

Romance!

By B. D. Tate

Every generation of men has heard about romance. The story goes like this: every woman wants to be swept off her feet by her “Prince charming.” Romance novels fill the stores depicting scenes of men wooing their fair lady. Have you noticed however, women are usually the ones buying and reading them? “Chick-flicks” are those movies that center on relationships, romance, more relationships and then more romance. Contrast that with men’s movies which are action, blood and guts, bombs exploding, fighting, more action and of course sex. There is quite a difference between men and women and their interests.

Men in general have approached finding a mate like a very important task. **They go after it like a mission.** A man’s attention is focused on the prize. He is determined to succeed. He plans, strategies, meditates, and works to accomplish his goal. Whatever it takes to get her attention and win her heart. **This might include strange behavior such as:** long talks on the phone (men hate talking on the phone); talking walks in the park (men would rather play ball in the park); buying flowers, chocolates, or jewelry (men don’t understand flowers, they’re lost in a jewelry store and they’d rather have a beer and steak); going dancing or to a concert, play, (or gasp!) an opera! (Men want to watch sports on the wide screen, go to a pizza place, go to the stadium); going to the mall, window shopping, dinning at quaint locations and a cute cafe’ (Some men get sick and hostile in the malls, window shopping is a ridiculous waste of time, dinning at expensive, foreign, and bazaar places with foods never before seen nor heard of is impossible); attending recitals, visiting family, going to church, dressing up for special occasions like a wedding or anniversary party (Men don’t recite anything, they barely talk, visiting family is a necessary evil, church is a temporary arrangement to get the prize, dressing up is going beyond the call of duty—but it may be unavoidable.); the list could go on.

IT’S THE MISSION MENTALITY!

This behavior though gallantly engaged for purposes of the mission is outside a man's normal parameter of actions. The normal man once his mission is accomplished, after winning his mate, will revert back to pre-courting practices. The thrill of victory or the sweeping off the feet is over. The time of odd and out of character behavior is done. The romantic in him, as if some out of body experience, goes away. Why did he do it in the first place? Why did he wine and dine, woo and coo, act beyond normal manhood? There was a lady to be won. There is the matter of sex. These things are needed to get what a man wants. A man wants sex and that means a woman.

Before a woman decides on him, the man is under her sway. Before she falls for him he is subject to her decision. Somehow, after she decides, he's no longer under it. Somehow after she decides he can go on to something else. There are other tasks, other jobs, other missions to be focused on. Why do men do this? Who knows?

There are some suggestions. We can't do two things at once? We are stupid? We are selfish? We only care about our own desires or goals in life? We are arrogant? We are sinful brutes who lose focus easily? We think it's about us? We think women are supposed to serve men?

Romance is a term most men think of as part of the task of winning a mate. It is a one time phase or necessary process that only resurfaces when the need arises such as: divorce, separation, marriage counseling, a disgruntled wife, etc.

When the task of winning a mate is over this vague, hidden, remote thing called romance goes somewhere out of mind and heart in men. It happens all by itself. Men didn't kick it in gear and they didn't take it out of gear. This relationship of romance being connected to courting has long been observed. The problem is that it has long been accepted, by men, to end there too.

If you want to kick it back in gear you may have to threaten men with losing their mate. This may get the romance going again. The point is that men instinctively connect romance with courting and courting with winning a mate—**not maintaining one**.

Maintaining a relationship now that's the issue. Men aren't good at relationships to begin with. The tools for relationship building and maintaining are not inborn. **Tools such as, listening, paying attention to personal details, remembering important times and dates** (such as birthdays, anniversaries, special courting places where moments of success took place such as the first time holding hands, the first kiss, etc.), **putting oneself in another's place or shoes, focusing in on the person—wanting their attention—In other words, putting people first!**

What are men good at? **Focusing on a task**, work, project, building things, construction, labor, seeking after a goal, guarding something, protecting, fighting, battling, arming, defending, enforcing, being about things, not people.

It's the mission not the relationship that's on men's minds. **Romance was a part of the mission when the mission ceased so did the romance.**

It's efficient. It's simple. It's explainable.

Yet, it's also the problem. Where did the memo come from that once the mission to win a mate was done, the mission was done? I think it came from inside. I think it came from our selfish sin nature. I think it came from our natural tendencies as men to accomplish something and move on. I think it came from the god of this world, too.

One of the worse scenarios men can find themselves in is being mission-less! Men who do not have a purpose or a goal are lost. What is the next objective? What is the meaning of work? What do I get out of bed for? Men instinctively evaluate themselves by the work they do.

Many men arrive at mid-life in crises of identity and meaning. What has my life been for? What importance do I feel? What have I accomplished? With this come further issues like the loss of strength, the realization that death will come after all, and as a man do I still have it?

Men tend to want to achieve, see results, admire work done, and feel the meaning of a mission completed. Men want to be able to evaluate and analyze a task, to improve or make corrections, to determine efficiency, to see if they can become better. Men also have a desire to be admired, respected, esteemed, and considered proficient, capable, the best.

The question is: **How does one rate romance? How does one admire, respect, or esteem the romantic?**

THE WORLD'S ANSWER:

The world's answer is the **lady's man**. The world projects the **womanizer**. The world esteems **the playboy**. Not that every man can be one, of course not, only certain handsome, good-looking, confident, charismatic men are eligible. These men have boasted of their many conquests. A man's reputation with the ladies is admired by other prospective lady-killers. I heard Wilt Chamberlain the famous NBA All-star basketball player boasted of "bedding" over a thousand women in his career! Is this romantic? Is he the successful man having had sex with many women? He is a privileged man of talents, a king among men, and the epitome of manhood?

Young men are encouraged to "play" the field, not to get chained down to one woman. Men are enticed by pornography and sexual advertising just about everywhere implying strongly that sex is the goal, and pleasure is what women are made for. Become a "stud," be cool, be sophisticated, turn on the charm, it's about the process; winning is having sex with as many as possible. **IN ESSENCE THEN, THE WORLD RATES ROMANCE BASED ON A MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, ONLY TO**

TURN TO ANOTHER MISSION, AND SO ON. Each mission is defined as being another woman.

THE PROBLEM WITH THIS APPROACH:

The Bible calls this **hedonism, fornication, lust, adultery, a depraved mind.** This is not the purpose of romance but a perversion of the **God given gift.**

Romance is a gift? Absolutely, it is a gift of God for men and women to experience, to know, to understand. **Romance is that intangible expression, communication, practice between a man and a woman. It is the attraction in operation. Romance is the focused attention a man gives to a woman.**

When a man is being romantic he is giving his suited focus and attention. A romantic action is one that manifests a sense of priority. **That is why courtship works for a woman when the man has made her THE PRIORITY in his life.** The romantic decisions show this placing of first things first.

Romance is God's gift for a man and woman, especially a man, **to show first priority** in his/her life (outside of God of course).

A man will do outlandish things to communicate the importance to a woman. He'll commute hours traveling hundreds if not thousand of miles on weekends to see her; he'll stay up hours into the night wooing her denying sleep and rest; he'll dress up in silly costumes, be carried in a Valentine's Day box into the middle of a church group meeting just to show how much he's interested in her. **It's the priority thing! It's the importance thing! It's the placing of her before everything else—that is romantic.**

Then, this gift of romance is shown in various ways. It must be creative, fresh, genuine, meditated, prophetic...

But I must stop for a second and back up. I didn't explain one more reason why the world's definition of romance is a problem. Other than the serious situation of it being immoral and

condemned by God; **there is the consequence of short circuiting the purpose of romance in a man's life.** If a man follows the world's advice and example he will forever be shallow. He may be a lady's man; but in truth he will never experience depth in any relationship. He will be underdeveloped, lack character, lack integrity, and lack intimacy for which he was created. The result will be a man filled with entertainment, excitement, pleasure, thrills, lusts, and a broken and/or empty heart. A man filled with shallow experiences will leave him unsatisfied. The emptiness that results from no depth in his relationships will ultimately leave him a very lonely man.

Life is more than physical pleasure. Life is more than sexual encounters. We are made for personal intimacy that is far greater than erotic experiences. We are spirits with a conscience, with emotions, desires, dreams, meaning, fears, worries, and stresses. The sexual act outside of emotional and even spiritual unity falls completely short of renewal, comfort, and fulfillment. Romance may indeed include sex but its purpose far exceeds it. The purpose of romance is to communicate attraction **but also priority and commitment**. It is meant to communicate trust! For example: a man romancing his true love is saying, "You can trust that you are the only one!"

Romance is God's beautiful way for us to express you are the only one! You can be yourself and I do and will love you. For one man to love one woman, to cherish, honor, esteem, and keep her as his focus and the center of his attention throughout life, that is romance's goal, romance's fuel, and romance's final development. The world's view falls so far short it is deplorable. God's romantic venue starts where the world does, but in purity, then grows and grows into the next phase, the next place, and the next stage.

THE ROMANTIC BLESSING

Once in a while I'll run across a couple that has been married for years, maybe they have raised their family, who exhibit this romantic blessing. They are still quite in love. They know each other well. They are not afraid. They have been through the ups and downs of their relationship and are well past puberty so to speak. Their love is developed and the trust is rock solid. **They look at each other with respect, admiration, and genuine depth.**

They have no desire for another because it would be like becoming a teenager to them again. Who wants to be an adolescent again? **Most importantly you can see that they cherish the other as the most fascinating, most energizing, and the most entertaining person in the world.** There is simply no one else on earth they'd rather be with. There is no way another person could enter that relationship and be any where near the depth they've known with each other for years. **It truly is a treasured thing that only time and experience brings.**

Do they have the erotic? Do they have the thrill and passion? Do they have newness of discovered love? No, they have something far greater. They had those things, and the memories of those things with each other. What they have now is satisfaction, fulfillment, meaning, unity, trust, peace, and rest. They aren't worried about failing each other. They aren't worried about the other leaving. They aren't worried about being rejected, finding someone else, having to be perfect, having to win the other's love...

What got them there has kept them there: that is keeping the other the priority in their life!

Romance begins with a thrill, but it grows with commitment, and it stays focused with first priority. It's about the everyday decisions we make on where we will spend our time, our energy, and our attention. **First love is thrilling, keeping our love first is fulfilling.** The romantic antics, the buying of gifts, the outlandish things we do to win our life's love are good; but if we

will continue those romantic antics, gifts, outlandish things into maintaining, and developing our love, the results are treasures of meaning and memories.

What is ever more unique it that our love, any married couple's love, is a first. No one can copy it. No one can experience it. Each couple is unique in God's design. What is so tragic is that **many stop short.** Many couples allow their treasure to be stolen from. Many men look to the immediate, lustful passions, and think they are missing out. Many get caught up in pornography which perverts sexual relationships from love to lust. Many men let go of their first priority to love their wife. When things like this happens the marriage stymies, gets placed on hold, and begins to fade, whither, or die.

PHASES OF ROMANCE:

Romance goes through phases. It starts with thrills and passions; but then enters into challenges and tests. **It presses onto deepening trust and bonds. It develops into hidden treasure.** The maturity of romance transcends the physical; it connects with the heart and emotions. Romance is the force or channel of expression that brings a man and woman into unity. They indeed are one. Where do the one end and the other begin?

Romance is intimate communion for the maturing couple. The look in the eye, the holding of the hand, the walk on the sidewalk, all these and more are a part of him loving his wife. He is beyond his selfishness. He is beyond his youthful distractions of other women. He may be tempted, but he knows what love is. **Love is his wife.**

What is the purpose of romance? It is the communication of one man to one woman that I love you, you are the most important person in my life, I think about you first, **I see you as the focus and purpose of my manhood as a man to my wife.** Romance then is the manifestations of this love. It is a man paying close attention to the

woman of his dreams and his life. This attention is confirmed and affirmed by the many things he does for her. The practicing of special efforts to show this love will not go unnoticed. She will respond to her man if he will be romantic with her in mind.

I can tell you that for years I struggled with romance. How do we define it? When does it happen? What is romantic? I watched movies and saw the many things being portrayed as romantic almost always they were **centered on discovering love**. Furthermore, the romantic activities usually always included **spending money**—which I didn't have to spend. The frustrations I experienced were the result of confusion and ignorance. First, I couldn't romance my wife with the same thrill and passion of new love. Second, I didn't have money to build, buy, or provide a better more romantic home. Along with that we couldn't go on lavish vacations, or rendezvous weekends. I remember almost arguing with my wife about how empty I felt romantically. As a young wife, her expectations were probably just as confused as mine. In time, we managed through those first years of marriage, and once in a while I stumbled across a romantic moment with her.

Some of the frustration I experienced related to sex and wanting the same passion always. This is unreasonable of course. What made it worse was watching shows or movies where new love and passion are viewed frequently—usually in sinful ways. The result of such thinking is the wrong idea and wrong expectations. We are setting ourselves up for trouble, disappointment, disillusionment, and continual frustration if we compare our relationships to the illusions presented on the screen. **The illusion** continues because women simply do not act the way many are portrayed in movies and/or porn. Our wives are real woman, not actors being made to fulfill some director's or writer's wishes.

We are setting ourselves up for trouble when we are viewing pornography of any kind for that is not sexual love that is

lust. More than a few marriages have been destroyed by the indulgent, self gratifying, replication of porn in the married bedroom. No wife wants to be lusted after, seen as an object of pleasure, or used for a husband's fantasy. More important is the fact that such behavior is adultery even though it is played out in the marriage bed.

Romance is a challenge to be giving. It is an act of love grounded in commitment. It is an act of showing your mate her priority in your life. **It is a growing love, maturing in an atmosphere of trust.** Romance is not a thing, place, or item, it is a way of treating you wife special. **A way of communicating with her like you would no other.**

A father who is romantic with his wife will do his sons and daughters a great service. He will help establish the fact that there is far more than new love and passion. He will by example be placing their mother as the focus of his life. He will by example be showing his sons how to keep the love of his life the central figure and attention.

Romance is the higher experience of loving your mate. It is the higher way of treating her. It is the result of overcoming the hazards, obstacles, and pitfalls of married life. All marriages have arguments, conflicts, struggles, financial stresses, decisions that interrupt daily life, preoccupation with raising kids, etc. You know you've overcome when your love manifests as a continuing romantic focus in your mate.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT:

In the movie *As Good As It Gets*, the main lead (Jack Nicholson) is psychologically impaired with various obsessions and rude habits. He is interested in his waitress (Helen Hunt). The movie hits a high point when she asks or rather demands him to compliment her. He struggles but finally says, **"You make me want to be a better man."** She of course is floored and overwhelmed.

When was the last time we let our wives know that she makes us want to be a better man? Romance is letting our wife know in spoken or unspoken ways how much she means to us.

WHAT TO DO:

There are books that help us think of ways of showing we care or aiding in our attempt to be romantic. There may be one hundred and one ways to inspire us. **But the truth is we only need to look into our own hearts.** We need to pray to God, who is the greatest romantic, how we genuinely want to show our wives what they mean to us. Stop, think, meditate, you know your wife, you know your circumstances, you know what she's like, what she wants (if you are listening and if not, start), and you know your marriage history. No one else knows these things—they aren't supposed to. It's in us. It's what helped us in our first mission to win our wife. It's still there it only needs to be released, put in gear. **Here's how we put it in gear: [make the mission of your life, to cherish your wife.](#)** Make it your mission to show her love that indicates she's the most important person in your life. I guarantee your romantic gear will get out of idle, and it will come to you. The key is making loving your wife, making her your focus and attention the priority of your life (outside of serving and loving God first). We are honoring and serving the Lord when we do.

Special Note: Each of us has a love language. This means that we are especially receptive when communication takes place through our love language. It may sound strange or unbelievable, but if you'll investigate just a little I think you'll be amazed at how true it is. There are **five love languages** and I'm just going to introduce you to them here.

- 1) Touch (non sexual contact), confirming love.
- 2) Gifts indicating love.
- 3) Acts of kindness or service showing love.

- 4) Affirmation or verbal expressions of love.
- 5) Undivided quality time and attention.

The point of bringing this up is **that we can miss each** other if I'm trying to be romantic in expressing my love to my wife with one language and she receives best through another. If gifts are what she responds to and I do acts of kindness around the house, she'll appreciate it some, but not to the degree I would want. If I hug her and tell her I love her, and her love language is quality time, I won't get the response I'm hoping for. If I give her quality time and she responds to gifts, we'll still be frustrated at some level.

There is a book by the title, **Love Languages** by Gary Chapman I highly recommend it. But knowing most men, sitting down and reading a book about love isn't what they want to do. However, if your mission is to love your wife and let her know how important she is to you, wouldn't it make sense to be accurate? For those I'm wasting my time trying to convince to read the book, a shorter version about identifying and working with love languages is in the outline on Marriage Principles called Love Languages. It is available. You might find it interesting to discover your own love language too.

FROM YOU ONLY...

Believe it or not, most if not all wives want romantic gestures **ONLY** from one man, their husband; they do not want flowers from someone else; they want them from the love of their life. Receiving attention from another man may be flattering, and it may tempt them, **but they'd rather have one man's attention**. They devoted their youth, their beauty, and the prime of life to their husband. It is very disappointing for any wife to be taken for granted. It is discouraging for them to long for focused attention

from the one they committed themselves to, to realize he went onto other things, went to sleep, or had placed her on hold. **HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIFE** (Eph. 5:25)! A wife is vulnerable and susceptible to another man's attention only when the husband neglects her.

This means cherish her; make her the mission of your life. You are in a position, God given, to be the initiator, the planter, the seed sower, **the gardener, of one unique woman**. Romance is that task of developing your relationship to your wife. New love is only the beginning, discovering mature love, trust, feelings, depth of emotions with one woman, takes time, work, attention, diligence, patience, character, integrity, fidelity, faithfulness—all virtues God wants us to grow in...In a way, we have this precious garden, what is the condition of that garden? Is it overgrown with neglect? Is it weeded, nourished, and protected? What kind of garden is descriptive of our marriage relationship? We have been distracted by our job or money, or finding a purpose and miss the most vital relationship in our lives—our wife.

SCRIPTURE:

1) Eph. 5:25-29 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

2) Col. 3:19 “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter toward them.

3) I Pet. 3:7 “Husbands, like wise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

4) John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

5) John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

6) John 17:21 “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

7) Eph. 5:31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24)

8) Song of Solomon is understood allegorically to picture God’s betrothed love to Israel His bride.

9) Jeremiah 3:8,9 “Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and tress.”

*This booklet addresses what men need to do, there is another booklet entitled “**Respect**” that addresses what women need to do.

*For more information or questions call the office at 609/971-9700

*A great resource for marriage and family issues can be found online at Focus on the Family ministries out of Colorado Springs, Colorado, with Dr. James Dobson. Type in “Focus on the Family” in any search engine and you’ll be connected.