

3 Keys to Making Your Love Last

Valentine's Day is coming up next week. If you're a wife, you may be thinking, *I hope he remembers!* If you're a husband you may be thinking, *Oh no, again?* Or maybe you're thinking, *I wish this day would go away. Could I have possibly married anyone less romantic?*

If love is a feeling, then marrying for love is the worst possible reason to say "I do." Feelings are fickle. Feelings *will* change. You married a sinner. Your spouse married a sinner too. And life happens: children, age, pounds and a million other things.

But if love is a covenant, an outworking of the love with which God has loved you, then it's the very best possible reason to get married. In fact, no other reason is big enough to carry you through everything that marriage will bring.

When John 3:16a says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," that love has nothing to do with feelings.

When Jesus said, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12b), He wasn't talking about a feeling.

And when you promised to love, honor and cherish your spouse as long as you both shall live, you weren't promising to have a feeling.

Marriage is one of God's most important laboratories for teaching us how to love well. Love is a choice, a verb. And love in marriage is definitely a covenant.

In that light, here are three keys to making the love in your marriage last.

1. Seek to understand first.

Almost any human interaction can be improved by seeking to understand the other person before trying to get them to understand you. Your marriage is likely to improve immeasurably if you implement this key.

Nowhere is this more important than in communication. Truly seeking to understand your spouse's point of view will open doors to connection and further intimacy. Communication is a skill that you must intentionally work to improve, and working to understand your spouse is where it begins.

Even if your spouse is behaving badly, seeking to understand them will make solutions more workable. Be curious, not nosy. Observe. Put yourself in your spouse's shoes. Look at the world through their eyes.

2. Choose to move closer.

Unless your spouse is truly acting out of an evil heart, your choice to move closer has a good chance of making them want to do the same. This is different from being needy or controlling. Moving closer means you are inviting your spouse to connect in ways that are more than superficial. It's being appropriately vulnerable.

Moving closer means going first. It means choosing to open a difficult conversation if there's an issue keeping you apart. It means learning to forgive and learning the difference between forgiveness and trust. And it means making yourself as inviting and safe a person as possible, someone your spouse would want to come closer to.

Asking yourself "What's it like to be married to me?" may help you know what to do next in this area.

3. Stay on your knees.

Two sinners hitched for life is a recipe for disaster—unless

God intervenes. You can't do this marriage thing alone.

Pray for your spouse and for your marriage. And pray for your own heart. Perhaps the most important question to pray about is, "Lord, who do You need me to be to my spouse in this season?"

And pray with your spouse. This is more than "Bless this food" at mealtime. Prayer together can feel very vulnerable. If you're not used to praying together, begin by agreeing to pray. Then join hands (perhaps while lying in bed together), and each pray silently. Squeeze your spouse's hand when you're finished.

And husbands, you've done harder things than pray with your wife. Step up and do it!

Your Turn: *Have you looked at love as a feeling? What if you saw it as a covenant—between you and God first, and then between you and your spouse? How might that change your marriage? Leave a comment below.*

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