

The Secret Ingredient

The secret ingredient in a recipe is always that special something that makes the food taste so good—so out of the ordinary. When people sense that there's something special in a recipe, they probe a little further and ask, "Hey, what's in this?" Bill and I have been asked that question for over 21 years. People have asked us how we stay in love, how our love stays fresh and strong. People ask us for the secret ingredient all the time.

You see, true intimacy involves risk, a risk to open ourselves up and share; a risk to connect our life to another and share; a risk to care, to connect, to accept one another and a huge risk to sacrifice and serve. Where can this strength and courage to plunge in and risk to build a relationship come from? It is a strength that really needs to be more than any one human person can carry off—it is best carried out when a person taps into supernatural strength. The strength God can give to a relationship isn't really so secret because God wants us to know Him and the strength He gives. How can a person tap into God's strength? How can you receive God's love for your own life, and for the marriage you desire to have? Read God's statement of love for you, and simply in prayer, receive God's gift of love.

God's Statement of Love to Us

- I love you and have a plan for you.
 - "I came to give life--life in all its fullness." (John 10:10)
 - "I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of."
(John 10:10, The Message)
 - "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)
- I know you are imperfect so you are separated from my love, our relationship is broken.
 - "All people have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory." (Rom. 3:23)
 - ". . . we've compiled this long and sorry record as sinners. . . and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us . . ." (Rom. 3:23, The Message)
 - "And when a person knows the right thing to do but does not do it, then he is sinning." (James 4:17)
 - It is your evil that has separated you from your God. Your sins cause him to turn away from you. . ."
." (Isaiah 59:2)
- I love you so I, who am perfect, paid the price for your imperfection so I could restore our relationship.
 - "But Christ died for us while we were still sinners. In this way God shows his great love for us. We have been made right with God by the blood of Christ's death. So through Christ we will surely be saved from God's anger. I mean that while we were God's enemies, God made friends with us through the death of his Son. Surely, now we are God's friends. God will save us through his son's life." (Romans 5:8-10)

"Christ had no sin. But God made him become sin. God did this for us so that in Christ we could become right with God." (I Cor. 5:21)

"Christ himself died for you. And that one death paid for your sins. He was not guilty, but he died for those who are guilty. He did this to bring you all to God." (I Peter 3:18)

"The greatest love a person can show is to die for his friends." (John 15:13)

- To initiate this new relationship, all you need to do is to accept my payment for your imperfection. I cannot make you love me, that is your choice.

"I mean that you have been saved by grace because you believe you did not save yourselves. It was a gift from God. You cannot brag that you are saved by the work you have done. God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people. . . ." (Eph. 2:8-10)

"If you use your mouth to say, "Jesus is Lord" and if you believe in your heart God raised Jesus from death, then you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

"And this is eternal life: that men can know you, the only true God, and that men can know Jesus Christ, the One you sent." (John 17:3)

To accept God's love for you, talk to him and tell him, let him lead the decision-making part of your life. This is a sample prayer:

Jesus, I am sorry I have chosen to live apart from you. I want you in my life. I accept the payment of love you gave for me by your death on the cross. Thank you for being my best friend and my God.

Bill and I have seen in our own life, and in the lives of countless other marriages, that the source and strength to love springs from the love God first gives us. We sign all of our books with the same verse that was etched into the wedding gifts we gave each other: We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)