**Let’s Stay Together**

Oh baby, Let’s stay together (‘gether)

Lovin’ you whether, whether

Times are good or bad, happy or sad

That’s a pretty good goal.

Better: Oh baby, Let’s ***thrive in God*** together Jan and I are honored to be doing this, but we had some reservations…

Our marriage is OK… 18-20 years ago we went through a pretty dark time.

Then we had a “bump” at the Chili Cookoff two weeks ago!

Gary talked me into saying yes.

We have a solid, stable, and productive marriage of 38-1/2 years.

We are doing better now than ever! We have made some real progress.

Last night I had a dream. It was a memory of when Jan and I were first in love.

We have something different now… Different and better!

We have been doing a series in Merced (and did one 1-1/2 years ago in Bak) titled Coming Home: One Another Passages. This will be the source for our messages this weekend.

Our Outline:

Friday:

Serve One Another

Accept One Another

Sunday:

Forgive One Another

Love One Another

Submit to One Another

Encourage One Another

I. Serve One Another Gal 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Jan’s “love language” is acts of service. (mine is words of encouragement. That is an easier one to fulfill.)

I don’t know about you, but I want to be a team with Jan. How do we become a team? I need to get behind her projects. And Jan has a lot of projects for me to get behind.

I have discovered the truth in Acts 20:35, that It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I am independent by nature. I am not exactly a loner, but I strongly prefer to do my own projects by myself. I need my space, and Jan does not like to give it. This drives Jan crazy. But… I can serve Jan by getting on board with her many projects.

Do I ever not want to do this? Yes! All the time.

Whether times are good or bad, happy or sad, and whether I am fully on board with the project or not, I get behind Jan and serve.

I think about the VBS’s the Christian Rock Concert, the Barn Dances, the Tamale Sales…

Jan has her cohort of servants, and I just join in.

Why? Because that is her gift, and like Eric Liddle said (when I run, I feel God’s pleasure), When Jan puts on projects for God, she feels God’s pleasure.

Jan share about **serving one another**   (Jan: I feel this is your specialty, so I want

you to share more about this one than me)

Bio

There are numerous ways that I feel served by John. He likes to cook often! Recently, I attended a women’s day on Saturday, which mean I wouldn’t have time to prepare for Sunday Lunch. He made 3 incredible quiches to serve to our church. He love to make pies and bake the turkey on Thanksgiving and lamb on easter. He takes care of the yard and cars. Brings down things on high shelves for me. He lifts and moves heavy things for me. There is no end to his serving me.

I try to serve him in anyway I think of. I shop and buy most everything for him for our home and for gifts. I serve him in all the basic ways: housekeeping, laundry, cleaning and cooking.  I serve him when he is sick. I make the hard phone calls for appointments, repairs, healthcare, arraignments etc. I have helped him plan and put on classes and conferences, to sell books, make brochures and mail media.

II. Accept One Another Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

The context: Paul is talking about the weak and the strong.

The “weak” being those with a more sensitive conscience about something which is not necessarily sinful.

The “strong” being those who are not as sensitive about the same spiritual issue.

The point: We need to accept our differences on debatable matters.

If you read Romans 14, in general (but definitely not always), the “weaker” partner should be given precedence. If one of you cannot do something in good conscience, then both of you should not do it. (intimate relationship, movies, events)

When we fell in love, we accepted everything about one another. Are you still there? Can you accept your spouse, even though you disagree on some fairly big questions.

For Jan and I, examples of this are in how we raised our kids. We did our best to come to a common decision and to never argue in front of the kids, but, in the end, we had pretty different ideas about how to discipline the kids. What will you do about that?

We work together great in our ministry (honestly!), but we have different ideas about how to study the Bible with people, how to do follow-up, how to do discipling.

I have learned to accept that Jan just plain does things differently from me and I accept that.

Because whether times are good or bad, happy or sad, I accept Jan for the amazing gift she is.

Jan: Share about **accepting one another**

I was raised in a very strict household, while John was raise in a more permissive household. So I wanted their to be more control over our children. I made rules for the household and mostly had to reinforce them myself. Basic grooming and clothing, chores, where they went and with whom, getting phone numbers of where they would be. (this is before cell phones) John was less supportive of my rules.

III. Bear with One Another Eph 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Accepting one another has to do with matters of opinion.

Bearing with one another has to do, sometimes, with character issues and sins.

Bearing with one another requires great humility, gentleness and patience.

How patient? There are sins your spouse will literally never completely overcome. Can you live with that?

Loving a spouse who is into dungeons and dragons

Loving a spouse who is into killing innocent animals and fish

Loving a spouse who loves to shop

Loving a spouse who is a political conservative

Loving a spouse who is a political liberal

Loving a spouse who dresses sloppily

Loving a spouse who puts the forks into the dishwasher the wrong way

Loving a spouse who leaves his/her underwear on the floor and does not put the cap back on the toothpaste.

Loving a spouse who always wants to talk during football games.

Loving a spouse who wants to watch football games when you want to talk.

Colossians 3:12-13 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you have a grievance against someone.

Do you have any “grievances” against your spouse? I do! (Should I air them here?...)

Jan will not throw out anything (virtually). Me… if it has not been used in a year, throw it out.

To be honest, Jan drives me crazy in this area. But I think I have finally reached the point where I love her anyway.

Jan: Share about Bear with one another, being with John (I know there is a lot there!)

“Barking Spider” a pseudonym for passing loud gas, tripping over size 12 shoes left where he takes them off.

John likes to cook. He uses multiple utensils, ingredients and appliances to produce great food, unfortunately it produces unseen splashes, spills and cluttered counters.

I usually say that I don’t like what has happened. But whether he can see my point or not, does not deserve a bump or fight. I ask myself, how important is this in the long run.

I Practice self denial even though it’s hard. Matthew 16:25 promises life to those who deny themselves for Christ’s sake. Bearing with your spouse when you don’t feel like it can actually strengthen your marriage.

Part II Sunday

So far… Serve One Another, Accept One Another, Bear With One Another

IV. Forgive One Another

Col 3:13 Bear with one another and forgive one another, if any of you has a grievance against your spouse. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

“If” any of you have a grievance against your spouse!!!

Sure, how much time do you have…

(Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as Christ forgave you.)

Related to bearing with one another and accepting one another. Accepting one another is about opinion, culture, traditions and personal taste.

Bearing with one another is about character and personality traits that annoy us.

Forgiving one another is about things that are wrong—sins, typically. We do not “accept” sin. Right? We oppose sin and call it out, right?

Col 3:13 In matters of right and wrong we still forgive one another.

I have heard it said, “Hate the sin, love the sinner.”

When it comes to marriage, love the sinner and love the sinner. We MUST forgive one another.

Matthew 18:21-34 (read v. 32-34?)

The fact is this. There will be sins in your spouse’s life that will never fully be done away with until the day you die. So… What are you going to do about this?

Forgive as God forgave you!!!

This is tough for us to share about… For me, the tough thing is that Jan gets upset and annoyed with me, probably for legitimate reasons. Almost always for legitimate reasons, but she REALLY struggles to admit any fault on her own part in the moment, and generally will not even go back there later to discuss this.

When people are coming over, when a project is coming due, when the stress is rising, Jan can become a tyrant or extremely impatient. She does not handle extremely stressful situations well. She becomes moody, critical and demanding.

So… What am I going to do about this? Change Jan? No!

So, what should I do? Forgive Jan. There but by the grace of God go I, and besides, Jan is about to share a recurring sin on my part.

You know why? Because whether times are good or bad, happy or sad, we are going to forgive one another.

Jan share about **forgiving one another**.

Forgive for not feeling supported in a conflict with a fellow Christian.

Forgive everyday disagreements, not cleaning up after cooking, or doing a project.

It is harder for me to get over a conflict with John than with my children or others.

V. Love One Another *agape* John 13:34-35 John 15:12,17, 1 John 3:11,23, 4:7,11,12 The most oft-repeated one another command.

John 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s spouse.

Even as I have loved you… This is how the world will know that yours is a true Christian home.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests.

Whose agenda gets first priority in your mind? I really struggle with this one. I have to regularly remind myself to put Jan above myself. My prevailing sin is pride. I am pretty sure I have it all figured out and my ideas are the best.

In Colossians 3:12-14, after Paul tell us to bear with one another and forgive one another, he tell us, “And over all these virtues put on love.”

Let me tell you how Jan has loved me.

She has supported me in some really crazy projects. Going to Haiti this summer is just one example of many.

A friend asked her before you were married, would you be willing to live in a hut?

Jan has been willing to do pretty close to that.

Because, “whether times are good or bad, happy or sad… Jan loves me. Jan is devoted to me. Do I drive her crazy sometimes? Yes, but she is my biggest supporter.

Jan share about **loving one another**.

Feeling loved and protected by John. Feeling secure is important me and a lot of women.

            Date experience Feeling protected in Volkswagen on date.

            John said,“I love you now, but I love more what you will become.”

Pet peeve when my parents got divorced.  John makes sure Cars always working. Bills always paid

I made a vows to him to love him until death. As a disciple of Jesus, I’m called higher to express my love to him in my words and actions. The word divorce was never to come to mind. We tried hard to not let the sun go down while in disagreement. To be available for love-making. To serve God better as a couple than when single.

VI. Submit to One Another Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Q: What does that mean to you?

Put the needs of your spouse over your own.

Be willing to let her/his opinion win out. Be the first to offer to say “not my will but yours be done.”

Come to a mutual conclusion, but if the opinion of your spouse wins out, fully and without any hesitation, support their decision. They are now the boss of this project. Either that, or it is now a team project, and no one can tell whose idea it was.

For me, it was our new home. For 38 years of marriage, she submitted to me on the whole idea of upgrading our homes.

This time, I gave Jan the full go-ahead.

The workers show up to our house—I say go talk to Jan.

Jan share about **submitting to one another**.

Our honeymoon was in Mexico City, Very scarey for small town, country girl.

Our moves from city to city are always a challenge.

John’s trip to w Africa for  3+ weeks. came home 2 days before moving day from SD to BKF.

VII. Encourage One Another 1 Thess 4:18, **5:11**

1 Thess 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are in fact doing.

Encourage: parakaleo Call alongside. Comfort one another. I am with you. To encourage is to put courage into your spouse. I am right here for you right now.

It is not “solving” their problem, but being there to support when they come up with their own solution.

Build up: oikodomeite literally to build up. To give strength. You can do it.

It is tough right now, but I know you will get through it. Si, se puede!

I already shared about this. When we are in stressful situations: the Thanksgiving guests are about to arrive. A group of 10 from Orange County will be arriving later today. The conference we are putting on next week… My role is to support and encourage. It is my job to believe in Jan when others do not. Jan: I have your back. Jan, I believe in you.

Because, Whether times are good or bad, happy or sad, I want to encourage and to build up my amazing wife Jan.

Jan share about **encouraging one another and building one another up.**

I try to appreciate and support his activities, Watching sports and action movies on TV

Grand Canyon hikes, Driving 8 hours.  I have dropped off him and other hikers at Kiabab trail at 4:30 AM, later met them at Bright Angel trail at 7pm

Being **all in** to lead the Bakersfield Church. Planting Merced.

I want to follow the example of Priscilla and Aquila working together as they built their tent business, hospitality, and taught people more thoroughly about Jesus. They were an amazing couple. I also want to be united in building up John and building up the church.

Lord’s Supper comments. Think about this:

Jesus Served us, accepted us, bore with us, loved us, submitted his will to our needs, encouraged us, and most importantly, forgave us.

Our marriages ought to be a reflection of Christ.

But think for a minute how much he has borne, served, accepted, and forgiven.

Think of him thinking of you on the cross.

Think of him thinking of you as you take the Lord’s Supper this morning.