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**AIM FOR THE  
HIGHEST**

inspiration for your

**LIFE • MINISTRY • BUSINESS**

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## **STRENGTHENING OUR RELATIONSHIPS**

On the first weekend of August the Little Brown Church is preparing to hold its 69<sup>th</sup> MARRIAGE REUNION and VOW RENEWAL event. Couples from all over the U.S. come along to celebrate their wedding at the Little Brown Church and to renew their marriage vows. It is a beautiful event, and we look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones. As we head towards this special day, I am reminded of the three things each couple need to be able to navigate a lifelong relationship.

### **Clarity**

By this I mean that you have a clear understanding of the current state of your relationship...good AND bad, strengths AND weaknesses. Owning up to the weaknesses and failures in our relationship is vital to moving forward. We need to remember that failure is not always fatal...but failure should always be a learning experience!!

### **Commitment**

Marriage is a committed relationship between two people. The Bible describes it as being a covenant. A Covenant is different from a "Contract" A Covenant is more than a contract. In fact, you won't find the word "contract" anywhere in the Scriptures! On the other hand, the term "covenant" is mentioned over 300 times in the Bible. With a **contract**, if one party does something to violate the contract then it the contract is broken. The whole contract becomes null and void. Basically, the signers of a contract agree to hold up their end of the contract as long as the other signatories hold up theirs too. With a **covenant**, both parties agree to hold up their ends *regardless* of whether the other party keeps their part of the agreement. The Hebrew word for "covenant" means "a coming together. The idea is that of binding or establishing a bond between two parties - or sticking together like Super Glue! Covenant means that you're not stuck with someone – you're stuck to them! In a Christian marriage the glue is God – the covenant is not just between two people – but three – husband, wife, and God Himself.

## **Compassion**

In Colossians 3:12 The Apostle Paul instructs the believers at the church in Colosse “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion**, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”. Another version of the Bible says it this way...“Clothe yourselves with compassion...” Compassion means “to love together with” – it involves caring, kindness, willingness to help others – even to the point of sharing in each other’s suffering. Compassion is not love in word or concept – it is love in action. The Bible tells us that God is “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness” Notice that the Apostle Paul said “Clothe yourself with compassion” or “put on compassion:” What he is saying is this...Just like you would choose the right clothes to wear for the day – the Apostle Paul is saying we need to CHOOSE to put on or clothe ourselves with compassion...it doesn't happen automatically...the burden is on US to make that choice...every day...to be compassionate with our spouse.

When Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, a reporter asked them, “To what do you attribute your fifty years of successful married life?” “The formula,” said Mr. Ford, “is the same formula I have always used in making cars—just stick to one model.”

**Clarity – Commitment – Compassion.** We'll need all three of these qualities if we are going to maintain and strengthen our relationship with our spouse. I encourage you to visit these qualities every day – to renew and strengthen your relationship every day – and not just at special occasions like the Marriage Reunion.