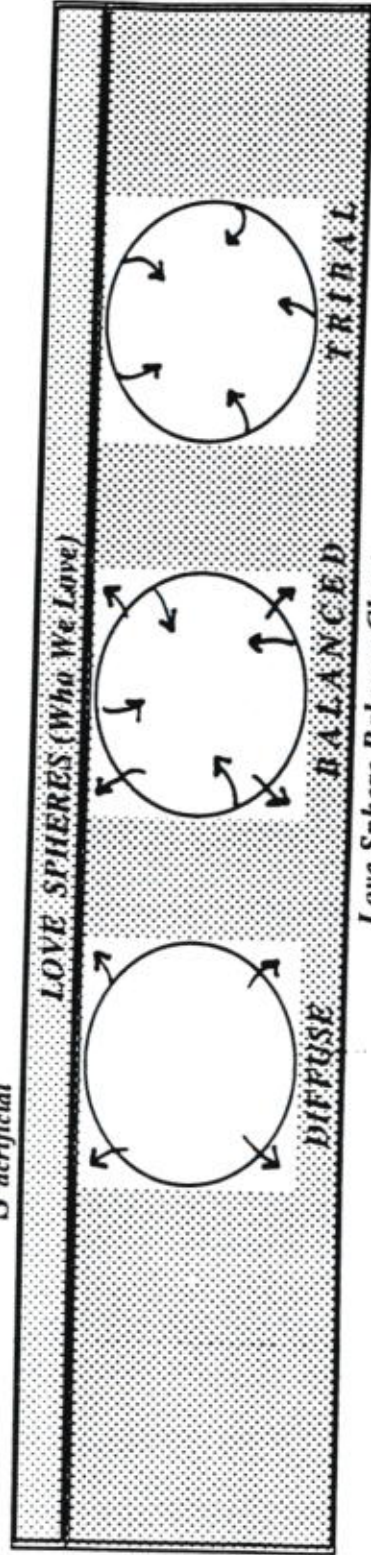


XENOS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP - BIBLICAL COUNSELING

LOVE THERAPY

Biblical Love Definition:

- G** racious/ Forgiving
- E** motional/ Genuine Warmth
- A** ll
- R** edemptive Discipline
- S** acrificial



Love Sphere Balance Chart

- Present Love Feelings-----
- Emotional-----
- Spontaneous-----
- Empathetic-----
- Permanent Love Values-----
- Critical-----
- Rigid-----
- Confrontive-----

Love Defects (How We Love)

- Infantile: "I deserve because I want." Takes love; conditioned on how they perceive love given.
- Work-For-Love: Usually women. "I care, I do for you, but..." Emotionally and functionally gives, but demands a response through emotional manipulation.(the hook, "After all I've done, how could you...")
- Work Substitute: Usually men. Work is substituted for emotional relating. Great difficulty in understanding the emotional side of life. "I work hard, you should know I love you." Failure at work destroys feelings of security and being loved.
- Emotional Transplant: Usually female. The woman trained to receive emotional life from achievement, grades, evaluations and career. Unprepared for the emotional sacrifice needed for role as wife and mother. When depressed about lack of present love feelings and/or failure at home, will return to career or activities that previously brought love feelings.

Love Therapy: Definitions and Strategies

Dennis McCallum

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Description

The basis for love therapy is the biblical notion that a key to solving most emotional problems is the development of "victorious love output." According to this notion, learning to build deep, mature relationships will naturally bring to light our relational deficiencies and these in turn are usually the main problems we face in life. While love therapy is compatible with dynamic model approaches that focus on discovering deep causes for emotional and mental problems, it focuses mainly on a different question: Where do we go from here? Love therapy assumes that insight has accomplished little until we observe tangible improvement in the heart of human living: clients' relational lives.

Love therapy attempts to define the main aspects of biblical love relationships and associated problem areas from a biblical perspective. After carefully defining love, we use the definition as a yard-stick by

which to measure or identify various deficiencies in a person's relational life. While the client's problems may in part be result of the actions or attitudes of other people in the client's life, we assume that, in the final analysis, clients suffer from a failure to *victoriously* love others.

This approach has born excellent fruit with people suffering from common problems and even from moderate neuroses. I have little experience to suggest it is adequate for more severe personality disorders or with major mental illness, although others have reported favorable results even in relatively severe cases.

In love therapy, the key to success in one's emotional life is victorious mature love *output*, rather than love *input*. Therefore, no matter how those around us behave, we are always able to employ biblical principles of love, and in non-clinical cases, this should eventually result in improved emotional health. Love therapy defines a person's tendencies in relationships (or lack thereof) before developing a practical strategy for advancement in love-giving. In theory, advancement in loving, especially in those areas where the client is weak will minister to the individual's most central needs.

In this paper, we will define ideal biblical love. Then we will study various commonly found deficiencies in relational patterns. Finally, we will examine some typical strategies for relational development for various types of people.

Biblical Love Defined

The biblical ideal of Christian love could be defined as: *A commitment to give of one's self in every area for the good of another.*

Put differently, "mature Love" in love therapy includes four aspects. These aspects can be conceived as parts of the whole as the following diagram shows.

Emotional	Disciplining
Sacrificial	Forgiving

We will examine each of these aspects in turn.

The Sacrificial Aspect

The *sacrificial* aspect of love is based on passages such as Mark 10:45 where Christ explains that, "The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve." Here, positive servitude is seen as the example of Christ--complete willingness to give of one's self for the good of another. In John 15 Jesus says, "Greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friends." We see that Christ did live this way. But we must also see that he commanded believers to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12; 13:34).

Such servitude does not require that the other person request help. *Initiative* in serving is an important component of Christ-like love because, although "no one seeks for God," we find that, "while we were still loved us." This means that the idea of positive servitude is an active, rather than a passive concept. The lover is not *responding* to love demands, he/she is *seeking* ways to serve and meet needs. It also means that biblical lovers won't complain that, "no one has called me on the phone," or that, "It's always me who has to do the asking," etc. To the Christ-like lover, initiative is always viewed as an opportunity, not as a

burden. The creativity and work needed to come up with new ways to imitate love giving are part of the sacrifice of love.

Self-sacrifice means that I have waived all personal rights within a relationship. Christ certainly had basic human rights such as justice and equality. Yet these were voluntarily waived when he allowed himself to be crucified while innocent. We do not find Christ complaining that "It isn't fair" as the nails are driven into his hands. Mature Christ-like love, then, rejects the idea that "I have a right to be treated in such-and-such a way," and instead, has not only accepted the unfairness of life, but sees self-sacrifice as more important than fairness.

Fairness is still a useful concept to mature lovers, because some relationships should be governed by fairness rather than self-sacrifice. Examples might include business dealings, crime and punishment, and a just war. Most of these relationships are not love relationships, and deal more with social ethics than with individual ethics.

Self-sacrificial servanthood is probably the most central theme in biblical ethics. When viewed from this perspective, we see that biblical love is not primarily a feeling of affection for another, although it is certainly compatible with affection. Instead, love is primarily the action of serving another (see John's definition of love in I John 3:17, where love is seen less as a feeling and more as action). Such serving action can be rendered whether feelings of direct affection are present at the moment or not. Because giving love is a matter of willing commitment rather than the presence of a feeling, our definition of love begins with the phrase "commitment to give of one's self. . . ."

The Forging Aspect of Love

Another implication of the imitation of Christ is the idea of *forgiveness*. Jesus emphasized the need to forgive others (Mt. 6:14,15; 18:21-35). Therefore, bitterness, remembering of wrongs and retributive acts are excluded from our understanding of authentic biblical love (I Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32).

God's insistence that we forgive others is based on the fact that he has forgiven us, and just as his forgiveness covers all sin, our forgiveness has to be complete and without exception (Col. 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."). Therefore, Christians who relate to God on the basis of his forgiveness, while at the same time insisting on the right to refuse forgiveness to others, are fundamentally hypocritical. Stated positively, the recognition of our own sins and the depth of God's forgiveness provides motivation to voluntarily forgive others.

Unresolved anger and resentments involving current or past wrongs can be highly disruptive to relationships. Resentment and hate are terrifically draining emotionally, and these are sure to follow when we fail to forgive from the heart. The depression and hostility resulting from lack of forgiveness can manifest itself in other relationships as well as in our functional lives, rendering us unable to complete demanding tasks and reducing our reliability.

The Disciplining Aspect of Love

However, forgiveness does not imply passivity in the face of evil. Practicing Discipline is also an important aspect of biblical love. According to many passages, real love includes the responsibility to discipline, admonish, rebuke, or oppose others *for their own good* (Mt. 18:11-14; Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:5-7; II Cor. 7:8-12; Gal. 6:1; Col. 1:28; 3:16; I Thess. 5:14; II Thess. 3:6,14; I Tim. 5:1,2; II Tim. 2:24-26; 3:16,17 Titus 1:13; Heb. 12:5-12; III Jn. 9,10; etc.). When dealing with Christians, we should be guided in

the application of discipline by the goal of seeing others conformed to the image of Christ. Christians are also called to grow up to "the fullness of the stature of Christ" (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 13-15). When dealing with non Christians, we still have a basis for discipline, mainly focusing on general principles of relating which we can negotiate with others for the common good.

Discipline in love must be carefully differentiated from any principle of justice or fairness. The point in discipline in love is not to punish fairly for wrong-doing, but to help the other person change for the better. Therefore, the believer is free to be "unfair" in the sense that more grace may be shown than would be warranted by the other's attitude or actions. Likewise, different people can be treated differently even though their actions are identical. When practicing discipline in love, our focus is toward the future (seeking redemptive change), whereas the focus of justice is on the past (matching the punishment to the crime).

Discipline in love is never the product of an angry loss of self-control. Discipline is a carefully measured response to observed behavior or attitudes. Anger may be incorporated into a disciplinary discussion for the sake of emphasis. However, such anger would be an "anger without sin" (Eph. 4:26) because it is not a selfish reaction to the violation of one's personal rights. Like Jesus, who demonstrated anger when cleansing the temple, we may realize that some people will listen only when we demonstrate a certain level of indignation.

In our earlier definition of love, the disciplinary aspect can be seen in the phrase, "for another's good" rather than simply, "for another." This is because what another wants and what that person needs may be completely different.

The Emotional Aspect of Love

The *emotional* needs of other people are important as well as their practical needs. Therefore, true biblical love is committed to meeting legitimate emotional needs when possible and appropriate. If we serve others in a cold and unfeeling way, we are loving sub-biblically. The examples of Christ, who wept for the sheep of Israel who had no shepherd, and who wept at Lazarus' tomb, as well as the many examples of nurturing emotion found in the writings of Paul both demonstrate the importance of emotional encouragement, disclosure, empathy and compassion. Scripture calls on believers to be "kind and tender-hearted" and to speak words that edify (Eph. 4:29,32).

According to love therapy, our focus is not merely on trying to constantly feel strong sensations of affection, sorrow, or ecstasy for another. Rather, our focus is on *expressing* these emotions based on the truth. Thus, emotional expression can and should go beyond the immediate feeling of the one expressing it. The larger context of the relationship may dictate that I express affection and care, even when I do not feel spontaneously compelled to do so. Such expression would not be manipulation because what I express is actually true, and because I am expressing it in order to give, not to take. In fact, expressing nurturing emotion often more truly reflects the truth about a relationship than would a lack of such expression.

In theory, as we learn to express emotions, the present *experience* of those feelings becomes more frequent and real. As in other areas of life, believers can find their feelings coming into line with what they know to be true. The emotional aspect of giving in love is expressed in our earlier definition by the phrase, "... in every area. . . ." This phrase is important for those who would give in other areas, but who would not easily give emotionally.

Those who are already strongly emotional may need to consider how they express emotions as well. Negative emotional expressions should be controlled. If we feel justified in "venting" our feelings, even

though they are unedifying or even destructive to others, we are practicing a selfish form of love alien to the Bible. Likewise, if we demand that others express certain emotions in certain ways we violate the concept of sacrificial love mentioned above. These are love demands, which are antithetical to the notion of self-giving.

On the other hand, we might find it appropriate to take loved ones to task for their lack of emotional expression, but only if such confrontation is for their own good. Anyone who cannot express caring emotion has a problem with will inhibit relationships. Therefore as seen earlier, we may be moved by the principle of discipline in love to approach others with their need to change lest their own relationship (perhaps including the ones with us) suffer.

Deficiency patterns in love: "Love Spheres"-- Who We Love

In love therapy, we refer to "love spheres." Love spheres refers to our pattern of choices regarding *who* to love. Two terms are used to describe this area: the Tribal love sphere, and the Diffuse love sphere.

The Tribal Love Sphere

Some people form relatively few relationships and remain in those relationships as long as possible, even if they are destructive. Such people usually selfishly cling to old relationships because they find the process of building new relationships burdensome or even frightening. In extreme (though not unusual) cases, some people's circle of relationships is no larger than the nuclear family.

This type of relational pattern is called *tribalistic*. The term tribalistic comes from oral cultures where members of other tribes are often viewed as sub-human. Tribes commonly use the same word for both the name of their tribe and for "human being." When people look at the world this way, they have little interest in relating to members of other tribes on a personal level. Relationships with outsiders are usually limited to a very superficial level involving business or diplomacy.

Many Westerners demonstrate the same mentality, defining their family as their "tribe." Relationships with those outside the tribe are neither sought nor welcomed, except on a very superficial level. People outside the tribe are treated virtually like symbols rather than actual people. Meanwhile, relationships within the tribe are expected to completely meet all relational needs. Such expectations are really love demands, and other family members feel burdened and suffocated because they can never fulfill such demands.

When tribalistic people need to form new relationships (perhaps because one's tribe is gone), this presents a serious problem. Overly tribalistic people will have difficulty forming new relationships, reaching out to the lost with God's love, using their gifts in ministry, and valuing people outside the tribe.

According to love therapy, some people naturally lean toward a tribalistic pattern of relating. Strangely, the we observe that narrowness in relational life is often connected to a general narrowness or rigidity in most areas of life. Tribalism in non-relational areas of life is called "functional tribalism." The functionally tribalistic person derives a sense of security from "sameness." Even though the status quo may not be particularly satisfying, it's better than changing to something new. Therefore, tribalistic people tend to live with a great deal of routine in their lives. The same schedule every week and every day will tend to be comforting to the tribalistic person, while not knowing what is going to happen next causes anxiety. The diffuse person would feel trapped by the same routine that makes tribal people feel secure. For functionally tribal people, messiness is very disturbing, while a diffuse person often has no problem with messiness. This characteristic rigidity may extend into all areas of life, reflecting a desire for *structure and*

predictability. The tribalist's insistence on a strict routine may interfere with the need to adapt to new conditions at work or elsewhere. In extreme cases, the tribalist may eventually lose the ability to function in any but one way.

This desire for predictability may lead to a form of relating based on controlling loved ones. The tribal person may interpret another's submission to their control as love. Yet, as the love feelings resulting from control of, let's say, the other's schedule wears off, the tribal lover feels the need to exert further control in other areas just to keep up the same feelings. Those who love tribalists may end up jumping through incredible hoops to avoid punishment.

In marriage, this desire for control may also result in a variety of sexual dysfunctions. These could range from the need to have sex in only one way, to complete rigidity or impotence when the person feels unable to enter into an intimate, yet uncontrollable situation requiring improvisation and vulnerability. Paradoxically, some tribalists may come to interpret their spouses agreeing to sex as submitting to control. They then may begin to constantly demand sex as a sign of love.

Control is a key word for understanding the tribalistic love sphere. Extreme tribalists often develop control-related neuroses. Various phobic complexes can result from the inability of the tribalist to control some aspects of the environment. Anxiety can come to play an increasing role as the tribalist worries that he/she may lose control of the situation or of the future.

Family members who realize that they are expected to meet all of the needs of the tribalist often feel repelled. Ironically, tribalists often end up with quite alienated relationships even within their own tribe. The in-grown environment breeds relational ill-health, in-fighting, and simmering resentments. Hysterical episodes sometimes afflict extreme tribalists who feel they are losing control.

The Diffuse Love Sphere

The diffuse person is the opposite of the tribalistic. Diffuse people demonstrate a tendency to become quickly involved in a new relationship, and to immediately feel "close." However, they typically fail to invest sufficiently in the relationship especially after the initial enthusiasm wears off. Relationships tend to become "boring." As relational problems arise, the diffuse person often finds it easier to form a relationship with someone else than to resolve problems in existing relationships. Of course, even tribalistic people may decide to form new relationships in some cases, but the diffuse do so much more often. The result is usually a series of superficial relationships. In extreme cases, diffuse people may never actually form any relationships at all. They may simply meet people and interact on a sub-relational level, seeking stimulation which they interpret as love.

Just as the tribalistic individual desires structure and control in life, the diffuse person desires stimulation and freedom. Lack of stimulation leads to boredom, restlessness and often resentment toward loved ones. Diffuse people may find stimulation in either the functional area (video games or job changes) or in the relational area (moving from one romance to another).

Present Love Feelings vs. Permanent Love Values

In love therapy, the stimulation sought by diffuse people is referred to as "present love feelings." Diffuse people falsely identify cravings within, believing them to be a need for drug intoxication or public acclaim, for instance, when they really long for present love feelings--the present sense of being loved. Present love feelings are evident when teenagers "fall in love." Such feelings are tangible sensations of excitement

When dealing with love spheres, we may encounter a confusing twist, especially with men. Some people are functionally tribalistic, and relationally diffuse. Others are relationally tribalistic, and functionally

these later. Recognizing and limiting excesses in the preferred love sphere. We will consider practical ideas for both of Balance can be enhanced by two means: 1) Learning to appreciate the missing love sphere, and 2)

antithetical to excessive diffuseness also. Stimulation is a poor substitute for real love. Eph. 5:25-29. The principle of "remaining in that condition in which you were called," (1 Cor. 7:20) is Excessive diffuseness would be antithetical to the biblical call for deep love relationships, such as

excessive tribalism. The scriptural mandate for such a balance is clear. Jesus critiques extreme tribalists in Matthew 5:46, where he rejects the idea of "loving only them that love you." This is sub-biblical selfishness because it ignores the needs of those outside one's family or affinity group. Likewise, the Pharisees' attempt to evade responsibility to love outsiders was rebuked by the example of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). All of the passages that call for outreach to the lost (cf. Matthew 28:19) are also, by implication, against

care for those outside the tribe. within a tribal framework, while retaining both the ability and the desire to establish new relationships and but to achieve a relative *balance* between them. A mature biblical lover should be able to build deeply. The goal of love therapy in the area of love spheres is neither to eliminate tribalistic or diffuse tendencies,

Balanced Love Spheres

In marriage, a diffuse person may refuse to invest in a relationship now considered "old hat." Diffuse spouses may struggle with constant feelings of dissatisfaction in the marital relationship because it isn't as stimulating as other immoral relationships, or even as the married relationship was at the beginning. Divorce is very common among diffuse people for the obvious reason that their spouses are dissatisfied with the level of involvement in the marriage, and/or the diffuse one becomes convinced that another person would be more rewarding than the present spouse. Diffuse people are prime candidates for adultery. Their spouses often complain that they are never home.

The diffuse person tends to develop assorted emotional disorders as time goes on. Typical types of disorders are drug addiction, alcoholism, obesity, and inability to succeed at a job, finish school or complete other complex tasks. This is because the failure to build deep relationships results in a sense of boredom, emptiness or void which demands solution. The diffuse person typically reacts to such feelings by seeking stimulation. The particular type of stimulation sought may vary, but there is little doubt that any satisfaction derived thereby will be only temporary. If the diffuse person is turning to intoxicants for stimulation, more will be taken in an effort to achieve the same temporary level of excitement, often resulting in addiction.

Tribalistic people appreciate a different type of love feeling referred to as "permanent love values." The sense of security and relaxation that some people feel when sitting around their parent's or their own house in a familiar chair, with family members around them, are examples of permanent love values. Although we experience little sense of excitement associated with such love values, and often little overt emotional response at all, tribalistic people find such situations very attractive.

which generally cannot be maintained over a long period of time. To the diffuse person, present love feelings are love. Anything else is an unsatisfying imitation of the real thing.

It is imperative that the work substitute learn how to express positive emotion, and that his pig-tail pulling be curtailed and moderated substantially.

Adult work substitute men continue to relate to friends and family members in this immature, negative way. A work substitute man may come home and pinch his wife in the rear, commenting that she is gaining weight. He later wonders why he does such things, protesting that it's all in fun. His wife complains that it's not fun, and feels that her husband is deliberately mean. Actually, his lack of emotional maturity, knowledge, and humility leave him without effective means of positive nurturing relating.

When seeking an emotional component in relationships, the work substitute often replaces positive nurturing emotional expressions with a practice called "pig-tail pulling." Pig-tail pulling derives its name from a typical practice of 10 year old boys. A boy at this age may feel attracted to a girl in his class, but lacks the maturity to express his feelings in a positive way. Instead, he pulls her pig-tail (or kicks her in the shin) during recess. She yells at him and perhaps chases him, thus completing an immature relational interaction which, although not ideal in the mind of the boy, is better than nothing.

The work substitute may have less imbalance in the area of love spheres than other types, but this can be misleading. Although the work substitute is willing to relate to outsiders and to insiders, the type of relationship involved is deficient in both cases.

Actually, the work substitute is guilty of substituting the enjoyment of goal attainment at work for the fulfillment of love relationships. Likewise, he replaces expressions of love with "doing things" for others. Overt emotional statements and actions seem mushy, ridiculous, and unnecessary to the work substitute.

Typically, the work substitute is an adult male who draws much of his love feelings from his career. He may seem like a "cold fish" because he does not feel able to express positive emotion, complaining that it makes him feel like a sissy, or a phony. He usually can express anger and resentment. The work substitute commonly cannot understand what others want from him in the area of emotion. He is aware that his wife and others complain that he is unloving, but finds this confusing. He points out that he brings home the pay check, that he bought his wife a new car, and that he spends time with the family, unlike a lot of husbands who run around all the time.

"Work substitute" describes a love deficiency in the area of emotional giving. This syndrome is commonly found in men, although a very small number of women also manifest the syndrome.

The Work Substitute

In addition to the question of love spheres (who we love) love therapy defines patterns in the area of love defects. These are deficiencies or distortions in the way we love. We will define three patterns of love deficiency. They are "Work Substitute," "Work for Love," and "Infantile" patterns of love.

Love Defects--How We Love

Some people are already relatively balanced in the area of love spheres. These people's problems are likely in other areas, such as love defects.

diffuse (although this is more rare). In the first case, the man will be a rigid, dominating family man, but also may have an occasional affair with his secretary. The functionally diffuse will have no interest in new relationships, but continually begins new hobbies, sports, or maintain a gambling habit for stimulation.