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## Can Love Last a Lifetime?

**Matthew 19:4-5:** (NASB77) *<sup>4</sup>And he answered and said, Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup>and said, for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?*



"The best things in life are free." That certainly can be true, but as always there is more to the story. Take the love that is between a husband and a wife, for instance. While this love certainly should be free - freely given and freely received - it does have a "maintenance schedule" attached to it. Funny thing is, we never hear much about love's maintenance schedule as it can be difficult, demanding and even daunting. The good news is that if we stick with the schedule, the results will literally last a lifetime and the love that we were freely given will have become a most valuable, admired and cherished part of our lives! How do we get there? How do we learn what to do and how to do it so our love will last a lifetime?

We will base today's podcast on some advice from eHarmony.com, forwarded to us by a CQ staff member. It clearly passes our test of its principles soundly supported by

Scripture.

(Source: eHarmony.com. *Seven Things Madly-in-Love Couples Do to Stay That Way*, by eHarmony Staff)

1. **LISTEN:** Listening to your partner reaps benefits in every area of your life together. When you listen, you'll learn things that will help you love the other person more deeply. You'll catch a glimpse of your partner's hopes and dreams, hurts and fears. You'll hear about things you do that make your partner want to withdraw. You'll discover ideas and thoughts previously unknown to you. If you're not in the habit of listening - really listening - you'll miss all these things and more.

That is not easy in a world full of distraction! When somebody knows they have your undivided attention, they respond. This is a great marriage lesson - to really listen and not be looking at your phone, thumbing through the mail or adjusting things on your desk. Be so focused that you do not want anything to get by.

Not listening intently might reflect we are devaluing what is being said.

We will focus on two types of love today. First, the most basic:

**Love:** Strong's #5362, philandros, #5387, philostorgos, #5388 philoteknos

The most basic and instinctive type of love is the affection between spouses, parents to children and children to parents.

**Titus 2:3-5:** (NKJV) *<sup>3</sup>the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things <sup>4</sup>that they admonish the young women to **love <5362>** their husbands, to **love <5388>** their children, <sup>5</sup>to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.*

**Romans 12:10:** (NKJV) *<sup>10</sup>Be **kindly affectionate <5387>** to one another with brotherly **love <5360>**, in honor giving preference to one another;*

This kind of love means to put others before you in a fraternal, familial kind of way.

That seems obvious, but we have lost the ability to put others' needs before our own. Today's culture with social media, electronics and technology is all about ME. It is all about the "selfie," what I want to do, what I want to look at, what I want to send...we forget our role in the bigger picture. Because we are so busy "doing," we stop listening.

Second, the most selfless love:

**Agape:** Strong's #26 (ag-ah'-pay); love, i.e. affection or benevolence

Being willing to give for the sake of giving with no thought of receiving.

Listening to our spouses gives validation to their words and feelings.



Generally, it is pride that is behind the behavior destructive to marriage: Proverbs 16:18-20,24-25: Love provokes us up and out of pride and one way it does it is by provoking listening.

**We start our maintenance schedule by tuning up our ears...then what?**

**2. VALUE each other:** When you value someone, you won't want to belittle or tear down that person. You'll also be less inclined to take that person for granted. And you definitely won't be careless with his or her heart. When you truly value someone, you'll see and appreciate what that person brings into your life on a daily basis. Even better, you will find ways to communicate that appreciation every chance you get.

Of course you value your spouse. But over time, you start to take things for granted and you forget. One day you wake up and see the value is gone because you have not paid attention. Value means putting your spouse above others and do all you can to show appreciation. It takes effort and focus to value someone.

**We KNOW men and women are wired differently and as a result we are shown different roles:** Ephesians 5:21-24: This sounds like a recipe for unfair treatment, rebellion and even lawsuits! As usual, if we just read only part of the Scripture then we cannot possibly begin to grasp its true meaning. More on this soon.

Love gives you a sense of well-being because you are accepted and cherished for what you are. That gives you the ability to feel like you can do more. That is why the "maintenance schedule" is such an important part of making a relationship work.

**Husbands are clearly taught to love their wives as a Christian responsibility:**

Ephesians 5:25-31: The husband's role comes with incredible responsibility for the wife. The key to truly valuing your spouse is in the concept of cherishing.

**Observations from Ephesians 5:21-31 - what is your responsibility?**

- For women - LOVE and be subject
- For men - LOVE and give yourself up for her (she becomes more important than you)
- For men - LOVE and care for her as your own body (the same instinctive care we naturally give ourselves)
- For men - Your love for her becomes your way of self-preservation (because she is part of you, you preserve yourself by loving and cherishing your spouse)
- For men - Cherish her (foster with tender love)
- For men - Leave all other ties for her sake (the wife comes before parents, children and friends)

**3. FORGIVE:** No matter how deeply in love, two human beings are bound to hurt each other with thoughtless words, selfish actions, or inconsiderate neglect. Forgiving each other for those hurtful acts is the cornerstone of any lasting, harmonious relationship. Without forgiveness, slights and offenses accumulate like boulders on a highway. Devote yourself to clearing obstructions in your relationship through forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not easy to come by. A relationship cannot move forward unless a path is clear, but pride gets in the way of forgiveness. Forgiveness between spouses is at the core of the marriage maintenance schedule. In some cases it can be like overhauling an engine that has lost its power to work. This is deep, focused and disciplined work! If you do not do the work, the engine of your marriage cannot drive you forward.

**Our ability to forgive one another on any level depends on how we see one another:**

Philippians 2:2-8: How we see one another depends on how we see ourselves and Christ in ourselves.

If we hold onto an unforgiving attitude it WILL affect us physically and emotionally. Our life will be continually influenced by its clear and powerful influence. Because we are affected physically and emotionally, we WILL be affected spiritually, and that will directly detract from our ability to follow Christ and therefore detract from our ability to be forgiven.

Are we looking through the eyes of Christ or the eyes of our own hurt?

Philippians 1:21: (NASB) *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*



We want to take that attitude into our marriage. If we are selfless, look at our spouse as more important than ourselves, protect them, and cherish and honor him or her, forgiveness is so much easier. We see our spouse as valuable. Remember, to forgive is to make someone's sin against us lose its relevance in our life! The event still happened and the results of the event are still intact, but the relevance of the act AGAINST us has been diminished.

**There is a maturing process to forgiveness - it takes time and effort - but our example is inspiring: Psalms 130:13-14**

**Observations from Psalms 103:13-14:**

- God by nature truly does know our weaknesses and frailty and the result of His knowledge of us is a fatherly embrace for any who seek it.
- We who are in a position to forgive must practice that family-based approach to those who have wronged us as we accept that we, as well as they, are all faulty. Focus on our own faultiness instead of that of our spouse - we will be humbled.
- We who are in a position to be forgiven must embrace the embrace of forgiveness!
- We need to be thankful and appreciate the strength of the other person for forgiving us of our mistakes.

**4. LAUGH together:** Laughing reduces stress, improves communication, gets past facades and releases feel-good hormones in the brain. It creates great memories, helps grudges fade and knits hearts together. Maybe your partner is always cracking you up. Or maybe neither one of you is all that funny, but you both laugh until you cry at the same movies. Wherever you find it, laughter is good for love.

To laugh together is to be able to share in the variety of life. For a Christian, the sheer joy of life and blessing can bring laughter to the heart, and when we share that we create a contagious joy. We need to be able to laugh at ourselves. Do not miss the moments that bring laughter because you are tied up in the thoughts that bring frustration. Moments go by quickly.

Proverbs 25:24 Proverbs 21:19: Find things that bring a smile to your face. Put yourself in a place of comfort with your spouse. To be able to go down that road is therapeutic in terms of being able to deal with the difficulties.

**Although this next text was written for the body of Christ and not for the sake of married couples, we can read its principles with marriage in mind: Philippians 2:1-4:** There is strength and power when united in spirit and mind. It is easier to deal with problems together. So, general Christian principles are golden within the confines of the marriage relationship! While the Scriptures do not give us a lot on the marriage relationship, the principles of Christian living apply. Ecclesiastes 9:9

**Another text for the body of Christ - but think of the joy it brings when we apply it along with our spouse! Philippians 4:8**

**5. BE KIND:** When it comes to keeping love alive, kindness is essential. For one thing, it breeds appreciation. It also builds trust. It's hard to stay in love with someone around whom you walk on eggshells because you never know when the next criticism or putdown is coming. In this manner, kindness is the antithesis of abuse and mistreatment.

Many times kindness can wear down frustration, anger and resentment if it is constant, clear and sincere.

We can pull out the best version of our spouse and let that be what the world sees.

1 Corinthians 13:4: (NASB) *Love is patient, love is kind ...*

Luke 6:35-36: If our true and deep kindness begins at home, how much more will it blossom everywhere else? Bring that positivity wherever you go. A strong marriage is an example to your children. 1 John 3:17-18: Successful spouses learn to give kindness to one another almost instinctively.

**Kindness flows when there is true respect: 1 Peter 3:7**

It does not say all women are strength-less. It means husbands are to give great esteem to their wives, as they would to something that is of great value, yet fragile - not as physically



strong. The point is to honor, not to look down upon. "I want to care for you because you are worth caring for."

**6. FLIRT:** Flirting helped you fall in love, and it can help you stay in love. And don't just flirt with your words - some of the flirtiest things can be said best with body language. Flirting says to your partner, "I'm still attracted to you and still crazy about you!"

**Not surprisingly, the Bible has no comment on flirting but does talk about sex:**

1 Corinthians 7:3-4: Why would the Apostle Paul write this? Marital sex is about attachment, pleasure and togetherness. Do not lose sight of this, because it is part of what holds you together. The Apostle Paul encourages the sexual relationship of spouses following Christ. It is a godly thing within a marriage.

**7. PROTECT:** Couples stay in love because they value the love they have. That means they do whatever is necessary to defend and safeguard their relationship. All kinds of unwise behaviors - addictions, affairs, lying, misplaced priorities - can jeopardize your unity and undermine your intimacy. That's why it's critical to be intentional about protecting what you have together.

If we are not intentional about protecting the marriage, we can get careless.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: *Holiness and honor* - when we lose this basis for our lives, we lose the foundation on which to build, cherish and protect what can be a successful marriage. Today pornography is a huge problem and can ruin a marriage. It is easily accessible and we need to make sure our focus is on valuing our spouse alone. The *honor* here is the sexual experience being expressed where God intended it to be expressed - within the marriage covenant.

**Do we fall into the old "the grass is greener elsewhere" thinking?** Proverbs 5:15,17-18

**Letting anger or resentment fester - that is going to hurt tomorrow!** Ephesians 4:25-27

**Holding grudges and constant complaining are never good things:** Proverbs 19:11,13

**Clothing ourselves with grace as we put away every damaging imperfect human characteristic is truly a recipe for protecting one another:** Colossians 3:8-15: (NRSV) <sup>8</sup>*But now you must get rid of all such things - anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. What if some of these are so engrained in you that you cannot do this?* <sup>9</sup>*Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices* <sup>10</sup>*and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator... Do not lie to one another - this is such an important place to begin. Sometimes we develop a habit of lying first. Be aware of it and attack it squarely. Not lying is the basis for clothing yourself in something different.* <sup>12</sup>*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Clothe yourself - notice these things are not from the inside out yet. They start as something we "put on" and learn to use by trial and error.* <sup>13</sup>*Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Rise higher.* <sup>14</sup>*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ...with that selfless, benevolent love that is the binding in our lives.* <sup>15</sup>*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. An attitude of gratitude can change everything!*

This is about putting in the maintenance time to the most important physical relationship we have so that we can make it better and stronger. Not only does it benefit the two spouses working on it, but it benefits everyone around them as well. The degree of value you place on your marriage will determine the degree of effort you put into your marriage!

This is about a series of choices. This is about the realization that as life goes on, we tend to get comfortable with things. When that happens, we stop paying attention. When we stop paying attention, we stop maintaining and start to lose. This causes regret.

This is the maintenance that is so important so we can live a Christian marriage of honor and praise to Him and His son.

*So, can love last a lifetime?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*