

Dr. Ron Armstrong • April 16, 2023

The Art of Loving and Laughing: Marriage (Part 1)

1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

A. Successful marriage is about giving; not receiving.

1. "Feelings" may drive the initial courtship, but your marriage relationship is built on "doing."
2. Our culture, courtship events, and the wedding day all tell us that marriage should be both easy and perfect. It's rarely either.
3. Genuine love and a successful marriage requires choosing to give up the childish "I want" focus. An adult thinks about others.
4. Plainly: We are both here to serve.

B. Showing love through actions is like depositing money in the bank. It creates relationship equity.

1. Why do we have "big" reactions to "small" things? Here are three common reasons:

- a. We're overwhelmed by emotional stress, fear, or frustration.
- b. We're tired or hurting physically.
- c. We have a low relationship equity balance.

2. When you do kind things for someone, your balance goes up. When you do hurtful things, the balance goes down.

3. Small daily deposits are the key. Grand gestures rarely pull a negative account back to positive.

4. Competition drains a relationship account while encouragement makes deposits. Children argue about who is "right," but adults can let it go.

5. What kindness could you "do" today that would help raise your relationship equity balance? And tomorrow?

C. We all need to learn, but some need help now. Here are three tools you could start using today:

1. Get better at conflict by:
 - a. Only arguing with the person in the room. Ask yourself who you feel upset with.
 - b. Take turns talking, listen for the feelings instead of the "facts," and avoid, "You always."
 - c. Own your part, but don't worry so much about fault.
2. Squish the zone of disappointment by:
 - a. Lowering your expectations.
 - b. Raising your game.
3. Play with "do-overs." You are both going to say the wrong thing. So just say, "I handled that

badly. I'd like us to do do-overs." Decide the point you want to go back to, and let it be okay to go back.