

## **“Love is in the Air”**

### **Genesis 2:15-24**

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

Smoke Rise Baptist Church

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It was a popular song during the disco days of the seventies. I'm sure some of you danced to it under flashing lights wearing those John Travolta leisure suits. The song was “Love is in the Air” by Paul Young. Many of you remember Lou Rawls singing it. The opening lyrics were, “Love is in the air everywhere I look around. Love is in the air in every sight and every sound.”

This week, love is in the air because Thursday is Valentine's Day. It is a day to reveal romantic feelings for that special someone in your life. It is my understanding that this tradition began years ago when a woman by the name of Valentine discovered that her husband had a part of his brain missing that initiates attention and affection. She thought it would be a good idea to have at least one day a year when her husband would bring her a mushy card and some delicious candy, so she convinced the leaders of the world that such an idea was in the Bible. She was so persuasive that they made this noble deed a requirement and named the occasion Valentine's Day. As Paul Harvey would say, “And now you know the rest of the story.” By the way, this dear lady is now the patron saint of Hallmark.

It is not my intention today to talk about Valentine's Day but marriage. I would like to seize the opportunity to preach a sermon on strengthening marriages.

I don't know how long I had been married before I was struck with a brilliant idea about my marriage. I am sure it was much longer than it should have been and for that I commend Jackie for her patience. At some point in our marriage, it dawned on me. If marriage is for better or for worse, why not strive to make it better? Why not discover what makes a marriage better rather than worse and do those things?

Somewhere along that process I asked three questions. Who is responsible for making my marriage better rather than worse? Are there things I can do to make it better? Whose help do I need to make it better?

When I answered those questions, I don't mind telling you that my marriage went to another level and Valentine's Day did not occur merely once a year. I'll also confess that when I reached that new level, Jackie was there waiting for me. She had figured this out long before I did and was waiting for me to catch up.

So, this morning, allow me to ask and answer these three questions. I think you will find it helpful whether you are married or one day will be.

**First of all, who is responsible for making your marriage better?** I don't want to sound simplistic or crass, but go look in a mirror. It's that simple. If you are waiting on someone else to make your marriage better, even your mate, you will be disappointed. You made that commitment, so take the initiative.

**Are there things you can do to make your marriage better?** Definitely and to discover these, I did a little research. I wanted to know what happily married couples did differently from those that were not so happy. Here's what I found from the article, “Advice That Could Save Your Marriage” by Nathaniel Branden, a psychologist who is the executive director of the Biocentric Institute, a counseling center in Los Angeles. These suggestions grew out of a question asked by two of his clients whose marriage had

gone bad. They asked Dr. Branden, “Are there specific ways in which couples who remain happily in love behave differently from couples who do not?” Dr. Branden accepted the challenge to find the answer to the question and he discovered that happily married couples:

**Say the words, “I love you.”** Happy couples express their love in words. Saying the words is one way of touching.

**Touch each other to show affection.** An infant first experiences love through touching. We never outgrow that need. Loving couples hold hands, hug and cuddle. Sex is integrated with feelings of love and compassion.

**Talk to each other.** They share thoughts, feelings, hopes, hurts, frustrations and memories of good, painful or embarrassing experiences. Communication flows freely. They are best friends.

**Express appreciation and admiration.** They talk about what they like in each other. They compliment each other often. Pride and delight are no strangers to the relationship.

**Offer each other emotional support.** Happy couples are there for each other in times of illness, difficulty or crisis. They know they can lean upon one another when necessary.

**Express love materially.** They give gifts to each other, often as surprises. Gifts are expressions of joy for the relationship.

**Learn to live with each other’s shortcomings.** They choose to highlight the positive rather than dwell on the negative. They do not torment themselves or each other over imperfections. They never try to control or change the other person.

**Create time to be alone together.** Happily married couples continue to date. They understand that love requires attention and time and they are willing to give them. As a matter of fact, they make dating a priority.

**Are faithful to each other.** There is a high level of freedom and trust in their relationship. They know that infidelity poisons love and erodes trust.

**Do not expect the other person to make them happy.** Marriages that begin because someone is escaping a bad situation or trying to climb out of depression rarely last.

**Forgive each other.** All couples hurt and disappoint each other at times. Happy couples do not ignore these problems, make excuses for bad behavior, cover up mistakes or accumulate resentment. They confront problems, deal with them, learn from them and move on. Lasting love means saying “I’m sorry and I forgive.”

**Whose help do you need to make your marriage better?** Ideally, you need cooperation from your spouse. While it is your responsibility to take the initial steps, success will occur when he or she joins you in that effort.

In addition, you need encouragement from family, the listening ear of a close friend and you may even need advice from a counselor. Most importantly, though, you need God’s help. You need Him to provide wisdom, understanding, guidance, patience, determination and love.

I cannot speak for all the other people in your life, but I speak on His behalf today. The Lord is willing to help you. He knows what is at stake and He also knows what is required to be happily married.

Genesis 2:15-24 reveals that the concept of marriage goes all the way back to His heart and hands. He created Adam and Eve to live in an intimate and functional relationship. If marriage was ordained by Him, then we can surely count on Him for the support we need to make it succeed.

Let me encourage you to ask for His help. Ask Him to show you what you can do this week to make your marriage better and it may all begin with a mushy card and a box of candy.