pursuit of Biblical Love

Introduction:

In the course of Biblical counseling, we are always endeavoring to help our counselees learn to consistently **OVERCOME** problematic and, potentially, sinful behaviors while growing in their **LOVE** for God and others. These are the basic requirements for “graduating” from the counseling process.

Are they consistently experiencing victory in areas of life that they used to struggle in? Are they demonstrating in practical and tangible ways that they have a greater love for God and others? That should be easier to discern in a marriage scenario where you have someone who can confirm or refute progress.

Last week this question was asked, “Do I believe that God made one perfect person for everyone – a soulmate or the “one”? The answer, in my opinion, is **NO**.

Searching for the “one” is like looking for Bigfoot riding a unicorn dancing on a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The “one” is the one you say, “I do” to and, after that, you do the hard work of leaning in and working toward increasing and pervasive intimacy with them. If marriage is hard, it isn’t because you missed the magical “one” or because God is punishing you for some past sin.

A single person should look for the right **KIND** of person (Proverbs 31 and Job 31). A single person should consider:

- Five things that a future spouse should **BE**.
- Five things that a future spouse should **BELIEVE**.
- Five things that a future spouse should **HAVE**.

Notice that I said a “single person” and not a person. Married people shouldn’t be asking those questions, because it’s too late. The goal at that point is to begin where you are and choose your way to the marriage that you want. A single person should make the best possible choice in a spouse before they get married because no one, outside of God, will have a bigger impact on their life than their spouse.

In Pursuit of Biblical Love:  
See 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

We looked at the first three verses a few weeks ago when we considered the Biblical roles in marriage. You might recall that I said, the roles that God defined are designed to be platforms for each spouse to express agape love to one another. A man can be a good provider and a woman can be a good cook, but that doesn’t mean they are fulfilling their design.

This week, I want us to understand verses 4-8 and the cumulative definition that Paul gives of agape love that is so often associated with marriage.

1. Love is patient. This speaks of exhibiting an internal control in difficult **SITUATIONS**. It speaks to taking a long time to get angry rather than being quick tempered.
2. Love is kind. This word speaks to **ATTRACTIVE** speech or action (winsomeness). It's the idea of benevolence (doing good for another) or showing **MERCY** to another.
3. Love does not envy. Envy speaks to an extreme desire for what belongs to another (being zealous for). The word speaks to setting one's heart on something and **BURNING** with a desire or need for a thing.

Question:

The word "envy" is negated in the Greek, meaning it is prohibited in Biblical love. Why is envy, as defined here, dangerous and sinful in a marriage?

It causes us to see our spouse as an object to be controlled, used, possessed, or consumed rather than as an image bearer of God. It causes us to resent the giftedness of our spouse and can cause a spouse to belittle the other. It can kill kindness and make a person demanding. A spouse can begin to idolize, in the worst possible way, their spouse.

4. Love does not boast. It speaks of **BRAGGING** or exalting oneself. In a marriage relationship, this can include speaking over one's spouse or highlighting your accomplishments while spotlighting your spouse's failures.
5. Love is not arrogant. This speaks to being puffed-up, inflated, or swelling with **PRIDE**. This is a me-first mentality that turns everything into a competition in which there is a winner and a loser.
6. Love is not rude. This word speaks to acting **SHAMEFULLY** or dishonestly. It speaks to behaving in a sexually indecent manner.
7. Love does not insist on its own way. The word "insist" means to **DEMAND** or require. You must pay attention to who is making demands, what are they demanding, and why.
8. Love is not irritable. This word speaks to being easily provoked or **EXASPERATED**. This is the consequence of living in frustration.

Question:

How would you describe the difference between being frustrated and annoyed? What are the dangers of living, long term, in a state of frustration?

An annoyance is often minor and temporary. Something that is frustrating is often more persistent. Frustrated exasperation is sinful because it's often rooted in the self and it gives the devil an opportunity to sow division (Ephesians 4:27).

9. Love is not resentful. This word speaks to keeping **SCORE** or taking inventory. It has the idea of mentally dwelling or fixating on a matter.
10. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing. A literal translation would say that love takes no delight in **EVIL**, unrighteousness, or sin.

Romans 1:28–32 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of **unrighteousness**, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Question:

Paul gives us a list of eight behaviors that describe what love is not. Given these definitions, how might these eight things evidence themselves in a marriage?

Envy can look like control and a desire to take what belongs to the spouse and bring it under their control. Boasting or pride can reveal itself in a critical or demeaning spirit. Rude can be anything from passing gas in bed to demanding sexual acts that the wife is not comfortable with. A resentful attitude shows itself in a tit-for-tat back and forth (money, adultery, violence).

11. Love does rejoice with the truth. The word “truth” speaks to that which accords to **REALITY**.
12. Love bears all things. This speaks to a willingness to **ENDURE** annoyance or difficulty. It has the idea of suffering or to bear up under difficulty.
13. Love believes all things. The word speaks to a choice to **CONSIDER** something to be true. Belief doesn't make the thing true, but it gives the person “the benefit of the doubt.” It has the idea of trust.
14. Love hopes all things. This speaks to a **CONFIDENT** expectation that looks ahead to an anticipated outcome.
15. Love endures all things. The word “endure” means to remain **BEHIND**. It speaks of fortitude or abiding. In other words, love doesn't run away from difficulty.
16. Love never ends. The word “end” speaks of falling, **DYING**, or ceasing to be.

Note – most definitions come from the Dictionary of Biblical Languages (DBL)

Question:

What final questions do you have concerning marriage counseling?

[Allow for Responses]

Homework:

- Marriage: Deep Friendship Inventory
- A Trust Questionnaire

Conclusion:

Couples do not fall out of love. They can, however, behave their way out of the emotion of love and affection. Agape love is a choice to seek God's best for the one loved. That means that every struggling couple has chosen their way to the marriage they have. The good news is that, in Christ, they have the ability to choose their way to the marriage they want if they are willing to repent, forgive, and follow a Biblical process of change. Our role, as Biblical counselors, is to help them navigate that journey towards a marriage that more fully glorifies God.