

The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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Keeping Marriage Alive in the Golden Years

As we contemplate our fiftieth wedding anniversary, we're wondering what married life is going to be like in the days ahead. Recently, we passed by a dilapidated old house that was our first home and recalled what it was like to live there half a century ago. We decided against reenacting the "groom-carrying-the-bride-across-the-threshold" tradition. When we went through that experience fifty year ago, we had little awareness of the alternating experiences of heartache and happiness, joy and sorrow, disappointment and elation that would characterize our experience over the next fifty years.

Now we face the question, "What next?" We're amazed at how much of the marriage literature follows the seasons of marriage up to the empty nest and stops. Now we've got a son and daughter-in-law who are facing an empty nest. What happens after that? - the nursing home? two combatants living in the same

house because they've got no place else to go? Or will it be constant euphoria until one of us slips peacefully into a dreamless sleep?

Clearly the death part is out there, and we're always aware of it. But what do we do with our marriage between now and then? We're not ready to spend our days watching soap operas on television and playing checkers with the senior citizens. Nor do we want to refer to our marriage in the past tense. We see new challenges, new opportunities, and yes we know that we are likely to face some new disappointments in the years to come. But it's not a time to be dreaded, and it's not a time to fantasize about how good things used to be.

According to the National Council on Aging, "There are 31 million Americans who are 60 or over, and 29 million of them are healthy, busy, functioning citizens." We think we belong in that category. We have health issues, but we choose not to dwell on them. Certainly, we have to make some accommodation to the process of aging. While we are comfortable using a computer, it seems to work better for us, if we use 14-point type when we write. We make substantial contributions to the pharmaceu-

tical industry that we didn't make twenty years ago.

We know there's a generation gap, and we're not going to start dressing like teenagers, but you won't see Ann in high button shoes, and you won't see Norman in red plaid shirt with a solid yellow tie. Still there are some areas, where we won't even try to catch up. We either can't understand or refuse to comprehend twittering, lol (shows up as a misspelled word on our computer), buying a truckload of products to makes one hair look as if he or she just got out bed, Letterman's popularity, and body piercing. We won't be making visits to the tattoo parlor.

Back in 1981, Henry Fonda and Katherine Hepburn starred in the movie, *On Golden Pond*. Ironically, the Fonda character was named Norman. We saw the movie and wondered if we would be like the fictional characters in the movie. We're close to the edge of being at the same point in life as the two fossilized relics in the film. Are we like them? Yes and no. We don't spend our summers in a New England lake cottage. Ann doesn't have all that much opportunity to pick berries in the woods and listen to loons. But we are relatively active, and we have health

concerns. Neither of us is sure about how soon we're going to run out of birthdays. We'd like to think that we're a little less cranky than the Henry Fonda and Katherine Hepburn characters, although we probably get on each other's nerves when we employ various defense mechanisms as a strategy to cover up our gradual slide down the slippery slope to infirmity. Check out the DVD at your local video store, and if you're still trying to watch movies on VHS, don't you think it's time you upgraded?

On Golden Pond was such a powerful movie because it depicted two people in the autumn years of their life who refused to give up because of their infirmities. As far as we're concerned our marriage is still in a growth mode, and we're not ready to retreat from living. Although we've learned quite a lot about each other in fifty years, we're still exploring and developing our relationship. We're passionate about many things - sports, politics, technology, learning, and most of all our faith. We don't long for the way things used to be. We're trying to make life better in the days that are ahead. Here's the main point. Despite many trials and difficulties we've stayed married these fifty years because we have always believed the words of Jesus. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6 KJV)

—Norman and Ann Bales



Adorable Children

We are blessed to have quite a few young children in our congregation. Little boys and little girls, with unexpected observations, expressive faces, and humorous behaviors, make sure there is not a dull moment when they are around. Inspired writers use terms like inheritance" (Prov. 13:22) and "gift" (Psa. 127:3) to impress us with their value. Jesus demands imitation of them (Mat. 18:3). Parents get so proud of their children, displaying their cuteness in pictures on social media. While so many kids reflect the good looks of their parents, it's not looks that most make children adorable. What makes children adorable?

- Obedience to parents
- The practice of good manners, courtesy and respect for others
- A pleasant demeanor and general good mood
- Avoiding the pattern or habit of tantrums and ill-temper
- The ability to speak and make eye contact when spoken to
- Laughter that reflects a genuine joy of living
- Engagement and interest in worship and Bible class
- Serving especially the elderly -visiting them, making cards or little presents for them
- Speaking respectfully to adults

The qualities above reflect an attractiveness of godly parenting and an appreciation for biblical principles of conduct that will make them adorable adults one day. It reflects the "others before self" mentality Christ wants to see in God's children (Phil. 2:1-4). It reflects the humility and service that causes greatness in His Kingdom (Mat. 20:25-28). It reflects the thoughtful consideration that ought to typify Christians (Col. 3:12; Rom. 15:1ff). It reflects the spiritual mindset necessary to be winsome, attractive ambassadors for Him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20; Rom. 12:17ff; etc.). Sometimes, much greater emphasis is given to the style of their clothes than to the strength of their character. We cannot put fashion before faith, image over integrity, or sophistication above spirituality.



I want to thank so many parents who get this ideal and are striving toward it. No one's children are perfect, just like none of their parents (or critical adults) are. But, parents who are trying to instill quality inner qualities in their children deserve highest honor! Keep rearing adorable children. You'll have a lifetime to be grateful that you did.

—Neal Pollard.