



## 2: The Sizzle of Romance | Pastor Joe Wittwer | February 14, 2010

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

**Introduction:** We're talking about building a lasting marriage--if you want it to last you've got to build it right. There's a sequence that most successful marriages follow. You start with friendship, it warms into romance, grows into a life-long commitment, and you celebrate it with sex. Mix up the sequence and you can mess up the relationship. In a great marriage, we keep growing and developing each of these elements.

Let's begin by admitting that the Bible doesn't speak directly to the subject of romance. You won't find the word "romance" or "romantic" in the Bible. And very few of the marriages in the Bible began with romance. In the Biblical cultures, marriages were arranged by the parents. Occasionally, a couple would fall in love and ask the parents to arrange the marriage, but most couples weren't "in love" when they got married nor even considered it important. The notion of romantic love as the basis for marriage is a relatively new idea. Since our approach to romance and marriage hasn't yielded great results, maybe it's worth taking a closer look at how romance works. Webster says that romance (noun) is "an emotional attraction between two people." There's chemistry, a spark, an emotional attraction; and in our culture, this is what usually draws us to the marriage altar. The problem is that our feelings change easily and often. Dr. Neil Clark Warren, in his book, *The Triumphant Marriage*, says, "Chemistry alone is not enough to hold a marriage together over the long run. But most marriages can benefit substantially by maximizing chemistry." Dr. Warren goes on to say, "Chemistry between two people is responsive to mental and emotional processes over which we have tremendous control. You can make chemistry happen." Romantic feelings are the result of things we do and say and think. You can make romance happen! As a verb, romance means "to try to influence or win favor with by lavishing personal attention, gifts or flattery." [Read **Revelation 2:4-5** together now.] In the verses preceding this, Jesus praises the Ephesian church for their orthodoxy and good works. But, they had lost their first love. How could they get it back? Jesus told them to remember, repent and re-do. Remember the height from which you have fallen—remember what it used to be like. Repent—change your mind and behavior. Re-do—do again the things you did at first. That same three-fold prescription can be used to rekindle the romance in your marriage. Remember—repent—re-do. Remember how you used to feel about your spouse. Honestly evaluate why you've lost those feelings and make the determined decision to change. Start doing the things you used to do when you had those feelings. Great marriages work on being "in love". You don't just feel it; you do it and then you feel it. So if romance is an emotional attraction, what attracts us? What do we find romantic? How can we keep romance alive and thriving after we're married? Here are four attractions that are part of romance and something practical to do with each.

1. **Physical attraction.** Usually one of the first things that attracts us to another person is the way they look. [Read **Genesis 29:14-20** together now.] This is the story of Jacob and Rachel. Notice what seems to be Jacob's initial attraction in verse 17. Rachel was "lovely in form and beautiful." Rachel was a hotty and Jacob was attracted to her because of her looks. For many men—and women—the initial attraction is often physical. So what can you do to keep romance alive? **Take care of yourself.** It's amazing how many people let themselves go physically after they get married. Part of romance is physical attraction, so look and smell your best! Not every guy needs to look like a Greek god; and not every woman like a super-model, but you should take care of yourself and look your best for your spouse...for the sake of your marriage.

**2. Personality attraction.** There are people with whom you feel an immediate affinity and others with whom you don't. That's personality attraction. Now, what attracts us to another person's personality? You know the old saying: opposites attract. It's often those mysterious differences that draw us together because we're looking for someone who compliments us. When you are first falling in love those differences seem mysterious, intriguing, fascinating; but after a few years of marriage those personality traits become *irritating!* So what should you do to keep romance alive? **Celebrate the differences.** Go back and do what you did at first. See each personality trait as a wonderful thing, different from you and therefore needed by you.

**3. Pursuit attraction.** Everyone wants to be wanted. Everyone wants to be pursued. And when someone pursues you, it's very romantic. We all know people who weren't smitten with their spouse when they first met but they were won over because they were pursued. Much of romance is feeling wanted. That's a great feeling. That's romance. By the way, this is what God does to us. It's why Jesus came: looking for you, seeking you. He went all the way to a cross to woo and win you! This is the divine romance. So romance, this emotional attraction, often grows out of pursuit. What happens: we stop pursuing and romance dies. So what should we do to keep romance alive? **Keep pursuing!** Keep wooing. Go back to doing what you did at first. That will fan the romantic flame.

**4. Positive attraction.** We put our best foot forward; we're kind and thoughtful. Romance is sustained by kindness. When someone consistently treats us well, we feel good about that person. Look back at Jacob and Rachel. [Read **Genesis 29:9-11.**] Jacob wooed with kindness. We do that when we're dating—we put our best foot forward. We're consistently kind and thoughtful because we're trying to win this person's affection. Later, we get careless and selfish. We stop doing the little things that keep the feelings alive. So what should you do to keep romance alive? **Be nice!** The Golden Rule works. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Be kind and thoughtful and people will love you.

**C. Life Group Questions** (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. Pastor Joe made the statement, "Romance isn't just something that happens to us; it's something we do." That being true, if romance has faded in your marriage, what should you do? What did Jesus recommend that we do when we lose our first love (refer back to revelation 2:4-5)?
2. What do you do to ensure that you remain physically attractive to your spouse or significant other? Why is this important?
3. What personality traits first attracted you to your spouse? In what ways are you and your partner similar or different? Are there traits that you once found attractive that you now consider annoying? If you are not married, what type of personality traits do you find attractive? How do you celebrate the differences between you and your spouse?
4. Are you continuing to "pursue" your mate or significant other, making them feel special? Do you try to build positive attraction through thoughtful acts--knowing what they need and like and doing it before they ask? Are you being nice?

**D. Personal Application** (1-3 Minutes)

- Married couples, go on a date this week and finish the following sentences with each other:
  - In our courtship I felt loved romantically when...
  - I think my spouse would like me to be more romantic by...Talk about it, and about how you are going to romance each other.
- If you are dating, adapt these questions to fit your stage of relationship. Be careful to start by being friends and then move into the romantic phase of your relationship.

**E. Prayer Time** (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4:10-15 Minutes)

- Dedicate your relationship to God. Ask God to bless and guide your steps forward in a new or existing relationship.
- Ask God for patience as you build the relationship step-by-step based on eternal principles, not the values of the world.
- Bring other praises or request to God that came up during the discussion.