

THAT LOVING FEELING // THE DATING MACHINE // THE MARRIAGE SECRET // SACRIFICIAL LOVE

lifechange

THE LOVE ISSUE

RELATIONSHIP
RESCUE

SEVEN
STATEMENTS
THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING

I LOVE



contents

THE LOVE ISSUE

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RELATIONSHIP REBOOT?

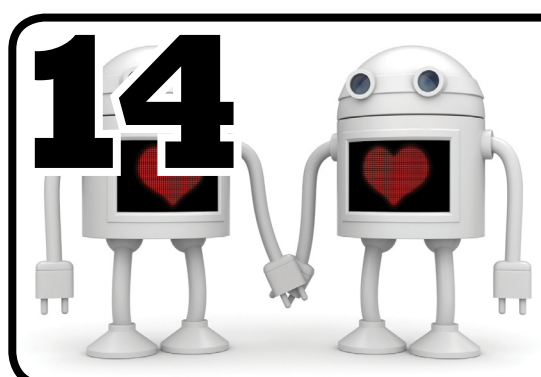
Every healthy relationship requires work, sometimes even a refresher on the basics. Learn how you can "Reboot" your relationship on page 30.

BIG NEWS FROM WEYMOUTH CHURCH

We're expanding this summer! Our historic Weymouth building is getting a little crowded, so as we continue to meet there on Sundays, we will also add another Sunday service at Williams-on-the-Lake near the Fairgrounds. If you don't have a church home and you'd like to check out what we're calling "LifeChange Church," visit our website for the start date & service times.

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Watch Videos of LifeChange

We've posted YouTube videos of Medina families that have experienced LifeChange and have a story to share - log on to WeymouthChurch.com. And, while you're on our site, browse our other features - learn about our plan to help orphans, the "Spiritual Roadmap" that helps people grow in their faith, happenings in our church family, our social network communities, and of course, a host of bonus features pertaining to LifeChange Magazine.

You Tube



love for A LIFETIME

"First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Johnny in a baby carriage!"

I remember chanting that rhyme on the playground back in elementary school -- little did I know that God had a plan for love, marriage, and children in *my* future! Fast forward several years, and I walked down the aisle and married a wonderful man. We had a traditional church wedding but as soon as we said our "I do's", we pretty much left God out of our daily lives and future plans.

It didn't take long before "the honeymoon was over" and life was happening. Within the first five years of our marriage, we had two kids and relocated to a new state away from our family and friends. Like many young couples with children, it was hard to find time or energy for each other.

It wasn't until a friend invited me to attend a Bible study that I began to understand how important love, marriage, and relationships are to God. He

gives so much instruction in the Bible on how we are to interact with each other. His principles can guide us forward to face whatever difficulties or joys may lie ahead.

In today's culture, biblical principles might seem old-fashioned. Magazines, movies, and media make it seem easy to move on when you get bored in your marriage or when your spouse's quirky habits begin to annoy you.

A marriage that endures takes tremendous effort. Don't rely on Cupid to guarantee you a loving marriage. Instead, be prepared to make a commitment to honor, respect, trust, love and forgive one another.

I didn't agree to work on this issue because I've got love and marriage all figured out! But I have seen how putting God at the center of my life has enriched and strengthened my own marriage—17 years strong. I hope that, whether you are married or single, this magazine can be a blessing to you.

Deanna Dubiel
Love Issue Response Leader

DON'T RELY ON CUPID TO GUARANTEE YOU A LOVING MARRIAGE. INSTEAD, BE PREPARED TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO HONOR, RESPECT, TRUST, LOVE AND FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER.



WHY AM I GETTING LIFECHANGE?

LifeChange is being sent out, free of charge, to every household in Medina, and a few surrounding areas as well. It has been written right here in our community by members of Weymouth Church. We're not out to get anything from you, there's no obligation on your part at all. It's just a gift.

At Weymouth Community Church, we've seen time and time again how God changes lives through biblical principles. Our prayer is that by sharing these with our friends and neighbors, we can make a positive difference in Medina and beyond. Two issues have already been released – one focused on *money management* and the other on *dealing with stress*. "The Love Issue" is the third in our series – still to come are magazines about experiencing the joy of *forgiveness*, breaking the bondage of *addiction*, and discovering the *purpose* of life. If you would like back copies of previous LifeChange magazines, we would be happy to provide them as long as our supplies last. Or, if you like, you can download a digital version of each LifeChange at our website, www.WeymouthChurch.com.



Everyday Romance

My wife and I have five children, and when they were little it was almost impossible to find sitters for them. One night after working a late night, I came home to a dark house. As I entered, I found my wife had prepared a candlelit dinner. She took an old card table from the basement and set it to look very fancy and romantic. It was great night where we were able to spend some much-needed quality time together. I'll never forget it! ● **SCOTT**

Nothing says "I love you" like bailing someone out of a stupid mistake. Our premier example of this (though by no means the only one) is when I drove to the wrong airport for a business trip and wasn't going to make it to the "right" airport in time. I bought a one-way ticket but kept my original return flight. My husband and a friend drove out, picked up my car, and picked me up at the "right" airport when I came home that night. All done with laughter, no anger, and lots of love. ● **EMILY**

Pete loves candlelight dinners so every night, even for a sandwich or bowl of soup, he makes sure the oil light or candles are lit and the overhead light is dimmed. What a romantic! ● **JO**

We honestly are not overly romantic people. As a matter of fact we laugh hysterically at each other when one tries to be romantic. Each fall we get away (just the 2 of us) for an overnight retreat. We take walks, catch up on sleep, read a little, work a little, and enjoy creation. Also, each day we make sure that we say "I love you" to the other, and we pray together before sleeping. ● **DOUG**

A few years ago on my birthday, my husband told me he had the evening planned and that I shouldn't ask any questions. Later that day as we were driving in the car, I

was so curious that I kept trying to guess where he was taking me. Of course, he wouldn't tell me a thing! To my surprise... he bought tickets to a play that was in town and that he had heard me mention wanting to see. The play was very enjoyable, and the dinner was delicious! It turned out to be a fun, romantic evening, and I will always fondly remember it. (By the way, the play was *Tuesdays at Morie's*) ● **VERNI**

I was having a little bit of a hard time with the fact that I didn't have a Dad to walk me down the aisle at our wedding. I had thought of little ways to remember him and honor him during the ceremony but the best came from my husband-to-be via my mom. At our rehearsal dinner, after we had given out our gifts to our bride's maids and groomsmen, Andy quietly presented me with a small box and said, "Here's a gift for you from me, your mom, and your dad." Inside was a pair of diamond earrings they had made from two stones from Mom's wedding band. ● **BILLIE**

This past winter my husband bought a big snow blower. During one of our winter blasts he took a little longer than normal to do the driveway. For many mornings after I enjoyed my coffee looking out the front window at a big "I heart U" that had been carved in the snow across the front yard. ● **RENEE**

For our 30th wedding anniversary, John surprised me by taking us back to Mercer, Pennsylvania where we were married in 1972. He arranged for our pastor to come to Mercer to the church we were married in. Pastor Bob remarried us and we reconfirmed our wedding vows. I walked down the same aisle that I had walked down 30 years earlier. I was happily surprised! ● **DONNA**



If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.... Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians

13

About

one month before our November wedding my husband began vomiting fairly regularly and losing weight. A cancer survivor, he checked with his doctors who assured him that as he was cancer-free 7 years, we could confidently go ahead with our plans. Yet on our wedding day he could barely stand and spent the night writhing up the few bites of dinner he had tried valiantly to enjoy.

We spent our honeymoon at Medina Hospital. He needed two surgeries, and was cut open, shall we say, stem to stern. And since the wound became infected, it was left open to heal on its own. It was a long and miserable convalescence. And it certainly wasn't the beginning of married life we had looked forward to! Passionately in love, I couldn't even hug my husband for nine long months. And I could sense the ache and sorrow he felt not being able to offer me all that was in his heart. We had to learn how to express our love in very creative ways.

Finally, spring arrived and daffodils peeked through the snow. "Oh, daffodils!" I exclaimed. "They're my favorite flower!" The next day when I came home, I saw him outside, holding himself together with one hand and cutting flowers with the other! I never felt so cherished. Everyday of every spring, as long as he lived, I had a fresh daffodil bouquet. And every spring thereafter, each yellow jonquil I see says, "I love you. I love you. I love you."

● **ELAINE**



THAT loving feeling

DAN JARVIS

It's gone, gone, gone – whoaoao. Yes, that feeling – of rapturous joy and excited anticipation and a quickening pulse in the presence of your sweetheart – that romantic “loving feeling” that you shared with your honey so long ago – what happened to it? Is it indeed lost (baby, baby)? The days of hand-holding and just-for-fun kissing and “let's go out to town together on a date” seem to be distant memories, almost like those happy days of sitcoms from an era gone by.

Did we change too many diapers? Did we have too many disagreeable discussions? Did we stay at work late too many times? Or did that loving feeling wander off for no reason other than the slow drip torture of years and years of petty annoyances and increasing wrinkles?

I'm convinced that the reasons we choose to jump into a love relationship aren't destined to disappear with the passing of time, and they aren't doomed to fail when we get frustrated or flabby. In fact, I've come to believe that just the opposite is possible – that our love can grow deeper and richer as we go forward through life; that our romance can mature; that our marriage can strengthen. You can be more fulfilled in the arms of your spouse tomorrow than you are today. It's not an issue of aging, or of settling, or of “losing” anything. It's entirely an issue of choice!

“Choice” isn't talked about much anymore, at least in the context of love. The language we use to describe love is far more accidental; “His eyes met mine and I just knew, it was love at first sight. Exchanging glances, what were the chances? Oh, I fell head-over-heels in love with him.” Or, in the simplicity of the male mind, “I just fell for her!” (I know guys will do anything to impress a girl, but com'on guys, can't we be more creative than that? Dance, or sing, or something?)

Think for a moment: if a relationship is going to last through sickness and health, for richer or for poorer, there will have to be more than “falling” going on. People fall off cliffs and ladders. People fall into ditches. They fall into raspberry bushes and scummy ponds. Falling almost

always causes problems.

I like the word “jump” better than “fall.” “Jump” is intentional, it's a choice, it's something I want to do. People jump at great chances or sweet opportunities in life; sometimes they just jump for joy. You jump into a refreshing pool, or up to slam dunk a basketball, or over a candlestick if you're nimble (and quick). Jumping is good news, most of the time, and I'd say I jumped at the chance to romance and marry the woman who is today my wife. It wasn't a trip, a fall, a stumble or an accident, it was a *choice*. I wanted her, I chose to love her, and I jumped head first into the relationship on purpose.

Here's my theory: If I'll keep making that same choice, no matter how tough life is or how cloudy the days become, I can still maintain a loving, committed, enriching and deepening relationship with my wife. Every day won't be sunny and carefree and pain-free and perfect, but those stipulations weren't named in the wedding vows I made. And that was a choice too: I chose to stand there at the altar before God and those witnesses and promise my love to one woman for the rest of my life.

All that being said, what's the answer? How do we keep that loving feeling two years in, five years in, ten years, twenty years, 'til death do us part? I'm sure different folks have different answers to this question, but I'll pass along some choices I'm making to keep the flame burning.

I CHOOSE TO CARE HOW MY WIFE IS FEELING.

It's elementary, I know, but so many of us get wrapped up in ourselves that we forget to look at life through the eyes of our spouse. Is she fulfilled? Does she have anything to look forward to? Is her life going the way she'd hoped? How can I serve her or make her life a bit easier?

I CHOOSE TO KEEP DATING (BUT ONLY HER!)

Remember the first day you mustered the courage to ask her out? Why not muster that same courage to call a babysitter, make a reservation, dress up a notch and surprise her with an evening out? It may take a significant

rearrangement of your priorities, but set a goal to “date” weekly, or at least bi-weekly. Drop some of those children's activities and pick up one that will teach your kids more about life than any extra-curriculars – teach them that your marriage relationship is priority one!

I CHOOSE TO WORK ON OUR RELATIONSHIP, EVEN WHEN I'D RATHER NOT.

To men, “work on our relationship” is female-speak for a bunch of probing questions, crying, and “I don't want you to fix it, I just want you to listen.” Look past that, and understand that what she's been saying is actually true: relationships require work. Grab a book on improving your marriage, or becoming a better man, or improving your parenting. Decide to deal with the difficult issues in your life rather than ignore them. (Heads up: this may require sustained conversation that lasts longer than a commercial break. Best not to hold the T.V. remote for this part.)

I CHOOSE TO REMIND HER OF HOW MUCH I LOVE HER AND WHY, OFTEN.

You're not always going to “feel” motivated to spend quality time with her, to give her gifts, to hold her hand, or to say, “I love you” every day. But choosing to do so is critical to long-term romance. How did you express your affection when you first met? Dust off the old playbook,

guys. Don't get lazy. You won her heart somehow, miracle that it may have been. You know what it takes!

I CHOOSE TO SHARE A LIFE-MISSION WITH MY WIFE.

The couple that serves together stays together. God has a purpose for your relationship – together you can accomplish more than you could apart. So start serving together, in whatever mission or cause you both believe in. Set financial goals together; talk about parenting strategy together; consider spiritual growth and church participation together – that's a big part of what it means to be “one” with your spouse. Of course you'll have to compromise sometimes to find common ground, but that's the point. You're a team. It's not just about *you* anymore.

There are few things better in life than sharing a no-holds-barred romantic, lifetime, sacrificial love commitment with your spouse. God designed marriage to complete us, to fulfill us, to satisfy our emotional and physical needs, to improve us, to bring us laughter and joy, support during difficulty, children, and a host of other blessings. It's our second most important eternal relationship – only knowing God personally matters more. Let's take our love lives seriously, put the effort in to make them fantastic for the long-haul, put our spouse's needs above our own. That loving feeling will be ours to enjoy for years to come.

a word to my single friends

You're single, eh? Thank God! It seems like a massive number of people in our culture have “fallen” into relationships that they wish they could get out of, and they end up getting out, with tons of pain and heartache. You have the opportunity today to chart a different course.

It took a long time (it seemed to me) to find the “right one.” But when I did, I knew. I didn't have to make compromises, I didn't have to say, “I hope she'll change,” I didn't have to sneak around and hide anything from my family. Waiting for the *best* is definitely worth it. God promises to sustain us through times of being alone, becoming our companion and our guide. He also promises that if we will trust and obey Him, He'll direct us (in relationships and in every other area of life). To learn more, check out “The Dating Machine” on page 14.



the Marriage

Secret

He makes a beeline for *Hallmark* and is soon gazing upon all those racks full of greeting cards. One colorful card quickly catches his eye. He skims the words - they are perfect! He thinks, *This card is her - no doubt about it.* He grabs it off the shelf, pays the clerk, and hurries home rejoicing - *I didn't forget this year!*

She is there when he arrives at home, so he sneaks the card into another room, signs it, and quickly writes her name on the envelope. He even adds a couple of tiny hearts over her name as an extra touch. Then he comes out and hands his wife her tenth anniversary card. She beams from ear to ear. She is so happy - finally he has remembered! She tears open the card and begins to read . . . and then her face falls. The eyes that had been bright with loving energy turn cold. Her beaming countenance becomes sour and dark.

"What's wrong?" her husband asks. (He's a very sensitive guy, and he can pick up on these things.)

"Nothing."

"There is, too. What's wrong?"

"No, there's nothing wrong."

"But there is - I can see it. What is it?"

"Well, it's not bad . . . for a *birthday* card."

As you might guess, the conversation is headed downhill from here. "You're kidding!" says the husband, grabbing the card from her hand. "No way . . . unbelievable!"

"No, you're unbelievable! If you took your car in to be detailed and they put a stripe on the side that was even a fraction of an inch off, you would notice that, right? Why? Because you care about it. But you don't care about our anniversary. You don't care about *me!*"

"Hey, I made an honest mistake, alright? Give me a break. Good grief! The way you're talking I'm glad I got you a birthday card for your anniversary!" And with that brilliant parting shot, he storms out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

Approximately two minutes have passed since he handed her the card. This couple, a husband and wife who truly love each other, have come home expecting to spend a wonderful, romantic evening together. Instead, they end up stomping to opposite ends of the house, staring out the windows into the darkness, wondering how it had ever come to this, and thinking, *This is crazy!*

THE CRAZY CYCLE

Stories like these are not unusual. Every married couple has versions of their own. Around and around it spins. I call it the Crazy Cycle.

It's like someone coming into a room, flipping the light switch, and discovering the lights won't come on. If someone tries the switch two or three times with no results, you can understand. He will eventually figure it out - a tripped circuit breaker, a burned-out bulb. But if he stands there and flips the switch constantly for half an hour, you begin to wonder, "Is this guy a little crazy?" The point is simple: Craziness happens when we keep doing the same things over and over with the same ill effect.

Marriage seems to be fertile ground for this kind of craziness. Ironically, there are more books being published on marriage today than ever before. But with all our knowledge, the craziness continues. Why? I have concluded that a crucial part of God's Word has been completely ignored or perhaps simply gone unnoticed.

THE "HIDDEN SECRET"

In Ephesians 5:33, Paul writes, "Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Of course, I had read that verse many times. I had even preached on that verse when conducting marriage ceremonies. But somehow I had never seen the connection between love and respect. Paul is clearly saying that wives need love and husbands need respect.

As I pondered what Ephesians 5:33 is saying, my thought process went something like this: "A husband is to obey the command to love even if his wife does not obey this command to respect, and a wife is to

obey the command to respect even if the husband does not obey the command to love.” So far, so good.

Then I reasoned further: “A husband is even called to love a disrespectful wife, and a wife is called to respect an unloving husband. There is no justification for a husband to say, ‘I will love my wife after she respects me,’ or for a wife to say, ‘I will respect my husband after he loves me.’”

At this point, I saw why it is so hard to love and respect. When a husband feels disrespected, it is especially hard to love his wife. When a wife feels unloved, it is especially hard to respect her husband. And when a husband feels disrespected, he has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife. (Perhaps the command to love was given to him precisely for this reason!) When a wife feels unloved, she has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband. (Perhaps the command to respect was given to her precisely for this reason!)

Even more convincing is what Ephesians 5:33 teaches about the woman’s primary need for love and the man’s primary need for respect: The husband must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. The Greek word Paul uses for love in this verse is *agape*, meaning unconditional love. And the wording of the rest of the passage strongly suggests that the husband should receive unconditional respect.

And then came what I call the “aha” moment: this thing triggers itself! Without love, she reacts without respect. Without respect, he reacts without love and nausea. Thus was born the Crazy Cycle!

YOU’RE STEPPING ON MY AIR HOSE!

The more I meditated on this passage of Scripture, the more I realized that if a husband is commanded to agape-love his wife, then she truly needs love. In fact, she needs love just as she needs air to breathe. Simply put, when her deepest need is being stepped on, you can expect her to react negatively. “Get off my air hose; I can’t breathe.” She is crying out, “I feel unloved by you right now. I can’t believe how unloving this feels. I can’t believe you’re doing this to me.”

Not only is the husband commanded to love his wife, but the wife is commanded to respect her husband. You see, the husband needs respect just as he needs air to breathe. He also has an air hose that runs over to a big tank labeled “respect,” and as long as the “air” is coming through, he is just fine. As his air hose starts to leak because of all the little cuts her heels have made in it, the husband is also going to react because his deepest need (respect) is not being met. And the battle is on.

The real issues are always *love* and *respect*. Everything else is just filling in the details.

IS UNCONDITIONAL RESPECT AN OXYMORON?

When I talk to wives, they have no trouble grasping the concept of unconditional love. After all, they are wired that way. But when I mention showing unconditional respect for husbands, it’s a much harder sell.

As I changed my message to include the whole truth - love *and* respect - I got interesting reactions. In one case I spoke twice to a group of two hundred women on the topic of respecting their husbands. I made myself available for a third talk, but the leadership of the group declined. Instead, they asked a female friend of mine to address the topic: “How to Love Your Husband.” My friend had heard me speak, and she dropped me a note: “That was your point! How to love your husband.” She could not believe how this group of women had missed it. The way to fully love a husband is to respect him in ways that are meaningful to him. Respect does something to the soul of a man. God made him that way.

ALL THIS SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, RIGHT?

Almost every time Sarah and I teach our seminar about the Love and Respect Connection, people tell us, “Why, of course; this is so obvious.” And then either the husband or the wife adds, “But why doesn’t my spouse get it?” Whether it’s a husband or a wife who “doesn’t get it,” the answer is the same: We often don’t see the obvious.

A door-to-door salesman rang the bell and waited. A boy who looked about ten years old answered. He was smoking the biggest cigar the salesman had ever seen. After a few seconds of stunned silence on the salesman’s part, he finally asked, “Is your mother home?” The ten-year-old puffed a couple of times, blew smoke in the salesman’s face, and said, “What do *you* think?”

And that’s the point. If the salesman had been thinking at all, he would have known that Mother wasn’t at home. But for some reason we don’t always think, particularly when something is shocking or distracting. When a wife feels unloved, it can be such a shock to her heart that she is oblivious to her disrespectful reactions toward her husband, though any man watching could see it plainly. When a husband feels disrespected, it can provoke him so quickly he doesn’t see his unloving reaction, which would be obvious to any woman. Words of wisdom for all husbands and wives are these: *We easily see what is done to us before we see what we are doing to our mate.*

Today, married couples are at a crossroads. Will she

appreciate her husband’s need for respect and discover that the best way to love a husband is by respecting him in ways that are meaningful to him? Will he discover that the best way to love a wife is to look beyond her criticisms and complaints to see why she isn’t feeling loved? Increasing numbers of couples who are at the crossroads are taking the right fork - the one labeled “Love and Respect.”

Learn more about growing a healthy marriage at www.loveandrespect.com.

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LOVE



WELCOME TO THE SCHOOL OF LOVE

In Greek, the language of the New Testament, there are actually four different words that translate into the English word, “love.”

Studying these four words can further one’s education in love and equip students with the knowledge to excel in relationships.

LOVE 101: STORGAY

“Storgay” is the natural love a person has for relatives. This is the most basic level of love that we learn in the context of our family, and can be extended out to close friends or a church community. The Apostle Paul wrote using this word that we should, “Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.” (Romans 12:10)

LOVE 201: PHILEO

“Phileo” is a brotherly love that is friendship-driven. It is a genuine concern and care for the needs of the people around us. Peter wrote that we should share this type of love, “Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.” (1 Peter 3:8)

LOVE 301: EROS

“Eros” is sensual or romantic love, the kind God designed to be shared within marriage. This kind of love was made to showcase the ultimate joy, affection and harmony a man and a woman can experience when they are united before God and totally committed to each other. Though the Greek New Testament never uses the term “eros,” the Old Testament book “The Song of Solomon” is romantic love poetry that fits the context of “eros” love. It is rumored that Hebrew boys long ago were not permitted to read the Song of Solomon until later in life, for very obvious reasons!

LOVE 401: AGAPE

“Agape” is the pinnacle of love, the kind of love that is sacrificial and self-less. This is what Jesus demonstrated when He gave His own life for the salvation of others. This all-giving love is the deepest and rarest type of love – it is the love that will make a marriage work for a lifetime, the love that will keep a family together in difficulty, the love that God wants to build into each of our lives. When asked about the greatest commandment in the whole law of God, Jesus replied that “agape” level love is required: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

GRADUATE PROGRAM

“If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ...Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.” (Luke 6:32-36)

>Learn more about love by reading:

1 Corinthians 13, Romans 12, James 2, and the book of 1 John

THE DATING MACHINE

Day after day, night after night, a machine has been running – for as long as you can remember. Dad used it, Mom fussed over it, even Grandpa has a few stories tinkering with it when he was “your age.” The quality or the products of the machine are never really questioned; as long as it keeps cranking and clanking, you assume all is well. Dad said it best, “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.”

Good enough. But what if the machine’s products are defective – nearly 50% of the time? Isn’t a change in order, or a least an honest evaluation? As time-tested as the tradition may be, sometimes machines need a tune-up, or some replacement parts. Sometimes they need a one-way ticket to the scrap yard!

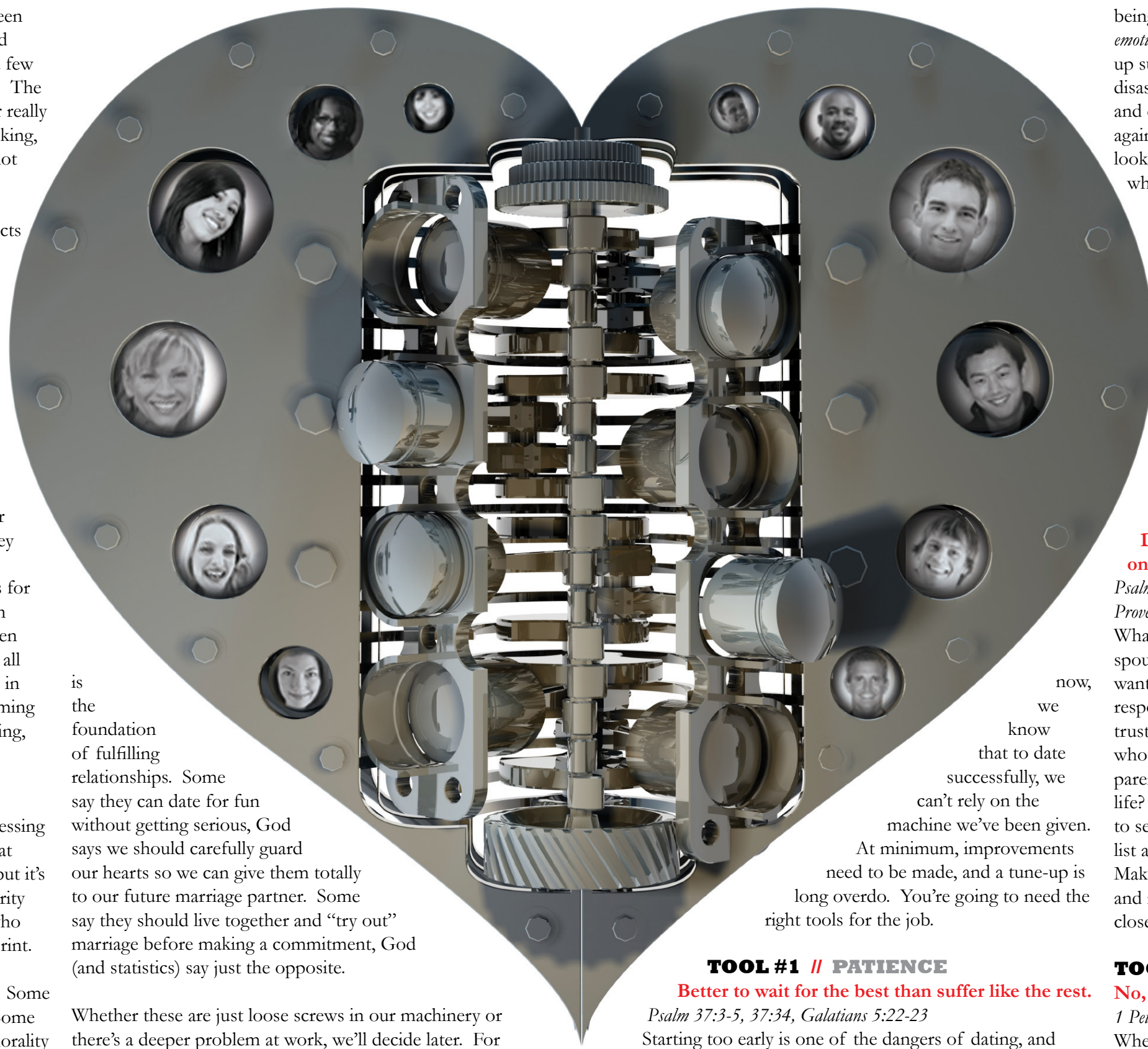
In our culture, dating is the “machine” that produces our marriage relationships. In a way, it is the machine that builds our families. Boy meets girl, gets phone number, gives chocolate, invites to movie, slips ring on finger, watches her frantically prepare for wedding, spends big money on honeymoon and voila – a new family unit is created. The dating machine sputters and rattles for awhile until a newly-minted marriage emerges on the conveyor belt, complete with cultural and even religious stamps of approval. Yet somehow not all these marriages are making it – in fact, many are in trouble. People who just years ago were proclaiming undying love for each other are litigating, divorcing, fighting and bickering. What’s going on? Is the machine broken?

Romantic relationships are a gift from God; a blessing from Him given to us in the beginning. How that blessing works for us is our decision to make – but it’s available. Amazing joy, fun, fulfillment and security are available in the context of marriage to any who will choose to do it based on the Creator’s blueprint.

There are plenty of shortcuts people have tried. Some set a low standard where God sets a high one. Some say morality doesn’t matter, but God says that morality

is the foundation of fulfilling relationships. Some say they can date for fun without getting serious, God says we should carefully guard our hearts so we can give them totally to our future marriage partner. Some say they should live together and “try out” marriage before making a commitment, God (and statistics) say just the opposite.

Whether these are just loose screws in our machinery or there’s a deeper problem at work, we’ll decide later. For



being ready *physically* doesn’t mean that you are ready *emotionally, financially or spiritually*. Most people end up suffering through rejection, guilt, and emotional disaster because they can’t wait. They go ahead and date any and everyone, only to be disappointed again and again. Meanwhile the “best” choices aren’t looking at them anymore, because they’re off dating whoever asks. Bad plan!

You don’t have to date today, tomorrow, or even next year. *Really*. You can take a break from worrying about it and focus on other things in life. One biblical writer said he was glad to be single, because he could focus his whole attention on God! Dating just for the sake of having “someone” is very dangerous. It’s a one way ticket to a messed up and dysfunctional romantic life. Instead, fill your time with serving God and serving people, and when the right one comes along, you’ll know.

TOOL #2 // WISDOM

Don’t just look for the right one...be the right one!

Psalm 139:23-24, Psalm 119:9-16, Proverbs 14:7-8, Proverbs 5:21-23

Whatever qualities you are hoping for in a future spouse, work on developing them in yourself. Do you want someone who is a hard worker and financially responsible? Do you want someone faithful, trustworthy, and interesting? Do you want someone who is committed to God, who would make a great parent to some future kids, who loves to have fun with life? It’s a great idea to make a list of what you want to see in your future sweetheart, but look back at your list and ask: “Do I measure up to my own standard?” Make yourself a “great catch” for the “right one” – and remember that the closer you get to God, the closer you will get to God’s best choice for your life.

TOOL #3 // REALITY

No, you can’t change ‘em.

1 Peter 3:10-12, Proverbs 26

When it comes to character and personality, people

TOOL #1 // PATIENCE

Better to wait for the best than suffer like the rest.

Psalm 37:3-5, 37:34, Galatians 5:22-23

Starting too early is one of the dangers of dating, and

rarely change.* Their interests and tastes may change (their looks will *definitely* change), but the inner qualities of a person are usually set early in life. Never believe that you can “change this person later.” If someone is abusive today, they will be five years from now. They will be that way with your kids too. If someone treats their parents poorly, they’ll treat you poorly. If someone is self-centered and negative, don’t count on that changing once the wedding bells ring. When dating, people tend to put on their best performance. The “real” them comes out later! If you see a person who is jealous, possessive, lazy, angry, has a temper, is irresponsible or foolish, take it as a warning – and steer clear.

TOOL #4 // COUNSEL

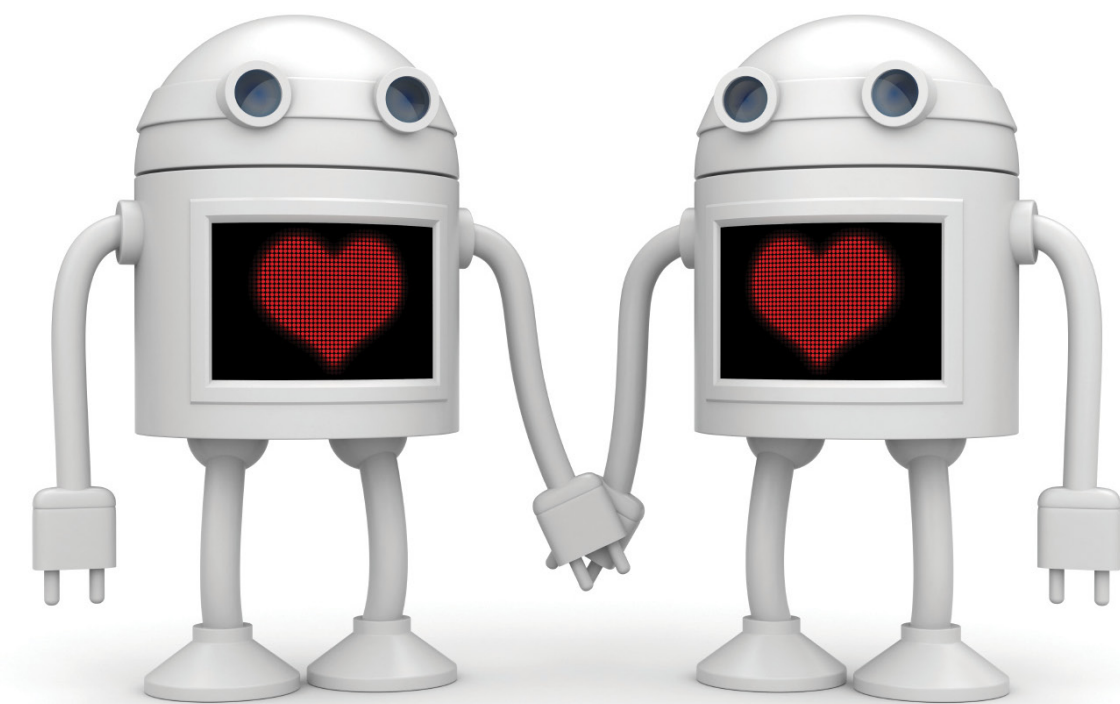
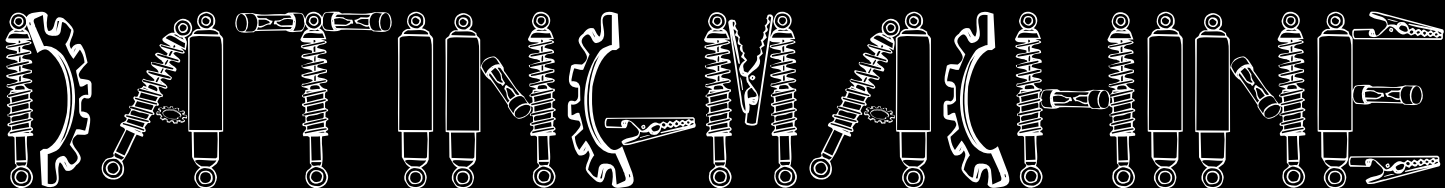
Shocker! Get advice from older folks, especially parents.

Ephesians 6:1-2, Genesis 2:24, Proverbs 11:14

Go the old-fashioned route and ask for parental blessing before you move forward in your relationship. Why not? (If your parents aren’t in the picture, look for someone in their age group who knows you well.) Don’t get defensive when a parent, friend, counselor or pastor tries to give you advice. They

have lived through these things before and listening to their wisdom will save you a lot of pain. The Bible promises prosperity to people who honor their parents and their elders, and it also promises safety in a “multitude of counselors.” This is a win-win that few people take advantage of.

After a tune-up like this, you’ll fire up the ole’ dating machine and get some very different results. You’ll find yourself running a whole different direction than the world around you. That’s great! It means you’re on the road to something better. And one day, you’ll be running in the race of life and realize that someone is running next to you – someone who shares your values, treats you with respect, cares about your needs, and is headed to the same place you are. Be sure to get that phone number!



*Obviously, from the title of our magazine, we believe that lives can change. Miracles happen.

But never gamble your whole future on someone reversing course. Find someone whose life has *already changed for the better*, with a track record of doing the right things long-term. Keep your standards high!

THE RADICAL LOVE OF JESUS

EMILY VARNER

The word *radical* might not fit the picture of Jesus we have heard about—the baby in the manger and the meek and mild teacher—but the word does capture the essence of how He *actually* lived. His love for people was *radically* different from the established norms, and I suppose that’s why Jesus has made such a difference. He said a lot about love—particularly, the love of God for humanity and the sad human tendency to reject a relationship with God. He also modeled what true love is by the way He cared for people. (We can see Him in action by reading the Bible’s four “Gospels:” Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.)

Some radical aspects of what Jesus said and did routinely take my breath away:

RADICAL PRIORITIES

Jesus insisted that the most important thing in life was loving God. He said that the love people have for their families should look like hate in comparison to their love for God. He even scolded religious people for getting their priorities wrong, becoming self-righteous hypocrites rather than loving God and, in turn, treating others well. (see Matthew 10:37-39; Matthew 23:23-28; Luke 12:27-31)

RADICAL INCLUSION

Jesus paid special attention to people who were not powerful, important, or respected. He healed people with debilitating or contagious diseases, accepted kindness from a prostitute, spent time with children, and ate at the home of a man who was a known cheat. (see Matthew 9:9-10; Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 5:12-13; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 14:12-14; Luke 19:1-9)

RADICAL GRACE

People who knew they needed help—spiritually and physically—flocked to Jesus. By forgiving and healing them, Jesus gave us a glimpse of God’s generous and merciful character. Even as he was dying, He prayed that his executors would be forgiven for what they were doing. (see Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 23:32-34)

RADICAL SELFLESSNESS

Jesus demonstrated that true greatness is not found in being powerful and in charge, but in the giving of oneself for others. When God came to Earth, he didn’t come with guns blazing but as a peasant teacher who sacrificed himself on behalf of a broken, desperate world. The ultimate expression of this is Jesus’ execution on a cross. Ironically, those who wished to end his life provided the perfect opportunity for Jesus to show just how radical His love really was. (see Matthew 20:20-28; John 10:14-18; John 15:12-13)

Perhaps most amazing of all is the fact that Jesus’ radical love is not confined to the pages of the Bible or the time of His life on earth. Jesus still reaches out to people in need, people with issues, people who don’t measure up, people who need grace and second chances. His radical love for each one of us kept Him on the Cross, but that is only the beginning. A genuine relationship with God can fill anyone with a new life of love and blessing in God’s presence, an earthly taste of an eternity we can scarcely imagine. And in the meantime, with God’s help we get to learn how to love like our Savior, adopting His radical ways.

Emily Varner resides in Medina with her husband and daughter, and is a part of the Weymouth Church family.



An interview with
BILL & CLARICE MUELLER,
members of Weymouth Church
and long-time Medina residents.

I'LL LOVE YOU FOREVER

LifeChange: Tell us about your background and how you got together.

Bill: I grew up in Parma, Ohio; Clarice grew up in Detroit, Michigan. I was a tool-and-die apprentice after high school, and when I became a Christian, I felt called to join the ministry. I enrolled at Fort Wayne Bible College, and at the end of the first year there, I noticed Clarice, but I thought another guy was in the picture.

Clarice: I had learned about serving God at a mission's conference when I was young, and I ended up working at a children's home in Kentucky – pretty soon I was in charge of 12 young boys. I loved it, I didn't cook for them, but I tried to be a Christian mother for them. Due to some health problems, I couldn't continue in that work, so I started thinking about college. I had a sort of miraculous healing from my ailments, which I took to be confirmation from God that I was heading the right direction. Soon I

was on my way to Fort Wayne Bible College. There actually was another guy in the picture, who was ready to give me a ring, but I called it off. I felt like God told me, "No, he's not the one." I was so glad I listened; later found out that the young man turned away from God.

We were in college together for awhile, and Bill noticed me before I noticed him. I remember I was at a baseball game, and Bill's roommate knew of his interest in me, so he grabbed Bill's baseball cap and tossed it over my direction. Playing along, I tried to keep it away from Bill and he chased me around a little bit. We ended up talking and eating, then Bill asked me to go on a date with him. He told me simply to "pray about it." I had never had a boy tell me to pray about a date!

I told my roommate, "Bill Mueller asked me to *pray* about going out with him – I'm flabbergasted!" I had no interest in going with him, but I prayed about it anyway. I told my roommate that I wasn't going to go with him, but for some reason, when I

saw Bill again, I told him I'd love to go!

Bill: Ironically, that date didn't end up happening because the hayride to which I had invited her was cancelled. So, our first actual date was a *Youth For Christ* meeting, and we had a cup of hot chocolate together. From there we went together for a year and a half, and I met her family. I was so impressed with her biblical desires to serve the Lord; I knew I wanted to find someone with the same spiritual basis as I had in life, the same goals and outlook – and she had all of that. That is what really attracted me to her.

Clarice: We did a lot of walking during those months; the college we went to had a lot of restrictions on dating couples – we couldn't even drive together without special permission!

Bill: There was one place without a street light that we liked to walk --

Clarice: Bill! I'll pick it up from here. I was so very grateful for Bill, because I knew the Lord was always #1 for him. In fact he told me that early on, that God was first, and that I would be second in his life. That's exactly how I felt it should be, and I respected him for his conviction. He told me that any family the Lord might give us would be third place in his priorities.

We were married in 1953. Since then, we've gone through our share of trials, some of them pretty hard. But through it all, we have learned to trust God more. Having the right order of priorities and always looking to God for guidance has kept our marriage strong for over 57 years.

LifeChange: What do younger couples have to look forward to as they stick together for the long haul?

Bill: Oh, there are so many great joys in marriage. You learn more about each other all the time, how each other thinks, what makes each other happy. We have three children now who love the Lord too, along with four grandchildren, and we love seeing how God is working with them.

Clarice: It has meant a lot to me that I can trust Bill so completely; he's been faithful to me, I've been faithful to him. We have shared heartaches and joys together, and our love keeps getting deeper. I love Bill more today than the day I married him. We love sharing each others' company, realizing how much we need each other – even more as we grow older. I have never regretted taking that step in 1953 to give my heart to Bill.

Bill: Not everything has been perfect, but we're both willing to say that we're sorry and to admit where we've been wrong. We both forgive each other and we've learned how to help each other when we are weak.

LifeChange: What advice would you give a couple who is struggling right now, or even thinking about giving up?

Bill: Remember your marriage vows, and seek the Lord for help. Think about what your initial attraction to each other was; remember, recover, and rekindle your relationship. You'll have to speak the truth to each other, and even more, you'll have to really listen to your spouse's point of view. And make whatever changes you have to. It is *so important* that you remain together, that you make things right – and even more so if you have children!

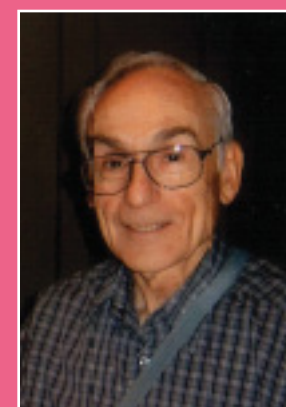
Clarice: We've endeavored to live by the Bible verse, "Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry." You'll have problems with money, sex, criticism, a host of things – and when those problems come, deal with them right away. Don't ignore them and allow them to fester. I'd also say it is important that you work together, serve together, wash the car together, rake leaves together, spend money together. Do things together, don't live separate lives.

Bill: You have to work hard to keep your marriage strong and joyful. You have to set yourself aside and choose to love the other person, no matter what.



CLARICE Why I Love Bill

- His sincerity
- His unquestionable love.
- He is faithful to me.
- He is very slow to anger.
- He is a loving father.
- He says, "I love you" to our family.
- He is a spiritual leader for our family.



BILL Why I Love Clarice

- She is generous.
- She loves people.
- She is compassionate.
- She is faithful to me.
- She has a self-less attitude.
- Her thoughtfulness and care.
- She serves the Lord with me.

help desk



We're having trouble communicating. How can we reduce the tension?

First thing: *relax*. Every couple experiences difficulty communicating. Rather than letting the situation get tense, have a meeting to talk it through. Give each other permission to be brutally honest, then finish these sentences: 1.) I absolutely love when you tell me... 2.) It hurts my feelings when you say... 3.) When you see me doing something wrong, I'd like you to... 4.) Some things you could do regularly that would really help me are... Now, don't get defensive or argue back when your partner gets honest. You gave them permission to tell the truth, remember? Neither of you are perfect people, so both of you will likely have some pointers and ideas for improvement. That's O.K.! (Hint: Guys, spend more time *listening* to how she feels than "fixing" problems that come up. And ladies, if your guy tries to suggest "fixes" along the way, cut him some slack. His brain is hard-wired that way. He wants to solve the problems because he loves you!) Finish your meeting with 5.) Something I'm looking forward to about the future with you is...

What if I don't like the person I'm married to?

Your marriage vows didn't probably include that you would "like" your spouse till death do you part, but you did say you'd love, honor and cherish! Start by making a list of the reasons you were initially attracted to your mate. What personality traits did you like? What physical features did you think were amazing? What goals or dreams did your lover have that you shared together? Use this list as a springboard to consider the reasons you still love your spouse.

"Like" is not nearly as powerful as "love." Like is a feeling, love is a commitment. Feelings, as we all know, change based on our circumstances. Commitments don't. In the moments when you don't feel as much passion for your partner, you can still make the choice to love them. You can choose to think of their needs and desires above your own. Often, if we'll make the choice to love someone, the good feelings will follow later.

God, the ultimate example of love, many times does not "like" the things we humans do. He may not like the way we spend our lives, the way we talk to Him, or the way we treat Him. Yet He still loves us – He loves us even more than we can imagine. His love for us isn't based on circumstantial feelings, it is based on a choice He has made to care about us. The Bible says, "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."

When am I allowed to give up?

Don't give up! God has great plans for your relationship if both partners are willing to work on making the right choices. It won't be easy, but it is definitely worth it. For the moment, it may feel like the only way out is divorce or separation – but there is another way. The Bible teaches that love, forgiveness, and compassion can heal broken relationships. God does not leave us alone to face difficulty – He will walk with us and even empower us to do the right thing.

Here's an interesting stat: Those who are unhappy but stay married are more likely to be happy five years later than those who divorce. 77 percent of those giving their marriage a very unhappy "one" (on a 1 to 10 scale) rated their marriage as a "seven" after five years of sticking together. **This means, in effect, that most divorces need not occur, and that those who "make it work" through unhappy times end up living more joyful, fulfilling lives.** Source: Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 148.

If you are on the verge of giving up, please pray for God's help first. Please give the LifeChange volunteer counselor team a call first at **(330) 723-1750**. There is incredible power available in God's Word for people in your situation, and though every fiber of your being may be screaming, "Get me out of this mess!" God can do miracles. There are real steps you can take to start turning things around. It starts with a prayer, a phone call, an open Bible, and a willingness to try God's way of healing your relationship. "Nothing is impossible with God!"

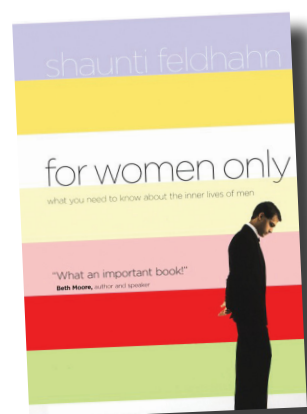
My relationship has turned violent and abusive. Is there a way out?

Absolutely! But the way out isn't going to be easy, and you have to choose to do the right thing for yourself (and for any children God has entrusted to you). Many abusers are amazing at manipulating situations, scaring victims into submission, or even going through the motions of sorrow and repentance, promising to change. Don't let them lie to you. If you are being physically harmed, you need to be honest before God and in your own heart: this is not what love looks like, and no one is allowed to treat a loved one violently. Ever. There's no excuse. None.

If you are in danger, flee the situation and call 911. Don't try to protect an abuser from legal problems – if he is hurting people, he needs legal problems! Your number one concern should not be the feelings of your abuser – it should be your own safety and for the safety of your children. If someone is lashing out in violent rage, no matter how good his excuses may sound, they cannot be justified. God designed you as a special, valuable creation of His! God has put legal authorities in our lives for precisely this purpose – to protect us from harm! But if you refuse to call, they can't help.

If you are out of immediate danger and would like to discuss your situation (you can remain anonymous if you wish), call the Medina County Domestic Violence Hotline at **(330) 723-3900**.

Once you have called for help, you'll have a whole range of services and options made available to you. They may recommend a battered women's shelter where you can be provided for and safe from harm while the legal and marital questions are sorted out. They may connect you with a social worker who can help you figure out what services are available to assist in your situation. Then, after you've contacted either the police or the domestic violence hotline, you may also want to contact a church pastor for prayer and counsel.



FOR WOMEN ONLY:
What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men
Shaunti Feldhahn
2006 / Multnomah Publishers

Women – you’ll be shocked at how much you learn from this easy-reading and fun book that opens up the real motivations of your man! This will help you see exactly where he’s coming from, what his needs are, and how you – the love of his life – can be the woman of his dreams.



MARRIAGE MATTERS:
Extraordinary Change Through Ordinary Moments
Winston T. Smith
2010 / New Growth Press

Hoping to dig deeper into God’s purposes for your marriage? Are you ready to take your relationship to a new level of trust, intimacy and communication? This thoroughly biblical book will provide helpful counsel for difficulties; giving you reasons to thank God for every moment He gives you together.



FOR MEN ONLY:
A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women
Shaunti & Jeff Feldhahn
2006 / Multnomah Publishers

Guys – it’s time to set up to the plate. This is a quick read that will help you explore the heart and soul of your woman. Discover why she reacts the way she does, what her emotions are all about, and how you can be the strong and loving man she’s hoping you’ll be for her.

Find these resources and be connected to other helpful content to enhance your relationships at www.WeymouthChurch.com.

WIVES: What Will Your Story Be?

Proverbs 31:12 says the virtuous wife does her husband “good, and not harm, all the days of her life.” Certainly one way to do this is through words of encouragement.

Over the years, I’ve often issued the *30-Day Husband Encouragement Challenge* to wives. Here’s how it works:

1. For the next 30 days, commit to say nothing negative about your husband—not to him, and not to anyone else about him.
2. Every day for the next 30 days, tell your husband something that you appreciate about him; then tell someone else about it.

The countless responses we’ve received from women who have taken this challenge illustrate the power of affirmation and encouragement:

We’ve been married for 43 years, and our marriage was dormant. I didn’t think anything could revive it. I was wrong. This challenge has made a huge improvement in our relationship.

This hasn’t been easy going for me. There’s a lot of hurt and anger and resentment toward my husband to overcome. But you have encouraged me to remember why I fell in love with this guy, what was so special about him. You’ve given me hope for my marriage. I may not be able to change my husband, but I can change my heart and my attitude toward him with God’s help. My husband is talking to me more—really talking from his heart. We still have a long way to go, but it is working. Every day gets a little easier, and some of that anger and resentment is fading away. I married a great man. I have just forgotten to nurture him in the day-to-day busyness of our lives. I love my husband.

I am realizing that by me being so negative, I was the main source of the tension and stress in the house. Now that I am encouraging and expressing love, my husband has expressed, verbally and by his actions, how in love with me he is. Thank you for creating this challenge. It is a struggle sometimes, but worth the fight.

I never thought in a million years that such simple words could have such a profound effect on our relationship.

I began the 30-Day Husband Encouragement Challenge, and within two weeks, my husband was making comments such as “Something’s changed.” “You’re more interested in me.” “Something’s gotten into

you.” “You never told me that.” “Thank you for saying all those nice things.” I have had a true change of heart toward my husband. He feels it, sees it, and loves it.

At first, the thought of saying only positive things about my husband made my skin crawl! I thought, how sad for me to feel more comfortable bashing my husband to people than lifting him up. About halfway through, my husband said to me, “I have really fallen in love with you. I mean, I loved you before, but I really love you now!” I was blown away!

Everyone who is married should read this challenge and live by it—not just for 30 days, but every day. The rewards are endless.

What will your story be? The 30-Day Husband Encouragement Challenge will change you as you see your husband through grateful eyes. It may even change your husband as you water the soil of his heart with words of affirmation, appreciation, and admiration.

Ready to take the challenge? You can click to www.ReviveOurHearts.com/challenge to receive a daily e-mail reminder for 30 days, each highlighting a practical way to encourage your husband, or click “printable download” for a PDF of daily ideas.

Nancy DeMoss is a nationally-recognized author, radio host and speaker, challenging women to fulfill God’s purpose for their lives. This article is adapted with permission from Revive Magazine. Visit www.ReviveOurHearts.com to learn more.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss

living with the EMPTY-NESS



A 50-something couple finds themselves unexcited about their future now that the kids have gone

THE SCENARIO

Just two years ago, Pete and Joann were filled with tearful joy at the graduation of their youngest son. They loved all three of their children dearly, yet for Pete especially, the thought of seeing the kids move on was exciting as well. They both had dreams of travel, of a free schedule, and maybe even a move to a different neighborhood. Joann had gone back to work a few years prior, so their budget, even with some college expenses, was in good shape. Life was looking good.

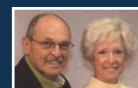
Today, they still have some hopes for their future, but a financial

setback and salary reductions have dried up their “fun money” for travel. They haven’t been able to sell their house, and they’ve got at least one child that may need to move back home to work off some debts. In short, Pete isn’t feeling the freedom he hoped for, and Joann is starting to wonder if their marriage was really just about getting the kids raised. Without them, what did she and Pete even have in common anymore?

They are “OK” for the moment, and both have maintained a positive attitude in front of their friends. But in their hearts, some difficult questions have started to surface. “Is this really how I want to spend the next

30+ years of my life?” “Don’t I deserve to be happier than this?” “Is our marriage supposed to feel this way - sort of, well, unexciting?”

Bob & Verni Dix



Pete and Joanne, we can relate to your predicament. We’ve been there, done that!

As you go through this time of turmoil and as these questions are coming into your minds, it is important that you examine the reason for your distress. Your questions are normal for your stage in life. The expectations that you “deserve more” than you are

getting, or that you are somehow missing out on better things, are really self-centered considerations, if you think through them.

God never promised us an “exciting” life, full of rainbows and blue skies. But, we can still find great joy in our lives by adjusting our expectations. Think of the blessings God has bestowed on you both! By working together to raise your children, you had a purpose. Mission accomplished! Now, how can you bring that same sense of purpose into the next phase of your life together?

We’ve discovered that having a date night set aside as a routine helps us stay connected to one another. We enjoy those times – they help keep us close. Short trips to places nearby for a few days can be a much smaller expense than the travel plans you had at first, but perhaps they would be a good starting point – and you could even include some friends whose company you enjoy.

You might try volunteering together to help others who are in need, which will help you take the focus off of yourselves. You mentioned that your son might return home to work off some debts – that’s a wonderful opportunity as his parents to guide him through the process.

We also joined a Bible study with friends who were empty-nesters. There, we were able to share our concerns of needing fulfillment and get some ideas from other people walking down the same road. God gives us so much grace – including everything we need to be loving partners for the rest of our time on earth. We have found encouragement specifically from two verses in the Bible: “Love never gives up, never loses faith,

is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance,” and “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Elaine Jackson



Wow Pete and Joann, you’ve had some tough blows! After years of careful planning, working hard, and playing by the rules, this isn’t the outcome you expected! You’re disappointed. Of course. No doubt you’re mad. These setbacks were outside of your control and the worst part is you feel powerless to reverse these losses.

There is another threat, however, that you may not be aware of. That threat is bitterness. Bitterness whispers, “Hey, you deserve better than this.” And in your heart of hearts you agree. You feel shortchanged and restless. Bitterness suggests, “Shouldn’t marriage be more, well, exciting?” So now you feel your spouse is letting you down too. You stop talking, find other things to do with other people, stop the small daily acts of consideration and thoughtfulness. Bitterness morphs into a wedge of resentment that drives you apart.

The Bible wisely warns us to not even let bitterness take root. It’s like a weed - pull it up! Right away! Bitterness *sounds* like an understanding, sympathetic voice. But it *will* destroy you. So, how do you pull it up?

First, talk to each other and admit you’ve allowed these life events to make you bitter. Apologize. This clears the air and makes the next steps possible. Talk candidly and compassionately about your disappointments and lost dreams. (Notice: This is very different from complaining.) Now, focus on what you have, rather than on what was taken away. Let *gratitude* sprout. You’ll notice little flowers of happiness forming. Next, look for ways to be thoughtful. Random acts of kindness are most important at home! Express appreciation. Laugh together. Then, prayerfully turn your attention to

a need that touches your heart. There’s a huge, hurting world out there. Meeting a need will fill you with joy, purpose, and plenty of excitement!

Ted & Debbie Luty



Listening to your story, we realized how much we have in common with your situation. Our lives have been filled with dreams and plans for our future, but it also seems like they’ve been filled with twists, turns, and unforeseen circumstances that have forced us to modify those future hopes. When these challenges come, we remember that God our loving Father is in charge, and He has reasons for allowing difficulty into our lives. A few Scripture verses have helped us, and we hope they could help you as well:

We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps. – Proverbs 16:9. God will lead us in the right direction, even when our own plans are shattered.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. – Jeremiah 29:11. Our lives are so exciting, even if we think we face setbacks, because we know God wants His best for us.

Be still and know I am God. – Psalm 46:10. This has caused us to be humble, to pray and to look to the Lord in the mist of difficulties.

He is a loving and faithful Father to all who choose to follow Him. In times of disappointment and delay, we have come together as a couple to discuss, pray, and seek His will. And with His guidance, we have never been disappointed. We encourage you, Pete and Joann, to give your lives and your hearts to God and trust Him.

RELATIONSHIP RESCUE

SEVEN statements that change everything

1 I was thinking about how I would feel if I were you.
Begin your rescue efforts by viewing the world through the eyes of your partner. What is he/she feeling right now? What does he/she wish could change about our relationship? What could I do to make my spouse happier? Follow the Golden Rule: “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.”

2 I forgive you.
Grudges will sink your relationship; let them go! And on the flip side, if you’ve hurt your loved one in any way, take the first step by asking for forgiveness. “Will you forgive me for...?”

3 Thank you for...
Old-fashioned gratefulness can go a long way toward restoring broken relationships. When we’re in conflict, we tend to focus on our partner’s faults and forget all the good things they bring to our lives. Write a note to your spouse today, beginning with, “Thank you for...”

4 I love you.
Love is a choice we make, a choice to put someone else ahead of ourselves. Love by definition is sacrificial, caring, and non-selfish. “I know we are going through a lot right now, and that things aren’t the way they should be, and I



want to work through all that, honey. I want you to know that I love you.”

5 Let’s pray.
Relationships weren’t meant to exist without God. He’s the author of life, of love, of friendship, and of family. Exploring ways to make God the center of your relationship will refocus you both toward the things that matter most. Ask Him for help, and start praying for your spouse daily.

6 I need help.
Everybody needs relationship coaching; get a book on marriage enrichment (see page 22), attend a workshop or link up with a pastor, counselor or mentor (see page 30). Admitting that your relationship needs work is step one on the journey to making things right. Who knows – your relationship might end up *better* than before it needed a rescue!

7 Let’s go out!
Rekindling the love of your life is going to require *time*, and re-arranging some priorities. Re-trace the steps of your first date, try a new restaurant or local attraction, or book a night together in the big city. Call a truce to your differences and, for an evening, go have some fun.

relationships by the BOOK

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

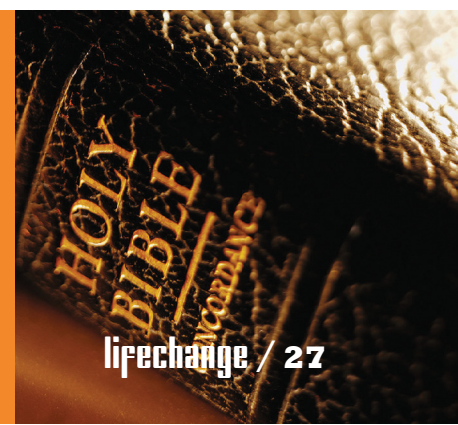
> **EPHESIANS 4:31-32**

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy,

kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with

love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

> **COLOSSIANS 3:12-15**



what KILLED their MARRIAGE?

Steve is late for work again. Before the coffee was even poured, he found himself in another heated argument with his wife Ann. “We argue about *everything* these days; money, the house, the kids...the list goes on and on,” he thought to himself. “Why does she have to be so unreasonable?”

His morning drive was lonely. Steve had switched off the radio - every song that played seemed to remind him of Ann and of better days long gone. He just

couldn't shake the sting of their fight that morning. He had threatened Ann with divorce before, but it had just been ammunition he would throw at her in difficult times. Divorce began to come up more regularly, and now, both were convinced the only way to put an end to the arguments and pain was to end their marriage. “I never thought it would really end this way,” Steve thought. “We used to be so happy. What happened?”

Another couple who met long before Steve and Ann

CRIME SCENE

LAURA TROMMER



Laura Trommer lives in Medina with her husband, Scott, and their five children. She is a part of the Weymouth Church family and is a singer on our weekly praise team.

may hold the ultimate answer to that question. A couple that had a *perfect* life and everything they needed to live happily ever after: Adam and Eve. Their setting was perfect, as was their relationship. There was never a harsh word on their lips or evil thought on their minds....not until....until one small word entered their perfect world. It seemed so insignificant at first, but in reality it was a killer that meant this couple great harm. A killer that would destroy their paradise and have a devastating outcome for all of mankind to follow. That killer was *sin*.

By God's decree Adam and Eve could “have it all” except for one fruit, one forbidden tree, one rule to follow to show their submission to the Creator. When they chose to disobey, sin came onto the scene, and in that moment their perfect relationship was shattered. Peace gave way to conflict. Love gave way to selfishness. Trust gave way to blame. Life gave way to death. The “fall” of humanity was tragic, painful, and irreversible. Sin had had begun its ugly work; separating people from God, from each other and stirring up pride and hate. Sin is the enemy! It looks for people in vulnerable, insecure places and, when the window of opportunity is open, it gains access, overpowers, and takes down its victims. *Sin is a relationship killer*.

The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death -- eternal separation from God. Like Adam and Eve,

or Steve and Ann, if we choose to allow sin into our own lives and marriages, it will slowly kill the unity and intimacy God intended us to have. This should come as no surprise to us -- it is our “wage”-- the paycheck we receive as a result of our sin. When we choose to lie, manipulate, abuse, criticize, hurt, or offend, we find ourselves alone and separated.

God in His love and mercy did not leave there. He could have abandoned us in our sin and let the killer have its evil way. Instead, He showed us what love truly means. He offered His Son as the payment for sin, so that those who believe in Him may have forgiveness of their sins and may then extend forgiveness to others.

Christ defeated sin and death, and through Him we can be restored to an eternal love relationship with God. This same restoration can breathe new life into our marriages! As we are cleansed from our sin, we are given new hope. This hope is encouraging for marriages that are happy, and it brings healing to those that are strained and broken, to people like Steve and Ann. Through Jesus we can choose to love and not despise, to forgive and not hold grudges, to comfort and not hurt, to encourage and not tear down. By God's grace we can have the loving and fulfilling marriages He intended for us, from the beginning. For further study, see: Genesis 2-3, Isaiah 59:2, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 15:21

THREE STEPS TO NEW LIFE

REPENT

We must turn away from our sin, admitting in prayer to God that we have violated His perfect standards, then choosing to change our direction.

BELIEVE

We must put our trust in Jesus to save us from sin; it was His death and resurrection that provided the pathway to forgiveness, restoration of our relationship with God, and eternal life.

FOLLOW

We must begin studying and obeying the Bible, following Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. A key part of this new life is learning how to love God wholeheartedly and to love other people like Jesus did.

TRACE EVIDENCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP KILLER:

Carelessness / Arrogance
Me-first Attitudes / Nagging / Laziness /
Hurtful Words / Grudges / Arguments /
Silent Treatments / Fits of Rage /
Lack of Kindness / Prayerlessness /
Ungratefulness / Lying / Put-downs /
Impatience / Intolerance

The wages of sin is death



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WRITE OR VISIT

Weymouth Community Church
3398 South Weymouth Road
Medina, Ohio 44256

5 mi. north of the Medina Square,
Just off of Rt. 3 near the I-71 interchange

Coming Summer 2011

LifeChange Church, a branch campus of
Weymouth, will be meeting at Williams-
on-the-Lake. See our website for the start
date and more details!



Time to Take Action

GET ADVICE

// TALK WITH SOMEONE FOR IDEAS

The church has volunteer counselors and marriage mentors that can chat with you on the phone, pray with you, get together with you, or just exchange emails. If you are in a tough spot in your relationship, there is help available. And there's no harm in asking! We have a lot of people here who have survived difficult relationship issues and can share their wisdom with you.

REBOOT on 4.30

// ATTEND OUR MARRIAGE WORKSHOP

It'll be fun for seasoned couples or those just getting started! From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 30, 2011, we'll hear from nationally-known speaker and author Del Fehsenfeld about how to "reboot" our relationships, refreshing them with practical and biblical ideas. You'll pick up tips for romance, hear stories of life-change, and laugh a lot! Lunch and childcare are provided - there is no cost to you. The perfect date, right? *Relationship Reboot* is our gift to you - all you have to do is sign up. Call us today, or visit our website. Last-minute signups are welcome, as long as space is available.

Miss the date? Let us know of your interest and we can add you to the invite list for next time.

FREE STUFF!

// EXTRA RELATIONSHIP RESOURCES

Contact us for a free marriage enrichment pack, including helpful articles, a few books, and some fun surprise gifts - all yours for the asking. Enjoy!

Our Love for a Lifetime

HUSBAND

I love you _____ because...

Signed _____

Date _____

WIFE

I love you _____ because...

Signed _____

Date _____

You have captured my heart, my treasure, my bride. You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes, with a single jewel of your necklace. Your love delights me, my treasure, my bride.

Song of Solomon 4:9-10

Ah, I hear my lover coming! He is leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My lover said to me, "Rise up, my darling! Come away with me, my fair one!" Look, the winter is past, and the rains are over and gone. The flowers are springing up, the season of singing birds has come.

Song of Solomon 2:8-12



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"Can we make it until the kids graduate?"
"We aren't communicating anymore."
"I'd be happier with someone else."
"What happened to our marriage?"
"I don't feel like she respects me."
"I'm just tired of this relationship."
"I'm not sure if he loves me."
"Are we going to break up?"
"I'm not feeling the love."
"All we ever do is argue."
"We used to be passionate."
"Why should we bother?"
"I'm running out of hope."



RELATIONSHIPREBOOT

april 30, 2011 // 9am-3pm

weymouth community church

remember.recover.rekindle