

LIFE SAVERS

A LIFE Group of the church of Christ at Tusculum
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The LifeSavers "Homebuilders" Study Series
"The Dance of Romance"
Spring 2008

Part 2: "A..B..C.., Easy as 1..2..3.."

We promised to love, honor, and cherish one another. We promised "for better or for worse". We were so in love. We were ready to conquer the world together.

And we didn't have any idea how much work it took to have a good marriage.

**Romans 12:10, Romans 15:7,
1 Corinthians 12:25, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:32
1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24, James 5:16**



But we soon learned. Many times it was the hard way. Conflicts, misunderstandings, frustrations, differing backgrounds, differing traditions --it all meshed together to make for some very difficult times. At one point it felt like we were the poster couple for "for worse". But we had one thing going for us. We were determined to make it to the "for better" part. And we determined to do whatever it took to get there. For us it involved some counseling, lots of reading, some mentoring by those who had been there before us, and much prayer.

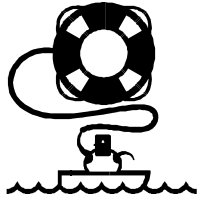
What are some of the things we learn through the struggles? It's kind of like going back to kindergarten - it's a matter of ABC's:

A - ALLOW FOR DIFFERENCES - As humans we are all created differently. We are also wired differently to make decisions and express emotions. As men and women, we also have very different needs. Rather than judging one another on our differences we had to learn to appreciate and work with our differences.

B - BE LOVING - Mark and I found that some of our problems were happening because we were expressing love to one another in the way we wanted it expressed to us. But not necessarily in the way the other one needed to hear it. We all need to be able to receive and express love. But again, we are all created differently. It's been found that there are 5 Love Languages that people "speak": Physical Touch and Closeness, Gift Giving, Quality Time, Acts of Service, and Encouraging Words are all ways we give and receive love. We were missing the boat because we were speaking a foreign language to one another. We had to learn to speak our spouses "love language".

"I was nauseous and tingly all over. I was either in love or I had smallpox."





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C - COMMUNICATE DAILY - In the season of small children, it's easy to fall into the trap of talking about nothing but "diapers and dishes". But to keep a marriage strong, communication needs to include feelings, emotions, and dreams. We need to be able to talk about how we're really doing. We need to talk about struggles. And we need to solve problems as a team.

D - DATE REGULARLY - The dating years allow us to focus just on our loved one. Now that we're knee deep in marriage, diapers, and housework we forget about the need to stop and focus on our spouse. But it needs to happen. If not, the children come between us and when the children are gone we find we have little in common. We have found that by picking one night of the week and by having a consistent babysitter who just plans on every Thursday night, date nights are a reality. When we've not been able to afford a sitter, we've found another couple to trade with. We've also found that our relationship doesn't do well without those times to stop and focus on one another.

E - EVALUATE YOUR PAST - Everyone comes into the marriage relationship with ideas, thoughts, traditions, strengths, and struggles that they picked up from the home they grew up in. Some of these are beneficial to continue in our "new family". Others we need to toss out and determine to do differently. Mark grew up in a family that handled conflict at a high decibel level and I came from a home that never admitted they had conflict. We both needed to evaluate our past as it related to conflict management. We needed to come up with a new plan that was far more healthy than what we each knew.

F - FORGIVE - Forgiveness is a choice. It's something we have to do, it's not usually something we want to do. It's something we do in exchange for continued anger, revenge, and snide remarks. It brings closure to hurt and conflict. Do we forget when we forgive? No. Do we determine to let go of the desire to hurt the other person back? Yes. We had to learn to add forgiveness to apology. Instead of "I'm sorry" it became "I'm sorry will you please forgive me?" Then the injured partner has the ability to bring closure with "I forgive you". Sometimes we even have to make a decision to forgive when the other person doesn't ask for it.

I once heard a couple who was struggling say, "Marriage shouldn't be such hard work. We're not made for each other. It should be easier." But reality is that marriage is hard work and if we're unwilling to work hard to make it work it probably won't last. It takes time, effort, and lots of energy to keep the marriage flame burning. But it is so worth it! I can truly say that those years of struggles through the "for worse" will make us really appreciate the "for better" part!

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