

Stop and think about it: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much love are you giving in your marriage?

Are you a 3? Maybe a 6? Perhaps a rare 10?

You know you have an IQ (intelligence quotient), but did you realize that (bear with me for the sake of argument) each husband and wife has an "LQ" (love quotient)?

God commands married couples to love one another and to increase their LQ! God inspired the apostle Paul to instruct, "Husbands, love your wives" (Eph. 5:25). Paul also taught that wives should "love their husbands" (Tit. 2:4).

God created marriage to be the most joyous, love-filled relationship. Unfortunately, many husbands and wives are not actively loving one another. Their LQ is dangerously low. They endure loveless marriages of misery.

God wants husbands and wives to be lovers. Here are five ways to show true love for your mate. The first two ways deal with the aspect of commitment in marriage—they will solidify your marriage and place it on a firm foundation. The last three ways deal with the pleasure phase of marriage—God wants your marriage to be brimful and running over with real, deep joy.

Lovers Forever

The first way to love your mate is with the love expressed by the Greek word *agape*. This is the word translated in I Corinthians 13 as "love" or, in the *Authorized Version*, "charity."

Agape means unconditional, unselfish giving. In marriage agape could be defined as a willful commitment to give to your imperfect mate without expecting to get in return. You consciously, under all circumstances, make a lifelong commitment to never stop giving to your mate.

God is the Rock from which *agape* flows. He is the source of the force that will give you the power to overcome all obstacles in your marriage. Your union must begin with God. The apostle John wrote, "And truly our fellowship is



Five Ways to Love Your Mate

What is the quotient of love in your marriage?

with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3).

The joy of *agape* will be added to your marriage if you first fellowship with God through Bible study, prayer and obedience to God's commandments. You will gain access to *agape* through God's Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). God will be at the center of your marriage, giving it strength.

God plus husband plus wife equal one *agape*-filled marriage. This is the missing formula for success in so many marriages.

As you submit to God's laws concerning marriage and other human relationships, He will unleash the power of *agape* to you, which

helps you to willfully choose to love your mate.

Society presents the false and damaging picture of love controlling you. In this false picture, love captures and enslaves you. You are a helpless "prisoner of love," unable to control your feelings. Have you heard married people say: "I cannot love him anymore—the feeling is gone"?

In truth, you choose to love or not to love. *Agape* is not a feeling, but a conscious and willful act you control.

God commands us to love one another because He knows we can control love (II John 5). Follow through on your decision to love

your mate by committing yourself to give the love that “never fails” (I Cor. 13:8, *New American Bible*).

Commitment Produces Endurance

You should have promised in a covenant with God, on your wedding day, to love your mate unto death. Pray daily to God for the power to love your mate and to keep that commitment in your mind constantly. Determine to allow nothing or no one, including yourself, to stop you from loving your mate. Go to God and recommit yourself to loving your mate.

Since *agape* is a willful commitment to give, your will and commitment must be followed by action. You cannot get love—you can only give it. Regardless of how little you receive, you will always have love in your marriage because the quantity and quality of love is dependent on how much you give.

In an emergency you would not hesitate to sacrifice your life to save your mate. Are you willing to sacrifice your life daily by pushing aside your needs and wants to satisfy your mate, by putting your mate's needs ahead of your own? When you are tired, do you get up and serve instead of waiting to be served?

Don't Give to Get

The apostle Paul admonished Christians: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

Strive to reach the state where fulfilling your mate's needs becomes, next to your commitment to God, the predominant need of your life. Give and you will have *agape*.

You may be saying, “But my mate doesn't deserve special love.” But *agape* motivates one to give to an imperfect person—yes, even to an undeserving person.

Agape—unconditional, unselfish love—does not require the other person to change or be perfect. There are no conditions, no qualifications for the giving of *agape*.

Jesus Christ, the perfect husband and the only human who ever perfectly expressed *agape*, gave His life for us while we were yet sinners (Eph. 5:25, Rom. 5:8). Christ did not require us to change first—His love was unconditional.

We ought to follow Christ's perfect example of love. Demand of yourself to give to your mate even when you have been wronged. By giving in spite of your mate's shortcomings, you will feel more positive toward your spouse. Peter expressed the principle in I Peter 4:8: “Above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’” Your unconditional love may cause a positive response in your mate, although this should never be the motive for giving (I Pet. 3:1-2).

Do not become disappointed. It is easy to become disillusioned after giving and giving without any response, not even a thank-you. *Agape* does not require love in return. Love does not give in order to get.

The apostle Paul taught that if we give with expectations of getting in return, our love is vain: “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing” (I Cor. 13:3).

Remove expectation and then love will fill your heart, leaving no room for disappointment. Jesus Christ taught that the joy is in the giving: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

And yet, at the same time, you can take heart from God's promise that if you faithfully and unselfishly give, you will eventually be rewarded: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over . . . For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

Agape is the most powerful facet of the whole of love. *Agape* will carry your marriage through the most difficult trials.

Lovers Belong to Each Other

The second way to love your mate is with the love of belonging, which will bring you and your mate closer together. This love will add another

point to your LQ and enrich your marriage.

God created marriage to be the closest human relationship. Yet, many married couples live together as strangers. A cold curtain of loneliness divides them as they go their separate ways.

What about your marriage? Do you live under the same roof, but as strangers to one another? God did not intend husbands and wives to live together like total strangers. He has a solution to your problem.

What is the love of belonging? This love is characterized by a bond of unity, companionship and loyal devotion. The love of belonging shines brightest in older couples. They act alike and think alike. They have become one. The love of belonging is not just for older couples, but for all couples.

God created man with the need to belong. God looked at all He had made and saw that “it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). But when God looked at Adam He saw something that was not good: “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be



alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18, *Authorized Version*).

Adam was lonely. God prescribed the love of belonging to cure Adam's problem. God gave Adam a woman, Eve, to love. Through giving, the first married couple could have grown to belong to one another.

This need to belong cannot be satisfied through any other person, whether mother, father, sister or



brother—only through your mate: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (verse 24).

As with *agape*, you can only give the love of belonging to your mate.

Accept your mate the way your mate is, not the way you would like him or her to be. Your mate will not feel he or she belongs as long as he or she senses you are not satisfied with him or her.

Emphasize the positive things about your mate. Make a list of all the good things. Think back to the time when you were engaged and of all the qualities you admired. You might be surprised to find those same qualities in your spouse today. Constantly think on these good qualities. Look to find more admirable qualities. The love of belonging is making your mate feel accepted.

Learn to empathize with your mate. Push out your concerns and concentrate on the concerns of your mate. Seek total identification with your husband or wife—immerse yourself in your mate’s concerns, feel your mate’s hurts, experience his or her frustrations, sing your mate’s joys.

Cleave to Each Other

The apostle Paul encourages us to bear—take upon ourselves—one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2). You will become an emotional refuge for your mate—a hiding place where your mate can find warmth and shelter from the storms of life. Both of you will have a home in each other’s hearts. Your mate will have a place to belong, and the love

of belonging will bring you closer together.

In Genesis 2:24, *Authorized Version*, God tells married couples to “cleave” to each other. The word *cleave* was translated from the Hebrew verb *dabaq*, which has the root meaning “to solder” or “to weld together.”

The strongest welding technique is called *brazing*, two pieces of metal welded together under intense heat. The molecules of the two metals become inseparable.

God compares the trials of life to a fire (I Pet. 1:7). By cleaving to one another as you go through life’s challenges you will become “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Becoming one physically, mentally and spiritually should be the goal of every married couple.

In the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite bride expressed the love of belonging she shared with her mate when she said, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (Song of Sol. 6:3).

Agape love and the love of belonging are the two legs upon which your marriage stands. They are the foundations upon which the next three loves are built. Use these two loves to increase your LQ—your love quotient—and make your marriage unshakable.

There are three additional ways to love your mate and increase your LQ. This phase of marriage could be called the pleasure phase. Let’s look at these three ways.

Lovers Cherish Each Other

The Greek word *phileo* describes the love of cherishing. This word is used in the New Testament to designate brotherly love, fondness, affection and cherishing. This is the third way to love your mate.

The apostle Paul clearly described *phileo* when he wrote, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12:10).

Cherish is the word we will use to describe *phileo*. *Cherish* means “to value highly, to hold in high esteem.”

Physically, your mate should be the most valuable person in your life, and spiritually, the most valuable after God. You treat things of

value with lots of attention and tender, loving care. If you do that with inanimate objects, shouldn’t your mate receive even more cherishing?

As with all the forms of true love, you cannot get *phileo*. You receive love as you give love. You can cherish your mate—here is how.

Cherishing is sharing. In Romans 12:10 Paul described the love of cherishing as brotherly love. Brothers share. In biblical times married couples affectionately referred to each other as “sister” or “brother” (Song of Sol. 4:10, 8:1).

How much sharing do you do with your mate? Do you share more with friends than with your own wife or husband? Your whole life should be shared together in a pleasurable way.

Sharing is doing things together. Invite your mate to share a hobby. Together you could collect stamps, refinish old furniture, exercise or pursue any number of enjoyable hobbies and projects. The main objective is that you have fun while sharing together.

Sharing is communicating with your mate. Wives often complain, “My husband doesn’t talk to me!” while husbands lament, “All she does is nag!” Such statements are signs that neither partner is communicating effectively.

Effective communication does not start with either listening or speaking. Surprised? Perhaps you thought it was all in listening and speaking. True communication, like true love, starts with giving—outgoing concern.

You must seek to understand (this is the *give* way) rather than to be understood (the *get* way). The



emphasis should be placed on your giving. Seek to understand what your mate wants to share rather than to "get" your mate to understand you. This approach to communication will open many new opportunities for sharing.

Cherishing is touching. How often during the day do you touch your mate? Only at bedtime? Could you and your husband or wife be called the "untouchables"?

If this is the case, your marriage is missing a great deal of joy. Couples often touch too much when they are dating, but appear to be handcuffed after they marry. Lovers love to touch. It sends the message, "I love you." It tells your mate: "You are important to me. I cherish you." The lack of touching conveys the exact opposite meaning.

Reach out and touch your mate. Weave touching into the daily fabric of your life. Give your mate a warm hug in the morning. Sit close together at home or in the car. Reach over and lovingly hold hands. Think about times you can touch your mate; then touch to your mate's pleasure.

King Midas' touch turned everything to gold, but the loving touch turns everything to love. Give your mate a touch and you will give *phileo*, the love of cherishing.

Lovers Are Romantic

Eros is the word used in Greek literature to describe romantic love. It is the love about which ballads and poems are written. *Eros* is the love that can light up your marriage and take it from boring, black-and-white silence to technicolor 3D, 50-mm excitement, in Dolby sound. Here, then, is the fourth major area in loving your mate.

You may be thinking, Romance is just a Hollywood production—surely God doesn't want us involved with that mushy stuff. Well, here's news for you—good news for your marriage. *Eros*—romance—is real.

God inspired a whole book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, to describe the proper kind of romantic love in marriage.

The Bible also describes the love

Push out your concerns and concentrate on the concerns of your mate. Seek total identification with your husband or wife—feel your mate's hurts, experience his or her frustrations, sing your mate's joys.

Jacob had for Rachel: "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days to him because of the love he had for her" (Gen. 29:20). Only romantic love could make seven years seem like a few days. Jacob was euphoric—on cloud nine. He was high on *eros*.

Yes, romantic love is real, and you really need to give it to your mate.

In many cases, wives have little trouble understanding *eros*. Quite often, they are starving for romance. Husbands tend to ignore romance, and do not fulfill their wives' needs. Wives desire romance. Romance must come before sex.

God wants you to give the pleasure of romantic love to your mate. Are you a fighter or a lover? If you have not been giving romantic love, you probably have been fighting. Now is the time to become a lover, not a fighter.

There are three keys to developing romantic love: climate, imagination and surrender.

The Climate for Romantic Love

The climate in which romance is given is important. *Eros* is emotional and sensitive and requires a warm climate to flourish.

Project a warm, positive attitude toward your mate. Ask God to help you remove any negative feelings you may have had in the past (Eph. 4:31-32). You are making a new beginning in your relationship. Your giving of kindness will go a long way in producing a warm climate for romance.

Decor, a lover's grooming, is an important part of the romantic climate. Since *eros* is sensitive to

sight and scent, your grooming or the lack of it can turn your mate on or off.

Be clean. If you want to get next to your mate, make sure you are tidy. Wives, keep your hair neat and pretty. Husbands, shave those whiskers. It is difficult to go cheek to cheek with a cactus. Exercise personal hygiene and also use a little cologne or perfume to spice things up.

Dress neatly, even around the house. Wives, dress as appealingly as possible for your husbands. Husbands, dress to please your wives. Find out what your mate likes to see you in; then aim to please.

The "look of love" produces a romantic climate. Solomon spoke of the power of romantic eye contact when he wrote, "You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes" (Song of Sol. 4:9, *New American Standard Bible*).

Couples who are in love look at one another often. It has been said that "the eye is the mirror of the soul." It is also true that the eye is the mirror of love. Create a romantic climate with your mate through eye contact. Look warmly into your mate's eyes when you talk. In public situations, occasionally look for your mate, catch his or her eye and smile or wink. You will be sending the message "I love you" from your eyes to your mate's heart.

Nothing warms the romantic climate like the giving of affection. Our generation has been stripped of its "natural affection" (II Tim. 3:3, *Authorized Version*). We have become cold and aloof, even in our marriages. Take your marriage out of the ice age by giving warm affection to your mate.

Kissing has always been a symbol of affection and warmth. You should make kissing the official form of greeting your mate.

A kiss in the morning is a pleasant way to start the day. Kisses through the day are an excellent way to sustain your mate's affection.

Solomon's bride desired his kisses: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine" (Song of Sol. 1:2). As wine makes the heart

merry, so do the kisses of romantic love.

Little things mean a lot. In no other area of marriage can so little mean so much as in romance. Have you stopped doing the little things? Now is the time to start anew.

Use Imagination

Romance is all in the mind! The imaginings of your mind can be a powerful tool in becoming more romantic toward your mate. Solomon said we are what we think (Prov. 23:7). If you think romantically you will act romantically.

Jesus Christ, of course, spoke of the sinful effects on the mind that lusting after a person who is not your mate will have (Matt. 5:28). But have you ever thought about the other side of this scripture? Usually for every good there is evil and for every evil there is good.

It is obviously wrong to have lustful thoughts about someone else's mate, but it is good to have thoughts of desire toward your own mate. God told Eve that her "desire" would be toward her husband, and the same applied to Adam (Gen. 3:16).

Solomon instructs us to use our minds in this way: "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. . . . As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love" (Prov. 5:15, 19). Even when your mate is out of sight, never let him or her be out of mind. Use your heart and imagination to create positive, pleasing thoughts about your mate (Phil. 4:8).

Think about your mate's attractive qualities. Hear his or her warm and reassuring voice. See that beautiful smile. Take mental stock of your mate's inner and outer beauty.

Proverbs 29:18, *Authorized Version*, says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We can also say that where there is no vision, there is no romance.

Launch yourself into the future through your imagination. Think about how you will be romantic with your mate when you are together again. Visualize warm and thrilling romantic situations where you are actively giving love to your mate.

If you use your mind and imagination, your thoughts will reinforce your feelings and actions of romantic love.

Surrender

Surrender is another key to developing romantic love. You must surrender and give this type of love to your mate.

We have seen that *eros*—romantic love—is real, and the need for it to be revived in your marriage has been made clear. You have been equipped with the principles and applications of romantic love. Now it is up to you.

Do not grieve the spirit of *eros*. Do not withhold the romantic love your mate so desperately needs from you.

Add another point to your LQ. Surrender and let love flow!

Lovers Are Lovers

The fifth way to love your mate is with sexual love.

How is your love life? God intended it to be pleasurable. You and your mate have the capacity to reach that high level of sexual enjoyment. Even if your sex life has been unfulfilling, you can change it for the better.

The place to start improving your sex life is with the application and giving of the other four loves. Sexual love has been placed last in this series of points because its success is dependent on the other areas. If you are to improve your sex life, first improve the rest of your marriage.

The prudish, Victorian approach to sex as being one of the necessary evils of life is wrong. The modern new morality is also wrong. To properly give sexual love to your mate, you need God's positive attitude toward sex.

God created sex, and He says that it is good in marriage (Gen. 1:27-28, 31).

God inspired Paul to write, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

For "bed" Paul used the Greek word *koite*, which literally means cohabitation or coitus. The translators of the *Authorized Version* of the Bible were ashamed to use the word *coitus*, so they used *bed*, and the *Revised Authorized Version* perpetuates this translation.

But God is not ashamed of this beautiful act of love. Neither were Adam and Eve, before Satan got to them in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:25).

You have a God-given responsibility to give sexual love and satisfaction to your mate. God commands husbands and wives to satisfy one another's sexual needs: "Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband" (I Cor. 7:3, NASB).

Your body actually belongs to your mate, and your mate's body is yours (verse 4). With that authority comes the responsibility to take care of your mate's body as if it were your own (Eph. 5:28). Never abuse your mate's body. Handle it with tender, loving care. You should never refuse to give sexual love to your mate or use it as a weapon or for leverage (I Cor. 7:5).

What is your LQ? After studying these five ways to love your mate, your love quotient should be five points higher.

Increase Your Love Quotient

If you give these loves, your marriage will become more contented and pleasurable.

Finally, listen to God's admonishment: "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun . . . for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun" (Eccl. 9:9, RAV). □