

The Four Seasons of a Flourishing Marriage

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It's All About Heart—At the center of the universe is a relationship of love.

Longings of the Heart

Am I beautiful? Will you cherish me?

Am I adequate? Will you respect me?

Hunger and Thirst: Isaiah 55:1, John 6:35, Revelation 22:17

Security

Having a deep confidence that I am unconditionally and permanently loved and accepted just as I am, by a love that is freely given, regardless of my performance. I am loved by a love I can always trust because I know it is always looking out for my good.

Significance

Being confident that I have value and worth and that I have an important life-purpose to fulfill that involves my relationships and work. I know I am competent to make an impact that deeply matters, the results of which will last forever.

The Season of Enchantment

Song of Songs 1:2-4, 15

Turn and Talk

Share something that attracted you to your spouse during your enchantment season such as...

A character quality

A personality trait

Something they did or said that answered your question—Will you cherish me? Will you respect me?

Attitude: All I can see is what's good about you.

Characterized by: Optimism and Blindness

The Season of Disillusionment

Song of Songs 5:2-6

Attitude: All I can see is what's bad about you.

Characterized by: Pessimism and Pride

Being in love is a good thing, but it is not the best thing. It is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling. Now no feeling can be relied on to last in its full intensity, or even to last at all. Knowledge can last...but feelings come and go. And in fact, whatever people say the state of 'being in love' usually does not last. If the old fairy-tale ending, 'They lived happily ever after' is taken

to mean 'They felt for the next fifty years exactly as they felt the day before they were married,' then it says what probably never was nor ever would be true, and would be highly undesirable if it were. Who could bear to live in that excitement for even five years? What would become of your work, your appetite, your sleep, your friendships? But, of course, ceasing to be 'in love' need not mean ceasing to love. Love in this second sense — love as distinct from 'being in love' — is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by (in Christian marriages) the grace which both partners ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other...They can retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be 'in love' with someone else. 'Being in love' first moved them to promise fidelity: this quieter love enables them to keep the promise. it is on this love that the engine of marriage is run: being in love was the explosion that started it." — C.S. Lewis

The Season of Growth

Song of Songs 6:3, 8:5

Attitude: I'm beginning to see how I contribute to the struggles in my marriage.

Characterized by: Humility and Self-Discovery

Truth or Lies? Telling Our Stories (see handout)

The Season of Joy

Song of Songs 8:6-7

Attitude: I'm growing in the freedom of loving my spouse even when he/she disappoints me because I know my needs are met in Christ.

Characterized by: Depth of character and Other-centeredness

Make This a Reality

1. Continuously choosing to believe that my needs are met in Christ (Cultivate John 15 in your daily life).
2. Continuously committing to the goal of ministry to my spouse.
3. Gaining and maintaining a substantial awareness of my spouse's desires (see your spouse's answers to "What We Desire to Experience in Marriage and share your stories—Truth or Lies? handout)..
4. Living with the conviction that you are God's chosen person to touch those desires in your spouse.

Turn and Talk

As you grow older together what would you want to most characterize your relationship?

What is one step you will take to make that a reality?



