**The Facet of the Capacity to Love, No. 3 – BD15-01**

We are looking at the techniques for a Christian to become a mature believer. We are now engaged in the study of the fourth facet of the pentagon our souls, and that is the capacity to love. To love God, to love your opposite particular man or woman, and to your friends. Now all of this is based upon Bible doctrine. That’s the foundation of the pentagon. Bible doctrine which we have learned and which we have exercised positive volition toward so that we have received it in a permanent usable form residing in the compartments of our human spirit.

One of our senior girls came to me this week and told me that she entered a class in high school and the teacher said I want all of you to write a paper on love. So she reached for her notebook where she has her church notes. She just happened to have them right there. She opened it to the last two Sundays where we have been talking about the capacity to love. She said everybody else in the class wrote a paper that dealt with love on an emotional basis. Love as an emotional expression.

When they came around to reading her paper, she had written a paper on love that presented the biblical meaning of the Greek words for love relative to being a mental attitude concept. She said the teacher read this and just raved. She said, “This is wonderful. Isn’t this wonderful? This is tremendous.” And our high school girl was just broken up about this, because she isn’t all that much to begin with. And here she’s writing a paper on love and making a big hit in the classroom. And then she started to leave, and I said, “Hey what kind of grade did you get?” And she said, “I got an A+.” And she walked off laughing…

She has learned something about love, and it was interesting that when she sat in a high school classroom, everybody in the place, the minute love was mentioned, thought about the emotional bit. Here’s a girl that says, “Wait a minute.” God says love is something different, and He’s the only one that knows. God is love. It’s His quality to begin with. And anything we have in the way of love we get from Him. God says this is a mental esteem sacrificial seeking the welfare of the object of your affection.

Well it is no wonder her paper made quite a hit, and it was worth an A+, because she had some Bible doctrine orientation that gave her an exactly right slant on the quality of love that nobody else in that class apparently shared. And therefore you had a whole class of high school kids who were totally incapable of even discussion the subject of love, let alone knowing what it’s all about. And they’re the people who are going to go out and get married and have families and be leaders in society.

This is a very strategic facet of maturity. It is a great thing that the Word of God informs us on this subject because it is not natural to man to have this kind of love. The Greek words were “agapao” which referred to mental esteem, free of ill will, sacrificially seeking the welfare of the object of our love. There is another Greek word “phileo” used in the New Testament which speaks of emotional attachment. It’s an unreasoning emotional expression. But when God says, “Love one another” as believers, He’s talking about our mental esteem. When He says, “Love your enemies,” He’s not telling you to have an emotional attachment for somebody that you couldn’t likely have an emotional attachment on the field of combat. But He is telling you to have no mental ill will toward the individual.

Love in the biblical sense is not natural to man. It is something we learn. Now when our soul goes negative to sound doctrine, we become calloused, we found, to the plan of God. And when we are calloused to the plan of God, we destroy our capacity to love in any of the three categories. Callouses on the facets of our soul cause our physical eyes to misinterpret what we see. Our whole being is disoriented as we saw from the Jewish people. That even as they stood right realizing they made a mistake not to go into Kadeshbarnea, and they repented, the confessed, they were back in fellowship, and then the first thing they did was made a wrong decision. They said, “We should have gone in. We’re going to go.” And Moses said, “Don’t go. God is not with you.” And they went anyhow. The Bible says they were killed and they were panicked.

How could that be? Well because of this long span of time in which they had gone negative toward God, their year of training in the wilderness, and the resistance of God’s demonstration of His truth and of His care, the result was that the callouses were so built up that they were totally incapable of responding. Their minds were just insensitive. Their emotions were insensitive. Their wills were insensitive. And all that they were taking in as a result of their “mataiotes,” as a result of their emptiness, their spiritual vacuum was the mind of Satan, their human viewpoint, their lack of any capacities to express toward God in faith rest or in love, or in prayer. They were totally disoriented. Consequently, even after they confessed, the callouses were still there. That’s why it’s a very very grievous thing to go along and be indifferent or resistant to sound doctrine because you put another layer and another layer and another layer. These people, though they were in fellowship, still found themselves resisting the very thing that God wanted them to do.

The callouses work against you while you’re trying to get them peeled off and get back oriented to God. One lady came to me last Sunday morning after the service and said, “I have a good illustration of what you’re talking about. I have a very bad corn on my foot” (which is kind of a super duper callous, you know). She said I went to the doctor and the doctor said, “The trouble is the shoes you’re wearing. Here’s a type of sandal-like shoe. You can wear that shoe and throw the others away.” She said, “Throw the others away? I can’t throw all my shoes away. I have all kinds of shoes—colors and shapes, and I can’t do that.” She said, “There was my problem. Because I didn’t want to remove the thing that was making the callous, my shoes, I still have my corn.”

When you don’t want to give up the thing that’s causing your callous which is your negative volition, you’re going to keep it, and you’re going to keep building it up and building it up and building it up. So some of you are going to have to start throwing away your shoes, your spiritual shoes that are causing your spiritual callouses or this condition will continue. And you will come to the point where you will be just totally disoriented to the Word of God and people will sometimes be surprised because you may be a Christian who has been around church for a long time. They’ll be completely surprised when they see you moving in a certain direction. And here you are. We expect a good deal from you and yet there are callouses on your soul that are working against you and against you and against you.

Now we’re going to view the expressions of biblical love in these particular three directions that we’ve been talking about. First of all, love toward God. Abraham in the Old Testament is an excellent example of the progression of love toward God. Abraham begins with minimum love for God. Love toward God in this agape sense is not a natural quality. At 75 years of age, Abraham is called out of an idol-worshipping city of Ur of the Chaldees to go to a new land that he would be given. He is promised great personal and national prominence with great blessing (Genesis 12:1-4).

So Abraham leaves Ur. He takes his father. He takes his wife, his nephew, his servants, and his possessions (Genesis 11:31 – 12:5). God’s love provided a perfect special plan for Abraham’s life. This plan was complete and it was personalized. This plan included understanding concerning salvation. God gave him the gospel and God gave him salvation (Galatians 3:8-9). Now God explained all this. This was great. Here was this man out of an idol-worshipping background, a magnificent city, but idolaters to the core, and God explains to him the gospel and salvation. He gave him divine protection and He gave him great personal prosperity (Genesis 12:7, 13:2, 14-16, 17). He gave him a great posterity. He promised that He would have descendants that would number as the sands on the seashore and the stars in the sky (Genesis 12:2, 13:16). He gave him inner happiness and certain peace (Genesis 15:1). And best of all, from the point of view of Abraham and Sarah, he promised him a son and an heir (Genesis 17:15-16). There was no doubt that God loved Abraham, and it was amply demonstrated.

On the other hand, there was something else when it came to the love of Abraham for God. Our love for God has to be cultivated. It is something that has to grow. We’re talking about that “agape” type of love. And God’s love for us, we’re told, draws us because of His love exercised toward us. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” The more we know about God, the more we love Him. And the way we know about God is through doctrine.

So love for God is dependent upon how much you know about God. How much you know about how he works. How much you know about His promises that you can claim. How much you know about prophecies so you know where the world is moving so that you do not engage in foolish useless activities that are countering to the program of God. The more we know about God, the more we esteem Him and therefore love Him.

Abraham began at this level—minimal love for God. This was evidenced in several ways. God said, “I want you to leave your family and get out of Ur of the Chaldees.” Well he loved God enough to leave this city, but he did not live Him enough to leave his family. He left his father’s house but he did not break the family ties. He put love of family before love of God. The divine principal was clearly declared by the Lord Jesus which was behind what God was saying to Abraham. Matthew 10:37 says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

So God had to teach Abraham that love for God comes before all other family ties. He proceeded to teach Abraham this by first of all removing his father Terah (Genesis 11:32). Then he caused trouble between his nephew Lot—the herdsmen of Lot and his own herdsmen, which necessitated their separating. So Lot left (Genesis 13:8-11).

Then there was the trouble over the foolish move of bringing Hagar into the family as a secondary wife for Abraham, literally a concubine, in order to produce an heir on their own, thinking that they had to help God fulfill His promise. And God removed Hagar and her son Ishmael and sent them away (Genesis 21:9-14). So that God removed this problem for Abraham and taught him to love God more than family.

The result was that Abraham learned, and he moved up to a second stage which was a medium of love for God. Things had moved upward. Things had improved. He had developed to the point where Genesis 17:20-21 tells us that he fully accepted that God’s promises would be fulfilled through Isaac alone. Now that was improvement. He had moved up in his love for God that he was going to look to God to fulfill through this son. And He was moving toward what we’re talking about here—building a spiritual structure in your soul. That’s what Abraham was doing. Now he could love God a good deal more than he could at first.

Because he had moved to the point where he knew God’s essence, he was able to appeal for the believers that might be in Sodom and Gomorrah when God said, “I’m going to destroy the city” (Genesis 18: 20-23). He knew that God was a god of justice. That God is always fair. He knew this because he knew the essence of God. He had developed that part in his doctrinal understanding, and he appealed to God for those people. Well only Lot and his two daughters were saved, but God responded to what he was in response to Abraham’s appeal.

At Gerar, God’s grace was demonstrated to Abraham and he learned a little more about God. Remember that when they came to Gerar, Abraham was afraid of King Abimelech. This was Abimelech I (the first). He was afraid that Abimelech would murder him in order to take Sarah into his harem. So what he did was agreed with Sarah that they would say that she is his sister rather than his wife so that he would not be on the king’s death list.

In Genesis 20:2, Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. Well it saved Abraham’s life, but he put his wife woman in the wrong position, in a bad position, because the king proceeded to take her into the harem. God intervened however and the king discovered the truth. Now this was a half-truth. He didn’t exactly lie. In Genesis 20:12, Abraham says, “And yet indeed she is my sister. She is the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.” She was his half-sister. So he was kind of playing on words when he said he wasn’t exactly telling a lie when he said, “She is my sister.”

But Abimelech discovered the fraud and he was horrified at what Abraham had done. Abraham should have had a relaxed mental attitude and should have had enough love for God to commit this problem to Him to protect them against Abimelech. But he did not. Yet God in grace showed mercy, protected Abraham and Sarah, and forgave Abimelech.

This moved Abraham in time up to a third stage where we are all interested in coming to, and that is where he is in maximum love for God. Isaac was born. The family’s joy is complete (Genesis 21:1-8). And then God speaks to Abraham, and He gives him a fantastic direction. He said, “I want you to take the boy Isaac. I want you to go up Mount Moriah. I want you to build an altar. I want you to lay out this teenage on this altar. I want you to take a knife, kill him, and burn him in sacrifice.”

Now can you imagine what would have happened had God given Abraham instructions like that back here at minimum stage of his love for God? What kind of a person would it take now to get a direction like that, to respond to it? You really have to be in love with God to make a response to something like that.

Here’s what Abraham did. He obeyed unquestioningly. There was no bargaining on his part. There was no delaying tactics this time like he was at minimum stage and God said, “Get out and leave your family.” In Genesis 22:3-4 when young Isaac says, “Father, we’ve got the wood and we’ve got the matches, so to speak, but we don’t have any lamb.” He gave a confident answer to the boy, “God’s going to provide” (Genesis 22:7-8).

There was no indication that Abraham resented God. He did not pity Isaac. He did not say, “This beautiful young boy. What a shame to take his life. There was no pity for Isaac. He didn’t feel guilty, and he didn’t wonder what he was going to say to Sarah when he got home without the boy either. He just proceeded up the mountain, and left the servants behind at a certain point and proceeded to the privacy of the sacrifice because he was under maximum love for God.

Do you know what was going on in Abraham’s mind? I’ll tell you. Hebrews 11:19 says of Abraham on this occasion, “Accounting that God was able to raise him (Isaac) up even from the dead from which also he received him in a figure.” Because Abraham had maximum love for God, Abraham said in his own heart, “I can go up this mountain. I can offer this boy in sacrifice. And when I’m all through, God’s going to raise him back to life, and we’re going to walk back down this mountain. And God’s purposes, whatever they may have been will have been fulfilled.” Because he knew that God said, “Abraham, not through Ishmael, but through Isaac the Jewish people will develop. They will become the leading nation of the world. They will become the apple of my eye, through Isaac.” And he believed it, and he proceeded on that basis.

How could he do this? Only because he had a maximum love for God. You remember that God stepped in. He stopped the sacrifice (Genesis 22:15-18), and the result of this maximum love for God was rewarded in James 2:23. It tells us that Abraham was called “the friend of God.” And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, ‘Abraham believed God.’” There’s our word for positive volition to the Word of God. “… and it was imputed unto him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. You and I are God’s friends when we come to this maximum position of love for Him. And you cannot come to this position of love for Him without the Word of God.

**Proof in Obedience**

So what’s the proof that you have arrived at maximum love for God? The proof that you have come to this position is obedience to the Word of God. 2 John 6 says, “And this is love (“agape”): That we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye shall walk in it.” And when we obey his Word, obey His commandments, we have evidence that we have come to a maximum position of love for God. The result will be that we give Him first place in our lives.

Colossians 1:18 says, “That in all things He might have the preeminence.” When you give God the number one spot, you have indication that you have come to maximum love. That is love to God. Abraham is the example.

Now love to the opposite sex, to your particular man or woman, is another expression of developing maturity in love. And again this is the same kind of love. This is this mental attitude esteem position. Now there’s a lot to be said on this. The tapes that you see displayed on the table this morning cover it in considerable detail, and if you haven’t listened to those you’re at a disadvantage, and I’d suggest you get hold of them. There is a great deal that the Bible has to say about marital love, but it comes under this same category of mental attitude outlook.

A husband is told to love his wife, and it is interesting that a wife is never told to love her husband. If you don’t understand that principal, you’re already in trouble in marriage. A husband is to have a mental attitude free of ill will toward his wife, and a wife is told to what? Respect her husband. To respond to him. And respect is drawn out because he has mental attitude love toward her. If he fails in that, she cannot respond. She has nothing to respond to. And she cannot respect him, no matter what he is, who he is, or what he does. Always there is respect when that mental attitude love is there. And that finds expression in this emotional “phileo” quality as well.

The experience of love. It’s easy to fall in love. And right back out of it again. We have quite a beautiful testimonial here this morning on people who have fallen madly in love and fallen madly out of love with the same person. It would probably make the whole service more interesting to a lot of us, but you can supply your own experiences with that. You may move in a dream world of misconceptions about a person. People look at you and you say, “Listen friend. If you fall in love with somebody, that is not a signal that you have met the person you should marry.”

And yet those high school kids who wrote that paper on love, this would be the first concept they would have. If you were to ask them, “How do you decide to marry somebody?” They would say, “Well, I’ve fallen in love with them.” Where did you get that idea? Human viewpoint. Falling in love is not the signal that that’s the person to marry. Love at first sight is no reliable guide. The person you’re taken up with at first may be a person who is most unsuitable and a real misery for you in marriage. It takes a man and a woman with some maturity to know true love, and therefore it is not for kids.

I had another 19-year-old teenage girl this past week who was shocked when I said I wouldn’t marry teenagers, including 19-year-olds, because she thought she was so mature. She doesn’t have a father (in the picture). That’s part of the problem. She has a younger brother while talking over problems of the brother, in his life, who is a teenager, and the mother said, “We don’t have a father (in the home) so I treat him as the man of the house.” I said, “I think that’s your mistake. Until he’s ready to be somebody’s husband, he isn’t ready to be anybody’s man. And he ain’t ready to be anybody’s husband. He isn’t ready to be the man of anybody’s house.” It takes some maturity to play the role of marriage, and falling in love is not the clue. Love with the opposite sex is an exclusive thing. It’s not a series of experiments, so don’t push things beyond control.

There is a pattern for true love between men and women. We can summarize it just briefly this morning. Adam had no right mate so God made a woman. When God brought this woman to him, he recognized her as his particular woman (Genesis 2:23). The purpose of marital love is laid out for us in the Word of God. It is fellowship for man’s soul. Genesis 2:18 tells us that they fit one another. She was a helper who was fit for him, and that means that all facets of their soul coordinated. Her mind fit his. Her will fit his. Her emotions fit his.

What the women’s lib is resisting is the idea that a woman should fit a man because this puts her in the position of subjection and him in the position of authority. There’s nothing more monstrous and ridiculous and idiotic than the women’s lib, and there is no greater misery to be brought into a woman’s life because this is bad doctrine. This violates every principal by which God has made men and women. And yet it is good human viewpoint. God says, “I make two people who fit each other perfectly, and I bring you together. The man to fulfill the woman’s soul and then her body (Genesis 3:16b, Ephesians 5:22-23). When he does this for her, she becomes his glory (1 Corinthians 11:7).

The purpose of marital love is fellowship for fulfillment of soul and body, for the establishment of family (Genesis 1:28)—the home and family, setting the pattern for stable society, and sex has an ennobling factor only within marriage. Otherwise it has a degrading factor. God has prepared a marriage partner for you. God will bring you together without your hustling around looking for that person, and when you meet, you will recognize that you have met your beloved (Song of Solomon 5:6). Only ignorance of the Word views marriage as some kind of a trial situation.

The basic requirements for a happy marriage: If you listen to the tapes, you will find 24 specific guidelines. And we tell you on the tapes that if you don’t like any of these, it is because you yourself fall short in that particular guideline, and that’s why you’re willing to settle for less. I’ve had any number of people to say, “Oh, you just want us to marry somebody who’s just perfect.” And I say, “That’s right. Somebody who is just perfect for you.” And if you’re willing to marry somebody who doesn’t meet one of these guidelines, it’s because you yourself are a failure in that guideline so you’re willing to settle for less.

But there are some basic requirements for a happy marriage. One of them is that you do not marry an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14). God says you are not to yoke animals who are unsuited to one another together. An ox and a donkey never make a good team because they’re too different in too many ways. You have priorities and values and standards that are so varied between believers and unbelievers that the conflicts are inevitable. You must have a compatibility and a common interest. Amos 3:3 says, “How can two walk together except they be agreed?”

So you don’t marry an unbeliever if you are a Christian, and you don’t marry somebody who’s beneath you spiritually. I am appalled by how many Christians are forever going around and they’re marrying some character, some gal, that’s way out spiritually beneath them, and they’re willing to bring misery and a hell on earth condition in their lives. And you would think they would know better.

Somebody observed a young lady that used to be around here some years ago, and was quite a resister. They observed her in a washateria, and when she walked out, the lady who runs the washateria said to another person, “Do you know that person.” The other lady said, “Yes, I know her well. She’s so sad. So sad. She’s got her second husband now and he’s on the way out. So sad.”

It’s hard to believe that these people sat right here in this auditorium and got the best doctrine in the world—the best information, the best guidelines in the world, and blew it, because they thought they could listen to the world around them. Or they thought they knew about love on an emotional basis. And they didn’t understand that in marriage you have to learn to love from the Word of God.

In marriage the right man has authority over his particular woman (Ephesians 5:23). The right man is responsible to care, to love, for the safety and the spiritual welfare of his right woman. Did you get that? For the spiritual welfare of his right woman. God’s line of authority for a woman is through her husband, and it is his business to see to it that she is placed in the best possible situation for her spiritual welfare.

These men who are in seminary are very often are in a position of very grave danger with their wives. I’ve seen more seminary men cut themselves out of great opportunity of Christian service and Christian experience because they were married to a wife who did not have their spiritual capacity, and they excuse her by saying, “Well, I’m in class. I’m always being fed. I’m getting great things out of the word of God. This poor little gal is not. And by that very token that poor little gal is not in the position to decide where you should go to church.

And I’ve seen more seminary wives put screws on their husbands and take them off into some run-of-the-mill cornball regular old Bible church that was cranking out the same of monotonous nothing to the great loss of their own preparation for the ministry, and it never occurred to them that if they had a little child in that home, they wouldn’t ask that kid whether he should brush his teeth or go to bed or sit up and watch television. But it never occurred to them that God says, “I make you spiritually responsible. I make you responsible for the spiritual condition of your wife and her welfare. And if she doesn’t know better, then you make the decisions that are necessary for her to come to know better.”

And don’t presume that it’s a 50-50 proposition. That is not love. That is not sacrificial taking care that the quality of “agape” love implies. You are responsible for her spiritual welfare (Ephesians 5:25, 29, Song of Solomon 2:4b).

God’s plan for marriage is monogamy, one man for one woman (1 Corinthians 7:2-4), faithful physically to one party, and mutual claims upon each other. Divorce and harems are not in God’s plan. Divorce comes from the distortion that’s imposed upon us from the old sin nature. Don’t defend the divorces that are necessary.

Last Christmas I talked to a thoroughly modern seminary student in Chicago. He was appalled by the idea that divorce is out of line for Christians. Now there are a couple of reasons why God justifies divorce in certain circumstances, but divorce is out of line. It is again a distortion of understanding “agape” love. So much of this is because you never would have gotten into it in the first place. You wouldn’t be seeking to divorce this man if you had made sure you could respect him and respond to him in the first place. If you found and really were sure because you had a long enough basis of experience that you could respond to him, you wouldn’t be trying to divorce him now. Or you to divorce here.

God says this is a twisted distortion of our being because of the old sin nature within us. It is not the plan of God. So don’t give me the gaff about incompatibility, meanness, lack of mutual concerns and interests, and everything else down the line. That’s important and that’s what you should have thought of, but God says once you commit a thing, you are committed. Like my number one son has said, “Christians are in a really bad position. They only have one shot at marriage. The world can go around and try it again.” So make sure, if you want real happiness, that it’s one shot. That’s maximum in God’s plan for you.

Abraham was in trouble when he listened to his wife Sarah. When Sarah came and started talking to him about helping God to fulfill his plan for an heir, for him to take a concubine in the servant girl Hagar, he should have started talking and put her in her place right quick. Instead, like a do-do, Abraham sat there and he listened to her because he was at minimum love for God, so he was unable to respond with maximum love to what God had promised that He would do.

Solomon, with his thousand wives, fell from a spiritually magnificent position to where he was a pathetic character at the end of his life who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, nine-tenths of which tells you what is not true, but is human viewpoint, as he discovered how there was all vanity and nothing. He gives you one thing after another in that book that he tried and tried and tried. And finally he came back. Doctrine—that’s the answer. There is where I made my mistake. When I left that, I left everything. The right man and the right woman can destroy their right love by jealousy (Song of Solomon 8:6).

We have an illustration of married life in Genesis 24 through 27. It’s the story of Abraham securing a wife for Isaac. How would you go about securing a wife for your son? Your son comes to you and says, “Dad, I’ve graduated from college three times, I have four degrees, I’ve been to trade school five times, I’m 35 years old, and I’d like to have a wife. Would you find one for me? Now, what could be better? A smart boy who knows a few things. He can probably earn a living now in our complex world, and he wants you to get him a girlfriend. Well, that’s what Isaac had to do. This is about the way it was with Isaac.

And so daddy Abraham takes his servant Eleazar and says, “We’re going to get this boy a wife. And he tells him how to proceed, and it’s very interesting to read this story as to how Abraham proceeded to get a wife for his son. First of all, he said this girl has to have the same spiritual outlook as Isaac does. Therefore we can’t go over here to these beauties that they have over here in Canaan. The Canaanite girls. These beauties when they run their Miss Canaan pageants. And these girls come through. Some of these girls from Moab, oh they are really something when they put on that Midnight From Moab perform, they are really something. And Abraham said, “No, those girls are beauties, but we’re going to get a girl for Isaac, number one, who has the same spiritual outlook as he does. We won’t object if she looks good, but first she’s got to be spiritually right.

So naturally he had to go back to his own people, and that’s where he sent Eleazar, to go back to where Abraham had come from, to his family where he could find a girl spiritually suited to Isaac. This is why, young people, it’s wise for you to seek the approving confirmation of your parents before you marry somebody. When you decide you’re getting kind of serious about somebody, you had better let your parents in on it before you get yourself too emotionally tied up because they may throw a few cautions and observations in your direction that you haven’t thought of. Experience in marriage comes only after you’re married, and that’s too late to use it. So take advantage of your parents’ experience, and before you get married, get their approval for your selection.

I have discovered that people who do this have fantastically satisfying marriages because their parents know their children’s weakness and they have the experience to analyze what’s involved in these two people joining together that the individuals themselves do not have. I’ve also noticed that young people around here who have bucked their parents when their parents were trying to put cautions and put a little restraint on them, and their parents were perfectly right, and they had perfectly good insight; I’ve found that when those young people buck their parents that they’ve had their ups and down and their real problems. Some of them have fractured apart and some of them are hanging together. But it’s not the best that it could have been.

It’s not old-fashioned to go to your parents and ask them. I was 23 years and a lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps when I went to my father and asked him if he thought it was alright if I got married to this blonde. And I don’t think that was too bad an idea. Not too bad an idea. So don’t think you’re such a big-timer that your parents don’t know anything because they’ve got insights. They know you. They’ll let you know. And he put his hand out and he shook my hand, and he agreed it was a good bargain.

The girl that Eleazar was going to get for Isaac, first of all, had to be spiritually oriented to same level of insight that Isaac was. Not his spiritual equal perhaps. He was going to be leader. But she could not be a do-do when it came to spiritual things. So the Canaanite girls were out. Isaac was content to wait until God provided the marriage partner. Eleazar then proceeded with the home ground of Abraham, and he said, “God, I know that in marriage you bring people together. I know that I do not have to go out and hustle to find the girl. All I have to do is make myself available to your information. And God, you’ll identify her.”

And he set up a situation for identification. And that’s exactly what God did. When Rebekah came to that well, the bell of identification rang, and Eleazar knew he had found the girl that was God’s choice. The right particular woman for Isaac.

Rebekah exercised her free volition. This is why a lot of men have trouble with their wives, because they’re trying to work around this wife’s volition which is drawn out by their “agape” love. And unless a woman responds with her true volition, you don’t have anything. Unless she can respond from her will to coordinate with your will, you don’t have anything. And this was what Rebekah did. She was delighted to respond immediately when Eleazar came along. She said, “This is from God. I accept.”

So he brought her home, and you remember the story when Rebekah and Isaac met, it was love at first sight. But this marriage that began on such a right basis was hindered later on. What hindered it? The fracture of “agape” love. Mental attitude sin came in and it destroyed the expression of God’s love toward one another.

For one thing, there was the fear of famine. It led Isaac to lie to King Abimelech II in the same way that Abraham had, about Rebekah being his sister. Except that Abimelech II saw Isaac and Rebekah in the garden together and they were carrying on like they were more than brother and sister. And he said, “You lied to me, and you put me in great danger before God.” And God took care of the situation again.

It was lack of confidence. Fear is a mental attitude sin, and God says He condemns fear. Jealousy tore the marriage apart because one had a favorite desire toward Jacob and the other toward Esau. And Esau ended up marrying up marry two Hittite women (Genesis 26:34-35). Rebekah schemed against her right man so she could gain his blessing for her favorite son Jacob. And Esau threatened to kill his brother. Now isn’t that a sweet family. These who began on a right man / right woman basis are ending up with their kids going to tear each other apart.

Rebekah convinced Isaac to send Jacob away. The situation became so desperate, she said, “Send him away to Uncle Laban.” And they sent the boy away, and Rebekah never again saw Jacob. She never again saw her favorite son. And it was years before Jacob and Esau were reconciled. Parents who should have been able to supply a home atmosphere and condition that was a joy and a delight for these children, because of mental attitude sins, tore apart the lives of their kids.

So we’ve looked this morning at love toward God and found that it can proceed from a minimum to a maximum level depending upon how much doctrine you have and how positive you are for it. When you know God, you esteem Him.

We’ve looked at love between a husband and wife, and we’ve just barely touched on what’s involved in that. But we have sought to demonstrate that there is one thing that’s supreme, that that husband has to have agape type love, a mental outlook toward his wife so that he’s not treating her in bitterness, in competition, in hatred, in envy, in jealousy, or in indifference, so that she can respond to him as she’s been made to respond with her own mental attitude love, and an emotional quality of love develops between them.

And as we have demonstrated in the case of Isaac and Rebekah that people who start off as right for each other can permit a breakdown of mental love to destroy the family life and the relationship that’s within them. It is Song of Solomon that says jealousy is as cruel as the grave. That bitterness will destroy anything that you may have that you esteem in marital love.

Next week we look at one more element, one that’s very very big with all of us, and that is how do you keep going with your friends? How do you maintain this quality of relationship with your friends? And we’re going to look at some of the beautiful examples of David and Jonathan in the Old Testament, two princely characters who in a very wonderful way demonstrate mental attitude love between friends.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971