



Part 3: Family Ties

7 Characteristics of Love That Lasts

1. _____
"This is my lover, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" Song of Solomon 5:16

Dr. John Gottman, after a 15 year study of over 600 couples: "The determining factor in whether husbands or wives feel satisfied with their marriage is, by 70%, the couples' friendship"

2. _____
"All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast." Pr 15:15

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."
Prov. 17:22

Drawing on interviews with 100 couples, Dr. Catherine Johnson reports: Couples married happily for over 50 years tend to attribute their marital longevity at least partly to a sense of humor!

3. _____
"Love builds up." 1 Cor. 8:1

"...encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13

Psychologists Cliff Norman and Howard Markham: Newlyweds with a put-down per comment ratio of 5:100 or lower tend to be together 10 years later. But those with a ratio of 10:100 or higher were nearly all divorced.

4. _____
"A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel." Prov. 15:18

5. _____
"...as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Josh. 24:15

Gottman's study of 600 couples: "In the strongest marriages, husband and wife share a deep sense of meaning... they don't just 'get along', they build a sense of purpose into their lives together."

6. _____
"They all joined together constantly in prayer..." Acts 1:14

According to Gallup's 1997 study of 657 married couples, the best predictor of whether a couple is happy is joint prayer.

7. _____
Jesus: "...what God has joined together, let man not separate." Mark 10:7-9

Even the infamous Dr. Kinsey agreed; after studying 6,000 marriages and 3,000 divorces: "There may be nothing more important in a marriage than the determination that it will persist."

Daily Meditations

Take a few minutes every day to read Scripture, pray, and answer some thought-provoking questions pertaining to this week's topic.

This week's memory verse:

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." - Phil. 2:1-2

Monday

Let's start with the idea of shared purpose. Read this week's memory verses: Phil. 2:1-2. If you're married, are you and your spouse "like-minded... one in spiritual purpose"?

Have you discussed your common spiritual mission? If not, take the time to talk about this with your mate today (see the exercise on the back page of the message notes, great for those married or single.). Singles, spiritual compatibility is typically the most ignored prerequisite among those seeking a marriage partner. Take a few moments to think about the benefits of having a common mission... it is the cornerstone of a healthy marriage!

Ask God to help you clarify your purpose in life! Praise Him for the sense of mission He gives us!

TLC message by Rene Schlaepfer for February 23 & 24, 2002

Tuesday

Read Eccl. 10:18 & Prov. 16:20. Are you and your spouse actively pursuing the kind of marriage you want? In what ways?

Galatians 6:7 says that a person “reaps what he (she) sows”. What is one way that you could “sow” the seeds of a successful marriage today?

If you're single, how could you begin actively pursuing the life you want-- sowing what you wish to reap-- today?

In prayer, thank God for giving you the resources for a healthy marriage. Ask Him to give you opportunities to invest in your marriage today!

Wednesday

One of the most important characteristics of happy relationships-- married or single-- is conflict maturity. Read Prov. 15:18. The five typical ways of conflict resolution are: yield, withdraw, compromise, win or resolve. Which is your typical style? Why?

One key to healthy conflict resolution is communication. Read Proverbs 16:24, 18:21 & 27:5. What do these verses say about communicating?

Ask God to help you speak today with grace, truth and love as you seek to resolve relational conflicts.

Thursday

An essential part of conflict maturity is to learn to forgive. Read James 5:16 and Proverbs 28:13. Why is it sometimes hard to apologize?

Why is it sometimes hard to forgive?

Ask your mate --or your best friends-- if there is anything you have done that is causing resentment or bitterness.

Ask the Lord to show you if you need to apologize to a family member for anything. If so, please do so now! Thank God for His love and forgiveness for you!

Friday

“Enjoy life with your wife (or husband), whom you love...” Eccl. 9:9

Every day with your spouse is a truly a gift from God! How will you enjoy this gift today?

Start by spending some time reflecting on God's goodness-- how blessed you are in marriage! If you're single, think of a friend or relative that God enriches your life with. Next, plan a date or special occasion with your spouse if you're married, or with a friend or relative if you're single. Find ways to express your appreciation for that person and enjoy a slice of life with them!

Thank God for the important people in your life-- by name.

Saturday

Look back over the notes from last weekend. What points seemed most relevant to your life?

How can you apply them?

Again, imagine the unlimited potential of a church that lives out God's love! Test yourself on the memory verses and ask God to help you live them out in your life. Please pray for our weekend services, and especially as Easter approaches quickly!

Great Books on Marriage

Willard Harley, *His Needs Her Needs*

John Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

Catherine Johnson, *Lucky In Love*

Michael McManus, *Marriage Savers*

Robert Moeller, *To Have and To Hold*

Putting the Fun Back!

10 Creative, Romantic Ideas That Cost Under \$20

1. Dress up for a meal you bring home from your favorite fast-food restaurant. Take out a tablecloth, centerpiece and your favorite romantic music.
2. Visit a museum or art gallery. Talk with each other about the art you like and dislike.
3. Go bowling together. Come up with prizes you can give each other for winning games; i.e., a massage, a week's worth of doing dishes, etc.
4. Write love notes to one another and hide them in unusual places like the freezer, a shower, the bathtub, her makeup kit, or under the bed covers.
5. Collect leaves or sea shells together on a nice day.
6. Buy a modern paraphrase of the Song of Solomon and read it to one another!
7. Walk hand in hand along a nature trail.
8. Watch a sunset together.
9. Rent each other's all-time favorite movies and play a double feature at home.
10. Look at a child's baby book or your wedding album and relive some memories together.

(Adapted from Love Is A Decision, by Gary Smalley and John Trent)

Defining Your Shared Purpose

Write a "mission statement" for your life. If you're married, write it as a couple. (Think of your own obituary. What would you like it to say?)

With your mission statement in mind, answer these questions:

What goals do you want to accomplish, for yourself, for your spouse, for your children in the next five to ten years?

What is one life dream that you want to fulfill before you die?

We often fill our time with things that demand our immediate attention. But what are the truly important things in your life that you really need to block out time for? Ask God to help you in this.

In light of your mission, what should your daily life be like— your marriage, dinnertime, bedtime?

What changes do you need to make to better reflect your common mission in your lives?

(Adapted from The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, by John M. Gottman)

Affirmation Practice: "I Appreciate..."

From the list below, circle three items that you think are characteristic of your spouse. If you're having difficulty coming up with three, feel free to define the word characteristic very loosely! Even if you can recall only one time your spouse displayed this, you can circle it.

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Loving | 25. Cheerful | 51. Virile |
| 2. Sensitive | 26. Coordinated | 52. Kind |
| 3. Brave | 27. Graceful | 53. Gentle |
| 4. Intelligent | 28. Elegant | 54. Practical |
| 5. Thoughtful | 29. Gracious | 55. Lusty |
| 6. Generous | 30. Playful | 56. Witty |
| 7. Loyal | 31. Caring | 57. Relaxed |
| 8. Truthful | 32. A great friend | 58. Beautiful |
| 9. Strong | 33. Exciting | 59. Handsome |
| 10. Energetic | 34. Thrifty | 60. Rich |
| 11. Sexy | 35. Full of plans | 61. Calm |
| 12. Decisive | 36. Shy | 62. Lively |
| 13. Creative | 37. Vulnerable | 63. A great partner |
| 14. Imaginative | 38. Committed | 64. A great parent |
| 15. Fun | 39. Involved | 65. Assertive |
| 16. Attractive | 40. Expressive | 66. Protective |
| 17. Interesting | 41. Active | 67. Sweet |
| 18. Supportive | 42. Careful | 68. Tender |
| 19. Funny | 43. Reserved | 69. Powerful |
| 20. Considerate | 44. Adventurous | 70. Flexible |
| 21. Affectionate | 45. Receptive | 71. Understanding |
| 22. Organized | 46. Reliable | 72. Totally silly |
| 23. Resourceful | 47. Responsible | |
| 24. Athletic | 48. Dependable | |

For each item you checked, briefly think of an incident that illustrates this characteristic of your spouse.

Now, share your list with your spouse. Let him or her know what it is about these traits that you value so highly.