




FOUNDATIONS FOR A LOVING MARRIAGE

Apostolic Christian Counseling And Family Services
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Mindset: Positive Growth

- Honor:** Remember to focus on what is going well in your marriage.
- Grow:** Build from where you are. Don't try to run before you can walk.
- Plan:** Don't expect this to fix EVERYTHING this weekend!




UNDERSTANDING LOVE IN MARRIAGE

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Why talk about Love?

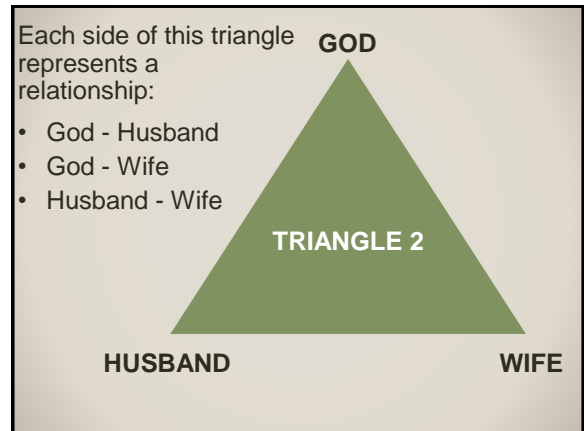
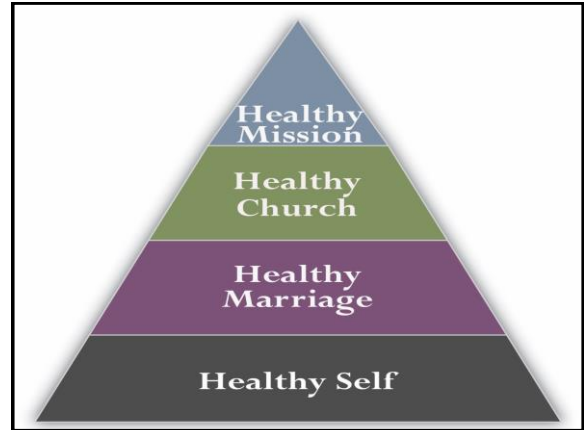
- Being loved is a deep human need. The feeling of love is what makes us feel connected.
- Growing in our capacity to love goes hand in hand with our growth in Christ.
 - **John 13:35** "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
- God initiates His love toward us and wants us to be loving.
 - **John 4:16** "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Challenges of Understanding Love

- Unclear definition of love.
- Multiple definitions of love for different people.
 - Assumption that showing love only means being gushy and overly-dramatic.
- Lack of modeling, knowledge, and/or skills.
- Hurt or lack of trust which prevents healthy development of loving feelings.

Applying What We Know to be True

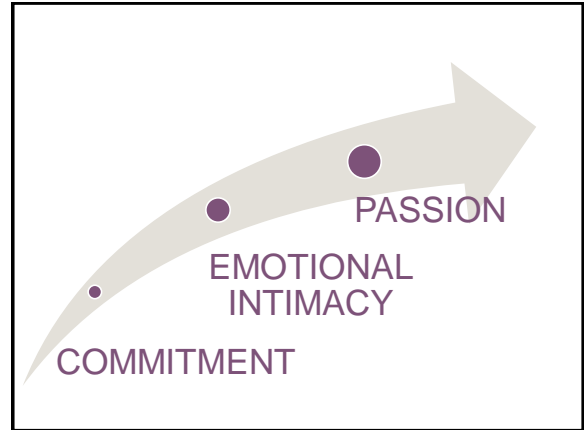
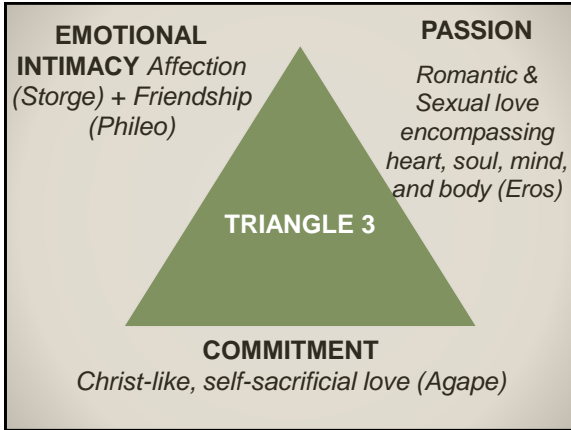
- Most people know the Bible says to love.
- Most people know love is important in marriage.
- **However**, many have difficulty understanding how this practically applies to their marriage.
- This presentation is about the application of the Biblical instructions to love.



Triangle 2: Explanation

- Unbalanced triangles -
 - Marriages in which one or both spouses are unbelievers.
- Spiritual Intimacy -
 - The spiritual dimension is the most intimate component; all other areas flow from it.
- Spiritual stagnation and/or backsliding -
 - Leads to deterioration of marital and family relationships.





Triangle 3: Explanation

- Three aspects of love in a healthy marriage:
 - Commitment
 - Emotional intimacy
 - Passion
- All three aspects are interrelated in marriage:
 - Deepening your love requires addressing all areas.
 - Each aspect of love builds on the other.
- Marriage can be in danger if a couple's decision to marry (or stay married) is based on a shallow concept or 'feeling' of love.

COMMITMENT

1. Agape Love
2. Explanation

Commitment: Agape Love

- Involves "agape" love
 - Repeatedly used to describe Christ's self-sacrificial love toward us.
 - Example of how we should love others.
- Agape love focuses on the well-being and good fortune of the other person without requiring or demanding the other person respond in-kind. **It is an act of grace.**

*"But God commendeth his love [agape] toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." **Romans 5:8***

Commitment: Explanation

- Evident in covenant (i.e. "for richer, for poorer, for better, or for worse").
- It is a decision or choice.
- It is not based on feelings or perceived worthiness.
- It is the foundation of trust in marriage.
- Foundational for freely building the second aspect of love in this model -emotional intimacy.




EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

1. Friendship
2. Affection

Emotional Intimacy

- Intimacy in this model is not sexual intimacy.
- Result of blending two important aspects of love:
 1. Friendship (Phileo)
 2. Affection (Storge)



Emotional Intimacy: Friendship (Phileo)

- Consists of regular communication of thoughts, feelings, hopes, and disappointments, etc.
- Friendship grows as couple spends time together and develops special memories.
- It is the experience of “knowing and being known”.
- Allows couples to share their hearts and feel they are “best friends”.

Emotional Intimacy: Affection (Storge)

- Refers to familial affection and care.
- Grown when one spouse **intentionally** focuses on expressions of love *that are helpful and meaningful to the other spouse*.
- We tend to **express** love the way **we** like to **receive** love rather than focusing on what makes our spouse feel love (i.e., Love Language)
- Affection grows through regular, purposeful, and meaningful expressions of love.

Emotional Intimacy: Five Love Languages

- Words of Affirmation - Receives love through encouraging words and compliments.
- Quality Time – Receives love when his/her spouse spends time being with or doing an activity with him/her.
- Gifts – This individual sees gifts as visual symbols of thoughtfulness and expressions of love.
- Acts of Service – Receives love when their spouse displays a servant attitude by their actions.
- Physical Touch – For this individual drawing close physically parallels drawing close emotionally.

Commitment + Emotional Intimacy = Passion

- **John 15:13-15**, “Greater love [Agape] hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends [philos]. Ye are my friends [philos], if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends [philos]; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”
- The safety and trust of Commitment and the emotional connection and expression of Emotional Intimacy allow couples to have the opportunity to experience Passion.

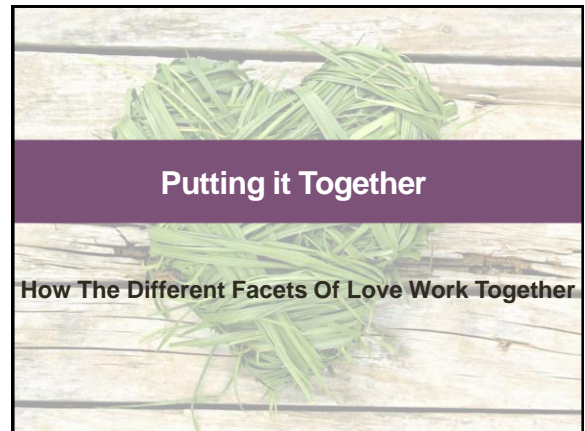


Passion: Explanation

- This side of love is exciting and exhilarating; creates the feeling of “being in love”.
- Connects you deeply with the heart, mind, body, and soul of your spouse.
- Oneness feelings are intensified and God’s design for sexual union is experienced.
 - *Ephesians 5:31-32*, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Passion: Explanation

- Often the expression of focused Emotional Intimacy.
 - Sexual desire and passionate feelings are closely tied to the level of Emotional Intimacy.
- Romance allows couples to experience closeness and rekindling of passionate love.
- This intense and exciting expression of love is only experienced periodically and is heavily dependent upon the health of Commitment and Emotional Intimacy.



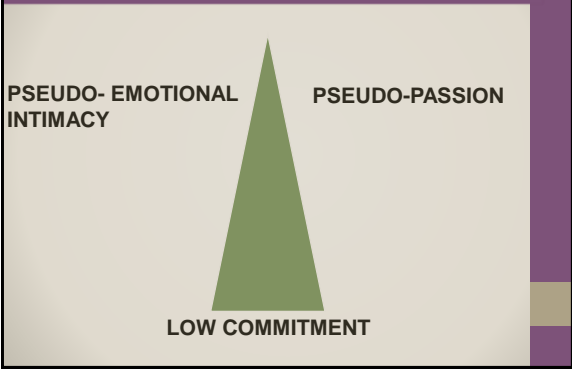
Triangles in Motion

- Every couple’s triangle is constantly changing shape and size.
- While, theoretically, having all sides of the triangle balanced is the goal, life simply does not allow it to stay that way for very long.
 - Conflict, hurt, and/or damage to any side of the triangle will affect the other sides.
 - Busy-ness and lack of attention to the facets of love probably lead to the majority of issues for couples.

Example 1: “Commitment Pulls us Through”

- Commitment side must be strong when spouse is sick with the stomach flu.
- During times like these, the Emotional Intimacy side of love may be gently nurtured while the Passionate side is put “on hold.”
- As Passionate side is waning, the Commitment and Emotional Intimacy sides must make up the balance.
 - Under the circumstances, this “imbalance” is necessary and will hopefully change as soon as the spouse’s health returns.

Example 2: "Counterfeit Love"



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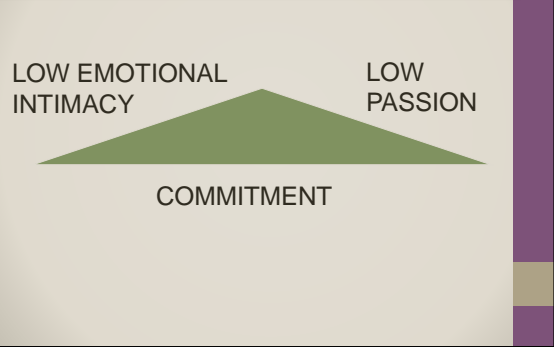
- High "Pseudo-Intimacy and "Pseudo-Passion with low Commitment shows "counterfeit love."
- Individuals in these situations will report feeling "true love" even though it is far from God's design.
 - When the commitment side is weak, the foundation of the marriage is threatened.
 - When the spouse tries to get his/her needs met in unhealthy and unbiblical ways, s/he may "seek fulfillment" elsewhere through fantasy or extramarital affairs.

Example #3: "Crack in Foundation"

- If Commitment and trust has been damaged by hurtful choices or actions, both Emotional Intimacy and Passion will suffer greatly.
- Remember the importance for trust, safety (Commitment), affection, and friendship (Emotional Intimacy) to be built first before the openness of the Passionate side of the relationship can be experienced as God designed it.



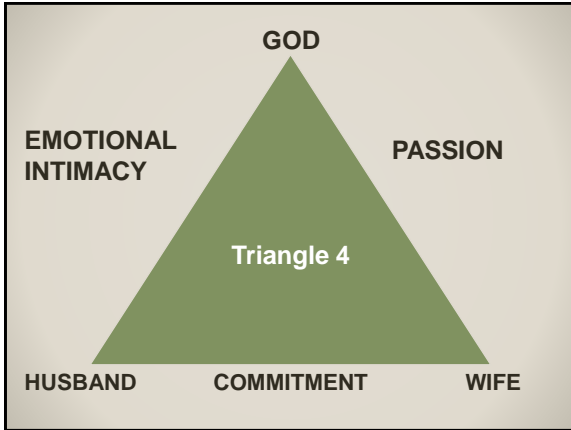
Example #4: "Dry Marriages"



Example #4: "Dry Marriages"

- Low Emotional Intimacy and Low Passion with High Commitment is an unfortunately common triangle arrangement.
- Married out of "duty" and remain married because of Commitment:
 - May have been together for years, but may barely know how to have a conversation together about their relationship.
 - Even though commitment is strong, they are missing much of what God designed their marriage to be.





Overview of Triangle 4

Shows a couple who share Commitment for each other and grow towards God enabling them to experience Emotional Intimacy and Passion for each other and in their relationships with God.

- In a **spiritual sense**, they have deepening commitment and maturity of their faith, they have a growing relationship with Christ, and they have a feeling of excitement and worship about what God has done for them and what He can do for others.
- In a **relational sense**, they have deepening commitment and trust with each other, they have a growing friendship and show affection to each other, they experience excitement and desire for each other.

Summary

- Monitor and be aware of the triangle shape.
- Individual circumstances and life transitions will cause unique variations in the shape of the triangle over time.
- Couples who notice that a side of their triangle needs attention can seek to bolster it by building that side (and the other sides) of their marriage.
- Maintaining your individual relationship with Christ is the best way to make sure love in your marriage stays strong.
- www.accounseling.org/lovelanguages

Personal / Couple Reflection Questions

What things am I aware of that help me feel close and emotionally intimate with my spouse?

How would you describe the 'triangle' representing your relationship as a couple? What side is currently strong? What side may need some attention?

This Presentation Contains Information Adapted From:

- Chapman, G. The Five Love Languages.
- Lewis, C. S. The Four Loves.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A Triangular Model of Love. Psychological Review, 93 (2), 119-135.

Appendix A

Five Love Languages: Practical Ways to Build Emotional Intimacy

Adapted from The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman

1. Words of Affirmation

- Receives love through encouraging words and compliments.
- He/she *needs to hear the words* that affirm his/her worth and abilities in order to believe you truly love and honor him/her.
- This person resonates with the truth in the verse: *"Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad"* **Proverbs 12:25**
- Kind words that build up, show appreciation, and communicate loving feelings are an essential part of feeling loved.

Ways to Give Words of Affirmation

- **Verbalizing your appreciation:**
 - "Thanks for helping me out today; it really meant a lot to me that you were there."
- **Giving Compliments:**
 - "You did a really nice job painting."
- **Noticing:**
 - Thanking your spouse for something routinely done but rarely recognized:
 - "Thanks for being a great father/mother to our children."
 - "I really appreciate your doing my laundry."
- **Writing:**
 - A positive note of encouragement can be kept and reread.

2. Quality Time

- God loves time spent with Him in prayer and in meditation on the Word.
- An individual with this love language will feel most loved when his/her spouse spends time being with or doing an activity with him/her.
 - Conveyed by giving undivided, focused attention to your spouse.
 - This may include spending time together, having meaningful conversations or just being in the same place.

Ways to Give Quality Time

- **Finding** time daily to connect and share highlights of the day, thoughts, and concerns.
- **Planning** a special outing, doing an activity that your spouse enjoys.
- **Taking** a walk together.
- **Going** for a long drive together, with or without a specific destination.
- **Making** household tasks more meaningful by doing them together.

3. Gifts

- From the beginning of time, our heavenly Father has revealed himself as a generous giver of good things: *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above"* **James 1:17**
- An individual with this primary love language sees gifts as visual symbols of thoughtfulness and expressions of love.
 - Gifts can be purchased, found, or made and the price of the gift is usually of little regard.
 - Small or large, gifts are appreciated when they are given as genuine tokens of love and give evidence of consideration.

Ways to Show Love through Gifts

- Putting thought into anniversary, birthday, and Christmas gifts.
- Finding opportunities for spontaneous, unexpected gifts
 - i.e. Flowers or favorite treat.
- Hiding a small gift or note for your spouse to find
- **NOTE:** Buying things for your spouse without showing interest in or spending time with him/her, will seem like you are trying to buy love.
 - Spouses with a Gifts love language feel loved because of the thoughtfulness the gifts reflect.

4. Acts of Service

- Jesus was a servant (*Matthew 20:26-28*). He provided us with clear illustrations of Acts of Service.
 - He humbly took the role of a servant and washed his disciples' dirty, calloused feet (*John 13:1-10*) out of love.
 - People with this love language feel loved when their spouse displays a servant attitude by their actions.
 - This includes acts done "on the spur of the moment" as well as planned time to help out.
 - Require various degrees of time and effort; the key is performing them out of love.

Expressing Love Through Acts of Service

- When your spouse requests a chore to be done, try to get it done before he or she has to repeat the request.
- Get up earlier to do one of your spouse's duties he/she normally does in the morning.
- Wash your spouse's car and fill it up with gas.
- Offer to run errands for your spouse.
- Take initiative to clean up a room or do some yard work.
- Work with your spouse on one of his/her regular tasks such as scrapbooking or working on the car.

5. Physical Touch

- Jesus understood the power of touch. He took time to hold the young children that were brought to him. Jesus "*put his hands upon them, and blessed them*" **Mark 10:16**
- Hugs, kisses, and other loving touches are appreciated by nearly everyone.
 - For someone with this love language, physical reminders are the most important messages of love.
 - Learn from your spouse what ways s/he appreciates Physical Touch.
 - For people who speak the Physical Touch love language, drawing close physically parallels drawing close emotionally.

Ways to show love through Physical Touch

- Making touch a part of your daily routine.
- Learning how to give back rubs or massages in a way your spouse enjoys.
- Putting your arm around your spouse.
- Holding hands often
 - while praying, walking together, or sitting by each other.
- Don't confuse with being sexual.
 - Most touches are simple reminders of love that do not lead to sexual intimacy.