

Fil-Am Community Church
13 February 2011
“LOVE THAT LASTS A LIFETIME”

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Today is special because it is Valentine's Day. And I have prepared a special message for those who are in love and not in love...anymore.

Hoping that this message will ignite again that spark in your love life. And for those whose relationships are constantly aflame, may this message continue to keep that fire burning. So, this message is for those who are married. If you're not married, this message is for you too because according to *Newsweek* magazine, 96% of all people in America eventually get married.

If you're a youth, however, keep these principles in mind but don't apply it right away. Don't think about marriage yet. ***Think of your career, your ministry, your family,*** before you think of marriage.

Now, of that 96% who get married according to *Newsweek*, 38% eventually divorce. Of those who divorce 79% will remarry and of those 79% who remarry, 44% will divorce again. I'm sure if you were to ask all of those people -- and perhaps you have gone through the heartbreak of divorce -- nobody plans a divorce. You don't say, "I'm going to get married and I'm expecting in a couple of years for this not to work out." It catches you by surprise. It is not a planned thing. The question that I have is "Why is it that so many marriages die?" What is it that makes a marriage last? Are there some ingredients that you can count on that will glue a marriage

together and will give you a love that will last a lifetime? The answer to that is the affirmative. Yes, there are.

This morning I want to share with you **six ingredients from God's word that build a lasting relationship.** Now, let's tackle the first ingredient.

1. ACCEPTANCE

In Romans 15:7 *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."*

Accept one another. This is very, very important in a marriage because 70% of everybody who gets married, marry their opposites. They have differences. The differences that attracted you to that person, later become an irritation if you have to live with them 24 hours a day. I hear people all the time say, "Before we were married we had so much in common, and now that we're married we have nothing in common."

I honestly think that God has a real sense of humor in putting opposites together. If you're married, I can almost guarantee you that one of you is an early riser and the other one wants to hibernate until noon. You're just opposite.

One of you loves to talk. You can tell stories and you're so expressive and you have the gift of gab. The other one is deaf and dumb.

One of you loves to spend money. You're an extravagant spender. And your mate is a tightwad.

One of you is always on time and the other one is never on time.

When it comes to bedtime, one of you is very romantic. You are supercharged, an atomic bomb. And your mate is a dud. One of you wants to say when it comes to romance "drop everything!" The other one says, "Drop dead!"

Differences. One of you is impulsive and daring and the other one is cautious and reserved. One of you is very decisive -- you make decisions immediately. The other one looks at a menu for 15 minutes and still can't decide.

The fact is folks, your differences are not wrong, ***you're just different.*** Two people can be different and still neither is wrong. The question I start out with is, do you accept your mate's differences? Acceptance is essential to marriage because everybody is imperfect. We all need lots of acceptance.

Romans 14:13 "Stop judging each other." So without acceptance you will nag your marriage to death.

2. ATTENTION

We all need attention. **1 Peter 1:22** *"Love one another deeply from the heart."* Over sixteen times in the Bible it says "Love one another." What does it mean? You spell "love" -- **ATTENTION**. If you love somebody you will pay them attention.

Everybody needs attention. As a little kid you used to say, "Watch me, Daddy! Watch me, Mommy! Watch me!" When we get older we still need that attention. We just don't do it so blatantly. We say to the world, "Watch me!" We say it by the way we dress. We say it by our cars. We say it by our homes. We say it by the plaques on our wall. Watch me! We need attention.

Do you remember how much attention you gave to your mate when you were dating? Compare that to now. Before, you were totally absorbed in that person and unaware of what else was going on. Now, you don't even go out on a date. Accompanying her to Costco is what you call a date. When you do go out together, you walk ahead of her and don't open the door for her. And when she's far behind you, you get annoyed and you say, "Ano ba, ang bagal mo naman." ***"C'mon, slowpoke."***

One thing I observe. If you go to a park, you can always tell who's married and who's not married. The unmarried couple is entangled with each other, enamored with each other. They are totally oblivious that everybody is

watching what is going on. But they are giving each other total, undivided attention.

Folks, the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is *apathy*. The worst form of rejection is to be ignored. We all need attention.

1 Peter 3:7 "*Husbands, be considerate of your wives.*" **Pay them attention.**

A national poll was taken on "How well do you know your mate?" And the survey says that wives know their husbands a lot better than husbands know their wives. Pay attention to your spouse.

3. ADJUSTMENT

We need to adjust to each other. Ephesians 5:21 "*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" That means there is a mutual adjusting. Doesn't the Bible say that the husband is the spiritual leader of the home? Yes, that's very true. Doesn't the Bible say that the wife is to follow her husband's leadership? Yes, it does. But it also says, "***Submit to one another.***" When the wife follows her husband's leadership, it doesn't mean she does all the adjusting. There is a mutual adjusting -- submitting to one another. There's a place for compromise. You both need to give in sometimes.

The problem is, we get so busy trying to change our mates that we don't have time to look at what we need to change. What happens is, we say things like "After we're married, he'll change." or "After we're married I'll change him." The truth is, both husband and wife need to change.

Better Homes and Gardens did a survey in 1979 of 300,000 marriages in the United States and asked "Why do marriages fail?" The number one reason was immaturity. The number two reason was selfishness. Immaturity and selfishness. Those two words are commonly called incompatibility. I hear people saying, "We're just incompatible." What does that mean? It means you're both stubborn and unwilling to change. It means you're both being selfish. You're both not willing to work at it.

We need acceptance; accept one another. We need attention; love one another. We need adjustment; submit to one another.

Romans 14:19 *"Make every effort to do what leads to mutual edification."*

4. AMNESTY

You need to call a truce. Total forgiveness.

How many of you agree that you can't make it in a marriage without forgiveness? You've got to have a lot of forgiving going on in marriage. One guy said "We have a beef stew relationship: I beef and my wife stews."

Resentment will kill your marriage quicker than anything. You need amnesty, forgiveness. Everybody hurts each other. Sometimes it's on purpose, sometimes unintentionally. But the fact is when you live close to somebody you're going to hurt them. You have two options with that hurt.

You can rehearse it or you can release it. Rehearse it -- I go over and over it. And it gets bigger and bigger. Or you can release it. And you can forgive.

What do you tend to resent in your marriage? Maybe you resent that your spouse doesn't accept the responsibility that is theirs. Maybe you resent that he doesn't clean up or she doesn't clean up her mess. Maybe you resent the fact that your spouse gets to travel more than you do. Maybe you resent the fact that they won't talk to you or listen to you. Maybe you resent the fact that they are irresponsible or insensitive to your sexual needs.

The fact is, resentment always hurts you worse than the person you're resenting. It's like throwing a boomerang. You throw it out and it comes back and hits you. It bothers you more than it bothers the other person.

What do you do? Remember that it hurts you more. So, you better forgive. Remember that God has forgiven you. Colossians 3:14 *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* That's the key. You've been forgiven so you ought to forgive.

5. APPRECIATION

¹ Thessalonians 5:11 *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you're doing."* We are to accept one another, submit to one another, forgive one another and encourage one another and build each

other up. The most encouraging thing you can do is express appreciation. Everybody needs appreciation. ***The power of praise is awesome.***

It is much more effective than nagging. Someone said, "Don't nag, brag." Don't give pokes, give strokes. You see, ***people blossom under affirmation.***

What does it mean to appreciate? To appreciate means to raise in value. When your home appreciates, it raises in value. It's the opposite of depreciate. When you depreciate something you put it down, you devalue it. Whenever you appreciate your wife/husband you are actually increasing their value. Appreciation is a powerful tool in marriage because it does three things:

- 1. It raises your mate's value.***
- 2. It raises your own value.***
- 3. It raises the value of the relationship.***

There are so many depreciators in the world. The world is full of put-downs. The last place you need more of it is at home. You see, there are a lot more critics than there are complimenters in the world.

Acceptance is when you say, "I accept you in spite of all your faults." Adjustment says, "I'm willing to change. I'm willing to meet you half-way. I'm willing to make an effort. I'm willing to work on my part." But

appreciation says, "I not only accept you, but I find things in you that I like. I find something that's good, that's significant." The Bible teaches that you are to encourage one another through appreciation.

Some people say, "I accept my spouse, but my marriage is dull." That's true if you don't have any appreciation in it. Acceptance will give your marriage stability. Appreciation will give your marriage a spark. It will raise up all kinds of romantic feelings in your marriage. It will replace the spark that's gone if you start appreciating your spouse, complimenting them. Appreciation is an aphrodisiac. It raises the value of your home and it increases your love for each other.

How often should I appreciate? Hebrews 3:13 ***"Encourage one another daily."***

I think every marriage ought to have a minimum daily requirement of at least one compliment a day. Some of you are going to have to be pretty creative in coming up with one compliment a day. Look for it. You may have to think up something! Look for ways to be creative and appreciative.

There was this Christian couple. One day, because they were struggling to make ends meet, the husband was livid when he confronted his wife with the receipt for a \$250 dress she had bought. "How could you do this?!"

"I was outside the store looking at the dress in the window, and then I found myself trying it on," she explained. "It was like Satan was whispering in my ear, 'You look fabulous in that dress. Buy it!'"

"Well," the man replied, "You know how I deal with that kind of temptation. I say, 'Get behind me, Satan! I did,'" replied his wife," but then he said, 'It looks fabulous from back here, too!'"

Men, your wives need some appreciation. They desperately need it. You don't want the devil to give it to her, do you? But joking aside, when you raise the value of your mate, when you love your mate, it's not only good for them, it's a ***testimony to the world***. It's a Christian witness. The Bible says that a husband and a wife, their love for each other, is to be an example of God's love for us. It teaches that in Ephesians 5. It is a good witness when husbands and wives are hopelessly in love with each other.

Appreciation. Let God build that into your marriage.

What should you appreciate?

1. The fact that they've stuck with you. For some of you that's a major accomplishment. They put up with you and didn't walk out on you.
2. You ought to appreciate their effort whether it's "up to your standards" or not. At least they made the effort.

It's like the new bride who brings dinner to her husband, "Honey, my two specialties are meat balls and apple pie."

The appreciative husband said, "***And which one is this, darling?***" He appreciated the effort. Don't nag, you brag. Don't give pokes, give strokes. Build them up; encourage them on a daily basis.

If you want to know God's will for your marriage -- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 "*In everything give thanks for this is the will of God.*" It is God's will that in everything you be appreciative, in everything, you give thanks. That's God's will.

How do you have a love that lasts a life time? Accept one another (Acceptance), love one another deeply (Attention), submit to one another (Adjustment), forgive one another (Amnesty), Encourage one another (Appreciation).

There's a sixth ingredient:

6. AFFECTION

I'm talking about the physical expression of love in your marriage. Physical expressions of love are vital to your relationship. In 1 Cor. 7:5, Paul says "*Do not deprive each other.*" Paul is acutely aware that as food is to your body's health, touching and tenderness and contact is to the emotions. It's

indispensable for emotional health and marital health. I know a lot of marriages that are dying of malnutrition. They just don't touch each other anymore.

1 Corinthians 7 is Paul's advice to married couples. In Verses 3-4, he says, *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife."*

Doug Williams, the comedian, once joked: "Before we got married, she was like a good health plan -- I had **full coverage**, you know what I'm saying? Once we got married, she turned into an HMO, **selective coverage**. I'm like, 'Hey, you keep this up, I'm going to have to go outside the network.'"

Folks, you don't want your spouse to get out of the network, right? So, give them full coverage. Remember, you are now one flesh, as Jesus says in Matt. 19:5, *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."*

Paul says three things about sex:

1. It is a legitimate need. It is not to be ignored. It's a vital part of your relationship.

2. It is for mutual benefit. It's for both the husband and the wife. The wife doesn't own her body by herself but when she married she gave up part of that right. When the husband married his wife, he gave up part of his right to his own body. It is a mutual benefit and either spouse may initiate it.

3. It is a spiritual responsibility. If you're married your sexual relationship is a spiritual responsibility. If you avoid it and deny it, you are bringing all kinds of possible consequences in your marriage that the devil can try to get hold of. Don't deny it. I'll bet most of you have never thought of sex as a spiritual responsibility. God says that's a part of life just like giving an offering or witnessing or praying. It's part of your spiritual responsibility.

Now, what is it that makes a marriage Christian? You see, you can both be Christians and not have a Christian marriage. A Christian marriage is a marriage where:

1. They follow the teachings of Christ -- love one another, accept one another, submit to one another, encourage one another, show affection for one another.

2. The Spirit of Christ is invited to be present and resident in the relationship.

Philippians 2:4-5. *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."*

If we would just follow this verse we would have so many fewer problems in our marriages. I can't think of an area that it applies to more than in marriage. Each of you should not only think of yourself but also of the interests of your spouse. If we would just follow that one verse, the number of problems we'd have would be much, much smaller.

The bottom line is you treat your spouse the way Jesus would. That's what it means to have a Christian marriage.

You can have a lasting love, a love that will last a lifetime, but you have to follow the instructions. When in doubt consult the original instructions. God thought up marriage and, in the Bible, He outlines the principles for a lasting relationship. It's a choice. We can make the choice.

Now, all this talk about marriage, about the six ingredients to make it last will be for nought if our marriage is not centered on the one who instituted marriage. Because you can try to apply all these principles, but when tough times come, the relationship would crumble anyway if it is not anchored on the firm foundation which is God's love. Folks, give your hearts first to God then he can give you a heart that will truly love.

Let us pray.....