

How to Maintain Your Passionate Spark Years After You Say 'I Do'

As Christians, when we understand that we get to be married to God and our spouse, marriage can truly be a lovership for all of our days. I first want you to be grounded in God and His Word about love.

The Lord now truly empowers us to kill our sin nature and not always be self-focused and, instead, lovingly serve our spouse. We can honestly participate in the lovership of God in marriage. A lovership is when we not only believe we can be a lover to our spouse every day, but we actually authentically behave this way.

Herein lies the real trick. You can't be a lover your whole life if you don't "believe" you can. You probably won't be a lover to your spouse if you don't even think that is the goal in marriage.

Our behavior tells us what we actually and truly believe. If you believe you are a lover for life as I do, you're more likely to move toward actually being a lover. You want to be creative and expressive toward your spouse.

If at the end of the day you asked yourself, "Was I a great lover to my spouse? To my God?" this would invoke great insight into how you're actually behaving toward your spouse.

If you ask yourself, "Was I a good husband/wife today?" you would probably go through your role definition and answer accordingly. So, you can always track what you actually believe about anything, including marriage, based on your actual behavior.

Imagine waking up in love with your spouse rather than feeling like you are in some philosophical, duty-based, check-off-the-box of being a good husband or wife state of mind. Instead, you wake up wowed and feel the same way you were enamored by them when you first held hands or kissed.

You can have a lovership like this if you both keep the attitude of a lover-spouse and avoid being just husband and wife. Being a husband and wife is the name society gives your relationship, but being a lover is who you are to your spouse.

I feel extremely passionate about being a lover-spouse. Being Lisa's lover-spouse allows me to truly understand my real relationship toward Lisa. I'm her cheerleader, greatest supporter, coach, encourager, friend, the person she spends her time with, her partner and I enjoy every aspect of her. I'm unashamedly her lover-spouse.

When we really break down and examine the whole creation and redemption story, you can sum it up in one word: love. I want to walk through a distinct part of Scripture to show you God's priority of love. When we see how He sees and respond to His love and wisdom, we become much more like Him. Honestly, I think the entire journey of marriage has quite a bit to do with becoming like Christ.

In Matthew 22:34-40, we see Jesus in one of those familiar settings in which religious leaders are trying to trap Jesus with well-thought-out questions. The first question had to do with taxes. The next about marriage and the resurrection. Then after the Sadducee failed, the Pharisees thought they would ask Jesus that "gotcha" question to trap Jesus.

You really have to love the patient part of Jesus' personality with these religious, academic thinking types. In verse 36 the Pharisees asked, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?"

This would probably have been a really hard question for the

academic types. Back then they might have had to look up a bunch of scrolls and examine and weigh each law. However, this was not a tough question for Jesus. He came from heaven, and He knows the author of the law intimately. He knows the author's heart.

Imagine the Pharisees' faces when Jesus didn't even take a second to answer. Jesus didn't pause and say, "Let me think about that one for a while." He didn't need to ask anyone else. He knew the answer and answered this academic's question. In verse 37, Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second one is similar. It reads, "'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (v. 39b).

This conversation with the Pharisees and Jesus is one of those amazing conversations that give you a window into the heart and mind of God. Jesus knows the Father. He knows the Father's heart and that His heart is all about love. As believers, we know this biblical truth. Intuitively in our spirits, we know above all we are to love God and love others.

I think we can easily suggest that loving or being a lover is very important to God. I believe placing a priority on love in general is necessary. However, I also believe this truth of being a lover to God and others also applies specifically to being a lover to your spouse.

How can we truly say we love God who we cannot see and not love our spouse who we get to see every day? When I say love, I mean all-in love. I don't mean "I told you I love you years ago and I haven't changed my mind" kind of love.

Love, by definition, is expressing. Not expressing is not loving well. As Christians we learn early on in John 3:16a: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

To love is to give, not to withhold giving.

Lover-spouses know this at a very intuitive level, but anyone can learn to be a lover-spouse. It's in all of us to be a lover-spouse.

We're called to be a lover-spouse, not managing partners of a family enterprise. We're not following some code or law to love our spouse. We're lovers. We're commanded to love because it's who we are and it's about being the best of who we are.

I've trained thousands of couples to become better lovers of their spouses. When they're in love with their spouse, not only can the marriage change—they change! The one thing I absolutely know, both personally and professionally, is love changes us. If I allow love to flow through me toward someone, they become a soul of value. I immediately give them the respect or honor of being God's child regardless of their beliefs or behaviors.

I've seen countless times when a man or woman reopens their heart to love their spouse. This love changes not only the person giving it but the person receiving it. Imagine if the real plan was a proactive loving of our spouse. In this process, we would daily change to be more Christ-like and would probably be more fun to be around. {eo}

Doug Weiss, Ph.D., is a nationally known author, speaker and licensed psychologist. He is the executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the author of several books, including his newest title *Lover Spouse*. You may contact Dr. Weiss via his website, www.heart2heart.org, on his Facebook, by phone at 719-278-3708 or through email at heart2heart@heart2heart.org.