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# revive

Volume 48, Issue 2

# becoming one



**THE DIVINE  
ROMANCE**

Gary Thomas | p. 6

**TWO THINGS YOU NEED  
TO SAY EVERY DAY**

Robert Wolgemuth | p. 10

**WHEN MARRIAGE  
IS HARD**

Real Husbands and Wives | p. 24



# CONTENTS

## COLUMNS

- 03** SPIRIT OF REVIVAL  
*Weathering the Storm*
- 05** CONVERSATIONS  
*Breaking the Crazy Cycle*
- 21** FROM THE HEART  
*Root, Root, Root for the Home Team!*
- 31** NEXT STEP  
*Change Your Purpose Pronouns*

## PERSPECTIVES

- 22** HARD QUESTIONS  
*Why is marriage a "mystery" in Ephesians 5?*
- 28** REAL WORLD  
*Deep Sorrows Meet New Hope*
- 30** MAKING IT PERSONAL  
*Practical application*

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### THE DIVINE ROMANCE

It's so easy to get caught up in the shortcomings of our spouse and in the pressures that everyday life puts on our marriage. This is a challenge to step back and marvel at the design of God-centered marriage.



### TWO THINGS YOU NEED TO SAY EVERY DAY

Like we need daily physical vitamins to strengthen us and ward off sickness, we also need daily verbal vitamins to keep our marriages healthy.



### BROKEN AND SHATTERED

One woman tells her story of learning to participate with God as He rebuilt their marriage from all-out war, to peace and harmony.



### IT'S TIME TO MAN UP!

Is chivalry really dead? Is it true that it has no place in modern society? Be encouraged and challenged as you hear God's heart on the matter.



### WHEN MARRIAGE IS HARD

We would have to be living under a rock to not address the fact that marriage can be hard sometimes, and you need some practical wisdom to navigate it. Hear from real husbands and wives on a variety of topics.

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# WEATHERING THE STORM

► Life Action teaches six biblical responses to God that lead to changed lives and revived marriages.

**Hurricanes Harvey and Irma set catastrophic records this year, unleashing destructive winds and torrential flooding in the United States. In the midst of covering the storms, the news media stumbled upon a curious couple—Harvey and Irma Schluter. Harvey is 102 and Irma is 93. This couple has weathered 75 years of marital storms!**

Is it still realistic to expect that marriages should last that long? When the winds blow and the water level rises, are households really going to stand strong, like Harvey and Irma's has?

I really believe what the late pastor Adrian Rogers once astutely observed:

*As goes the west, so goes the world.  
As goes America, so goes the west.  
As goes the church, so goes America.  
As goes the family, so goes the church.  
As goes the marriage, so goes the family.  
As goes the heart, so goes the marriage.*

*Thriving marriages are necessary not only for the **survival** of the church, but for the **revival** of the church. And revived marriages begin with revived hearts . . . yours and mine.*

That's why Satan's most lethal weapons in his battle to destroy marriage relate to heart issues, not legal ones. The deadly storm surge of selfishness, discontentment, pride, and blame can overwhelm once-healthy relationships in any context—even in church!

Now, let me be honest here: My wife and I do not have a perfect marriage. Like every other married couple, we have to hunker down and do the hard work of resolving conflict and nurturing our marriage. We daily have to ask God for help, especially when we disagree, or when one of us walks on the dark road of selfishness.

But in the storm, God is there. As we humble ourselves and call upon His grace, He faithfully rescues and empowers us to rebuild our relationship and to re-establish the oneness and joy that was lost.

So, whether your marriage today is strong and secure, or it's being battered by hurricane-force challenges, I want to offer a word of challenge to you, husband or wife. Your relationship together can be strengthened in direct proportion to your relationship with God. *The way you respond to Him is directly related to the way you respond to each other.*

Over the years, Life Action has taught churches and families about six biblical responses to God that lead to new life and new beginnings. And, in my experience, they directly apply to marriage!

**Be humble**—to secure God's grace in your marriage (James 4:6).

**Be honest**—to experience healing in your marriage (James 5:16).

**Be repentant**—to ensure God's presence in your marriage (Isa. 57:15).

**Be forgiving**—to avoid bitterness in your marriage (Eph. 4:31-32).

**Be obedient**—to obtain God's blessing in your marriage (Isa. 1:19).

**Be kingdom-minded**—to enjoy fruitfulness in your marriage (Matt. 28:19-20).

Perhaps this issue of *Revive* will spark some important conversations—not so much about marriage generally, but about *your* marriage specifically. Marriage is an amazing gift from God, and as the apostle Paul reminded us in Ephesians 5, it's not just about us. There is a mystery at work as well, something far bigger involved, something about marital relationships that has eternal, theological implications.

Imagine that for a moment: *Your marriage* has eternal, theological implications!

For that reason, and for many others, it's worth fighting for. It's worth your prayers, worth your effort, worth weathering whatever storms may be on the horizon. If your heart is willing, God will give you grace each day, and maybe you'll end up like dear old Harvey and Irma, celebrating 75 years together!

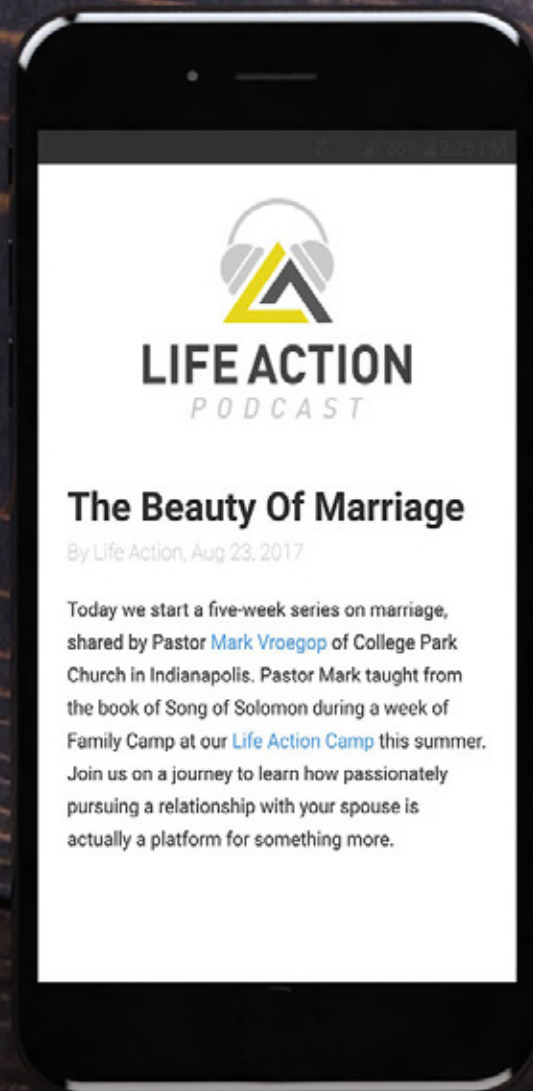


## SPIRIT OF REVIVAL

**Byron Paulus**  
Executive Director / President  
Life Action Ministries

***Thriving marriages are necessary not only for the survival of the church, but for the revival of the church.***

 @ByronPaulus



# *Download Our New App Today!*

*Get our daily devotional, prayer points, core messages, event information, and more all in one place.*





# BREAKING THE CRAZY CYCLE

► Getting your way in the immediate problem is secondary to the priority of your relationship quality. How many battles have we won, only to find ourselves losing the war for oneness?

Albert Einstein left us a famous definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over expecting different results. But his insight doesn't take a genius to understand—anyone who has ever been married already knows the insanity that a downward spiral of marital conflict can become.

Virtually every couple falls into one of two tendencies in dealing with marital conflict. Some of us are escalators. We *pursue* under stress, and our responses are outward. We want to help our marriage by talking things through as soon as possible. When upset, we can get hot under the collar and blow steam.

Conversely, others of us are avoiders. We *withdraw* under stress, and our responses go inward. We would rather help our marriage by waiting for things to cool down or blow over. When upset, we can freeze our partner with emotional and physical distance.

Often there is one of each conflict style in a marriage. And the harder the escalator pursues, the faster the avoider runs. One spouse literally feels like they are chasing the other from room to room!

It would be funny . . . *except it's not*. In fact, ineffective patterns of conflict resolution are frustrating and destructive. Being trapped long enough in a crazy cycle of conflict can lead to feelings of futility and even despair.

The irony is that both escalators and avoiders care about the relationship. The escalators want to “stay connected,” and the avoiders want to “stop fighting.” However, since they misinterpret each other's motivation (and because they are angry!), this crazy cycle is easy to start and hard to escape.

So how do we break sinful patterns of marital conflict?

**1. Calm down!** (Prov. 29:11 – Only a fool gives full vent to his anger!) It's a biological fact that when in marital conflict, your heart rate and blood pressure increase. Remember the “flight or fight” response from high school biology? During marital conflict, your ability to process information,

pay attention, and engage creative thinking dramatically decreases. And when under physical duress, it is *not* a good time to solve marital problems! So DON'T. Take some time to calm down first. (Warning: If you take a break to calm down, make sure you schedule a time to come back and talk things through, or else the break will deteriorate into just another avoidance tactic.)

**2. Remember the point of the argument.** (Eph. 5:28 – He who loves his wife loves *himself*.) The point of any marital argument is not winning—it's *oneness*! Oneness means it is impossible to win if your spouse loses. Your spouse is not the enemy. And getting your way in the immediate problem is secondary to the priority of your relationship quality. How many battles have we won only to find ourselves losing the war for oneness?

**3. Soften your approach.** (Prov. 15:1 – A soft answer *turns away wrath*, but harsh words stir up anger.) Sociological research reveals an astonishing fact of marital conflict: 94% of arguments end *exactly like they began*. That means the first few sentences in a conflict can virtually determine the outcome. So above all, don't start with accusations. Start with “I” vs. “You” statements, and remember to seek to understand as much as you seek to be understood.

**4. Use your brakes.** (Phil. 2:3 – Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.) Research shows that the average time a spouse spends listening before interjecting an opinion is just seventeen seconds! Never offer your opinion until you are confident your spouse feels you have understood them. And remember, you can prevent disaster if you know how to repair when things have gone off track. When you have hurt your spouse, humbly asking forgiveness and reassuring your spouse of your love and commitment will go a long way toward making space for the repeated attempts needed to put things right.

With God's help, let's stop the insanity!

\*Ideas in this article adapted from *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John Gottman.



## CONVERSATIONS

**Del Fehsenfeld III**  
Senior Editor

***Never offer your opinion until you are confident your spouse feels you have understood them.***

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the name 'Del'.

# The Divine Romance

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BY GARY THOMAS



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IF I BELIEVE THE  
PRIMARY PURPOSE OF  
MARRIAGE IS TO MODEL  
GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS  
CHURCH, I WILL ENTER  
THIS RELATIONSHIP  
AND MAINTAIN IT WITH  
AN ENTIRELY NEW  
MOTIVATION.

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## *There is something mesmerizing*

to me about standing beneath a tree that is seven hundred years old. “What was happening here when this tree first started growing?” my daughter asked me as we hiked the western slope of the North Cascades in the state of Washington.

“Not much,” I laughed, stunned by the realization that this tree was nearly two hundred years old when Martin Luther was born.

One of the reasons the trees on the western slope of the Cascades survive so long is quite simple: The Washington forests are so wet that lightning strikes cause relatively few fires. Lightning strikes still come, but they're not as devastating, so trees have had a much longer time to take root and grow.

I think that's a good picture of a strong Christian marriage. All marriages will be struck by lightning—sexual temptation, communication problems, frustrations, unrealized expectations—but if the marriages are heavily watered with an unwavering commitment to *please God* above everything else, the conditions won't be ripe for a devastating fire to follow the lightning strike.

### THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Ask ten people on the street what their goal in life is, and you'll get an amazing variety of answers. Paul answers a lot of questions for us when he says, “We make it our goal to please him” (2 Cor. 5:9). For the Christian, Paul couldn't be clearer—his consuming ambition, the motive force behind all he does, is to please God.

But Paul doesn't just say pleasing God is *his* “consuming ambition,” he assumes it will be *ours* as well: “We make it our goal to please him.” When something is the motive force behind all we do, it becomes the driving force for every decision we make. And Paul is crystal clear: The first question we should ask ourselves when doing anything is, “Will this be pleasing to Jesus Christ?”

The first purpose in marriage—beyond happiness, sexual expression, the bearing of children, companionship, mutual care and provision, or anything else—is to please God. Rather than asking, “What will make me happy?” we are told that we must ask, “What will make God happy?”

The key question is this: Will we approach marriage from a God-centered view or a man-centered view? In a man-centered view, we will maintain our marriage as long as our earthly comforts, desires, and expectations are met. In a God-centered view, we preserve our marriage because it brings glory to God and points a sinful world to a reconciling Creator.



## THE DIVINE ROMANCE

Both the Old and New Testaments use marriage as a central analogy—the union between God and Israel (Old Testament), and the union between Christ and his church (New Testament). Understanding the depth of these analogies is crucial, as they will help us determine the very foundation on which a truly Christian marriage is based. If I believe the primary purpose of marriage is to model God’s love for his church, I will enter this relationship and maintain it with an entirely new motivation.

Paul makes this analogy clear in his letter to the Ephesians. You’ve probably read or heard these words dozens, if not hundreds, of times: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:25-27).

God did not create marriage just to give us a pleasant means of repopulating the world and providing a steady societal institution for the benefit of humanity. The primary reason God designed marriage was to serve as yet another signpost pointing to his own eternal, spiritual existence. If we are consumed with highlighting where our spouses are falling short, we will miss the divine mysteries of marriage and the lessons it has to teach us.

## LIVING THE MYSTERY

Think about this. The very nature of Christ’s work was a reconciling work, bringing us together again with God. Our response is to become reconcilers ourselves. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18).

Clearly Paul is talking about carrying the message of salvation. But we cannot discuss with any integrity the ending of “a relation of enmity” and the dawning of “peace and goodwill” if our marriages are marked by divorce, fighting, and animosity. Everything I am to say and do in my life is to be supportive of this gospel ministry of reconciliation, and that commitment begins by displaying reconciliation in my personal relationships, especially in my marriage.

If my marriage contradicts my message, I have sabotaged the goal of my life: to be pleasing to Christ and to faithfully fulfill the ministry of reconciliation, proclaiming to the world the good news that we can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The last picture I want to give the world is that I have decided to stop loving someone and that I refuse to serve this person anymore, or that I have failed to fulfill a promise I made many years before. Yet this is precisely the message many Christians are proclaiming through their actions.

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**If my marriage  
contradicts my  
message, I have  
sabotaged the goal  
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pleasing to Christ.**

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If my “driving force” is as Paul says it should be, I will work to construct a marriage that enhances this ministry of reconciliation—a marriage that, in fact, incarnates this truth by putting flesh on it, building a relationship that models forgiveness, selfless love, and sacrifice.

One of the reasons I am determined to keep my marriage together is not because doing so will make me happier (although I believe it will); not because I want my kids to have a secure home (although I do desire that); not because it would tear me up to see my wife have to “start over” (although it would). The first reason I keep my marriage together is because my life is based on proclaiming God’s message to the world. I don’t want to do anything that would challenge that message. And how can I proclaim reconciliation when I seek dissolution?

### GOD ON DISPLAY

Knowing *why* we are married and should stay married is crucial. If I’m married only for happiness and my happiness wanes for whatever reason, one little spark will burn the entire forest of my

relationship. But if my aim is to proclaim and model God’s ministry of reconciliation, my endurance will be fireproof.

In a society where relationships are discarded with frightening regularity, Christians can command attention simply by staying married. And when asked why, we can offer the platform of God’s message of reconciliation, followed by an invitation: “Would you like to hear more about that good news of reconciliation?”

In this sense, our marriages can be platforms for evangelism. They can draw people into a truth that points beyond this world into the next. Just by sticking it out in our marriages, we can build a monument to the principle and the practice of reconciliation. 📌




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TWO THINGS YOU NEED TO SAY

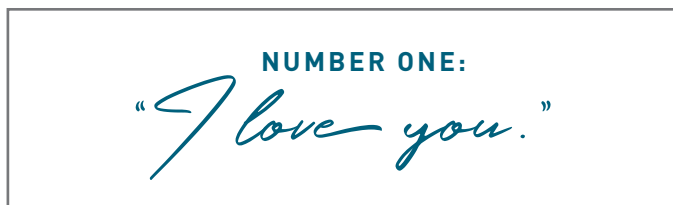
*Every Day*

A couple is sitting on a rocky outcrop, looking out over a vast landscape at sunset. The woman has long, wavy hair and is wearing a dark top. The man is wearing a white t-shirt and a white baseball cap with a logo. The background is a hazy, golden landscape under a bright sky.

**As vitamins nourish and strengthen your body, so are these potent phrases to your relationship.** And they come with the following guarantee: If you begin using them on a regular basis, the results will be profound. Measurable. That's a promise.



BY ROBERT WOLGEMUTH



During my high school years, when I worked at DuPage Photo and Hobby Shop, I became quite the connoisseur of greeting cards. Hallmark had just released its hilarious Contemporary card line (twenty-five cents each), and our store had a terrific selection of them. One of my favorites had a classic illustration of a woman reclining on a chaise lounge. She had this passionate look on her face, and the card read: “Please tell me those magic three words I’ve been longing to hear from you.” Inside, the card read: “Scratch my back.”

Although that one also still makes me smile, as you know, those *aren’t* the magic three words at all. The *real* ones are: “I love you.”

Of course, the impact of these words is clear to everyone. You can flip on your TV and hear a guy going on and on about how much he “loves” his Toyota. Or you can go to a sporting event and hear the fans yell and scream about how much they “love” the Dodgers. You may hear a woman exclaim to her friend how much she “loves those new shoes.”

But there’s nothing to compare with the power when two people are romantically gazing into each other’s eyes, and one of them says, “I love you.” Or when a telephone conversation with someone special ends with “I love you.” Or when you say to your mate over dinner, with all the tenderness and sincerity you can muster, “I love you.”

Remember that “I love you” must be spoken in its entirety and does not count if delivered on the run. A breathless “Love ya” shouted over your shoulder as you dash out of the house with a toasted bagel in one hand and your computer case in the other doesn’t count.

### SOME EXTRA DOSAGE

Many years ago, the marriage expert Walter Trobisch wrote a book called *Love Is a Feeling to Be Learned*. The title says it all, doesn’t it?

Years later, a book was published with the same big idea tucked into its title: *Love Is a Decision*.

If we said “I love you” only when we had chills running up and down our spines, as we did the first time we held hands, we would rarely say it at all. Why? Because getting through a day—and much less a life—means a lot of hard work, daily interruptions, and drudgery: “Clean out the garage.” “You’re late.” “What’s for dinner?” “Are we there yet?” “Oh no, I think I’m going to be sick.”

Add to that, sometimes people act in such a way—whining, arguing, silent, disobedient, distant—that makes them quite *unlovable*.

The titles of these books remind us that love is something we *decide* on and *learn* about and *work* on. **Love is not something we hold out for until everything is in perfect order and the feeling hits us.** No, “I love you” means that regardless of the circumstances, regardless of what has happened, you can count on me.

Let’s pretend that you and I are sitting across the desk from the most popular marriage counselor in town. We ask her about this. “How many couples tell you that their marriage is in trouble because ‘We never loved each other in the first place?’”

The counselor gives us a knowing smile and tells us that many—in some cases, most—of her clients say exactly that.

Are her clients lying? No. This is really how they *feel*. But what they’re actually saying is, “I don’t have that same tingle I had when we first met [or] . . . when we announced our engagement [or] . . . when we got married. It’s been so long that I don’t remember the last time I had that feeling.”

After almost forty-five years of marriage to my late wife Bobbie, and two years of marriage to Nancy, I fully understand this. “I love you” is really “I love you . . . anyway.” “I love you . . . regardless.” “I love you . . . and that’s final.” This is something that comes from our minds as well as our hearts. It’s a feeling to be learned, a conscious decision we make.

## NUMBER TWO:

*"I need your love."*

It's one thing to tell your husband that you love him, but what if you want him to say it to you . . . and he just doesn't? This vitamin will fix that problem.

Very early in my marriage, I learned a painful lesson about unmet expectations. No, actually, I learned many painful lessons about unmet expectations.

For example, one of the things my dad did every year was to give my mother something nice for Christmas. Something practical. As kids, we watched my mother lift a bathrobe or a new blouse out of the box, hold it up with admiration, and with appreciation say, "Oh, Samuel, thank you sooo much."

Question: Do you suspect that I entered marriage with certain expectations?

My late wife's dad, on the other hand, bought her mother not-so-practical and over-the-top gifts like an expensive silver coffee service or a sleek new convertible. Gifts she did not ask for, expect, or particularly need.

Question: Do you suspect that Bobbie entered our marriage with expectations?

Another example: When her family was on a road trip, Bobbie's dad—who was always the driver—pulled the family car over for short diversions. "Scenic Lookout Ahead" or "Pecan Pralines at Stuckey's" or "Flea Market Next Exit" meant an immediate adventure.

It was get off the interstate, find a parking spot, and enjoy. Every time.

Question: Do you suspect that Bobbie entered marriage with expectations about car trips?

My dad considered the time saved on road travel like money in the bank—every precious minute passed at a gas station, like a lost jewel. If we kids weren't back from the potty by the time the tank was filled, we believed the family car would leave without us. This never happened because we never dared to dawdle.

Question: Do you suspect that I entered marriage with different expectations?

After a few years of silent frustration about these and other unmet expectations, my wife and I finally talked. "I need some help in selecting gifts at Christmas," I admitted to her. "I was sure you'd like that hair dryer. I didn't know it would make you cry. I feel as if I failed you on Christmas Day, and I need help."

That gave her the freedom, later on, to say to me, "I would like our car trips to be more fun. I need for you to stop at more rest stops even if we don't make great time."

The point is this: In every marriage, people have expectations. Often these go unmet because no one expresses them. So we mope around, stewing over the fact that our mate isn't doing what we need them to do. Sadly, most mates are seriously inept at mind reading!

**"I need your love" is about putting our unmet expectations into words.** It's the unashamed admission that our relationship is a two-way street. I speak it with the confidence that the person I'm speaking to loves me and wants to do things that make me happy.

When I was a little boy, my mother taught me a way to communicate "I need your love" without making a sound. She had learned this from her mother.

When we were someplace where lively chatter was not appropriate—in a church service, for example—she reached over and took my hand. Then she squeezed it four times. I squeezed her hand in return, three times. She squeezed my hand twice. And I finished the wordless exchange with one final really big squeeze.

Here's the translation:

"Do you love me?" Four words, four squeezes.

"Yes, I do." Three words, three squeezes.

"How much?" Two squeezes.

One last hand-crushing grip. No explanation necessary.

I taught my daughters this little game and, now in their forties, we've probably done the "love squeezes" a thousand times.





## SOME EXTRA DOSAGE


I remember vividly the day a good friend of mine called to share something that was troubling him. He told me that he suspected—at that very moment—that his wife was packing her things into her car and leaving him! The mother of four children was running away from home.

As it turned out, he was right. A few weeks later, I received an e-mail from her. She wrote that she’s not off on some short-term fling, but that she’s gone forever and never going back.

She fulfilled that promise.

In the years that followed, my friend and I talked about what had happened. In every situation like this, there are plenty of complex issues and two-way failures. One of the things that was clear to me—and to him—was that my friend’s wife was living with a truckload of unmet expectations.

Because, like most men, my friend wasn’t world-class at reading his wife’s signals or subtle hints, he had missed most of these opportunities to meet his wife’s needs. And she had neglected to verbalize her needs and expectations to him.

This “I need your love” statement is about daring to tell the ones you love that their expression of love for you is important and the best way for them to convey it. Suffering in silence or harboring resentment is not a viable option. 



Dr. Robert Wolgemuth has authored more than twenty books on marriage and fatherhood. After almost 45 years of marriage, the Lord called his wife Bobbie home. In the years following her death, Robert married Nancy Leigh DeMoss, and he continues authoring and ministering on family issues. You can learn more about Robert and Nancy’s ministry work at [ReviveOurHearts.com](http://ReviveOurHearts.com).

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**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU  
SPOKE THESE TWO THINGS IN YOUR  
MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP?**



# Broken *AND* Shattered

BY DONNA AVANT

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The door slammed so hard, the entire house shook. My thoughts were, “Go ahead and leave. That’s what my dad did when I was sixteen.”





THREE PAIRS OF PRECIOUS EYES stared at me as I stood in the middle of the kitchen, surrounded by shattered glass. They had just witnessed their mom at her worst. Screaming, yelling, and belittling their daddy as I threw a framed picture across the kitchen.

Honestly, I do not remember what precipitated the argument between John and me. However, I do remember the feelings of shame and hopelessness when it came to our marriage. We most likely would have filed for divorce during that time if it hadn't meant John would lose his job.

Our broken marriage was a secret to be kept inside the four walls of our home. As a pastor and a pastor's wife for a congregation of over one thousand, we were supposed to have it all together, an exemplary couple with a perfect marriage.

Today, we have been married 37 years. John is my best friend, my lover, and my spiritual leader. We just returned from a week's vacation, just the two of us, and I really don't think we fought once.

How did we go from the brink of divorce to where we are now?

## 1 WE BOTH ADMITTED THAT WE WERE AT FAULT IN AREAS OF OUR MARRIAGE.

I quit blaming him, and he quit blaming me. We made a choice to point fingers at ourselves instead of each other. John owned his faults, and I owned mine.

My biggest struggle was with anger. I had grown up in a house of yelling and screaming. It had become a way of life for me.

I memorized James 1:20, "Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." The Holy Spirit enabled me to understand that all the yelling and screaming in the world was not going to make John or my children behave in a certain way. As the Holy Spirit began to work this verse into my heart, my behavior began to change.

## 2 WE MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO FIGHT FOR OUR MARRIAGE.

I grew up in a home that modeled divorce. My dad was married four times; my mom was married three times. John, on the other hand, grew up in a Christian home with a mom and dad who loved Jesus. John and I made a promise to each other that we would never, ever threaten each other with divorce again. Making this promise to each other gave me the security I desperately needed.

## 3 WE CHOSE TO EMBRACE BIBLICAL MARRIAGE.

John had not embraced being the spiritual leader of our home at that point. We didn't pray together as a couple. We didn't pray together as a family. John began to pray over me every night. He asked God to heal my broken heart. He asked God to bless me and encourage me as a wife and a mom. We also began to eat breakfast together as a family (even if it was a Pop-Tart) and pray over our children before they left the house for school.

I had not really been a helper to my husband. I began to ask John every morning, "How can I help you today?" At first he shrugged this off, but then he began to ask me to help him. Sometimes it was as simple as, "Can you sew a button on my shirt?" Sometimes it was, "I have a really important meeting today and need your prayers for wisdom." In our culture the word *helper* is not esteemed. Yet, if the President of the United States asked for our help, we would feel honored to help our country. Shouldn't we as wives view honoring the King of kings by helping our husbands as even more important?

As I am writing this article, I am surrounded by pictures of my husband, children, and grandchildren, in frames that aren't broken. In God's mercy and grace, He healed our marriage. Marriage is a gift worth fighting for! 🙏



John and Donna Avant serve on the leadership team of Life Action. You can check out more from Donna on her blog, [RealLifeOnRockyTop.com](http://RealLifeOnRockyTop.com).

# IT'S TIME TO MAN UP!

BY JODY BURKEEN

AS YOU WALK INTO American churches today, you see many of the programs and ministry outreach efforts performed by . . . women. In many cases, these same women are also the spiritual heads of their households, raising the children and doing the heavy lifting. The biblical model God gave us—that men should be spiritual leaders in the church and home—seems like a throwback to olden days.

Here's what I believe: Countless married Christian men have become "spiritual sissies." They have their tail between their legs, and their wives feel they have no other choice but to grab them by the collar. Many of these men have sat on the sidelines emotionally, spiritually, and functionally until their wives carry the load and call the shots. In many cases it's not because the wife wants it to be this way, but because she doesn't see any other choice—her husband simply isn't manning up.

Don't get me wrong: I am not being a chauvinist with these statements. Women have a major role to play in God's kingdom and the home, and they are equally gifted in areas of ministry and the home. As a matter of fact, the Bible gives us many examples of women God used mightily for His kingdom.

But men, where are you? Where are we? The stereotypical view of a Christian man today is someone too frail to stand up for God, their marriage, and/or their family. It's time to man up, God's way!

## PERSONAL TESTIMONY

When I was married in 1990, my wife was far more mature than I had ever thought about being. (Some might say she still is.) But since I became a Christian in 2003, our roles have reversed.

During the first thirteen years of our marriage, my wife was raising me. She always had to mold me, scold me, and hold me just like a young child. And I came to the point where I actually liked it. The day before I got married, my mom made my bed. The day after I got married, my wife made it.

I had just gone from one mom to another. I was the biggest sissy around. My wife was my mom, not my soul mate. She spent many

years training me to become a man. It didn't work too well, because that isn't the biblical model, and I think over time she finally stopped trying and just let go.

In the early years of our marriage, when people asked us about having children, I would jokingly say, "She has to raise me first." I later realized that it wasn't a joke! I was so far away from being a biblical husband, like the one Paul talks to in Ephesians 5:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies (vv. 25–28).

After I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I began to read what the Bible says about being a Christian husband. I found out that I wasn't even close! And sadly, neither were most of the men I'd met in church. But knowing I needed to change didn't mean I knew what to do. I had thirteen years of bad habits to get rid of and a comfortable routine that would tempt me back way too often.

On top of that, I had a wife to convince that I had changed, and I had to close my ears to Satan telling me I couldn't do it. Becoming the husband God wants me to be has been the biggest challenge in my Christian walk thus far.

I had made a lot of mistakes and had let my wife down more than once. So for me to start practicing spiritual leadership in the home . . . well, it was going to take time, a lot of prayer, and actions that were much different than I had shown in the past. As she has always said, "Actions speak louder than words."

## A VICIOUS CYCLE

Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Ephesians 5:33).





# 10 WAYS TO LOVE HER MORE

I've noticed that we tend to read this passage like this: Men read it as, "I will love my wife when she respects me," and women read it as, "I will respect my husband when he loves me." That's a lose-lose, vicious, endless cycle!

So we have husbands and wives, arms folded, back to back, telling each other that they will do what God commands when the other one breaks and starts doing what *they* are supposed to do. Guys, that's not what Paul was talking about!

In verse 25, Paul says to love your wife "**as Christ loved the church.**" The way Christ loved the church was *sacrificially*, till death, even when He knew not everyone loved Him. In the same way, men, we are to love our wives sacrificially. In other words, we love her whether she respects us or not!

So, men, love your wives! Start doing something different than you are currently doing. Stop the vicious cycle, and be the man God has called you to be. Sacrificially love her. Give up *your* time to spend it with her. Give up *your* rest to give her rest.

And what you will see develop over time is respect! The closer you get to looking like Jesus through His Word, prayer, and lifestyle, the more she will respect you. Make it your goal to out-serve her, to go above and beyond, to show her in every way that she is loved.

If you man up God's way, you'll be amazed at what God will do in your family. And your wife will be amazed at what God does in you! 🙏



Jody Burkeen is the founder and president of MAN UP! God's Way Ministries (ManUpGodsWay.org). This ministry was birthed out of a desire to change the way Christian men "do" Christianity.

- 1. LISTEN TO HER**  
without interjecting.  
*(Proverbs 18:13)*
- 2. SPEAK TO HER**  
without condemning.  
*(James 1:19)*
- 3. GIVE TO HER**  
without sparing.  
*(Proverbs 21:26)*
- 4. PRAY FOR HER**  
without ceasing.  
*(Colossians 1:9)*
- 5. ANSWER HER**  
without arguing.  
*(Proverbs 17:1)*
- 6. SHARE WITH HER**  
without pretending.  
*(Ephesians 4:15)*
- 7. ENJOY HER**  
without complaining.  
*(Philippians 2:14)*
- 8. TRUST HER**  
without wavering.  
*(1 Corinthians 13:7)*
- 9. FORGIVE HER**  
without punishing.  
*(Colossians 3:13)*
- 10. PROMISE HER**  
without forgetting.  
*(Proverbs 13:12)*

# Bless the

“Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”

Matthew 19:6

“Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.”

Hebrews 13:4

“And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21

## TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

“I hate divorce!” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.”

Malachi 2:16





# Bliss



**THEN THE LORD GOD SAID, “IT IS NOT GOOD FOR THE MAN TO BE ALONE. I WILL MAKE A HELPER WHO IS JUST RIGHT FOR HIM.”**

**Genesis 2:18**

“Husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her.”

Ephesians 5:25

“Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life.”

Proverbs 31:10-11

## BETTER TOGETHER

“In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together.”

1 Peter 3:7

“Each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

Ephesians 5:33




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**“FIFTEEN DAYS AGO, GOD FOUND ME** thinking I was in control of everything. I truly believed I had most things figured out . . . but as each day passed, I realized that I had never really surrendered all to God. This conference has been amazing and enlightening for my family. It has renewed my walk with Christ in a way I’ve never experienced before.” *(James, Florida)*

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# ROOT, ROOT, ROOT FOR THE HOME TEAM!

► Our ability to give humble, helpful critique and have it be well-received is in direct proportion to our encouragement.

## **I am an editor by trade and by natural bent.**

This means I have spent most of my adult life noticing and trying to correct mistakes. My husband, Robert, says I can spot an error on a billboard while speeding by at eighty-five miles per hour. My ability to open a three-hundred-page book and spot the solitary typo is legendary.

But while that skill is useful when it comes to proofreading, it's not particularly helpful in relationships, least of all in marriage. If I'm not careful, I am prone to notice and point out the one thing that's wrong (in my view) and much slower to identify the ninety-nine things that are right.

On occasion, Robert has said, "I feel like you're editing me." Ouch. I know that in those moments he feels I'm not pulling for him. What he needs in those moments is an encourager, not an editor. So I've made it my prayer and aim to build Robert up and to be a means of grace in his life.

From what I hear from others, I know I'm not alone in my "editing" tendencies. And I know that focusing on our spouse's faults and failures can be highly toxic in a marriage relationship.

Does that mean you should never point out needs in each other's lives? By no means. We all need honest input from those who know us best and can help us see blind spots we may be oblivious to. But our ability to give humble, helpful critique and have it be well-received is in direct proportion to the effort we make to give the gift of encouragement.

Knowing how important (and neglected) this gift is in a marriage, I have often urged married people to take what I call the "30-Day Encouragement Challenge." The challenge has two parts.

First, *for the next thirty days, don't say anything negative about your spouse—to them or to anyone else about them.* That doesn't mean they won't do anything negative. It doesn't mean there won't be anything you *could* say. It just means you're not going to say it. You're going to choose not to think about or focus on those things.

Then comes the second part, the positive one, which is equally important: *Every day for the next thirty days, encourage your spouse by expressing something you admire or appreciate about him or her.*

Say it to your mate, and say it to someone else. Tell your children. Tell your mother. Tell *their* mother. Each day, think of something good about your spouse and tell them about it, and then tell someone else.

Now, you may be thinking, *I can't think of thirty things I appreciate about my spouse!* Well, then just think of *one* thing and repeat it every day for thirty days!

In the years that I've been offering this challenge, I've seen marriages change in a way that has been nothing short of amazing. On a scale of one to ten, your relationship with your spouse may be at a negative two right now. And this little challenge is probably not going to give your marriage an overhaul overnight.

But if you persist for the full thirty days, I believe it will change you. It will give you a different perspective. And in time, as you water the soil of your spouse's heart with affirmation, appreciation, and admiration, you may see them change as well. Either way, you can't go wrong.

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## FROM THE HEART

**Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth**  
Revive Our Hearts Radio Host

***I've seen marriages change in a way that has been nothing short of amazing.***

 @NancyDeMoss

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nancy'.



## WHY IS MARRIAGE A “MYSTERY” IN EPHESIANS 5?



DR. RICHARD FISHER

**M**arriages fall apart today for the same reasons that Adam and Eve’s relationship suffered—selfishness, a refusal to submit to each other, and a desire to be free from God’s restrictions. A feeling of guilt and inner pain accompanies this breakdown. We run away and hide (like the first couple) because we can’t face our shame, or face our Father who comes looking for us.

Yet, herein lies the source of the mystery surrounding marriage: *While Adam and Eve were running away to hide from God, God was running to find and restore Adam and Eve.* Throughout history, humans have always had trouble comprehending that God wants to restore our broken relationships with each other and with Him. Even in our rebellion, God loves us and searches to bring us home (Luke 15).

### The Meaning of Marriage Realized

Even though the institution of marriage is present in every culture across the world, it is clear that most of humanity does not know or apply the fullness of God’s wisdom to marriage—they miss the mystery, and all the joy it unlocks!

So, here’s the good news: **The coming of Jesus brought light on all God’s promises and plans.** In Ephesians 5, Paul identifies the spiritual nature of the mystery surrounding marriage and helps us understand the bigger picture. He says that **marriage is a reminder of, a celebration of, and a commitment to God’s plan and provision:** (1) to restore the relationship between Himself,

the man, and the woman, and (2) to re-form His intended partnership between the man, the woman, and Himself as we navigate our life adventures together and fulfill our destiny (Gen. 1:27-28).

## The Mystery of Marriage Explained

We can observe in Ephesians 5:15-33 that every section starts with a wise directive from God, followed by a reference to Christ and how He modeled for us the secrets of successful marriage.

**Secret #1** (vv. 15-20) – **A godly life is the foundation** on which the institution of marriage is built:

- On a heart of thanksgiving to God in the name of **Jesus Christ**
- On a desire to walk in **the Spirit**
- On understanding **the will of God**, which reflects His redemptive plan
- On wise, **Bible-based decisions** in the trials and opportunities of life

Jesus modeled all of these in His life. For a marriage to succeed, the man and woman must each have a vital relationship with God, being committed to His mission and will.

**Secret #2** (vv. 21-30) – **Submission to one another is the secret sauce** to a great marriage. Christ is the one who demonstrated submission in its true form (Phil. 2:1-11; John 17:1-5). Submission involves a humble, sacrificial, and obedient heart as pictured in the attitudes of Micah 6:8—mercy, justice, and humility—before God and our spouse.

When God fashioned woman out of man—to create male and female (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:7-8, 21-22) for the purpose of companionship and teamwork—He did it to reflect creatively the nature of His spiritual relationship with us (1 Peter 3:7). He created us to fellowship with Him, to be in partnership with Him in fulfilling His vision of redeeming the earth.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose to dissolve this relationship and separate from the Creator and giver of life, to pursue their own agenda without God. Yet, as the gospel teaches us, God did not give up. He sought after them—and still seeks those who are lost. For in Christ, acting as the Second Adam, God made it possible to be reunited . . . in a “marriage” relationship. And this is where the mystery comes into focus: Marriage symbolizes the spiritual unity and special relationship God created for us as a couple (His image bearers) to have with Him.

Paul illustrates what submission looks like in a marriage relationship. Christ demonstrated each aspect of this submission during His mission to redeem humanity, so we would see how they work.

- **The first ingredient** in the secret sauce of submission is **respect** for each other (vv. 21-24). This respect grows out of love and trust for each other, and reverence toward God. We are to respond to each other as if we were responding to God. *God gave the responsibility of maintaining this attitude to the woman.*

She holds the welfare of the mission for their marriage in her hands. By giving full cooperation to her husband’s leadership, as if she were following Jesus, she develops this respect in her heart and in her husband’s.

- **The second ingredient** in the secret sauce of submission is **sacrificial love** for each other (vv. 25, 28-30). Love flows out of us when we have compassion for and want what is best for someone, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself as a sacrifice for the church, His bride. *God gave the responsibility of maintaining this attitude to the man.* He is to hold the vision for the marriage in his hands. By providing Christlike leadership, the man develops sacrificial love in his heart and in the woman’s heart.
- **The third ingredient** in the secret sauce of submission is **a commitment to redeeming** each other (vv. 26-27). The fall of the first couple shattered humanity’s relationship with God and with each other, setting in motion dire consequences. So in His plan for redemption, God added a new purpose to marriage—restoring broken relationships. This involves restoring trust and respect; restoring love through selfless sacrifice; and restoring a submissive, humble heart, all as demonstrated by Jesus.

**Secret #3** (vv. 31-33) – **You must choose to become ONE** to experience God’s blueprint for marriage. Genesis 2:24-25 calls the couple to a vision based on God’s directives and a total commitment to each other. This means letting go of all individual goals and selfish agendas to become a new creation with a single heart and purpose—to walk hand in hand with God.

In this way, marriage is more than an end in itself—it is a profound mystery, showcasing God’s redemptive vision for our broken world. And that vision steps closer to ultimate consummation—one human couple at a time.



Dr. Richard Fisher retired from Moody Bible Institute as a Professor of Biblical Studies. He presently serves on the pastoral staff of Grace Church near Akron, Ohio.

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# WHEN MARRIAGE IS HARD



WE KNOW THAT BRINGING UP THE TOPIC OF MARRIAGE TOUCHES ON SOME OF THE MOST WONDERFUL AND MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF LIFE. WE ASKED A FEW TRUSTED FRIENDS THROUGHOUT OUR MINISTRY NETWORK TO GIVE PERSPECTIVE ON SOME COMMON QUESTIONS.



## CHAD WILLIAMS

*Life Action Ministries  
Board of Directors*

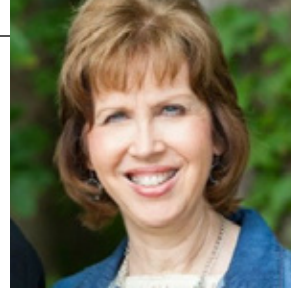
### **I'm afraid my work responsibilities are starting to overshadow our marriage relationship. What should I do?**

The balance between work and family is truly a walk of faith. When we choose to confront our time allocation and realize that we may be out of balance and need to spend more time with our family, it requires faith that God will be our provider—either by giving favor when we speak with our boss, or by bringing in business if we are self-employed.

Here are some practical steps to consider:

- Recognize that this is something every person who cares about priorities will face. The struggle isn't unique to you.
- Pray about the situation with your spouse.
- Seek counsel from godly mentors, and meditate on Scriptures like Psalm 127:2; Proverbs 3:5-6; 10:22; 14:26.
- Craft a plan that will show your employer you can continue to deliver on your job, but you need to bring some better balance to your family. Craft a second plan with your spouse for how you will effectively use the time to invest in the family.
- Share your plan with your employer. Be humble and respectful. Take the same approach Daniel took in approaching his "boss" in Daniel 1:8-17.

A book I've personally found helpful is *Choosing to Cheat*, by Andy Stanley.



## PATTI SIMMONS

*Life Action  
Road Team*

### **How do I keep loving my spouse when my needs are not even on his/her radar?**

When I don't feel like my husband is aware of my needs, I begin to dry up on the inside and get irritable and full of self-pity. That's when God brings me to Philippians 2:3-4, over and over again:

Do nothing from selfish ambition [rivalry] or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

God brings me to the place of taking my needs to Him to be met. These verses are what God wants me to focus on instead of my own desires. So, I ask God for wisdom regarding how to count my husband's needs as a higher priority than mine. I ask myself, "What are his interests, and how would God have me join him in those?"

I remember one time when I was feeling neglected and not hopeful about this dynamic changing in our marriage. I read these verses and asked the Lord, "How I can live this out right now?"

That's when I learned that a major tennis tournament was going on, and I knew this was of great interest to my husband. I felt like the Lord wanted me to sit down with him during this tournament and join him in his interest. I did my best to ask questions about the different players and about what was happening.

Needless to say, my husband loved it, and we had a great time! I even found I began to enjoy doing this with him, and I especially enjoyed his enthusiasm for me being with him. This began a journey we probably had shared while dating and first married but that I had neglected over our married life and needed to recapture.



## JENNIFER SLENK

Ambassador for  
*Revive Our Hearts*

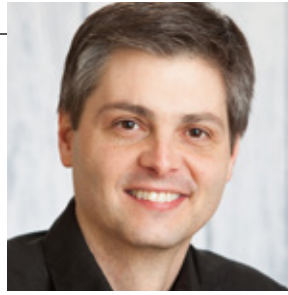
**Why should I keep going when I feel like giving up?**

Marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and a woman. It is unlike any other relationship on earth, and it is of such immeasurable value that *it would be foolish not to fight for it.*

However, the reason to fight for your marriage goes beyond even that.

God, the Creator of the universe, chose to give us a tangible picture, through marriage, of His relationship to and deep love for His bride, the church. When I choose to fight for my marriage and do everything I can to protect and nurture it, I am doing my part in preserving and putting on display God's intimate, awe-inspiring relationship with the church.

Knowing I have the opportunity and responsibility to affect God's reputation on this planet motivates me to not give up in my marriage relationship. When things get tough, I ask myself, "Will my response to this situation point others to Christ?"



## DEL FEHSENFELD

Senior Editor, *Revive*

**Our personalities are so different, and we don't share the same interests. What should we do?**

Dennis Rainey popularized the image of marriage as a spinning top. Over time, the gravity of life takes its toll. While paying bills, doing laundry, and raising children, our marriages have to keep on spinning. *But without intentional efforts to recharge the relationship, every marriage will begin to wobble.*

One of the best ways to re-energize a marriage is to find something to enjoy together. A friend even once reflected that *his dog had saved his marriage.* The time spent every evening walking the dog together for twenty minutes provided a rhythm of relaxed conversation that was vital.

But be warned—finding something you *both* enjoy can be more difficult than it sounds. One couple I know bought a double-seated kayak, only to find that two people trying to steer one boat was not going to work in their marriage! Instead of giving up, they bought two single-seated kayaks and discovered that paddling side by side was actually fun.

So get out there and walk the dog or buy your own kayak. Something simple or even silly like that might save your marriage!



## JEFF MANN

*Life Action Camp*

**We've hit a rough patch with our children, and it's taking a toll on our marriage. How can we maintain unity?**

Make sure your children know that your marriage is more important than they are. Dad, flat out tell them, "Mom is my favorite. You will leave home in a few years, but Mom and I are together for life." Unity, or oneness, is a biblical descriptor of marriage, not family.

Only after husband and wife agree to be a team can they effectively enter their role as parents. Dad and Mom, observe each child separately to see if there is indeed bad behavior. Rather than trying to correct the behavior, determine possible root causes, and find Scripture that addresses the deeper issues. Sharing Scripture with them is part of what it means to raise them in the admonition of the Lord. Remember, this responsibility falls to Dad first (Ephesians 6:4).

As parents, we have to release ourselves from the responsibility of "making" our children follow God. We can raise them in an environment that models a relationship with God (marriage is one of those models), but we cannot guarantee life change. There was a time in my life when I was actually a "rough patch" child in the household I grew up in, and my parents had to work with me to help me through that time. From that experience I would say this: When your children are old enough, be sure to let them know that one day they will stand before God without you. That was the message I needed to hear!





## DANNAH GRESH

*True Woman Movement*

### **My husband keeps looking at porn. What should I do?**

First, recognize that you're not alone. Nearly 65% of Christian men say that they view porn at least once a month, often causing immense pain to their wives.\* You are not alone. Don't isolate yourself by hiding this sin in secrecy. Hiding sin—your own or someone else's—only multiplies it. Case in point: While most men who attend church regularly are slightly less likely to look at porn than unchurched, men who self-identify as “fundamental” are 91% more likely to look at porn than unchurched men.\*

Environments that tend to emphasize performance-based faith and leave no room for honest confession . . . increase the risk. Don't let your marriage become that kind of place! Drag this sin out into the light. James 5:16 says we should “confess your sins to one another . . . that you may be healed.” This is your first step in winning the battle with porn. You and your husband need to talk to someone you trust, and ask for help.

Second, be careful with your husband's heart and reputation while you seek the help you need. Even though your heart is hurting, you need to be tender with his. He is likely filled with shame, which could present as anger or withdrawal. Getting help will likely be hard for him.

But dragging sin into the light doesn't mean you drag your husband's name through the mud, or control his every thought and move. Be respectful, but make sure your own needs are carefully and confidently communicated. *You need help and can't do this alone.* Ask him to go with you when you talk to someone, possibly selecting a couple you both trust so you both get the help you need. If he is unwilling, humbly tell him that you will be going to a woman you trust to get support for yourself.

Finally, as long as the situation has not become abusive or escalated to physical adultery, hang in there with your husband during this hard time. Try to have a perspective marked by grace. Give your husband the love and companionship he does not deserve right now.

God's Word says in Titus 2 that His grace teaches us to say no to worldly passions and to live holy lives. Grace leaves room for God's love to rush in to your husband's heart. God's Spirit—not yours—is the primary tool for conviction and training in righteousness. Be a tool of that grace, and believe that God can change your husband's heart and life.

\*[www.CovenantEyes.com/pornstats](http://www.CovenantEyes.com/pornstats)



## JANET JOHNSON

*Life Action Camp*

### **My spouse wants to have sex more than I do. What should I do?**

Too busy, too tired, too sick, too angry, too afraid (of getting pregnant again or of pain), too hormonal, too insecure, too hurt . . . all are reasons, and in some cases excuses, that we give to avoid having sex with our spouse. We need to be careful here. Sexual intimacy is a small part (time-wise) of our marriage, but if that part is not right, it affects every other area of our relationship!

If you struggle with this—and many do—there are a few things you can do to get a healthy perspective on this area of your marriage.

- Speak truth to yourself. God made up the idea of sex in the first place. It wasn't your spouse's idea! And God made it beautiful. Sin has perverted and distorted this act of unity. Mark 10:8 says, “The two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh.”

- Realize that the Enemy gets a foothold when we withhold ourselves from our spouse, no matter the reason. “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:5). If I truly love my spouse, I will seek to meet their need in a physically intimate way.
- Seek godly counsel from a biblically minded mentor or pastor. If you are feeling overwhelmed with sexual sin from your past, then repent. God promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). God desires for you to walk in His grace so you can move forward in healing from hurtful sexual choices, whether made by you or by someone else, and into a place of abundant freedom, even in this area.
- Communicate with your spouse. Whether you are the one wanting to have more sex, or the one not wanting as much, communication is still the number one way to overcome the problem. The Enemy wants us to walk in isolation, but only further division results when this happens. Talk with and listen to each other.
- Pray about this, together and separately. Ask the Lord who created each of us to give insight and discernment into the ways we are responding. Ask Him to give deep understanding and a desire to meet each other's needs, even if that means dying to your expectations in order to meet your mate's needs. 🙏



## DEEP SORROWS MEET NEW HOPE

*Five women testify that even when hearts are broken and messes are made, new beginnings are still possible by God's grace.*

As Life Action ministers in churches, our team leaders notice patterns that span across denominational and ethnic lines—struggles which are common to all of us. Among the most common? Marriage and family problems, kept hidden from public view. Here, five women offer a glimpse into the “real world” of their challenges.

“When we learned about forgiveness, I felt God was talking to me. **I have been so very angry and bitter at my husband.** I just want to thank God because without His help to overcome this, I don't know what I would do. I am still a work in progress, but I know that as long as we have God on our side, our marriage can weather any storm.”

“You found me at a very sad point in my life where **my husband of twenty-four years decided to file for divorce.** Throughout this process I have always kept the faith, hope, and unconditional love in my heart that this decision can be turned around.

The Saturday Home Life Café in the middle of our Summit revitalized my belief even more that all things are possible with God's will and grace. I want to be the best wife and soul mate my husband could ever have.”

“I started this week angry, contemplating leaving my husband, leaving my church, and withdrawing from God. For some reason I had volunteered to host some of the team girls in my home—and I learned so much from them! I came the first Sunday of the conference with trepidation, **knowing my selfishness was about to be exposed . . . AND, BOY, WAS IT!** I ended up confessing to my husband, to my Christian sisters for prayer, and to my children for forgiveness. I *lived* to be in the sanctuary every night at 6:00 for the next part of the story. You spoke the Word boldly to me, in love, and I will never be the same.”

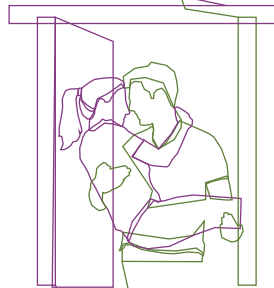
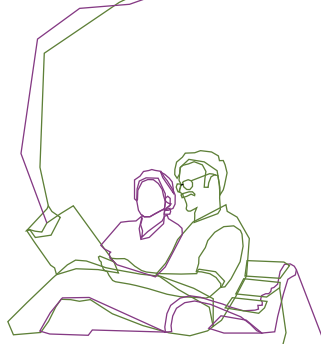
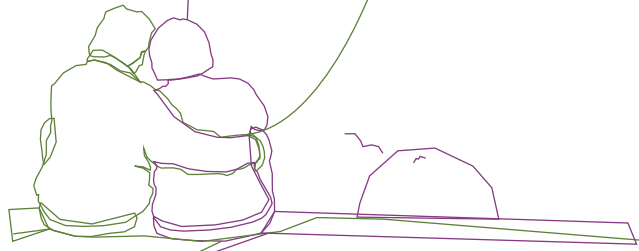
“Eight days ago I was focused on **the sorrow of not being able to have children.** God has reminded me in these days that He loves me, that our inability to bear children isn't because I've done something wrong, and that I can trust His plan even when I don't understand. I haven't arrived yet, but I'm trading my sorrow for joy bit by bit each day. God has reminded me that my husband is a gift, a precious gift that I shouldn't take for granted.”

“Five months ago I asked for a divorce, and through divine intervention God pierced my husband's heart, and he has prayed for us daily. We have been working through our difficulties, and the message the team gave on suffering gripped my heart. **God brought me to my knees that night.** I totally believe you were sent just to bring me the word I needed to hear.”



BE  
DEVOTED  
TO ONE  
ANOTHER  
IN LOVE

HONOR  
ONE  
ANOTHER  
ABOVE  
YOURSELVES



MARRIAGE

ROMANS 12:10





## TIME TO TALK

Use the following as the basis for some important conversations with your spouse. Discuss both of your responses to each question, and mark those you'd like to set aside for additional consideration and prayer in the months to come.

### CONVERSATION #1: **OUR PURPOSE**

1. What are some things we know God wants us to do next?
2. How has our sense of purpose in life changed since we were married?
3. Regarding our mission in life, are we mostly united, or mostly separated?
4. What is our vision of the next decade? What do we hope for?
5. How often should we discuss our purposes and goals together?

### CONVERSATION #2: **OUR PRIORITIES**

1. What would we like our top four priorities to be, as a couple?
2. Have our financial and calendar decisions matched up with our ideal prioritization?
3. Aside from work and sleep, how do we spend our time together?
4. How do we express our commitment to God on a regular basis?
5. How do we express our commitment to each other on a regular basis?

### CONVERSATION #3: **OUR PASSION**

1. What are a few descriptive words we would like to be true of our relationship?
2. To what extent are our physical and emotional needs being met?
3. When do we feel the most in love, and why?
4. What were some of the initial reasons we were attracted to each other?
5. What could we do to better express passionate love to each other?

### CONVERSATION #4: **OUR PATTERNS**

1. How often would we like to go out on dates or spend special time together?
2. What has been our pattern for Bible reading and prayer, personally and/or together?
3. Is there anything about our work/life/schedule balance that either of us wishes to change?
4. Do we have any negative habits that are hindering our relationship with each other or with God?
5. Are we talking enough? Do we have strong communication?

# CHANGE YOUR PURPOSE PRONOUNS

► For any of this to really work, something fundamental would have to change for both of us. “ME” would have to flip over and become “WE.” “Mine” would have to become “Ours.”

**I said “I do” to the woman of my dreams.** I’m really, really, really glad that for some crazy reason, she reciprocated.

Melissa and I met in the ministry—she was an Iowa farm girl who had been teaching second-graders in South Bend, Indiana. She answered a call to serve in the newly-formed *Revive Our Hearts* radio outreach of Life Action Ministries. I was a young pastor from Ohio and an aspiring writer who was just getting involved in *Revive* (then called *Spirit of Revival*).

Our first date was at a Mexican restaurant (a date we repeat frequently, by the way). Five months later? We were tying the knot and moving to Florida. A few years later? We’d served in two churches and begun the journey of foster parenting in Ohio. And a few years after that? Seven children to raise, exciting work to do, a beautiful place to live in Michigan, and plenty yet to accomplish.

It’s been fun, it’s been fast-paced, and at least from our perspective, it’s been filled with *purpose*.

And for us, that last part is a big deal. We’ve always wanted our relationship to be *purposeful*—to really accomplish something important for God. We’d met far too many people who, after a brief flame of love, ended up in permanent “survival mode” or who just lived with a “let’s work for retirement” mindset. We wanted more than that, and we got married because we thought we could have more than that.

I knew Melissa was the one for me when I realized something big about life’s purpose. I realized I could fulfill it with her—and *better with her than without her!*

The light bulb went on: “We could really help each other tackle God’s mission for life!”

And so, the anticipated day arrived, and for better or for worse, we were married. The purpose of our lives didn’t change that day, but our purpose *pronouns* absolutely did.

Because for any of this to *really* work—for all the mushy-gushy, lovey-dovey talk to actually add up to *purpose*—something fundamental would have to change for both of us. “ME” would have to flip over and become “WE.” “Mine” would have to become “Ours.”

The moment I put a ring on the finger of my new bride, it was no longer about “my gifts” or “my dreams” or “my ministry” or “my work for the Lord.” All of the “my’s” of life suddenly became “ours.” *Our* dreams. *Our* burdens. *Our* money. *Our* time. *Our* friends. *Our* mission.

Changing those purpose pronouns has made all the difference; in fact, it’s one of the most important ways we can demonstrate oneness together.

So, a few encouragements:

If you aren’t married, get immersed in the type of work God wants you to do, the calling He has placed on your life. That’s the best way to find the best one—live your mission now, and see who ends up living it with you.

If you are married, take a moment to thank God for your spouse. Remember all the crazy reasons you fell in love? Yeah, that actually happened!

But your marriage isn’t just about love—it’s about destiny. You have to have purpose in the midst of your passion, and that’s where changing your pronouns can help. Perhaps you could start by praying:

*What priorities do You want us to maintain, Lord? What good works do You have in mind for us? What mission should we be preparing for, together?*



## NEXT STEP

**Dan Jarvis**  
Managing Editor

***Your marriage isn't just about love. It's about destiny.***

 @DanJarvisUS

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dan Jarvis".



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