***A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN***

***“and they lived happily ever after”***

It’s simple, really. I do not have to write a large volume, followed by a sequel, on all the ways to establish a good marriage. While the book shelves are stocked with wonderful methods to build a great marriage, the real solution to having a happily-ever-after relationship with your mate is found right under your nose (or, more specifically, right on your lap). It’s the great marriage manual called The Bible. I invite you to read one of the great texts of that Bible. Read I Corinthians 13:1-7. Very Slowly. Very Carefully. Very Prayerfully. That’s it. In those seven verses are found the key to building your very own “home-sweet-home.”

Paul’s simple instructions on that word *AGAPE* – which is translated “charity” in the KJV, and “love” in most all modern versions – reveals the heart and soul of all human relationships, whether marriage, the church, or our next-door neighbor.

*AGAPE* describes the very nature of God (I John 4:8). Jesus told Philip that if he had seen Him he had seen God (John 14:8-9). Jesus was the express image of God (Hebrews 1:3). Christ was, and is now, the very essence of *AGAPE*. Therefore, the more we are like Him, the more we will love.

Men, listen up. As husbands we are to *AGAPE* our wives just as Christ loved His bride the church (Ephesians 5:25). How do we do that? Paul’s description of love in I Corinthians 13 is the answer. Learn that text, put it into your marriage, and you will have all you need to have a fulfilled and happily-ever-after relationship. All 15 traits Paul used perfectly described Jesus Christ, who figuratively posed for this portrait that came to be Paul’s masterpiece. Become this person! Become Christ-like by becoming a man of Biblical love.

Read your marriage into I Corinthians 13. Examine each of the 15 descriptions of love and replace the word “love” with your own name, thinking of your wife in the process.

I Corinthians 13:

***1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.***

 ***4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.8 Love never fails.***

Now, read it again, with this slight change:

***I*** suffer long and

***I*** am kind;

***I*** do not envy;

***I*** do not parade myself,

***I*** am not puffed up;

***I*** do not behave rudely,

***I*** do not seek my own,

***I*** am not provoked,

***I*** do not think evil;

***I*** do not rejoice in iniquity, but

***I*** rejoice in the truth;

***I*** bear all things,

***I*** believe all things,

***I*** hope all things,

***I*** endure all things.

***I*** never fail (i.e. quit on my mate).

That sure puts a new twist on my thoughts of marriage, doesn’t it? It is easy to see how Jesus has been all of these things to us. Now it is our turn to obey His command to love our wives as He has loved us. By committing to this course of life we will soon become “*heirs together of the grace of life*” (I Peter 3:7) and turn our relationship into a dream-come-true happily-ever-after marriage.

Start by telling her these words, “I Love You!” and then reading her I Cor. 13:1-7. If, and when, she sees this growing in you, she will happily-ever-after be thrilled to “*submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord … see that she respects her husband*” (Eph. 5:22,33).

Now that is a marriage made in heaven.

Benita, I AGAPE you. – Rick