

KEEPING YOUR LOVE FRESH

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Love is like a tomato fruit which must be kept in a cool place for it to remain fresh. It has to be handled with care for it not to be destroyed and become useless. Tomato trade can be very risky and unpredictable. It can lead to total loss of investment when the freshness is destroyed by lack of care or accident. Many marriages have been destroyed because one of the parties involved, and in some cases both became careless, and the love got soured and messy.

Freshness in marriage is very important. All in marital relationship must endeavour to maintain freshness in their love for each other. This calls for hard work and commitment. It is therefore very important that we learn about the things that kill freshness in marriage.

LOVE KILLERS

1. Refusal to overlook an offence

“A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offence.”
(Proverbs 19:11)

“It is to a man’s honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.”
(Proverbs 20: 3)

“Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:12, 13)

No relationship will survive without forbearance. Intolerance is the cause of many failed marriages. It is important that couples give room for offence because they will always come whether you like it or not. No matter how you pray about it, offence will come in various forms, shapes and times in your marital life. You must come to terms with the fact that your spouse like you is not yet perfect in conduct. As much as you realize that you need some allowance to fail, your spouse also needs some breathing space.

Overlooking an offence is a sign that one understands that all have one weakness or the other, and we need to accommodate that in our relationships. It takes the wise to overlook an offence. It is a man’s wisdom that gives him the ability to be patient and overlook an offence. The scripture above declares that it is to his glory to overlook an offence. In other words, it is a sign of maturity to tolerate your spouse’s errors and offences against you in order to keep your love fresh and vibrant. Nobody is going to give you an award for beating up your spouse, quarreling regularly in your marriage, fighting your spouse, keeping malice, refusing your spouse sex because of a misunderstanding, separation or divorce. You will only be praised for maintaining a sweet relationship with your spouse.

2. Refusal to forgive when hurt

“Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:12, 13)

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31, 32)

To enable you overlook an offence, you need a forgiving heart. Love without forgiveness will not survive. I have always taught that forgiveness is the healing balm of relationships. So when a man or woman refuses to forgive his or her spouse, it is obvious that their marriage will not last long. There is nothing that destroys relationship like unforgiveness. It is so important that Jesus taught that God will not forgive the one that refuses to forgive his brother from his heart.

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6;14, 15)

Until we forgive the one that has hurt us God will not forgive us. The truth is that, no one merits forgiveness when he has not forgiven the one that has offended him. If you know you need forgiveness, then you must learn to forgive others. God is committed to forgiving you when you have forgiven those who hurt you.

Your spouse needs your forgiveness each time he or she offends you. You need your spouse to always forgive you each time you offend him or her. That is the way it supposed to be. In this way, you keep love for each other fresh and alive. Where there is no forgiveness, bitterness and malice will fill the hearts concerned. When these are allowed to occupy hearts for a long time, you can be sure that love is dying or has died, and in its place hatred is growing.

Always forgive as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you. Forgive and forget by putting behind you all that has happened and look forward for the best to come. Forgive as many times as you are offended by your spouse. Pray for your spouse rather than quarrel, for everyone needs God’s supernatural help to overcome.

3. Always recalling and recounting past offences

“Love.....it keeps no record of wrongs.” (1 Corinthians 13:5)

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

“Who is a God like you, who pardons sins and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins under foot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18, 19)

God does not remind us of our past failures or sins; once he forgives he forgets. He throws them into the depth of forgetfulness. Forgiveness is the finality of a case – once someone is forgiven, the case is closed for ever. The same way, God wants us to always forgive and rest each case, never to bring it up again. In this way, wounds healed are not injured or resurrected. Each case should be treated separately as a fresh case, and as much as possible should not be linked with the past that has been laid to rest.

Recalling and recounting past wrongs always create tension and quarrels, and this is not healthy for a marital relationship. That is why God wants us to learn from him and forgive as he forgives us. Let us do what he has commanded and it will be well with us in our marriages and relationships.

4. Giving a listening ear to gossips

“Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man’s inmost parts. Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart. A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbours deceit. Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly. If a man digs a pit he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him. A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” (Proverbs 26:20-28)

This passage is the most outstanding and expository of the nature of gossip and the style of gossips.

- a. They fuel crisis and make it impossible for quarrels to end and be settled.
- b. Gossips are quarrelsome people. They love quarrels. They love to quarrel, make and see people quarrel.
- c. They are very careful in choosing the words they use in order to achieve their aims. They know how to arrange words. They are craftsmen with evil intent.
- d. They come disguised as if they have you in their heart, yet they have no good intention for you and your spouse.
- e. Their stories are so packaged that you can’t disbelieve them. They are coated, and not real.
- f. His professed love for you is not real.
- g. There is deception in his heart and ways.
- h. Gossips are liars and hate you who will hurt as a result of their gossip.
- i. God will pay them back in their own coin.

With this understanding, I expect you to keep away from gossips and not to work with any unconfirmed report from anybody, including those you think love you so much because of the things they told you in time past.

5. Partisan in relating with each other's family members

"If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." (Mark 3:25)

Showing more love to members of your family and neglecting those of your spouse can create a serious problem in your home. This has brought seasons of quarrels, accusations and divisions along family lines. When you decide to marry someone, you should make up your mind to relate with members of his or her family as you will relate with yours.

Let help be rendered according to needs to relatives. You may also decide a certain figure that you give to relatives of both sides no matter the financial need each person may have. As much as possible, avoid anything that can bring quarrel and damage your love for each other. Don't allow family matters to put you asunder. Remember to leave your families and cleave to each other.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

6. Selfishness

"You my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'." (Galatians 5:13,14)

Selfishness kills love and destroys confidence. A self-centered person does not have genuine love, and definitely will kill genuine love in the heart of the spouse. Love is sacrificial. Real love lays down his life for his friend. One with true love does not insist on his own way. Real love is interested in the happiness and satisfaction of the other. Real love is a giving love and not waiting to receive all the time.

Anyone who is only concerned about what he or she feels and wants does not have true love and does not want his or her relationship to last. Eliminate selfishness from your marriage and you will see how sweet your love life will become.

7. Refusal to accept correction and make changes where and when necessary.

"Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice." (Proverbs 13:10)

"He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded." (Proverbs 13:13)

"Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path; he who hates correction will die." (Proverbs 15:10)

Pride is what makes people not to accept that they are wrong and ask for forgiveness and amend their ways. Many do not like to accept correction and this eventually affects the trust and love the spouse has for him or her. It is important that

we listen to the feelings of the one we love and decide not to say and do things that hurt him or her. It's no use saying you love me when you keep doing the things that I have told you time without number that I hate. When you choose to continue to hurt me, you cannot claim to love me.

Accepting correction and effecting change is very important if your marriage must maintain its freshness. Only Jesus Christ can bring change to your life. Allow him to change the areas of your life that you find it difficult to change. The areas of complain about your spouse should be handed over to God to help you overcome. Success in marriage is a function of your willingness to become like Christ. Accept the word of God as the final authority on the subject of relationship and marriage. Practice the word of God in your life and change will be visible.

CONCLUSION

Take a good look at yourself and note what you find as far as this subject is concerned. Go to work on yourself immediately, and make all the necessary adjustments that are needed and you will be sure that your marriage will maintain its freshness by the day and by the year.

WORD OF WISDOM

- 1. Success in marriage is a function of your willingness to become like Christ.**
- 2. "He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise." (Proverbs 11:29)**
- 3. "He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich." (Proverbs 21:17)**
- 4. If you marry for sex, you will not be prepared for the responsibilities of marriage.**
- 5. Making marriage work involves a lot of tolerance, hard work and commitment.**
- 6. Love is a manifestation of the deep thoughts of the mind that are rooted in the heart.**
- 7. The one who married and stayed with you when you had nothing deserves your respect and must not be abandoned for another when things are okay with you, no matter what happens.**
- 8. Don't be foolish to overlook what you should give attention to all in the name of love, for it could be a warning from God.**
- 9. People change, and so do you. So, watch out.**
- 10. Little things that don't matter to you matters to someone. This may be the reason why your marriage is having crisis. Feel what your spouse is feeling and give attention to it.**

