



## Take It Home

*Applying the Preached Word  
Marriage and the Mercy of God  
15-17 January 2009  
Men's Break-Out Session*

**Speaker:** Gary Ricucci  
**Title:** Romance – God's Goodness and Mercy in Marriage

### I. ROMANCE IS AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE

#### A. GENUINE LOVE ORIGINATES WITH GOD

##### 1. In creation

*"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Gen. 2:18, 24-25)*

##### 2. In redemption

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (Eph. 2:4-5)*

*We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19 also 7-12)*

#### B. GENUINE LOVE IS ALWAYS EXPRESSED

##### 1. God gave his Son

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son... (John 3:16)*

##### 2. The Son gave his life

*...Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her...(Eph. 5:25)*

##### 3. God's love and mercy are constant

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end....(Lam.3:22)*

#### C. GENUINE LOVE IS GLORIOUSLY DISPLAYED IN MARRIAGE.

##### 1. God's love to us.

*He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD. (Prov.18:22)*

##### 2. God's love through us

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... (Ephesians 5:25)*

- Constant
- Creative
- Sacrificial

##### 3. Marriage is a living demonstration of divine love and mercy in human relationship. As men we have the privilege and responsibility of leading our wives by our example. It is our joy to display the goodness, mercy, and love that God has lavished on us.

##### 4. The culture is unable to define or display genuine love because it doesn't start with God and the gospel. As a result love becomes all



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about obtaining our selfish desires, rather than offering ourselves in love and sacrifice.

- a. Getting, not giving.
- b. Selfishness, not sacrifice.
- c. Conquests, not commitment.
- d. Lust, not love.

5. There is a glorious reason, a biblical reason, for marriage.

***For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32)***

## II. ROMANCE DEFINED

- A. Romance is the outward expression of the desire to love, nourish and cherish our spouse. Affection, intimacy, and delight should be a regular part of that expression. True romance is only possible where there is biblical love within the covenant of marriage.

The word “romance” does not appear in the Bible, but Scripture offers several powerfully inspiring examples of passionate love between man and woman:

- The redemptive love of Boaz for Ruth (Ruth 2:8-16, 3:11-12)
  - Jacob’s passion for Rachel (Genesis 29:20)
  - The Song of Solomon
  - New Testament warning against physical separation (1 Corinthians. 7:5)
  - Husbands “nourishing” and “cherishing” their wives (Ephesians 5).
- B. ROMANCE IS AN ART that must be developed the rest of my life. It is not a natural state that is automatically maintained. Romance has nothing to do with background, temperament or personality. It is love desiring to be expressed as often and as passionately and in as many ways as possible, in every season and circumstance, for as long as you both shall live.
- Romance without marriage is selfish...
  - Marriage without romance is also selfish...
- C. ROMANTIC LOVE is a pleasurable, learned response to the way your partner looks and feels, to the things your partner says and does, and to the emotional experiences you share.



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It is a keen desire to work for the beloved's happiness, no matter how much effort is required. - *Ed Wheat*

### **III. THE (not so) LITTLE FOXES THAT SPOIL THE VINE (Song of Solomon 2:15)**

NOTE: Covenant love and holiness were corrupted in the garden. The effects remain. The following are symptoms of deeper heart issues that violate the commandment to love God and love one another. Once identified, we can with ask for conviction of sin, confess sin, and ask for God's grace to mortify sin and bear fruit – creative and sacrificial goodness, mercy, and love.

#### A. IGNORANCE - lack of training or example

*I will become a student, learning about my spouse and about romance, starting with....*

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#### B. INGRATITUDE - failure to appreciate goodness and mercy received, making comparisons

*I will daily thank God for my spouse, and today I will thank my spouse for....*

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#### C. SPIRITUAL NEGLECT - breaking the first great commandment

*I will intensify my love relationship with the Lord by....*

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#### D. SELFISHNESS - indifference, laziness, pursuing romance to get rather than give

*I will be more consistent in looking to the interests of my spouse, and I will begin with....*

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- E. BUSYNESS - failure to put first things first, showing love and mercy elsewhere

*I will make my spouse and romance a top priority by spending less time doing...*

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- F. BITTERNESS - disappointment, resentment, resignation

*I will not withhold romance, and if tempted to do so will determine why and repent by...*

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- G. FEAR of MAN - pride, embarrassment, "self-consciousness"

*I will creatively and adventurously pursue romance with my spouse by...*

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#### IV. ROMANCE COMES FROM A PASSIONATE HEART - From the *Song of Solomon*

An entire book of the Bible, *The Song of Songs*, is devoted to proclaiming the unique joy and wonder of passionate marital love. The couple depicted in this poem has studied one another, they are fiercely devoted to one another, they are constantly aware of each other, and they passionately desire one another. As a result they fill their thoughts, words and actions with expressions of love for one another. Both the bride and the bridegroom are active participants.

- A. ROMANCE IS TO OCCUR IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMITMENT.

*"My beloved is mine, and I am his." (2:16, 6:3, 7:10)*

*"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." (8:4)*

- B. ROMANCE IS PASSIONATE.



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***“For love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Neither can floods drown it. Many waters cannot quench love, If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.” (SONG OF SONGS 8:6a-7)***

C. ROMANCE BEGINS WITH CONSTANT THOUGHTS OF AFFECTION.

1. Thoughts of desire

***“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” (7:10)***

2. Thoughts unceasing

***“I slept, but my heart was awake.” (5:2-8)***

2. Thoughts of anticipation

***“My beloved speaks and says to me: Arise, my love, my beautiful one and come away.” (2:10)***

D. ROMANCE IS SPOKEN WITH CAREFULLY CRAFTED WORDS.

- Secret and public admiration

1. The bridegroom says to his bride, ***“Behold, you are beautiful my love, behold you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.” (1:15)***

2. She says to her bridegroom, ***“Behold you are beautiful my beloved, truly delightful.” (1:16)***

E. ROMANCE IS ACTIVE...PLANNED AND SPONTANEOUS

1. Be a “student for life” of your spouse.
2. Learn to appreciate your spouse’s interests.
3. Begin to pursue planned and spontaneous expressions of romance.
  - a. How can I love my wife today?
  - b. How can I do good to my wife today?
  - c. How can I show mercy to my wife today?Begin to write your own story, and chronicle your own magnificent journey and adventure into the joy of romance.

F. BEFORE YOU TOUCH HER BODY, TOUCH HER HEART AND MIND



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**V. ROMANCE IS TO BE A WAY OF LIFE –**

A. NOT JUST THINGS, BUT YOU - Big gifts given occasionally from our wallets and hands, are not a substitute for little things expressed consistently from our hearts.

1. Interest - care, concern and lots of questions!
2. Communication - thoughts and feelings, laughter and tears - and everything in between!
3. Time - it won't just happen, and it's never an interruption!
4. Responsiveness - RSVP ASAP!

B. PLANNING (Like they say, "Fail to plan...etc. etc.)

1. How can I serve? How can I surprise?
2. Special days & Family traditions
3. Make memories

C. SUPPLIES (Be prepared!!!)

D. CARDS/ NOTES/ E-MAIL (Write it! Sing it! Say it!)

E. GIFTS (Who doesn't like surprises?!?!)

F. OUTINGS – EFFORT and PLANNING

G. SPIRITUAL INTIMACY – Prayer, reading, and worship

H. MISCELLANEOUS

**VI. CONCLUSION**

A. BEGIN IMMEDIATELY/ START SLOWLY/ BE CONSISTENT

B. NO EXPECTATIONS ON SPOUSE'S RESPONSE

C. MAKE *The Song of Songs* YOUR SONG!



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<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for COUPLES</b>
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1. To me, a truly romantic marriage relationship includes the following:
2. List three of your most romantic experiences together, and explain what made each one particularly memorable and special.
3. In what ways is your spouse romantic?
4. What affect does your experience of the gospel have on your love for your spouse?
5. Are there any "**LITTLE FOXES**" in your heart (**III. A. - G.**) that are causing damage to the vine of romance in your marriage? Explain.
6. From **ROMANCE COMES FROM A PASSIONATE HEART (IV. A. - E.)**, what needs your greatest attention right now? Explain.
7. From **ROMANCE COMES FROM A PASSIONATE HEART (IV. A. - E.)**, what specific steps can you begin to take to deepen and demonstrate your passion for your spouse?
8. Are there things that I do or neglect that make it more difficult for you to pursue or respond to romance in our marriage? Explain.
9. What can I do to inspire you in romance?
10. Expressions of romance that are awkward for me to pursue (or even imagine me doing!) are....
11. Share with your spouse (begin a list!) those qualities in him/ her that inspire your gratitude, admiration and respect....