

***A Word from Woody. . .***  
**Love Advice for Valentine's Day**

Elena and I enjoy reading out loud together good marriage books. One book we are currently enjoying is by Christian psychologist Dr. Kevin Leman provocatively called, *Sex Begins in the Kitchen*. No, it's not about *that*! The book's subtitle helpfully explains, *Because Love Is an All-day Affair*.

I am convinced a large part of our culture has romance turned upside-down, where the primary attention is on sex, which God intended *only* for marriage. Rather, romance, as anyone who has a good marriage knows, is about roughly 5% sex and 95% relationship. And it is the latter that makes the former what God intended it to be. Thus, Leman's book especially focuses on this 95% portion of romance. Here's a dozen nuggets of wisdom I have culled so far.

"If you want to change somebody else's behavior, the best thing you can do is change your own behavior first" (p. 15).

"Are the sexes equal? Absolutely. But they are not the same. A happy marriage is one in which both partners understand and accept those differences, and understand how to relate to each other *in spite* of the fact that they relate to the world differently. The key to growth and enrichment in marriage is in reaching out and being able to touch each other in a special way that conveys, 'I understand how you feel and I'm going to do my very best to meet your needs'" (p. 18; emphasis his).

"I don't care how enlightened a man may be, there is still within him that desire to protect his woman. A woman who's intelligent will be aware of that and will not be offended" (p. 29).

"The best way to discourage too-early dating is never to encourage it. People frequently ask very young children, in a joking way, 'Got a girlfriend [or boyfriend] yet?' Naturally, the child begins to assume this is something that is expected of him. If it is understood from the time your child is very young that he or she can begin dating at the age of sixteen (or whatever age you choose), then he or she already knows the house rules long before the teen years come around" (p. 38).

“. . . there's some interesting research that shows that living together actually increases the probability of divorce. Sharing the same four walls may *seem* like a commitment, but if you want to break it off, you just have to call a moving van. It *feels* like an intimate step, but most cohabiting couples have never really taken off their masks. They're still dating each other. The date may last a long time, but there's still no permanence to it. And so both partners try to keep their best foot forward at all times" (p. 40; emphasis his).

"I have talked to many men and women who have become involved in extramarital affairs, and I guarantee you that the number-one reason for affairs is lack of communication between husbands and wives" (p. 108).

"Too many couples seem to have the idea that going away for a weekend is a waste of money, or a luxury, but it isn't. If you want your marriage to be all that it can be, you will invest in the relationship, and that includes as many romantic weekend getaways as possible" (p. 111).

"There are basically two reasons why we have no success at good communication: (1) We don't listen, and (2) we don't perceive what is being said. Listening is at least a third of the communication process, the other two-thirds being the sharing of self and the understanding that follows the listening" (p. 122).

"Try to begin expressing yourself with 'I' statements rather than 'you' or 'they' statements. The idea is to say, 'I feel very angry when you say things like that.' In this way, you are focusing first on your response rather than upon the other person's actions" (pp. 139-140).

"If you are the person who is always bringing up the misdeeds of the past, that may soon be where your marriage lies—in the past" (p. 140).

"You see guys, there's one question that you wife needs to have answered every day. *Do you really love me?* You can answer that question in many ways, with words as well as hugs, caresses, and so on. But these physical actions only seem like love *if they have nothing to do with sex*. . . In a way, that's the theme of

this whole book. If you practice a lifestyle of affection, that should create sexual fulfillment as well. Sex does indeed begin in the kitchen” (p. 151, emphasis his).

“One of the hallmarks of this love language is the way people ask for what they want. ‘Love makes requests, not demands,’ writes [Gary] Chapman. That requires humility. Demands are putdowns, implying, ‘I’m important and you’re not. Do this for me. Your desires don’t matter.’ On the other hand, a humble request gives the other person a choice: ‘You probably have more important things to do, but would you consider doing this for me? I’d be grateful’” (p. 167).

If you are married, I encourage you to have a date with your spouse (perhaps Valentine’s Day?) and read this article together and discuss it. If you are not married, I encourage you learn from the wisdom of Dr. Leman on marriage and pray the Lord will prepare you to be the kind of spouse He would have you be as you trust Him with and honor Him in your dating life. And as we enter the season of Lent this month, may we all learn from the way our Lord loves: “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Much Love in Christ,

Woody