

Eric Gist

Calloway Smith Middle School

Teacher: Sequau Malone

District 1

### “What Is a Successful Marriage?”

I remember reading that 3 out of 5 married couples never make it to four years of marriage because of cheating, arguing, or money problems. I was surprised because I know many successful marriages. However, it is the marriage of my grandparents, Louis and Earnestine Rivers that I want to write about. They have been married for over 50 years. When I asked my granddad how they met, he said that after a religious meeting, my grandmother and a group of friends went out to eat. He says he and my grandmother had a great conversation and because of that my grandmother wanted to see more of him. They began dating. Then he says she fell in love with him. So she just had to marry him. Of course my grandmother says the same story with a different twist. I laugh every time I think about it.

My granddad and grandmother are both hard working people. They are not lazy, and they pay all of their bills no matter how tight money is in the house. He is a technician and a mechanic. My grandmother has a sewing company where she sews things for weddings and things like that. They don't argue about the bills because everything is split 50/50. She pays half and he pays half. What is left over is used on each other and grandchildren. For example, after they leave the Kingdom Hall on weeknights they take turns treating each other to Red Lobster or O Charlie's. My grandmother says she always wants to show herself thankful for the hard work my granddad does. Occasionally, when she is not too tired, she surprises him with one of three of his favorite seafood dishes, lobster, fried seafood, or a gumbo. Sometimes my grandmother would be surprised with a home cooked dinner, flowers or chocolate from Wal-Mart. My granddad wants my grandmother to know that he loves her and cares for her.

I always see my granddad and grandmother teasing each other about silly things like the time my granddad bought glasses that made his eyes look like moons. They are always kissing and hugging each other. They loved to play the card game Spades. My grandparents didn't play a card when they were supposed to, but the other couple didn't catch it. They should have lost, but they didn't say anything and my grandparents won the game. They found that so funny and laughed about it for days.

All of my granddad and grandmother's children are grown. They have three boys and one girl, my mom. It was her responsibility to take care of washing their clothes, cooking, homework and things like that. She took the bible command that women should be good workers at home taking care of their husbands and children. He also took the command seriously about husbands should be loving their wives not being bitterly angry with them and presiding over their households in a fine manner. So my granddad took responsibility for studying the bible with his wife and his children. This is also the reason why both of them took each other's responsibility on when the other was sick, hurt, or just not feeling

well. Believe it or not my grandmother took my granddad's spot on the riverfront while he was out sick. They always had each other's back!

They were not without problems. My grandmother hated it when my granddad fed the dogs. She thought they were vicious and would one day hurt my granddad. One day my granddad was attacked by one of the dogs and the dog had to be put to sleep. This hurt my granddad so badly. Instead of my grandmother telling him "I told you so," she encouraged him to get another dog. I believe that this was hard to do because I wanted to say, "I told you so," to him. I didn't always know what they were arguing about, but my granddad said, "Earnestine, we're not going to go to sleep mad." My grandmother would always say that when you don't forgive you could start to hate that person. "Eric, Jehovah God forgives me for my mistakes, so I might as well forgive your granddad."

I also saw them stick together in bad times. My granddad's mother learned she had cancer and my granddad and grandmother had to take care of her. This was hard and we all had to come together as a family to help them. Sometimes my granddad and grandmother got upset with each other, but what I saw is that they would just be quiet in the middle of the fuss rather than continue an argument where one would say something to hurt the other.

I have learned so many things from them. I learned that God should be real in your marriage. I learned by example that you have to make time for your husband or wife. You have to do nice things to them. You have to be respectful. You have to share everything. I also know that humor is important in keeping a marriage strong. I also learned about the part of the marriage vow when it says, "until death do you part." Although I talk about my granddad as if he were still alive, my granddad died four years ago from cancer. My grandmother has not remarried. Even though she understands he is dead, her religious beliefs comfort her. She says Jehovah is a God of the living. Therefore, my granddad is alive in her memory. She hopes to see him again in the resurrection that the bible promises of both the righteous and unrighteous.