

How to Make Love Last (Pt. 2 of 2)

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

If a recipe is followed exactly, the results will be exactly what the recipe intended. The cake, cookies, casserole... whatever the recipe was for will be delicious. God has given us His recipe for a loving, lasting, fulfilling marriage relationship. In the last SEEDS FOR GROWTH, we talked about the first four ingredients in God's recipe: 1. A Sense of Permanence 2. Loyalty and Trust 3. Acceptance and 4. Shared Activity. We believe there are four more essential ingredients.

Shared talk follow shared activity.

5. The fifth ingredient is **Shared Talk**. Shared Talk naturally evolves from Shared Activity. Couples who do things together talk more. Men especially find it easier and more natural to talk over, around and about activities. Wives, take advantage of this male friendship pattern. Especially if you have found little success in setting your husband down and demanding that he “share his feelings” with you. We are not saying you should talk *only* around activities, but it's a terrific start. Because when you get into the habit of talking about routine things, you will eventually become comfortable talking about deeper things like feelings.

Having devotions together as a couple will enhance your communication more than anything we know. When you read God's Word together and talk about what it means to you and how you can put it into practice, you will be communicating on a deep, personal level. And when you pray together, your shared talk becomes three-

way. You may talk about emotions together in prayer that never would have surfaced any other way.

Having devotions together on a regular basis is a wonderfully natural way to share your growth in Christ with each other. Sharing with your partner what God is doing in *your* life without even a hint of condemnation will encourage your mate to do the same. *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds* (Hebrews 10:24).

Liberally mix in the ingredient of **Acceptance** as you attempt to add more Shared Talk to your relationship. The confidence to communicate on a deep level comes slowly, as our mates feel safe enough to share their feelings without fear of criticism.

6. The sixth ingredient is one which comes with time. It is a **Sense of History** — the “remember when's” of life. Every couple has their own story. It is like a patchwork quilt, with every piece sewn snugly to the other pieces. As the years pass, and new pieces are added, it becomes so encompassing that it stretches forward as well as backward. Our present problems and irritations don't look as large when we see them in relationship to the whole quilt. We'll get through them this time just like we got through before.

Every day we are writing our history: the happy moments like taking a walk at sunset, and the sad ones like rushing the baby to the emergency room. Every “we experience” is a new piece added to our quilt of life together. We need to treat our story with respect, for it holds the proof of our

significance. Sure, we have a ways to go, but just look how far we've come!

How often God had the children of Israel rehearse their history out loud to one another! And every time they retold the story, they were reminded how significant they were to the Lord, and how significant He was to them. “Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way....” (Deuteronomy 8:2)

Interdependency brings cooperation and respect.

7. The seventh ingredient in God's recipe for life-long marriage is **Mutual Dependency**: interdependency built upon respect for one another. Mutual Dependency is based on mutual submission. In Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3, the writers speak eloquently about mutual submission. Both husbands and wives are commanded to behave “in the same way” as Jesus (1 Peter 3:1 and 7) who lived a life of submission “leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Mutual Dependency, as well as mutual submission, means we view our marriage not as a contest, but as a cooperation. We are not in competition with each other; we are not struggling for control of the relationship. This is the path of happiness.

The opposite path — the path of destruction and misery — is when we are in continual power struggles. We want control and we fear being controlled. We're like two puppies fighting over the same rag. They

sink their teeth into opposite ends and growl and shake their heads and growl some more. They wrestle and struggle for the rag, but usually end up so tired, they fall asleep with the rag between them, neither having won. That's how we act in power struggles. We sink our teeth into our own agenda, growl and wrestle with our mates, but never really win. The more we struggle for control, the less control we have.

We must keep in mind that as married partners, we are a team. And as a team, we are interdependent on one another. We are not two fists, fighting for control. We are one fist made of two hands, fingers interlocked.

Hugh Hefner did not create sex – God did.

8. The final ingredient for a successful marriage relationship is **Sexual Intimacy**. Sex isn't something couples grow out of as they mature in other areas of their relationship. No way! Our Sexual Intimacy grows too. It gets *more* fulfilling as we get to know ourselves and our partners better.

Hugh Hefner did not create sex — God did. He created it as a gift for every married couple to enjoy. He declares that the marriage bed is “pure” or “undefiled” (Hebrews 13:4). He is

not speaking here about the place we sleep. “Marriage bed” in this verse means “sexual intimacy.” So in God's sight, sexual intimacy between married partners is pure -- not dirty. He gives us a wonderful example of married love as God intended it to be in *The Song of Songs*, a book devoted exclusively to love and marriage.

For some of you, this might be a difficult ingredient because of the wrong messages you've received about sex throughout your life. Perhaps good intentioned people impressed upon you that sex was dirty. They were wrong! Don't believe them! Get to know what God says about sex. The Song of Songs in a modern translation is a good place to start. And there are several good books available that can help you get rid of the lies and start believing the truth. A Celebration of Sex by Dr. Rosenau, The Gift of Sex by the Penner's, and Intended for Pleasure by the Wheat's are three we highly recommend.

If your sex life needs adjusting, we urge you to do something about it. Don't devalue God's gift by ignoring the need for change. If you need more help than a book can provide, see a godly therapist who can help you work through a painful past. God wants you to enjoy His gift to the fullest — and so do we.

These aren't, of course, the only ingredients that make for a successful, life-long marriage. But, in our experience, observation and reading, these are the biggies. The question is: what are *you* going to do about them? Are you willing to use the right ingredients in your marriage even when it means personal change? Are you willing to change even when it's difficult — and even though you don't believe your mate is willing to change?

It boils down to two basic beliefs. First of all, do you believe God's recipe is worth following? Do you believe His ways are trustworthy? Is obeying Him worth all the trouble? Hebrews 11:6 says “...anyone who comes to him must believe that he is [who he says he is] and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Secondly, do you believe God really can help you change by the power of the Holy Spirit? Are you, by that same Power, ready to obey Him?

There's a saying that goes, “The proof of the pudding is in the tasting.” God is faithful and He will prove to you that when you use the **right ingredients**, you really will get the **right results!** Have a delicious marriage!

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