Marriage is a Team Effort
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Anyone who watches a sport’s franchise realizes that it takes time to build a dynasty. Work begins slowly with the fundamentals and builds one strength upon another. With team effort marriage can yield high levels of comfort, support and satisfaction.

A. Challenges of Becoming a Team Player

When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.

A1. Less blaming each other for our problems
A2. Less ignoring each other
A3. Fewer disagreements popping up without warning
A4. Less criticism of each other’s abilities or beliefs
A5. Less putting each other down as a person, parent, etc.
A6. Fewer strong emotions dominating troublesome issues
A7. Less raging in anger

B. Building a Team

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other’s cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but not from the same loaf.

More of these
B1. Saying/hearing “thank you” for everyday tasks
B2. Listening without trying to fix each other’s problems
B3. Apologizing for mistakes made
B4. Gently introducing troublesome issues
B5. Seeing each other’s point of view, even though we disagree
B6. Respectfully withdrawing from distressing arguments intending to return when emotions cool down
B7. Appreciating what is at stake in this relationship
C. Building a Winning Team

Sing and dance together and be joyous,
but let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of the lute are alone
though they quiver with the same music.

More of these
C1. Giving equal importance to each other’s feelings, values, and beliefs
C2. Seeking and accepting invitations for closer connection
C3. Creating safe “relationship space” for each other
C4. Risking and sharing feelings of inadequacy, fear, hurt or isolation
C5. Comforting and listening to each other’s deeper feelings and concerns

D. Building a Dynasty

Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow.

More of these
D1. Expressing curiosity in each other’s activities
D2. Holding on to our own dreams
D3. Supporting each other’s dreams that are different from our own
D4. Standing up for ourselves without putting each other down
D5. Accepting the things in life that cannot be changed
D6. Seeking agreement with each other about the “meaningful” things of life
D7. Shifting from a life of constant “doing,” to a life of peaceful “being”

The poetry is from “The Prophet” by Kahlil Gibran, 1923
The items A-D are based, in large part, on the work of John Gottman, in “Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work,” 1999.

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