

ROMANCE IN MARRIAGE

I. ROMANCE IS AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE

A. Genuine love originates with God

1. In creation

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it..." And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Gen. 2:28, 31)

It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him. (Gen. 2:18, 24-25)

2. In redemption

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (Eph. 2:4-5)

We love because he first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19 also 7-12)

B. Genuine love is always expressed

1. God gave his Son

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son... (Jn. 3:16)

2. The Son gave his life

...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... (Eph. 5:25)

3. God's love and mercy are constant
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end. (Lam.3:22)

C. Genuine love is gloriously displayed in marriage

1. God's love to us.
He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD. (Prov.18:22)
2. God's love through us
Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church... (Eph. 5:25)

- Constant, Creative, Sacrificial

Older women...train the young women to love their husbands and children, (Titus 2:4)

3. Marriage is a living demonstration of divine love and mercy in human relationship. As husbands and wives we have the privilege and responsibility to share and to display the goodness, mercy, and love that God has lavished on us.
4. The culture is unable to define or display genuine love because it doesn't start with God and the gospel. As a result love becomes all about obtaining our selfish desires, rather than offering ourselves in love and sacrifice.
 - a. Getting, not giving.
 - b. Selfishness, not sacrifice.
 - c. Conquests, not commitment.
 - d. Lust, not love.
5. There is a glorious reason, a biblical reason, for marriage.
 - *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31-32)*

II. ROMANCE DEFINED

- A. Romance is the outward expression of the desire to love, nourish and cherish our spouse.** Affection, intimacy, and delight should be a regular part of that expression. True romance is only possible where there is biblical love within the covenant of marriage.

The word “romance” does not appear in the Bible, but Scripture offers several powerfully inspiring examples of passionate love between man and woman:

- The redemptive love of Boaz for Ruth (Ru. 2:8-16, 3:11-12)
- Jacob’s passion for Rachel (Gen. 29:20)
- The Song of Solomon
- New Testament warning against physical separation (1 Cor. 7:5)
- Husbands “nourishing” and “cherishing” their wives (Eph. 5)

- B. Romance is an art** that must be developed the rest of my life. It is not a natural state that is automatically maintained. Romance has nothing to do with background, temperament or personality. It is love desiring to be expressed as often and as passionately and in as many ways as possible, in every season and circumstance, for as long as you both shall live.

- Romance without marriage is selfish...
- Marriage without romance is also selfish...

- C. Romantic love** is a pleasurable, learned response to the way your partner looks and feels, to the things your partner says and does, and to the emotional experiences you share. It is a keen desire to work for the beloved’s happiness, no matter how much effort is required. - *Ed Wheat*

III. THE (not so) LITTLE FOXES THAT SPOIL THE VINE (Song of Solomon 2:15)

NOTE: Covenant love and holiness were corrupted in the garden. The effects remain. The following are symptoms of deeper heart issues that violate the commandment to love God and love one another. Once identified, we can with ask for conviction of sin, confess sin, and ask for God's grace to mortify sin and bear fruit – creative and sacrificial goodness, mercy, and love.

A. Ignorance - lack of training or example

I will become a student, learning about my spouse and about romance, starting with....

B. Ingratitude - failure to appreciate goodness and mercy received, making comparisons

I will daily thank God for my spouse, and today I will thank my spouse for....

C. Spiritual neglect - breaking the first great commandment

I will intensify my love relationship with the Lord by....

D. Selfishness - indifference, laziness, pursuing romance to get rather than give

I will be more consistent in looking to the interests of my spouse, and I will begin with....

E. Busyness - failure to put first things first, showing love and mercy elsewhere
I will make my spouse and romance a top priority by spending less time doing....

F. Bitterness - disappointment, resentment, resignation
I will not withhold romance, and if tempted to do so will determine why and repent by....

G. Fear of Man - pride, embarrassment, "self-consciousness"
I will creatively and adventurously pursue romance with my spouse by....

IV. ROMANCE COMES FROM A PASSIONATE HEART – From the *Song of Solomon*

An entire book of the Bible, *The Song of Songs*, is devoted to proclaiming the unique joy and wonder of passionate marital love. The couple depicted in this poem has studied one another, they are fiercely devoted to one another, they are constantly aware of each other, and they passionately desire one another. As a result they fill their thoughts, words and actions with expressions of love for one another. Both the bride and the bridegroom are active participants.

A. Romance is to occur in the context of commitment

- *“My beloved is mine, and I am his.” (2:16, 6:3, 7:10)*
- *“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.” (8:4)*

B. Romance begins with constant thoughts of affection

“Before you touch her body, touch her heart and mind.” – CJ Mahaney

1. Thoughts of desire
“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” (7:10)
2. Thoughts unceasing
“I slept, but my heart was awake.” (5:2-8)
3. Thoughts of anticipation
“My beloved speaks and says to me: Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.” (2:10)

C. Romance is spoken with carefully crafted words

- Secret and public admiration based on careful observation and deep affection!
1. The bridegroom says to his bride, *“Behold, you are beautiful my love, behold you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.” (1:15)*
 2. She says to her bridegroom, *“Behold you are beautiful my beloved, truly delightful.” (1:16)*
 3. *As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. (2:3)*
 4. *What is your beloved more than another beloved...? (5:9)*

D. Romance is displayed with physical affection

- *“Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?” (8:5)*

E. Romance is active...planned and spontaneous

1. Be a “student for life” of your spouse.
2. Learn to appreciate your spouse’s interests.
3. Begin to pursue planned and spontaneous expressions of romance.
 - a. How can I love my wife/ husband today?

- b. How can I do good to my wife/ husband today?

Begin to write your own story, and chronicle your own magnificent journey and adventure into the joy of romance.

F. Romance is passionate

- *“For love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the LORD.
neither can floods drown it.
Many waters cannot quench love,
If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
he would be utterly despised.”*

V. ROMANCE IS TO BE A WAY OF LIFE -

A. Not just things, but you - Big gifts given occasionally from our wallets and hands, are not a substitute for little things expressed consistently from our hearts.

1. Interest - care, concern and lots of questions!
2. Communication - thoughts and feelings, laughter and tears - and everything in between!
3. Time - it won't just happen, and it's never an interruption!
4. Responsiveness - RSVP ASAP!

B. Planning (Like they say, “Fail to plan...etc. etc.)

1. How can I serve? How can I surprise?
2. Special days & family traditions
3. Make memories

C. Supplies (Be prepared!!!)

D. Cards/ notes/ e-mail (Write it! Sing it! Say it!)

- E. **Gifts** (Who doesn't like surprises?!?!)
- F. **Outings – Effort and Planning**
- G. **Spiritual intimacy** – Prayer, reading, and worship
- H. **“Wish List”**

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. **Begin immediately/ start slowly/ be consistent**
- B. **Give...with no expectations of your spouse's response**
- C. **MAKE *The Song of Songs* YOUR SONG!**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, EVALUATION and APPLICATION

1. To me, a truly romantic marriage relationship includes the following:
2. List three of your most romantic experiences together, and explain what made each one particularly memorable and special.
3. In what ways is your spouse romantic?
4. What affect does your experience of the gospel have on your love for your spouse?
5. Are there any "LITTLE FOXES" in your heart (III. A. - G.) that are causing damage to the vine of romance in your marriage?
6. Explain. From **ROMANCE COMES FROM A PASSIONATE HEART (IV. A. - F.)**, what needs your greatest attention right now? Explain.
7. From **ROMANCE COMES FROM A PASSIONATE HEART (IV. A. - F.)**, what specific step can you take to begin to deepen and demonstrate your passion for your spouse?
8. Are there things that I do or neglect that make it more difficult for you to pursue or respond to romance in our marriage? Explain.
9. What can I do to inspire you in romance?
10. Expressions of romance that are awkward for me to pursue (or even imagine me doing!) are....
11. Share with your spouse (begin a list!) those qualities in him/ her that inspire your gratitude, admiration and respect....