

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
The Husband in the Mirror – Best Friends and Lovers
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November 8, 2002

I answered the phone, “Hello, is Patsy Morley there?” “No, I’m sorry, she’s not here, but this is her husband and best friend – may I help you?” Silence...Silence. This morning I want to have us continue in this series on marriage, and really for want of a better title, I’m going to call this talk, “Best Friends and Lovers”. And what I want us to take a look at is what is it that she wants, how do we give it to her, and why should we want to - and so I’m going to have this talk from the book called, “The Four Loves” by C.S. Lewis. I’m going to give you a little book report, I guess. And then I am going to talk to you about what we will call romantic love and then we will spend a good deal of time talking about what is her best “deposit”, this referring to the emotional bank account.

Ephesians 5:28 – what is that she wants? Men, once a woman has heard this, this is what she wants. If your wife is a Christian lady, or a non-Christian lady, once she has heard that this is a possibility, she will not be satisfied with anything less than what we are about to read. Ephesians 5:28 – In this way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. Once your wife has heard this category open up, this is a very unusual category; marriage is the highest of human relationship. Nowhere else in the literature, nowhere else does it say the two shall become one flesh. Nowhere else! Marriage is the highest form of human relationship. And once a woman sees this sentence in the same way, “Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies”, that’s what she wants. “He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his body but he feeds and cares for it just as Christ does the church, all right? So if you want to know what your wife wants, what she wants is you. We talked last week about the idea of Agape love, or moral love – to love as duty, as responsibility, the role of a husband, it is ethical, agape love. And it is no surprise to any of us that our wives want more than “duty” love. I think Lewis does as good of a job as anybody, well, better than anybody, he identifies four kinds of love and we’ll talk about them in a little bit. I’m just going to read you a few sentences on each. If you want to read them for yourself, it’s called the four loves by C.S. Lewis, and it is an excellent read.

The first is affection – in which he talks about the kind of love that a parent has for a child or a child for a parent. The second kind is friendship. The third kind of love is Eros – this is what it means to be in love with somebody. And the fourth kind of love is charity. Now, those of you who have heard me teach on this subject before, friendship would be Phileo, Eros is physical, and Charity would be the agape, affection with the Greek word would be *storge*. You don’t often associate that particular kind of love with marriage. Now, with regard to affection, I’m just going to read you a few sentences from Lewis – I think you’ll find these interesting. With regard to affection, he points out, “Not all kisses between lovers are lovers kisses. So there is in a marriage a kind of affection that really is not because we’re in love with our wives, but there is this affectionate kind of love. With regard to friendship, he says, “Hence we picture lovers face to face, but friends, side by side, their eyes look ahead.” The ideas in friendship love – and you have friends that are not wives, so it’s not something that’s exclusive to marriage, yes? But, you also have marriages where the mates are not friends. So, to be friends is to share some truth in common. And you can read more about that if you want in Lewis. He says, “Eros will have naked bodies, friendship, naked personalities.” What Lewis calls Eros, he is kind of rolling up a lot of things that have to do with the marriage relationship. It’s interesting, he says this, “Sexuality may operate without Eros or as part of Eros. In other words, for Lewis, sexuality is not what marriage is all about. You can have sexual intimacy in marriage, and you can have sexuality outside of marriage without Eros. In other words, you can have sex, and not have this sense of being in love with the person. And most people have failed – all men have failed in that area – either in lust or in sexual immorality or adultery. Okay, then he goes on to say, “The times and places in which marriage depends on Eros are in a small minority. Most of our ancestors were married off in early youth to partners chosen by their parents on grounds that had nothing to do with Eros. And even today, in many cultures around the world, marriages are arranged, and incidentally, statistically, arranged marriages have a much higher likely hood of making it than our self-chosen marriages here in the United States. And then he says about sexual desire – the desire for sex, without Eros, without this sense of being in love with the person, what’s it – the thing in itself. Sexual desire without Eros just wants sex, basically. Eros wants the beloved. Now Eros makes a man really want, not a woman, but one particular

woman. In some mysterious but quite indisputable fashion, the lover desires the beloved herself, not the pleasure she can give. In other words, it's not sex that I want, I want you. That's Eros. That's what Eros is all about.

And then, with regard to charity, he says, "We begin at the real beginning with love as the divine energy." This primal love is what Lewis calls "Gift love". He talks about "gift love" and "need love". I realize this is a little dense – we are going to move this in the practical realm here in a minute. But, for those of you who can catch part of this, this is wonderful, wonderful stuff. Listen, in God, there is no hunger that needs to be filled. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation, it is essential. God, as creator of nature implants both in us – the ability to "gift" love, and the ability to "need" love. We need love, we need things, and we need love. The gift of love is a natural image of him. Now, I said that once your spouse has heard the idea, has the category in her mind that husbands should love their wives as their own bodies, this becomes her need love. This is her most profound need – she needs to have you love her in this way. How can you love your wife in that way? Well, when you are in love, when you are in this Eros state, there is nothing too great for you to give to your wife. You want to be her best friend, you want to be her lover, you want to give to her. I'm going to call this love romantic love. Now, romantic love – I want to talk to you about the emotional side of that, and I want to talk to you about the physical side of that.

How many great lovers do we have here in the audience this morning? If you are a great lover, raise your hand. Okay, we have a couple of great lovers. I'm sure we have more, and I am sure that you are too embarrassed to admit it in front of all of these other men. But, I want to talk to you – how many of you would like to have more sex, and great sex? (Laughter) How many of you think you have a wife who would like to have more time and conversation? All right, here we go! Here we go! You want more sex, and better sex, and she wants more time, and more conversation. Why is this? Why is this? Well, it is because your wife views sex the way she views everything else – it's a relationship. And you as the man, you view sex the way that you view everything else – it's a task! It's a mission – and so for you, sex is raw, it's sudden, it's fast, it's furious, it's over. It's something to be checked off on your "to do" list. You know, you make up your "to do" list in the morning, you know – go to work, stop by the grocery store on the way home, have sex, get ready for bed...It's an event, it's something you do, you are a man on a mission. And so, for your wife, it's a relationship – it's the result of many small kindnesses done all during the week. It's when you have loved her like you have loved your own body during the week. When you've given of yourself, when you've done little chores and little errands that are important to her, it's when you've touched her physically and non-sexual ways. It's when you've given her your undivided attention and listening to her all through the week that it opens up her heart emotionally, you fill her emotional bank account, and it releases her to make the decision to love you. You want sex as an instinct. She wants it as a relationship. For her it's a decision she makes. For you it's something that comes on you through arousal, it can be almost anything. For her, though, she is not aroused like a man is aroused for physical intimacy. She is aroused because she decides to. Because of the emotional love, when we love our wives like we love our own bodies. And so, you say to her, "Honey, let's make love, and then we'll talk about it!" And she says, "Oh no, no, no, no, no! Let's talk and drink deeply of each other and really learn to know each other in a better way, and then we'll make love to celebrate!" Who makes the first move? Who makes the first move? Who makes the first move, guys? You do! Why!?! Because you want sex! (Laughter) No, no! Because you are the spiritual leader of your wife! You have the responsibility biblically, to build into her life by loving her as you love your own body. And this releases your wife to respond to you with physical and sexual intimacy.

All right, now. This is the way the romantic love works: it consists of both emotional and physical love, and you release the physical. She needs to have you love her emotionally so she can love you physically. And you need to have her love you physically so that you can love her emotionally, and you are the leader, so you are the one who takes the initiative in this, and you love her like your own body. Maybe that's the big idea. Maybe it's just the text, huh? Husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. Now, author Gary Chapman came up with a very wonderful insight in his book "The Five Love Languages". If you haven't read that, I would encourage you to read it. And his insight is this – it's that we tend to love our wives the way that we want to be loved, and not the way that they want to be loved. For example, he talks about love languages, but you could also call them five different types of deposits.

And we'll get into these in a moment. For Patsy, her primary love language, or her best deposit, is service. So, Patsy is always, always, doing errands for me. She's always doing errands for everybody. She's taking people to chemotherapy; she's getting my shirts at the cleaner. One day, I said to Patsy, "I'm out of shirts", she said, "Well, I'll just run to the cleaners." I said, "Ahhh – that's okay, I'll just take a shirt out of the hamper, run an iron over it, and no one will ever know." And she said, "Oh, no, no, I don't mind, I'll run up to the cleaners!" I said, "Patsy, don't run up to the cleaners, I'll just iron the shirt" she said, "Oh, no, I really don't mind!" I said, "DON'T DO IT!" She loves serving. Because that's her best deposit – that's her love language, if you will. Me, my best deposit, if you really want to express your love for me, you need to spend a good deal of quality time with me. We need to spend some time walking along the beach, spending some time sitting and talking after dinner – just a chance to talk and to really bond at that level. And so, what I discovered with Chapman's insight here, is that we really love our mates the way that we want to be loved. At the twenty-three year mark of my marriage, I realized that for twenty-three years, I had loved Patsy the way I want to be loved. So, I had been virtually smothering her with time. On the other hand, for twenty three years, Patsy had loved me the way that she wants to be loved. I could care less about these errands! Well, I mean, they're nice, don't get me wrong. But I mean that's not how you love me! I mean, if you love me, you spend time with me! Get the picture? Your wife – if you want to love your wife like your own body, you have to understand how she wants to be loved, and love her that way. Not love her the way that you would like to be loved if you were in her shoes, because you are not in her shoes. She is who she is, and she has a best deposit. Now on your listeners outline this morning, I have eight of these, I am going to give them to you all right now, and then I am going to talk about a couple of them in the time that we have remaining. One potential best deposit is time. Do you spend quality time with your wife – possibly, do you date her? Secondly, conversation – Third, listening – Fourth is touch – Fifth is discerning – Encouraging, and then from Chapman's book, Gifts and Service.

So, conversation...do you engage your wife in meaningful conversation? When I talk about meaningful conversation, I'm talking about something below the surface of managing the daily life - down here in the deeply felt sorrows and joys. Oswald Chambers says the last sign of intimacy is to share secret joys. You know the things that are really the greatest delight in the life of you and your wife – do you share these deep and personal joys that you have? You'll find the same thing with sorrows, although sorrows are easier to share than these exquisite, highly personal joys. If you think about your greatest and most sublime joys, there is a chance you have never shared them with anyone. And if you've shared them with somebody besides your wife, you might want to think about how that fits into the nature of this relationship, "The two shall become one". Listening: Paul Tornier says that the two greatest fears that people have are the fear of receiving advice, and the fear of criticism. When you try to unburden yourself, and you've been thinking about a subject for months, you finally screw up the courage to mention this to someone, your wife, or she to you, and about three sentences into you trying to explain what's been happening to you, the other person jumps in and says, "Oh, oh, oh, yeah, let me tell you what you need to do". What happens? Something inside of you just withers, doesn't it? And you begin to withdraw. And if this happens over and over again, what happens? Real communication stops, and all of your life is lived above this waterline here. And then there's the fear of criticism. You're talking about your finances, and your wife says to you, "Well, I don't understand why you can't make more money. I mean, look at our neighbors. He's got a great job, he seems to be making money. You keep talking about how the 'big deal' is just around the corner, but why can't you make more money?" What happens? Something inside of you begins to shut down. Well, your wife is like this, too. So when you criticize her, or you give her unwanted advice at the most vulnerable moments when she's opened herself up to you, first of all, you are not loving her like you love your own body, because you'd never criticize yourself or advise yourself that way. But you also are killing her slowly and repetitively if you do this all of the time. So, when I began to first learn this, when I first read this in Paul Tornier in his book, *Understanding Each Other*, I decided to try this out on Patsy. And so, one night, after dinner, Patsy began to talk about a problem that had been troubling her for many months. And she spoke two or three sentences, and then she paused, and looked at me. Now why do you suppose she paused and looked at me? She knew from experience, this was the intuitively timed period from her experience that she knew that I would butt in, and interrupt, and tell her what she needed to do to fix the problem. Because as men we want to logic them to death, right? But I'd been learning this principle of listening, and so, I just returned her gaze as though to say, "You know, this is the most fascinating thing I've heard in a long time. Won't you please continue?" And as you might expect there was a puzzled look on her face, but after a few moments, she continued on, and spoke for a paragraph or so.

And then, once again, she paused, because she knew from intuition and experience that that was the about the length of time that I was going to let her talk before I would but in and tell her the next thing she needed to do. But again, I just continued to look into her face, as if to say, there is no place that I would rather be right now than right here, listening to you, loving you like I love my own body. And after a moment, she began to speak again, and we went back and forth like this for a period of time until finally, she got it all out. As far as I know that's the first time that I'd ever intentionally let her get it all out. I mean, I'm sure accidentally in previous occasions I had some time per chance allowed her to get it all out, but that was the first time in our entire marriage that I had intentionally let her get the whole thing out. And you want to know what? She was healed! She was healed of the emotional pain that had been building up in her heart for months, because I made this deposit into her emotional bank account by listening to her. This could be one of the best deposits for your wife, you'll have to decide. We all should make all of these deposits into our wife's bank account, but what Chapin would tell us is that they also have a "best" deposit, and it's important to know what that is, and also to know what our own is. Touch: Physical Touch. You know, when you touch somebody, or when you are touched by somebody, do you notice what happens, just physiologically, emotionally, in your mind, in your spirit? Something happens, doesn't it? There is an exchange that takes place. When Jesus was touched, power went out from him. And that's what happens when you touch somebody, something physically happens. It's like connecting a live battery to a dead battery sometimes. Not necessarily a dead battery, but certainly there is a flow, an exchange of energy that takes place, and so, for a lot of our wives, their best deposit, and certainly a needed deposit for all women, is just non-sexual touching: Little hugs, little pats, little squeezes, holding hands when you walk through the mall. Sitting close enough together on the sofa so that you are physically touching each other, and as I said before, for years, whenever I walked by Patsy, I'd just reach over and gently touch the top of her head, and then walk on. (Of course, she has quite a bit more hair than you do, Jim...) Discerning: Can you tell when something is bothering your wife? Can you tell, and do you care? Gifts: Do you remember special dates and occasions and commemorate them with little cards and gifts? And then, Service: Helping with household chores, errands. Once I learned that my wife's primary love language, that her best deposit is service, I began to recall how over the years, she had asked me to do these three things this week, and when would I do them? I would always do them next week. Or, to be honest, sometimes never, because I wasn't loving her as I loved my own body.

So, the question this morning is: What does she want? She wants you to love her like your own body. And how do you do that? You do that by finding out what her best deposit is, and then you build that into her life. And why should you want to do that? We love because he first loved us – It's not that we loved him, it's that he loved us and gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is filled with gift love, and he has given us this responsibility to make gift love deposits into the need love of our own wives. Husbands, get out of here! Go on! Get out of here! Leave! Go love your wife as your own body. Let's pray.

Father, what a privilege it is to have a wife who is a best friend, and a lover. What a unique category you have given us: That there is a relationship where the two can become one. Lord, I pray that you would help each of us to ponder anew the simple truth that we ought to love our wives like we love our own bodies, and that we would discover what it is that they need that we can give to them, and that we would make those deposits into their lives. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.