



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 5 - Day 4

Loving One Another

by Brian and Susan Moore

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

1 Peter 3:8-11

This is so hard! Everything within our natural selves wants to exact revenge, even the scales, bring justice about whenever we are wronged. And yet, that is precisely opposite of what we are called to do as Christians. This is what we see in these verses:

- No good comes from insulting others or trying to punish others when they have wronged you;
- You can't be bitter and loving at the same time;
- If we truly want to be disciples, we must love one another as He loves us;
- When we are intent on blessing others, we, ultimately, receive the blessing

Jesus tells us that our mouths speak out of the abundance of our hearts. In other words, what we say reveals what is in our heart. In fact, many times the heart of a problem is a problem of the heart. When we face the challenges of life, our words reflect what is honestly in our heart. When we are in tune with Christ, love and compassion come easily; when we're depending upon our own means for survival, it can be downright impossible to forgive, forget, or accept the shortfalls of others—especially where we're involved.

The answer to the struggle? Love. In all things. In all ways.

Love allows us to get beyond ourselves and on to the needs, the hurts, and the struggles of others even when—especially when—their words and actions are painful to us. Love can lead us to forgive instead of holding on to a grudge; love can change our hearts from greedy to grateful; and love can help us to see and savor what we have rather than always seeking more.

When we harbor anger and envy and resentment, it harms us more than anyone else. It also leads to bitterness in our heart. When we keep score of the hurts and wrongs we've suffered due to our spouse, it becomes a game of tit-for-tat—one hurt begetting another, and so on and so on. When this occurs, the cycle is not only endless, but the reactions frequently increase in intensity as the bar of 'getting even' is perpetually raised. No one wins this game of verbal limbo.

The solution is simple, though not easy: honest and open communication will uncover and release the seeds of bitterness and allow us to move on, move forward, and get about the business of blessing the other as God originally intended. When we choose to live like this—intentionally seeking to serve instead of sabotage—we bring honor to The Lord and set the example for others to emulate.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a believer, what can you do to develop the attitudes Peter mentions in verse 8?
2. How does humility and empathy help you to respond properly to persecution?

Action Steps:

Remember that you are both on the same team, in the same marriage, in the same family. Complement one another instead of trying to compete. Minimize conflict by maximizing cooperation as you interact this week.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessing of our marriage. Show us our hearts that we may truly know when our words expose ungodly motives. Sharpen our awareness of the words we use so that we can see any harmful intent, resentment, or bitterness that resides within us. Facilitate healing where dysfunction exists; and allow eternal joy to permeate our character and bless our relationship with our spouse with love, thoughtfulness, goodwill, caring, and unconditional commitment.