

Introduction: The secret to a lasting relationship

Hollywood's prescription for lasting relationships:

4 steps to follow!

1. **FIND** the right person.
2. **FALL** in love.
3. **FIX** your hopes and dreams on this person for your future fulfillment.
4. If **FAILURE** occurs, repeat steps 1, 2, and 3.

The success rate:

The pain, the fall-out, and the damage:

God's prescription for lasting relationships:

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Ephesians 5:1-2

4 steps to follow!

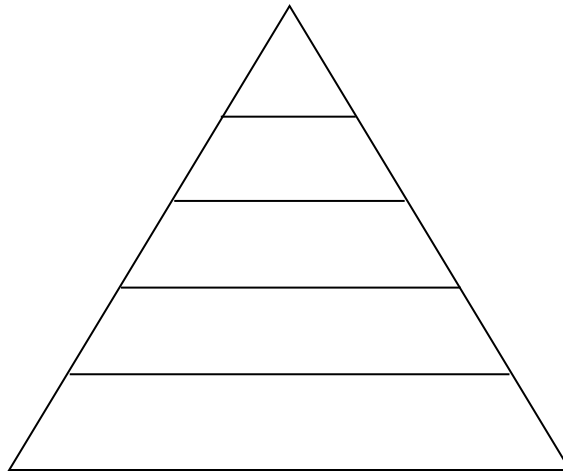
1. **BECOME** the right person.
2. **WALK** in love.
3. **FIX** your hope on God and seek to please Him through this relationship.
4. If **FAILURE** occurs, repeat steps 1, 2, and 3.

The success rate:

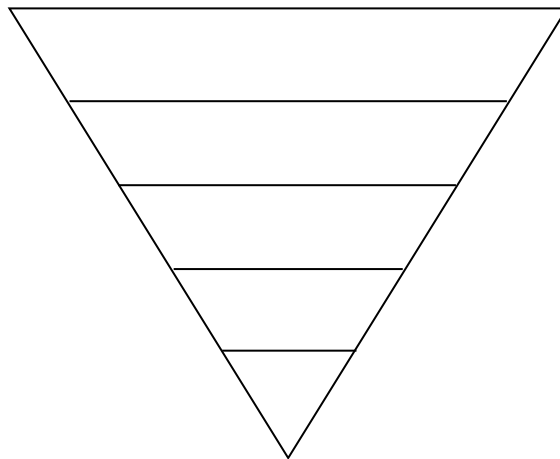
The reward, the legacy, and the blessing:

Pictorial Summary: 2 models for lasting relationships

Model #1: God's Prescription



Model #2: Hollywood's Formula



Biblical Summary:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

Personal evaluation and analysis:

1. Which triangle most represents your approach to building lasting relationships?
2. What would you like your present and/or future relationships to look like; model #1 or model #2?
3. What specific steps do you need to take to begin implementing **God's secret** to lasting relationships?
4. A word to . . .
 - . . . uninvolved singles.
 - . . . involved singles.
 - . . . divorced/widowed.
 - . . . married couples.

Reference: Judith Wallerstein & Mavis Hetherington – University of Virginia
U.S. News Weekly

Introduction – 3 kinds of love:

1. Eros Love

Proverbs 5:15-19

This is need love. It is based upon physical attraction and fulfillment. This love is necessary for marriage to succeed; however, marriage cannot be sustained by eros alone.

2. Phileo Love

Romans 12:9-13

This is friendship love. The Bible uses the word “companionship” several times in describing what a marriage relationship is. Phileo love means reciprocal sharing of time, activities, the home, hobbies, games, and other objects of common fellowship.

3. Agape Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

This is a giving love. This can be unilateral in that one loves even when the other doesn't respond as expected. It is self-giving in meeting real needs of the other with the purpose of helping the person to become a better, more mature individual. Agape love takes the initiative and energizes the other two kinds of love.

Is it “Love” or “Infatuation?”

Test #1 - TIME

- Love grows, and all growth requires time.
- Infatuation may come suddenly.

Test #2 - KNOWLEDGE

- Love grows out of an appraisal of all the known characteristics of the other person.
- Infatuation may arise from an acquaintance with only a few or only one of these characteristics.

Test #3 – FOCUS

- Love is other-person-centered. It is outgoing. It results in sharing.
- Infatuation is self-centered.

Test #4 – SINGULARITY

- Genuine love is centered on one person only.
- An infatuated individual may be “in love” with two or more persons simultaneously.

Test #5 – SECURITY

- An individual in love tends to have a sense of security and a feeling of trust after considering everything involved in his relationship with the other person.
- An infatuated individual tends to have a blind sense of security based upon wishful thinking rather than upon careful consideration, or he may have a sense of insecurity that is sometimes expressed as jealousy.

Test #6 – WORK

- An individual in love works for the other person or for their mutual benefit. He may study to make the other person proud of him. His ambition is spurred and he plans and saves for the future. He may daydream, but his dreams are reasonably attainable.
- An infatuated person may lose his ambition, his appetite, his interest in everyday affairs. He thinks of his own misery. He often daydreams, but his dreams are sometimes not limited to the attainable and are given free rein. At times the dreams become substitutes for reality and the individual lives in his world of dreams.

Test #7 – PROBLEM SOLVING

- A couple in love faces problems frankly and attempts to solve them. If there are barriers to their getting married, these barriers are approached intelligently and removed. Whatever barriers that cannot be removed may be circumvented, but with the knowledge that what is done is deliberate circumvention.
- In infatuation, problems tend to be disregarded or glossed over.

Test #8 – DISTANCE

- Love tends to be constant.
- Infatuation often varies with the distance between the couple.

Test #9 – PHYSICAL ATTRACTION & INVOLVEMENT

- Physical attraction is a relatively smaller part of their total relationship when a couple is in love. When a couple is in love, any physical contact they have tends to have meaning as well as be a pleasurable experience in and of itself. It tends to express what they feel toward each other.
- In infatuation, physical contact tends to be an end in itself. It represents only pleasurable experience devoid of meaning.

Test #10 – AFFECTION

- In love an expression of affection tends to come relatively late in the couple's relationship.
- In infatuation, it may come earlier, sometimes from the very beginning.

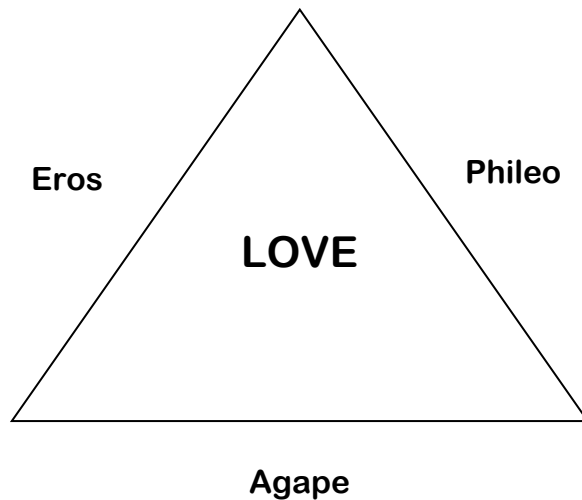
Test #11 – STABILITY

- Love tends to endure.
- Infatuation may change suddenly, unpredictably.

Test #12 – DELAYED GRATIFICATION

- A couple in love is not indifferent to the effects of postponement of their wedding and do not prolong the period of postponement unless they find it wiser to wait a reasonable time; they do not feel an almost irresistible drive toward haste.
- Infatuated couples tend to feel an urge toward getting married. Postponement is intolerable to them and they interpret it as deprivation rather than preparation.

How to improve your love life:



1. **A word to singles** – Keep your EMOTIONAL and PHYSICAL involvement behind your leading from God and commitment to the other person.
2. **A word to the married** – Love requires the nourishment of all three kinds of love. Examine which one YOUR MATE needs most and choose to give it as an act of worship to God.

Resources:

Experiencing God's Dream for Your Marriage – MP3/Small Group Study – Chip Ingram
Relationships – Dr.'s Les & Leslie Parrott
Intimate Allies – Dan Allendar, Tremper Longman

Introduction:

- Lauren's Story
- Mike's Story
- Paula's Story

When we fail to understand the difference between love and sex, we are doomed to failure in both our relationships and our sexuality.

A Word from God about Love & Sex:

- **The Historical Setting** – Paul's Day
Ephesians 5:1-6
Hebrews 13
- **The Context** – God's Concern for Our Relationships
³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:30-32
- **The Command** – Walk in **LOVE**!

How?

- **Positively** – Be giving, caring, sacrificial, and **UNSELFISH** toward others.

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Ephesians 5:1-2

- **Negatively** – Refuse to take, exploit, cheapen, defraud, or **SUBSTITUTE** sexual activity for genuine love and authentic intimacy.

*³But do not let immorality
or any impurity
or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints;*

*⁴and no filthiness,
silly talk,
coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

Ephesians 5:3-4

The Reason: Sexual impurity DESTROYS relationships

⁵For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, (who is an idolater), has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things (mentioned above) the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Ephesians 5:5-6

Where do you go from here?

... a word to uninvolved singles

... a word to involved singles

... a word to those in crisis

... a word to the married

... a word of hope for all of us

Isaiah 1:18-19

Application:

1. What did you learn from this message?
2. Why is sex serious business to God?
3. Why is sex outside God's boundaries unloving and destructive in relationships?
4. What does obeying and trusting God in the arena of love and sex look like in your life?

Introduction: Five facts about sex!

1. Those who abstain from sexual intercourse before marriage report the highest levels of sexual satisfaction in marriage.
2. Those who cohabitate (live together) before marriage have a 50% higher divorce rate than those who do not.
3. Those who abstain from sexual intercourse before marriage have the highest rates of fidelity in marriage.
4. The introduction of sex in a dating relationship almost always ushers in the “break-up” of that relationship.
5. Sexually transmitted diseases (including AIDS) can remain dormant for up to a decade or more; but be passed on to others during that time.

Loving relationships demand sexual purity:

➤ **Walk in Love**

²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. ³But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Ephesians 5:2-4

⁵For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Ephesians 5:5-6

➤ **Walk in the Light**

⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them; ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:7-10

Sexual purity demands a game plan:

1. Develop CONVICTIONS.

Ephesians 5:2-4

Purity requires a personal commitment to the truth.

2. Ponder the CONSEQUENCES.

Ephesians 5:5-6

Fear can be a legitimate and healthy motivator for delayed gratification.

3. Make PRE-DECISIONS.

Ephesians 5:7-9

Advanced decision making is an absolute necessity for sexual purity.

4. Get ACCOUNTABILITY.

Ephesians 5:10

Asking others to help you keep your commitments to God will empower you to walk “pleasing to the Lord.”

The Reward – Sexual purity’s pay-off:

1. One couple’s journey – God’s way WORKS!

2. You can start today – It’s never TOO LATE!

3. A word to virgins – You are not WEIRD; You are wise!

Application / Discussion Questions:

1. When you read the “Five facts about sex” in the introduction, how out-dated does God’s wisdom appear concerning sex?
2. Why is it so crucial to continually emphasize “loving relationships” when we think and talk about sex?
3. Which of the four aspects of “Sexual purity demands a game plan” do you need to put into practice this week?
4. How will you specifically trust God to empower you to obey Him in this area? Who will you ask to help you?

Resources: *Relationships* by Les & Leslie Parrott
Bethesda Research Group – Washington Post 1994

Where there is not revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the Law.

Proverbs 29:18

A night I will always remember:

- A private war was raging
- A small farmhouse in the country
- A young couple beginning God's journey together
- An ordinary moment with extraordinary impact
- A "vision" that changed my life

Why is sex such serious business to God?

The Command:

Ephesians 5:11

"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;"

The Reason:

Ephesians 5:12

". . . for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

The Explanation:

Ephesians 5:13

"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light."

The Invitation:

Ephesians 5:14

"For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"

Summary:

Just as light silently reveals all things for what they really are; so it is when God's people MODEL purity and love in relationships, they EXPOSE sexual immorality for what is really is... lustful, destructive, self-worship.

Answering God's call to "The Second Sexual Revolution"

1. A revolutionary way to **THINK** about human sexuality.

- Sex is **SACRED**. Hebrews 13:4
- Sex is **SERIOUS**. 1 Corinthians 6:15-20

2. A revolutionary way to **ATTRACT** the opposite sex.

- God's way - 1 Peter 3:3-4
 - I - **INWARD CHARACTER**
 - O - **OUTWARD MODESTY**
 - U - **UPWARD DEVOTION**

3. A revolutionary way to **FIND** the opposite sex.

- As a **FRIEND**. John 15:13
- As a **FAMILY MEMBER**. 1 Timothy 5:1-2
- As a **FOLLOWER** of **CHRIST**. Hebrews 10:24

Application / Discussion Questions:

1. Why is sex such serious business in God's eyes? What is at stake for the world around us?
2. In what ways do you need to change how you think about sex? What implications does this have on your thought life? Behavior? Viewing habits? Renewing of your mind?
3. How does modesty facilitate loving and lasting relationships? In what ways has "our culture" seduced us into attracting the opposite sex in ways that prohibit focus on inner vs. outward qualities?
4. Is it possible that the whole "dating" paradigm is not the wisest or most effective way to build relationships with the opposite sex? Discuss your thoughts.
5. How could you answer God's call to **The Second Sexual Revolution**? What might that look like in your life and relationships?

Resources:

Life on the Edge by James Dobson

Relationships by Les & Leslie Parrott

Running the Red Lights by Charles Mylander

Christianity Today Article – Christianity Today July 2000

A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue by Wendy Shalit