

Build Love in Your Marriage

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[0:00] Well, we're studying Paul David Tripp's book, What Did You Expect?! And I think there's just three lessons left, one this morning and then the next two weeks.

! Those dynamics of confessing and forgiving.

The second was the daily agenda of growth and change, that marriage is something that we give ourselves to pulling the weeds of sin and planting the seeds of the virtues of Christ, daily commitment to growth and change.

And then third, that we saw last, was building a strong bond of trust, both being trustworthy ourselves and being willing to trust another.

Now, commitment number four is we will commit to building a relationship of love. And someone has said that love at first sight is easy to understand.

[1:20] It's when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle. And Tripp is concerned that married couples have learned to be satisfied.

Satisfied with something that falls way short of what God expects and wants our marriages to be. What God has designed in marriage.

That we're just, we're too good at just getting along. Just avoiding conflict. Just making do and settling for less than the best.

Tripp says the best marriages are made up of partners who refuse to settle for less. They just outright say, we're not settling. And are ever seeing their need for God's grace and working hard to change.

So, there's that faucet at home and it's dripping. And it's been dripping for, well, as long as you can remember. And rather than fixing it, you just learn to live with it.

[2:27] And so, that's what we do. And eventually we start to view dripping faucets as normal. Acceptable behavior for a faucet.

It's not as bad as other faucets. They're dripping twice a minute. And ours only drips once a minute. And we no longer view it as something that needs to be changed. We've learned to settle.

We've lost the vision of how faucets are intended to be. So, in our marriages we can easily settle for something less than the love that God wants us to have in our marriages.

So, that we're no longer praying for. We're no longer seeking after. We're no longer working to know more of that love of God in our marriages. So, God wants our marriages to sing.

You know the difference between an engine that just grinds along and one that sings? God wants our marriages to sing.

[3:30] Do you really believe that? Not just exist. Not just endure. Not just put up with and get through.

But sing. And so, he put the song of songs in our Bible. And he means for us to sing it. He means for our marriages to be that song.

A celebration of marital love that is not just getting by. A marriage is there celebrated.

A marriage worth singing about. Now, we saw in the service yesterday that the Lord has done a lot to rescue us and our marriages from the curse of sin that destroys every marriage.

He's done a lot to make our marriages sing. To give them what left to ourselves we wouldn't have.

And so, Tripp wants us to live up to our inheritance.

[4:35] Live up to this standard of true love that God wants in our marriage. So, that's the fourth commitment. We will commit to building a relationship of love.

Now, in the video, Tripp spent some time defining what often goes as a substitute for that love.

What we often settle with. He talked about the different kinds of attraction that we might have thought we loved that person. When really it was either physical or emotional or even some kind of

spiritual alignment that we believe the same things.

And we thought that it was love when in reality we were loving ourselves. Remember that? When he said that so much of love masquerades around. And it's really self-love if you strip it off.

That we love that person because they give us the life that we want and the things that we sought after. And so, he spent some time with that. We're not going to spend time there.

[5:41] And then he directed us to what he called cruciform love. Let's turn to 1 John chapter 4. Just to remind ourselves.

It's verses 10 and 11. 1 John chapter 4. And Tripp is concerned that we're missing the kind of love that makes a marriage sing.

Well, what kind of love is it? Well, it's the kind of love that God has. That we are to share in and enjoy in our marriages.

And we have it defined for us here in 1 John 4. 10. This is love. Remember, that's a definitive statement of definition. This is love.

Not that we love God, but that he loved us. And sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

[6:42] So, the way God has loved us, we ought to love one another. And that's true of this church, your brothers and sisters. But it's also true in that most intimate of relationships of marriage.

So, cruciform love is the title he gave it. Because it takes the shape, the form of Calvary. That's how God demonstrates his love for us.

Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. So, he gave this definition then of Calvary love. And he spent some time opening that up and explaining it.

We're not going to do that again. Let me just read it once more. Love is willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation, nor does it require that the person receiving it is deserving of it.

Alright? So, he talked about that kind of love. But in his book, he applies that. And says, now what will that look like in marriage? And that's the material that didn't get into the DVD.

[8:01] And that I want us to at least mull some of the lessons from. We're only going to have time to give maybe half of what he says. This is how it looks in marriage. This is how it acts in marriage.

So, we're looking at what cruciform love looks like in a marriage. Number one, cruciform love then is being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of your spouse without impatience or anger.

To have your life complicated. We all love ease, don't we? We all love for life to be without the bumps in the road. And cruciform love is being willing to have bumps in our road, to have difficulties in our day that come about because of our spouse.

Christ was willing to face all the complications and struggles and temptations and trials of life in a fallen world in order to meet our deepest need.

So, he sacrificed any love of ease that he enjoyed in heaven to come and do us good. Yet, we don't want life to be complicated by our spouse.

[9:14] We don't want to have our plan interrupted. We don't want to deal with problems that we haven't caused. And one of the great challenges of real love then is the willingness to abandon your demand for comfort and predictability and to say, I am willing to face this problem even as Christ was willing for me.

Well, that's the first point he gives. Secondly, cruciform love is actively fighting the temptation to be critical and judgmental toward your spouse while looking for ways to encourage and praise.

In other words, we've talked about if we truly love someone, we will be willing to confront them with the truth.

And that's part of love, isn't it? It's what Jesus does with us and the way that he loves us. But, if we're willingly seeking their good, then we'll not only be confronting when they are out of step with the truth, we'll also be encouraging and praising when what we see is in line with God's truth.

If two flawed people living together jump on every failure of love in each other's relationship, no matter how small that failure may be, it will be a marriage that's smothered with conflict and hurt.

[10:48] What happens when your child continually picks on a scab? Well, it takes a long time to heal, doesn't it? When if you left the scab alone, it would scab over and turn to fresh skin and on your child would go.

We can give each other little time to heal and we're picking at it again. Well, we may need to confront, but there are a host of times when we just need to leave that scab to heal. We've said enough. We need now to pray, encourage, and not to be picking at it. 1 Peter 4.8 says, Love covers over a multitude of sins.

Now, if that's true in the general statement, it's certainly true in our marriages, isn't it? That in marriage we sin against each other in many ways, and Peter's saying that real love will learn to cover over, not just a little, but a lot, a multitude of sins.

Jesus doesn't break a bruised reed. Jesus doesn't snuff out a smoldering wick. I don't see much change. I don't see much happening. Jesus blows upon that smoldering wick and feeds it and encourages it into a flame.

[12 : 16] He encourages even the smallest faith, wherever he saw it, wherever he came across it. And so, cruciform love will fight that temptation.

It's easy to be critical, isn't it? It's always easy to find fault. That's part of our depravity. Let's work, then, on encouraging and praising.

Thirdly, cruciform love resists the needless moments of conflict that come from pointing out and responding to minor offenses. Now, this goes along with what we've just seen.

In fact, I think I've covered that material in what I've just said. He made that a third point, that it resists that needless moment of conflict that comes out from just continually picking on minor offenses.

So, cruciform love needs to be patient. It doesn't delight in evil. Finding evil, Oh, I found something to get her with. I've got stuff now to condemn him with.

[13 : 21] No, love does not delight in evil, but delights in the truth. It delights not in finding evil, but in finding truth. We're still broken works in process, and so it's important that we have wisdom to know what needs to be lovingly addressed and what needs to be lovingly overlooked.

Either way, it should be done in love. Well, the next way that cruciform love shows itself is that it works through inevitable misunderstandings with patience, kindness, and grace.

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Why does Tripp call them inevitable misunderstandings?

Isn't that a bit pessimistic? Why does he say that? He's married. Probably because his wife told him that, right?

We've heard his wife straighten him out enough. Why is that? Why is it inevitable that we will have misunderstandings in our marriage? Jim?

[14 : 36] Because we're sinners. What is it about sin that causes us to misunderstand one another? Well, we're self-centered. We're one in our way.

We just don't understand. That's put real well, brother. I noticed Becky's not here today.

All right. That's good. Who else had something? Yeah, Jim. We've got to remember our enemy, Pastor. He's there.

He's a fan of the flame of causing problems. I think he's achieving. Did he destroy any good? He can talk to him on anything. That's good, Jim. We remember that Satan is the deceiver.

He's the king of darkness. And so rather than enjoying light coming to a subject, he'll put darkness over it and keep us from understanding one another.

[15 : 37] Work to, at least. Good. Dare? Okay. Okay.

Good. So men and women look at the same thing from different perspectives. He from his maleness and she from her femaleness.

I think with my male mind and my wife thinks with her female mind. That's the way God meant it to be. But we can get frustrated with that difference. And we can start fighting because of that difference.

And so with our backgrounds. Why else are they inevitable? Raj? The world is fighting for the devil. Why do you know the world is being that you're doing?

Hmm. Hmm. Good. So the world we live in is complicating things and building up our own live for self.

[16 : 46] And when you put two of those together, there's going to be misunderstandings. So sin puts, if not blinders on us, at least sunglasses on us so that we look everything through our perspective and we can begin to evaluate everything as we want to see it and as Jim said, as we want it to be.

It's sin that makes us poor listeners. Maybe she's explained to us over and over what she thinks. But we're not listening.

We're loading up our guns for the next round. And we're not good listeners because love wants to find out what our spouse says and means. But we can fail at that level.

So they're inevitable. So that's part of the way that he defines cruciform love. It works through these inevitable misunderstandings with patience, kindness, and grace.

Think of the way that Jesus dealt with the misunderstandings of his own disciples. He wasn't married, but I think that was the closest relationship that he had to marriage was that relationship with the twelve.

[18:00] And think how patiently he bore with their misunderstandings of his mission. They didn't have a clue.

So that when he says, I'm going up to Jerusalem and I'll be mistreated and crucified, and Peter berates him and rebukes him. Yes, Jesus rebuked him back, but he had to put up with that kind of stuff all along with these men.

And he was so patient with them. How many times did he correct them when they were self-seeking and wanting to be the greatest? How many times did he ask them, men, what were you talking about on the way?

And they all blushed because they were arguing about who was the greatest. How many times did he bring a child into their midst and say, kingdom of heaven is like a little child? To teach them humility.

To teach them that the greatest in God's kingdom is the one who is the greatest servant. And so over and over, with patience, with more patience, with kindness, Jesus dealt with those inevitable misunderstandings that took place in his little family of 12.

[19:10] And in it, we learn what cruciform love looks like in our marriages. And we need to be patient and kind and gracious as we work through those misunderstandings understandings to understanding one another correctly and then coming to a resolution.

Did I see a hand or a comment? Jim? And then John, Pastor, he knew one of the apostles was going to betray him. That's right.

The patience he had with Judas and the mistreatments that he received from him, even calling him friend as he was betrayed with a kiss. Well, the fifth lesson on cruciform love is that it keeps on loving even on your spouse's bad days.

and we could have probably put inevitable bad days because we all have them when we're not acting in the spirit as we ought but acting in the flesh.

Well, does love pack it up on those days and just say, well, if that's the kind of day he's having then I'm not going to love him. No, cruciform love doesn't do that.

[20:25] It keeps on loving even on their bad days when they're demanding, when they're critical, when they're unkind, when they're not holding up their end of the bargain, that's especially the time when cruciform love is needed because love doesn't require that those receiving it be deserving of it.

Remember, that's part of what cruciform love is. It's even given to the least deserving yes, Jesus gave it to us when we were enemies and we didn't like him.

In fact, Romans says we hated him and we would not submit to him or his ways. So, cruciform love refuses to return wrong when they've wronged you because that's one of the bad days.

They wrong you. That's part of how badness shows itself. They splash their sin on you and so they've wronged you in one way or another and cruciform love looks for ways to overcome evil with good.

Cruciform love doesn't say, okay, how can I get her back? It says, how can I love her back? How can I do good for the evil received?

[21:43] Remember, that's Romans 12, 21. Do not be overcome by the evil but overcome the evil with good. And what's the good in that context?

Do you remember? What kind of good are we to do to our enemy when they've done evil to us?

Turn the other cheek is one way he gives us in the Sermon on the Mount.

I'm thinking more in terms of the Romans 12. That's excellent. How do you remember he talks, so if your enemy is hungry, you what? You feed him.

If he's thirsty, give him to drink, that's practical stuff, isn't it? It's saying, what does she need? Let me get busy doing what she needs. What does he need? Let me get busy doing that. Meeting needs, practical needs, rather than being overcome with evil so that I do nothing to meet needs. I sit and stew, I have a pity party, and I return evil with silence and revenge and reprisal in some way.

[22:50] cruciform love rejects all thoughts of revenge as they inevitably come into our minds. Don't they? Isn't that often the first thing that comes to mind?

Is that sharp word to give back, that piercing look of the eye to give back, that sound of, we've got to learn to be rejecters.

It's like working in the factory. I did a whole bunch of it down at Breeman Castings, and you had these little chopsticks, and you put it under the Brunel machine, you pushed a button, and it came down, and it determined whether the metal was too hard or too soft.

And if it was okay, you put it in one basket, and if it was not okay, you put it in the other. And life is like that, isn't it?

Those first reactions to evil done, we've got to reject them. We throw them in the reject. Not going to act on that one. Lord, that was raunchy thought. That was bad.

[23:51] That was evil. And we reject it. And we instead say, now what's the good I can get busy doing? That's the way Jesus treated us. It's not natural to our sinful nature.

It's not natural to our flesh. It's not natural to our pride. And that only goes to show how supernatural cruciform love really is. We're not talking about just pretending to do things.

We're not talking about just merely going through motion. We're talking about a love that only God has. And I'll only have it if he gives it and works it in me.

All the wrongs our Savior received from men, and yet he did not revile in return. Instead, he did them the greatest of good, he offered up his life for us.

He prayed even as he was being crucified that the father would forgive them for they knew not what they were doing. Well, sixthly, cruciform love makes you a good student of your spouse.

[24:56] It makes you a good student of your spouse. In other words, it turns you outward. Sin curves you inward and you think all about what you, your physical, emotional, spiritual needs are, but cruciform love looks out as Jesus looked out and was filled with compassion at what he saw.

So, we be, this kind of love makes us good students of our spouse. We study them. They become the, the object of our study and we want to know what are her needs, what are emotional, physical, spiritual needs and we study how can we remove their burdens.

What kind of burdens is she bearing? What are the loads upon her that I could help carry? We study that. It's called thinking of the other person.

It's living with them in a way of understanding. It's called putting yourself in their shoes, walking a mile in their moccasins, whatever you want to call it. It's thinking, studying them, trying to understand their needs and then meeting them.

What are his responsibilities? What is his schedule? What are his burdens? What are his temptations? And then moving quickly to help, indeed finding joy and lifting burdens.

[26:24] Love doesn't wait around to be told what to do. It anticipates needs. So love not only reacts, but it initiates as Jesus loved.

didn't wait around until we loved him first, but he loved us when we were unlovely, and we now love because he first loved us.

Two more. Again, these are about eight out of sixteen in the book. Cruciform love is willing to invest time and energy to lovingly serve your spouse and do whatever is needed to make your marriage better.

In other words, he's saying cruciform love is costly. And I guess if there's anything that comes to mind when we speak about Calvary love, that surely leaps into the mind early, doesn't it?

That this kind of love we're talking about is costly. And so it's willing to invest what's important to us, time, money, energy.

[27:25] So it's costly, after all, it takes the form of a cross. And that's where people die, that's where sacrifice is made, and on the cross we need to die to ourselves.

So it involves saying no to some desire of self for ease, for comfort, for quiet, for downtime. It's sacrificing the way we want something, our preferences, thoughts, and plans for the good of the other.

But here's the clincher. Love pays the price, but doesn't spurn the cost, but willingly pays it. Love is willing to have less free time for myself in order that her needs might be met, that her evening might go better. I'm willing to have my evening go worse. Willing for her busy schedule to have one less thing to do. Even when busy or tired, which for many of you is every day, that's the way cruciform love acts.

[28:41] Because if we only love when we're not busy, if we only love when we're not tired, we'll never know what cruciform love was. As I read through the gospel account recently of those final days, or really the last day of Christ, I was struck with how tired he was.

It's the same man that sat at the well at noon, because he was already shot, tired, bone weary, at noon.

And he's been up all day, and he's been teaching his disciples, not for the second time, but for the umpteenth time, about arguing about who's the greatest.

And he's got the towel around him, and he's washing their feet. And then he's teaching them for hours, that great upper room discourses, those last words of the Savior with his men.

After all, he's preparing them to build this church that's going to fill the earth. And his time is short. And then he says, okay, men, let's go, it's time to pray.

[30:04] He takes them into Gethsemane, and they're snoring before he gets far in his prayer. He keeps praying, he comes back, finds him sleeping again, goes back, praise.

And it's not just, Lord, bless the night's rest. It's not, Lord, thank you for another day. No, he's wrestling with tomorrow. Something that caused him to be so agitated that his disciples had never seen him in that state before.

Troubled. Lord, if it's possible, if it's possible, take this cup from me. And he's sweating great drops of blood.

This is wrestling in prayer. And he's so weary, and he's so tired, that angels are sent to strengthen him, gird him up.

This is the Son of God who's become man, and feels our weakness, and he's tired. He's still, he's just, he's just getting started.

[31:11] Here comes Judas and the arresting mob, and there's that emotional scene, and Peter whacking off ears, and Jesus no, no, and teaching, and the pain of Judas lifting up his heel against him.

And now it's off to some kangaroo court. Didn't we hear you say this? didn't you say that? Falsely accusing him. And then all the physical stuff, and the beating, and the cursing, the slugging, and the dressing him up like a king, and crushing his head with a crown of thorns, and all through the night, sending him off to Herod.

And Herod sends him back dressed like a king, making fun of his claim. And Pilate and Herod become friends that day because they had a common joke with the king of the Jews.

He's brought out into public and mocked, and on and on this scene goes. And at nine o'clock they hoist him up. They make him carry his cross to the place.

He crumbles. He can't. They make Joseph carry it. And he's on the cross. and he's ministering to his mother.

[32:35] He's praying, God, forgive them. Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. He was tired. He was busy. And he was loving. And if we know anything of cruciform love, then we've got to know it on our tired days.

We've got to know it on our busy days. that stops and says, this is important to me. And I will give myself as much as it costs and as tired as I am.

That's the way my Savior was with me. Up all night long for me. And then to the horrible cross.

Cruciform love then is willing to invest time and energy even when we're tired and busy.

And lastly, it refuses to be self-focused and demanding. And Tripp spends some time talking about this whole entitlement mentality.

I'm done here with this. I think we'll just direct you to the book. But we can start to think that we deserve better treatment and we can start to think just as some people think the government owes me this and that and the other thing.

[33:49] We can start to feel that way toward our spouse. I deserve better than that. We need to remember that Jesus promises to meet all of our needs.

And we can call desires needs real easy just like people today. I need this and this and this and the government better give me this and this. That's not need.

And sometimes we can say in our own hearts and minds about our spouse, I need this, this, and this from you. If you don't give me this, this, and this, then I'm upset. But Jesus promises to meet all of our needs according to his riches and glory.

So if I don't have at the present time something that I think is a need, I need to redefine that word and say, no, I don't have what I want, but I have everything that I need because my Father knows what I need and he meets my needs.

And so we need to be careful about thinking that we're entitled to this and this and this. These are my needs. Well, not presently or you would have it.

[35:02] At least for right now, we can at least say this, if I don't have it right now, then I can't call it a need. It's a desire and I need to learn to submit my desires to the Lord.

And when I do, who am I submitting my desires to? I'm submitting my desires to the one who went to the cross to meet my greatest need. And he who did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also along with him freely give us all things that we need?

He really will. And so I can leave my, quote, needs at the foot of the cross and be assured that I have from Jesus everything that I need.

love. And if we've rightly understood cruciform love then, what does it do? It shows us, well, I don't have this kind of thing. I can't whip it up.

I can't produce it. Lord, I need it. And he, by his grace, knew that. And so he put his Holy Spirit in our hearts to work in us.

[36:08] What? What's the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned? Love. love. Cruciform love. God-like love. So that we might not just sit back and think, you know, what would it be like to have a marriage with real love?

No, but that we might experience it and know the joy of it and know what it is for a marriage to sing. Well, may the Lord help us then as we commit together to not settle for anything less than cruciform love.

We don't have that. We don't enjoy that. Well, we're not going to just settle. We're ever going to be pressing on. There's more ground to be taken, brothers and sisters. We're not going to settle.

But cry out to God. God, teach me. Teach me to love like this. Lord Jesus, come and help us.

Francis Schaeffer, back in 1976, I had the privilege of just visiting for a few weeks at LaBrie in Switzerland.

England and we loved to sit around and had time for question and answer and to just pick his mind with questions.

[37:20] This great theologian and philosopher. And the thing that struck me about him was some of the answers that he gave to all these big shots that were coming through with their philosophical and very deep questions.

Christians in this next century may make the biggest impact upon the world by living together happily with the same spouse all their lives.

I thought, that's simple, isn't it? I mean, boil it all down. How can we influence the world? What are we going to launch? What are we going to go out and do? And Schaeffer says, time out.

One man, one woman, for life, but not just enduring, enjoying, enjoying it.

love. That will leave an impression upon a world. That will wake up a world that doesn't know this kind of love and will provide a platform in which we can speak of the cruciform love of Christ at Calvary.

[38:39] Let's pray and ask him for help. Lord Jesus, thank you for what you've done for us. Thank you that we never need to look further for a definition.

an example of love. Thank you that we, your people, know what it is to have been loved perfectly. Fill us with your spirit and create more in our hearts that kind of love.

And yes, help us to put to death that part of self that resists and that will meet us, teach us what it is to be rejecting thoughts and words and attitudes as they launch and leap into our minds and hearts and teach us to cling to Christ and ever be looking to him.

Lord, this world needs to know you. It needs to see something more than what it has itself. And here you've given us a platform in which to show this cruciform love.

Oh, forgive us for the many ways that we've missed our very calling in marriage to be a mirror of this heavenly love. Oh, come and help us and make our marriages to be to your praise.
[39 : 53] We ask it with confidence in Christ our Savior. Amen. We're dismissed.