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WAYS OF LOVE IN MARRIAGE

Be devoted (philostorge) to one another in brotherly love (philadelphia). Honour one another above yourselves. (Rom 12:10)

Dear friends, since God so loved (agape) us, we also ought to love (agape) one another. (1 John 4:11) How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers. (Song of Sol.4:10; 5:1)

I. ROMANTIC LOVE [*eros*] = mutual delight between a man and woman in the committed relationship of marriage. [Gen. 2:23; Song of Songs; Prov. 5:15ff.; 1 Cor. 6:19-7:5]

Reflection Questions: How can we daily fill our marriage with delight, emotionally and physically? What boundaries are necessary to protect the sanctity of each other's bodies? In what ways can we make a sustained effort to give joy to each other, rather than just selfishly focusing upon getting it? How can we direct our imaginations upon each other's beauty as God's great gift?

II. FRIENDSHIP LOVE [*philadelphia*] = a growing companionship of intimate communication, knowledge, and deep unity. Marriage is a "covenant of companionship." [Rom 12:10; 1 Thes 4:9; Heb 13:1; 1 Pet 1:22; 2 Pet 1:7]

Reflection Questions: Do we really know each other? Are we allowing ourselves to be known? How can we know better? How are we seeking to build our companionship? How can we do this more? What more can we do together that friends do? How can we build unity and not sow disunity?

III. FAMILY LOVE [*philostorge*] = familial belonging, affection, and loyalty. This type of love leads to security, refuge, and peace. [Rom 12:10; cf. Col. 3:15]

Reflection Questions: What can we do to make our relationship more of a "safe haven"? What things threaten the security of our relationship? How can we replace those things with comfort-building words and actions? Do each of us know that the other is "there for us," no matter what?

IV. GIVING AND FORGIVING LOVE [*agape*] = the choice to give for the greatest benefit of another, even at great cost, and even in the face of wrongs done. This kind of love is not based upon your feelings, but upon commitment. It is the core of biblical love. This kind of love especially brings the gospel into focus in your marriage. All love, including marital love, is modelled after God's love! [John 3:16; Eph. 5:25ff; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:7-12].

Reflection Questions: Does my partner's performance determine the degree of love I give to him or her? Do I offer love only as a reward for good behavior? Do I wait until I believe my mate has changed before I can love him? Do I try to improve my partner's behavior by withholding love? If the answer to any of those questions is "yes"... What must I change in order to love my mate in a right and biblical manner?

Part III. God's Heart for Unity: Fire Your Marriage with Love

FOUR KINDS OF LOVE

ROMANTIC LOVE

Mutual delight and attraction
(Song of Solomon; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

FRIENDSHIP LOVE

Companionship, mutuality, unity
(1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22)

FAMILY LOVE

Belonging, loyalty, security, peace
(Romans 12:10)

GIVING & FORGIVING LOVE

Self-sacrificial, generous, unmerited
Focuses upon the Gospel!
(John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 5:25; 1 John 4:7ff.)