

“A Covenant of Love”

Walking in Relationships pt 4

March 1st, 2021 | Pastors Al & Tava Brice with Pastors Cameron & Micaela Brice

Pastor Al: Every marriage begins with high and exciting expectations, can't wait for that honeymoon night, going to be like this forever, and then, months after the wedding and honeymoon, the reality of your spouse not being perfect, not meeting all your needs, or living up to your expectations begins to set in like a chill on cold wintry day.

Tava: Marriage can and should be an intimate relationship that last for a lifetime and grows stronger and closer over the years. That's the kind of love for which the human heart longs for, including yours and your spouses'. Al and I, Cameron and Micaela have enjoyed that kind of relationship, but it didn't come naturally, we all had to work on several areas of our own life to achieve what we experience today. There were some specific areas that we had to learn, work on and grow in.

#1. An accepting unconditional love

Pastor Micaela: Many marriages experience much frustration, anger, hurt, and begin to falter due to a lack of “accepting love.” In such a case, one or both of the people in the relationship feel a need to live up to the other's expectations in order to be loved. This performance-based acceptance is often a carryover from our childhood. When did you feel love by your parents? Was it when A's or B's showed up on the report card? When your team won the game? When a task or chores were completed just right and on time? In most cases, we grew up receiving rewards or praise for what we did instead of who we are, a precious and loved son or daughter.

Pastor Cameron: If this is the case, your spouse probably equates love and acceptance with performance. In a performance-based marriage, we give love and feel loved on an “I love you if” or an “I love you when” basis. A performance-based attitude will poison your relationship. It will produce a scorekeeping dynamic that operates in fear, suspicion, and disappointment: here is a couple of examples: “if I just do better, he'll love me more,” or “I bend over backwards for her, and this is the gratitude and thanks that I get?” “I'm constantly doing things for my family and I never hear, ‘great job honey’ or any ‘thank you’”!! It becomes a treadmill of effort and expectation that wears you down and results in constant disappointments.

Pastor Micaela: But an everlasting love takes an altogether different approach. It's an “I love you, period!!” I love you for who you are, not for what you can do!! How do you love a new-born baby? You love unconditionally because that baby can't do or contribute anything but just eat, cry, poop, and wake you up at the craziest of times but that baby is the apple of your eye. You accept your baby the way Jesus accepts us and the same way that we should accept one another.

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Romans 15:7 (NLT)

“Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.”

To accept each other means more than grudgingly putting up with each other and rating one another's performance. We are to accept each other even with our flaws and mistakes, just as Christ has accepted us, with all our flaws and mistakes into his fellowship and family.

Romans 12:10 (NLT)

“Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.”

Does Jesus extend acceptance to people based on their performance? Does he redeem sinners based on their good works? Does he withhold kindness from those who don't measure up? Of course not!!

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Pastor Cameron: This doesn't mean that we don't work on areas of our lives that we know frustrates our spouse. True love sees and recognizes things that need to change and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to change. It also, doesn't mean that I'm excused from being responsible to help at home or at work.

We do things, at times, that irritate one another but we still love one another more than our mess ups. We've learned to say, “I'm sorry, please forgive me.” We help each other at home, run errands for each other, I help with Benj to give Micaela a break when I come home and on weekends.

Colossians 3:12-15 (NLT)

“Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.”

#2. A loyal and committed love.

Pastor Al: Remember our marriage vows? I, Al, take you, Tava, to be my wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better for worse; for richer or for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish until we are separated by death; as God is my witness, I give you my promise.

(Illustration: Let's say that Tava and I walking on the beach, (show picture) we stop, I turn and look into her eyes, and say, "Honey, of the 3 billion women on this planet, you are on my top ten list." Tava looks into my eyes and says, "Wow honey, thanks so much!! That means the world to me and to think, that I'm among the 10 women that you love the most!! Just to be on your list, sweetheart, is an honor and is good enough for me." XXX WRONG!!!!)

Tava would be insulted and deeply hurt if I said something like that. Underneath Jesus, we're both number 1 to each other, even above our kids.

God designed us to want the exclusive, loyal, and committed love of one another.

Ephesians 5:28-29 (NLT)

"In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church."

Tava: God Himself exemplifies that kind of love for us. The Bible refers to God as a jealous God...

Joshua 24:19 (NLT)

"But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

The words jealous God in Hebrew are "el qana", which also denotes zeal. The word jealous in English is mostly used in a negative sense, but in Hebrew it expresses not a suspicious, insecure emotion but rather passion and caring, most often in connection with the relationship between a husband and wife.

When spouses reserve their love and devotion exclusively for each other, it deepens and strengthens the relationship.

Pastor Al: A husband can demonstrate loyal and committed love by speaking respectfully to and about his wife around others and, when at work, by refusing a co-worker's flirtation or turning his eyes away from any images that would stir up lust.

Job 31:1 (NKJV)

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"

Tava: A wife can show loyal and committed love by choosing not to share herself emotionally with another man or by rebuffing children's efforts to pit mom and dad against each other. Both husband and wife can show loyal and committed love by maintaining healthy boundaries with people of the opposite sex and by regularly praising and never criticizing each other in public.

Philippians 2:2-5 (NLT)

“Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.”

Romans 12:10 (NLT)

“Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.”

Pastor Al:

Galatians 5:13-15 (NKJV)

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

Altar call and Communion