

**A HANDBOOK OF PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP
IN YOUR MARRIAGE**

By G. H. Strauss

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A Few Words About Principles and Pictures

Life is sure to bring you many relationships, but I don't think any human relationship is more important or more challenging than the one that will develop in your marriage. In writing these principles I understand that every relationship is unique and that generalities such as these could seem irrelevant to your specific situation, but they are intended to help you see past your specific circumstances to a bigger picture, a picture that has enabled me to make sense of my own marriage. It is certainly important for you to find your own way in life, but life is full of possibilities that can be hidden by inexperience or well worn habits.

This handbook is intended to simply suggest some of these possibilities for you to explore. These principles may seem unnatural at first, but they are intended to stimulate your thinking, not provide simplistic answers. As you think about them you may find some of the principles will have immediate application while others will be more useful later. Start with any part you prefer. The format will make it easy for you to pick and choose your own path through these principles. As you explore one area it will lead you to another. Like a puzzle coming together the picture will become more obvious as you add the pieces.

This handbook is not intended to produce cookie cutter marriages. The general ideas here will give you the tools you need to begin painting your own unique picture. You should realize that you may need to put aside some preconceived notions. You might even need to start over in a few areas. Regardless of where you are in the development of your marriage relationship, my hope is that these principles will equip you and encourage you to become the most beautiful picture you can be: Ultimately, you will find this is a picture that only God can design.

PART I. So Which Part of Commitment Don't You Understand

Unfortunately, relationships depend on commitment. Even more unfortunate is that many people don't realize the quality of a relationship depends on the quality of the commitment. This is never more evident than in the marriage relationship. A marriage is commonly believed to represent a deep, rich relationship because it is based on a sincere, public commitment of two individuals. But commitment is not a ceremony nor is it simply a matter of sincerity or good intentions. It is actually an attitude with a daily impact. The qualities of this attitude will color the whole relationship. The following principles will help you understand and develop what I believe are the two most important qualities in your marriage commitment.

Chapter 1. It sounded better before you said "unconditional"

PRINCIPLE #1: Make sure your commitment is unconditional

To some, "unconditional" commitment is merely a romantic ideal that has very little to do with day to day life. To me it is precisely this quality that makes commitment relevant to daily living and profoundly important to your marriage relationship. The following points will help you check your concept of unconditional commitment and how to apply it to your marriage.

-Check your concept of unconditional.

Unconditional commitment doesn't lock two people together like a chain: it is an attitude that aims you towards each other. It is the perpetual tendency to gravitate towards one another no matter what the circumstances are like around you. In some mysterious way, as it draws you together it actually unlocks the qualities that facilitate personal and relational growth without ever demanding it. In other words, it's not a lock it's a key.

Unconditional commitment is an acknowledgment of the privilege of living your life with someone. It is not feeling stuck with someone for the rest of your life. It is not a defensive position taken to hold off problems, it is an offensive position that takes whatever time is necessary to work through the problems of life.

Unconditional commitment is not the same as mutual dependence or good chemistry. The feeling that you can't live without someone may seem to be a good reason to get married but it is not the same as unconditional commitment. It may come as a shock to find that your mate can't meet all your needs and if this is the basis for the relationship, in the end you will be very disappointed.

-Check the roots of your commitment

For some, the roots of commitment are in feelings of hopefulness, sincerity, satisfaction, compatibility, tradition, or even appearances. These roots invariably produce a "circumstantial" type of commitment. Even though strong feelings may have brought you together and are an important part of a relationship, your relationship must be built on choices that come from something deeper. Only with its roots in personal character will commitment develop unconditional qualities because this development requires strength that cannot come from feelings. With time commitment will grow into a way of life that sustains you despite your circumstances like high quality glue that is not affected by the elements, the weight it has to bear, or the length of time it must hold. Strength of character is the foundation of your marriage. This strength is obtained by your personal pursuit of virtue. It may sound a little old fashioned but it's the only way to get there.

-Check the appearance of your commitment

Commitment is an attitude that can't be hidden. Unconditional commitment is demonstrated by trust, patience, respect, hope, and contentment. On the other hand, impatience, disrespect, and discontent with your mate could mean there is some degree of conditional commitment. These qualities actually reveal a little bit of the nature of your commitment and can help you see your progress or remind you of your lack of it.

PRINCIPLE #2: Unconditional commitment must be given as a gift not as a reward.

-Unconditional commitment is a unique gift

Of the many things you will give during your lifetime nothing is so extraordinary as unconditional commitment. It is a gift that is constantly used but is never used up or worn out. It is of incalculable value to you but worthless unless you give it to someone else. It is a gift for a lifetime but it must be given every day.

-Unconditional commitment is a gift to only one person.

It is not a commitment to the institution of marriage or a gift to yourself nor can it be given to several people. It is a gift extended to only one person in the whole world, your mate. After that, it's all used up. All other commitments will be conditional. Not even your commitment to your children will have this same quality. It is important not to give it lightly.

-Give your unconditional commitment unconditionally

Pride and selfishness are going to make you believe that you deserve something in return for giving this gift, but it is only cheapened by putting a price on it. Commitment becomes oppressive if it is associated with demands. Using it as a reward for getting what you want is manipulative. It's good to have expectations and hopes for a relationship but it's even better to choose commitment above your personal expectations.

PRINCIPLE #3: Unconditional commitment must be received as a gift not as a right.

-You can't demand it, take it, manipulate it, or buy it- it is unconditional.

It is critical to see commitment as a gift not as a right. In fact, demanding commitment has a good chance of undermining the relationship. You lose the very thing you want the most. Security in the relationship comes from accepting what is freely given. No amount of manipulation or financial success can give this to you. The effort of taking from a relationship weakens it. The act of receiving strengthens it.

Just as you can't demand it from someone, you can't force it on anyone either. Unconditional commitment simply cannot function until someone freely accepts it.

-Unconditional commitment is not a guarantee, but accepting a commitment is the choice to live like it is.

Practically speaking accepting a commitment means learning to wait for and facilitate growth rather than demand it. Accepting a commitment means taking responsibility for what you need to do regardless of what it seems like your mate is doing or not doing. It means joyfully embracing the changes your mate goes through rather than wondering why they didn't change sooner. I have found that this is one of the hardest parts of marriage because it requires complete trust as each person goes through many failures.

CHAPTER 2. You mean we can't just hang out together?

PRINCIPLE #4: Make sure your commitment is purposeful.

A marriage based on unconditional commitment is a process. It takes time and patience for the relationship to mature. More importantly, it takes purpose. Commitment is meaningless without being purposeful. Consider why purpose is important.

-The natural direction of a relationship is towards separation. Lack of a common purpose allows you to drift apart.

-The natural direction of the individual is towards self-satisfaction. Making individual needs the top priority will lead to separation. Putting individual goals and needs under a higher purpose for a relationship is critical. Don't pretend personal goals are unimportant but put them in light of what is most important.

-If two individuals can share a common purpose, they most likely will be drawn together. The natural tendency towards separation is overcome and individuality is enhanced. Sharing a common purpose inspires the best in both individuals. A common purpose brings unity.

PRINCIPLE #5: Purposeful commitment requires choosing common goals with your mate.

People who are committed to each other must be going the same general direction in life. Many individuals believe that marriage itself determines this direction for their lives but I do not think this is the case. If you don't have direction for your life before you are married, don't think that marriage will bring some great revelation about this. Confusion will only increase with time. Marriage does not determine the direction for your life. You do! And one thing worse than having no goals at all is having goals that are unrealistic or misguided. Don't forget that it is never too late to choose goals.

Critically consider the following examples of personal goals:

-self-fulfillment: This goal is impossible to share with someone else (since this is about "self") but it can result in mutually compatible lives that stay on parallel tracks for some time. Do you really want to spend your whole life chasing your own elusive dreams?

-fulfilling someone else's dreams desires: Many people give up their personal goals for another only to find that they are lacking in a goal that can be shared. It may be okay to give up personal goals but only for the sake of higher goals. Otherwise it leads to loss of individuality. Trying to be the perfect husband/wife as defined by your mates needs and wants usually leads to frustration. Do you want to spend your whole life trying to make someone else happy?

-personal happiness: This is certainly an attractive goal and consistent with basic human instincts, but it tends to elude those who pursue it. Will what makes you happy now still make you happy later?

-NOT being like parents or others: Generally a goal needs to be positive. Do you want to spend your life running away rather than towards something?

-having a family: This goal is most likely attainable but it is vague and not fully under your control. What if you can't have children? What about when the children leave? What if the family is not the way you expected it to be?

-some religious cause: This may be good so far as the "cause" is concerned but is too limited in scope. What will you do if you can't pursue your cause or you loose interest?

Each of these goals raises serious questions. I would suggest the following as the best choice. There is no question it is difficult to achieve, but in my mind, it is the most reasonable choice of all.

Consider a lifelong focus on following the historic Jesus*: I believe this is the best goal for a couple to share in marriage. It is a goal you can share for a lifetime. It is a goal that moves you away from defining your relationship based only on each other (and consequently each others faults) and moves you towards something bigger. Jesus is the source of love and the best example of the principles that make relationships work. Focusing on Him results in humility and patience by connecting you with the only one who is able to cause growth.

**Why Jesus?: He is the only one who offers heaven later and life now as a gift. Receiving it does not depend on being worthy; it is ours for the asking. He can make this offer because he claimed to be God and the only way to God. These claims are based on the historical facts. He showed no evidence of craziness and it is extremely unlikely that he and hundreds of followers would continue to die for a lie perpetuated over hundreds of years. Jesus makes a legally defensible claim to be God. While this is not scientifically provable (this would require the ability to produce the same set of events now to test the hypothesis that Jesus was who he claimed to be), history has never found evidence of fraud, abuse of power, or evidence of fabrication. Faith is choosing to trust what you cannot see. It doesn't mean accepting the irrational or impossible.*

PRINCIPLE #6: Purposeful commitment requires hard work, consistency, and truth

-Marriage is a purposeful process like gardening.

You provide good soil for your marriage garden when you give and receive unconditional commitment. Your hope is that your garden will grow as planned, but like any garden it requires hard work to reap the rewards. In the end, what you reap is what you sow.

-Plant seeds of truth

We all grow from “seeds” planted in our minds by various experiences and observations. Unfortunately, these "seeds" may or may not yield the desired fruit. It is important to sort through these seeds so that those which are consistent with the purpose for your garden can be allowed to grow. I believe that this "sorting" process is essentially learning to separate truth from lies. Needless to say, lies bear bad fruit while truth bears good fruit. But more important (and contrary to current thinking) is the fact that truth is actually discernable, absolute, and relevant to our daily lives. The source of propositional truth is God's word and when seeds of this truth are planted in your life, they yield great reward. Nothing has had a greater influence on my life than the word of God, the bible.

-Carefully and patiently cultivate your commitment by choosing what you say and do.

Growth of your marriage garden is not guaranteed by commitment. Careless behavior can make the soil hard and rocky. Words said in anger can unintentionally damage the growing plants. Beware! Weeds will grow if you stop cultivating your relationship or expect it to take care of itself. The fruit of your commitment can be easily hidden or choked out. Don't expect your mate to tend the garden alone. It needs consistent attention from both partners.

-Jesus causes the growth

Despite all the effort you put into it, only God can cause growth to occur. Those who understand this, learn to wait patiently for the fruit. The seeds of truth planted in the ground of unconditional commitment, cultivated with careful choices in what you do and say, creates an emotional “environment” for the growth that God promises to cause in His time.

PART II. ARE WE THERE YET?

A marriage based on unconditional, purposeful commitment is poised for growth. Unfortunately, while commitment can give you security it does not guarantee success. The issues of daily life can slowly undermine even the best foundation and goals. How do you deal with different personal styles, strengths and weaknesses, and basic personality differences? How do you build a relationship on the foundation of commitment? The building process requires skill at handling issues in at least four main areas: personal rights, communication, personal roles and responsibilities, and problem solving. The following principles will help you develop these skills.

Chapter 3. The nuts and bolts of a committed relationship.

PRINCIPLE #7: Commitment based marriage is about giving up personal rights.

There are several ways of thinking about personal rights. These are often handed down from one generation to the next and frequently are at least partially unconscious. This makes them difficult to deal with for most couples. Use the following to consider how you want to deal with the issue of rights. Make sure it is consistent with your commitment and direction.

a. Competition for rights:

In this system you find the door mat wives and hen pecked husbands. One person's rights are usually highly dominant. Individuals typically demonstrate highly manipulative behavior, aggressive behavior, or passive/aggressive behavior as the weaker individual fights for survival and the dominant one fights to maintain control.

b. Balanced or equal rights:

In this system you find couples living parallel lives. They interact on an as needed basis. There is no real need for depth in the relationship since each individual is self-sufficient. Many needs are met outside the relationship by material things or other people. This type of relationship often has a business-like quality to it and can look like a game of "you do your thing and let me do mine". Subtle lies and manipulation are the normal type of communication as each individual tries to make sure they get their fair share.

c. No rights:

The word for this system is love. It is based on an unconditional commitment to extend yourself towards your mate regardless of your personal rights. Such a system results in a paradoxical way of living. It results in commitment without oppression and meets needs without making demands. It brings hope without stirring expectations and finds the best when things are the worst. It endures all things without expecting anything, it is completely vulnerable but strong and fearless, and it enhances individuality while denying self. The need to justify is replaced with humility. The need to compare and find fault is replaced with grace.

Jesus is the best example of how to love. His teachings explain the necessity of a moral framework for love ("love your neighbor as yourself"), the necessity of universal application of love to all people ("love your enemies"), and the cost of love ("this is love that you lay down your life for your friends"). His promises and teachings provide hope and guidance for the relationship.

There is no balancing of rights or competition when the choice is made to give up your rights and follow Jesus example of love. The husband and wife who have set aside their personal rights today will have no serious problem living with each other tomorrow.

PRINCIPLE #8: Commitment based marriage is about skillful communication

Communication is the practical “stuff” of every relationship. Commitment and love are fundamentally important but communication is where the rubber meets the road. Unfortunately, it is also painfully obvious that the mouth is the most difficult part of you to control. The sooner you make it a priority to work on, the better. The principles that follow will help you understand communication and learn how to use it to help your marriage grow.

a. The act of communication

-“I am not yelling!”

Your words have a profound power over life. Everything about life is affected by how honest you are, how clearly you say what you mean to say, and what you choose to talk about. But our words are certainly not the only way we communicate. Everyone knows that even a person who is saying nothing may be yelling loudly. Body language is also powerful and responsible for the majority of what you communicate. Your behavior over a period of time is the loudest communication about your values to others, especially your children and your mate.

-“I said, 'I love you' didn't I!”

Every personality expresses itself differently. Some are quicker than others to process information. In addition, everyone carries baggage with them from their past that can load certain words or phrases with unusual meanings that can make them land mines in a relationship. To make things even more complicated, men speak a different language than woman. In fact, your mate may speak several languages. There is a love language, a needs language, and a language of anger to name a few. Each one has its own vocabulary that you need to figure out.

-“We never talk any more”.

Day to day communication usually has an emphasis on problem solving, decision making, and routine activities. Men usually have this as their forte and often think this is the only communication they need with their wives - the rest should be “understood”. Hinting or assuming is miscommunication waiting to happen.

While casual communication is an important part of a relationship, do not depend on it for all the relationship needs to grow. Communication can and should occur on a deep level with your mate. Deeper communication is primarily concerned with understanding and respect rather than problem solving. It usually has an emphasis on personal thoughts and feelings. Women usually have this as their forte and may feel that their husband never talks to them if he has not learned to talk on this level. Remember that everyone has a great need to be understood. This type of communication opens the door for trust, romance, sex, and growth because it is the basis for understanding in the relationship. It is the most important communication in a relationship but is often the least tended to.

b. The art of communication

Communication is a learned skill not an innate ability. It is an art that requires practice. Don't equate talkativeness with the ability to communicate. In fact, talkative people may have trouble learning to use their words to say what they mean.

In a marriage, communication is different than in any other situation and always requires some adjustments from both people. This is a fact necessitated by the uniqueness of a relationship based on unconditional commitment between two very different people. You can't use pre-marriage or business skills to make marriage communication happen. Even dating communication skills are different than what you need for marriage. The following are some skills you may need to learn with your mate.

- Practice active listening

Remember words are limited in meaning. Watch for non-verbal clues. Use eye contact even for casual communication as much as possible. Listen with your face. It is the responsibility of the one listening to seek understanding. It is not enough to ask your mate if they want to talk. Let them know that you want to listen! Explore rather than evaluate. Give feedback and check your understanding. Don't expect them to say things the same way that you would. Study your mate so that you will know and appreciate your differences.

-Establish connection through communication

The most important thing you must do with your communication is establish connection with your mate. Connection is about oneness not sameness. It sorts out differences with respect. It involves a heightened awareness of the way your mate thinks and feels about subjects that are important to them and not necessarily you. Connection requires vulnerability and therefore, is dependant on trust.

Connection occurs through deep communication. You must understand that this type of communication is a time consuming process, not a one time emotional event. The process begins with an attitude of mutual respect that grows out of the choice to base your marriage on unconditional commitment. It always includes encouragement, affirmation of love which grows out of following Jesus, and it always requires active listening. Try to stick with the here and now and not what should or shouldn't be or how you should or shouldn't feel. It is strictly about understanding and respect.

Sometimes you have to agree on certain words to use to facilitate understanding. Don't be concerned that it may seem artificial if you are just trying this for the first time. Do not try to "act" like you have certain feelings or pretend you don't have feelings about something when you do. Don't forget that your actions must be consistent with your words. Doing what you should do despite your feelings communicates commitment.

Make it a point to provide the best setting you can for talking. Avoid trying to have a heart to heart talk in the dark, while watching TV, or in the car. Avoid the "if we have time" trap. Let your mate know that they are your top priority. This does not mean making them the first one you get to after all your other priorities! It is not the same as bringing home a paycheck for your wife or providing sex for your husband. Put your mate before the children and before your career. Don't put them on a pedestal but do put them first. Let them know that they are your favorite person even though they are not perfect. Our imperfections make this one of the hardest things to do. It is not your job to fix your mate. Avoid demands, criticism, and comparisons. Marriage is not another "job" with its own goals and objectives. Let your relationship become its own unique picture of love and commitment that you paint together.

Chapter 4. So who goes first?

PRINCIPLE #9: Draw lines not boxes.

These principles about commitment, love, and communication must be applied equally by both the husband and wife, but when it comes down to it, how do you get started? How do you draw the lines?

-The husband and wife must recognize and embrace the differences in how they relate and use these differences to the advantage of the relationship. I am not talking about who does the dishes or who takes out the trash. I am talking about accepting the distinct roles in the relationship each will have because of who they are. Commitment based marriage lived skillfully in love requires separating and maintaining individual roles but does not mean losing individuality.

- Avoid assigning character roles based on weaknesses or problems. This tends to put people in boxes where they can't or won't grow. Assigning the husband or wife to pigeon holes such as the unromantic husband, the cold fish wife, or excusing some inappropriate behavior because it is "a guy thing" or "a woman thing", can wind up leading to serious problems.

-Applying and consistently using these principles will require a leader and a responder. It's a common mistake for a couple to think of themselves as 50/50 partners or co-leaders. This may work out fine for many aspects of married life but when it comes to the relationship, you can't both lead. There are only two of you and one must be a responder.

PRINCIPLE #10: The man goes first.

-The man must take the initiative to resolve conflict. Be watchful for problems and address them gently. Be quick to ask forgiveness and seek connection even if your wife is trying to avoid you. No pouting!

-The man must take the initiative to promote the relationship. Women are easily distracted by children and their own god given emotions. Keep the big picture in mind. Look for opportunities to make memories together. Always seek to please your wife before yourself. Show good manners.

-The man must take the initiative to meet the woman's needs. If you go first in meeting her needs, she will be free to meet yours. Protection and provision are usually her two most important needs. She needs to feel secure and free to respond.

-The husband must be careful that he does not make money the most important issue or a point of control. The wife has entrusted you with all that she has. All you have should also belong to her and she should know it. Generally, it is not a good idea to have your own little stash for stuff but separate accounts sometimes work well for accountability. Be willing to share control with the attitude that money is a gift to both of you from God. Make sure that large expenditures are a mutual decision. If there are spending problems, seek accountability outside of the relationship. Don't depend on credit to solve your problems.

-The husband must above all consistently respect, honor, cherish, and promote his wife. Be her biggest supporter. Your wife should feel that she is the most special person in the world because of your attitude towards her. Your encouragement should show in private and in public. Treat her with tenderness physically, sexually, and emotionally.

PRINCIPLE #11: The woman is the responder.

-The wife must respond wholeheartedly. Resentment and reluctance are the wrong choice. They communicate disrespect. It's okay to disagree but do so with an attitude of wanting the best for both of you and assuming the best of your husband

-The wife must respond responsibly. You have been entrusted with all that belongs to your husband. Accepting this trust involves acting responsibly on his behalf. If you have a problem with spending it is your responsibility to get help from your husband or someone else. Don't let money become the issue- "if you just gave me more money I would be happy". Materialism kills relationships.

-The wife must ready to respond actively. Take a proactive position. You may need to be the one who goes first when love is the higher priority in caring for your husband. He will not carry out his role perfectly and may require help. This must be done without any nagging and only as much as is needed to get him going.

-The wife must respond with grace. There is never any place for "I told you so's". Let Jesus be in charge of the outcomes. Always see him as the one ultimately in control. Let your behavior speak louder than your words.

-The wife must above all respond appreciatively and respectfully. Lack of gratitude or respect can lead to a walls developing in your relationship. You could wind up pushing your husband out of his role and out of your life if you aren't careful. There's only room for one leader.

CHAPTER 5. What About Me?

PRINCIPLE #12: The only person you are in charge of is you.

-Take care of yourself. Your mate should not have to do this for you. A key requirement for applying all these principles is the willingness of each individual to take responsibility for themselves. Commitment based marriage lived skillfully in love requires maintaining personal responsibility along with marriage responsibility. Remember that your responses are your responsibility.

-Pursue your own relationship with Jesus. Get to know him for your own sake. Don't go to church just because it's good for your marriage. Live like God is in charge of your life. Each time you take responsibility and take a step, the Lord can direct your way. Jesus is not a marriage builder: He is a people builder. Remember that personal growth must accompany the growth of your relationship. Be sure to make it a priority to plant and cultivate seeds of truth in your own life.

-Communicate what you believe you need to make your commitment work. Don't leave this to guesswork. Don't assume that your mate should somehow be able to figure this out. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Argue respectfully and without making accusations. Always assume love and concern for your well being. If this is not true, it will become obvious.

-Seek help if you can't deal with a problem. Don't waste a lot of time trying to fix yourself. Seek the resources you need. Having weaknesses is not irresponsible- not seeking help is! Make prayer a vital part of your life.

-Make your commitment and love a daily choice. Don't settle for good enough. Don't let little problems turn into big ones. Don't work on your relationship tomorrow. Do it today.

Principle #13: When one gets stuck you both start over.

Relationships can wind up in a sort of stalemate condition very easily. The pain of dealing with an issue may be great and the ability to communicate about it may be limited. Solutions for fixing the problem may be impossible. The natural response is often to retreat. Consider how to rely on your commitment and love to get started again.

- The best solution sometimes is taking personal responsibility for not being able to deal with a problem immediately.

Don't make it the other person's responsibility by blaming them and don't feel like you're failing because you haven't arrived yet. It's okay to agree to wait on dealing with a problem in some cases but it must be by agreement. You can't fix a problem in the relationship by yourself. Remember that mercy triumphs over judgment. Remember that both of you have unresolved problems- don't make one person's problem the center of the relationship.

- Connect first, solve second.

It takes a lot of patience when problems occur to first make sure that there is understanding and respect. But most conflict can only be resolved on this deeper level because it is on this level that understanding occurs rather than just problem solving. This level of communication is not about who is right or wrong. It is about commitment and love. Learn to identify the deeper problems and issues. Like peeling an onion, sometimes you must work through the layers of a Problem to find the core feelings that must be addressed for resolution to occur.

- Allow time for rebuilding trust.

Rebuilding is a long and scary process with no guarantees. It is critical that you keep your eyes on Jesus rather than watching each others progress. Growth is never fast enough humanly speaking. Remember that trust cannot be based simply upon a promise to change. Promises only have power if there is already trust. Forgiveness is the responsibility of the one who has been hurt. Give it as a gift to your mate because of commitment to the relationship, not because they deserve it. Remember that forgiveness does not mean consequences are eliminated. It does mean the relationship is restored and the commitment is re-affirmed.

-Seek help.

Accountability and encouragement of friends or professional help can keep you from giving up when you cannot see any hope. Always use problems as a chance to get to know Jesus better.

EPILOGUE

My hope is that all who read this will come to understand these principles that have given me the most wonderful human relationship I can imagine. I would never want their relationships to be the same as mine- each one will be unique. But if these principles and how I have lived them can help them learn more about how to live and love as I have, I will be enormously satisfied.