Title: Marriage and Love
Text: 1 Corinthians 13
Main Point: Because of God's love within us, we can release this love to our spouse.
Date:11/ 08 /2026
Series: Growing Godly Marriages

MARRIAGE AND LOVE: INTRODUCTION

The love I discuss today is not naturally within us. Because of sin, we naturally trend toward selfishness. For this reason, those "in Christ" have been given God's love: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:5) Our time today is spent on releasing this love to our spouse. As we choose to give God's love to our spouse, we join the Holy Spirit's help in fulfilling God's will in growing a "godly marriage to reach the world." Becoming a loving person is a choice, an act of the will, not an emotion (what I feel). Encouragingly, we have supernatural help in this pursuit.

Cultural forces combat God's ideal of love. These forces reduce love to feelings, not choice; they trivialize love by claiming something as simple as good ice cream is love: "I love my ice cream!" So, as we begin, I want us to be aware of the cultural forces that confuse us regarding biblical love.

We are so embedded in our culture that only concentrated effort can help us comprehend its influence. An exercise by Collin Hansen, in *The Disciple-Making Parent Podcast* (https://www.thedisciplemakingparent.com/understanding-disenculturation-collin-hansen/), is helpful. He describes an assignment by which he challenges his students called "disenculturation."

> What I [Hansen] do in my class with students is, I encourage them to re-narrate their story as a Christian who's somebody called to ministry, but to do it as if they were an outsider to their story. So as evangelicals we're all familiar with the testimony, but usually you're publicizing your internal process. The process of disenculturation is learning to see yourself from somebody else's perspective. And so I ask them to go back and really think about being a missionary, trying to propagate your faith in a foreign, different culture.
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> Well, you'd have to take a kind of look at your faith in three ways. Number one, you'd have to say, what is it about the faith that I inherited from my host home culture that I'm going to hold onto with everything? I don't care where I am. I don't care who I'm talking to. I'm not giving this up.
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> Go to the other end of the spectrum: What's something that I was taught in my home culture as a Christian or from Christians or other significant authority figures that I know when I look at the Bible, when I look at history, when I look at other cultures, this is wrong? They told me that it was essential to be a Christian, but in fact they're wrong, and I would be totally wrong if I did the same thing with others.
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> And the third step is, what are those things that are neutral? They may be characteristics of your home culture, and maybe it would be fine to be able to bring those into another

culture as long as you didn't mandate them as requirements but they could simply be options, but you don't want to confuse them for being absolutes.

I believe this three-step process is helpful as we consider the role of love in marriage. Biblical love is different from how culture wants us to understand love. Here are some examples to make my point.

Maybe you have heard some of these expressions in popular commercials: McDonald's: "I'm Lovin' it."; Pepsi: "For the Love of it"; Diet Coke: "Love What You Love"; TikTok: "Watch it. Love It. Want it." We, including me, often use love so casually that it loses its substantive meaning. For example: "I love pizza"; "I love this truck"; "I love my wife." "I love my wife" can seem on the same level as "I love pizza." This use of love is not what the Bible means by love. Words are powerful, and how we use them can subtly shape a Christians understanding.

The culture has hijacked biblical love to mean "something I feel or desire." Consequently, love is no longer attached to truth. Now many Christians capitulate to culture when they promote the idea that to love someone is to affirm everything they believe or do, even if the behavior is sinful. Otherwise, you hate rather than love and are canceled by many from speaking.

Any biblically minded person soon realizes that society will not do well with this confusion of love for long. In direct contradiction to the Bible, love becomes self-centered rather than other-centered. This selfish view of love creates not only problems in marriage but in every part of culture.

So, we must step back and work to segregate cultural love from biblical love. Therefore, I hope this message recalibrates your understanding of love. God created marriage, and He alone knows how it best flourishes; it flourishes with two spouses who understand biblical love practice it in marriage.

I realize sin makes this difficult, very difficult in some cases. Because of sin, we hurt each other, which makes attempts at love hard. The longer we practice cultural love, the harder it will be to reclaim biblical love.

All we can do is begin where we are and, through tiny steps, move forward toward God's intention for marriage. Marriage requires two willing participants. Sometimes all we can do is pray and offer sacrificial love while waiting on God.

I hope today to give you a place to begin with 1 Corinthians 13; I know of no better place to define what I mean by biblical love.

MARRIAGE AND LOVE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13

1. We start by placing 1 Corinthians 13 into its larger context.

    1.1. "Chapter 13 interrupts Paul's extended discussion of spiritual gifts (chapters 12–14), appearing after his promise to show 'a still more excellent way' in 12:31b[1]. Rather than

abandoning the gifts discussion, however, Paul returns to that subject in chapter 14[1], making chapter 13 a strategic interlude rather than a tangent.

The chapter functions as a corrective framework for understanding gifts properly. Chapter 13 contextualizes the encouragements to pursue spiritual gifts by emphasizing that love—not the gifts themselves—endures eternally, whereas knowledge, tongues, and prophecy are temporary phenomena destined to pass away[2]. The chapter addresses not only the Corinthians' preoccupation with spiritual gifts but the divisiveness and factionalism that plagued their community[3].

Paul deliberately echoes central themes from chapters 12 and 14—knowledge, tongues, and prophecies—to show how these gifts appear in a new light when evaluated through the lens of love[1]. The characteristics Paul ascribes to love directly address the Corinthians' actual deficiencies: they lacked patience and kindness while displaying jealousy, arrogance, and boastfulness—the very opposites of what Paul describes[4]. The chapter serves as the pivotal point demonstrating that external spiritual manifestations must be subordinated to community welfare[5]."

[1] Derek R. Brown and E. Tod Twist, 1 Corinthians, ed. John D. Barry and Douglas Mangum, Logos Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2026).
[2] M. Turner, "Spiritual Gifts," in New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 793.
[3] Kenneth Schenck, 1 & 2 Corinthians: A Commentary for Bible Students (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 183.
[4] Craig Keener, The Bible in Its Context: How to Improve Your Study of the Scriptures (Mountlake Terrace, WA: Action International Ministries, 2013), 86.
[5] Russell Morton, "Gifts in the Context of Love: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 13," Ashland Theological Journal Volume 31 (1999), 31:13.

2. Next, I want to consider the makeup of biblical love. As I do, you may ask God to reveal where He would like you to grow in offering biblical love to your spouse.

   2.1. Foundational to biblical love is that it is other-centered, not self-centered. You give away God's love to your spouse.

   2.2. Biblical love is patient. Of course, this quality of love is most challenging when you are frustrated with your spouse.

      2.2.1. A patient spouse grows to endure difficulties (over a long period of time), delays, frustrations, or weaknesses without becoming angry, resentful, or giving up.

      2.2.2. A patient spouse listens instead of reacting.

      2.2.3. A patient spouse gives the other time to grow.

      2.2.4. A patient spouse remains kind with repeated annoyances.

2.2.5. A patient spouse reflects how Jesus treats His people. He remains with us when we are slow to change and make poor choices. A patient spouse models this pattern while also growing in biblical truth together.

2.2.6. A patient spouse is not "irritable or resentful."

2.2.7. However, a patient spouse does not ignore sin, tolerate abuse, or become emotionally detached.

2.3. Biblical love is kind, not rude. In kindness, your spouse can be fully transparent without fear or criticism.

2.4. Biblical love does not envy or have intense feelings over your spouse's success. Biblical love does not "parade itself" (NKJV) or envy. It "does not insist [on his or her] own way."

2.5. Biblical love does not heap praise on itself or boast (is not arrogant).

2.6. Biblical love does not accept sinful actions but "rejoices with the truth."

3. In summary, biblical love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

3.1. Biblical love gives; secular love thinks of self first.

3.2. Biblical love is not feeling-based; it is truth-based.

3.3. Biblical love is life and health to a marriage, and the degree to which it is lacking represents the degree of dissatisfaction and lack of joy.