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Becoming a Professional LOVER



A Weekly Devotional for
Learning to Love God's Way

DEDICATIONS

First, we dedicate this book to our children, their spouses, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, because we want them to have what we have, and more. Without you, we wouldn't be who we are today with a story to tell.

Then, we dedicate this book to all couples who want to make a lasting success of their relationship, extending beyond this present life; one that will enable us all to go home with Jesus—as a family—when He comes.

Lastly, we dedicate this book to our extended families and all of the people who have become family through love and friendship. We've struggled together and shared good times, strengthening each other and lifting each other up, and we love you.

A special “Thank you” to our daughter for her faithfulness and untiring effort in telling our story to the world.

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INTRODUCTION

For over 40 years, we were blessed with opportunities to share our knowledge and personal experiences of marriage with couples across the United States. During that time, we began using the phrase, “professional lover.”

The phrase elicited the most response from the men attending our seminars. They’d nod their heads and smile like, “Yeah, my man! He’s a *professional* lover.” It’s an idea that attracted the men because the phrase implies being skilled in romancing women, much like a “Cassanova.”

While that’s definitely a part of being a professional lover, in God’s eyes it’s a very small part. Much smaller when compared to the other facets of loving. And to become a professional lover, you have to be skilled in *all* of love’s facets; not just one or two.

Becoming a professional lover God’s way is not for the faint-hearted. It will take study, practice, and time.

Think about it: What did it take for you to become a professional in your career? For many of us, it took at least four years of college built on 12 years of schooling prior to college. That equals 16 years. Then many of us added one to four years of graduate school. That equals 17 to 20 years. Some did even more. And embedded within all of those years are thousands and thousands of hours of study and practice. What a commitment!

Becoming a professional lover will take the same kind of commitment to study, practice, and proficiency. And it will not happen in a few weeks or a few months. In fact, it really is a life-long education, but an exciting one. As you begin practicing God’s way of loving, its impact on others and yourself will result in rewards beyond your imagination.

As we share with you the process of becoming a professional lover, we're working on several assumptions. We assume that:

- You are *truly* interested in loving *God's* way;
- You understand that God's way *always runs counter* to man's way;
- You will guard against personal interpretation of scriptural passages by searching all related scriptures and contexts;
- You are fully able to cognitively process this information and rationally choose your behavior;
- You understand that there are exceptions to every generally-used description.

To get the most from this devotional, we suggest that you begin each study time with prayer. You'll need the power of the Holy Spirit to discern the truth behind the principles we offer and to make you *willing and able* to practice them.

We also suggest that you use a variety of study tools, among them: A dictionary, a few different bible translations—particularly the King James Version and Amplified Bible, and a Bible concordance. This will aid you in getting the most understanding and complete knowledge from what you read.

Finally, we suggest that you have an accountability partner. It can be your spouse, best friend, or someone else reading this book who's striving to love the way God loves. Holding yourself accountable to someone else will motivate you to practice what you read.

The Bible tells us that love has meaning; love has structure; and love has style. We aim to explore all of those

facets as we start you on your journey to becoming a professional lover, God's way.

**love \ˈlev\—satisfying the legitimate
human needs of another through
your own resources or by guiding one
into a direction where resources are found**

WEEK 1

Pattern your love after Christ and His church.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” Ephesians 5:25 & 22, KJV.

Often, people who sew use patterns; replications of the garment’s pieces. You don’t have to guess about how to do anything. Just pin the pattern to your fabric, cut it out, and follow the sewing instructions.

Likewise, you don’t have to guess about how to love. God left us a pattern—a replication of how He loves us, preserved in the Bible.

Ephesians 5 lays out the pattern of love for us. It begins by telling us how a “follower of God” thinks and behaves versus one who does not follow Him. Then, it shows how the individual’s godly behavior translates to the marriage union:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself”
Ephesians 5: 22-23, 25 & 28, KJV.

We purposefully inverted today’s text because many focus only on the submission of wives to husbands rather

than focusing equally on the pattern of love for both wives *and* husbands. Also, the thought of submission dredges up mental pictures of the misuse and abuse of male dominance that women often experience.

But if husbands love their wives the way *Christ* loves the church, wives will not hesitate to submit. Christ's love *never* involves abuse, misuse of power, selfishness, intolerance, injustice, or disrespect. In fact, He willingly gave up His life for His church.

Don't be blinded by the ways that humans distort God's love pattern to fit their own designs. When people do that, it shows that they don't have a true or complete understanding of or connection to God. And Satan loves that because it causes us to question or mistrust God.

In fact, Ephesians 5 tells us exactly what to do with people who distort God's pattern. It says don't associate with them or share with them. Instead, use your living by God's pattern as a way to expose and reprove their deception, and, hopefully, convict them to God's way (Amplified Bible).

Christ gave us a perfect love pattern because He was perfect through His Father's power. In order for imperfect people, like us, to follow Christ's pattern of love, we need His Father's—our Father's—power as well.

This week's homework:

Using an Amplified Bible, study Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3. Outline God's love pattern for *you* first, then for your spouse. Using the elements of love detailed in the stories of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11), describe what the love pattern should look like in day-to-day living.

Week 11

Respect each other's individual needs.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” Romans 12:10, KJV.

For many people, it's hard to distinguish between a need and a want. Societal values and norms have altered our ability to truly discern what is essential to our existence. But if we go back to God's word, it shows us how to tell the difference.

Let's consider the story of creation. God's ultimate desire was to create beings in His image. But man was not the first thing He created. He, first, created everything that man needed to survive and grow.

God created an appropriate environment to sustain man—light, air, water, land, and food. Then, God created an environment to give him a sense of responsibility and fulfillment—creatures of water and air and land animals.

Once God set up everything, *then* He created Adam and put him to work, to stimulate his creativity and thinking. While Adam was working, he noticed that every animal had another of its kind, but he, himself, didn't. When he mentioned it to God, God agreed that Adam needed a “help meet,” a companion to support him and share life with him. So He created Eve.

Finally, God created a specific time for Adam and Eve to rest from their everyday work and to focus solely on His blessings to—and His love for—them.

When you pay close attention to this account, you get a sense of what defines a need. A need is something that is

essential to life and growth. It's something that you can't do without. God's order of actions said, you can't do without things that sustain you physically; you can't do without things that sustain you mentally; you can't do without things that sustain you emotionally; and you can't do without things that sustain you spiritually. Otherwise, you will not grow or continue to exist.

Because we're individuals, our needs differ within these areas. That's where respect comes in.

Sin destroyed the perfect balance of need fulfillment that God masterfully designed. We all grew up in relationships, surroundings, and cultures that supplied our needs in varying degrees.

Because of this, you will have needs that others don't, and vice versa. And instead of using your lack of need in one area as a standard for someone else, God says you have the responsibility to do everything that you can to supply someone else's need. Whether you can personally fill it, or supply other resources that can.

That is the essence of God's love toward us and our love toward each other.

This week's homework:

Look up Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and ask your spouse how completely each one is being met. Ask whether there is anything you can do to help fulfill each need, and make notes of the answers. But remember to incorporate a biblical perspective in your discussion so that God's standards provide the correct context for behavior.

Week 33

Sex is for pleasure; as well as for intimacy and creating children.

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits”
Solomon 4:16, KJV.

During a seminar discussion we were having at a church, an older man stood up and very proudly said, “My wife and I have been married for 60 years, and never have I once seen the nakedness of her body!”

I couldn't help but respond, “Brother, you don't know what you've been missing.”

Clearly, that brother was not acquainted with today's text, nor even the entire book! He also must've never read Genesis 18:12 where Sarah said—in response to Jesus' proclamation that she would bear a child for Abraham—
“After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

Throughout the Bible, the sexual intimacy of a wife and husband is used as a metaphor for God's desired intimacy with His church. Why would God do that if sex were only designed for the purpose of creating children? And why would He include Song of Solomon as one of the Bible's inspired books?

Song of Solomon is full of insights on the pleasure of sex, along with lots of tips for how to make it such. For instance, the chapters tell how the wife planned all day for her and her husband's sexual retreat. She prepared her body

– bathed, lotioned, and was smelling sweet. The husband took her under the trees, and they were naked in the breeze. He stayed there all day and night. And they thought of old ways and new ways to make love.

When you study Song of Solomon and decode the poetic prose, that couple clearly pleased each other sexually. They couldn't get enough of each other! But, don't mistake that to mean that married couples can do anything sexually that both consent to.

In 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-8, God says to stay away from sexual immorality, each of us controlling our own body in a way that is *holy* and *honorable*. We should not abuse our bodies through lustful passions the way people do who don't know God or His will.

This clearly sets boundaries for what a Christian couple can do to enjoy sex. Knowing that God wants us to fix our minds on what is pure, noble, wholesome, and lovely (Philippians 4), we should not treat our bodies in any ways that dishonor God, the Creator of our bodies. God's Word should set our boundaries—not secular science, wisdom, or pop culture.

As such, over the years I developed a resolution for myself; there is so much that God has given me to enjoy with my wife that I would rather run the risk of doing less than I could, than run the risk of doing more than I should.

This week's homework:

To understand the importance of sex for pleasure and intimacy, use several Bible translations to study the Song of Solomon, along with other resources like Tommy Nelson's *Book of Romance* or Daniel Akin's *God on Sex*. Compare the sexual activities that are common in your marriage, to the standard set in the Bible.

Week 51

Recognize that love, marriage, sex, and family are God's idea—not man's.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” Proverbs 14:12, KJV.

When you look at the story of creation, particularly the part where God creates Eve, you'll notice something very interesting. First, let's put it into context.

God creates Adam and puts him to work. As Adam is naming the animals, he notices that each one is paired up. But he doesn't have anyone like himself, for himself. He mentions it to God. God says that Adam's right. *God* says, “It's not good for man to be alone; I will make a helpmeet for him” (Gen. 2:18). Then He puts Adam *to sleep* and creates Eve. When God presents Eve to Adam, *God* says, “A man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife” (Gen. 2:24). *He* also tells them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

Nowhere in this account do we ever read about Adam giving God suggestions on how to solve Adam's issue. God took Adam completely out of the equation while He made someone suitable for him. Then God gave them conditions for happiness: Stay together; resist the devil; and obey Me. This account suggests a couple of things: 1) It's God's responsibility to choose a mate for each of us; and 2) If we follow God's plan and commands, we'll be happy.

Well, Jo certainly followed #1. While she enjoyed dating and getting to know the guys she went out with, she asked God to choose her husband. This freed her up to

focus on developing herself as a woman and as a relationship partner. Once God put us together, we've both been striving for over 50 years to follow #2.

Yet, many people get their picture of happiness from the television, or news media, or social media. But if those pictures contradict what the Bible says, then your picture is coming from man, not God.

Man had nothing to do with creating the ideal. So why, then, are we so comfortable following what humans say about love, marriage, sex, and family instead of what God says? Why are we so comfortable altering God's design to suit our own?

It started with "that tree." God told Adam not to go near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam didn't know why God commanded that; but, God knew that the mixture of good and evil would destroy His ideal. Satan appealed to Eve's pride which caused her to doubt God and assume that she knew best. We still succumb to that today.

What we hear humans teach is often a mixture of good and evil, which always causes problems. Just as God's beautiful creation instantly changed when Adam and Eve sinned, the same happens today. When we mix a little human perspective with God's perspective, it taints the entire view. That's exactly what Satan wants.

This is why we've deliberately used a biblical view for sharing what makes a marriage successful. All we have to do is decide to follow it and repel the urge not to.

This week's homework:

Look back through the homework assignments you've completed over the year, and record the impact of following God's design vs. man's design for love, marriage, sex, and family.