

In part one, we examined the first two factors. From my experience in working with couples that often go into making a great marriage, a world class gold medal marriage with the capacity and focus, goal orientation. Now in part two, let's look at the next three factors. The third factor I want to address with you is time. Anyone who's great at what they do, and I don't care if you're an athlete, or a performer, or a musician, an artist. But certainly this is true, in marriage, you have to invest time to what it is you're doing. Time is the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future to plan or arrange when something should happen or be done. That sounds intentional to me. In Galatian 6, Paul said, what, Let us not lose heart in doing good for in due time. We will reap if we don't grow weary. Time in today's culture and society that's fast paced. Push button, instant everything is a precious commodity. I know it is. To me, I'm busy. I'm sure you're busy, and I'm sure the couples we work with are very busy. So time is a precious thing, and how we allocate it and how we invest it says a lot about what the priorities in our life are. It's also true for a marriage, and let me say this, Great marriages don't happen in a vacuum, they just don't. Couples who are great and healthy take the time to be a couple. They take the time to be together, talk together. It's always amazing to me and maybe I'm going to pick on the guys a little bit more. It's always amazing to me. Some of my guy friends growing up, you know, they met the woman of their dreams and oh my goodness, they'll talk about, hey, I spent 3 hours talking to so and so on the phone I walked around all day with her while she shopped, carrying her coat and her purse. And they loved it, they couldn't get enough of it. Right after the de it's like the wife is saying, could I have 10 minutes of your time? You know, where were the three hour conversations we had when we were dating? Men are great pursuers. Once we catch what we're after, sometimes we have to be diligent to continue to pursue Ecclesiastics. 31 Solomon said there's an appointed time for everything and there's a time for every event under the heaven. So let me say this. No shortcuts to having a great marriage. There's no shortcuts to having a healthy marriage. It takes the investment of time. I'm Italian, which means I like olives. Among other things. I learned this about olive growers. Olive growers, when they plant their trees for the very first time, they will intentionally pick off the buds early in spring so it won't go to fruit or flower for the first seven years. Now if I'm an olive grower, I got to produce olives and sell olives to sustain and pay my bills. Then I want olives. And the sooner, the better. Imagine for a minute, if you invested in this business, that this is how you make your livelihood for the first seven years you're investing just time. Why do they do that? Because they want all the growth and all the health to go into the root system, into the stock of that olive tree. Because they know in the arid desert regions where olives tend to grow, where there's a lot of drought and a lot of disease promotion, they need a healthy tree that will produce for them for decades. They're willing to invest the time for the future results that they might get as an olive grower. I think it's a great metaphor. Alan Redpath, who wrote a book on the life of David called The Making of a Man of God. He said this in the preface of his book, which is an interesting comment. He said, the salvation of a soul is the miracle of a moment, but the making of a St. is the task of a lifetime. In other words, God can do something in a moment to bring something into life, but to in essence, give it substance takes a lifetime. Well, I can take that principle that Alan Redpath shared in his book, Into Marriage. I could say the miracle of the moment is the introduction as husband and wife at the altar. Is the walking down the aisle is the kiss after, uh, a preacher does the vows. That's sort of the miracle of the moment. Wow. A marriage was just created here in front of God in these witnesses. But the making of a marriage, the making of a marriage is the task of a lifetime. There's nothing miraculous about walking down an aisle. It doesn't automatically produce a great marriage. Marriages may be blessed in heaven, but they're often forged right here on the Earth. And so we have to talk with couples. How are you taking this precious commodity of time and investing it into your relationship? The fourth factor I want to talk about is Perseverance, or long suffering perseverance is defined this way. Steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. Tenacity determination and staying power marriages today in the culture we live in, need a sense of tenacity, staying power determination, because there are so many things that push against the health and well being of a marriage. If you're familiar with the website Ashley Madison, this is a website designed for married couples on how to have an affair. And hundreds, if not thousands, if not tens of thousands of people have access that website. There are all kinds of things that come against the health and well being of a marriage. Again, every marriage, the longer two people walk together, life is such. We live in a fallen world, a broken world. Tragedy happens. Grief and loss happens. Sinful choices are made. No couple is necessarily immune from the storms of life. Are they? The sun shines on the good and the evil. If you look at Matthew seven, when Jesus is talking about a wise man building on the solid rock, foolish man building on the sand. And when the storms come, obviously the house that's built on rock survives. And the one built on the sand doesn't. As I'm reading that, I understand the connotation of rock and sand, hearing what God has to say, and actually implementing it, which is a lesson in all of itself. But I'm also reminded of this. The

storm came against both houses. There's no guarantee, because a couple says we have a Christian marriage, or we both have a faith or a trust in God that we're going to be immune from the storms of life. Every couple is going to be challenged and have to learn how to push through and persevere some of the hardships that just come with living on this side eternity. Paul said this in a Philippians 310. He says that he's talking about knowing God in the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering. And I'm glad he says not that I've already obtained it. I like that now if God can use Paul to write most of the New Testament and he says, hey, I'm not there yet then relax. It's okay that our couples can say, hey, I've been at this for a while, I'm still working it out. But I like this even though he says he's not become perfect. He says, I do press onward. I do press onward to the higher calling of Christ Jesus in my life. It's that pressing onward ability in couples that often help produce stable and healthy marriages. Success is falling down seven times and getting up eight. And so every couple is going to fall down from time to time. Maybe individually as a spouse, maybe collectively as a couple. They may scrape their knees, they may be in some pain. There may be some discouragement. They may want to give up. They may not want to push on, but they need to do that. I don't really have time to go into it, but part of my own story, again, I'm Italian, right? Ten children is a great start. I come from a big family and in the Italian culture, if someone comes over to your house more than once, they're a cousin, it doesn't matter where they're from. Right. So when I got married, I wanted to have lots of kids. My wife had four miscarriages. Three times she went into full labor and delivered a dead baby. And I know you what you may, and I have a great story and testimony. We're adoptive parents. We have wonderful identical twin sons who are Marines, you know, now in their '30s. But I say that because we had to persevere. I didn't sign up for that when I walked down the aisle. I did not know that, I did not know God was going to cause us to have to journey there, but he did. And every couple will have its own story that they might have to persevere through. Maybe just what they're coming to you in the counseling office is the story that they have to persevere through. So you're going to have to deal with that. Then the fifth element I want to talk about is consistency. Some of the greatest musicians, athletes, performers, artists, leaders that I know of are some of the most consistent people I've ever met. In other words, they never allow themselves to say, I've arrived, I'm done. I can stop continuing to pursue that, which I'm pursuing, they never do that. A lot of people look, for example, at Michael Jordan and say he was one of the most consistently, great free throw shooters in the history of the NBA. I think his career average was in the '90s. And you would say, well, you know, he was just a pretty talented guy. No, what a lot of people didn't realize is that often after practice ended and everyone else hit the showers, he would stay and stand on the free throw line and just continue to practice free throws. Why? So in the game time, he could be consistent. Consistency is defined as this, unwavering adherence to the same principles, course of action, or form. Unwavering adherence. I like that conformity with previous attitudes, behavior, and practice. In other words, what you see is what you get. There's a sense of authenticity. I'm consistently here, you have to couples. Let me actually back up for a. Let me make this point by looking at first Corinthians 15 58. Paul says, therefore, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. We have to help, not to sometimes be abounding occasionally, but always. We have to be ready in season and out of season. As Paul told his son in the faith, Timothy, that takes some discipline. It takes some commitment to the goal and why a couple is continuing to sustain and work on their marriage. Paul said, I've finished the course, I've run the race, I've kept the faith. And yesterday's excellence, if we're not consistent, becomes today's mediocrity and tomorrow's failure. What worked for a couple yesterday, they have to keep employing it tomorrow and the next day and the next day. So it's important that we help them see that marriage, love and passion is like fire. Think about it for a minute. The nature of fire is to go out. If you think about love and passion as fire, that's great, right? But the nature of fire is to self extinguish. If you're familiar with how they fight these vast, big wildfires out west, they'll often take a jump team, a fire team, and land them ahead of the approaching fire, and they actually set another fire. It's called a backfire. That's where we get the phrase, fighting fire with fire. Because when the main fire gets up to what's been burnt, there's nothing left to consume, at least in theory, the fire will self extinguish. Same thing in a marriage. I talk with couples and say you have to consistently put wood on your own marital fire because it's not anyone else's responsibility, no one else walk down the aisle with you. The marriage is yours, you own it. Be consistent, Keep putting wood on your marital fire. If you don't, then that love and that passion and everything you had when you fell in love and were courting each other and got engaged on your honeymoon, it may die down, it may dissipate, it may even self extinguish. And so I talk to couples again about the importance of building the fire, sustaining the fire, and tending the fire. Those three factors, again, right time, perseverance, and consistency go right along with the capacity and the need to set goals in a marriage. Those are the first five. And in part three, we're going to wrap up the last two factors.