

In for the Long Haul

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Tomorrow, my wife and I will celebrate our twenty-seventh wedding anniversary. Frankly, this surprises a lot of people. They aren't surprised necessarily because Sandra has stayed with me that long, although, she certainly deserves an award for that. They are amazed because far too few couples stay together that long. It has become very common for couples to divorce after just a few years. It seems that for a couple to be approaching three decades together is becoming a rarity.

I think the primary reason more marriages don't last as long as they used to is because of the attitudes of the people going into marriage. When I do premarital counseling, I used to ask the couple, "Under what conditions would you consider a divorce?" In other words, how bad does a relationship have to be before you decide to call it off? I was surprised at the long lists that these couples would give me.

When my wife and I married, we both entered into the relationship that this was "for better or worse, till death do us part." I'm glad no one told my wife just how much worse it could actually get. If she had known then what she knows now, she might never have married me. But the reality is, she didn't know, but was willing to commit anyway. After we each committed ourselves, we knew there was no turning back.

The reason this is so important is that it gives each of us more incentive to work things out when a problem comes. We are each willing to negotiate and compromise for the sake of maintaining a happy relationship. I heard someone jokingly say that they had never considered divorce; murder, yes, but never divorce. While it is made in jest, it conveys the idea that if divorce is not an option, and certainly murder isn't, then we have to do something to make sure that we resolve the issue at hand.

Another strength taking a long-term view of the marriage has is that it allows each of us to function with the assurance that the other will always be there. There is a wonderful sense of security knowing that the other person is willing to overlook faults or flaws in the other and that we are each willing to forgive and go on to make our relationship stronger. Certainly, we could do things to weaken the marriage, but since we are committed to the relationship and to each other, we make it a point to avoid those harmful acts. One those rare occasions that one person does something harmful, it is easier to forgive knowing that this is either out of character for the other or it is simply a mistake that is not likely to be repeated.

I suppose the marriage is what best mirrors what our relationship with God is supposed to be like. We are committed to our relationship with Him and we try to live our lives in a manner that does not harm it. We always know that God will be there for us and we can live in the assurance that He loves us and forgives us. He is committed to a long-term relationship with us. After all, He intends for us to remain together for eternity. Our relationship with God is truly a "marriage made in heaven." For Sandra and me, God has blessed us with a marriage made on earth, but blessed by heaven.

Take a long-term view of your relationships. Be loving. Be forgiving. Above all, hang in there for each other.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in church on Sunday.

