

Keeping the Fire Burning

"In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard." I Peter 3:7 (New Living Translation).

It seems to become more and rarer that one has a happy marriage with longevity in that relationship. I have both. Having been married for forty-five years, I feel that I can speak with some authority as to how to keep the "love light" glowing. My marriage has not been a perfect one but it remains vibrant and Anne and I are more in love than we have ever been. This has not happened accidentally. Here are a few pointers I have learned along the journey of marriage. Maybe you can benefit from some of my successes and mistakes.

1. Commit yourself to making it work! Covenant with your partner that "divorce" will be stricken from your vocabulary.
2. Realize that you must work at maintaining your marriage every day of your life. Letting the relationship slip can be fatal.
3. If possible, Center on Jesus Christ and His will and way. It's not so much a matter of you having your way or your spouse having his or her way. It's Christ's way that is essential to maintain the relationship.
4. Listen to your spouse. Really listen! So many of us hear so little of what our spouses are really saying.
5. Communicate! Communicate! Communicate! Our spouses often want the details of our day and we only give the "headlines." Take time to converse.
6. Recognize the Importance of Timing! Some much of what we say or even do is a matter of choosing the proper time.
7. Show more attention and affection to your spouse than you do to others.
8. Be sure there is no doubt in your children's minds, that you love their mom or dad.
9. Never criticize your spouse to your friends and especially to your parents (or hers).
10. Keep the romance in your relationship. Go on dates together. Enjoy one another's company. Don't always be so practical and frugal. Occasionally splurge on your spouse.
11. Commit yourselves to grow together, spiritually and intellectually. Read books to Each other. Listen to tapes and CD's. Attend lectures, concerts and conferences together.
12. Find as many ways as you can to say "I love you." (In word and in deed).
13. Don't let your spouse find out from others what he or she should have heard from you.
14. Laugh together! Find things that make you laugh. It's great medicine for the marriage.

Since we have just observed Valentine less than a month ago (February 14) I will limit my "Check List" to fourteen points. They have worked for me and they will work for you. Marriage is a great adventure! A great laboratory for living! A great way to spend the rest of your life IF you work at it!

Jim Bevis, President, CSR Ministries