

Love is a Many-Splendored Thing

Track 4



IS MANY SPLENDURED THINGS



LOVE IS MANY SPLENDoured THINGS

Introduction

An adaptation from the book - 40 WAYS TO SAY I LOVE YOU by James R, Bjorge with dialogue questions/exercises added by an anonymous couple who is truly committed to Marriage Encounter Movement. They have made a gift of this programme to other love circles. Love circles can further modify it for their use, if they choose to do so.

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1 LOVE IS WORKING TOGETHER

REFLECTION

God liked pairs, so he made a pair of persons. He called them man and woman. They were the same. Yet they were different.

I was given two arms. They are the same. Yet one arm or hand is stronger. It does the writing. It throws the ball, it has certain abilities developed through years of use. However, it never lords it over the other arm. Right and left work beautifully together as I catch a ball, eat a meal, or hug my beloved. They are companions, not competitors.



Marriage brings together two miracles

I have two eyes, yet I see one image. Neither one argues about having to do more than its share in the workload of seeing. Neither one strives to view more than the other. They exist to fortify each other. I have two legs. I can kick a ball farther with my right foot than with my left, but I could not walk or run unless both willingly transported my body. They cooperate and complement each other, making me mobile.

God made persons with the possibility of being pairs. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one." [Genesis 2:3]. Pairs of persons are to function as one, as do pairs of eyes, hands and feet.

Marriage brings together two miracles with the possibility of creating a third. Have you paused to wonder at these miracles? It is wise to pause and praise God occasionally for the enormous possibilities he placed within our human frames.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: In what areas do I need most to work with you, my spouse? What do we need from each other? How do I feel about us working together more intimately to strengthen our marriage?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: In what areas (or experiences) have I become more thankful for your cooperation and support, my spouse? In what areas can we do better? HDMAMMF?
- c) Small Group or Community: In what ways has being with the group (or community) helped me to be more intimate and whole with you, my spouse? How do I feel telling you this, my spouse and friends?

WRAP UP

I will cooperate. Together, a woman and man can do more than either can do individually. In the spirit of His love, we can work at love together for the good of the whole. Then it is not a question of who is right, but what is right.

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2 LOVE IS NEW EACH DAY

REFLECTION

Ole and Olga lived on a farm. Olga was living on a starvation diet of affection. Ole never gave her any signs of love, and Olga's need to be appreciated went unfulfilled. At her wit's end, Olga blurted out, "Ole, why don't you ever tell me that you love me?" Ole stoically responded, "Olga, when we were married I told you that I loved you, and if I ever change my mind I'll let you know."

Remember in the Old Testament the account of the Israelites wandering in the Sinai desert? During those arduous days God provided them with manna for their physical sustenance. It came fresh each morning like dew on the grass. Some Israelites wanted security for their tomorrows, so they tried to gather a supply for several days at one time. It always spoiled and became full of worms. God seemed to be telling the Israelites that He would daily supply their needs. He wanted them to daily be aware of their dependence on His goodness.



Let's say it today

Other things besides-manna cannot be stored, pickled or embalmed. One is love. Love cannot be stored in a trunk for a rainy day. It cannot be guaranteed by signing a document of intent. It lives each day-only when fresh. Some expressions never grow old. They are always warm and exciting. They burrow into the heart of what really matters. The words "I love you" envelop the beloved with a never-tiring caress. The words "I missed you" are like gentle rain on thirsty soil. When a person is floored by disappointment, there is no balm quite like the words "I believe in you." So, say them again.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What was something you, my spouse, said or did recently that touched me with your love. How did I feel then? What makes it difficult (or easy) for me to say or signal 'I love you' in daily affirmation, my spouse? HDIFTYT?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: What are the things you continue to do or say, my spouse, which help me to feel loved? What are my feelings when I realise you go on caring for me? HDIFTYT?

WRAP UP

I will say it today. In marriage, many good things may have happened in the yesterdays. You may have sung love songs, whispered affection, and passionately embraced. But if not baked fresh today, affection soon becomes stale, and we find ourselves famished for the fresh food of love. So, say it today. Do it today. Feast on the newness of your love.

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3 LOVE IS WILLING TO WAIT

REFLECTION

We are people on the run. We worship quickness. We gulp down our instant coffee and instant tea. Sociologists tell us we even make love too fast.

We race through childhood robbing those few precious years of their joys. Soft cuddly Raggedly Ann dolls used to make pillows for tired little heads. Now they've been replaced by fashion model dolls with figures that bulge in all the right places. Little girls, eager to grow up quickly and look like their dolls, breathlessly await their first bras. As a Boy, I'd wander through the orchard, impatient for the apples to ripen. Sometimes in a moment of impatience I'd devour a few green ones. They were sour and the end result was a stomachache. I learned the virtue of patience the hard way.



But when we arrive at marriage and have said our respective prerequisite for harmony. We want a house and a new car before we can afford them. We want security without struggle. We want complete compatibility before we've worked out adjustments. We want automatic peaks of sexual fulfilment before we've learned what the two of us enjoy. We want the lights off before our spouse is finished with the newspapers.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What would be my precious goals, my spouse, if I my wishes could be granted? When I look at some of the things we are chasing after, what can I delay for the sake of our relationship? HDMAMMF?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: In what ways have you become more patient in your love and consideration for me, my spouse? In what ways have I become more patient and thoughtful? HDIFTYT?
- c) Small Group or Community: Do we see patience and respect as a virtue in our small group (or community)? HDIFAMA?

WRAP UP

I will pause to ponder. Patience is a prerequisite for harmony. Slowdown. You will destroy the miracle of life by rushing it. Inch by inch makes companionship a cinch. Be patient with each other, for God is working in both of you when you let him. And remember - dreams are worth waiting for.

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4 LOVE IS GIVING ROOM TO GROW

REFLECTION

A tall, stately elm stood like a sentinel on duty. The trunk, three feet in diameter, held a crown of green foliage shaped like an enormous puff-ball. Ten feet from the base of this domineering elm was a sturdy oak fighting for its life. It was bent over as it reached out, attempting to grasp a beam of sunlight. But the elm had laid claim to the territory and held the younger oak in submission.

Plants need room to grow. So do people. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Most people die with their music still in them." In marriage, it is easy for one to crowd out the potential of the other.

A marriage is composed of two unique creations of God. Both have received gifts that need nourishment in order to bloom. Wise partners hang on to each other with open hands so that neither suffocates in submission.

I must not only allow my spouse to develop his or her interests and talents. I must encourage it. My spouse then inspires me to explore my abilities and gives me the freedom even to fail. We don't grow in separate backyards, but side by side. We don't dream independently of each other, for we are one, yet two.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: In what areas of our marriage do I see myself overshadowed and shackled? How do I feel about this? What would I ask from you to help me out?
WAMFTYT?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: In what areas am I most thankful for your support and inspiration? How can I be more trusting and encouraging to you? HDIFTYAT?
- c) Small Group/Community: Do we make room for all to grow as individuals, as couples and as a team in this group (or community)? HDMAMMF?

WRAP UP

I will help you grow. The home is not a place where one plant looms large and the other is dwarfed. The happy home finds two plants blooming with family fragrance, each rejoicing in the uniqueness of the other. Home also has plenty of room for some little plants, called children, to sprout and grow.

5 LOVE IS WILLING TO COME IN SECOND

REFLECTION

Frank Sinatra used to sing a popular song, "I Did It My Way." People like that. We all have a bit of peacock pride in us. It's easy to think that my way is always the right way. Thus, every crossroads in marriage becomes a battleground where I stealthily plan and prepare to assure victory for my point of view. We have become indoctrinated with the belief that winning is everything. Thus, we are tempted to keep score in everything we do. In personal relationships, the result of keeping score is devastating.

A famous home run hitter comes up to the plate. He stands at the plate and mightily swings the bat, as though it were a toothpick. The coach signals "bunt". In baseball, we call that a "sacrifice" for the batter sacrifices his own interests to advance the cause of the team. The person who is willing to bunt when necessary is the person who plays well on any team

A marriage is a team endeavour. We often find it necessary to bunt in order to advance the needs of the other. What matters is not whether the husband wins or the wife makes more points. When the good of the team is the foremost pursuit, both husband and wife are winners.



SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What often prevents me from putting you first, my spouse? How can I do better? HDMAMMF?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: Identifying the areas or situations, how do I feel when you put me first and care for my needs before yours, my spouse? HDIFAT?
- c) Small Group/Community: How do I feel about going on in this group (or community)? HDMAMMF⁷

WRAP UP

I will be a team player. Sometimes in the race of togetherness I must decrease the pace so my partner catches up with me. Sometimes he or she must let up and hand the baton to me. We want to cross the finish line in family style.

6 LOVE IS NOT DOMINATING

REFLECTION

I drove into the driveway with a brand-new car. With bucket seats, padded dashboard, and luxury interior, it was a beauty, and I was intensely proud of acquiring it. When my children jumped in for a ride, I told them in no uncertain terms: Keep your feet on the floor, don't mess with the instrument panel, don't drop your gum, don't eat sticky candy. This new car was to be kept as clean as a surgical room in a hospital. I didn't relish the idea of giving a bunch of rowdy boys from the church a ride.



Something strange was happening to me in relationship to this machine on four wheels. It was beginning to possess me just as surely as I possessed it. We were getting locked in a paralysis. Better judgment began to prevail. The new car was to use as well as to look at. While the children stuffed their mouths with popcorn, they were enjoying themselves. A scratch or dent wouldn't destroy the auto. Sitting loose in the saddle made driving a pleasant experience.

Sometimes in marriage we possessively guard our mates, making ourselves nervous and wary. We jealously hold on when they mingle with others, as though we might somehow lose their love. Obsessed with their good looks, we fear watching them grow old and wrinkled. We panic if disease threatens their life style. We are devastated by the thought of our mate dying. But wait a minute! What is marriage anyway?' It is not possessing another person. It is a partnership where each can enjoy the other and have the privilege of sharing life and love. But God alone owns. All life belongs to Him. God is so good that he entrusts us with the care and companionship of another of his children.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: Where do I think I am rather dominating and controlling, my spouse? Can I lei go and free you to blossom and shine? HDIFAMA?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: Where am I sometimes rather dominating and controlling, my spouse? How is this affecting our relationship? HDIFAT?
- c) Small Group/Community: How do I feel about my spouse contributing his/her resources (gifts, talents, time, etc.) with the group (or community)?

WRAP UP

I cannot establish a proprietorship over my mate. He or she is not an appendage which i manipulate. will give you freedom. Like me. you belong to the Master of Life, and I must not suffocate you with possessiveness.

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7 LOVE IS ACCEPTANCE

REFLECTION

Procrustes was a devilish tyrant in Grecian mythology who had a bedstead to which he would tie any unfortunate travellers who happened to fall into his hands. If his captive was so tall that his legs stretched over the edge of the bed, Procrustes would promptly cut off his legs to fit. If the captive was shorter than the bed, Procrustes would torturously stretch him to fit the bed's dimensions.

Descendants of Procrustes' bed seem to appear in many master bedrooms. We pledge not to scissor up our mate when we say, "for better, for worse", but soon we're sizing each other up for tailoring alterations. She is late and makes him wait. He tends not to talk when they go for a walk. She drives too fast. He doesn't look where he is going. The list goes on and on.



Once a young woman asked for a copy of a sermon. She said her husband could not be there that day and he needed to hear it. What she really meant was "He needs to shape up and I want to clobber him with that sermon." To be sure, both my spouse and I need to change for the better. Marriage is always open to improvement. But frontal attacks seldom prompt improvement. Our frequent "put downs" lower our regard for our mate, even if we speak jokingly. And when the water level of regard reaches a dangerous low, there is a marriage drought. I will laugh with you, not at you.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What are my thoughts and feelings when I am pressured to change? HDIFSTWY? (Describe in relation to specific areas of your marriage relationship).
- b) Advanced Love Circle: Where is one area where I have changed (or I'm changing myself) so as to accept and love the person you really are? How has this improved (or is this improving) our relationship? HDIFTYT?
- c) Small Group/Community: How does being with you, our friends, help us to accept ourselves for the persons we are? HDIFAMA?

WRAP UP

I will let you be you. I can't change my spouse by verbal bullets. I will only make my spouse cringe. He or she cannot harass me into being a harmonious husband. However, we can both love and support the best in each other so the climate of warmth and concern causes many of the little irritations to shrivel and die, or at least to lose their significance. Paul exhorts us. "Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good." [Rom. 12:21]. So start the pump of praise. Even if you praise your mate to friends and your mate doesn't hear, your words have a positive effect - you strengthen your love by expressing it.

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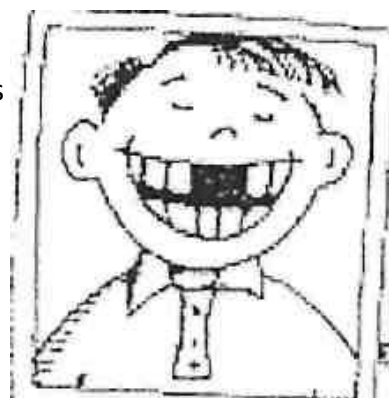
8 LOVE IS SEEING WHAT COULD BE

REFLECTION

There is a story of a beggar who was sitting across the street from an artist's studio. The artist spied him and thought he would make an interesting portrait study, so from a distance he painted the dejected man. When he was finished he called the beggar over to look at it. "Who is it?" the beggar questioned. Then he began to see a slight resemblance to himself. Hesitantly he asked, "Is it I?" The artist replied, "That is the man I see in you." The beggar said, "If that is the man you see in me, that is the man I'll be."

What do you see in your mate? If you spoon dignity out of the cup of your companion, you'll have left a dried-up shell. Whether you use words or reflected silence, your mate gets the message. Words like "stupid", "lazy", and "clumsy" are written in indelible ink, and the sketch is not pleasant. Your mate will live out the portrait you have painted.

It you lovingly paint the portrait your mate's cup overflows with confidence. I have been blessed with a wife who sees much good in me. She doesn't gloss over my weaknesses, but she concentrates on my strengths. I'm no doubt a better man for her praise. If that is the man she sees in me, that is the man I'll be.



Is it me?

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What are your most endearing qualities, my spouse, especially those I'm discovering more of these days? What do these qualities mean to me? HDIFTYT?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: What new things am I discovering about you? What are my thoughts and feelings? HDIFSTWY?
- c) Small Group/Community: Are we able to see the best in each other, my friends? HDIFAT?

WRAP UP

Someone has wisely said, "The worst way to improve the world is to condemn it." This is also true of marriage companions. When Jesus stood before a sinful woman, he said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again." Jesus did not overlook her sin, but neither did he overlook her possibilities. He knew her shameful past, but he concentrated on her potential future. One person said of Jesus, "In the company of sinners, he dreamed of saints." I will look for the best.

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9 LOVE IS PLEASING EACH OTHER

REFLECTION

Have I ever taken the time to discover where my wife enjoys being touched, or do I just touch her in ways that give me the most pleasure? Today we talk a lot about verbal "strokes" but physical strokes are still very much in style. "If it feels good - do it." In the scariness of marital union, partners can tell each other what feels good. Some strokes are soothing, some exciting, some arousing. We ought to unashamedly reveal what sets off rockets of ecstasy and what soothes us into sleep. Then we should practice pleasing our partners.

It is right for a wife and husband to experiment in giving pleasurable feelings to each other. The apostle Paul puts it this way: "A man should fulfil his duty as a husband, and a woman should fulfil her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs. A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is; in the same way, a husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is." [1 Cor. 7:3-4]



I remember well the old-fashioned water pump. The pump always had to be primed. I had to pour water into the pump casing to get it started. Many things in life require certain actions before the mechanism will function. Human relationships also require priming.

Men often look at women as instruments to "turn them on" and, if women don't consistently do it, call them "cold cucumbers". They also have the job of priming the pump for the woman. The Scriptures talk about the responsibility of husbands loving their wives [Eph. 5:25]. It seems that women were created with a built-in responder. When that is triggered by consideration, affectionate love from the husband, they turn into the delightful creatures that God has enabled them to be.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

Complete the exercise on Love Is Pleasing Each Other. Exchange and discuss answers with your spouse. Then proceed to dialogue questions.

As I recall the days of our romance, which pleasurable memories of you, my spouse do I specially cherish? HDIFTYT? What "touches" can I consider to please you more today, my spouse? HDIFAMA?

WRAP UP

I will practice the proper touch. Let's try a little more body language in saying, "I love you."

LOVE IS PLEASING EACH OTHER EXERCISE – HUSBAND

A: SHE LOVES ME / SHE LOVES ME NOT - *Recall the heydays of your romance. Recollect the non-verbals of your beloved that really spurred you on, and here you are today.*

- She winks at you while talking or winks from a distance.
- Gazes in your eyes with deep interest and her pupils are dilated.
- Blinks more than usual, fluttering her eyelashes.
- Eyebrows raised and then lowered, then a smile plays from her lips.
- Skin tone becomes flushed, cheeks rosy, being around you.
- She *raises/lowers* the volume of voice to match yours.
- She speeds up or slows down her speaking in rhythm with you.
- She laughs in unison with you.
- Bites her lips, shows tip of tongue, licks her lip.
- Puts her fingernail between her teeth.
- Plays with jewellery, especially with stroking and pulling motions.
- Rubs her wrists up and down.
- Twirls her hair around her fingers while looking at you.
- Rests an elbow in the palm of one hand, holding out her other hand palm up.
- Rubs her chin or touches her cheek.
- Starts sitting straight up and her muscles appear to be firm.
- Her crossed leg is pointed towards or rocking back and forth towards you.
- She allows you to touch her hand, arm, shoulder, or thigh, while talking.
- Others _____

B: SHE WILL STILL TURN ME ON - *Select what you may contemplate these days.*

- Surprises you at the door.
- Shows of her fun or silly side.
- Takes a bath for two with you.
- Does a (private) striptease.
- Gets goose pimples when touched accidentally
- Holds you tight.
- Flashes a sweet smile - really
- Writes a sexy love note.
- Puts aside her distraction - TV, sewing, magazine, etc
- Indulges in your quirks.
- Shows off your talents to others
- Helps you with the handy work (e.g. plumbing)
- "Strokes" you in a love letter
- Others _____

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LOVE IS PLEASING EACH OTHER EXERCISE - WIFE

A: HE LOVES ME/ HE LOVES ME NOT - *Recall the heydays of you: romance. Recollect the non-verbals of your beloved that really spurred you on, and here you are today.*

- Looks at you until you turn around, then boom, he's looking the other way.
- Stares straight into your eyes, his eyes subtly soften, relaxed around the edges.
- Eyebrows flash, then a smile plays from his lips, and eyebrows remain lightly raised while you're talking.
- Eyes watches your lips, travel in a little circle around your face and land back on your eyes.
- Tells you that you smell nice.
- Remembers little things you have mentioned casually.
- Voice gets softer when the two of you talk.
- Does something physical - like grab you in play, poke you, play with your hair.
- Smooths or messes up his hair.
- Guides you by putting his arm on your elbow or in the small of your back.
- Lends you his coat or sweater.
- He fiddles with his socks and pulls them up.
- While looking at you touches his face - strokes his cheek with the back of his fingers, touches his ears, or rubs his chin.
- Perches on the edge of his seat to get closer.
- Stands with hands on hips.
- Others _____ :

B: HE WILL STILL TURN ME ON - *Select what you may contemplate these days.*

- Surprises you at the door.
- Shows of his fun side.
- Takes a bath for two with you.
- Remembers something you said casually yesterday.
- Holds you tight.
- Flashes a natural smile - really.
- Fetches you the papers or glass of water.
- Everything is erect - ahem, stands with all his muscles tight to show his body off to best advantage
- Indulges in your quirks.
- Shows off your talents To others
- Helps with household tasks
- Strokes" and "massages" you in a love letter
- Others

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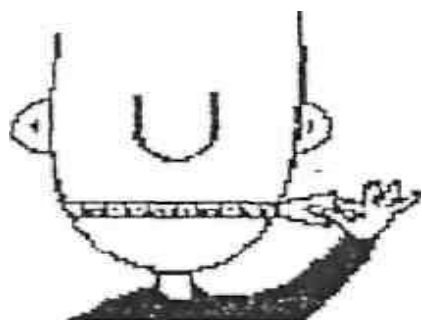
10 LOVE IS SLOW TO ANGER

REFLECTION

Have you ever heard a wasp buzz momentarily around your head as you amble in the backyard in the summertime? If you don't bother it, chances are it will go away. But if you try to swat it, you arouse its indignation, and sting you it will.

Maturity in marriage is the art of learning to roll with the punches, and also knowing and respecting your spouse's vulnerable or sensitive areas. We all need to subdue and conquer oversensitivity to slights. The wise author of Proverbs puts it well: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Jesus showed us the way. He was accused falsely. He was taunted, mocked and reviled. He was spat upon. But there were no shouts of condemnation from his lips. There was no reviling in return. There was only a prayer uttered for the forgiveness those who taunted him.



Respect the 'soft spots' of your mate - fat, tardiness, or the relatives. If you're concerned about keeping the peace, you'll avoid contentious comments. No need to wave the red flag in front of the bull.

I find it easy to be a "minus" man. Criticism always cuts. It's minus stuff. If you cannot say anything kind, say nothing at all.

Someone asked an elderly woman who was well liked what her secret was in keeping so many friends. "Well," she said, "there's just one daily rule I follow. I'm always mighty careful to stop and taste my words before I let them pass my teeth." The marital ride would be more enjoyable if each partner practiced the art of being kind.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

(Answer without blaming each other. Focus on sharing feelings)

- a) Early Love Circle: Which areas between us tend to get heated often, my spouse, because we are vulnerable and sensitive? How do I feel when we have not been careful and gentle with our words?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: In what areas or ways am I experiencing you becoming sensitive and gentle with your words? How do I feel thinking about that?

WRAP UP

I will answer softly. I will be gentle. Take out the book of etiquette and remember that manners belong in marriage. Coarse belching words and actions take their daily toll. But kind words demonstrate loving concern, and they keep a home happy. Be kind. Try it tonight. A plus person brings life to a marriage. Stand opposite your mate and seal each other with the sign of the cross

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11 LOVE IS SPEAKING CLEARLY

REFLECTION

In the winter of the year, assorted jars of jelly are stacked on our basement shelf. They are not only the extra fruit of an abundant season, but also the fruit of my wife's labour. These jellies enhance a slice of toast on a cold winter morning. The jars aren't labelled and we guess the contents by colour. Occasionally, we are surprised by the type of jelly in a particular jar.

Actions, like jars of jelly, sometimes need labels to avoid confusion. I usually eat out at noon, but on this particular day I think it would be pleasant to eat with my wife. Suppose she is busy cleaning house and washing clothes. If I come bombing through the doorway and announce I'm home for lunch, chances are she won't seem overjoyed. Not planning to fix a noontime meal, she will probably think my arrival demonstrates lack of concern for her busy schedule, though I intended to show her that I enjoy her company.



Now the key to such a situation is that I quickly label my reason for coming home. If I put my arm around her and tell her I love her and want to spend the noon hour with her, she'll view my presence in a different light. And the sooner I speak, the better. We reveal the label on jars before tasting the contents. The reverse order is meaningless.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

(Don't find fault with each other. Focus on describing feelings)

What recent incident can I recall when my true intentions were not fully appreciated, my spouse? How did I feel then? What can I possibly do to avoid misunderstandings like this? HDMAMMF?

WRAP UP

I will label my actions. Don't forget to label your jars of jelly!

12 LOVE IS A STATE OF MIND

REFLECTION

We were reminiscing on our courtship days and our first feelings of love. I said, "You know, we choose to love." That sounded academic and calculating to her and she responded rather coldly. She wanted to know if I had proposed to her because of the computer of my mind or the beat of my heart.

Feelings of love are necessary and basic, but I must also love with my mind. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind." A heart of gold and a head full of feathers will not create a happy marriage. The mind must be set on the course of love.

I had a friend from India, a handsome and brilliant lad. We tried to line him up with dates, but he always graciously declined. His father and elder brother had chosen a mate for him to marry when he returned to India. Amazed, I asked how he was sure they could pick out the right "beauty" for him. He simply stated that he trusted their judgment and that he would choose to love the woman they picked.

Love can grow out of deliberate, persistent goodwill. If his mind follows the path of love, the heart will take that course also. The marriage based solely on feelings has a weak foundation. Feelings come and feelings go. Some days we don't feel very loving. Maybe we don't even feel married. But the fact of determined love rides calmly through the storm and soon fact and feelings come together again.

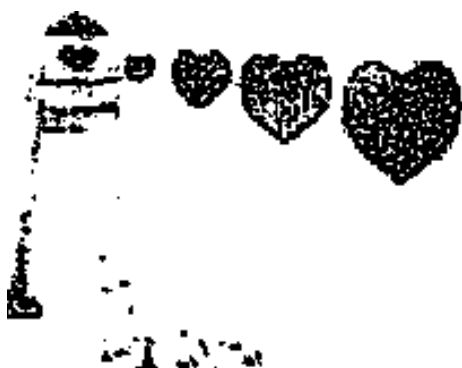
SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Love Circle: Why did I decide to marry you? Are these reasons still important to me?
HDIFSTWY?
- b) Small Group/Community: In our journey together as a group (or community), what qualities or values did we choose to foster among us? HDIFAT?

WRAP UP

I will love you with my mind. When I married, I didn't promise to always feel on cloud nine about the ways of my spouse. Such feelings could not be produced. Instead of promising what I would feel, I promised what I could choose to do: "To have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part."

13 LOVE IS REACHING OUT



REFLECTION

Travelling in the mountains, I have often observed signs that say; "Beware - falling rocks." They alert travellers to impending danger. The marriage road also has dangers of which travellers should beware. One is the attraction of pulling off the side of the road to enjoy the view. Some couples become so engrossed in their private lives that they "let the rest of the world go by." Wrapped up in their own concerns, they retire from any service to other people. They sink so much time, money, and effort into their home that they may imprison their spirits therein.

Sometimes "things" are the problems - they climb into the saddle and ride us. Gadgets for good living become the goal and payments become a permanent fixture. We intend to reach out to those in need, but we procrastinate, thinking that someday it will be different. In the meantime, we are gaining the whole world of appliances and losing our own lives.

Humanity must be our business. Antoine de Saint Exupery once said, "Life has taught us that love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction." That is a dimension of love we cannot afford to miss. Windows of service not only permit us to look out at the world, they also permit the light of real life to shine in and energize the marital home.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: How do I feel about reaching out to others with our love as a couple? How do I feel when others reach out to us? HDMAMMF? (Answer in relation to reach out activities you do together or wish to do).
- b) Advanced Love Circle: How has reaching out to others deepened and strengthened our love as a couple? How do I feel about us going on to share our couple love and our resources with others? HDIFTYT?
- c) Small Group/Community. How do I feel about hosting gatherings of the group at our home?

WRAP UP

I will care for others. So, the home becomes an outpost of love, mercy, and concern for others. It was never intended to be an isolated fortress to ward off the presence of other people. It is to be an extension of the Father's caring for the whole family of human beings. This larger family awareness will also intensify a couple's love for each other. The family that doesn't reach out will shrivel and die. Unconcern for others is a marriage cripple.

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14 LOVE EMBRACES OTHERS

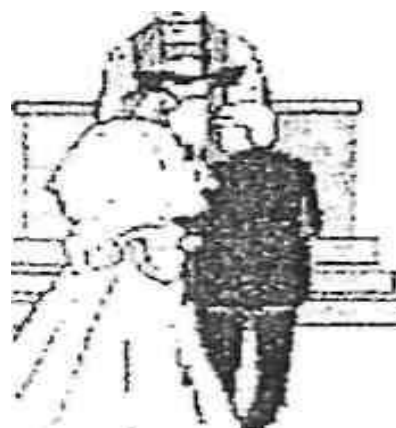
REFLECTION

A married couple sat under a large oak tree, sipping ice tea and chatting with an out-of-town friend. 'they talked about their son, Mike, who was away for a stint in the army. Then the friend began to stare at the old dog sprawled out on the soft grass by the hammock. "Isn't it a nuisance to keep a dog here in town?" he asked. "Yes, but old Boots belongs to Mike," they explained. "They used to be inseparable buddies. Now that Mike's in the service, we're looking after his dog. And we love old Boots too, for Mike's sake." There it is - for Mike's sake.

We love our in-laws - even those who are a nuisance - for our mate's sake. When Jesus knocks at the door of your human tread and you open it to let him in, he never enters alone. He always brings along his family, the communion of saints. Christianity has never been merely a cosy, private relationship between the believer and his Lord.

Marriage, too, is more than a cosy couple. Those folks we call in-laws are thrown in as a bonus. We don't vow to honour them and keep them in sickness and in health, but if we don't, we get into trouble.

Still, responsibility for in-laws is not all bad. Such responsibilities characterise our religious faith. We love others because He first loved us.



SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

Distribute Some Principles to Explore Together the Tips Towards a Pleasant Dialogue.

How do I feel about deepening our acceptance, intimacy and love in the area of our in-laws? How do I feel sharing these feelings with you?

WRAP UP

I will love our relatives. Relatives should have the privilege of feeling that they belong. As you love them, you show love to your partner.

14 LOVE EMBRACES OTHERS - SOME PRINCIPLES TO EXPLORE TOGETHER

Jesus answered, "Haven't you read the scripture that says that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.' So they are no longer two, but one. Man must not separate, then, what God has joined together." [Matthew 19:5]

A New Loyalty - marrying our spouse means we turn our loyalties to him/her. We are not disloyal **to our** parents, **but** we place priority on our husband/wife. Even *if* our in-laws **disapprove** or offer their opinions, we make our own decisions and stand by them. **together**.

The Middle-Man Rule - this **makes** our spouse the "middle-man" **for** conflicts I/we **have with his/her family** members. Relationships are stronger when they have time **behind them** and, *as* they say, blood is thicker than water.

Independent Identity - this means establishing an identity of "oneness" that *is* independent of your parents. If this doesn't happen, a healthy marriage becomes much more of a challenge. Conflicts need to be resolved without the involvement of in-laws.

Mutual Respect - in all things, respect your spouse's parents. It's important to honour and respect your in-laws, but above that, protect your marriage.

TIPS TOWARDS A PLEASANT DIALOGUE

- Begin with the end in mind, i.e. to strengthen the bonds between you and your beloved spouse and *Increase* your circle of social support.
- Share your deepest feelings as well as your thoughts
- Listen not only with your mind, but also with your heart to one another.
- Be sensitive to your spouse's feelings, take them seriously and act to improve the situation.
- Look for similarities *as well as* differences so we can work together towards the common good and a harmonious marriage, e.g. basic values relating to family, education, taking care of the weak, the old and the sick.
- Work past the right/wrong mentality towards supporting and agreeing to disagree, especially loyalty and influence issues.
- Let all things be flexible and negotiable.
- Seek to understand rather than project motives onto our spouse
- Avoid criticising your spouse for his/her relationship with the in-laws. It only lead to mon-: clingincss or complications
- Be gentle, patient and persevering.
- Don't neglect to forgive, heal and affirm



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15 LOVE IS RISKING CHANGE

REFLECTION

A joker said, "A marriage is like stepping into a steaming bathtub; after you get used to it, it ain't so hot."

Couples easily fall into the trap of boredom where two people tend to develop a treadmill existence -moving but not going any place. Life gets to be an endless addition of one day upon another, and sameness ties them all together. Husband and wife may slip into passivity which paralyses their potential and zest for living. No spring rain falls on boredom and marriage becomes as dull as dust where nothing germinates. Between the happy home and divorce court come several stages, and perhaps the most evident is stagnation. A marriage that is merely holding its own may be in trouble.

Newness is as important to God's children as it is to his world of nature. Fruit always seems to grow on the new wood, the new shoots. In scripture God says, "Watch for the new thing I am going to do." [Isa. 43:19]. We have a creative God.

If I do the same things in the same way day after day, life lacks luster. My family has a music box that always plays the same tune. It has been playing that tune for 15 years. It can't help it - that's how it was constructed. But God doesn't programme a person that way. A wide variety of music can burst forth from your soul. Love reveals itself in a moment of self-forgetfulness.



In marriage, we must cherish the ability to let loose in reckless displays of affection and admiration. When it stealthily slips out of life, it takes so much with it.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What fears have I got in risking change? How can you help me to overcome these fears? HDIFTYT? [Answer in relation to specific areas of your personal or marriage life]
- b) Advanced Love Circle: Areas where I am thankful that we had risked change are _____. How do I feel as we move on together in life, sharing the years ahead?
- c) Small Group/Community: What can we do for a change as a group (or community)? How do I feel thinking about this? (Example: an outing, project, recreation, etc)

WRAP UP

I will look for newness. We must risk the new. When I get the notion that I am contributing to a dull marriage, I must replace apathy with enthusiasm. I will no longer sit in the easy chair and watch my marriage go by, but I will arise and make things happen. Turn your imagination loose and put a new idea into action. Dullness exits when discovery enters. Discover a new hobby, a new recipe, a new attitude, a new way of telling your mate, "I love you".

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16 LOVE IS LOOKING AT BOTH SIDES

REFLECTION

One door and only one, and yet its sides are two. I'm on the inside. On which side are you?

Once two knights on horseback were coming down a path from opposite directions, and they saw a shield tied to a branch of a tree. The first knight asked, "Who owns this white shield?" The second knight replied, "What do you mean, white shield - it is black as midnight." The first knight responded indignantly:



"What do you think I am, blind or a fool? That shield is white." They drew their swords. A third knight happened along and heard the commotion. He looked the situation over, then suggested that the two knights change places on the path. They soon discovered that one side of the shield was white and the other side was black. They were arguing because they hadn't taken the time to look at the issue from both sides. Sheepishly they saluted each other and went on their way.

Scripture says that in marriage two become one flesh. We swing together on the hinges of love and trust. But there are two sides to one marriage. Husband and wife are two unique persons with ideas and values that have grown out of their individual experiences and training. Marital discord often arises when we don't have the patience or the wisdom to look at both sides of an issue. If we do pause to ponder our judgments, we become far less critical and the road is cleared for understanding. If you do not take the time to listen or if you ignore your mate's opinions, you insult both the intelligence and personhood of your partner.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

Before starting, everyone reads Ask Me What I Mean.

[On a more serious tone] - What habits and attitudes usually prevent me from really knowing your mind and heart (thoughts and feelings), my spouse? How can I possibly overcome these obstacles? HDMAMMF?

WRAP UP

I will hear your viewpoints. Love takes seriously the feelings and viewpoints of the other. It takes two to tango, and in marriage it takes two to decide

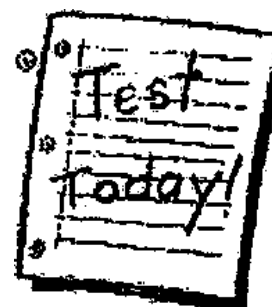
LOVE IS LOOKING AT BOTH SIDES - ASK ME WHAT I MEAN

WHEN A GAL SAYS:

"FINE" - Translated: "I am right and need to shut you up". NEVER use 'Fine' to describe how a woman looks. This will cause you to have one of those arguments.

"FIVE MINUTES" - Translated: "Half an hour. It \s equivalent to the five minutes that your football game *is* going to last before you take out the trash, so I feel that it's *an* even trade."

"NOTHING" - Translated: "Something, and you should be on your toes." "Nothing" is usually used to describe the feeling a woman has of wanting to turn you inside out, upside down, and backwards. "Nothing" usually signifies an argument that will last "Five Minutes" and end with the word "Fine".



"GO AHEAD" (with raised eyebrows) - This is a *dare*. *Om* that will result in a woman getting upset over "Nothing" and will end with the word "Fine".

"GO AHEAD" (normal eyebrows) - Translated: "I give up" or "do what you want because I don't care". You will get a raised eyebrow "Go Ahead" in just a few minutes, followed by "Nothing" and "Fine" and she will talk to you in about "Five Minutes" when she cools off.

"LOUD SIGH" - Not actually a word, but is still very misunderstood by men. Translated: "I think you *are* an idiot at this moment and wonder why I am wasting my time standing here and arguing with you over 'Nothing'."

"SOFT SIGH" - Again, not a word, but one of the few things that some men actually understand. Translated: "I am contented." Your best bet is not to move or breathe and she will stay contented.

"OH" - This word followed by any statement is trouble. Example; "Oh, let me get that". *Or*, "Oh, I talked to him about what you were doing last night". Run, do not walk, to the nearest exit. She will tell you that she is "Fine" when she is done tossing your clothes out the window, but do not expect her to talk to you for at least 2 days. It usually signifies that you *are* caught in a lie. Do not try to lie more to get out of it, or you will get *raised* eyebrows and a "Go ahead," followed by acts so unspeakable that I can't bring myself to write about them.

"THAT'S OKAY" - *One* of the most dangerous statements a woman can say to a man. Translated: "I want to think long and hard before visiting on you major retribution and tribulations *for* whatever it is that you have done." Often used with the word "Fine" and in conjunction with a raised eyebrow "Go Ahead". At some point in the near future, you are going to be in some mighty big trouble.

"PLEASE DO" • This is not a statement, it is an offer. A woman is giving you the chance to come up with whatever excuse or reason you have for doing whatever it is that you have done. You have *a* fair chance to tell the truth, so be careful and you shouldn't get a "That's Okay"

"THANKS" - A woman is thanking you. Do not faint, just say you're welcome.

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"THANKS A LOT*" - This is much different than "Thanks". A woman will say, "Thanks A Lot" when she is really ticked off at you. It signifies that you have hurt her in some callous way, and will be followed by the "Loud Sigh" (see "Loud Sigh" for dire consequences).

WHEN A GUY SAYS:

"IT'S A GUY THING" - Translated: "There is no rational thought pattern connected with it, and you have no chance at all of making it logical."

"CAN I HELP WITH DINNER?" - Translated: "Why isn't it already on the table?"

"UH HUH." "SURE, HONEY." OR "YES, DEAR" - Translated: Absolutely nothing. It's a conditioned response.

"IT WOULD TAKE TOO LONG TO EXPLAIN" - Translated: "I have no idea how it works."

"I WAS LISTENING TO YOU. IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE THINGS ON MY MIND." - Translated: "That girl standing on the corner is a real babe."

"TAKE A BREAK HONEY, YOU'RE WORKING TOO HARD." - Translated: "I can't hear the game over the vacuum cleaner."

"THAT'S INTERESTING, DEAR." - Translated: "Are you still talking?"

"YOU KNOW HOW BAD MY MEMORY IS." - Translated: "I remember the theme song to 'F Troop', the address of the first girl I ever kissed, and the vehicle identification numbers of every car I've ever owned, but I forgot our anniversary."

"I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT YOU. AND GOT YOU THESE ^*OSSES*." - Translated: "The girl selling them on the corner was a real babe."

"OH, DON'T FUSS - I JUST CUT MYSELF, IT'S NO BIG DEAL." - Translated: "I have actually severed a limb, but will bleed to death before I admit that I'm hurt."

"I CAN'T FIND IT." - Translated: "It didn't fall into my outstretched hands, so I'm completely clueless."

"WHAT DID I DO THIS TIME?" - Translated: "What did you catch me at?"

"I HEARD YOU." - Translated: "I haven't the foggiest clue what you just said. I'm hoping desperately that I can fake it well enough so you don't spend the next three days yelling at me."

"YOU KNOW I COULD NEVER LOVE ANYONE ELSE." - Translated: "I am used to the way you yell at me, and realize it could be worse."

"YOU LOOK TERRIFIC." - Translated: "Oh, please don't try on one more outfit. I'm starving."

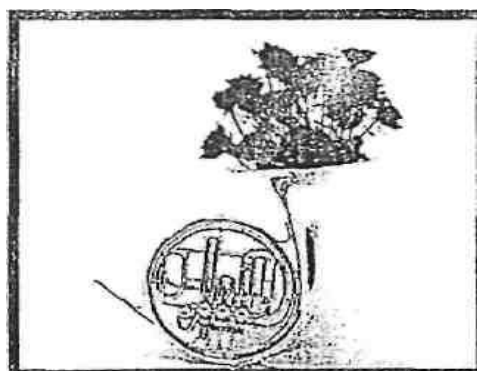
"I'M NOT LOST. I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE WE ARE." - Translated: "No one will ever see us alive again."

17 LOVE IS SEEKING GOODNESS

REFLECTION

Marriages are doomed to drown if we constantly complain about each other and about our life of marriage. Our salvation is to have the mind of Jesus, who will put a song in our spirit. Then we will look for the silver lining, even in the darkest of clouds.

Frequently in marriage, we are more prone to scold than sing. If we keep on the look-out for faults in our mate, we'll no doubt find them. But good qualities are also present, and we can choose to look for those. A Swedish proverb says, "Those who wish to sing can always find a song."



I find it easy to be like the crow who sits on a perch, criticising and condemning what he observes. I find it more difficult to be like a cardinal, whose song lifts the spirit of all who hear. Maybe God gave the crow a coat of black because of its somber nature, and the cardinal got a royal red because it radiates joy. But sometimes I'm unwilling to yield to His paintbrush. It is easy to gripe. It's easy to concentrate on the faults of the other. But through prayer God gives you the mirror that reflects the positive side of your mate. You'll also find yourself reflected in the mirror. You'll find yourself asking, "Why did I say that? Did I purposely hurt her?" Persistent prayer will change your outlook, removing obstacles to love.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

Pick a song randomly and sing together.

- a) Early Love Circle: Recall some recent joy-and-love-filled moments shared with your spouse. What were the qualities in each other and in your relationship that were most uplifting and delightful in these experiences? HDYFAT?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: What were those uplifting experiences in your life that led you to appreciate deeply the loving and supporting qualities of your spouse⁷ What are these qualities? How did you feel in those moments? HDYFTHT?
- c) Small Group/Community: How has the group (or community) been a source of uplifting and cheerful experiences? HDIFAT⁷

WRAP UP

I will keep singing. Then I will realize my spouse is a prize and thank God for his gift. "Prayer changes things." That's true, but even better is the motto "Prayer changes me." Try it! The next time your mate irritates you. bring it to God in prayer Open yourself to God's grace for whole relationships

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18 LOVE IS SEEKING QUALITY

REFLECTION

We are impressed by quantity, whether be it of dollars, acres, jewels, or years of life. We think a big diamond demonstrates how much a man loves his wife. Size rules the roost, but its day is short-lived. The big diamond is little consolation in a marital crisis. The advent of age brings sagging bosoms to women and muscular flab to men. Measurements have diminishing returns as the years go by. But quality abides. Whether in clothing or cars or marriage, only quality lasts.



Abundant living does not depend on the quantity of our activities, but their quality. We don't have to read everything, but we should choose what we read with care. Happiness depends, not on having everything, but on appreciating the quality of what we have. Everyone must learn sooner or later the sage advice: "Having one woman completely, he has all women, but seeking all women, he has none." If our goal in life is accumulating quantities, chances are we'll end up with nothing worth having.

It isn't the number of hours a couple sits in easy chairs watching TV that makes for togetherness. Physical proximity does not add up to marital bliss. What counts is how moments together are used. A few minutes of gut-level sharing is far better than hours of small talk. The tragedy in marriage is that some couples spend decades together without really getting to know each other. They never create together anything worthy of eternity.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What would I consider "quality time" to be in our couple relationship, my spouse? If I were allowed only three things to do with you, what would these be? How do I feel about the time we spend together?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: What things and activities are we having less of (or letting go) as we move on in life? How has this affected our quality of life? How do I see us striving for the best in the years ahead with what we have between us? HDIFAT?
- c) Small Group/Community: How has being in this group (or community) enriched and sustained the quality of our life? HDIFAT?

WRAP UP

So, remember, quality counts more than quantity. You don't know whether your marital trip will be short or long, but pack your mutual bag with quality living. I will strive for the best.

19 LOVE LOOKS AHEAD

REFLECTION

A young married couple settled down in a rented house in a new development area. The house made a cosy nest, but the lawn outside the house was almost naked. A few green tufts were the only vegetation in evidence. Sally told Bill that a few trees and shrubs would really enhance the property but Bill wouldn't consider it. "We're paying good money for renting this place," he argued, "and we're not going to throw money away building up its value for the owner."

Several years slipped by, with Sally and Bill still occupying the house. One day the owner came by and proposed that Sally and Bill purchase the place. His price seemed reasonable and within the reach of their finances. They completed the transaction shortly thereafter. The following spring Bill went to a local nursery and bought several shade trees and ornamental shrubs to dress up their newly acquired property. Sally, observing her industrious husband as he proudly planted the nursery stock, couldn't resist commenting, "Bill, if you'd planted those trees the first year we moved in we'd be enjoying a little shade already." Bill nodded. But at that time, he hadn't thought they'd still be living there, much less owning the property.

We state at our wedding, "until death do us part." Death is usually many miles of living down the road. We must keep this in mind if we are to have a proper perspective on the present. The early days of marriage may not be blissful, but if we keep planting prayer, patience, and principles, someday we will reap the fruit. People may say, "Well, things will be different when my ship comes in." That is often wishful thinking. Unless you send a ship out to sea, none will come in.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

What are some of my concerns for our life ahead? What do I see as sound "investments" we've made for a better future? What else could we consider as we move on in life together? HDIFAMA?

WRAP UP

I will face the future. Scripture tells us. "Do not deceive yourselves; no one makes a fool of God. A person will reap exactly what he plants" [Gal. 6:7]. So, keep thinking about relaxing in the shade tomorrow, and patiently plant trees today.

20 LOVE IS UNDERSTANDING

REFLECTION

Spirits do not always soar. Sometimes even the noblest of spirits sinks into a despondent sea. Elijah, the Old Testament prophet, serves as an example. He stood in triumph on Mount Camel as his God defeated the prophets of Baal. His courage and faith were dauntless. Yet a short time later, a lonely figure dragging his feet across the parched Arabian desert, he collapsed on the shifting sand and cried out: "It's too much, Lord. Take away my life: I might as well be dead!"

How did Elijah get so low that he desired escape from life itself? After a 200-mile flight on foot with little food and water, he was physically depleted and depressed. Another reason Elijah was discouraged was that he was thinking of how King Ahab and Queen Jezebel hated him. As he fled from their wrath, he became convinced that everyone had turned against him. In such a state, a person's statements should not be held against him. After Elijah had eaten and regained his strength, God gently reminded him that 7,000 in Israel had not bowed to Baal.

Your spouse, if physically or emotionally exhausted, may occasionally speak harshly. Cast off the caustic remarks your spouse makes in a despondent mood, understanding that they would not have been made in the sunshine. After some bout with life, when it seems the whole world is against him/her, your spouse may feel that even you couldn't care less. At such times, don't chastise your spouse for being silly. Rather, show that love and believe in your spouse.



Love is being there. You may not know how to take away the suffering of another, but you can stand by. You may not be able to solve someone else's problem, but you can stand by. You may not always have the words to express your feelings, but you can stand by. If you care, you will be standing by whenever your presence is needed.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

What was one of the lowest moments either you or your spouse had experienced. What were your feelings during this experience? How did you reach out to touch/accept each other with love? HDYFAT?

WRAP UP

I will try to understand. Do not turn against your spouse. Show that you love and believe in him/her

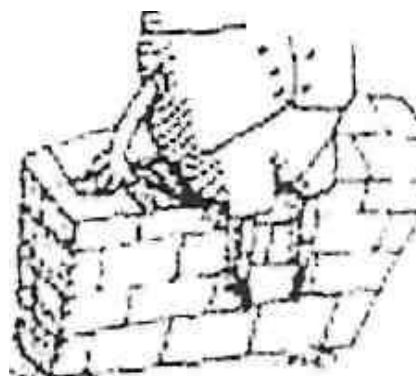
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21 LOVE 15 RESILIENT

REFLECTION

One day, I watched a wren building a home in a small birdhouse in our backyard. Attempting to get a rather large twig into the small hole, several times she dropped it to the ground. She would then fly down, pick it up, and try again. In the midst of her failures she occasionally paused for a few bursts of song. Never once did she hide her head under her wing, embarrassed by her unsuccessful attempts. Finally, she picked up the twig near the end and maneuvered it through the opening. Failure was neither fatal nor final for this little bird.

Our society tells us we have to win or be stamped as second-class citizens. As a result, some people are paralysed by fear of failure. Husbands and wives are sometimes inhibited by this failure complex. They feign happiness so their marriage won't appear a failure. The wife pretends to be fulfilled at home so no one will brand her an incomplete homemaker. The husband secretly wants to try another vocation but, rather than look like a quitter, he plods along. Both are "upright" about sex, afraid of being a lousy lover or incapable of ecstasies. They neither enjoy life nor suffer much, because they live in a twilight zone that knows no victory or defeat.



Jesus gave his disciples room for failure. He told them that when the gospel fell on deaf ears they must learn to shake off the dust from their feet and move on - a sacrament of failure that enabled them to lose and then try again, always at the risk of not standing in the winner's circle.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE QUESTION

- a) Early Love Circle: What is one risky or difficult thing you might wish to try or embark on? How do you feel when you think of the possibility of failing? How do you feel about telling this to your spouse today? (Or it could be something you're having now that could end in failure).
- b) Advanced Love Circle: Recall an event when you encountered failure or setback and your spouse stood strongly by you. Describe the thoughts and feelings you experienced. How do you feel sharing these with your spouse today?
- c) Small Group/Community: Were there times when you experienced disappointment or disillusionment? What were your feelings about going on? How did you come out of this? How do you feel sharing the experience with your friends today?

WRAP UP

I will love you even if you fall. Husbands and wives need to give each other the right to fail. Then they each can step to the plate and swing boldly, not fearing chastisement for striking out. There will be another day and another chance

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22 LOVE IS NOT AFRAID OF CONFRONTATION

REFLECTION

When Joe Louis was training for his fight with Billy Conn, a newspaper reporter told him that Conn was practicing his footwork and he hoped to keep away from Joe's lethal fists.

Louis thought a minute, then smiled as he said, "He can run, but he can't hide."

There's no hiding place in the boxing ring. There's really no place to hide in life's ring, either. We can run, but we'll never get away. True boxing skill lies not in fancy footwork, but in slugging it out. The marriage ring is not a place for skirting personality conflicts and problems, but for verbally slugging it out.

Anger is bound to arise when two imperfect human beings live side by side. Scripture can attest to this. But we should heed the warning: "If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day." Don't flee from anger, don't panic, for the problem will pursue you. Rather go to your partner. Anger has to be released. After many boxing matches I've observed the two fighters throw their arms around each other and exchange words of congratulations. So, may a husband and wife embrace after their anger has been released. Then, and only then, will healing take place.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

Pass out WHY CONFRONT (FIGHT) and GUIDELINES FOR CONFRONTATION.

- a) Early Love Circle: Recall an occasion when you very upset (or were faced with a sensitive issue), but chose not to tell your spouse. What were your feelings and your reasons for not sharing with him/her? How do you feel about trusting more in the love of your spouse?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: Are there still fights or confrontations between you and your spouse? What were the kind of feelings and issues involved? How do you feel about such incidents still going on in your relationship?

WRAP UP

I will tell you when I'm upset. Don't nurse your anger. Take it into the ring.

22 LOVE IS NOT AFRAID OF CONFRONTATION

WHY CONFRONT (FIGHT)?

- Sometimes a decision to love involves deciding to confront each other.
- All couples fight sometimes, not to hurt one another, but to strengthen their relationships.
- If an issue has come between you, so that you are living separate, isolated lives, you should fight. It says that you care about your relationship.
- Fighting helps you "to reveal yourself through your feelings, your needs, and your hurts. It helps you to listen to your spouse in his/her feelings, needs and hurts.
- Fighting helps the couple to express what they want for themselves. Fighting can help them discover where they really are with each other right now.
- Fighting can help them recognise their own responsibility in any difficult situation.



GUIDELINES FOR CONFRONTATION

1. Avoid criticism and sarcasm
2. Avoid name calling
3. Don't waste time trying to figure out who is to blame
4. Don't get historical - try agreeing to a "48 hour rule"
5. Avoid using absolutes, like "always" and "never".
6. Do not bring in third parties
7. Stay physically close to one another
8. Be gentle with your tone of voice
9. Remember, being right is not as important as being in relationship. The issue you discuss is never the most important issue - you are.

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23 LOVE IS BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

REFLECTION

Once a rich man wanted to do a good thing. He noticed the miserable condition of a poor carpenter. So he commissioned him to build a beautiful house. "I want this to be an ideal dwelling," he said. "Use only the best materials, employ the most skilled craftsmen, and spare no expense." The rich man said he would be going on a journey and he hoped the house would be finished when he returned. The carpenter saw this as a great opportunity to make extra bucks. Therefore, he skimmed on materials. He hired interior decorators at low wages and covered their mistakes with paint and veneer.



When the rich man returned, the carpenter showed him the house and said, "I have followed your instructions. Here is the finished product." "Good," said the rich man. Then he handed the house keys to the carpenter and said, "They are yours. You and your family are to have it as my gift."

A married couple may wake up one day to find that their marital roof is leaking, the foundation of faith is sagging, the walls of integrity are leaning, and they wonder if the home they built is worth saving. But it's all they've got. God gives us the equipment to put together a marital mansion. He supplies us with the finest tools. But other things demand our attention and entice our desires, so we think we can sloppily slap it together. We forget that we need it for a lifetime, and that it will take time and energy to build it properly. No good thing comes without a struggle, whether it be health or a happy home.

Love is worth coming home to. One man I know spends most of his hours in a local bar, sipping away the day. His marriage is on the brink of disaster. Certainly he is wrong in attempting to plug holes in his life with booze - it will never do the job. But after I heard a yelling contest between him and his wife. I could empathise a bit. He came home intoxicated to cushion himself. After a day of combat with the world, neither man nor woman wants to come home to a war zone. Home should be like an oasis for the weary traveller. And it can be that way. If you are not sure, you'd better start refurbishing the nest with the down of kindness, gentleness and self-giving love.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What are my thoughts and feelings about the precious values (qualities, gifts or activities) we have cultivated in our relationship since our weekend? What more can we work on together in our journey of life as a couple? HDIFTYT?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: What values (qualities, gifts or activities) do I cherish most in our relationship as we move on together in our journey of love? HDMAMMF?

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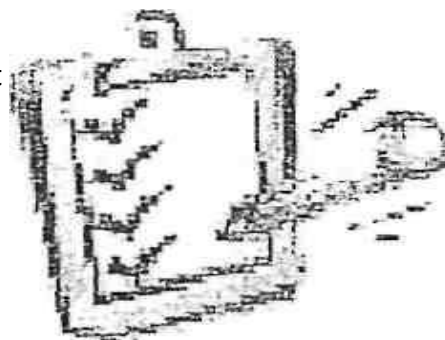
WRAP UP

I will use God's blueprint. Check God's word for that. Use faith for the foundation. The lumber should be the finest grade of love. Putty all the windows with prayer Trim the house with trust Furnish it with forgiveness. Your home should be as fine as you want to make it. Start by doing all the little things in a great way.

24 LOVE IS BEING EASY TO LIVE WITH

REFLECTION

A nine-year-old boy wanted to be a saint. He had read many stories of saints in the history of the Church. He put a stool in the middle of the kitchen floor and announced to his mother, "I'm going to stay here for 40 days." It didn't take long for him to realise he was getting in the way of the rest of the family. In fact, his mother told him he was a first-class nuisance. Soon she told him to move his stool and go somewhere else to play. As the lad picked up his stool and walked dejectedly into the living room, he said, "It's hard to be a saint when you're living at home."



No doubt about that. Sainthood is hard to maintain at home. It is tough to imitate the life of Jesus among those who know us inside out. The little boy who wanted to be a saint had a worthy goal, but a poor method. He didn't take into consideration those with whom he was living. We must be lifelong students of the art of loving together. We must check often to be sure our conduct coincides with our creed.

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

[Each one to reflect on the Marital I.Q. Questionnaire, before proceeding to the dialogue question(s)]

- a) Early Love Circle: What makes you easy to live with, my spouse and how do I feel about that? As for myself, how can I be easier to live with and what are my feelings telling you that?
- b) Advanced Love Circle: If I were the remaining Survivor with you, what are my thoughts and feelings about making it through with you, my spouse? HDMAMMF?

WRAP UP

I will take inventory. If I score low, I need not despair. With God's grace, and the grace of my spouse, I can take the test again, and with their help I will score better next time.

24 - THINGS LOVE IS BEING EASY TO LIVE WITH

"Put yourselves to the test and judge yourselves, to find out whether you are living in faith. Surely you know that Christ Jesus is in you? - unless you have completely failed." [Cor. 2, 13:5]

MARITAL I.Q.: QUESTIONNAIRE

Reflect on this separately before proceeding to the dialogue question(s).

MY SPOUSE		MYSELF	
1	Is he/she easy to live with?	1	Am I easy To live with?
2	Does he/she believe the best about me (she's not that easily hurt, offended, or shattered by me)?	2	Do I believe the best about him/her (I am not that easily hurt, offended, or shattered by him/her)?
3	Does he/she manifest the spirit of forgiveness and understanding?	3	Do I manifest the spirit of forgiveness and understanding?
4	Do I see Jesus in him/her?	4	Will my spouse see Jesus in me?
5	Is he/she helping me on the way?	5	Am I helping my spouse <i>on</i> the way?

O = Often, S = Sometimes, R - Rarely

25 LOVE IS GROWING OLD TOGETHER

REFLECTION

A girl won a prize for a drawing she made. When someone congratulated her for her fine work, she said, "That isn't my best drawing." "Why didn't you exhibit your best?" she was asked. "Oh," she replied, "my best drawing isn't drawn yet." That girl was on the road to becoming a good artist.

Robert Browning said, "Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be." Many will respond, "Hogwash!" Old age has its aches and pains, its sagging flesh and loss of vigour.



But growing old together can bring mellowness, achievement, and tranquility. Your later years may be your best years. Each stage of life has its hurdles and its special rewards. God provides fruits for all seasons. Life can be like a spiraling crescendo moving upward and onward. The best way may be the tomorrows if you keep searching and striving.

KEEPING OUR LOVE HOT

Love does not grow without cultivation. But with proper care it will be a perennial bloomer.

REMEMBER - Memories can ignite love if it burns low. James Barrie said, "God has given us memories that we might have roses in December." When winter winds have cooled off the romance of marriage, the warm breezes of memory may bring back life to the frozen ground



REPENT - Love is saying you're sorry. Confession is still good for the soul. Stones will not evaporate on a sunny day; neither will sin of indifference and hurt. Stones can only be cast away, and wrongs can only be confessed away.

REPLENISH - I must "do the works" I did at first. And I remember what they were. I proudly told my friends about the young woman who had captured my heart. I drove out of my way to see her. I searched for time to be alone with her, and I always found it. I looked for ways to surprise her. I didn't need a birthday or holiday - every day in young love was special and reason for celebration

SUGGESTED DIALOGUE

- a) Early Love Circle: What are the things that keep us focused on working at our relationship? What are the things that could make us complacent, distracted or disillusioned? How do I feel identifying and telling you about these avenues and threats to our relationship?

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b) Advanced Love Circle: Looking honestly at where we are now. what are my thoughts and feelings about keeping the torch flaming in our relationship?

c) Small Group/Community: How do I feel knowing that our work is never finished?

WRAP UP

I will keep climbing. Travelling as a couple is the best way to climb the mountains of life. Each plateau is special, and when you and your mate stand together, each achievement is doubled in joy.

VINTAGE LOVE LETTERS

Winston Churchill (1874-1965) to Clementine (1885-1977) - after 26 years

January 23, 1935

My darling Clemmie,

in your letter from Madras you wrote some words very dear to me, about my having enriched your life. I cannot tell you what pleasure this gave me, because I always feel so overwhelmingly in your debt, if there can be accounts in love.... what it has been to me to live all these years in your heart and companionship no phrases can convey.

Time passes swiftly, but is it not joyous to see how great and growing is the treasure we have gathered together, amid the storms and stresses of so many eventful and to millions tragic and terrible years?

Your loving husband

Ronald Reagan to Nancy - after 31 years

March 4 1983

Dear First Lady

I know tradition has it that on this morning I place cards Happy Anniversary cards on your breakfast tray. But things are somewhat mixed up. I substituted a gift & delivered it a few weeks ago.

Still, this is the day, the day that marks 31 years of such happiness as comes to few men. I told you once that it was like an adolescent's dream of what marriage should be like. That hasn't changed.

You know I love the ranch but these last two days made it plain I only love it when you are there. Come to think of it, that's true of every place & every time, when you aren't there, I'm no place, just lost in time & space. I more than love you. I'm not whole without you. You are life itself to me. When you are gone, I'm waiting for you to return so I can start living again.

Happy Anniversary & thank you for 31 wonderful years.

I love you

Your Grateful Husband