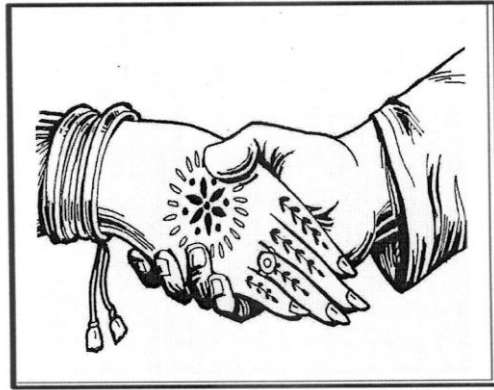


F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

NOTE:

Please first read the APPENDIX.



F. A. C. T. S.

OF

A LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

By Pastor Bien Llobrera

INTRODUCTION

1. Since the beginning, marriage has always been under attack. In Bible times, under the law of Moses, divorce was already allowed, but in modern times the no-fault clause made divorce even easier to obtain in the U. S. A. and other western countries. It didn't take long for other countries in the rest of the world to follow suit. In the Philippines the campaign to legalize divorce has been gaining momentum.
2. A hundred years ago, couples living together out of wedlock carried social stigma. Now celebrity couples flaunt their love children born of their out-of-wedlock relationship.
3. However, a seismic change is about to happen with same-sex marriage gaining acceptance all over the world. Marriage and family as we have long traditionally defined it may soon be relegated to the fozzil age of cultural history.
4. Is there a way to have a happy and lasting marriage? According to the Bible, the answer is Yes! The Bible gives us F. A. C. T. S. that will build and maintain a lifelong love and marriage, which will nurture and fortify strong families.
5. F. A. C. T. S. is an acronym for the following important ingredients or components of a lasting love and marriage:

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

- Foundation
- Acceptance
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Satisfaction and Success

LESSON 1

FACT 1: FOUNDATION

6. Someone might say, "Wait a minute, pastor, aren't you forgetting the most important thing in your acronym?" And I ask in return, "What's that?" And you answer, "Love!"
7. The reason LOVE is not in the acronym is because, love is assumed; it goes without saying that people get married because they love each other. Very often they say that they are madly in love with each other; or they're crazy or insane about each other. They admit that they're mad, they're crazy, they're insane!. I wonder if that's not the problem. Because once they get over their madness and craziness and insanity, is that when they begin to think of getting out of their marriage vows?
8. I repeat: LOVE must be there in the marriage from the very beginning. The question we are trying to answer is: How can married people make their love and marriage last? These F. A. C. T. S. will help them to do that.
9. So, on to the first letter of the acronym. F stands for the FOUNDATION that love and marriage must have in order to be happy and lasting.

TUG-OF-WAR

10. Let's analyze why people get out of their marriage vows. At the very bottom is that they treat their marriage as a game of TUG-OF-WAR.
11. When people fall in love and they get married, at first they are very happy because they do what lovers do – they try to please each other and do things to make each other happy. This is called the honeymoon stage. How long will this honeymoon stage last? How long do married couples continue to try to make each other happy? It varies with different people. But sooner or later, the true nature of the human heart comes out.
12. The Bible tells us the true nature of the human heart in James 4:1-2: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. Your murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war."

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

13. Now, let's see how this looks. Imagine that inside the husband's heart there is a throne; there is a similar throne in the heart of the wife. Guess who is seating as king in the heart of the husband? The big, proud "I". Guess who is seating as queen in the heart of the wife? You guessed right! Sitting on her throne is also the big, proud "I". This is the reason for all wars – in marriage, in the home, in nations. There are two conflicting rulers and two conflicting kingdoms. The husband or the wife says, "I" am the king/queen, I want the other person (my spouse) to submit to my wishes and desires.
14. This is how the tug-of-war begins. The husband pulls in his direction and says, "This is what I want, and you, wife, must do what I want!". The wife pulls equally in her direction and says, "No, this is what I want and you, husband, must do what I want!" In the marriage tug of war, the husband and wife keep pulling and pulling until one of three things happens:
 - (a) DICTATOR-DOORMAT: Either the husband or the wife submits and says, "Okay, you win" and agrees to move over to the side of the winning spouse. And you will have a marriage where one partner dominates, and the other becomes a doormat.
 - (b) DIVORCE OR SEPARATION: Neither the husband nor the wife will yield... they keep pulling and pulling until they get tired of pulling and they drop the rope altogether and go their separate ways -- that's what you call "divorce". In the Philippines there is no divorce legally; but there is divorce in actuality (spouses living in separation and living with someone else; or spouses still living together but are already maintaining separate lives).
 - (c) COMMON GROUND: The husband and wife are willing to come together in the middle and find a common ground that gives them a reason to stay together.
15. As you can see, option number 1 (dictator and doormat) may prolong a marriage but only at the expense of one partner.
16. Option number 2, divorce ends the marriage and brings damage to both husband and wife and to their children. Although many people deny it, divorce has life-long negative consequences.
17. Option number 3 (finding common ground) will prolong the marriage only as long as both partners continue to be committed to the common ground. Here are some examples of common ground:
 - (a) For the sake of the children;
 - (b) Until the children are grown;

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

- (c) To preserve family reputation;
 - (d) For the sake of a career, usually the political kind.
18. How do we solve the marriage tug of war? By helping the husband and wife to find a solid, lasting common ground that they can stand on together for life.
19. The Bible gives us God's Master Plan for a happy and lasting marriage by providing a solid FOUNDATION. This foundation provides the only durable common ground. This foundation includes three components: ONE LORD, ONE LAW, ONE PURPOSE.

ONE LORD

20. ONE LORD (Romans 10:9,10). God wants to lay this foundation in the heart of both husband and wife. God wants to change your heart from self-controlled to Christ-controlled. Let's remind ourselves about that throne in the heart of both the husband and the wife, and about who is sitting as the king/queen on the throne, the big, proud "I". In God's plan for marriage, it is CHRIST, not the "I", who sits as the Lord and King in the hearts of both spouses.
21. This is the first ingredient or component of a happy and lasting love and marriage. You and your spouse must personally invite Christ to take over the throne of your heart. When Christ is Lord in your individual hearts, then it is no longer the selfish "I" that's motivating your attitudes and actions and wishes and plans. Now, you no longer want to play tug-of-war. Your desire now as husband and wife is to ask: "Lord, what do you want us to do?"
22. This is what the Bible means in 2 Corinthians 6:14,15: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"
23. In Bible times, farmers plowed with two animals yoked together. They made sure, however, that the animals were about the same height; otherwise, the yoke would be unbalanced and would hurt both of them. In Christian marriage, this means that the husband and wife must be of the same "height" or standard – both of them must have Christ as Lord of their heart. If, say, the wife has Christ in her heart, but the husband has the selfish, self-centered "I" sitting on the throne of his heart, they will be of unequal height; the wife has a higher standard, and they will be in conflict with one another and will only hurt each other.
24. This is why, before marriage, Christian young people and singles are strongly counseled to choose another Christian for a life partner.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

25. But for you who are already married, it's not too late to make sure that you have received Christ as Lord and Savior of your life and marriage. If you have not done this before, you can do this today with a simple prayer: *"Lord Jesus, please come into our heart and into our marriage and be our Lord and Savior from now on. Amen."* This is the first component of the FOUNDATION of a successful and happy marriage: ONE LORD.

ONE LAW

26. The second component of the FOUNDATION is ONE LAW (2 Timothy 3:16,17). This is the COMMON GROUND that will last for a lifetime -- the WORD OF GOD. This is the solid rock on which you can build a happy and lasting marriage. All other ground is sinking sand. (Please see below FACTS – Fig. 1)



FACTS – Fig. 1

27. Please imagine three circles next to each other. Standing inside the left circle is the husband; standing inside the right circle is the wife; in the middle circle is an open Bible. In a tug-of-war relationship, either partner will insist on staying in his/her circle and will keep trying to push the other partner to move over to his/her circle. But now, imagine that both partners agree to move out of their respective circle in order to stand together on the OPEN BIBLE in the middle circle. What has happened? They are now standing on a common ground, in fact, they are standing on the only common ground that will last for a lifetime (please see below FACTS – Fig. 2).



FACTS – Fig. 2

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

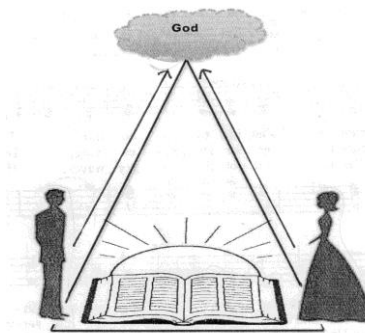
28. You see, when Christ is Lord in both of your hearts, then your desire is no longer to play the game of tug of war; rather both of you will be asking: "Lord, what do you want us to do?" You are now submitted to the ONE LAW of Christ. The important thing is no longer what the husband wants or what the wife wants. The important thing is what the Lord wants; and God reveals what He wants in His book, the Bible. The Bible, God's Word, becomes the ONE LAW of your life and marriage and of everything else you do in life. Another way to put it, God invented marriage, and He gave the Bible as the USER'S MANUAL to show the spouses how their marriage is supposed to operate.

ONE PURPOSE

29. The FOUNDATION God gives for a happy and lasting marriage consists of, first, ONE LORD, second, ONE LAW, and thirdly, ONE PURPOSE: TO BE A HELPMATE TO EACH OTHER (Genesis 2:18).

30. To illustrate this one purpose let's draw a TRIANGLE. Every marriage is a triangle. At the left base of the triangle stands the husband, and on the right stands the wife, and at the apex there is always one thing or possibly another person that's very important to either spouse. In a failed marriage, this thing or person becomes more important than the spouse. In the successful marriage God is at the apex, holding the spouses together.

31. What happens when God is at the apex. Let's draw an arrow going from the husband toward God, and a similar arrow going from the wife toward God. The arrows, pointing in the same direction toward God, symbolize that in a happy, lasting marriage the husband and the wife are both committed to the same purpose, God's purpose for their marriage (please see below FACTS-Fig. 3).



FACTS-Fig 3

32. Marriage has a three-fold aspect in this one purpose:

(a) To complete each other (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:18, 21-24)

- Body: To meet each other's physical needs (food, security, sex)

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

- Soul: To meet each other's "person" needs (need for companionship & friendship; needs related to the development of the whole "person": mind, emotion, career, gifts and talents)
 - Spirit: To meet each other's spiritual needs (become like Christ)
- (b) To raise a godly family (Malachi 2:13-16).
- (c) To fulfill your God-given work in this world (John 15:16). Every marriage has a God-given assignment to perform in this world. The husband and wife must help each other fulfill this purpose.

CONCLUSION

33. Questions for single people as well as for married couples:

- (a) Do you want to have a solid and lasting FOUNDATION for your marriage?
- (b) Are you sure you have received CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR.
- (c) Do you both commit to follow God's Word, the Bible, as the ONE LAW of your life and marriage?
- (d) Do you both commit to fulfill God's THREE-FOLD PURPOSE for your marriage?

34. If you are an engaged couple already planning to get married, or even if you are already a married couple, we encourage you to pray the following:

"Lord Jesus, we want to build our marriage on Your strong FOUNDATION. We invite You to come in our hearts to be our LORD and Savior in our personal life and in marriage. We accept the Bible as the ONE LAW of our life and relationship. And with Your help, we commit ourselves to fulfill Your PURPOSE for our marriage. In the name of Jesus our Lord we pray. Amen."

LESSON 2

FACT 2: ACEPTANCE

1. Acceptance is the second fact that will help us build a happy and lifelong love and marriage.
2. Why is acceptance important? We often mistake ACCEPTANCE for ATTRACTION. When we "fall in love" with someone, we are actually saying that there is something about that person that attracts us, something in that person that we want to "own", to possess, to call our own. Here are some POSITIVE THINGS people say they are attracted to:

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

- (a) Beauty
- (b) Intelligence
- (c) Giftedness (maybe in music, art, etc.)
- (d) Money (and all that this means – power, position, prestige, security, comfort)
- (e) Character qualities (so kind to me, so thoughtful, so loving, so considerate, so polite, etc.).
- (f) Father image/Mother image (he's got qualities like my father; she's got qualities like my mother)
- (g) Others.

3. Let's take a few minutes for a reality check. Take a piece of paper and write down the positive qualities which attracted you to your partner.

4. Strangely enough, there is also SOMETHING NEGATIVE that people find attractive: For example, here's a person who is very problematic for whatever reason (parents have neglected or abused him/her; someone who feels misunderstood by other people; someone nobody loves; someone who is a victim of circumstances, etc.). Regarding this matter, there are two dangers we must beware of.

(a) MOTHER INSTINCT.

For a woman, she must beware of her natural, God-given “mother instinct”. This instinct is awakened when she meets a man who is in need of saving, and she feels and believes that she – and only she – can save this poor soul. "Martyric women" (women with very compassionate and self-sacrificing nature) must guard against men who know how to take advantage of this "mother instinct"; these men will keep saying, in one form or another, "You are my savior; without you I will die." This desperate plea for help and understanding usually moves a “martyric woman” to sacrifice herself in order to save this poor soul.

(b) SIR LANCELOT COMPLEX.

On the other hand, a man must beware of the male chivalrous instinct, which is awakened by the sight of a damsel-in-distress. We may call this "Sir Lancelot Complex". Remember in the story of King Arthur and the knights of the round table? Lancelot pledged himself to be the protector of the queen and both fell into the trap of falling in love with each other and betraying the king in the process. Men should beware of women who know how to manipulate the kindness of Sir Lancelot.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

5. The essence of **ATTRACTION** is this: we find something in the other person which seems to **SUPPLY WHAT WE LACK**, something which seems to give us what we are looking for, something that will make us happy, secure, and fulfilled. Usually, attraction will focus only on that **ONE THING** that's the point of attraction and will ignore or deny other qualities or realities about the person. Often, attraction lives on **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATION**; that is, I expect that that person will always show that wonderful quality. But when the other unpleasant realities manifest themselves so that I can no longer ignore them, then I am overcome, first, by feelings of disappointment; then by disillusionment, and finally, disgust that leads to rejection and separation.

6. We should recognize that the initial **ATTRACTION** is only a step toward genuine **ACCEPTANCE**. What's the difference between attraction and acceptance?

(a) Attraction is blind. Paraphrasing Shakespeare: "Attraction blinds you to a person's faults; it only makes you see his/her good qualities." Acceptance, on the contrary, means that I accept the reality that every human being has a good side and a not so good side; a beautiful side and a not so beautiful side (One tv personality used to say, "Take a picture of me from this side, not on that side", because he says he looks more handsome on one side than on the other side.

(b) Attraction ignores differences. Acceptance, however, accepts the **BOTTOMLINE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE**. "Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars." Women generally go with their feelings; men generally go for action.

(c) Attraction is idealistic; it makes lovers think that love will compensate for everything. On the other hand, acceptance is realistic about **DIFFERENCES IN BACKGROUND** -- family background, educational background, social and economic background. (For example, you can take the boy out of the province, but you may not be able to take out completely the province out of the boy. Something of his being from the province will always show.)

(d) Attraction is idolatrous; it makes a lover magnify a certain quality in the beloved and then puts him/her on a pedestal to be adored. On the other hand, acceptance recognizes **DIFFERENCES IN TALENTS, GIFTS AND INTERESTS**.

REMINDER FOR TEENAGERS AND ADULT SINGLES:

7. Singles need to be reminded of the following:

(a) Do not marry **YOUR IDEA OF WHO THE PERSON IS**.

(b) Do not marry a person **HOPING OR BELIEVING THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CHANGE HIM/HER** after you're married. Do not expect him to be like your dad; do not expect her to be like your mom.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

(c) Do not get engaged BEFORE YOU REALLY KNOW THE PERSON (GOOD SIDE AND BAD SIDE, PRETTY SIDE AND UGLY SIDE). In Latin there is a saying: CAVEAT EMPTOR -- BUYER BEWARE. In today's market, there is a disclaimer attached to some goods: BUY AS IS.

(d) Therefore, before you even consider that this person is the one you'll spend your whole life with, YOU MUST TAKE TIME TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER – not only for you to know him/her, but for him/her to know you. Be as honest and transparent as you can be about your personalities, about your backgrounds, about your past life, present situation and future hopes and plans.

MARRIED THE WRONG PERSON?

8. How about married couples. You may be tempted to think, "It's too late. I think I married the wrong person." Here are some words of encouragement and hope:

(a) GOD IS SOVEREIGN. Since God controls everything, and nothing happens without His permission, since He allowed you to get married to each other, you may be sure that YOU ARE GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT TO EACH OTHER.

(b) BEGIN AGAIN TODAY. God has made you aware of the FACTS of lasting love and marriage. Begin to build your marriage around those facts. Commit yourself to Christ's foundation and its three components: ONE LORD; ONE LAW; ONE PURPOSE.

LAW OF ACCEPTANCE: LAW OF LOVE

9. Since Christ is the Lord and Savior in both of your hearts, He gives you His LAW OF ACCEPTANCE found in Romans 15:7: "Therefore receive (accept) one another, just as Christ also received (accepted) us, to the glory of God." This is also expressed as Christ's LAW OF LOVE found in John 13:34,35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Please note:

(a) Acceptance/love is not based on how acceptable we are to each other; love is not based on how loveable we are to each other.

(b) Acceptance/love is based solely on how CHRIST ACCEPTED/LOVED US. The measure and standard of our acceptance for each other is how much and to what extent Christ accepted us. And HOW did Christ accept/love us? Christ accepted/loved us totally, unconditionally, eternally.

10. Let me repeat: The measure of acceptance is not the limit of my toleration-threshold. You've heard of the pain-threshhold, right? That's the limit of your ability to endure pain before you say OUCH! Well, we have a toleration-threshhold, the limit of our ability to tolerate something before we say, "ENOUGH!" That limit is Christ's

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

acceptance of me. Does Christ wait to accept me until I am acceptable? Is not grace the only basis for Christ's acceptance of me? And grace is defined as God's favor that I did not, do not, and will never deserve.

PRACTICAL STEPS

11. Two practical steps can help spouses to accept one another: \

- **STEP #1: THANK GOD** for each other's qualities and lack of qualities, for each other's successes or failures. God's will is for couples to give thanks in everything (1 Thess. 5:18). Married folks, try thanking God in everything in your marriage. Husbands, can you say, "Thank God, my wife is nagging today." (Say that to God in your heart, not to HER!) Wife, can you say, "Thank You, Lord, my husband is late in coming home again tonight." When you thank God in everything you are declaring that you trust in God, that He has everything under control, and that He knows exactly how to handle situations for you. Such thankfulness glorifies God.
- **STEP #2. FORGIVE EACH OTHER.** In Matthew 18:35 Jesus tells us how to forgive – from the heart. What one has forgiven from the heart will never be remembered. If one is reluctant to forgive, one has to remember that Jesus makes our ability to experience God's forgiveness dependent on our forgiving others (Matthew 6:14-15).

ACCEPTANCE AT THREE LEVELS

12. But we must also realize that acceptance/love is exercised at three levels.

- **LEVEL 1: CHANGE THINGS THAT CAN BE CHANGED.**

Acceptance/love means that we must help each other to change differences that can be changed to make each other a better person. God intended marriage as a training ground to make us the best person we can be.

- **LEVEL 2: RECOGNIZE SOME THINGS CAN'T BE CHANGED.**

Acceptance/love means that we recognize there are differences that cannot and must not be changed, because they are part of the person's unique identity. God did not intend marriage to change a person into someone he/she is not. Example: An extrovert may learn to control his/her enthusiasm sometimes, but you do not try to make an extrovert into an introvert. An introvert may learn to be more friendly and sociable sometimes, but you must never try to make an introvert into an extrovert. God did not intend marriage to change our personalities into something we are not.

- **LEVEL 3: CELEBRATE YOUR DIFFERENCES.**

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

Acceptance/love means that we decide to celebrate, instead of fight or merely put up with, our differences because they give spice and variety to our marriage. God did not intend marriage to make carbon copies out of couples.

13. Someone wrote a prayer that Christian couples will do well to pray regularly: 0

"Lord, give me the courage to change the things that can be changed; the grace to accept the things than cannot be changed; and the wisdom to know the difference."

14. Couples, are you ready to make the PLEDGE OF ACCEPTANCE? Are you ready to say to each other:

I believe with all my heart that you are God's special gift to me. Therefore, I accept you and love you as Christ accepts and loves both us – totally, unconditionally, and eternally. I acknowledge that there will be times when we make mistakes, and even fall into sin. In those times of failure, by God's grace, I will humble myself and ask your forgiveness and I will also grant you forgiveness. And together we pray: Lord, give us the courage to change the things that can be changed; the grace to accept the things that cannot be changed; and the wisdom to know the difference, in order for us to celebrate our differences, and become truly one in Christ's love.

In Christ's precious name we pray. Amen.

LESSON 3

FACT 3: COMMUNICATION

1. Communication, the third fact of a lasting love and marriage, may be defined as the process of sending and receiving a message from one mind and heart to another. Almost everything – if not everything – in human relationships, depends on communication. Communication as a field of study has exponentially exploded, especially with the advent of high tech global communications. Communication is an **INDISPENSABLE FACT** of marriage.

2. Have you seen this cartoon showing a husband and wife having breakfast, both with their noses stuck to their smartphones? The caption reads: "What do you mean we can't communicate? Just yesterday I texted you a reply to the text you sent me."

3. How about this story?

A couple was asked their secret why they were able to stay married for a long time. The wife replied: "I talk." And the husband added: "I don't listen."

4. Seriously, Paul Tournier, a famous marriage counselor from a former generation, in his book "To Understand Each Other" wrote: "Listen to the conversations of our world,

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf."

5. Here's an ancient story about communication:

A young man went to the great philosopher Socrates in order to be taught public speaking. The moment the young man arrived, he began to speak and went on and on and on. When finally Socrates was able to get in a word, he said, "Young man, I will have to charge you double fee." The youth replied: "Why double fee?" The old philosopher replied: "Because I will have to teach you two sciences: first, how to hold your tongue, and then how to use it."

6. To set the stage for our discussion, let us talk about Filipino communication. We Filipinos find it difficult to communicate. We have to use go-betweens. We have to resort to insinuations. We beat around the bush. We say what we think the other person wants to hear; or we say what will not hurt the other person; or we simply do not say anything at all in front of the person. The problem is, after the person leaves, we tell everybody else what we really think. Or, for some men, they get drunk, and then come home and under the pretext of being drunk, they speak everything that they have been keeping bottled up inside. Later on, when they are sober, someone asks them why they said such and such and they say, "I'm sorry, I was drunk. I don't remember what I said."

BIBLICAL MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

7. To build a happy and lasting love and marriage, couples must learn to communicate. And they need to learn to communicate in the biblical way. Let's read Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ." (NASB). From this verse we learn four things:

(a) First, SPEAK. To communicate, we must learn to talk, to speak up; we must express what we really think and feel and want. We must not demand or expect the impossible from the other person. Many couples demand that their spouse be a prophet, a mind reader, a manghuhula. That's unfair. Some rare people might have the gift of prophecy. But most of us cannot read minds. We must learn to express what's deep inside our mind and heart so that our partner will know what's going on with us.

(b) Secondly, SPEAK THE TRUTH. To communicate we must learn to use words so that our words will mean exactly what we mean. As mentioned above, Filipinos don't like to hurt the feelings of others. They don't tell you what they really think or feel.

Do you know the difference between Americans and Filipinos in communication? Americans tend to be brutally frank. They have a saying, "Call a spade a spade." They tell it like it is. They don't care if you get hurt, as long as they express themselves. So, we Filipinos think they are rude because they hurt our feelings with their frankness.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

Filipinos on the other hand are very polite. We don't like to hurt anybody. I will tell you what you like to hear. We say, yes, yes, I'll try, when we actually mean no. So, when we say to the American that we will see him at 8 o'clock tomorrow, and we don't show up, he calls us a liar.

Americans are brutally frank. But Filipinos are polite liars.

To communicate truly, we must speak the truth.

(c) Third, SPEAK IN LOVE. However, we don't need to be brutally frank or be polite liars. The Bible tells us to speak the truth in love. We must be careful with our choice of words, the tone of our voice, the timing of when to speak, the attitude that fills our words. We must make sure that we really want what's best for the relationship. Here the principle applies: "Love the person, hate the sin." We must learn to focus on the problem and how to solve it, not on trying to hurt the other person, to get even with or to shame the other person.

(d) Therefore, fourthly, we need to learn to LISTEN. Someone said, God made us with one mouth and two ears, so that we might listen twice as much as we speak. In listening we must be aware of three languages:

SPOKEN LANGUAGE – the words we are actually saying.

UNSPOKEN LANGUAGE – what you omit saying is as important as what you actually include in what you're saying.

BODY LANGUAGE – the physical and emotional components of what we are saying. Let's make an experiment: Let's take the word "OO" (yes). Using body language and tone of voice, how many meanings can you give to OO?

Express the following meanings and emotions:

- You really mean it.
- Lovingly
- Angrily
- Not sure
- Joke only

8. Couples need to listen to the SPOKEN WORDS. They also need to listen to the UNSPOKEN THOUGHTS. We know that what is left UNSAID sometimes means more than the words actually SAID. As we have already demonstrated in our experiment, we

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

must also listen to the tone of voice and watch the BODY LANGUAGE. James 1:9 gives this practical advice: "Let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger."

9. One thing we should avoid: While the other person is talking we must actually listen, not be thinking about what we will say when he/she stops talking.

(a) Stephen Covey, in his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", suggests FIVE LEVELS OF LISTENING:

- Level 1: Ignoring another person, not really listening at all.
- Level 2: Pretending to listen.
- Level 3: Selective listening, paying attention to only parts of what the other person is saying.
- Level 4: Listening attentively.
- Level 5: Empathetic listening, with intent to understand, to get inside the other person's frame of reference, seeking to understand them emotionally as well as intellectually.

(b) Win Arn, Carroll Nyquist, and Charles Arn in their book "Who Cares About Love" suggest FOUR LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION:

- Level 1: Exchange of clichés: "Hi, how are you? Have a nice day."
- Level 2. Shares data and information. Talk about things that are impersonal and non-threatening – the weather, sports, world events.
- Level 3: Shares something about who we are – our opinions and attitudes, dreams, goals, and values.
- Level 4: Most intimate level, when we share our feelings, emotions, joys, and fears with another person.

The authors say, "Sometimes we communicate very well when first beginning a loving relationship, when we are at the first or second level. But we can easily stagnate at one of these levels if we don't choose to go deeper and become more personal, open, and intimate."

CONCLUSION

10. The goal of communication is symbolized by the description of the first married couple, Adam and Eve. Genesis 2:11, 23-25 says:

11 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

Note from this scripture the following:

(a) **UNITY.** Let's note first that God's plan is for the man and woman to become ONE FLESH – complete unity.

(b) **HONESTY.** Secondly, they were naked – totally transparent, totally honest with each other.

(c) **ACCEPTANCE.** Thirdly, they were not ashamed. There was nothing to hide from each other. There was total acceptance, understanding, love and support.

This was their condition before they fell into sin.

12. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, notice what they did according to Genesis 3:7-10:

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

From this scripture, note the following:

(a) **SOMETHING TO HIDE.** Let's note first that after they sinned they became ashamed of their nakedness. Some Bible commentators believe that before they sinned, Adam and Eve had some kind of glorious cloud covering of purity and innocence around them like a beautiful garment, but after they sinned this cloud vanished and they lost their purity and innocence; instead they experienced guilt and shame and therefore they needed to cover themselves. From this we see that the first hindrance to communication is if we have something to hide. How do we overcome this hindrance?

(i) By receiving forgiveness and cleansing from God through faith in Jesus Christ. This is why it is important to receive Christ as our Lord and Savior. When we know our sins are forgiven, then we can be honest with each other about ourselves.

(ii) But not only do we need forgiveness and cleansing from God. We need to be assured that our spouse must also give us unconditional love, forgiveness and understanding.

(b) **PRETENSE.** Secondly, after Adam and Eve sinned they sewed fig leaves to cover their shame. The second hindrance to communication is pretense, putting on a false front, hypocrisy, putting on a mask to make people think and believe we are someone we

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

are really not. To overcome this hindrance, we must learn to drop all pretense. There must be total honesty, transparency, sincerity and integrity. We must practice the principle someone described as *W-Y-S-I-W-Y-G: What You See Is What You Get*. Couples don't automatically become transparent with each other – and they shouldn't. They must LEARN to be transparent, but they must also EARN the right to be transparent. How do you EARN this right? By assuring each other more and more that we are safe in opening up ourselves to each other. We can only open up to someone that we know will love us just as we are and who will not judge us.

(c) HUMAN LIMITATIONS. Thirdly, after Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God. The third hindrance to communication is our own human limitations. By ourselves, we cannot truly be fully transparent with each other because we cannot fully love each other in our own strength. Other human beings cannot help us, not even the most highly qualified psychologist or psychiatrist. We need the help of God. We must make God as the Third Partner in our marriage. And we must make His Word as the Light that will open up the dark corners of our lives.

1 John 1:7: "But if we (husband and wife together) walk in the light as He (God) is in the light (God's Word), we have fellowship (total union and full communication) with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Psalm 119:105: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

APPLICATION

13. May I challenge you:

- (a) Will you as a couple commit yourselves to LEARN how to communicate and to EARN the right to be fully transparent with each other?
- (b) Will you allow God's Word to serve as your LIGHT to help reveal more and more of your innermost thoughts and feelings toward each other?
- (c) Will you allow God's LOVE to enable you fully to accept, forgive, and support each other?

LESSON 4

FACT 4: TEAMWORK

1. We come now to the fourth of the FACTS that build a happy and lifelong love and marriage: TEAMWORK. Teamwork arises from the fact that God made the husband and wife as helpmates. Let read Genesis 2:18, 21-22. Regarding this scripture, may I say some words for teenagers and adult singles.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

But first, let me tell you a story from Pastor Chuck Swindoll. He says that one time he received a letter from a woman who shared how she found a husband. The woman said, "I didn't worry about getting married. I did leave my future to God's will. But every night I hung a pair of men's pants on the bed and knelt down and prayed this prayer, 'Father in heaven, hear my prayer. And grant it if you can. I've hung a pair of trousers here. Please fill them with a man.'" Pastor Swindoll thought that was a great letter and he shared it one Sunday in his sermon at his church. In the audience that day were a father and his unmarried son. The mother happened to be home that Sunday taking care of a sick daughter. The father, hearing Pastor Swindoll's story, cracked up laughing, but his son was rather serious. Interestingly, not long after, Pastor Swindoll got a letter from the son's mother. She wrote, "Dear Pastor Chuck, I'm wondering if I have something to worry about. I've noticed that our son, when he goes to bed at night, has this bikini hanging over the foot of his bed."

Anyway, from Genesis 2:18, 21-22 may I say some words to you teenagers and singles:

(a) *God knows you need a partner.* In the case of Adam, he did not even have any idea of what a woman looked like or why he needed her. But long before Adam became aware of it, God already knew that he needed to have a woman partner.

(b) *God Himself will prepare that partner.* Again, in Adam's case it wasn't Adam who asked for a woman partner. God Himself, in His infinite wisdom and love, took upon Himself the responsibility of preparing the woman who was to be a perfect partner for Adam. Be assured that He will do the same for you.

(c) *In the meantime, you need to "sleep" regarding this matter.* God put Adam into a deep sleep while preparing his partner. Medically minded people think that what God did to Adam was the first recorded surgery in all of human history, and the first recorded use of anesthesia. Anyway, this is what God wants you single people to do while waiting for that special partner; He wants you to "sleep" with regards to looking for your partner. Does this mean that you won't show any interest at all in this matter? No; it means that you will not choose or make commitments until you are very sure that God has brought to you the one He has specially prepared for you. You ask, "What do I do in the meantime?"

Let me suggest something very important: In the meantime, develop healthy Christian friendships; get to know many friends. It may be that God will show you from these friends who your partner will be. Go to "sleep" regarding making a definite commitment to a person, but "be awake" to God's training program (cooperate fully with God in the life preparation that He is giving you). And, I assure you, you don't even have to hang a pair of trousers or a bikini at the foot of your bed.

3. Now, to our fourth component in the F. A. C. T. S. of marriage: TEAMWORK. Teamwork involves three elements.

AUTHORITY

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

4. First, teamwork requires that a couple must recognize that God placed man as the head of the woman in marriage and in the family. God established the order of authority for everything, from marriage to family to societies and governments. Please read 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-12; Ephesians 5:22-33. God instituted authority for at least three reasons.

(a) **ACCOUNTABILITY.** God has established an order in His universe that He works through His divinely ordained authorities. And He has ordained them so that they will be accountable to Him. Romans 13:1.

(b) **COVERING AND PROTECTION.** Part of the accountability of authorities is that they will serve as covering and protection over those that God placed in their charge – the wife under the protection of the husband; the children under the protection of the parents; citizens under the protection of their rulers.

(c) **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT.** The human body serves as a good illustration. God gave one head to rule over the body, which is made up of many parts. Can you imagine a two-headed body? That would be a freak and a monstrosity. One head is necessary for effective direction and management in the physical body as well as in marriage, in the family, and in all other human institutions and organizations.

QUESTIONS

5. We need to answer some questions before we go on.

(a) Does male leadership mean that woman is inferior? Not at all. Nature and position are not the same; man and woman have the same equal human nature, but they occupy different positions. Even in the Trinity, there is an order of authority, as we have already read in 1 Corinthians: FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT.

(b) Does male leadership mean that woman is a slave? Unfortunately, in many societies this has been the treatment of men toward women. But in God's plan, both husband and wife are called equal children of God and equal heirs of God (1 Peter 3:7).

(c) How about FEMINISM – is it scriptural or not? In its goal to do away with the abuse and oppression of women by men, feminism has done a lot of good. But in its radical form which pits women against men as if they were competitors, and in its extreme agenda of making men unnecessary for women, feminism is unscriptural, because it destroys the unity and partnership that God has planned for men and women.

6. Summary: For the sake of order and government, God has placed the husband as head over the wife and over the family.

ROLES

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

7. Secondly, teamwork requires that couples agree about their ROLES and their division of labor, depending on their respective talents and their situations. In early agricultural culture, the roles were clearly defined. Modern life has brought a lot of changes. Role distinctions are changing rapidly. Let me share some illustrations:

(a) When our children were still young, my wife and I decided, she'd take care of the baby during the day; I was the one to get up at night when the baby cried. Now that we have an empty nest, my wife cooks; I do the dishes.

(b) One husband I know is the better cook so he does the cooking most of the time.

(c) Tony and Pam are my favorite examples. Tony is an engineer; Pam is a nurse. But in the early days of their marriage, Pam earned more than Tony did. So they decided that Tony would be a “house-band” and Pam would be the bread-winner. Later on, when Tony finally got a good paying job, they decided that they could afford for Pam to be a full-time stay at home wife and mother. And they have raised wonderful kids who are successful adults today.

(d) I want to say something about finances – who handles this? There are some cultural differences between Filipino and American practices. In the Philippines the husband is usually the bread-winner but on payday he brings home his check and gives it all to his wife. The wife will then give him his allowance for the month, if not for the week or even daily. But in America it's different; generally, as I understand it, it's the man who holds the purse strings, and gives allowance to his wife. Quite apart from who controls the purse strings, there's the question of who is the better budget manager, who is the better bookkeeper? You have to discuss and agree who does what in the finances.

(e) But I have a final question regarding this matter of roles. Who will fix the screen door when it's broken? Early in our marriage, my wife was so frustrated with me because I did not fix our broken screen door. One day she had had enough that she took hammer and nail to fix the door herself, at the same time telling me, “Why can't you be like my dad? When he sees something broken, he fixes it immediately.” To tell you the truth, I did not even notice that the screen door was broken.

8. Summary: Husband and wife must find their own style. You must agree what roles you will fill and how you will arrange your division of labor. Never mind what other people say; do what works best for both of you.

DECISION-MAKING

9. Thirdly, in TEAMWORK husband and wife must agree on a system of making decisions. There is the mistaken concept that because the husband is the head, that he can make decisions by himself without consulting his wife or his children. This is not the idea or ideal of the Bible. In fact, before you come to Ephesians 5:22 (“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord”) you must first pass Ephesians 5:21 (“Submitting to one another in the fear of God”). The over-arching principle of God in His family is that

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

there must be mutual submission among Christians. And under this over-arching principle comes the subordinate principle of wife submitting to her husband. Under the over-arching principle we derive the principle that in marriage, decision making must involve both the husband and the wife, as well as the children, according to the level of their understanding.

I suggest the following steps:

STEP 1: INFORMATION.

BRAINSTORMING. Getting all the facts and ideas from the whole family. In brainstorming all ideas are welcome; there are no right or wrong ideas. This is not the stage for judging the merits of the ideas.

STEP 2: GUIDANCE.

Prayer, Bible study & godly counsel - Prov. 3:5-6; 12:15; 15:22; Romans 8:14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This is the stage where you sift your ideas, valuing and judging the merits of each idea, and retaining only the good ones.

STEP 3: OPTIONS.

Prioritizing your best options: For example: Option A, Option B, Option C. Make a "Pro & Con List" for each option. This is the stage where you make your tentative decisions. Continue to pray and study the Bible and (if necessary) ask for counsel from godly people. Then together as a team (husband, wife, and children) you may write down, as crystal clear as you can, your top three options, listing the advantages and disadvantages for each option.

STEP 4: DECISION.

The Head (Husband/Father) must make the final decision. Of all the options that the family has decided on, the husband/father must choose one.

STEP 5: IMPLEMENTATION.

After the father has made the decision, the whole family (husband, wife, children) must unite behind the Head's decision. With faith and determination, they must all work hard to make the decision work. No doubting, no second-guessing, no blaming; the family must present a united front to the whole world – win, lose or draw. I say this because there are wives who say (and maybe they have the right to say this because they have not been involved in the decision making process): “Well, that’s his decision, not mine.” Couples, if you want your marriage to last long and be happy, make your decision as a team effort. And together as a family, stand by the decision whatever might be the result.

CHALLENGE

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

10. Why is TEAMWORK very important in marriage? Because it's teamwork that helps a team to win. In sports, we have seen again and again a second rate team without superstars with teamwork beat a team with superstars without teamwork.

11. And it is important for a Christian marriage to succeed for this greater reason. In God's plan, a successful Christian marriage is God's real-life demonstration to the world of the reality of the beautiful love relationship that exists between Christ and His Bride, the Church. When the world sees a truly successful, happy and lasting marriage, they will be convinced that God is real, that Christ is real, and that love, lasting love is possible even in this world! (Ephesians 5:30-32)

LESSON 5

FACT 5: SATISFACTION & SUCCESS

1. Our final FACT is entitled SATISFACTION & SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE. Guess what we're going to talk about? The topic that everybody seems to be thinking and talking about on tv, in radio, on the internet, in movies, books, newspapers, magazines. The whole world – at least, as portrayed by Hollywood – seems to be crazy about this topic. S-E-X.

2. There was a time when nobody talked about this topic openly, in public. But times have changed! In America, in the public school, they even give sex education now to children – and they are even educating them about what gay people do! Personally, I believe this is irresponsible and horrible and very, very unwise. They are giving information that children don't need at that age.

3. But Pandora's box has been opened, and the terrible knowledge is out. And we have to deal with it.

THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT SEX

4. But what we, conservative evangelical Christians, forget is that the Bible talks about SEX. And we must learn to teach the Biblical truth about sex, and talk about it in a biblical way. So, let me begin by talking about the FOUR BOUNDARIES OF SEX, illustrated by the four sides of a square as in the diagram below:

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE



BOUNDARY 1: God gave me the gift of love and sex.

God created people as **SEXUAL BEINGS**, male and female; and He implanted in them this amazing, powerful, and mysterious capacity and need called sex that makes them attracted to each other. Sex is God's gift to humanity, just as much as the appetite for food is, along with the other needs involved in the five senses, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling.

BOUNDARY 2: God will supply my need for love and sex.

For every need that God implanted in our body, God also created something on the outside to supply that need. For example, God implanted in the body the sense of hunger; He also created food to satisfy that hunger. This is true for all needs of the body. This is no less true of the need for love and sex. God Himself made provision to supply this need. We must look to Him to provide our need in this area. The experience of Jesus in the wilderness of temptation demonstrates how this principle works (Matt. 4:1-11). Jesus believed God brought Him to the desert; He also believed that God Himself will meet His needs in the desert. When the devil tempted Him to make His own bread, He replied: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). In other words, Jesus waited for God to supply His need in God's own way and God's own time.

BOUNDARY 3: Sex is reserved only for marriage.

This is the essence of the command against fornication (unmarried people having sex with other unmarried people) and adultery (married people having sex with someone other than their spouse). God also commands sexual purity in our mind (Matt. 5:27-30). It is encouraging that many Christian young people are committing to sexual purity through the programs such as True Love Waits and other programs like it.

BOUNDARY 4: I will follow God's will for purity: single or married.

God's normal plan for people is marriage; but God calls some people to a special calling of singleness. Therefore every Christian must seek God's will for his/her own life, and

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

follow that will in all purity. God will supply the needed grace for marriage, as well as the needed grace for singleness, to stay holy and pure sexually.

SATISFACTION AND SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE

5. Satisfaction and success in marriage involve three elements: SEX, FRIENDSHIP, PARTNERSHIP.

6. Now we ask: What does the Bible teach about sex in marriage? The Bible is very realistic about this. Listen to what the Old Testament says: "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love" (Proverbs 5:18-19). In fact, one whole book, the Song of Solomon, was written to describe the joys of married love.

7. Listen to the New Testament's very practical guideline concerning sex in marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, NIV: *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to pray. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."* Please note: Don't think that the Bible is too graphic; rather, it is very straight forward about the proper place of sex in marriage:

(a) It is the marital duty of both husband and wife to give each other sexual satisfaction.

(b) The RSV gives a more literal translation of 1 Corinthians 7:4: *"For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."* This means that in marriage, the initiative does not solely remain with the husband but equally with the wife as well; this is because God planted the same equal desire in both man and woman. (In Tagalog, we say, "Hindi lang asawang lalake and puwedeng mangalabit; puwede ring mangalabit ang asawang babae, at hindi ito nakakahiya.")

(c) The Bible definitely commands spouses not to deny one another; but they must have mutual agreement about when to abstain (for reasons of health or work or above all, for spiritual reasons, such as special seasons of prayer).

(d) The Bible also warns that spouses must not stay apart too long otherwise Satan might use that as an occasion to tempt either partner.

8. In summary, the Bible plainly tells us that sex is God's marvelous gift for both husband and wife to enjoy freely. This means that sex must never be used by either husband or wife as a weapon for manipulation against each other. This is why, I believe, the command in Ephesians 4:26 ("Do not let the sun go down on your wrath") is specially applicable to married couples. The Bible is saying: "Husband and wife, before you go to

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

bed, make sure that you forgive each other and get reconciled with each other, so that you will have no hindrance in enjoying your love for each other."

FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

9. But the Bible shows us that there is more to love and marriage than just sex. Married couples must grow in their FRIENDSHIP with one another. Who or what is a friend?

(a) Friends love each other unconditionally.

Someone said, "A friend is the one who walks in when all the world has walked out." Jesus Himself is our pattern for friendship; He says, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). This is a very, very profound statement that we will never fathom in this life. Jesus says that the mark of His friendship with us is that He makes known to us all that He has heard from the Father; in other words, everything that He knows, everything that's on His heart and mind! Even so with the husband and wife: the goal of friendship is so to get to know each other, and to make known to each other, everything that they have in their heart and mind. I repeat, this is the goal of a lifetime. We have mentioned this earlier in our lesson on acceptance and communication – total transparency coupled with total acceptance: being totally naked with one another in body, mind and heart.

(b) Friends grow together.

Friends help each other to achieve their full potential. "A friend accepts you as you are, but won't let you stay as you are." Philippians 2:1-4 gives a good description of Christian friendship whether in marriage or in other relationships: "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

(c) Friends experience life together.

As we said, marriage must be more than sex, because physical desire and physical ability do not last forever. Why do you think Viagra is so popular today? That is why couples must keep growing in their friendship and companionship so that when sexual enjoyment diminishes they will still enjoy each other as companions for all seasons, who experience life together. Why do we say "experience life together" instead of "enjoy life together"? Because as you grow older, you will experience more pain and less enjoyment – arthritis and gout and back pain... you know the rest. By the way, how do you know you and your friends are growing old? When you get together you talk about the medications you're taking and about your doctor's appointments.

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

PARTNERSHIP IN MARRIAGE

10. In order to have a lasting, happy marriage, a couple must go beyond even friendship. They must discover their partnership with each other and with God. 1 Corinthians 3:9 tells us that Christians are co-laborers together with God. This is true specially of married people. Here the saying is true, "Only one life, it will soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." Marriage must go beyond enjoying each other physically in SEX; must go beyond enjoying each other emotionally as FRIENDS. Marriage must be invested in something that will last for eternity through PARTNERSHIP with God.

- Couples are partners with God, first of all, in raising up children not only for this life but also for heaven.
- Couples are partners with God in encouraging and mentoring disciples for Christ. They can do this best by being involved in a ministry in their church.
- Couples are partners with God in making a difference in the larger world around them. They can do this by getting involved, perhaps as volunteers, with their community, through working together on causes or projects that will benefit the larger society.

CONCLUSION

11. We have taken quite a journey with these lessons. So we ask again: WHAT ARE THE F.A.C.T.S. THAT HELP BUILD A HAPPY AND LASTING LOVE AND MARRIAGE?

- FOUNDATION
- ACCEPTANCE
- COMMUNICATION
- TEAMWORK
- SATISFACTION & SUCCESS.

DAFFODIL PRINCIPLE

12. Someone may ask: But HOW do you go about actually building your marriage with these FACTS?

13. Let me answer: You build by using the DAFFODIL PRINCIPLE. Let me explain. Recently someone emailed me the story about the Daffodil Principle. The author tells about how, putting it off, she finally got persuaded to go to see the "Daffodil Garden" that her daughter was raving about. Here's her story...

After about twenty minutes, we turned onto a small gravel road and I saw a small church. On the far side of the church, I saw a hand lettered sign with an arrow that read, "Daffodil Garden." We got out of the car, each took a child's hand, and I followed Carolyn down

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

the path. Then, as we turned a corner, I looked up and gasped. Before me lay the most glorious sight.

It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it over the mountain peak and its surrounding slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, creamy white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, and saffron and butter yellow. Each different-colored variety was planted in large groups so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. There were five acres of flowers.

"Who did this?" I asked Carolyn. "Just one woman," Carolyn answered. "She lives on the property. That's her home." Carolyn pointed to a well-kept A-frame house, small and modestly sitting in the midst of all that glory. We walked up to the house.

On the patio, we saw a poster. "Answers to the Questions I Know You Are Asking", was the headline. The first answer was a simple one. "50,000 bulbs," it read. The second answer was, "One at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and one brain." The third answer was, "Began in 1958."

For me, that moment was a life-changing experience. I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than forty years before, had begun, one bulb at a time, to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. Planting one bulb at a time, year after year, this unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. One day at a time, she had created something of extraordinary magnificence, beauty, and inspiration. The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration.

That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time – often just one baby-step at a time – and learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world ...

"It makes me sad in a way," I admitted to Carolyn. "What might I have accomplished if I had thought of a wonderful goal thirty-five or forty years ago and had worked away at it 'one bulb at a time' through all those years? Just think what I might have been able to achieve!"

My daughter summed up the message of the day in her usual direct way. "Start tomorrow," she said.

She was right. It's so pointless to think of the lost hours of yesterdays. The way to make learning a lesson of celebration instead of a cause for regret is to only ask, "How can I put this to use today?"

Use the Daffodil Principle. Stop waiting...

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

14. You build a happy, lasting marriage ONE DAY AT A TIME:
- (a) One step at a time of obedience to the Lord, to His law and His purpose;
 - (b) One effort at a time in ACCEPTING each other unconditionally;
 - (c) One word at a time of loving and truthful COMMUNICATION;
 - (d) One hand at a time stretching out in TEAMWORK with your spouse;
 - (e) And enjoying each other one day at a time as LOVERS, FRIENDS AND PARTNERS.
15. Start writing your story of lasting love and marriage beginning TODAY!

APPENDIX A EVANGELISTIC USE OF F. A. C. T. S.

F. A. C. T. S. OF A LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE (NewLife Book 6-B), may be given as a “stand alone” special Bible study for married couples and singles in committed relationship, as an evangelistic/discipleship course, as often as you can gather a group of couples (numbering 5-8 couples, or more).

GRADUATION. After completing the course, hold a special graduation program and party. The program should include some testimonies about what particular lesson helped them most; include one or two special love songs; have a brief “renewal of vows ceremony”; then proceed to the party. Invite your married friends as guests and potential participants in the next batch of training.

Identify each training group as “Batch 1”, “Batch 2”, etc. The idea is that batch graduates will recruit other couples to form a new batch; graduates will also serve as assistants in the training of the new batch. Graduates will be encouraged to join a cell group where they can begin their discipleship training to study NewLife Books 1-14; unless they were already in such a cell group before attending the F. A. C. T. S. special course.

APPENDIX B

A poem for weddings and wedding anniversaries:

One True Love

We have wandered for so long our lonely way,
Waiting for the One True Love to come one day,
Always searching in the crowd, in every place,
Looking for one special voice and touch and face.
Now that day has come, behold, what a surprise!
You and I now stand before each other’s eyes.
All our lonely days and nights take wings of flight,
And the world of One True Love dawns on our life.

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And today that One True Love asks you and me,
If we'll take each other's hand to walk one way;
And, forsaking all, to hold each other's heart,
As our only life-long prize, never to part.
Oh, what can we say and do but say, "We do!
To the world of One True Love we will now go,
Though beset with hidden snares for you and me,
Hand in hand we shall now walk the narrow way."

While the early sun shines bright upon our face,
And the morning breeze lends grace unto our feet,
Let this song of One True Love within our breasts
Ever closer bind our hearts before the tests.
Soon the noonday sun shall beat upon our heads,
And the breeze turn into storms to sweep our feet.
Then this song of One True Love within our breasts
Shall give strength and hope and faith to meet all tests.

When at last the sun goes down, and day is done;
And the storms of life give way to evening calm,
We shall sing again our song of One True Love,
Love that helped us walk together the narrow road.
Then we shall look up and thank the One above,
Who has placed within our hearts our One True Love.
In His world of joy and peace with Him above,
We shall ever live in love, for God is love.

By Bien A. Llobrera © 2026

APPENDIX C

A WEDDING CEREMONY

1. Prelude

2. LIGHTING OF CANDLES

3. SPECIAL MUSIC

4. Processional

Entry of Bridal Entourage

Entry of the Bride: (Pastor will announce: Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise)

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5. INVOCATION

Pastor prays: We call upon the name of the Triune God and ask for His presence to come into our midst: The Father, who in the beginning created man and woman and instituted holy matrimony for the perpetuation and joy of the human family; the Son, who as the heavenly Bridegroom showed the Greatest Love the world has ever known toward the Church, His holy Bride; and the Holy Spirit, who is the unfailing Fountain of love that sustains all life. Amen.

6. WORDS OF WELCOME

Pastor says: To all of you who came, may I say thank you on behalf of the Bride and the Groom and their families. I welcome you and invite you all to witness anew the mysterious work of God in joining two hearts and two lives into one.

7. SCRIPTURE READING

8. HYMN OR SPECIAL MUSIC

9. MESSAGE

Pastor says:

As the pastor officiating this marriage, I have already given the required Pre-marital Counseling to the Bride and Groom, in preparation for this wedding. In that counseling, I showed them from the Bible, God's Word, THE FACTS OF LASTING LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

But I need to give them one final reminder through our short message today. The title of this BRIEF WEDDING HOMILY is:

MARRIAGE -- GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS.

Our text comes from John chapter 2, where the story is told about the Lord Jesus attending the Wedding at the town of Cana in Galilee. There was bad news at that wedding. They ran out of wine. In those days, wine provided the spirit of joy that made the celebration a success. But there was bad news – the wine had run out.

Dear Bride & Groom, throughout your married life I want you to remember three things:

First, MARRIAGE HAS BAD NEWS:

Everything in human life runs out. The most passionate love, the most enduring patience, and the most sympathetic understanding – all these and every other human virtue are all subject to Murphy's Law ("If anything can go wrong, it will") and to the second law of

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

thermodynamics ("Everything tends to break down"). Like the wine at Cana of Galilee, everything human runs out. That's the bad news.

But, second, MARRIAGE HAS GOOD NEWS, too.

This is the second thing I want you to remember. At the wedding in Cana, when the wine ran out, the Lord Jesus was there. And He made more wine, the best wine, and provided a supply that never ran out.

Dear Bride & Groom, this is the good news from the Lord Jesus for you.

In the future, when your reserves of love and patience and understanding seem to be running out, remember, you can always go to the Lord Jesus and say:

"Lord, please fill me afresh with love, patience and understanding." And He surely will, He always will, and the supply He gives will be more than sufficient to last your whole lifetime together.

This is why, I believe, the Lord Jesus began His ministry with this first miracle at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. He wants to tell you as husband and wife – and to tell the whole world – that God is there at the very fountain of human life and human family and human society.

Finally, there's a sad truth you must never, never forget. Marriage is always a Triangle, for every couple without exception. Make the wrong person or thing as your third partner, and you guarantee your marriage will break down without fail. You may never separate or divorce, but you will be miserable all your life.

BEST NEWS TO REMEMBER

Here's the BEST NEWS to remember: The secret to lasting love and marriage lies with the Author of marriage, God Himself. He has the User's Manual for lasting love and marriage. Make God the Third Partner in the Triangle of your Marriage Relationship. Make God the apex of your marriage Triangle, as the Source, Guide and Goal for your whole life, relationship, family, work and everything else. Both of you, keep getting closer to God and to His heart and His Word and Will, and the closer you get to Him the closer He will draw you to each other.

With God as the Goal, the Apex of your marriage, you will make this tremendous, happy discovery: You will discover that though everything in human life runs out, you can always run to the Source and you will find that He will give you more and better and sweeter love and life than you ever dreamed of.

Make God your Goal and you will find He has the best goal for you. And He always saves the best for last!

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

10. Exchange of Vows

Pastor says: May I ask the principal sponsors to rise to witness the exchange of vows.

(Name of Groom), will you take (Name of Bride) to be your lawful wedded wife, to live together after God's holy command in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, to cleave only unto her, so long as you both live?

(Name of Bride), will you take (Name of Groom) to be your lawful wedded husband, to live together after God's holy command in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, to cleave only unto him, so long as you both live?

(NAME OF BRIDE AND GROOM), please repeat together after me:

Today we take each other / as spouse and lover, / as partner and friend for life, / to have and to hold from this day forward; / for better for worse; / for richer for poorer; / in sickness and in health; / to love and to cherish, / till death do us part, / according to God's holy command; and thereto we pledge / our love and faithfulness.

11. GIVING OF rings

To seal their vows, (NAME OF BRIDE AND GROOM) will give each other a ring. The gold represents pure love; the circle represents endless love.

Please repeat after me...

I give you this ring as a token of my love and faithfulness; and with this ring I thee wed. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

12. GIVING OF COINS (optional)

Pastor says: The giving of coins represent the promise of the groom to provide materially for the bride, and the promise of the bride to be happy with what the groom is able to afford.

13. GIVING OF BIBLE (optional)

Pastor says: The giving of Bible by the bride and groom to each means that they recognize God as their Lord and Partner in their marriage and that the Bible will be their Marriage Manual to guide them in how to make the marriage happy and successful and lasting.

14. BRIDE AND GROOM KNEELING (While they are kneeling, a SPECIAL SONG may be sung or the poem ONE TRUE LOVE will be read.)

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

15. PRAYER (Bride and Groom still kneeling.)

Pastor says: Let us pray.

O eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all mankind, Giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life; send your blessing upon these your servants, (NAME OF BRIDE AND GROOM), whom we bless in your name; that they, living faithfully together may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may they ever be bound together by their ONE TRUE LOVE as long as they both live. This is our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

16. Veil AND CORD

Pastor explains: The Bible tells us: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no one put asunder."

The veil placed around the shoulder of the man and over the head of the woman symbolizes their becoming one; the cord symbolizes the bond between them that God commands never to be broken.

Shall we now call for the veil and cord.

17. PRONOUNCEMENT OF UNION

Pastor says: By virtue of the authority vested in me as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by the laws of the state, I now pronounce (FULL NAMES OF GROOM AND BRIDE) as husband and wife. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

18. SIGNING OF MARRIAGE CONTRACT (Bride and Groom and Witnesses and the Pastor will sign the Contract.)

19. LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE

(After the veil and cord are removed, Bride and Groom will proceed to light the unity candle, the middle one.)

Pastor explains: The two side candles represent their individual lives now united as one (represented by the middle candle), and yet their individual personalities are not erased, but rather find greater fulfillment in their union.

20. Benediction

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

Pastor says: May we all rise and please join me in this prayer by raising your hand toward the BRIDE AND THE GROOM:

(NAME OF BRIDE AND GROOM), the Lord bless and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you and fill you with all spiritual blessings and grace throughout your journey of love together, and (as God wills) may you raise up godly children and leave a legacy that will bring glory to God and bring joy to many people. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

21. INTRODUCTION OF NEWLYWEDS

Pastor says: Dearly loved ones and friends, it is my honor to introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. (FULL NAME OF GROOM)

You may kiss the bride.

22. Recessional

23. Postlude

24. PICTURE TAKING (The newlyweds and the whole entourage will be requested to gather for pictures.)

APPENDIX D

FOOT-WASHING

On a very, very rare occasion, the bride and the groom may request that FOOT-WASHING will be included in their ceremony. Below is a suggested script, which emphasizes three truths from the lesson on ACCEPTANCE above:

1. INTRODUCTION

On the night when the Lord instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, He performed a powerful exemplary action... that of washing His disciples feet. The apostle John records this account of that incident in John 13:12-17:

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. ¹⁴ If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

Christian Bible teachers and commentators throughout Christian history have argued whether or not the Lord intended foot-washing should be a part of the Lord's Supper. A minority have said yes and include this practice in their Communion service. You may be interested to know that a minority-minority have argued about an additional detail, "Which foot, right or left?" Whether this is true or not, I heard that there are "left foot-washing churches" and "right foot-washing churches."

All that aside, I am very pleased to tell you that our bride and groom have requested to include the foot-washing ceremony in their wedding service today. I highly commend them for doing that. Let me tell you why.

First of all, they are obeying the Lord's clear command: "13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. 14 If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

And the Lord Jesus guaranteed, they will be blessed! Hallelujah!

2. MEANING OF FOOT-WASHING

Second, let's look at the three-fold meaning of this ritual.

- FORGIVENESS.
- ACCEPTANCE.
- GROWTH.

FORGIVENESS.

Mutual foot-washing means mutual forgiveness.

The feet represent our daily life in this world. The feet get dusty as we walk the path of daily life. Mutual foot-washing means that the husband and the wife must regularly humble themselves before each other and ask for and give each other forgiveness. No bride or groom is perfect; everybody makes mistakes and commits sins. The husband and wife must first ask God's forgiveness and then grant each other forgiveness. They must try to do this, by God's grace, before they go to sleep at night. This is part of the meaning of Ephesians 4:26, 27: 26 "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil."

After they have reconciled with each other, they can then honestly pray the Lord's Prayer together before they go to sleep. Of course, forgiveness means forget what you have

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

already forgiven, like God said, “I will forgive your sins, and remember your sins no more.”

ACCEPTANCE & GROWTH.

Mutual foot-washing means mutual acceptance and commitment to help each other to grow.

You heard the saying, “Every hero has feet of clay.” Every beautiful bride has an ugly side; every strong groom has a weak spot. Mutual foot-washing reminds the husband and the wife that both of them are a mixture of strengths and weaknesses and they re-commit themselves continually to accept each other unconditionally. But not in a consenting or compromising way.

3. PRAYER BEFORE FOOT-WASHING

Here’s a prayer that husband and wife must pray together regularly. Let me read the prayer first, and please listen to the prayer carefully. After the reading, I will let you pray after me.

I believe with all my heart that you are God’s special gift to me. Therefore, I accept you and love you as Christ accepts and loves both us – totally, unconditionally, and eternally. I acknowledge that there will be times when we make mistakes, and even fall into sin. In those times of failure, by God’s grace, I will humble myself and ask your forgiveness and I will also grant you forgiveness. And together we pray: Lord, give us the courage to change the things that can be changed; the grace to accept the things that cannot be changed; and the wisdom to know the difference, in order for us to celebrate our differences, and become truly one in Christ’s love.

In Christ’s precious name we pray. Amen.

COUPLE PRAY TOGETHER

And so, if the Bride and Groom are ready, please repeat after me this prayer, and then we will do the foot-washing.

I believe with all my heart that you are God’s special gift to me.

Therefore, I accept you and love you as Christ accepts and loves both us

– totally, unconditionally, and eternally.

I acknowledge that there will be times when we make mistakes, and even fall into sin.

In those times of failure, by God’s grace, I will humble myself and ask your forgiveness

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

and I will also grant you forgiveness.

And together we pray:

Lord, give us the courage to change the things that can be changed;

the grace to accept the things that cannot be changed;

and the wisdom to know the difference,

in order for us to celebrate our differences,

and become truly one in Christ's love.

In Christ's precious name we pray. Amen.

4. PERFORMING THE FOOT-WASHING CEREMONY

5. CLOSING PRAYER & BENEDICTION

After the foot-washing, the minister prays:

Lord Jesus, the Bride and the Groom have obeyed Your command, and they have made a commitment to love and accept each other unconditionally, to forgive each other in times of failure, and to help each other to grow to be more and more like You. Now, Lord Jesus, only You can help them fulfill their commitment. Pour out upon them Your super-abounding grace that will sustain them in their journey through life together. In Your mighty name we pray, amen.

APPENDIX E

ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE

MARRIAGE -- GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS.

NOTE: The following is the wedding message above adapted for anniversary

Our text comes from John chapter 2, where the story is told about the Lord Jesus attending the Wedding at the town of Cana in Galilee. There was bad news at that wedding. They ran out of wine. In those days, wine provided the spirit of joy that made the celebration a success. But there was bad news – the wine had run out.

[Husband & Wife's names], on this your ____th anniversary I thank God and congratulate you for your love and faithfulness toward each other that brought you this far. But I wish to refresh you about three things, which I hope and pray will make your next 30 years, Lord-willing, sweeter as the years go by:

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

First, MARRIAGE HAS BAD NEWS:

Everything in human life runs out. The most passionate love, the most enduring patience, and the most sympathetic understanding – all these and every other human virtue are all subject to Murphy's Law ("If anything can go wrong, it will") and to the second law of thermodynamics ("Everything tends to break down"). Like the wine at Cana of Galilee, everything human runs out. That's the bad news.

But, second, MARRIAGE HAS GOOD NEWS, too.

This is the second thing I want you to remember. At the wedding in Cana, when the wine ran out, the Lord Jesus was there. And He made more wine, the best wine, and provided a supply that never ran out.

[Husband & Wife's names], this is the good news from the Lord Jesus for you. In the coming years, when mid-life crisis might suddenly hit you, when your reserves of love and patience and understanding seem to be running out, remember, you can always go to the Lord Jesus and say:

"Lord, please fill me afresh with love, patience and understanding." And He surely will, He always will. And the supply He gives will be more than sufficient to help you navigate the turbulent waters as you sail toward the final harbor.

By the way, why do you think the Lord Jesus began His ministry with this first miracle at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. He wants to tell you as husband and wife – and to tell the whole world – that God is there at the very fountain of human life and human family and human society. He was there when you first tied the knot. He was with you these past 30 years. He will remain with you to the end.

However, no matter how faithful you may believe you are toward each other, for every couple without exception there's a sad truth you must never, never forget. Marriage is always a Triangle. There's always the temptation to make the wrong person or thing as your third partner. And with the wrong third person, I guarantee you, no matter how successful your first years have been, if you allow a wrong third partner in, your marriage will break down without fail. You may never separate or divorce, but you will be miserable all your life.

The final and BEST NEWS TO REMEMBER

Here's the BEST NEWS to remember:

The secret to lasting love and marriage is to make as your Third Partner the Author of marriage, God Himself. He has the User's Manual for lasting love and marriage. Make God the Third Partner in the Triangle of your Marriage Relationship. Make God the apex of your marriage Triangle, as the Source, Guide and Goal for your whole life,

F.A.C.T.S. of LIFELONG LOVE & MARRIAGE

relationship, family, work and everything else. Both of you, as you get closer to God and to His heart and His Word and Will, the closer you get to Him the closer He will draw you to each other. Together, read the Bible and pray everyday. Keep loving God first and second, keep sharing God's love with others, beginning with your family and then expanding to your circles of influence.

With God as the Goal, the Apex of your marriage, you will make this tremendous, happy discovery: You will discover that though everything in human life runs out, you can always run to the Source and you will find that He will give you more and better and sweeter love and life than you ever dreamed of.

[Husband & Wife's names], make God your Goal and you will find He has the best goal for you.

Just as the Lord Jesus made wine that was much better than the previous wine which was served, be assured God will save for you the best for last!