

## Romantically Challenged 02.13.11

Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-10, 15, 21 ESV

Video: "Romance Tips" [2:08] by Jeff Foxworthy

**Introduction:** So how's your romance working out? Tomorrow is Valentine's Day - a day set aside for romance. So I thought today - and actually the next couple of weeks - we'd take a look at what God's Word has to teach us about romance.

**Activity** - Grab wireless mic and say, "I'd like to know what your idea of romance is. How would you define it? What's it mean to you? To motivate you to participate, I have some boxes of chocolate to give away to you." (Do the Phil Donahue thing. Get some participation.)

**Definition** - When we look up the verb for "romance" we are told it means *to court or woo romantically*. So we have to look up romantic.

- characterized by a preoccupation with love
- displaying or expressing love or strong affection
- ardent; passionate; fervent

### Problems with Our Concepts of Romance

- We think in terms of romance as an on and off switch. As if there are times when we are romantic and then other times when we are not.
- We often think in terms of what romance can gain for us... As if romance were a means to a selfish end.
- We tend to think of romance only between two people in love. But we can actually romance anyone. We should practice romance with everyone!

**Transition:** God's Word has a lot to say about romance! There one passage in particular that you may not think of as "romantic" but actually provides God's plan for Romance: Ephesians 5 & 6.

Paul writes the letter to the Ephesians and in the first half of his letter provides some great Christian theology. But then he follows up in the back half of the letter with what we should do about it. We come to this transition word, "therefore"... *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV* Paul crams "love" in as much as possible in these two verse. In other words, he is telling us how to be loving... or how to be romantic!

**Bible Moment:** Look at overview. Three "Walks." Outline different than it looks in English. 3 Lives in NIV. Then application - Romance in all relationships - husband and wife (5:22-33), children and parents (6:1-4), employers and employees (6:5-9). Be romantic (show intentional love) in every relationship.

**Honest Admission:** We are romantically challenged! Even the most romantic usually have to work at it. It is not something that comes naturally to any of us. For some of us it's almost as if romance is a foreign language. For some of us, romance is just a way of getting something for ourselves - a false romance. **So let's look at God's plan for real romance!**

## God's Plan For Real Romance

### 1. Real Romance SEEKS THE BEST FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

Real romance is not selfish. Real romance requires sacrifice of what we want to seek the best for someone else. *That's why our example:*

*“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.”*

*Ephesians 5:2a ESV*

Consider that we see a great contrast between Christ, who gave himself up for us, and what follows - all as example of self-seeking: (1) sexual immorality - seeking my own pleasure outside of the bounds of God's plan for me and others; (2) crude talking - language that often attempts to build me up in view of others; (3) covetousness - wanting what belongs to others.

Note that this romantic way of relating to one another is not just for a “romantic couple”. For every relationship:

*“In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” Ephesians 5:28 ESV*

*“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Ephesians 6:2-3 ESV*

*“Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you,... Serve wholeheartedly.” Ephesians 6:6a,7a NIV*

Ultimately, the real love language of romance is SUBMISSION - putting my wants and wishes below the person to whom I want to demonstrate love. This is often the favorite position of those who wish to wield the club of a wife's submission to her husband from verse 22. But every relationship should involve submission going BOTH ways according to verse 21!

*“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

*Ephesians 5:21 NIV*

To view v.22 in isolation is to take it out of context. The Bible teaches us that we show reverence (respect, worship) for Christ when we submit to one another. **None of us do this well! That's why...**

### 2. Real Romance SEEKS GOD'S HELP AND PLEASURE.

*“Walk as children of light... and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”*

*Ephesians 5:8b,10 ESV*

The most romantic boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife, or employee or boss is the man or woman who seeks first the kingdom of God, who more than anything else wants to please God! You cannot be the romantic creature you want to become if you haven't settled your relationship with God as THE #1 PRIORITY in your life. And this is just as important... you are only fooling yourself if you are looking for romance with a man or a woman who is not seeking Christ first.

The truth is that none of us can live the life of unselfishness and sacrifice without help from God's Holy Spirit. It's His power and strength that helps us be REAL romantics.

**Finally, because real romance does not come to us naturally...**

3. Real Romance **REQUIRES INTENTION AND ACTION**.

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”  
Ephesians 5:15 NIV

For real romance to happen in your relationships... at work with your boss or employees... at home with your spouse or with your children or mom and dad... you have to work at it. It requires your constant attention and intention. Not only do you have to think about it, you have to take action - you have to do something about it.

The Apostle Paul lays it out for us - romantically, we are swimming up stream. “The days are evil.” To not be intentional, to not take action, to simply float along is to float downstream, away from romance and away from love.

Notice the definition of wise and unwise here. Wise is not just a knowledgeable person, someone with gray hair whose an expert. No, a wise person is someone who “makes the most of every opportunity” (NIV) or who “makes the best use of the time” (ESV). The wise person is not just the one who thinks romantically or feels romantically... the wise person is the one who takes action!

Over the next couple of weeks, we’re going to talk a lot about how we do this, but for now let me leave you with...

**4 Hints for “Making the most of every opportunity!”**



**Knowing HOW to seek the best for someone else requires time, study, and sacrifice.**

It’s easy to know what you want. Sometimes we foolishly assume that whatever would please us would, of course, please someone else. Not usually true. That’s why it takes time to really know someone else. You want to have a GREAT marriage? Take time to become a student of your spouse. **Joke: I may never get that graduate degree in theology, but let me tell you after 32 years, I’m going for a doctorate in Mary Kay!** Don’t make the mistake of thinking that many years of marriage EQUAL growth. It’s possible that we relive the same one year over and over again. Learn what makes someone else tick. **This may require...**



**Romance sometimes requires a second language.**

Did you know that we don’t all speak the same love language? It’s true! #1 - Words of Affirmation. #2 - Physical Touch. #3 - Quality Time. #4 Acts of Service. #5 - Gifts. You could be shouting “I love you” as loudly as possible *in your love language* only to discover that the one you love can’t even hear you. You’re speaking in the wrong language. As a student of your lover, or your children, or your boss... you need to learn to speak their language!



Romance can happen anytime, not just at prescribed times.

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day - the day of Romance.

- 190 million Valentine's Day cards will be exchanged<sup>1</sup>
- Avg. U.S. consumer will spend \$102 on VDay.<sup>1</sup>
- Chocolate and candy profits on VDay sales > \$1 trillion<sup>2</sup>
- 198 million roses given away. #1 Holiday for florists, 25% of total flower biz<sup>3</sup>

That being said - (you gotta do VDay, right?) because it's expected it doesn't get the same bang for the buck. You be romantic when it's not expected. Go out of your way on a normal, regular day to show your love to the one you love!



Balancing romance with the rest of life requires God's wisdom.

We can become way too focused on receiving love from one particular person. Don't become unbalanced in your love. Sometimes our love is not returned. Easy to get hurt. But here is a fact - there is a world of people who would LOVE to have your love. Easy to miss that. Easy to get sidetracked. Easy to get focused. This is why we need God's wisdom.

We start with God's love. We start with His romance filling us up, filling our need for love. Then we move to give and receive love from others. If we start with God and then move outward from Him, we'll never run empty. If we start with others and then turn to God when we're hurt, we'll always be running between fill-ups, never full, always nearly empty or stalled on the side of life's highway. Start with God's love first.

**Let's pray.**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.womansday.com/Articles/Lifestyle/Holidays/10-Fun-Valentine-s-Day-Facts.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.articlesbase.com/relationships-articles/the-notsomushy-statistics-during-valentines-day-99897.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aboutflowers.com/about-the-flower-industry/holiday-statistics/valentines-day.html>