

Lover Advice – 08.30.09

Intro - Today I'd like to talk a little about "L.O.V.E.R. Advice." We've all heard that half of all marriages end in divorce. (40% of first marriages.) Even those remaining in marriage are not necessarily "happily married." British firm Seddons surveyed 2000 married couples and found out that:

- 59% of married women would leave if they could find financial security
- 51% of married men described their marriage as "loveless."
- 10% wished they had married someone else.
- 37% said they stayed together because of the children.
- 35% said their marriages had turned stale.

Did you know that God cares about marriage? Of course you do! But did you also know that God cares about lovers? Specifically He cares a GREAT deal about lovers in marriage. The last thing in the world He wants is for you to be in a marriage for financial security, or for the children, or for your relationship to be loveless or stale!

In fact He cares so much about this that He included a Lover's "Ode to Love" in the Bible. We call it Song of Solomon or Song of Songs. Sadly it's preached out of very little, which is quite sad. This book talks about love, and not just in the theory or esoteric sense... it talks about the hot, flaming, physical and emotional bonds of love between a man and a woman!

This morning we have just such a passage included in our Lectionary! Before I read it, let me share a word for those who are not in "lover" status. a) pay attention because you may be some day / b) even if you're not, you probably know someone who could benefit from this talk.

READ Song of Solomon 2:8-13

This is poetry, a very small portion much longer piece - very expressive of the physical attraction of a man and woman for one another. There are many similes - this is "like" that. Poetry is one of those things that you can read and dwell on. As a married man or woman, you can let your mind wander and remember when you once thought that way about your lover. It's good because, along the way, you can also wonder, "Why can't I feel this way again?" God gave us SoS for a reason! It really is an S.O.S. - a "help" for the stale relationship. Let's look at just six verse this morning and seek what we can discover about being a good LOVER

L **LISTEN** _____ **to Your Lover.**

"Listen, My lover!" Song of Solomon 2:8a NIV

It really is significant that this section begins with the voice of the beloved. So much of the poem is based on sight - seeing the physical attributes of the other. But here, the lover is listening for her beloved. So much of a good relationship is built on good listening! Many of the Proverbs - pearls of wisdom - speak about the value of good listening. If you want to live well, you'll learn to listen!

"Listen to good advice if you want to live well." Proverbs 15:31 The Message

In fact, another proverb puts it even more bluntly. Only stupid people think they are right all the time.

**“Stupid people always think they are right. Wise people listen to advice.”
Proverbs 12:15 GNT**

When we are in that first, physical attraction stage of a love relationship, we can't wait to hear the voice of our lover. When we were teenagers we would spend hours listening to each other on the telephone. Then after a few years of marriage, it's easy to lose that desire for the other's words. But the wise husband and the wise wife will learn to love and listen to the advise of the lover. No one knows you better. No one is looking out more for your interests. But real listening is more than hearing. It is concentrated effort to know what the other thinks. Listening creates space in the conversation and in our brain to make room for another point of view. Too often we are only interested in spouting off our own views...

**“Spouting off before listening to all the facts is both shameful and foolish.”
Proverbs 18:13 NLT**

The Bible tells us that “spouting off” is both shameful and foolish... shameful because it's childish - we wouldn't put up with such behavior in our five year old child - and foolish because I learn absolutely nothing by spouting off. I already know what I think. I need to know what you think! There is a beautiful merging together when two people who love each other really listen to one another, really SUBMIT themselves to each other (Eph. 5:21).

O **OVERSTATE** **Your Love.**

**“Look! Here he comes,
leaping across the mountains,
bounding over the hills.**

**My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Look! There he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattice.”**

Song of Solomon 2:8b-9 NIV

It is absolutely OK to overstate your love, to exaggerate your love for your lover. Be corny. Be foolish in your love. Let your words drip with honey when it comes to those private conversations with your lover. You are fighting a battle of entropy. It is absolutely NOT alright to have the attitude that “I told you before I love you and if I change my mind I'll let you know.” No, you must remind your lover and remind yourself all the time of your love.

Have I told you today just how much I love you? At least once a day and even more often. Learn love language and “say” your love in every way imaginable. Not only state it with #1 Words of Affirmation, but also show it with #2 Gifts and #3 Acts of Service and #4 Physical touch. Everyone enjoys all the love languages at one point or another, but some people appreciate some of these love languages more than another. Your lover may speak a different love language than you. So become a student of your lover. Find how many ways you can tell your lover how much you love them.

Let's spend a little bit of time focusing on the 5th - Quality Time.

We hear only the parts we want to hear. A little boy was attending his first wedding. After the service, his cousin asked him, "How many women can a man marry?" "16" the boy responded. His cousin was amazed that he knew the answer so quickly. "How do you know that?" "Easy," the little boy said, "all you have to do is add it up, like the preacher said: 4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, 4 poorer."

"On a good day, enjoy yourself; On a bad day, examine your conscience. God arranges for both kinds of days so that we won't take anything for granted."
Ecclesiastes 7:14 The Message

We take and make a loving relationship in all kinds of days. We don't take it for granted.

R **RENEW** Your Affections.

**"Flowers appear on the earth;
the season of singing has come,
the cooling of doves
is heard in our land.**

**The fig tree forms its early fruit;
the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.
Arise, come my darling;
my beautiful one, come with me."**
Song of Solomon 2:12-13 NIV

As lovers, do we recognize that there is a season to our love? Even when times are tough, our love doesn't have to be stale. Just like the spring follows the winter and the flowers appear and the fruit forms and the vines blossom, our love can be (and should be) renewed. **The Bible reminds us that...**

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven."
Ecclesiastes 3:1 NLT

Go back and underline the word "activity." Renewal takes activity, it takes effort, a little work. When we first fall in love our actions follow our feelings. But this is only baby love. You want a mature, grown up love and for that it works exactly the opposite - your feelings follow your actions. You must ACT to renew your affections.

Concluding Story of woman divorcing man. Wanted to hurt him.

Lawyer said he could sue for her, but if she really wanted to hurt husband she should go back and PRETEND she really loved him. Do everything for him. Make favorite meals. Write him love poetry. Go with him to his football games. Show him physical affection. Buy him personal presents. And then, just when he is completely and totally heads over heels with you, THEN drop the divorce papers. Three months later she comes back and drops divorce, because she had fallen in love again with her husband and he with her. The feeling of affection follows the actions of affection!

ASK: What are you doing to be the LOVER in your life? Don't wait on someone else to take action first. You be the LOVER to someone else! Who could use a listening ear? Who needs to hear you overstate your love? Who could you value some time with? Who is going through tough time and needs some love? Whose love needs renewed?

PRAY AND COMMUNION.