

Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

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No Greater Love

Next week, my wife, Cathy and I, will celebrate our 27th wedding anniversary. I love her more now than the day in '82 when she walked down the aisle and said, "I do." (She was a beautiful bride, bold and confident. When it was my turn to say the vows, I blubbered and squeaked like Mickey Mouse – but she knew what I meant anyway.)

It's hard to imagine that so many years have zoomed by. It seems like just yesterday that I was courting her – dating her – writing little love notes with x's and o's at the end, and saying goofy little things like "yours 'til the ocean wears rubber pants to keep it's bottom dry."

We've done a lot of living since then. We've had our share of joys. We've had our share of tears. We've had our share of heartaches through the years – but now, our love is sweeter still.

A while back, Cathy made an astute observation: "You can't really love somebody until you've been through something with them. Before that point, you're just acquaintances." You know, she is right on the money with that one. Maybe that's why I love her so much – because we've been through so many things together.

I'm learning the true meanings of love. I say "meanings" rather than "meaning" because there are many facets to it. Just when I think I understand what it is to love, I realize I am barely scratching the surface. One can never plumb the depths of love because it is eternal.

The word "intimacy" literally means "profoundly interior." Relational understanding, like gold and silver, is discovered deep underground. It comes from the core of our being. Of course, there is the exterior dimension as well. A "deep down" love is revealed by our actions for and towards each other. A loving intent without a loving follow-through isn't worth much. One reason so many couples lack satisfying interactions with each other is because they have not paused to reflect enough on the deeper meanings of their relationship.

Maybe it would be good for couples to stop and ask these questions: What is our story? What are the themes of our relationship? Have we looked beyond the surface issues to the deeper substance? When are we most fully alive and free? What is our delight and desire? How can we turn duties into delights?

Marriage takes work. It requires much patience. If it wasn't hard it wouldn't require patience! Marriage might be made in heaven – but it has to be worked out here on this earth. Maybe that's why it's for a lifetime – because that's just about how long it takes for people to finally understand. Before then, we should probably put "Under Construction" signs in front of our homes. The romance of love is splendid. It's a beautiful gift from God. The warm friendship of love is sweet, and there is nothing that compares with comfortable familiarity. The choice to love sacrificially is the most sublime. It is love in the highest form.

I am reminded of these words from the poet, Rainer Marie Rilke, "Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect, border and greet each other."

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13