

How two live together...and experience *REAL* romance
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"I shall love you in December with the love I gave in May."

- *John Alexander Joyce*

Have you ever seen a married couple sitting at dinner with nothing to say to each other? Maybe the husband is reading the newspaper. We stand in judgment, wondering how anyone could let their marriage become so boring.

As newlyweds in 1983, Karen and Michael *knew* that would *never* happen to them! Their relationship would always be fueled by intense romantic feelings and free flowing conversation. Now after 20 years of marriage, they are not so quick to judge. As a matter of fact they have found themselves at the restaurant struggling to find something to talk about besides their children. Fortunately, the newspaper has not been pulled out ...yet?

Needless to say, intimacy and romance don't just happen. Real romance is a commitment to love each other in spite of the disappointments and difficulties.

Yet, for many married couples, what began as a close and intimate relationship disintegrates into two people sharing a bed, a bathroom, and a closet but who are miles apart emotionally. How does this happen?

Factors that Erode Intimacy

The illusion of *whom* you married fades. You begin to discover that your mate is not quite as perfect as you once thought. It is easy in the courtship and engagement phases of a relationship to mask insecurities and faults behind performance and intense romantic feelings. The realities are noticed. Couples may become more critical and less accepting of each other as faults surface. It helps to remember that everyone is part virtue and part fault. The great challenge is to focus more on your spouse's many

admirable qualities rather than on one or two faults. As Romans 15:7 says, we are to accept one another as Christ accepted us...even though we are far from perfect. However, as you offer your spouse acceptance in spite of their weaknesses, you build into your relationship stepping-stones that lead to oneness and intimacy.

Laziness also can erode intimacy and romance. It is easy to take for granted the faithfulness of your mate and settling for the mundane and mediocre. Early in marriage, tenderness, romance, and thoughtfulness are instinctive and come naturally. Later, though, they require discipline and commitment that cultivates REAL love.

As the intimacy erodes, may the commitment you made at the altar become a reality over the years as you deepen your love for one another. Most of all, may you never pull out the newspaper on a dinner date!