

How To Attain a Godly Marriage - Part 6

Love Never Fails

Many of us have read the portion of 1 Corinthians 13:8 that says "*Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end].*" But how many of us know how to implement love so that it never fails? And love never fails at what?

Love never fails to impact any situation wherein we allow love to flow. When we get stuck in a relationship, or find ourselves in an argument that is going nowhere, or our spouse has just hurt us and we don't know how to respond – displaying love always improves the situation.

Love must permeate everything we do. The R.A.D.I.C.A.L. principles we have discussed so far in this series (relationships, attitudes, disciplines, inspired living, clean heart, abundant fruit, and love) are all held together by love.

Picture yourself building a brick wall. The initial brick you lay is your relationship with Jesus Christ. The other bricks represent the biblical principles we've discussed, plus others. But what holds the wall together? Love. It is our love that is the mortar holding these principles in relationship to each other. Without love, our brick wall falls apart (as does our life).

This picture is supported by Scripture. The Bible tells us at Colossians 3:14: "*And above all these [put on] love {and} enfold yourselves with the bond of perfectness [which binds everything together completely in ideal harmony].*"

In any marital relationship there are times when one spouse gets hurt by the other. How we *immediately* respond will set the stage for the growth of the intimacy in the relationship. We are told at 1 Peter 4:8, "*Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others.]*" I always thought this verse was talking about how God forgives my sins because of His great love for me. But I've come to realize that when I react with love instead of hurling accusations at the one who hurt me (sinned against me), then immediately I am at peace. By doing this Satan doesn't have a foothold wherein he can influence me to rehash the hurtful event and let bitterness develop.

However, if we are repeatedly hurt by our spouse because his or her action is sinful, then we must confront our spouse about the ungodly behavior. A friend does not allow another friend to continue committing sin. The person must be confronted and encouraged to change. How we do this makes all the difference in our ability to make the confrontation. Instead of just pointing out the sinful behavior, we also need to point out how the person should act or react. Sometimes the other person doesn't know how to respond differently. Our suggestion will help the transition to be easier. Proverbs 25:11: "*A word fitly spoken and in due season is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*"

God's Love Flowing Through Us

You can't give away what you don't have. But even if you have a little revelation of God's love in you, then you can, and should, share it with others. Once we become a Christian we have the Holy Spirit living inside us. The Holy Spirit is part of the trinity of God (God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Therefore, we do have all of God's love sitting inside us since God is love. We don't need to ask God for more of His love, but that we will learn how to manifest that love through active faith.

Knowing that God's love is already living inside us takes away our apprehension of whether we're good enough to receive God's love. This is a major shift in our thinking. Instead of trying to be a good person so God will love us, we can focus on knowing that God's love is already inside us and ask God to help us tap into that love.

Are you focused on learning techniques and tools on how to love others or on how to release God's love already inside you? There is a big difference. We can learn certain actions or words to help us relate to others, but that doesn't guarantee God's love will be released through us. Certain things in our life stop the flow of God's love. These include anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, fear, pride, self-centeredness, habitual sin, and unbelief. However, once we receive a revelation of the depths and height of God's love, we begin to deal with these things and God's love flows freely from us.

Many teach a twist on this doctrine. They say you can't love someone else until you love yourself. Although they say you can't give away what you don't have, they're talking about loving yourself first, versus having a revelation of God's love for you. A couple of questions to consider when looking at this viewpoint is, "How much do I have to love myself before I'll be able to love others?" and "When will I know that I've reached that point?" No definite answers are available!

The problem with this faulty doctrine is that a person with low self-esteem will stay stuck in a rut because the only way to raise our self-esteem is to reach out and love and serve others. We raise our level of confidence in who we are "in Christ" as a by-product of our actions of loving others with God's love, and serving them through utilizing our passion in life. When we get ourselves involved in a project bigger than "me, myself, and I" our outlook on life and ourselves takes a drastic change for the better.

How To Receive a Revelation of God's Love

What do you focus on? Do you focus on *not* doing something, or on what you *don't* have in your life, or on all the negative stuff in your life you want to get rid of? Are you trying to shovel all the darkness out of your life to let some light in? Are you focused on what the devil is doing to you or how he is deceiving you? Do you spend more time on the above than you do learning about who Jesus Christ is, soaking in His presence and then going out and doing what He tells you to do?

Imagine yourself in a dark room. How do you get rid of the darkness? By turning on the light. You flip the switch and instantly the darkness is gone. You didn't have to learn everything there is about darkness or learn how to get it out of the room. You just simply flipped the switch and the darkness disappeared.

To get rid of the darkness in your life, all you have to do is turn on the light! Jesus Christ said, "*I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the Light which is Life*" (John 8:12). We spend too much effort and time examining the darkness in our life and trying to figure out how it got there. Then we go through a phase of rebuking Satan. Then we finally realize that if we focus on drawing close to God and gaining knowledge and understanding of who He is, then the darkness flees!

Jesus explained this contrast of darkness and light and how it operates in the world:

"The [basis of the] judgment (indictment, the test by which men are judged, the ground for the sentence) lies in this: the Light has come into the world, and people have loved the darkness rather than {and} more than the Light, for their works (deeds) were evil. For every wrongdoer hates (loathes, detests) the Light, and will not come out into the Light {but} shrinks from it, lest his works (his deeds, his activities, his conduct) be exposed {and} reproved. But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him]. " John 3:19-21

We turn on the Light in our life every time we obey God. We put action to our beliefs, despite how we think or feel about our worthiness to accomplish the task God sets before us. When we do so, God moves and provides, and we are amazed at how much He loves us that He would work through us.

We stand in awe that God gives us a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance, etc., etc. He never gives up on us. He is always faithful to us. It's time to begin to recognize how good God is and how well He treats us and blesses us.

When we begin to see how God treats us because of His love for us, we will begin to treat others the same way. We won't focus on the little things that irritate us. We'll be quick to forgive and forget. We'll recognize that God doesn't continually point out our faults and make us feel bad because we're not perfect. This frees us to treat others with this same attitude.

When you receive a revelation of God's love for you, you'll no longer care what others think about you. You won't be codependent any more (looking to others to give you your self worth). You will be so full of God's love that you will instantly forgive others when they hurt you and you will keep on doing what God has shown you to do.