

MARRIAGE: UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Prior to becoming “one flesh” in the bonds of marriage, a man and woman should give much consideration to their compatibility. The couple’s ability to live together in harmony should be carefully evaluated by each party prior to the wedding day. Barriers and problems encountered during courtship will not be eliminated by a wedding ceremony and a common place of residence. Only true love can produce a strong, healthy marriage.

Unfortunately, Hollywood has convinced many people that true love is an inescapable feeling or mood by which one is taken captive. The idea is impressed upon our minds that we “fall in love” and that we have no more control over this “mental chemistry” than we do the weather. Therefore, it is not surprising that many marriages end in divorce when this philosophy is accepted as the foundation for marriage.

Feelings of excitement and romance should be an ongoing characteristic of a good relationship, even after marriage. However, true love is not an undetectable “virus” which overcomes you without warning. There’s more to marital love than what George Strait referred to as “The Love Bug”:

*“Oh that a little bitty teeny weeny thing called the love bug
Nobody’s ever seen it but it’s got the whole world shook up
It all started with a little bitty kiss and a hug
It’s a little bitty teeny weeny thing they called the love bug”*

In the Book of Ephesians, Paul writes, “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church...*” (Ephesians 5:25) To love your wife is to regard her welfare. Rather than being an unpredictable mood, love is described here as a responsibility one has toward another. Once married, “feelings” are irrelevant to the obligation each spouse now has to love (regard the welfare of) one another. Long term, happy emotions and good feelings in marriage are the consequence of a firm commitment by husband and wife to unconditionally love one another. In order to experience pleasant feelings one for the other, couples should try reviewing and implementing their publicly professed wedding vows, “...to love, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, till death alone shall separate you.”

One of the indicators of a breakdown in the commitment to unconditionally love one another is bitterness. In the Book of Colossians, Paul writes, “*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*” (Colossians 3:19) Occasionally, the husband and/or wife become irritated at the other because they feel like they are not being appreciated.

Remember, true love is a relationship which concentrates on giving rather than receiving. The best way to root out bitterness is to love your spouse in the same way that, “*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*” Christ did not love his people because they were deserving of his love. To the contrary, “...*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8)

Are you willing to unconditionally love your husband or wife in the same way that Christ unconditionally loves you?

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