

The things that matter in life

You'll forgive me for the personal reference, but as this Monday Motivation is written for August 23, 2004, my 7th wedding anniversary, I'd like to spend a few moments talking about the things that matter in life. I've written a second, extra edition of Monday Motivation, for those of you who just want a success-oriented message. Before you turn to it, though, please read on.

It's been said that when you die and get to the other side, (assuming there is another side of course), that God will look you in the eye and **not** ask you how much money you made when you were alive. God will want to know the important things: Were you happy? Did you impact someone else's life for good? Did you make a difference in a positive way? Did you conquer your fears?

And most importantly, God will want to know the answer to one great question: Did you love someone, and did someone love you?

I feel badly for those people who will not be able to answer in the affirmative to all of these questions -- but after I have been the recipient of so much love from my sweet wife, I feel badly mostly for those who have not loved, or haven't been loved. I was once one of you.

Oh, when you get right down to it, all of us have loved people -- and been loved by people. I know we all have, at one time or another. It might have been puppy love, or a mother's love, or a father's love, or a secret love (the kind of love that romance novels always seem to write about). To quote Dean Martin, "Everybody loves somebody sometime."

But altogether too many people never really feel the love that counts most of all -- the love towards a wife, or husband -- and receiving the love of that wife or husband in return.

Sometimes it's because we put the decision off. We've got the demands of work that call us away from establishing a great relationship. Other times, we're scared to make the first move -- the first call, the first kiss, the first contact. Occasionally, we've been hurt in the past, and we shut ourselves up in a cocoon of our own making, expecting that one day, Prince (or Princess) Charming will ride up on a white horse and break us out of our shell. Sometimes it's because we're so afraid of rejection, that we never take a chance. I had a former employee who came up to me one day and told me that he loved this girl, but he didn't know how to tell her. "Just tell her. If she love you, it'll be all right. If she doesn't, then you're better off knowing about it," I said. He told her. He married her.

Some people expect God to make the decision for them -- not realizing that God wants us to be happy with someone, but is unlikely to tell us who to be happy with -- that's our decision.

In my case, I was extremely lucky when I met my wife.

My wife and I were a setup -- a co-worker recognized how well suited we were for each other, and suggested a meeting. We emailed, met, talked, and found that we were (and still are) a lot alike. It was the beginning of a love affair that continues to this day -- and I could never have found someone who would be better for me -- or to me -- than she is.

Now, let me set aside the personal references for a moment. Are you in a relationship? If you are, are you giving it the value it deserves? I know that as much as I love my wife, I've still got a lot of room for improvement -- and I bet you're similar. Are you loving your "special someone" (jeez, I hate that phrase) as much as they deserve being loved?

I know there are some people out there who are saying to themselves: "Wait a minute -- am I being loved as much as I need to be loved? That should be the big question here." To those individuals, let me explain that love is a strange thing -- the only way to **gain** more love is to **give** more love.

Love is a matter of **show** and **tell**. Are you **showing** your love? Are you **telling** your "someone" that you love them? Do you **do** little things for them -- rubbing their back (or feet), taking out the trash, **buying** flowers for your wife (or for your wives that are reading this, buying **power tools** for your husband)?

Now the hard questions:

Do you **show** as much **courtesy** toward your spouse/significant other/special someone as you would to a total stranger?

Do you **respect** your loved one at least as much as you respect your friends? Do you **show them you respect them**?

When you **talk** with your loved one, do you use a **reasonable** tone of voice?

Do you constantly pick at their weaknesses, or do you **help them** overcome them?

Do you **give them time** -- more time than you give to your friends, bowling buddies, work, or "the guys" or "the girls?"

Do you constantly bring up matters that are **better left buried** -- your mother's cooking, that ugly hairstyle, her bad driving, his bad venture into commodities trading?

Do you try to **make yourself better** for your loved one? Do you try to **improve yourself** at least as much as you try to improve them?

Do you **do what you say you're going to do**? Do you hurt them unnecessarily, or do you **do everything in your power to make their life better**?

If you've got a family, do you **spend time** with your kids? Your parents? Your siblings? (I'm a big problem child on that one).

Last of all, do you **see your relationship, marriage, or friendship with a eye toward the future, ignoring the problems of the past, and constantly strive to make your life better**?

I'm extremely lucky to be married to my wife -- she's an amazing, dynamic, beautiful, courageous woman. Being married to her -- seven years it's been -- has been the happiest time of my life.

Now -- for those of you who aren't in a relationship -- what are you waiting for? It's much better to grow old with someone than to grow old alone. Are you waiting for a lighthouse to spring up out of the ground and point out the person who you should marry? Are you expecting God to appear out of thin air, grab you by the hand, and point to a person walking down the street? Are you so scared to make a move that you sit there, paralyzed?

My old roommate used to have a big list of the attributes that "his wife" would have. She had to be blond, have nice hair, play the piano, and a whole list of other attributes. Truth be told, I think he had a particular person in mind. Anyway, when he finally found his wife, she was many of those things -- but not all. It took him a while until he found her -- and a lot of that was getting rid of the preconceived idea of what a "perfect person" should be.

When it comes right down to it, there are no perfect people. There are only people who are perfect for us. I'm lucky to have found such a person -- luckier still that she has stuck with me all these years. She's not perfect -- she likes to tell me how to drive -- but she's perfect for me.

If you're in a relationship, treasure that love you share. If you're not in a relationship, find someone who will love you, and who you can love.

These are the things that matter in life -- loving and being loved, caring and being cared for, communicating and understanding, growing and progressing. These are those things that God will ask you about, if you ever meet God face to face.

After all, no success matters as much as success in your home.

Oh -- Happy Anniversary, Judy. Thanks for loving me. I love you.

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