



SESSION NINE God's Fourth Rule of Relationship: Love

There's another law of relationship, which *also* you can think of it as touching one another. And it's amazing that I've gone this long in talking about marriage. You know how many hours we've been on it? And I have not yet said a *word* about hmmm (laughter). And it is the theme of every wedding that I've ever been to, and it is also the theme of every divorce. It's what you talk about all the time in connection with marriage, and it is one of the problems of marriage—and that is *love*.

One of the great leaders in helping American families has said one of the great problems and difficulties in American marriages is this whole idea of love. *They don't know what it is!* They don't know how to *handle* it. So, I want to suggest to you as relationship law number four. Now, hold your pen for awhile.

I want to talk first about what I call "Love, *American Style*." This is, is that's what they talk about! Young people, that's all they hear: "love, love, love." "You see, and we're going to fall in love, and we're going to love and get married." And there are problems *galore*. Love, American style has two essential problems and I want to *deal* with them, and then we want to turn in the second part of our session to see what *God* says about *love*! God's kind of love is qualitatively different! And if you don't understand it, you're going to have problems in your *own* marriage. You're going to have *serious* problems as you train and counsel others. So I charge you as we begin: Let's *seek* to understand. There *is* a reality! I will not deny it. The Scripture *refers* to it and if I didn't have a word from Jesus Christ authoritatively, I could not speak as I will speak to you about this thing we call love.

He talks about it in this way. Love, American style has two problems. One is people don't understand what it is. Second, it is the basis of all marriage. Now, when you take this, and you've got something that you don't know how it works, and I will attempt to show you in just a moment what it is, and how it works. And if you don't know what it is and how it works, and then you try to build a marriage on the foundation of that. Suppose some of you are builders. I know there's one builder here. If he hears of a new building material that is good for the foundation of high buildings and he doesn't know what *weight* it will bear. . . I don't think he would try to build his house or building on that material, if he doesn't *know* what kind of material it is. If he knows it will act as quicksand, I have an idea he would never use it. If you don't know what love is—American style—and then you try to build a marriage on it; you're in trouble. And that's what American marriages are facing.

Here's what love, American style, is. I'd like to give you a verbal definition by one of the authorities, and then I will draw you a picture of it. This is one of the authorities in Marriage and Family Life. In fact, he is the one—. I don't know what text they use at the University of South Carolina in their course in Marriage and Family Life, but several years ago they used this man's text in Marriage and Family Life at the University of South Carolina. Not a Christian, of course, but he's an authority. So this is his definition of love. He's not playing, you know, he's not being facetious. Now listen carefully: "Love is an emotion." Underscore that in your thinking and in your notes. Give me a synonym for emotion. Love is a—*feeling*. Feeling? Yes. "Love is an emotion, usually profound, which is experienced as a result of important need satisfaction." Let me read that 25 more times. You see what he says? That sounds very erudite, and it is. Psychologically, it is right on target. There is a reality here. It's not something, you know, that doesn't exist; I'm not talking about a little fairy tale. This is very real. Let me read it a couple more times: "Love is an emotion, usually profound. . ." That means

it's deep. And sometimes it *grabs* you! And sometimes it grabs people so deeply that they will turn away from the throne of a kingdom to get involved with "this one who has *grabbed* me with this emotion!" It is usually profound. But here's the second key: "... which is experienced as a result of important *need* satisfaction." Your two key parts of this definition is "Love is an *emotion* which comes as a result of important *need* satisfaction."

Now, let me draw you a picture. Here's a young man, and here's a young woman. Now, he talks about this, and this is a psychological reality. He talks about *needs*. I'll not go into an elaborate definition of that. But a need, everybody has needs. For example, you have need for food. Right? If you never ate, you would . . . [die]. That's a psychologist's definition of a need. There's something there that is indispensable. You've *got* to have it. That's what a need is

Sometimes in my teaching in psychology, I draw it like this; I draw it like a little tank. Just like your car. Does your car need gas? Does it need a washing? Yes or no? I mean, you say, "Yeah, it would look better." But will it run without washing? Will it run without gas? That's a need. So I draw them as little tanks. This person has *needs*. Now the psychologist is not talking about physical needs; he's talking about needs in the soul.

Now here's what he says, "Love American style" is an emotion; which comes as a result of important need satisfaction. Here's a young man. And he looks over there and sees this young girl. She's very beautiful! And he's just coming up, you know, and he hasn't had many of his needs satisfied. So she turns to him and she says, "Man, you're the greatest! You're so . . . You've just got it, man! Where have you been all my life?" You know what she's doing? She's filling that cup. And you know what he will be? *I make light!* This happens all the time. And America calls that *love*.

Now watch what happens. Then he turns to her and he says, "Oh man, man! I've never seen somebody so *pretty!* Look at that hair! I've never seen . . . and such beautiful *eyes!* And you're not only beautiful! I used to think girls who were beautiful were dumb, but you're so *smart!* Because you think *I'm* great, you must be *smart!*" Now, I'm joking, but my friend, I am not *joking!* And so he says, "Boy, you're so beautiful." You know what he's doing? He's meeting her need. And so she will have this warm feeling. And I want to tell you, my friend, it *grabs* and it *drives* and it *colors!* And he looks at her and says, "Boy, she's an angel!"

Yeah, I'm building it up and you say, "Oh, that's just infatuation." Alright, lay aside your puppy love. Lay aside your infatuation. Come to what you call real love, American style, and it'll boil down to this: And he says, "I don't think I can make it in college." And she says, "Sure you can. You've got it. *You* can cut it." She keeps filling his cup and meeting his needs. And she keeps stroking him the right way. *And he feels he loves her!* And then he keeps stroking her. "I can never be. . ." "Yeah, you can; you've got it, gal. And you can. . . Come on!" And so, he strokes her. And I'm not talking just about the physical stroke. And so they say, "*We are in love.*" Yeah, that's "love, American style." That's what love is. It's a reality. And that's what happens. That's "love, American style," *I'm* not denying it.

Now they say, "Well, let's get married." What we've always heard; "If you ever find somebody you love, that's the one you ought to marry." "And *you* don't tell me I don't love—!" And parents will say, "Oh, it'll never work." But, "Well man, I *love* that gal, and she loves me!" Sure, that's love—"love, American style." Do you see what it is? It is when somebody else satisfies whose needs? *Mine*. When that person satisfies *my* important needs, then I love her. And if I satisfy *her* important needs, then *she* loves *me*, and so we get married.

And sometimes it might even be on the honeymoon. Sometimes it's after a year, two years. Then things begin to happen. And *he* gets busy. And he does not come home on time. And he doesn't call. And she starts saying, "Why don't you come home at five o'clock like Susie's husband?" You know what it's doing? It's no longer meeting his needs. *She is siphoning out.*

"Well, why don't you cut—? Why don't *you?* Why don't *you?* Why don't *you* buy me a new house like Jane's husband?" You know what happens? Where has the love gone? Then he comes home and looks at her (laughter). Now, I simply deal with the trivia, so it won't be so devastating. My friend, if I didn't—. If I didn't

have an answer to this, I wouldn't anymore lay this on you. And it's going to be so superficial; it probably won't even touch most of you. But when you really come to grips with this, this is *devastating*! And so then he looks at her and says, "Man, look at this *house*! Why don't you keep house like Mama used to do?" And so she's siphoned out. Not only *not* meeting the needs, it's frustrating. Listen. "You don't expect me to live with somebody I don't love, do you?" And so they get a divorce. Why? Say it. "We don't love each other anymore"

My friends, my young people, listen carefully. It'll happen. And if you don't have anything other than that, it won't last. Because there is no way that through the long haul of that race that any human being can consistently satisfy the needs, and stroke them right. And so, the love goes. And [for] some it will go very quickly. Others, it might take a little longer. But it will always. It cannot last because of the very nature of it. But the problem with America is they don't understand that. And I don't know any couple of the thousands that will get married this month, one out of every two of them will end in divorce down the road, I don't have any idea that any of them would say, if you asked them the day before they're married, "Do you love him?" "Sure." "Do you love her?" "Sure." And they have this romantic idea it's going to last forever. That's the way it is. Have you experienced it? That's love, American style. Your first problem is people don't understand what it is.

And here, the *second* problem in American marriages is this: Now here's a couple, they're trying to decide "Should we get married?" Oh, they go back and forth and then they begin to—. "Yeah," and so they get this warm feeling. And then they say, "Yes, we *love*." So they'll build their marriage on this. We get married because we love. That's American. What else?

Oh, I wish a Christian had done what this man has done: the little book by Eric Fromm that's been almost a classic now, *The Art of Loving*. It's not by a Christian, but I'll tell you he touches some of these things that Christians should have touched long ago. He says, "There is no enterprise among human beings that starts with such high expectations, that collapses so regularly as love." We build our marriage on this, and it won't be long until I wake up and this is shattered. I'll tell you frankly, and I've shared something of my own experience, if I had nothing but these feelings, I wouldn't have lasted two weeks.

But oh, I'm so grateful there is something else. And you spell it the same way, but it is as different as heaven and hell. That is love, *God's way*. *God's love*. The love that *God* wants for me.

I would like to share with you something from the Scriptures about this thing. And oh, we need a new word. It's spelled the same in our English translations. It's l-o-v-e. But my friend, there is no *connection*! Now let's go to our model again, and I think in all these matters of relationships I can find in them everything that I need down here. Except of course, I won't find that sin thing; I won't find that "I want." That's not there. Let me ask you, do you see any love up here? What *kind* of love? "And the Father *loves* the Son, and has given all things into His hand." Do you think the Father loves the Holy Spirit? Do you think the Holy Spirit loves the Son? Oh yes. And the Lord Jesus, I was reading that again last night. And, boy, it just—! And the Lord Jesus is talking to His Father in John 17 and He says, "O Father, the love which You had for Me before the world was. O Father, that love I've given to them." Man, that is out of this world. I challenge you; take that definition of American love. It'll be as different—I say it carefully—as heaven from hell. And yet the *awful* problem, we're so used to this kind of love: "I love those, and those love me. If I treat them right, they'll love me." And so I get the idea then: "God loves me if I—" what? Say it: "treat Him right." And so we think God's love is this kind of mushy, mucky mess that we've got down here. My friend, it is entirely different.

Now, let's look at Scripture in terms of our relationships and we'll see what it means. Turn with me to Matthew, chapter 5, verse 43, "Ye have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy,' but I say unto you. . ." Say it all together. What? "*Love your enemy*." Now let's apply that to a marriage relationship and see if it fits the American style of love.

God says to me as a husband, "Love your wife like this." And He says, "Love your enemy." You say, "My wife—she, you know what she did? She did not *appreciate*; she did not meet my *needs*. And so I don't—. " Wait a minute. I'm to love her even if she is my enemy. I don't want to joke, so don't laugh. Just suppose you woke up one morning, and I'll say the worst; and your wife has *really* become your enemy. And she has put,

now I'm not joking, she has put ground glass in your oatmeal, *deliberately* to kill you. Would she be your enemy? Now let me ask you, is she now meeting a significant need? Will you have that warm little feeling? I don't understand much about human psychology, but if you ever give me a human being who finds that another is trying to kill him, and who'll have naturally a warm feeling. God says, "Even if the worst, she is your enemy," He says, "Love her." The love that God expects from me toward my wife has absolutely nothing to do with what she does to me. Whether she strokes me right, or whether she gives me what I want, whether she pleases me, whether she does anything to me, this is the absolute standard of the love of God.

It has no conditions on it. And I am to love her whether she satisfies my needs or not and if you think that's a warm little feeling, I've got news for you. It is not that. It is something entirely different. That's the way God loves me, and that's the way I'm to love her: *Unconditionally*. If I wake up in the morning and say, "I don't love my wife so I can't—." You know what God says? "Turn away. That's a sin. Love her." God doesn't buy this talk: "I don't love her anymore; therefore, I'll leave her." God doesn't buy that. God says, "Love her." Then my friend, it is not—because I *agree*—there is a psychological natural reaction. I cannot control that. So it must be a different kind of operation. When God tells me to do it and I cannot control my emotions. Alright, then he must be talking about something else.

Let me give you a couple more verses. In Colossians 3 Paul says, "Put *on* love." *Put it on*. Let me ask you, and I'll challenge you to do this. Go to your room and put on a warm feeling toward your wife. Just try it. Try to say, "Oomph! I'm going to, oomph, have that warm feeling that I have, that I *used* to have when she did everything I wanted. I'm going to put it—oomph!" I'm making a joke, but my friend, I'll tell you. It is psychologically impossible to put *that* on. Emotions are a result of important need satisfaction. I can't *put* it on! But God says, "Put *this* on." Then it must be something different.

And the greatest passage I've ever run into is Philippians 2. He says that, talking about being one, and then He says this: He says this great word, "*count*." Now some of the modern versions have kind of tampered with that great biblical word. "Count *others* better than yourself." Count it! Don't feel it; *count* it. And that Greek word, and my great lexicographer—I had to get that in somehow—he tells me that when the Greek word "count" is used, it has nothing to do with inward feeling. It has to do with an operation of choice which is based on objective considerations *and I choose it!* I *count* it so. Count *her* better than yourself; more important than yourself. And so, my friend, it starts with a choice of direction. It starts, I say—I'm not saying it ends there—it *starts*. I'm going to *choose* to do this. "Oh," you say, "that's not very romantic." I don't care where it is. God says, "Put it on," "count it so." And if I count it so in the presence of God, and I trust the Holy Spirit, whose fruit will be the love of God, you know what will happen? Eventually my whole being will be drawn—my *mind*, my *soul*, every part, and eventually my emotions will be drawn to the welfare of another person, whether they do anything to me or not. *That's what it is.*

I'd like to read you a letter I got several years ago from a couple who were at this seminar. God had touched them very deeply and did something for their marriage. And they went home and began counseling others, and she wrote me this letter telling first what God had done for them. Then she says, "We've had opportunities to share with young couples what the Lord is doing in and for us. I have to tell you about one. Before the seminar, I had been talking with a young married girl whose relationship with her husband was showing outward signs of real strain. She couldn't respond to him sexually. She was convinced she didn't 'love him,' but felt trapped in the situation. In fact, she had even decided it was wrong to live under pretense, so she was going to tell him she didn't love him."

Then the person writes, "My tone of counseling, if that's what you call it, changed the last few months because of the change in our relationship. And about a month ago she called and this is what she said: She said, 'I was fixing to tell my husband I didn't even love him. And while I was standing at the sink doing the dishes, I looked in the living room and he was there singing and playing with the baby. He looked so happy and I thought, "Here I am, I never respond to him, I don't even fix myself up for him anymore or talk to him much, and he goes to school and works to provide for us.'""

Then she says this: “I don’t care if I love him or not, I’m going to be the best wife he could ever have.” You know what that is? That’s what? That’s love. And she goes on to tell of the changes that took place.

My friend, I want to tell you, if you just wait for these warm feelings, if you go—and that’s the mood of America. If you *feel* it, it’s *real*. If you *don’t* feel it, it’s not *real*. It’s not authentic. That’s not God’s approach. These feelings will be lying witnesses.

Now in closing, let me show you this. Nowhere in the Scriptures does God say even *this* kind of *love* is the foundation for your marriage. As wonderful as that love is, God never says—. It’s *amazing*, it’ll shock us Americans, you know, when you try to talk about—! Even Isaac and Rebekah, you know, when they got together, why he’s never seen her before. But then it says this: And when she came and she was riding a camel, “Who’s that?” “Oh, that’s Isaac out in the field.” And Isaac looked. “Who is—? Oh!” And so they saw each other. And then it says this: “And they were married *and he loved her*.” We have reversed the thing. Now don’t go out and say I said, “Don’t love your wife until after you get married.” But the Bible does say this: The foundation of your marriage is not that we *love* each other, but what? Say it. *That God has brought us together*. And the will of *God* never changes! I’d wake up in the morning, I say, “I don’t care if I hate my—God brought me together, and I’d better get with it.

Colossians 3:14 says this: “Put on love, which is. . .” not the *basis* of your marriage, but he says this: “Put on love, which is a *bond* of unity.” Now that’s one translation of that. And my translation says, “Put on love which is a *bond* of perfectness.” One translation has it “Put on love which is a *bond* of oneness.” May I suggest to you, your love for your mate is not the foundation; it is the *bond* that ties you together. It’s a relationship that will tie you together in your oneness.

And I talk to you women as well as you men, though it is usually the man that hits it first. “I don’t love my wife anymore.” Do you know what God says? “That’s sin; get down and confess it, and take another direction.” And you wives, you say, “Well I don’t love him anymore.” Get down and confess that’s your sin. And come to the Lord: “Lord, I’m going to love him. I’m going to be the best wife he ever has and by your grace, I’ll choose to love him, and I trust you to make it mine, by the Holy Spirit.”

That is equitable and durable. That’s God’s love and it’ll last. That’s love, *God’s* style. Radically different than “love, American style.” But only God can build this. You know this. You agree with that? Only God can do that. If you think you can grit up your teeth because you’ve been to a seminar and now you can do it, I don’t care who you are, you’ll never do it. And you’ll never do it after you’ve done it once. You’ll never do it again unless God does it in you.

But you can choose, “This is the direction I’m going to live, and I’m going to trust God to work it in me.” And the Holy Spirit will produce again in you His fruit which is love. God’s kind of love—which is from above. I think it would be good for us just to thank God again that He loves us—not like we love. Oh, how pitiful it would be for us if His love was based on our meeting His needs. It has nothing to do with that. God loves me, not because I’m a preacher or have ever done anything for Him. He loves me. It’s unconditional. And it’s directed toward my good. Let’s put that on toward one another.

Father, you realize that we’re still dust, we’re still in the flesh and this thing still hounds us. We still want people to stroke us right. We will not deny that reality, but we will not live by it. We want to operate as Jesus Christ did. He’s called us to this. And He said that the love that You had toward Him, He would give to us. So Father, do this for us that we may love one another, as You loved us. And then they will know that we are Your disciples, because we love one another, in Jesus’ name. Amen.