

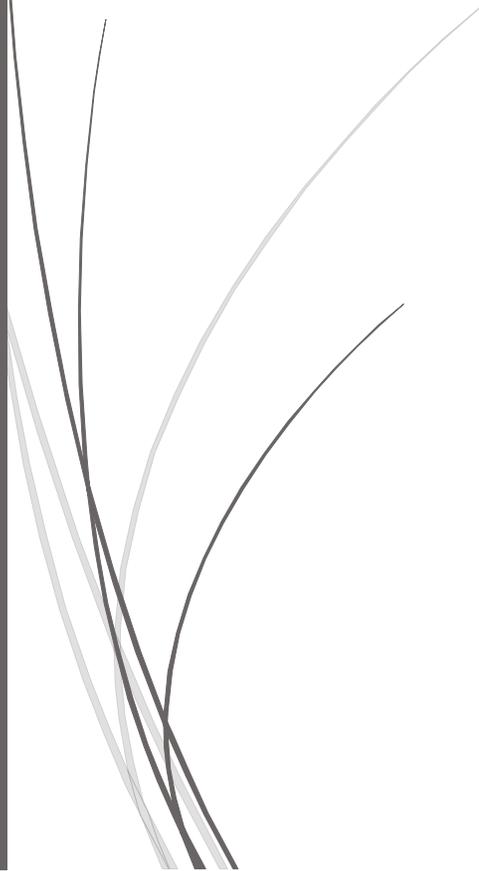
Lesson 3

# THE PATH TO SOUL SATISFYING LOVE

ACCEPTANCE



**Marriage**Helper





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## UNDERSTANDING THE KEY TO LOVE...

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (Philippians 2:3)

Experience with thousands of couples taught us the most important thing in a relationship is respect. That means giving esteem and honor, as well as demonstrating regard and consideration to each other. Most of the couples we see in our workshop for marriages in crisis, [\*Marriage Helper 911\*](#), offer little or no respect to each other (or at least one to the other). Healthy, happy couples do.

Respect has to do with acceptance. As you may have read in my book *The Art of Falling In Love*, people tend to paint a picture they believe others wish to see. We paint those pictures because we want others to accept us. However, what we really want – deep in our hearts – is to be loved for the person we are rather than the picture we paint.

To have the deepest love possible with your spouse, you must learn to accept yourself as you are and your companion as s/he is.

If you are not in a relationship, this chapter applies to you just as well as those married. Acceptance is the most important LovePath step for falling in love.

### BIBLICAL VIEW OF ACCEPTANCE

As noted in chapter two, we do not have to meet any standard for God to love us as we are. We do not have to paint a picture that we hope He will love. He sees into our hearts, knowing who we are, and loves us for ourselves. For emphasis, we underline certain phrases in some of the following passages.

*“...God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:7)

Ephesians 2 speaks of our sinfulness thoroughly known to God. Immediately after describing human transgressions, Paul writes that God loves us anyway: *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”*(Ephesians 2:4-5)



## Acceptance

God tells us that we are all sinners (Romans 3:10) who *“fall short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) Yet, *“...while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:6-8)

In the New Testament you will find that Jesus treated sinners with great respect, though He did not accept their sinful actions. The story of the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 demonstrates the tremendous love Jesus felt for a woman that an entire town rejected. He knew her sins and loved her anyway – just as she was. That wonderful love (acceptance) from Jesus led her, as it did many, from wicked ways to the way of light. He loves us as we are, before we change to be what He wishes us to be.

It was the hypocrites that Jesus treated with harshness. The entire 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Matthew consists of Jesus condemning – rejecting – those who pretended to be righteous but were not. When we acknowledge our weaknesses, failings, and transgressions, without trying to paint a picture that we are someone other than our real selves, God showers us with love and acceptance. If we try to paint a picture for Him to love – thinking that we hide our real selves – He rejects us.

In His teaching about love and acceptance, Jesus reiterated an Old Testament principle as a New Testament truth: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”* (Matthew 22:37-40) Life shows the truth of that passage, particularly in that those who cannot love themselves do not love others. It is in acceptance of self that we find the direction to light and life.

Let us explain that in modern terms.



## WHAT IS ACCEPTANCE?

If you comprehend the following, you will understand the foundation of true love.

***“The most crucial dimension for falling in love is acceptance. I will not love a person that I do not accept, even if that person is me.”***

Acceptance does not always mean agreement. One definition of acceptance is “tolerance without resentment.” In the way we use the term, it means accepting that something exists or is true whether you want it to be or not. For example, a husband may not agree with his wife’s political views, but he can accept that they are valid (true) to her, and, therefore, should be respected. He does not harangue her to agree with his views, does not treat her as if she is unknowledgeable, nor behave as if he is superior because he feels his political views are correct and hers are not. In short, giving acceptance to another person is to show respect to that person as your equal, especially when you do not agree with or like what that person believes, thinks, or feels.

Each of us wants to be validated for who we are, what we think, and what we feel. Receiving understanding and respect provides us validation.



## LOVING SELF

The most important thing in love is acceptance. People who interact with love and affection with others must first love themselves in the right way. Not too much. Not too little. But we are all people with value and worth – consider Psalm 139:13-14: *“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”*

Sometimes we have trouble accepting ourselves as we are because of events that occurred earlier in our lives.

### LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT WERE CREATED BY YOUR ACTIONS

Think of anything you have done in your life that negatively affects your acceptance of yourself. Write a brief description of it here, just enough to evoke your memory.

### LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT WERE CREATED BY THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS

Think of anything done to you by others that negatively affects your acceptance of yourself. Write just enough to evoke the memory.



## Acceptance

## LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT NO ONE CAUSED

Think of anything life has thrown at you, not caused by any person, that negatively affects your acceptance of yourself. Write a brief description of it here.

Look through the things you have written in the three areas above. To change their negative effect on how you accept yourself, there are four possible solutions.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO OVERCOME NEGATIVES CAUSED BY YOU?

Sometimes facing a wrong we have done is the best way to overcome it. That may mean confessing. It might mean apologizing. In some cases, it could be returning something to someone else. You have to decide what action, if any, would bring you inner peace and acceptance.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)*

*Note: Do not do anything that may harm others - for example, confessing to your best friend, "I slept with your husband."*

Write here any actions that you can do to overcome any of the negatives you listed above.



## WHAT IMPERFECTIONS OR FLAWS SHOULD YOU ACCEPT ABOUT YOURSELF?

The secret to acceptance is to accept the imperfections and flaws that you have. We call it satisfied dissatisfaction. The famous psychologist Carl Rogers said, "The curious paradox is that when I accept myself as I am, then I change...we cannot change, we cannot move away from what we are, until we thoroughly accept what we are. Then change seems to come almost unnoticed"

Write here those things you need to accept about yourself, even if you want to change.

## WHOM DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE?

You will learn a great deal more about forgiveness in chapter eight. Right now, think of it this way: Hating, wanting vengeance, and hanging on to hurts seldom affects the person who hurt you. Instead, it becomes a ball and chain that ties you to that person in your mind and heart. Forgiving does not absolve the other person from guilt or responsibility; it sets you free from the pain of the hurt.

Forgiveness means: 1) deciding the other person is flawed and is not the Devil; 2) deciding to give up any right you have to vengeance. If you wish, it may also mean, 3) reconciling with the person who hurt you. However, that step is not required for you to find inner peace. Forgiveness allows you to accept that what that person did to you happened and you cannot go back in history and make it not happen. Decide that you will not let it affect the rest of your life.

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)*

What do you need to forgive someone for? Write that here.



Acceptance

## WHAT NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES FROM LIFE DO YOU NEED TO ACCEPT?

Acceptance in life means accepting that history cannot be changed. For example, the final stage of grief when a person loses a loved one is to finally accept that s/he is gone and never coming back. That acceptance brings inner peace. What do you need to accept as history that cannot be changed?



## IF YOU ARE NOT IN A RELATIONSHIP

Make sure that you have done the exercises in the section of this chapter about self.

### DEAL BREAKERS

It is time to think about what you will not accept in another person who may be a potential partner. We refer to them as “deal breakers.” Use them to evaluate any person with whom you might develop a relationship. Remember, it is easier to end an unhealthy relationship early on than it is later.

Think of personality traits, behaviors, life conditions, religious practices, previous experience, morality, or anything else you will not accept -- deal breakers -- in developing a relationship with another. Write them here and check them regularly as you consider potential companions.



## IN CONCLUSION

If you feel accepted as you are, you feel loved. If you feel accepted only if you paint a picture that you believe the other person wants you to be, you will doubt the depth of his/her love.

When you accept another as s/he is, that person feels loved. If s/he feels accepted by you only when they paint the picture that you expect, s/he will doubt the depth of your love.

Learn to accept yourself as you are so that you can learn to accept the one you love as s/he is. This is the most important dimension of love. There is great research indicating that couples work through even the most difficult of problems when they learn to accept each other as they are; tolerance without resentment.

Love works better when you live with satisfied dissatisfaction. That means accepting yourself and your beloved as you each are while always wanting to grow.



## MOVING ON

After the next section **Daily Thoughts and Prayers** are questions that you need to answer before sitting down with your spouse and discussing.



## DAILY THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

### DAY ONE

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about how He accepts you as you are. Jot your thoughts here.

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me learn to accept others as God accepts me is....

### DAY TWO

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about how you can accept others similar to the way He does. Jot your thoughts here.



Acceptance

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me learn to accept others as God accepts me is....

### DAY THREE

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about what it means for you to accept yourself as you are, instead of feeling that you have to be or do more to be acceptable. Jot your thoughts here.

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me learn to accept others as God accepts me is....

### DAY FOUR

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about what it means for you to accept Him as He is, instead of what you might want Him to be. Jot your thoughts here.



Acceptance

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me learn to accept others as God accepts me is....

## DAY FIVE

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about how you have changed for the better because He loves you as you are, an imperfect human. Jot your thoughts here.

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me learn to accept others as God accepts me is....



## SHARING TIME

Before sharing with your spouse, think these through and write your answers.

- Using the following scale, circle the statement that best reflects how you honestly feel about the following sentence. “I accept, respect, and love myself as I am.”
  1. *Strongly Disagree*
  2. *Moderately Disagree*
  3. *Mildly Disagree*
  4. *Not sure.*
  5. *Mildly Agree*
  6. *Moderately Agree*
  7. *Strongly Agree*
  
- Why did you give yourself that rating? Please be as specific as possible.
  
- What has been the most difficult thing for you to forgive another person for? How did you do it (or how will you do it?)
  
- Why is forgiving a crucial aspect of loving?
  
- This workbook states that you cannot love anyone that you do not accept as they are, even if that person is you. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.



Acceptance

## NOTES AS YOU WATCH THE VIDEO



## MARRIAGE HELPER

If your marriage is in crisis—or if you love someone whose marriage is in crisis—our success rate since 1999 is three out of four marriages. It doesn't matter if one spouse comes reluctantly or under pressure. It doesn't matter if one is madly in love with someone else. Our success rate remains just as high. It is, of course, by the grace of God Almighty.

If you wish a miracle for you or someone you love, call now toll free 866-903-0990 or visit us at [www.marriagehelper.com](http://www.marriagehelper.com).