

Bethel Bible Chapel ? A successful marriage

My wife and I celebrated our 35th wedding anniversary in August. Over our meal at a restaurant in Williamsburg Virginia, we took time to reflect on many of the places we've seen and things we have done in our lives together over these years. Part of that was thanking God for two beautiful daughters, a great son-in-law and now a new grandson.

Through these years of married life I've come up with three things that need to be in any successful marriage in order for it to flourish. All three start with the letter 'c'.

The first is commitment. From the time the couple say 'I do' they need to have a total commitment to making the marriage work. They need to keep in mind that there will be many ups and down within every marriage but a couple who are totally committed to it will do whatever it takes to make it succeed. There is security within the marriage if each one knows that the other is fully committed to it. This is an important starting point for every marriage.

The second is compromise. This can be somewhat difficult, especially if you have lived alone for a number of years. Even seemingly simple decisions, like what T.V. show to watch, take compromise. We all like to have it our own way to a certain degree. I read an article recently that suggests that it takes from nine to fourteen years for two individuals to stop thinking of themselves as individuals and to start thinking of themselves as a couple. I'm not sure if this is true or not but I do know that my selfish thoughts continually crop up in my marriage and I need to make a concerted effort to think about my wife and what her needs might be.

The third is communication. In his book 'The Five Love Languages' Gary Chapman observes that people speak different love languages. He says we all have ways we especially like to give and receive love. These are gifts, service, time, touch and words. What we have to discover is which of these are important to our mate. Most of us tend to give love in the ways we most want to receive it. We must remember that what is important to us might not be what is important to them.

Some people like to receive gifts. This is not necessarily expensive gifts, but just the fact that you were thinking enough about them to stop and buy something for them means a great deal.

Others like it most when we serve them. It can be important to our spouse when we set aside our own agendas and decide to do something for them. This might be doing chores around the house that they are the one normally doing. Serving your spouse can be very powerful as long as it is high on their list of priorities. Just ask and find out.

Others like to have your time. With time the emphasis is on quality and quantity, what you say or do and how much of yourself you put into it. We live in a busy world but we make time for what is important to us.

Another language is touch. Sometimes all someone needs is a hug. Using honesty and openness, we can learn the kinds of touching our partners enjoy most, and the circumstances in which they are preferred.

The final way to communicate is words. This is a skill we men need to work on. Both husbands and wives need to here 'I love you' again and again daily. Combined with specific compliments about character and ability, the words build up the marriage.

There we have it. The three 'c's of a successful marriage: commitment, compromise, and communication. I'm sure there are more.

Let us remember to put Christ into the centre of our lives and into the centre of our marriages.

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