

The Beauty of the Long Journey

Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be - the last of life for which the first was made.
Robert Browning

What a challenging concept to explain to a young couple! Marriage is very much like a long journey. Planning the trip brings anticipation and excitement. Often we are in such stress by the time we leave. Then, the journey itself produces unexpected difficulties and joys. Somewhere along the way, we realize getting to the destination isn't that important, but what we experienced along the way was priceless. As we stop along the journey, we look back at the times resulting in the most joy and laughter. Usually, they were the obstacles that tested our resourcefulness and unity.

If you asked a long-term, married couple, "What kept you on the journey, even when it looked like you couldn't take another step?" The answer would most often be – "It was our commitment to do it together." That kind of commitment isn't just to stay married; it is a commitment to each other personally to stay together and not give up.

I didn't marry you because you were perfect. I didn't even marry you because I loved you. I married you because you gave me a promise. That promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine. Two imperfect people got married and it was the promise that made the marriage. And when our children were growing up, it wasn't a house that protected them; and it wasn't our love that protected them - it was that promise. Thornton Wilder

James Thurber said, "Love is what you've been through with somebody." The milestones in marriage aren't the 25th or 50th anniversaries. The milestones are the anniversaries after the year you lived through the birth and adjustment of having your first child, the year you lost your job and moved across the country for a new one, the year your parent died, the year you learned to cope with a serious, chronic illness, and countless others. But whatever you lived through, whatever you did, you did it as one.

A recent movie "Shall We Dance" illustrated it clearly when the wife said,

Or, put another way: Why is it that people get married? Because we need a witness to our lives. There are a billion people on the planet. What does any one life really mean? But in a marriage, you're promising to care about everything... The good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things, All of it... all the time, every day. You're saying "Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go unwitnessed - because I will be your witness."

This kind of commitment is the essence of unconditional love. The *agape* love that God has for us and that He enables us to have for each other. *Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.* 1 Corinthians 13:7 NLT

*I think a man and a woman should choose each other for life, for the simple reason that a long life with all its accidents is barely enough time for a man and a woman to understand each other and. . . .
To understand - is to love."*

William Butler Yeats

It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing to a young bride and groom from his prison cell in Nazi Germany, 1943

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The Beauty of Love:

The question is asked, "Is there anything more beautiful in life than a young couple clasping hands and pure hearts in the path of marriage? Can there be anything more beautiful than young love?"

*And the answer is given. "Yes, there is a more beautiful thing. **It is the spectacle of an old man and an old woman finishing their journey together on that path.** Their hands are gnarled, but still clasped; their faces are seamed, but still radiant; their hearts are physically bowed and tired, but still strong with love and devotion for one another.*

Yes, there is a more beautiful thing than young love. Old love."

Unknown Author