

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**Making Love Last a Lifetime (part 4)**  
***I'd Do It All Over Again!***  
**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 \* I Corinthians 13:1-8a**  
**February 16 & 17, 2013**  
**Pastor Rick Fossum**

This is the last in our series we're calling *Making Love Last a Lifetime*. We hope it's been helpful to you . . . not only to you married folks, but also to you who are single, widowed or divorced. It's always good to learn about and understand other people especially other people of the opposite sex.

This series has been difficult for both Ray and me. It's been a struggle as we've tried to affirm and celebrate those of you who are married on the one hand while being sensitive to those of you who are not married on the other hand.

We know that we live in an imperfect world. Sometimes, loved ones die too soon. Sometimes, marriages aren't made in heaven. Sometimes, dreams get broken.

Yet, we think it's appropriate, from time to time, to celebrate and re-affirm certain promises we make such as our Baptismal promises, our church membership promises and our wedding promises.

And this is our intention for this service. It's to reaffirm and celebrate marriage. Whether you've been married for one week or fifty years, you deserve the support of your church.

Today, I'm asking the rest you to help celebrate these marriages. Please, pray for our married folks. Pray that God will bless them and help make their relationships flourish and grow stronger.

Being married isn't an exact science. I don't know about you, but I was about as ill-prepared to be a husband as I was to be a father when we had our first child. I mean, how do you prepare someone to be a husband? Or, a wife? How do you have a wedding one day and start married life the next?

I'm going to suggest two principles that I believe are important. These are two principles that I think are keys to a successful marriage.

Over the years, I've learned that being married is like moving into a new or different house. When you first move into the house, everything looks wonderful. The

plumbing, the wiring, the roof, the carpets . . . it's all OK.

But then, once you've moved in, you start noticing things. The faucet leaks! There's a big crack in the driveway! There's not enough room in the closets! The carpet smells like a dog or cat!

Some of us ignore these things hoping they get better on their own. But they don't get better, do they? A leaky faucet still leaks. The closets are still too small. The carpets still smell. We need to fix these things because they don't get fixed on their own.

This is the first principle. It takes work to be married. The minute you think your marriage will fix itself; the minute you think your marriage will flourish and grow stronger without any effort on your part is the minute your marriage starts sliding downhill. It takes work from both the husband and the wife.

Someone once said, "*Success in marriage isn't simply finding the right mate, but it's also being the right mate.*"

One person alone can't build or fix a marriage. It takes two. It always takes two.

I Corinthians thirteen is commonly called '*The Love Chapter.*' This passage is used in many weddings today. Did you know that Paul didn't write this passage for weddings? He wrote it for the church. This is how he wanted church people to love each other. Yet, it's also perfect for weddings.

For Paul, love was more than just a feeling that happens between two people. Love, for Paul, was something that grows and grows. It becomes stronger as your years together become longer. In other words, the love two people have for each other at the beginning of their married life is just a fraction of the kind of love they can have for each other at the end. Love grows and grows and grows.

But, it takes work. Each person in a marriage has to be willing to do what it takes to build a strong and successful marriage. Forgiving each other, supporting each other, encouraging each other, takes work from both partners.

The second and final principle is this: successful marriages happen when two people share a common purpose or meaning or goal.

Couples need to be on the same page. Unfortunately, many couples invest their time and energy in things that don't last or in things that are always changing. They want to become wealthy or buy a big house or build a career, or raise children. The trouble with these goals is this: They don't last. The kids grow up and move. Wealth

can never satisfy anyone. You will always want a little more. And good careers don't always stay good.

So, what is a common purpose or goal for two people who are married? As Christians, it's our faith in Jesus Christ. When our faith becomes the common goal. When growing our faith together is our purpose. When serving God is important to both partners our love for each other also grows. As we love Christ . . . as our faith in Christ grows, it shows up in how we love each other. It's just that simple.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, there's a popular passage, that's also used in weddings, that puts it this way:

**Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

-Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NRSV)

Every marriage is like a piece of rope with two strands. There's the husband strand and the wife strand. The two strands are stronger than one when it comes to meeting the challenges of this world. But, by adding a God strand, making it three strands, you make your marriage even stronger.

These are two principles every married couple needs to understand. First, marriage takes work. It takes work to love, understand, forgive, support, and encourage each other. Second, our faith in Jesus Christ is the third strand; it's the common goal that makes the marriage relationship even stronger.

And that's why I think this service today is important. It doesn't matter whether you've been married for a week or fifty years. It doesn't matter what kind of shape your marriage is in right now. This service is for you. This is your chance to both remember and re-affirm your wedding promises. This is your chance to once again, stand before God and say to your husband or wife, **"Yes, I'd do it all over again."**

So, while Julie is playing the wedding music, I invite those of you who are married to walk down the aisle. I invite you to come forward in the presence of your church family and in the presence of God. I invite you to come forward and re-affirm your wedding promises to each other.

I know your knees are shaking and your heart is beating faster than it should, but don't let that stop you. Take your partner's hand and make your way up front. There

will be plenty of room.

Again, I ask the rest of you to remain sitting down and celebrate these marriages. Please, pray for them. Ask God to bless them in ways that only God can do. I ask you to be their witnesses as they re-affirm their wedding promises.

Married folks, please, come forward.