

Series: Fireproof Your Relationships
Title: Love for a Lifetime
Text: Matthew 19:3-6
Format: *This message was presented in a forum format where two couples, the Lead pastor and his spouse, and the Pastor of Worship and her husband presented this topic in a public discussion format. Each person shared personal reflections, insights, and marital experiences which illustrated and reinforced the teaching points in this message. We allocated thirty minutes for this presentation. Some of the personal antidotes are not included in this manuscript.*

Good morning friends! We're delighted that you have chosen to come and learn more about fireproofing your relationships. Some of us are discovering ways to fireproof our most important relationship of all: our marriage. Others, who are single, are learning some ways to safeguard their relationships. Today, we will be discussing how love can last a lifetime. I trust that God will reveal something that will make a huge difference in any marriage or in any relationship.

Today, Pastor Bonita and I are delighted to have our spouses join us in talking about enduring love. Pastor Bonita, how long have you and Kevin been married years? What was your special day like? Where were you married?

Twenty-three years ago, Melinda and I were married in Salem, Indiana.

Last line of wedding vows: "As long as we both shall live."

(8:00 & 10:30) Jesus also refers to God's desires for enduring relationships. I invite you to open your Bible to Matthew 19: 3 where we find him responding to a question with a hidden agenda.

- Facilitator sets hopes for audience and introduces video clip (9:15)
Learn some skills that will help you navigate through the seasons of a relationship. We also invite you to take notes so that you can refer to them in the future.

In the movie, *Fireproof*, Caleb and Catherine are starting down the road to divorce. Caleb explains to his friend, Michael that the marriage is probably through. To which Michael responds, *“I’ve seen you run into a burning building to save people you don’t even know, but you’re going to let your own marriage burn to the ground.”* Watch this clip with me. (Play the Session Three clip from your *Fireproof Your Marriage DVD*. Clip’s length = 2:33. SHOW CLIP.)

I invite you to FIND A BIBLE AND TURN TO MATTHEW 19:3. *“One time Jesus was asked about marriage. Here’s what happened. “Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”* Matthew 19:3-6.

“Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” God desires that married relationships last a life time, through all the seasons of life.

ALL MARRIAGES GO THROUGH SEASONS. That's just how life works. Like the rotation of the earth, they move through seasons that are predictable.

I imagine that each of us have lived through various seasons of our marriages. Bonita and Kevin, what was it like for the first year of your marriage?

For most Americans, this romantic stage lasts right up to somewhere between the "I now pronounce you man and wife," and the first time he leaves the toilet seat up or the first time she says, "I was too tired to cook anything so I bought you a TV dinner."

At this point, one or both parties look in the mirror and quietly say, "I guess the honeymoon is over."

And then you know what you're left with? **REALITY.** (Chris & Melinda)
That's the second season of a marriage. **Reality** is what sets in when romance wears off.

Suddenly, one or both parties realizes that the object of their pursuit, the person of their dreams, the individual they feared they could never attain... is now someone they can never get rid of.

That leaves two who were once *in love* to discover how *to choose to love for a lifetime*. *Choosing to love* is what reality is all about. When choose to make several adjustments: routine of work, sleep, social activities, and frequency and form of sexual relations, family holiday rituals They must learn the subtleties of non-verbal behaviors and communication....desire to change each other.

Reality clarifies what romance conceals. Kevin and Bonita what kind of feelings rose to the surface when you “reality” hit you in the face?

It’s called the **season of REBUILDING**. (Chris & Melinda)

If that kind of love doesn’t get practiced, then the marriage never makes it through all the seasons. It either gets stuck in a perpetual wintertime of resentment, or it dies and is buried in a ceremony we call, “Divorce.”

In conversations with other couples I have discovered that all marriages have romance, reality, and resentment on their calendars. Some get to experience the springtime of rebuilding.

During this season of marriage both members of the marriage learn a few essential skills. Kevin and Bonita what was one skill that you learned that help you rebuild your marriage?

Bonita and Kevin: We REMEMBERED THAT WE'RE DIFFERENT,
AND ADAPTED ACCORDINGLY.

differences in communication:

(1) MEN TALK IN GENERALITIES; WOMEN TALK IN SPECIFICS.

(2) MEN TEND TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THEIR THOUGHTS FIRST
AND THEN THEIR FEELINGS; WOMEN TEND TO BE IN TOUCH WITH
THEIR FEELINGS FIRST AND THEN THEIR THOUGHTS.

(3) MEN AND WOMEN HAVE VERY DIFFERENT IDEAS ON HOW
EVENINGS SHOULD BE SPENT.

Chris & Melinda: ASKING AND GRANTING FORGIVENESS.

It doesn't take any skill to say the words, "I'm sorry, or please forgive me."

Love means you always have to say, "I'm sorry."

The Bible says: *BE KIND AND COMPASSIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER,
FORGIVING EACH OTHER, JUST AS IN CHRIST, GOD FORGIVE YOU.*

Ephesians 4:32

Kevin and Bonita, It seems to me that there may be more to simply saying,
"I'm sorry." What have you learned that helps move you beyond confession and
forgiveness?

DECIDE TO LOVE AND KEEP ON LOVING.

Friends, we've learned that marriages go through seasons. We also believe that all relationships go through similar seasons as well. Most relationships experience healthy feelings of warmth, tenderness, and compassion. Then reality settles in and we begin to realize that our friend or co-worker, teacher or coach, neighbor is not what we expected or experienced. We begin to see how annoying, frustrating, and disappointing their behavior and attitudes can be. Sometimes we resent them. This resentment is sometimes expressed, sometimes it just simmers below the surface until an eruption of emotion that comes out of nowhere, leaving a path of destruction. Like in a marriage, the relationship then moves to a fork in the road. A decision is made. Rebuild or let it die. Like in marriage, if we work the rebuilding stage sincerely, we can come back around to deeply caring for the other person. It will be different than before, but it will be better than what it used to be. Marriages and relationships pass from one season to another to another, over and over again. – If we'll master the skills of communication, forgiveness, and deciding to work through our differences. If we choose to do the hard work, in the end, we will say, "We lived *mostly* happily ever after." And others will say, "Those two have a really good marriage. They are really good friends."

Last week we had a love dare challenge. How many of you chose to give it a try? Great, for you and for the ones you love. (Bonita) Here is your LOVE

DARE CHALLENGE for this week: COUPLES: Pray with your partner and then renew your marriage vows. Spend a few minutes praying together about your marriage, thanking God for qualities in your mate, confessing any disruptive attitudes and habits, forgiving hurts and disappointments, and affirming your love toward your spouse. For your convenience we have the traditional printed vows for you to renew.

“I, _____, take you _____ to be my wife/husband. 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 cherish as long as we both shall live.”

(Chris) SINGLES: PICK OUT A SKILL TO WORK ON: AFFIRMING DIFFERENCES IN MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX. FORGIVING
(We’ll have a chance to go deeper with this in two weeks.) **DECIDING TO LOVE AND KEEP ON LOVING A CLOSE FRIEND.**

Will you take this challenge?

(Chris) Let’s pray. (Pray for marriages and all relationships in each of the seasons, for courage to rebuild, character to keep loving, courage to forgive, and creativity in honoring the differences between men and women.)