

A man in a plaid shirt and vest is lifting a woman in a black lace dress on a wooden walkway. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a railing.

31 Days
to a

Better
Marriage

Written by

30 Different Contributors

JoleneEngle.com

A Marriage that is Not of this World

[By Jolene Engle](#)

When I walked down the aisle to marry my husband 15 years ago, I had no idea how hard life was going to be. Yes, I had plans of giving my husband honor and respect and I was hopeful that we'd serve the Lord together and raise up Godly offspring, but I didn't realize how much God was going to require of me to die to myself in this process.

I was a hopeful new Believer anticipating not only my new life in Christ, but my new marriage as well.

However, I had zero understanding that my marriage could possibly draw others closer to Jesus Christ. I didn't learn this truth until many, many years later, and let me tell you, they were hard years! I wasn't walking The Narrow Path, I was crawling it and many times I needed to be carried along the way!

At some point in my spiritual journey, I read this verse:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

I've only thought of this verse and how it applied to me, but I never really thought of applying it to my marriage until one day when I was thinking about how a Christian marriage is designed to reflect Christ and the Church.

And then it hit me...

When I'm going through trials, my marriage should look different than the world's type of marriages because I've got a great God who guides me, loves me, comforts me and convicts me! Therefore, my marriage should stand out and cause people to want to become Christians based on how I go about my life.

This is much easier to type out than to live out!

A few years back my man and I were in a pretty horrendous trial. With tears in my eyes, I couldn't help but ask my Lord, "Why are you taking us through all of this?"

I remember that day so well...

- My body was weak.
- My mind was spent.
- My marriage consisted of a man and woman trying not to drown in the tsunami that we were living in.
- And my faith was at a defining moment.

How was I going to respond in this trial? Was I going to blame my husband? Lash out at him? Fight with him because my world was spinning out of control? Or would I be tempted to curse God like Job's wife wanted him to do because of all their suffering?

I had a choice in how I was going to conduct myself. Was I going to stand on the Truth or listen to the lies from the Enemy?

And the Lord whispered to me that day,

“Daughter, who are you going to worship?” Is it you or Me? Are you going to embrace your fears and cling to them? Or are you going to embrace Me and walk by faith?

Deep sigh. Yeah, that's how my Father and I roll. We have conversations like that often and many times it bends me out of shape because I know He is leading me to do hard things!

So I thought about that day and what my Lord was asking me, and of course I was convicted.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1 (NIV)

Yep, I think this verse will convict just about any Christian wife! The Apostle Paul says, “True and proper worship.” That's what life and marriage really boils down to, doesn't it? I can't help but ask myself the question, “Am I willing to worship the Lord in my life and in my marriage?”

As Christians, our lives are always on display for the whole world to see. What do others see when they look at us? Our marriages? How we go through trials? Do our actions and attitudes show that we really trust God? Does God's Word really have the answers for a thriving marriage? (Yes, it does! 😊 I'll come back here at the end of the series and share with you a few practical tips.)

Since Jesus Christ is everything I live for and because He's the Ruler of my heart...

I want my marriage to reflect Him; a marriage filled with grace, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, and love towards my husband.

The world's marriages don't have the power of the Living God residing in them, but mine does.

The world's marriages don't have the ability to love and lay down their lives for their spouse, but mine does.

The world's marriages don't have the Word of God guiding them into all Truth, but mine does.

If I choose to worship the Lord and not myself, then my marriage will essentially look like it's not of this world. It's this pursuit that will draw the world to Jesus Christ, not to mention cause the natural by-product of a better marriage! 😊

I want to worship Jesus, after all, it was my sin that placed Him on the Cross.

I have learned that when I seek to bring God glory with my marriage, His glory unfolds in my marriage.

I challenge you to take a step of faith today and for the rest of this series and lay your man, your marriage, and the possible mess you're living in, at your Messiah's feet and watch His glory unfold in your life.

Day 2: What Kind of Wife Does He Need Me to Be?

By Lisa Jacobson

The letter said, *He's tall, dark, and, believe me, handsome.*

Yes, I was intrigued. What single, twenty-six year old wouldn't be? Certainly one who'd been a bridesmaid a record-breaking 12 times.

The beginning stages of despair that I'd ever meet "the man of my dreams" had set in long before this letter arrived. And, as I had well over a decade to develop this dream man, my list for him was really quite impressive.

Impossible, some said.

Yet, when he walked inside to join us for the dinner party, **I knew immediately, *There He Is***. Exactly as I'd imagined he would be. What a picture he made with his dark wavy hair, blue eyes, tall and strong, wearing black Levi's and cowboy boots. Wowza. *Girly sigh*.

I watched as he strode purposefully across the room to introduce himself to me.

To me...?

I left the party that night knowing I'd met the man I was destined to marry.

After a completely inexcusable eternity of *three days*, Mr. Right came to the same conclusion and a few short months later we were happily married.

So dreams really do come true.

The one hitch in the dream? Like most starry-eyed single women, I'd spent a great deal of time envisioning what kind of husband I wanted him to be – things he would have to do and be to "measure up" to my standards. Somewhere in all that focus on what he needed to be, **very little time had been devoted to the consideration of what kind of wife Dream Guy would want me to be.**

But when a woman suddenly wakes up a few months into this marriage deal, she starts asking herself some hard questions. Or, at least I did.

- *What does this man need from me?*
- *How can I love him in a meaningful way?*
- ***What can I do to make this marriage the best it can possibly be?***

Maybe you're asking yourself those same things. Maybe you've been married a few months, a few years, or even longer. Or, maybe over 20 years like me.

Maybe you've been wondering...

What Kind of Wife Does He Need Me to Be?

Kind. I didn't realize when we began how much he would need me to show him kindness. That he'd need a wife who was thoughtful and gracious toward him. It makes such a difference in our communication if my manner is gentle and my words are sweet. *He needs a kind wife.*

Loyal. Who would have guessed that this would be so important to him? But I'm telling you, it's a Big Deal. He needs to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I'm behind him all the way. Over the years, I've become downright feisty in my loyalty to him. *I'm standing by my man.*

Respectful. Okay, so I thought I did respect him. But I had to learn how to demonstrate that respect in ways that proved it to him. It wasn't only in what I said, but how I said it. It was also in what I did and the choices I made. All of these combined to communicate the kind of regard I had for him. *He needs my respect.*

Prayerful. You might say marriage has made a dramatic impact on my prayer life. So much to bring before our God: our relationship, for protection, and for growth and understanding. I've come to see that a wife is not nearly as effective as the Holy Spirit when it comes to helping him – or me – change our ways. *He needs a woman faithful in prayer.*

With an eye to the future. When I was young and newly-married, I mostly thought in terms of what I wanted and felt in the moment. So when things were tough, I was tempted to give up or walk away. But a strong marriage requires long-term thinking. Now I remind myself of what I want our marriage to look like in 5 years. Or 10 years. Or another 20. *I'm a woman with hopes and dreams for our future together.*

So now here it is over 20 years later and he's still my Mr. Right. Still tall and handsome (*though not so dark – *wink*). Still the man for me.

And, together, we're working on making this marriage the best it can possibly be.

Day 3: When He Needs You Most

[By Danielle Peters](#)

When I was 6 months pregnant with our first child, I returned from a weekend away to find that my husband was convinced our marriage was over. The deterioration of our relationship didn't happen that quickly, but the realization of where we were after numbing months of grad school, demanding jobs, constant travel, and separate lives, was a sudden shock.

In the weeks and months that followed, the things he said and did were so uncharacteristic of him that I literally thought he'd lost his mind. In his late thirties and on the cusp of being a father, I wondered if this was a mid-life crisis. As evil words and actions poured from him, I thought maybe this was some sort of demonic attachment like straight out of a Frank Peretti novel. Where had the man I had married gone?

What I did know was I was witnessing what can happen to a man who has lost his way; how the enemy can feed the seeds of bitterness in the fertile soil of a distant marriage until we are convinced of his lies; and what can happen when a wife, consumed with things outside her home and marriage, loses sight of her #1 job, to be her husband's divine helper.

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper (ezer) suitable for him." – Genesis 2:18

"Helper" is such a limited English translation for the Hebrew word 'ezer'. Helper has an implied inferiority that didn't exist in the original text. Some translations use "companion" which is still lacking.

To really understand it, you need to look at where else it was used. Let me give you a few examples...

*"And this he said about Judah: "Hear, O LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his **help** against his foes!" – Deuteronomy 33:7*

*"We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our **help** and our shield." – Psalm 33:20*

*"Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my **help** and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay." – Psalm 70:5*

Do you hear it ladies? Do you see the real call to us that was intended with our *Ezer* title?

Comrade. Ally. One who fights beside them.

Rescuer. Lifesaver. One who fights for them.

Perfect Compliment. One who they can't win without.

The word is used to describe our God, our Great Ezer. And us as wives.

There will be a time when he needs us most. When he is undervalued or unfulfilled at a job he knows provides for his family. When he is feeling sorrow and grief that he doesn't know how to express. When he is struggling in sin. When he is fighting a battle within his own mind and heart and the odds seem to be against him.

And that is the place when it is so easy to pull away, because the words sting and the sin betrays and the man who stands before you now does not even resemble the one who stood before you as you said those vows.

But it is when he needs you most.

You can't take responsibility for his actions and you certainly aren't condoning his behavior, but you can realize that perhaps, like me, you left your post. You dropped your guard. You went AWOL on being his *ezer*.

On the brink of marital collapse, I realized I couldn't change my husband or his behavior, but I could accept responsibility for my part and seek my *Great Ezer* to help me not retaliate and not retreat when my husband needed me to come alongside and fight with him, fight for him.

This was my chance to be Christ-like in my response to my husband and react with love, forgiveness, selflessness and grace. My husband saw my response and it helped him fully grasp the love and grace God had for him. It let him know that I was his wife, his divine *ezer* perfectly provided by God to walk this earth with and that I would be with him, by his side, helping him win these battles. His fight would be my fight. The victory would be ours together.

The truth is all of our marriages are in a battle. We have an enemy who seeks to steal and destroy. We are under the constant barrage of a culture that gives us an arsenal of justifications for waving the white flag of defeat. We need to stop fighting each other and realize we have a common enemy.

Fight the good fight for your man and your marriage, because this may just be when he needs you most.

Day 4: You Wish He Would Change

[By Christy Fitzwater](#)

I just wanted him to make the bed. That's all. I didn't want him to do laundry or wash dishes or buy groceries –just make the bed. But for a few decades of marriage he did not.

Every morning I quietly fumed and silently ranted.

You're the last one out of the bed. Why can't you make it? How hard is it, really?

Saying ugly things in my mind that I would never say to his face.

And there, making the bed every morning, God transformed the rant into a quiet complaint and then miraculously into an adoration of my husband.

It was not the man who needed to change. It was me.

Ten Actions You Can Take if You Wish Your Man Would Change:

1. **Beware your expectation** that your husband be perfect. (That is the core problem, isn't it? Highly unfair.)
2. **Toss the "serve me" mentality** and replace it with an "I will serve you."
3. **Take the gospel to the annoyance.** Remember, you annoyed God –were his enemy even –and he chose to love you while you were unchanged. (See Romans 5:8.) We should mirror the same grace to our husbands.
4. If your husband is well-intentioned toward you, let that **truth override** the petty areas where you find him lacking.
5. Annoyance and gratitude can't fill the same space. When that pet peeve strikes again, **make a list of 10 ways your man is awesome**, and see if those bitter thoughts don't dissipate. (My man has called me every day for two decades, just to say he loves me and to see how my day is going. And he lets me cry whenever I am so inclined. And he is an awesome dad. And he works hard and never fails to bring home a paycheck. And he makes our home a fun place. And he has impeccable integrity. And he has never once lied to me in our entire married life. And... It's a long, long list, which makes you want to say to me, *Girl, what in the world are you complaining about the unmade bed for?*)
6. **Consider his perspective.** (When the bed was unmade, I felt like Matt didn't love me enough to make it. The truth was he just never thought about making the bed.)

7. To pray or to hound him? **Choose prayer.** We cannot succeed in nagging a man into being perfect. Be quiet toward your husband and speak much to God, starting first with prayers regarding your own attitude. When your attitude toward your husband is *perfectly* in line with the humble attitude of Christ, then you may start praying about your husband changing.
8. Start **verbally thanking your man** for the things he does well.
9. **Thank God** you have a husband.
10. Obey Paul's words to "Do everything without grumbling." (Philippians 2:14 NIV) **Do marriage without grumbling.**

Now the surprise ending to my story. This last year my husband attended a Bible study called Men's Fraternity_(highly recommended by every wife I know!) At the end of the study, all of the men made a rather secret-clubbish "man plan", which none of them would talk about with us wives. Evidently, my husband made a commitment to make the bed, because I haven't made the bed since the day that man plan was due. If I try to make it, he hollers at me and says, *Hey, that's my job now.*

Isn't this how God works in a woman's life –bringing us to a place of humility, servitude, obedience, and love before he will even consider giving us what it is we really desire.

Are you willing to work through the list?

Day 5: In Sickness and In Health, Respecting Your Husband through Cancer

[By Shari Miller](#)

It seems like a lifetime ago that these vows were made between my husband and I, “To have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part.”

We were young and had a future of hopes and dreams in front of us. We knew that life would have ups and downs, but never in our wildest dreams were we prepared for the news we would receive on August 3rd, 2003.

You have breast cancer.

When I first heard those words ten years ago, I knew I had two choices. I could either let self-pity swallow up my life and make myself miserable, along with everyone else around me, or I could make the trial of cancer have meaning, I could make it count and turn others towards God because of it. **During this time God spoke to me and He said...**“Give me the glory through it all. Let my light shine in you so that they may see who I really am.”

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” – Matthew 5:16 (NIV)

God not only wanted me to be a witness to friends and extended family, he also wanted me to be a witness right inside my home to my husband and children.

God has taught me two very important lessons in regards to being a stage IV breast cancer fighter and respecting my husband of 21 years.

The first thing I learned is, I’m not the only one fighting this. In the words of my husband, “He has cancer too.”

It can be very easy to get wrapped up in self when walking through an illness. As wives, we need to remember that we’re to fulfill our duties of honoring and respecting our husbands, regardless of the circumstances that are going on around us. We need to remember that we’re in a partnership, we’re not

going at this solo. We have to learn to be “selfless” in respect to our husbands and think of his needs and not just our own.

**“not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” – Philippians 2:4
(NIV)**

Take a moment to put yourself in your husband’s shoes when you are going through cancer, or any type of chronic illness and realize that they are walking on this journey right along with you. They have the fear of loosing their loved one. They have the same fears as you do of going to each and every doctor appointment, of awaiting the dreaded tests and scan results, and waiting to see which type of treatment will happen next.

A very important thing I’ve learned about going through trials, which can be applied to any difficult situation that you and your husband face, is to put others first. Instead of focusing on how horrible my problem is, I try to focus on the needs of others around me, especially my husband’s. For me, doing this helps to take the sting out of the hurt to my soul, caused by the problems around me.

When you’re in a similar situation, think about what you can do to ease your husband’s pain and suffering. Whether it is making his favorite meal, to texting him encouraging words throughout the day. Do things to make him feel better, remember that he is hurting just like you. Most importantly, ask him how you can pray for him throughout the day. Prayer can turn any situation around, there is power in prayer that can breathe new life into every fiber of a persons being.

“A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian. ” – Billy Graham

The second lesson I learned about respecting my husband is to accept him for who he is.

Cancer, chronic illness, or many other types of problems can bring about various challenges. When your destination of life gets changed and you and your husband have some bumpy roads to travel on, accept all your husband’s qualities, both good and some not so good. No one is perfect, he is only human, he is trying the best he can through these difficulties.

Accept his decisions during these times. Support him, be his biggest cheerleader. A wife that tears her husband down, or belittles her husband’s decisions will be doing more harm than good. She will be bringing more turmoil to the situation and hurt her husband’s pride in doing so. For a man, hurting your husband’s pride is one of the worst things that you can do.

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.” 1 Peter 3:1-2

Wives, we each have unique roles to fill in our marriages. No matter what we're going through, let us live out those roles to the best of our abilities with the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, pushing us forward to greater things in Christ's name. Let's take our eyes off of self and onto our husbands, encouraging, respecting, and loving them to be the men of God called them to be, no matter what the cost.

Day 6: Reduce Stress and Live More Calmly

[By Gaye Christmus](#)

How do you feel most days? Calm, focused and purposeful? Stressed, scattered and distracted? Or something in between? Many women yearn for calm but feel stressed, as if they're being pulled in a dozen directions. They aspire to a peaceful home, an organized office, a manageable schedule and a little time to relax with their families, but instead find that they're running on empty, trying to do entirely too many tasks each day. If that's the way you feel, here are some ideas for reducing stress and living more calmly.

- **Infuse your day with prayer.** If you're like me, you frequently forget this obvious and important step! I tend to charge through my days, tackling my to-do list without asking God what He wants me to do. Ask Him for guidance each day. Ask what He wants you to accomplish today/this week/this month and for the strength to accomplish those things. He won't ask us to do things He doesn't equip us (spiritually, physically, emotionally or intellectually) to do. Yes, we'll experience times when our resources are put to the test, but I think we often create difficult times we weren't meant to face. We drive ourselves crazy, because we're doing things He hasn't called us to do. They may be very good things, but they may not be "our" things.
- **Set priorities.** Work with your husband to set realistic priorities for your family. What is most important to the two of you? What is God calling you to do? What do you want to focus on over the next year? You may need to limit your priorities to just a few, especially if you have children at home. I like to think of it as "framing" your family's life, then keeping the things you do inside the "frame" you have established.
- **Calibrate your expectations.** Once you've identified your priorities, set realistic expectations. For example, if homeschooling is a priority, you'll probably need to say no to some commitments and accept that your house won't stay neat and clean most of the time. If spending more time together as a couple is a priority, you may need to let go of some activities, even some that are very worthwhile. Or if you've started to work outside your home, then you'll have to let go of some things you did when you stayed home. Set realistic expectations so you don't end up disappointing yourself continually. You just can't do it all – no one can.
- **Manage your family's schedule.** In many families, mom and dad are not controlling the schedule. Some families are allowing the children to determine how the family's time, energy and money are spent. In others, no one is deciding – family members just commit to activities without any

plan for best using the family's resources. The most obvious culprit is children's activities – sports, lessons, and social activities can absorb every moment of free time and then some! But parents can over commit too, allowing their church, community and social activities to suck up inordinate amounts of time. If you want to maintain any kind of calm and sanity, you and your husband must manage your family's schedule.

- **Organize the things that create stress in your life.** You know those little things that drive you crazy on a regular basis – the missing school papers, bills lost in piles of mail, closets crammed with clothes nobody wears, children's rooms strewn with toys? They seem small, but they cause major stress for many women. Do you have any of those (or similar) disorganized messes at your house? (I do!) If so, pick just one and organize it this week. Next week, maintain it and begin to work on one more. Over a month or two, you'll reduce significant sources of stress in your life. Think you don't have time to tackle even one? Then pick one and work on it for 15 minutes a day until you have it under control. Then start on another one.
- **Practice health habits that reduce stress and increase calm.** The way you treat your body influences your stress level. If you treat your body poorly, you're more likely to feel stressed and worn out. And your risk of getting sick increases. So take care of the body God gave you! Exercise regularly – walking 30 minutes a day improves your fitness and reduces your stress. Eat more real foods – processed and fast foods don't provide all the nutrients your body needs, and they introduce chemicals and preservatives it definitely doesn't need. And get enough sleep. Almost everyone needs 7-8 hours each night. Try these health habits for several weeks – I think you'll feel more relaxed and energetic.

Despite our best efforts, though, sometimes life is stressful in ways we can't avoid. When that happens, prioritize and manage your life even more carefully, perhaps by reducing your commitments to an absolute minimum. Continue to pray, and work with your husband to “ride out the storm” together.

Day 7: A Wife's Prescription to Connecting with Her Husband

[By Bonny Burns](#)

Sex was a problem.

Steamy chemistry ignited first romance with my husband and sealed our marriage. It was like magic. Fifteen years later, where was it now?

Somehow we had slipped into a place of misery.

My gestures of love for him were met with hostility. The ways I knew to show my love didn't include physical intimacy. We were at odds.

As his frustration grew, his talking ceased. I felt rejected. Who wants to make love when you feel misunderstood and empty?

Our shared belief in the Lord was still in place. However, strife continued in spite of doing all the God-stuff: attending church, Bible study, etc. I tried to be the Proverbs 31 wife. (Have you ever noticed that there's nothing in that list that mentions sexual intimacy?)

Why couldn't we connect? For a long season, we prayed to understand the invisible barrier that kept us from sharing our original spicy allure.

The Lord heard and slowly guided us to treasured wisdom.

**“...inclining your heart to understanding; ...if you seek wisdom like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God,”
Proverbs 2:2-5.**

Counseling didn't quite work. Books helped some. Then the Lord sent a marriage class into our life. The insight was stunning.

It boiled down to this. The invisible barrier between our hearts included two parts: my husband's unwillingness to talk freely with me and my unwillingness to have sex with him.

The secret to our magic's disappearance? We emotionally connect in two totally separate ways. Conversation is my key and sex is his. If neither of these is happening, we are miserable.

Call me clueless. It had never dawned on me that sex was anything more than a physical release, certainly not an emotional experience. *Sex is my husband's most intimate conversation.*

Once we understood that sexual intimacy and emotional intimacy are interwoven, we began tearing down the barrier and presto! The magic started to reappear.

This sounds so simple, right? Years of embroiled bitterness made it hard for us to see clearly. That's why it's OK to seek outside help if you are reaching a point of desperation in your marriage.

God's design of our complementary natures is amazing!

Males and females have differences far below the surface of our genitals. Our brains and bodies biochemically crave and function differently.

The complementary cravings of husband and wife work together to fill in each other's weak spots.

A low libido wife doesn't crave sexual intimacy. However, it is most excellent for her physical, emotional and, yes even spiritual health. A husband might not crave emotional intimacy through conversation. However, it promotes health for him, too.

Knowing my husband's key to emotional intimacy was sex and that sex is really good for both of us, I had some work to do. I had to figure out the trick to convincing myself to engage in sex while not having much of a sex drive.

I started to see that every interaction with my husband, not just conversation, helps me to emotionally bond. Since he travels frequently for business, we had to optimize together-time. Increased connection in all areas of our life meant my increased interest in practicing steamy bedroom unity.

My husband started seeing the correlation, too. He no longer begrudged hanging out exclusively with me and started talking up a storm! He took much more interest in me outside of the bedroom.

A low libido wife's simple prescription for restoring magic.

There are no tricks or rocket science involved.

Spend time together, a lot of time, preferably one on one. I know with young families this isn't an easy feat.

~ Pray together. #1 priority. Pray about your sexual disconnect, if it's present.

~ God's Word. Early morn or late evening, read a verse or two out loud and discuss.

~ Play together. Date nights, fly kites, fish, ride bikes, blow bubbles, etc.

~ Work together. Do home maintenance projects together or run errands together.

~ Praise each other.

~ Discuss your dream vacation or your bucket list of experiences to fulfill.

Have an attitude of unity.

~ Choose not to judge or be offended. When you were first dating, no one flinched when deepest darkest secrets were revealed. Open your mind to another's point of view. It's neither right nor wrong. It's just different.

~ Choose to satisfy. Your spouse's needs are probably not much different from when you first married. Remember the magic? You were happily meeting that desire then, and you can again. Discuss what this means with one another. It may be sex, but it may be something else, too.

Decide to make love in spite of low libido but address the low drive.

Reasons for low libido include:

Lack of emotional connection

Lack of understanding regarding sex

Lack of experiencing pleasure during sex

Past abuse

Imbalance of hormones

Stress/Anxiety

Chronic illness/Physical pain

Exhaustion

See a doctor for a physical assessment. If emotional issues are too overwhelming, seek outside help. I also highly recommend the book, “Intimacy-100 Day Guide,” by Dr. Douglas Weiss.

Final Thoughts

Every marriage is different – but if sex is a sore spot in your marriage, it’s time to take stock. Unity in marriage means the desires of both are taken seriously, even if you don’t understand them.

Happy marriages gain more than earthly contentment and physical pleasure. United marriages build stronger families, which in turn create healthier future husbands and wives. Hurting marriages often have only the strength to tend to their own wounds.

Healthy marriages are part of Christ’s team of ambassadors. Much of the time, sexual connection is crucial to a healthy marriage.

“....Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you,” 2 Corinthians 13:11.

Day 8: From Mess to Bliss: 7 Tips that Saved My Marriage

[By Sunu Philip](#)

Two years ago, my marriage was a complete mess. My husband was constantly working late, and some days we hardly had time for meaningful conversation. As a work-from-home mom, I felt tired and alone, with no one to share my ideas and dreams with. I was on anti-depression medication, and we went to several counselors to get our marriage work.

And then, there was the guilt!

I accepted Jesus as my Savior during my post graduation, but due to parental pressure I chose to marry a man who did not accept God as I did. When my marriage was on the rocks, I felt guilty for making the wrong choice of husband. I should have waited for God's choice for me. ***And that led me to feel that this man was not the one God created for me!***

I had picked the wrong person!!!

With my mind playing havoc, I took it all out on my husband. The main weapon I used was crying, just to make him feel inadequate. (I am now ashamed of that behavior.)

And yes, through all this I was praying and reading the Bible! What a hypocrite I was?!

And then one day, God intervened. He took away a big contract that was a major source of my income. I was totally devastated, because that was my security in the midst of my chaos – the idol I was holding onto.

God used that time to bring me closer to Him. God led my online searches to the right Christian blogs and articles. He used songs to speak to me; He wooed me back to Himself. It was the return of a prodigal daughter back to her Father.

As I started studying the Word diligently, He revealed the idols that had taken His place in my life. It wasn't easy to remove them and place God in His rightful place. The major turning point in my marriage happened when I read a similar 31 Days to Love series at Time Warp Wife. And that's how I came to know Jolene – it was her "Who is on the throne of your marriage?" article that totally changed the course of my marriage.

Fast forward two years and our marriage seems like a fairytale. My husband still hasn't come to know the Lord personally (but I am sure he will!). It wasn't my husband who changed... It was me!!!

There were many things God had to chip away (and it's still in progress) but here are 7 tips that saved my marriage.

1. Make God Truly Your First

I made the mistake of depending on my husband for emotional security. I looked to him for filling my need to be loved and cherished. But the Word of God taught me that only He is my anchor and Savior. I just need Him TO BE COMPLETE!

2. Give Up the Feeling of Spiritual Superiority

This was a major stumbling block, as being a believer for the last 13 years made me feel superior to my husband. God showed me Psalm 36:2 which says, ***“For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.”*** My spirituality made me blind to my own faults. I am as much a sinner as my husband is. How could I forget that?!

3. Respect Him and... SHOW it!

Do you want love from your husband? Then respect him. It was difficult for me to respect him when I felt like shouting. Eventually, it was simple compliments, small sincere actions, the right tone and body language that conveyed my respect. (Hint: outright flattery won't work!)

4. Keep Your Mouth Shut

As a former teacher, I have a tendency to correct and instruct. God taught me to listen more and speak less. When you feel like correcting or instructing your husband, REMAIN SILENT and ask God to cover him.

5. Thank Your Husband Often!

This is the easiest way to make him cherish you. Thank him for every single thing he does – from opening a door for you to giving you a good time in bed. I text and email him thank you notes, conveying how blessed I am to have him.

6. Be Submissive – Even in Everyday Things

I'm a very headstrong person, with strong opinions on everything. Submitting completely to my husband was totally out of my comfort zone. I cannot in complete honesty say I've mastered being submissive, but I am trying.

7. Pray and... Pray Some More

Praying for your husband is the ultimate love language. Stormie O'martian got it right! Prayer changed our marriage and gave it a new depth. I did a 31-day prayer challenge (again!) which covered all vital aspects of being a husband. I now ask him everyday how I can pray for him. He in a way feels secure that I have him covered with God.

These 7 tips helped my marriage a lot, but it was truly God who was the restorer. He is in the business of creating love stories that last. He worked in me and made me realize that my husband was indeed the perfect companion for me – my better half.

If you are going through a tough time in your marriage, seek God first and the rest will fall into place.

Day 9: Being His Friend

[By Jenifer Metzger](#)

From the moment we take our vows, we are committing to a *life time* with our mate. A life time that will bring ups and sometimes, even some downs. A life time that will bring love and happiness. However, if there is no friendship within the marriage, it is going to be a long and lonely life time.

Friendship within the marriage is vital. Friendship brings about a closeness between two people. Friendship improves intimacy.

8 Ways to Being His Friend

- **Talk to each other.** Our closest friends are those we talk to regularly. I am not the kind of gal who goes to lunch, has coffee, or goes shopping with my girlfriends, but I do talk to them very regularly. We need to talk to our husband. Talk to him about our experiences, our heart, our plans, our hopes, and most important, ask him about those things too.
- **Laugh.** Life doesn't always have to be so serious. You laugh and joke with your girlfriends. He laughs and jokes with his buddies. So laugh and joke together. Too often we left the busyness of life bog us down. We laugh with the world and try to be everything they want us to be, but our spouse gets the tired, worn down, serious mate. It's time to have fun.
- **Do things he enjoys too.** It's not all about us. Sometimes we need to do things our guy likes. If he is into building things, be the girl standing next to him passing him tools. If he enjoys watching football, learn the sport and buy yourself a cute jersey. I am not saying become a die hard football fan, but watching the occasional game with him will tell him that you care about his passions.
- **Never stop learning about him.** The longer I am friends with someone, the more I learn about them. It may be things about their childhood, a dislike they have or a silly quirk. But I am always learning. Never stop learning about your husband. And when you do learn something new, file that information away as important.
- **Be a listening ear for him.** One thing we like about our girlfriends is that they listen to us. We need to be a listening ear for our man. Men don't always share as often or in the same way women do, but they still need to know we are here to listen.
- **Seek his counsel.** It is always wise to seek our husband's counsel no matter what. But when we need advice we tend to seek out a friend, not our man. We want to know what she thinks and how she would handle something. But if we seek our husband's advice, it shows that not only do we respect him but that we also consider him a friend.

- **Offer grace and forgiveness.** We all goof up from time to time. We all need grace and we all need forgiveness. How come we are quick to offer a girlfriend grace when she wrongs us or has an attitude, but when our husband hurts us, we hold onto that grudge for awhile? Give him some grace. Forgive him and let it go.
- **Pray for him.** When we are having a hard time with something, we often turn to a friend. We want her to pray for us. And when a friend turns to us in a bad time, we pray for her. Do this for your husband. If he mentions a hard situation at work, not feeling well, or a strained relationship with someone, pray with him right then and there. And continue to pray for him. He needs to know he has a praying friend in his wife.

{If you do these eight things and feel like he is not responding to your plea for friendship, keep pressing on. Don't give up on the idea and plan for friendship. Remember that to have a friend, we must be a friend. Continue to be his friend and let God work in him.}

Think about the things that makes you close to your best friend. Look for those in your mate. And more important *be* those things for him.

God gave us a built in best friend the day we said "I do."

Day 10: 5 Ways to Encourage Your Husband to Lead

[By Marquis Clarke](#)

Throughout scripture we see how we are structured, God – Man – Woman – Children. Man is not more important than Woman, we just have different roles in accordance with God. As read in scripture, the man is the “head of the wife” {1 Corinthians 11:3}, but we are suppose to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ {Ephesians 5:21}. Basically, the Man is charged with leading his household toward Christ. This is not always easy and attainable because our husbands are not perfect. But, as wives, we are charged to be our husbands helpmate.

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. – Proverbs 31:10-12

I'm not saying that I have this down, because I feel like I am constantly failing in this area of encouragement to my husband, but I am striving to be his helpmate and biggest fan. Here are some practical ways we can encourage our Husband's in their role as spiritual leader of our homes.

1. Praise Him: Verbally and publicly. For past, present and future. Let him know that you think he is a great leader and when appropriate, praise him in public for his efforts in leading. Praise him for what he has done in the past and present. Let him know you feel confident he is going to lead your family in the future. Example: “You are going to be a great dad, our children will learn so much from you biblically”.

2. Thank Him: Make sure to thank him when he is leading you or when you notice efforts he is making. Your acknowledgement of his efforts go a long way.

3. Ask Him: For advice and for wisdom. I think its easy to think that you “know” what you husband will say or advice, but “ask him” for his advice. You might get the response you were thinking, but you might be surprised and he might be encouraged that you asked.

4. Follow Him: Submit to his leadership and decision making. This also means respecting him and honoring him. Read this post about practical ways to respect your husband. By no means am I saying that you should not have an opinion or voice, I am simply saying to let your husband take the lead by not solving every problem yourself.

5. Pray for Him: To me, this is the most important. I firmly, irrevocably believe in the power of prayer. Only God has the power to change and mold your husband into who He wants him to be. Pray for your husband's walk, integrity, strength, fears, triumphs, failures, thoughts and actions. Pray for God to teach him how to be a good Husband and leader for your family. Also pray that you would be his helpmate, partner and source of encouragement.

Day 11: The Blessings and Struggles of Getting Married Young

[By Jami Balmet](#)

My husband first told me he wanted to marry me before I had even graduated high school. He was already in college and ready to go, but I had grown up with the mentality that we had to be at least through college and with steady, great paying jobs before even thinking about marriage. Naturally, this little bit of news freaked me out just a bit. Well fast forward a year, I had matured in my relationship with Christ and had fallen head over heels in love with this man. So when I was 18 my husband proposed and at the ripe old ages of 19 and 21, we tied the knot before our families, friends, and God.

I firmly believe that God calls us all into marriage at different times. God has a special and unique plan for everyone. Some couples are not mature enough, haven't come to the Lord yet, or are not ready to get married until later in life. And some are ready at 19. I want to provide encouragement to you who were married young or perhaps are struggling to understand a couple you know who wants to get married young. There are many myths concerning getting married young and in fact some people go so far as to say that marriage before 25 should be illegal, so I want to share that God's plans for young marriages can be a good and beautiful thing.

The Blessings of Young Marriage

I am a strong proponent of getting married young – if it's God's will for you. Not everyone is meant to get married at 19, but not everyone is meant to get married at 30 either. We each have a unique path to walk laid out for us from the Lord. And the blessings of getting married young can be wonderful.

One of the most beautiful things about getting married young is that we have grown up together. Our faith in the Lord has grown, we have learned how to handle money, and are now tackling what it means to be parents. The Lord has grown us up together and we wouldn't have it any other way!

“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth” ~ Proverbs 5:18

We have grown up together. We had the joys of saving up for our first TV together. The heartache of realizing we need to be better at saving money. The ups and downs of finances and figuring it out all together.

We have shared beautiful memories of developing interests together like bike riding, playing games, and taking a Segway tour on the beach. And **all of this has created a beautiful environment of accountability and trust within our marriage.**

The Struggles You Will Face

No marriage is perfect, and getting married young won't let you escape from the fact that you married a sinner. While there are many blessings of getting married young, there are also some unique struggles.

Often when you get married young, you have never lived on your own before. Usually, this can bring blessings but other times it can present struggles.

You must learn how to handle finances together, you are often still developing in your career, and finances can become a strain. But as long as you are open and willing to talk about things, you can develop great habits early on when it comes to how you use money, spend your time, and prioritize things in your life.

Growing in the Lord

Perhaps the biggest blessing – and struggle – of getting married young is that you are still growing in your relationship with the Lord. If you have married for the right reasons, then you are well on the right track.

Maturity in Christ takes hard work, patience, and lots and lots of love. And as a young couple you have the unique opportunity of doing this together. Whether you are a brand new Christian or have been serving the Lord for 30 years, we all have things we can learn.

Make it a daily habit – from the first day of your marriage – to establish a firm foundation in the Lord. Learn to forgive quickly, show grace to your spouse, cultivate gratitude to your spouse, and make a commitment to form a Christ Centered marriage.

Yes, this takes daily work and a commitment to always making Christ the Center of your marriage. These are lessons that all marriages can learn and many couples start off their life without Christ as the center, so it's never too late to form this habit.

Learn to put Christ FIRST in your marriage, and then your spouse. Raising a Christ Centered household can be tough but at the end of this life, it's the only thing that matters.

We should consistently, constantly, and fervently work towards growing together in the Lord daily through talking together, reading God's Word, worshiping together, praying together and finding godly mentors who we can follow their examples in marriage.

Day 12: 5 Ways to Keeping Your Marriage Strong While Your Husband Travels

[By Sonya Schroeder](#)

Being a military wife for 12 years I know all too well the ups and downs of keeping my marriage strong while my husband is away. Some walking without God and some walking without Him.

Trying to keep a marriage strong without God was one of the most difficult times in our marriage. When I first got married in November 2000 my husband went to his job every day for 5 years just like a normal job. Then September 11th happened and everything changed. We would start preparing for our first deployment, away from each other, for 12 months.

This is a time when we were not walking with God. We tried everything to prepare for the separation, however, there is NO preparing for what was to come to our marriage over the next 12 months.

The fear sets in.

The insecurities bubble to the surface.

The unknown is paralyzing to the point you're not sure how to move forward.

There are so many tears that you could fill bucket after bucket.

Somewhere deep inside yourself, you find the strength to go on, clinging to hope, till you see your husband again. It carries you, or at least that is what I thought walking through this without God. God truly was carrying me, I just didn't realize it till later.

We would make it through our first deployment, very scared to only prepare for another deployment, 1 year later, even more scared.

I thank God daily for having to go through the ups and downs of being apart from my husband because now my husband is a contractor working with the military. He travels at least once a month for a week at a time. I am more prepared today then I have ever been to make my marriage strong while he is traveling.

5 Ways to Keeping Your Marriage Strong While Your Husband Travels

1. Pray for your Husband!

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6

This truly is an important part to a strong marriage. The doubt will creep in if we don't slap it with God's word. Pray that God will keep him safe, his eyes focused on Him, his heart guarded, the strength he needs while he is away. Pray blessings over your husband during this time apart. This will draw you closer to God and your husband.

2. Communicate in LOVE!

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-8

I failed at this one many, many times. God really had to do a work in me for this to come to pass. I am just sorry for my husband that it took so long. There are more times than not that our husbands will have to work over time or will be pulled into many directions while away. This is where we come together in communicating in LOVE. When we call our husbands and they are not available, we need to be more understanding of what is going on in their lives, instead of letting the enemy creep in and take over. When this happens we stew on it the rest of the time until we talk to our husbands. When we do talk to them we have nothing loving to say because we are so upset that we could not talk to him at the moment we tried to call.

Keep your focus on Christ by praying when these moments arise. When we flood our minds with God's Word nothing but love will want to flow out!

3. Place love notes through out his bags!

This is one of my favorite parts when my husband travels. Showing him how much he is loved and missed while he is gone keeps him encouraged and feeling secure. Remember, our husbands have a hard time being a part from us as we do them. Men hide it better because they know the family is relying on them to provide.

4. Make every moment count!

Because we have no idea what our husbands work load looks like, make every moment count when speaking to one another. Keep the focus on each other and share only what is needed. Meaning, don't share every little thing getting on your nerves or venting how you wish he was here to deal with XYZ. Make this a time to share some things that have been on your mind or just enjoy the talking with no distractions.

5. Never let anger consume the trip!

“BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.” Ephesians 4:26-27

When we take our eyes off of Christ that is when the fighting, insecurities, doubts, and fears creep in. Look out for these as they are NOT from Christ. Stop and pray God's Word so that the enemy will be crushed. If this doesn't work repeat 1 & 2!

Day 13: Pornography- The Unwelcome Guest in Your Home

[By Vicki Tiede](#)

Have you discovered that pornography showed up in your home like an uninvited guest, unpacked her bags, and isn't catching on to the fact that she is UNwelcome? If so, let me begin by telling you that I'm sorry.

I'm sorry that this is a post that caught your attention and felt like the promise of a cold drink in the middle of your desert.

I'm sorry that you may feel like you don't even know the man you married. (Can I tell you some truth? The fact of the matter is, now you finally do know who your husband really is ... all of him ... not just the bright and shiny parts, but the dark and honest parts too. We all have those parts, by the way)

**(He) will bring to light the things now hidden in the darkness
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.**

1 Corinthians 4:5

I'm sorry if the thought has crossed your mind that maybe *you* should pack your own bags and move out for a while because you + your husband + countless digitally enhanced images of other women results in a house that's too crowded and a marriage bed that doesn't feel safe. Exhale. Remember that you *are* in a battle, but this is a battle not between you and your husband, but a battle between the two of you against pornography. Though this has taken you by surprise, it has not surprised God.

I'm especially sorry if your husband didn't have the courage to tell you about his struggle and you found out the hard way. I imagine you may wonder if he is truly sorry because of what he did, or if he is sorry he got caught? It's normal for a wife to wonder how much longer he would have kept this little secret or if he would have ever come clean. This is a question you'll never have an answer for, so it's best to set it aside in lieu of the question that has answers:

WHAT DO I DO IF MY HUSBAND IS LOOKING AT PORNOGRAPHY?

Do SOMETHING because your husband's use of porn will not go away if you simply ignore it.

God's blueprint for marriage is spelled out in the Bible. It's that blueprint that causes you to think, "A faithful, godly husband doesn't do this." While the word *confront* doesn't sound very loving, leaving your husband in this sin isn't a loving response either.

You need to tenderly confront your husband about his use of pornography. There is no right or wrong time, as long as you don't avoid or deny the issue. Don't be surprised if your emotions bubble to the surface and you find yourself crying or fighting mad. Our God was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). You can trust that He understands what you are feeling.

Find safe support.

It is important that you find someone to talk to, and the first person should be God. Ask Him to direct your path in this situation. Your best confidants will be those who are equipped to listen without judgment, and preferably someone who has experience with this.

If your husband is committed to restoring your marriage and he is taking obvious steps in the right direction, I strongly encourage you to consult him about who and how much to tell. You likely have a million questions. You will find additional resources with answers to many of those questions here on my [website](#).

Accept the fact that it is not in your power to fix this for your husband.

God has given the Holy Spirit the task of conviction of sin. You are not responsible for your husband's daily choices. Your job is to walk in obedience to the Word of God. My book, *When Your Husband is Addicted to Pornography: Healing Your Wounded Heart*, leads women to the Wonderful Counselor who is in the practice of taking the broken pieces of a woman's heart and making something beautiful.

You've experienced a painful betrayal and you need to trust yourself into His care. When you arrive at a place of healing, you will be in a better position to create an environment that promotes healing in your marriage. Leave your husband in God's hands. He's got this one.

Rest assured that your husband's use of pornography is not about you.

I hope he has already told you this, but I suspect you're not so sure. Believe it. Pornography is a selfish act meant to meet his own perceived needs. That means you are not in competition with images of other women. This is not about your appearance, your sexual availability, or your competence in the bedroom.

Friend, I encourage you to lay your husband at Christ's feet and place your heart in His hands.

Day 14: 3 Ways to Reignite Sexual Passion in a Financially Stressed-Out Marriage

[By Rosann Cunningham](#)

Sex and money are two of the most heated topics of discussion in marriage; often causing so much turmoil it fuels on toward divorce. In today's economy, 19 million Americans are struggling financially, largely because of a job layoff followed by trouble finding full-time employment. The overwhelming emotions that come with this kind of hardship can be toxic on the marital relationship, certainly smothering the flame for sexual passion.

My husband and I lived it ourselves a few years ago. It was a long, emotional, and financially devastating trial – the toughest thing we've had to face as a couple so far. Despite our loving, Christ-centered marriage and steadfast faith that God was at work in our situation, the stress of being strapped for cash and jobless with no prospective employers calling, caused a wall of strife to begin growing between us.

Little by little we stopped smiling at each other, hugging each other, holding hands, kissing each other, and sleeping together. There was almost zero affection between us. Still, my husband expressed a desire to have sex with me, which fueled anxiety-filled questions of *"how can you even think of sex when we have no money?"* I was angry, disappointed, and full of fear and uncertainty over what the future held. How in the world would I be able to get in the mood to make love?

Then one day, we both reached an emotional breaking point. We were so lonely and missed the deep connection we once shared. We agreed God created sexual intimacy to be an essential ingredient in our marriage – a way of becoming one – but we didn't know how to reignite a mutual flame of passion when we were so stressed out. We prayed and talked a lot that day, and with God's guidance we found answers that worked!

Here are 3 ways to reignite sexual passion in your financially stressed-out marriage:

1. Keep Things in Proper Perspective

Whatever you're going through – it won't last forever. In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon teaches us there are a season and a time for everything. Not a single moment of our life happens without first passing through our all-knowing and loving God's hands. Pray for Him to give you eyes to see how He might want you to grow or deepen your faith through this trial, and ask for courage and guidance to do so. Let your hope rest in knowing He makes all things beautiful and His provision is always right on time. When stress is high, take life one day at a time. Don't try to control things you can't. Tackle today's problem today and avoid worrying about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). In God's perfect time, and not a moment before, His glory will shine bright and you'll be sharing with others how He orchestrated awesomeness into your life!

2. Find Healthy Ways to Reduce Your Stress Levels

The key to overcoming negative thoughts is to focus your attention on happier, more productive experiences. Get into a regular fitness routine to help burn off stress. Set aside time each day to do

something you love. A hobby like gratitude journaling or gardening can be very therapeutic. Practice deep breathing for relaxation. Pray without ceasing, and meditate on God's word. Listen to your favorite music. Do something fun with your children. Volunteer to help with a good cause. Have a knee-slapper belly laugh with your husband. Join a support group or get involved in a women's group at church.

3. Get Your Mind Ready For Sexual Intimacy

In order to get the stressed-out female mind refocused on intimacy, it really helps to plan for it and move toward sex slowly.

First, agree to meet each other in the bedroom every evening immediately after the children are tucked in. Whether it's for 10 minutes or an hour, this is your time to reconnect as a couple. It doesn't have to be about sex. Just make it face to face conversation, kissing a little bit, holding hands, catching up on the day's events. No television or electronics interfering. If it leads to sex, great! If not, that's okay too. These are no-pressure opportunities to just be together.

Next, pick one evening each week to set aside specifically for sexual intimacy. This will allow your mind plenty of opportunity to switch gears. That evening put the kids to bed early. Take a steamy bath or shower so you're clean and smooth. Put on lotion for silky skin. Wear something sexy. Light some candles. Kiss him passionately and let the flame of desire take off from there. Snuggle up for a movie and a glass of wine afterwards. Declare that evening "date night" going forward and avoid letting other schedule conflicts interrupt it. Over time you'll both look forward to these special evenings together and you may even decide to enjoy them more frequently.

Reigniting sexual intimacy in a financially stressed marriage won't be easy. It *can* be done though. Be intentional and prayerful, and in no time you'll feel the temperature rise.

Day 15: Busyness, Ministry, and the Myth of Quality Time

[By KM Logan](#)

Do you sometimes get too busy? So busy you wonder if you or your marriage will make it?

The kids were at their wits end. They were tired, they were cranky, and they were just plain out of sorts. And of course stressed out kids mean a stressed out mom too.

It felt like I had suddenly become a single mom. No my husband hadn't left me (and believe me I realize there is a difference) he had just been *mostly* gone. For two weeks straight.

The kids had barely seen him, and I had only seen him for a few minutes here and there before he'd run out of the door in the morning and when he'd come to bed, after I was already sleeping, at night.

No my husband wasn't working long hours. He wasn't going on business trips. He was serving God. And for a few weeks every summer this is our lot.

In addition to working full time to provide for my family, my husband is an ordained minister and we're transitioning to full time ministry. But unfortunately transitioning to full time ministry often translates to working like crazy at the "real" job then putting in more time in "service for God."

We're busy, and it's hard. Really hard sometimes.

For you it might not be ministry, it might be school activities, homeschooling, or church commitments. Anyway you slice it though there are seasons in our life when we will be busier than others.

Letting busyness rule your life though can spell disaster for marriage and family. Don't let this happen to you.

And don't be fooled by the myth of "quality time" either. Let's be real I'd rather spend two hours talking about nothing with my husband than 10 minutes of "quality" conversation. Quantity time is quality time, period.

So how exactly do you make more time for your spouse, when you're busy? It takes work. It takes planning, and it is so worth it. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- 1) Cut out the nonessential activities, in favor of spending time with your spouse. Yes girls night out's and man cave time are important but if it's a busy week (or month) it's not the right time for these activities.
- 2) Turn off the T.V. Yes it's tempting at the end of long days to turn on the T.V. but finding other activities that are relaxing (a massage maybe?) and that facilitate communicating rather than merely proximity are so much better for your marriage in seasons of busyness.
- 3) Plan a date night or family day before the dreaded busy week(s) get started and one after it ends. Seriously plan it. Don't just say you're going to do it, schedule the sitters write it on the calendar and plan what you're going to do ahead of time. Knowing that at the end of a crazy week or month I get to have a great family day then a date with my husband is a life line.
- 4) Make time for prayer. If you have a busy week/month then you don't have time not to pray with your spouse. Yes it can be hard, but it's so worth it.

Now it's your turn. What tips do you have about how to carve out more time with your spouse when you're too busy?

Day 16: When God Intervenes in Your Marriage

[By Tehila](#)

Some couples seem to leave their honeymoon, and continue into wedded blessedness. Oh sure, they have an argument here and there, but overall, their marital journey seems pretty straightforward and joyful.

For my dear hubby and I, this was not the case. We had a great honeymoon, in Italy no less, and I'm pretty sure the first couple of weeks thereafter were fine and dandy as we settled into a life together. However, **all I can remember of the rest of that first year is loud fights, hubby sleeping on the couch, and my dashed hopes and dreams for marital bliss.** It was rough. Out the window went our Christian convictions and conduct. And introduced were two selfish, angry, and broken people.

When God Intervenes In A Marriage

With the help of caring friends, prayer, and God's mercy, we began to stumble through the next years making one small step of improvement at a time. It often felt as though each and every hurdle we faced in life seemed to knock us over as a couple. However, **we had three things going for us; we were committed to one another, loved each other, and despite our heated spats, held firmly to a faith in God and His Word.** Slowly, but surely, we made progress in our marital relationship.

And now, here we are, in our fifteenth year of marriage. We are the best of friends. We have been through so many trials, and so many joys together. We share four beautiful children, we've moved to the opposite side of the earth as a family, and when I think about it, **I can hardly believe how far we've come.**

A Godly Perspective for Your Marriage

How wonderful it is when you and I look back and see God's hand upon our marriages. Clearly this is an area where God should be highly exulted and our testimony of the distance that He has brought us, loudly declared.

Yet, my dear friend, for so many years I tried to hide the state of my marriage. I would put on a joyful smile when I went to church. I would answer, "Great!" when asked how we were doing. But deep inside I was hurting so desperately.

In Mark 5:19, Jesus said to a man whom He had freed from demon possession,

**“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,
and how he has had mercy on you.”**

The Pretence Behind A Struggling Marriage

When our Lord says to tell others about how much He has done for us, that means that you and I need to make ourselves vulnerable. It requires us to humble ourselves and admit that we were in a difficult place. That our values and beliefs did not shine through to our behavior. That the fruit that was emanating from us towards our spouse, was anything but the fruit of the Spirit. **Before we can boast in Him and in how far He has brought us in our marriages, we need to admit to the hard parts first.**

As believers, we are Academy Award actors. We could get an Oscar for being radiant, shiny, happy people. Giving glory to God for what He has done in our lives often requires us taking off our masks, our facades, laying down our fear of man, and honestly sharing that we were void of peace in our relationship, but that God worked so mightily in our lives.

Sure it took years. You bet it cost tears. **But it was all worth it if the King of all Creation can get the glory for where we are now!**

Tests To Know Whether Your Marriage Has Improved

Have we arrived at a perfect marriage? Of course not. But there are few experiences as bonding as when we look back long enough to praise God for the large and small victories that He has brought us through. And doing so, gives us the strength, motivation and hope to continue on the path that He has laid out for us on this Earth together, as a team.

If you are struggling in your marriage, think about the areas in which, as a couple, you have progressed.

- Three years ago, you would have been so angry when your man was late, and **now you are far more understanding and tolerant.**
- Five years ago, it would have irritated him when you reacted in a certain way, and **now he responds lovingly** instead.
- Ten years ago, you would argue in the car all the way to church, blaming one another for this and that. Yet **now you arrive peacefully, having overlooked the other's faults.**

You see, you **have** come a long way! Further than you realize. God is working in your life, and He has chosen that very man you married for you, because God knew that your specific husband would be the absolute best instrument to transform you into the image of His Son!

What are some points of progress that you recognize in your marital relationship that have come about by God's gracious hand?

Day 17: His Wife First

[By Kela Nellums](#)

“And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” -Genesis 2:18 (NKJV)

I became a mother first. Then, I became a wife.

As soon as I said, “I do” to my husband, the roles of this woman switched immediately and permanently.

I’m now *his wife first*.

The role of wife and mother can so easily merge into each other.

The wife’s heart wants to pour into pleasing her husband.

The mother’s arms wants to snuggle those precious babies close.

It can become easy to lean more toward meeting the needs of our children when they’re young and helpless. This pattern continues as they get older and rescuing our children is a regular occurrence. We’re mom. It’s our protective duty, right?

Our husbands are (in our thinking) self-sufficient enough. “He can get it himself. I’m tending to the immediate need of these helpless kids.” can quickly become the mindset.

Sometimes it can be a more subtle thought of, “He understands my need to be everything for and to the children.”

I can see how the enemy can use this to the fullest when our husbands choose hobbies or work over time with their wives or the children.

I can see the enemy’s cunning when the children can become our immediate comfort; the comfort and emotional needs being met that is supposed to come from our husbands.

I’ve heard many friends say, “My children are my everything.” and that to me is a sad statement because I know that they’re there to fend for themselves and their children.

I'm my husband's wife first. Then I am my children's mother.

Mothering and home educating 6 children **and** being a wife first has had its challenges for me.

If not for my husband knowing my need for him...and need for my sanity, I'd be in a ship of motherhood alone.

God has tremendously blessed me with a husband that does make our marriage a priority.

There are many times that my husband and I are asked, "How do you do it all?"

They wonder how we keep it together and make our marriage a priority with all of the kids that we have.

- **My first response** is always, "By the grace of God." but I know they're looking for more substance and "how to" than that.
- I've found myself needing to **examine my heart first**. Self is the best place to start because I'm the primary nourisher of our children since I'm home with them daily. I can become more attached to their lives, joys and issues than my husband sees or knows. *It can be hard to detach.*
- **I purpose to think about my husband**. Not just pray for him, but to sit and think about him in a positive way. *Finding the good* and seeing him as Christ see him. If I was upset with him, I have to choose to let it go.
- **Remember that our children see** how my husband and I treat each other and respond to each other. We are their first teachers; good and bad.
I want them to know and learn how to make their marriage a priority.
- **Don't allow the children to interrupt** my conversations or interaction with my husband. This actually speaks volumes in my husband knowing that I value our time and his words to me.
- **Date regularly**. It can be dinner and a movie, a stroll in your neighborhood, any crazy/cool thing happening in your town or city, or just a drive across town, dream building (my favorite has always been Saturday Open Houses in the nicer neighborhoods). We do talk about the children, but they aren't the only conversation. We DO like to talk about the thing that made all those babies, though 😊. Hey! We're in love and we want to keep it that way. What better way than to talk about things we're passionate about...each other.
We also talk about our personal dreams and goals, Spiritual conversations (we LOVE talking about God's Word), and where we're going as a couple.
- **Seek to be a positive influence** in someone else's marriage. This is where the teacher becomes the student. When we know that someone else is watching, it makes us mindful of our marriage. *It helps us to quickly seek each other's best interest, to see the log in our own eye first, to be a better team.*

**I speak and write from a view of my own marriage.

I don't pretend that everyone's marriage is an easy journey. There's tougher stuff that goes on between

husbands and wives that need more than I can offer. I pray that while you are still married that God reveals Himself mightily in your marriage.

Day 18: Differences in Marriage is Always There

[By Angie Benjamin](#)

Ephesians 4:2-3 (New International Version)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

It doesn't matter how "compatible" you think you are. Differences will arise sooner than later.

The important thing is how you manage those differences and what you do with them (how you take advantage of them and turn them into something beautiful).

My husband and I have been married for over 2 years and differences have surely come up in all senses.

To start with, we face the first evident difference: He's a man and I'm a woman ...that's the problem, the opposites attract...but don't forget they're still OPPOSITES.

Second, my husband and I were raised in totally different backgrounds: he comes from a very traditional humble African family and I come from a very traditional Mexican Family. And though our cultures share lots of similarities, they are still quite different in other aspects.

The fact of being an interracial couple has put also a bit more pressure on us. Not a bad one, but where we've lived and where we come from is not that "common".

Language has also played a big part in our marriage. English is not our first language, so I sometimes want to express something but the intonation suggests something completely different from what I'm trying to say...the Spanish accent and intonation might imply that I'm upset when I'm not! Lol. 😊

We do have different perspectives on church, family (extended) and raising children (because of our cultures). And when an "argument" is about to arise I'm glad that my husband and I have made the decision right from the beginning of our marriage of not letting our decisions be ruled by "my culture" or "your culture" but the "Gospel culture".

Proverbs 17:14 (New International Version)

**Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam;
so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.**

We have made of God's word our foundation and our place to go to where difference arises.

The three most important tips I can give you when solving differences in Marriage are:

1.- Go to His word

2.- Welcome the differences, with this I mean that there should be an open mind about the differences. Hey, my culture ain't perfect and his culture ain't either and I have learned to "reject" or give up on several aspects of my own culture and adopt the good ones from his.

Philippians 2:2 (New International Version)

Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

3. Be willing to compromise. It doesn't always have to be done your way. Give it up. After all, that's what love is, isn't?

1 Corinthians 13:5

It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

What kind of differences have you faced in your marriage? How have you solved them?

Day 19: How I Discovered Respect

[By April Cassidy](#)

I am a 40 year old Christian wife (married 19 years), part-time pharmacist and mother of 2 children. I accepted Christ as a child and grew up to be very involved in church, I had my Bible study and prayer time almost every day from high school and thereafter. I wanted to please God. I was a straight A student in high school and most of the time in college, too. I got customer service awards as a pharmacist. I cared about people. I was super friendly. I never let anyone feel left out or ignored around me. I went to church 3 times a week most of my life. I believed I was the best Christian wife and woman ever for the first 14+ years of my marriage.

But my husband – well – he was not the Christian husband I had expected him to be. VERY early in our marriage, my husband began to stonewall and shut me out. Sometimes he would barely look at me, barely speak to me and barely touch me. I hurt so much! I prayed and prayed for God to change him. I wanted him to be a strong, godly leader. But he wouldn't answer when I asked him important questions. I thought he wouldn't lead. So very early in our marriage, I felt I had to take over. I didn't think I had a choice. I had been the dominant twin in a set of identical twins, and I just took over the dominant role in our marriage, too. I was stressed, anxious, worried, afraid and very lonely most of the time.

My husband NEVER said what he needed from me. He seemed to want me to just be quiet and smile. But how could I do that when he was hurting me and ignoring me so much? So I continued to tell him how upset I was and how he needed to change and how he wasn't being a godly husband. There were times that were fairly "ok" but I knew we were missing out on so much intimacy emotionally and spiritually – even physically. I didn't understand why. I would beg him to tell me what he needed from me. He wouldn't say anything. I became convinced that my husband had no feelings and begged God to make him be more loving to me. I thought I was obeying all of God's commands for me as a wife. I mean, I didn't cuss at my husband, scream or throw things or threaten divorce.

In December 2008, I opened the book, Love and Respect, by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. I read the first chapter in the book store and asked Greg, "This can't be right, can it? It says that men need respect as much as women need love?" Greg said, "Yeah, I'd say that's right." Suddenly, our 14.5 years of marriage flashed before my eyes in a new light. Suddenly, I realized that I did not have an A+ on my "wife report card" – it was maybe more like a D-. I was mortified! I read the book and tearfully apologized to Greg over

and over again. He immediately forgave me – it took all of 2 seconds. Wow. I knew I could never have forgiven him that quickly. Maybe I wasn't the spiritual giant I thought I was.

I told him, "I don't really understand this whole respect thing. It is like a new world that I never even knew existed. But when I figure all of this respect stuff out, you are going to feel like the most respected husband on the planet!"

God showed me a MOUNTAIN of my own sin that I had been completely blind to (here are just a few): PRIDE PRIDE PRIDE – thinking I knew better than Greg all the time, that I was always right, that my way was the only correct way of looking at anything, and, honestly – I thought I knew better than God, even though I doubt I would have said that.

Idolatry – I put feeling loved by my husband above Christ in my heart. And I also trusted myself much more than I trusted God. I didn't consciously say these things, but that is exactly how I lived, as if I was sovereign and in charge of everything and everyone and as if God was a small, little wimp.

Disrespect – I had NO idea all the things that are disrespectful to men. I had tried to verbally force my husband closer to God by criticizing, lecturing, arguing, insisting, nagging, complaining and bossing him around. I had actually pushed my husband away with my disrespect - and I never knew I had hurt him. He didn't say a word about how wounded he was, or about my disrespect. He just shut down.

Unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness – I held on to all of these things. They were a toxic poison. Jesus says God won't forgive me if I won't forgive others.

God helped me repent of all of my sin, and then He filled me with His Spirit as He taught me to die to myself and submit completely to Jesus, living in total obedience to Him. It took a good 2 years before I felt like I had a clue what it meant to respect my husband. At first, I tried to just be respectful, but not to actually respect my husband. That didn't work! I had to actually find good things in him to admire. As I focused on Philippians 4:8 kinds of things, and stopped the negativity, and began to look for ways to build up my husband with my words, to encourage him, to appreciate him, to admire him and to cooperate with His God-given leadership, God radically changed me first. Then He radically changed our marriage, and eventually, He began to radically change my husband, too.

My motive HAD to be only to please Jesus – not to change my husband. God made sure of that!

Now, we BOTH have the marriage of our dreams. Funny how doing things God's way brings real peace, joy, fulfillment and blessings.

Day 20: In-laws or Outlaws?

[By Gail Purath](#)

I felt I would never get along with my in-laws.

We had different backgrounds, different values, different ways of expressing ourselves, and entirely different perspectives on life.

Sound familiar?

After years of nursing this typical daughter-in-law opinion, I was convicted by one of God's principles. You know the one. It's found in the Fifth Commandment and repeated in Ephesians 6:2-3: "Honor your father and mother."

Obedying this command is not contingent on the character of our parents but on our character and trust in God's principles. And as much as we'd like to ignore it, once we're married our in-laws are part of our Fifth Commandment responsibility.

Honoring parents has grown more difficult, I believe, because it contradicts the prevalent attitudes of our culture and sometimes defies our human logic. But it's accompanied by an incredible promise for our well-being. If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3 NLT).

As Christians, we have some significant Biblical role models for honoring those in God-given positions: King David had a father-in-law from the dark side but he refused to take advantage of King Saul or show him disrespect even when those around him encouraged him to do so (1 Samuel 24; 1 Samuel 26).

Ruth had an insensitive, self-focused mother-in-law, but Ruth focused on God and was greatly blessed for it. These examples show us how completely we can trust God's principles and promises.

So let's look at eight ways we consciously or unconsciously undermine our relationship with our in-laws:

1. Judging them hypocritically—not judging our own actions and attitudes in the same way we judge our in-laws’ (Mat.7:1-5). Christians are often more self-righteous about their in-laws than unbelievers.
2. Favoring our parents and treating our in-laws like “second-hand” parents and grandparents (Mat.7:12).
3. Not encouraging our spouses to resolve conflicts and improve their relationship with their parents (Eph. 6:2-3).
4. Being petty and sensitive (1 Peter 4:8).
5. Treating in-laws poorly when they treat us poorly (Rom. 12:17,21).
6. Thinking we are responding to our in-law’s disinterest or disrespect, when they are actually responding to ours (Phil. 2:3-4).
7. Becoming bitter (Heb. 12:15).
8. Talking and thinking about in-laws in negative terms (Eph. 4:29; Phil. 4:8).

It’s always good to ask if we would like our married children to treat us in the same way we are treating our in-laws. It very likely will happen.

We must guard against selfish advice from our peers and realize our obedience to the Fifth command reflects our respect for God.

I believe most in-law problems would dissolve if couples showed their in-laws as much respect and interest as they show their friends. Yet God commands us to honor parents more highly than friends.

When I started applying the principles of Ephesians 6:2-3 to my in-law relationship, it was incredibly hard. I was skeptical, and so were my mother and father-in-law. Gradually, however, God showed me how much my judgmental, self-righteous attitudes had damaged the relationship.

Now I not only love and respect my in-laws, I enjoy them. They still have their quirks, but now I realize I also have mine.

I challenge you to test God’s “command with a promise.” I know God will bless you.

Day 21: Can Sex-Driven Wives Be Godly Wives?

[By J from Hot, Holy, and Humorous](#)

I'm tempted to answer my own question, "You bet," and leave it at that.

Yet I know the struggle that many Christian wives feel. I've felt it too. That sense that if you really enjoy sex with your husband...

If you desire, delve, and delight in sex...

If you even invite, initiate, and indulge in sex...

If you—heaven forbid!—mention aloud to other Christian wives how much you enjoy sex, then...

Maybe you're not quite up to snuff on the disciple-o-meter. After all, how could you be so obsessed with the physical side of life when God is clearly only interested in the spiritual?

Unfortunately, the Church and its people have often blurred the lines between premarital purity and fully-endorsed-by-the-Father sex in marriage. Entire generations of women were raised in the church to believe that "good girls don't" and, after marriage, "good girls do, but don't want to." The stigma remains in some circles that if you crave and revel in good sex with your husband, then you're somehow lesser-than.

Here's the biblical truth: God created you to be a sexual being, and God gifted marriage with the blessing of sexual intimacy.

God is not the least bit taken aback by a wife who loves having sex or even desires sex more than her husband. He's commanded us to have sex (Genesis 2:24), and the Bible fully recognizes that we ladies have some sexual fire in us (see 1 Corinthians 7:3-9). God planted that desire and expects us to fulfill it in marriage.

Indeed, in Song of Solomon, a book of the Bible devoted to sexual intimacy, the woman eagerly invites her husband to make love to her. "Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his

chambers” (1:4);“Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits” (4:16). And after the couple makes love, there is a part often attributed to “Friends,” but scholars now largely agree that the speaker is likely God Himself. In Song of Songs 5:1, God voices his approval: “Eat, friends, and drink; drink your fill of love.” In other words, chow down on the love feast, husbands and wives!

Moreover, we can look at how God created our body, the one He knitted together in our mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13). Here’s more proof that God’s on our side when it comes to wives and sex: the clitoris. For years, scientists assumed that the clitoris had some reproductive or functional use, so they studied and studied. And came up empty. Its whole purpose is female pleasure. Yep, the clitoris is a gift-wrapped present from God for married wives to experience arousal, pleasure, and climax.

Despite the evidence, however, many Christians intimate that high-drive wives are, well, weird. Like we’re an endangered species, or should be.

It’s still common to hear Christian wives complain about their husbands wanting sex too much, state that they undress or make love in the dark, or wish that the biblical obligation to have sex would just go away. Some women recognize the importance of sex in marriage, but only insofar as suggesting that wives comply and meet their husband’s needs, without regard to completely legitimate intimacy needs that wives have. And those of us who really, really like and want sex feel like dodo birds...or maybe, let’s face it, sluts. Indeed, with my history of premarital promiscuity, it was difficult to oust this label even from my own mind and embrace instead the way God saw my marital intimacy—as right and good and honorable.

Even spiritual.

Yes, spiritual. Consider that Jesus’ spiritual commands have a physical manifestation:

Love someone...by treating them as the Good Samaritan cared for the injured Jew

Help others...by giving to the poor

Serve others...by giving your time and resources to care for them

Our deeds demonstrate the maturity of our faith and love.

Likewise, God blessed marriage with a physical manifestation of relational and spiritual intimacy with your mate: It’s called sex. And there is nothing wrong with you wanting to grab hold of that blessing.

Proverbs 13:12 states that “a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.” God infused you with a longing for deep, physical intimacy with your mate. That doesn’t make you a flesh-crazed lunatic. It makes you the woman He made you to be. And He wants your marriage to fulfill that longing.

Meaning, find that husband and get busy, you godly woman!

Day 22: Being Intentionally Intentional

[By Debi Walter](#)

I know the title is redundant, but it makes perfect sense. We have a choice: We can intentionally do nothing, stick to the same old routine and not help our marriage or our spouse grow one bit. Or we can be intentionally intentional in growing our marriage every day that the Lord gives us together. The saying goes that those who fail to plan can plan to fail. This is so true in our marriage relationship. Our responsibility is planting and watering our own marriage vineyard, but it is God, alone who causes the growth. Let's be sure we're providing the richest soil possible.

Here are the nutrients needed to enrich the soil where your marriage vineyard grows:

Be intentional in growing in your love for the Lord. Following Him is the first and most important step in keeping our priorities right in marriage. He is our closest friend and our best advocate for a successful marriage. Our marriage mirrors Him, so it matters to Him more than we realize.

Intentionally carry your spouse in your heart everyday. Whether they're at home doing chores around the house, or at the office working hard to provide means for the family. Let your love for them be what motivates all you do each and every day. And make sure they know this is your motivation. There's a song that says, "You know it's true...everything I do...I do it for you." Let this be your anthem as you do the mundane tasks each and every day.

Be intentional in knowing your spouse well enough to know the things that are weighing heavily on their heart. If you don't know, then ask good questions like, "How can I pray for you today?" "What is one thing you're asking God to help you with today?" Questions like these open the door for quality communication that goes a long way in helping you enter into your spouse's world. We offer an iPhone, iPod, iPad app that provides over a hundred questions to help you know what to ask.

Intentionally pursue their input and help in your own life. It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of life—doing the things you know you need to do—without considering there may be a better way to do it. Talk to your spouse. Ask them if they have any observations about your routine that they think would help you grow and change? You might be surprised when they actually say they do. And be ready to listen and try their suggestion. No one has a better view of our blind spots than our spouse. And if we're open and

humble about their input we may grow in ways we didn't know we needed to grow. Kind of like a plant that's outgrown its pot. It's still green and has life, but imagine how much better it would do if the plant was given a bigger pot in which to grow.

Be intentional in romancing your spouse. I'm not only talking about sex here, although sex is a very good thing to be intentional about. Romance is the pursuit of pleasing your spouse in lots of meaningful ways. Be sure you know your spouse's likes and dislikes in this area. It benefits no one to romance them in a way that they won't notice or appreciate. Find out their love language and do all you can to romance them to the hilt in this regard. But I offer a caution—the love languages can limit our ability to grow and understand our spouse on a different level. Imagine a husband who goes out of his way to express his love for his wife by writing a long, detailed love letter to her and mails it through the USPS. If she prefers acts of service to words of affirmation, she may be tempted to disregard his unselfish act of love towards her. We don't want to cling to our love language as the only way we'll appreciate our spouse's affection. This is selfish and reeks of pride. Instead, let's be grateful for any intentional expression of love that our spouse gives us. It is a gift we never want to take for granted.

Finally, be intentional in pleasing your spouse's sexual desires. God intended for you to be the only one who would know your spouse in this way. We realize many marriages come with baggage, like finding unwanted weeds in your vineyard. Certainly, we must be intentional in being honest, confessing failures and sins, and pursuing forgiveness at all costs. Sometimes the weeds are so many that it's hard to find the vine. If this is the case in your marriage, then be intentional in getting help. Open up the gates of your vineyard and invite others in to help you remove the weeds of past sins, unforgiveness and uncharitable judgments. These weeds are like the little foxes that want nothing more than to destroy your marriage vineyard. Let's be intentional in identifying who our real enemy is—it's not your spouse! You are on the same team fighting a common enemy. Realizing this one fact alone will do more to help you both be more intentional in all the areas we've listed above, than anything else will.

An intentional marriage requires a willingness by both the husband and wife to get dirty in cultivating their relationship for God's glory and for the good of the family and society at large. It's good to remember the big picture of why our marriage matters to God especially when we're spending so many days plowing up the dirt and don't see a lot of growth. God has promised He will provide the growth. You can be certain He was intentional towards you when He gave the following promise:

For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:19-21 ESV)

Day 23: Marriage from a Young Wife's Perspective

By Jaimie Ramsey

I was blessed to begin my marriage as a Christian with a believing husband.

We started our relationship with the determination to do things God's way, and that has not changed. Both of us were raised by parents who have given us amazing examples of what a Christ-centered marriage should be. Our parents taught us about submitting to and respecting each other. They taught us what selfless love looks like, and how essential forgiveness is.

Our parents prepared us well. But they couldn't give us exact instructions for everything we would encounter in married life. I didn't realize that living so closely with someone else would lay bare all my best and worst qualities. I can be lazy, insensitive, rude, extremely selfish, and basically everything that 1 Corinthians 13 says love is not.

On the other hand, I've found that I can be selfless at times, like when I get up early when I don't have to in order to make breakfast for my husband, when I learn to play a video game so I can do something with him that he likes, and when I take care of him when he's really sick. My husband does similar things for me! I never knew how much I could love or how much I could be loved until I knew my husband.

The way he loves me even when I'm at my most unlovable is an amazing reminder of how God loves me unconditionally. The love of my husband isn't a replacement for the love of Christ, of course, but it's a picture of the love God has for me.

As a young couple (we were married when he was 20 and I was almost 20), we've faced most of the same obstacles any recently-married couple does, such as differences in how we deal with money, different habits, learning how to relate to each other sexually, learning to communicate clearly despite our different methods of communication. We mess up. We hurt each other. We say the wrong thing. We act thoughtlessly and selfishly.

No matter how we sin against each other, there is always forgiveness.

We are able to forgive each other because Christ has forgiven us of sins far greater than the ones we commit against each other. We are able to love each other because God loves us, and that love flows through us to each other.

We made a commitment very early in our marriage that the word “divorce” would never be spoken. It’s simply not an option, ever. We’re “stuck with each other,” because we made a commitment to each other and to God that we would be together and faithful to each other “till death parts us.” It’s only by the grace of God that we will be able to keep that promise. It’s because of his forgiveness that we’re able to forgive each other and move past our mistakes. It is his love that will keep us together and loving each other.

I am so glad my husband and I decided to get married when we did. Yes, we were young, but marrying at a young age has given us the opportunity to finish our growing-up years together. We are maturing in our faith and in other ways as a couple, instead of by ourselves. Yes, we’re still developing as individuals, but we’re going to be together as one flesh for the rest of our lives. It just made sense to start that life sooner rather than later. And we don’t regret a minute of it. Sure, we’ve had struggles, and I know we’ll face more that right now I can’t even imagine. But God has already proved himself constantly faithful, even when we ignore him. We can trust absolutely that he has our lives in his hands, and that he will carry us through no matter what life may bring.

Day 24: Lessons from Infidelity

By Alecia Starks

Twelve years into our marriage, I found out that Clint had an affair. A few days after his initial confession I found out there was more. He'd had multiple affairs over the course of almost four years. It was completely devastating and life-altering. In all of the ways you could possibly imagine. It was also completely life-altering in a plethora of good ways as well. It completely rocked our marriage as we knew it. It turned everything upside down. It required us to take a long hard look at the state of our union and be honest about what we wanted our marriage to actually look like.

I'll be honest...I almost didn't stay. But I'm glad I did. And I'm even more glad that God has allowed us to share our story and has used our experience to bring hope to those who are going through similar trials. As we continue to grow Marriage Life we are continually reminded of 2 Corinthians 1:4-5:

“who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”

During the aftermath of Clint's affairs, digging through all of the rubble, we both realized that we had changes we needed to make. There were a number of cultural lies that we had bought into that contributed to our marriage being ripe for an affair. Because of that, one of the most important aspects of our ministry at Marriage Life is sharing truths with others that will hopefully rock their marriages and their mindsets for the better. We have realized the importance of living in truth and not buying into the lies that we are fed through TV, music, and our own basic thought processes and then choosing to daily live out that truth in our actual lives and marriages.

I'd like to share some of the most important truths that we came to learn about marriage as we walked through infidelity in hopes that you can take some of it and apply it to your marriage as well:

***Unrealistic expectations will kill your marriage.**

Unspoken expectations will kill it just as fast. Your marriage will never look like your parents so quit silently expecting your husband to be just like your father. Your marriage will never be like your favorite Hollywood

love story. They aren't real. Quit expecting your spouse to talk to you sweet every moment of every day, to be perfectly romantic at all the right times, and to say all the right things just when you need them. We set ourselves and our marriages up for failure when we go into them with unspoken, unrealistic expectations for our spouses that they can never measure up to. It is more than okay to have expectations but we can't create ones that your spouse can't or won't live up to. My husband is not a huge romantic by nature. I love all of those little gestures like hand holding, coming home with a single rose, little back massages. When we were dating he actually told me he didn't like giving massages. Yet, what did I do? Continued to harbor that expectation that in my marriage I would have a husband who would give me massages whenever I wanted.

Years later, he knows how much I enjoy them and we meet in the middle. It's not something I expect and it's something that's even more treasured when it's given.

***Your spouse will fail you.**

Plan on it. A while ago, we read about marriage speakers who will have their audience turn to their partners and actually have them say this to each other. "You will fail me." Your spouse might not fail you in the ways that my husband did me, but they will still fail and fall short. It's inevitable. If we stop elevating our spouse's to God-like status and remember that they are fallible human beings we are more apt to accept and respond to failures and disappointments with more grace.

***Forgiveness is key.**

If we are in relationship with people who are going to fail us and not meet our expectations we are going to have to learn to be forgivers. One of the first things I did when Clint confessed was forgive him. I just heard God speak to my heart and I knew. Didn't I keep making the same mistakes over and over? Did I desire forgiveness every time I failed? Lack of forgiveness to me felt like I was telling not only my husband but also God that what Clint had done was just too big. Too big to forgive. Too big for God to heal. And that's not true. Nothing is too big, or too bad, or too awful for God to completely restore and make new.

If your marriage is struggling or experiencing infidelity we at Marriage Life want you to know that we are here for you and we are in constant prayer for you. Do not hesitate to reach out and daily keep doing all you can to make your marriage all it can be!

Day 25: 6 Ways To Preserve Your Marriage When You're Too Busy Pouring Into Others

[By Nan](#)

You listen to a friend whose heart is breaking as her marriage is crumbling around her, you sit with a mom whose child is facing a serious illness, and you hold her hand tightly as you pray with her. You pray with another who has just lost a loved one, and you hold her as you cry with her. Then you go home, drained and exhausted.

How do you keep your marriage together when stresses are threatening to pull you apart? How can you fill your children's emotional cups all day long, be there for a dear friend who is struggling, get dinner on the table, and manage to have anything left over for your husband?

What happens when you are so busy pouring into the lives of others that you feel like you have nothing left to pour into your marriage?

Is it o.k. to neglect our marriages in order to better serve the Lord? How do we "bear one another's burdens" without having those burdens overwhelm us and strain our marriages?

We have to learn how to care for others without becoming overwhelmed by their needs or problems. We do this by setting boundaries and priorities and leaning heavily on the Lord:

1. Share their burden but don't carry it FOR them. You can love them, encourage them, empathize and pray with them, but you must not carry that burden as if it were your own. Point them to the Lord. You want them to be leaning on Him, not on you.

Sometimes we may find ourselves stepping in and taking over in a situation. Soon we can find ourselves doing things for people that they really should be doing for themselves.

Help them as the Lord directs, but don't take away their opportunity to help themselves. Remember that the burden is theirs to carry, not yours. Taking on the problems of others will only add to your own burdens.

2. Don't bring it home. When you are home, be HOME! When we care about someone it can be so easy to let our minds get discouraged and overwhelmed by their needs.

If we aren't careful our evenings will be filled with other people's problems and concerns instead of being filled with the love and laughter of our own family. Take those burdens to the Lord and trust Him to take care of them and let it go. We won't have time to do the things God has called us to do when we are too busy trying to do His job.

3. Set boundaries. There are some lines that must not be crossed. You don't have to be available 24 hours a day. It's o.k., and healthy even, to set boundaries that protect you and your family. Shut off the phone when you need to, let the answering machine answer it, don't answer the doorbell. Know that it's o.k. "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." Mark 10:9 (NIV)

4. Guard your relationships. Make your loved ones a priority and view your time with them as something to be protected. You can't do everything, and you can't BE everything to everybody. Remember your priorities. You are a wife and mother FIRST. Be prayerful about anything or anyone who tries to monopolize your time or doesn't respect your boundaries.

5. Know how and when to say no. It's o.k. to say no, you can't do everything. Is the request in line with your priorities? Do you have the time? Have you prayed about it? Does it cross your boundaries?

6. Go to the Lord daily for your strength. You have to continually go to the Well and fill up or you'll be running on empty. Find someone to hold you accountable to time in the Word and prayer and to the boundaries and priorities you've established.

Your relationship with the Lord is a wall of protection around your marriage, and your marriage is a wall of protection around your family. Don't let it crumble.

Day 26: For Those Who Want to Change Their Spouse

[By Lara Williams](#)

Say it with me, “I cannot change him.” No, really. Say it out-loud. And again.

Now say, “And it’s not my job.” Yes, out-loud. Now put both statements together and say it again. Like you mean it. You can even shout it...unless you’re reading this in the Wal-Mart checkout line.

“I CANNOT CHANGE HIM. AND IT’S NOT MY JOB!”

Believe me. I tried to change my husband for years. And more years. Always with the premise that “it’s what God would want for him” or “what God commands of him”. But in reality — deep down — I believed that if he changed then I could actually experience true peace or joy or hope. But that doesn’t mesh with the truths of my God. In fact God has a word for things or people that we depend upon to give us the abundant life found only in Christ. He calls it idolatry. Oh that reality pains me.

I loved Jesus when my husband and I got married. Loved Jesus. I was the prodigal preacher’s daughter returned. I had been a rebel in every area of my life until God got a hold of me. And I became that passionate Jesus-girl who wrote letters to everyone I had ever known to tell them about this One who had changed me.

Fast-forward a few years. God was actively deepening my faith, one step at a time. He was shedding needful things from me. He had healed and continued to heal many of my prodigal wounds. And then I met my husband. Little did I know that our marriage would be one of the things God used — ordained — to tangibly teach me deep aspects of His love and grace.

Our marriage started off difficult with poor communication and unmet expectations. Yet we pressed on. Until six years and three kids into our messy marriage when God shined His light. He revealed the pit of betrayal into which my husband had secretly fallen. And the reality completely shattered me.

The reality completely shattered the idol of a man’s love.

If there was anything God taught me through the long, painful, slow healing that came from that breaking, it was that my husband was not mine to control. My husband wasn't the one who could bring me everlasting joy. Because he was (and is) human. Like me. And we as humans do one thing very well. We fail.

God revealed afresh that abundant life — a life marked with peace and joy and hope and love — was a gift of grace, rightfully mine as a disciple of Christ. And that He intended for me to experience His abundance regardless of my circumstance.

I don't type those words flippantly. I don't throw that out there as good Sunday School advice. I say that as a touchstone that has proven vital to experiencing His fullness even in — especially in — the darkest valleys of our marriage.

I'm very aware that many of you reading this post (or series) desperately crave the abundance of Christ. I'm here to testify to the fact that abundance ultimately comes from the Lord Jesus. No man or marriage will ever fully satisfy because that longing in us was crafted for Him alone.

That's not to say that desiring a "better" marriage — complete with good communication and fidelity and love/respect — isn't honorable. It is...as long as our soul stands first and foremost on the foundation of our God, clinging to Him for life.

**Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.**

**He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.**

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Here's the beauty. Releasing control to a faithful, pursuing, relentlessly-loving God sets us free. Believing Him to be true to His Word, even when we may not see tangible results with our physical eyes, stirs the peace found only in Him. Resting in the fact that He's sovereign over the good and the devastating, faithful to work it all together according to His will, empowers us to love.

Our job isn't to control or manipulate or change the heart of our spouse. There remains only One who can transform humans from the inside-out. Our calling is to love. Love freely and graciously out of the overflow of His love made alive within us. And that alone changes the world. That alone changes our marriages, beginning in you and me.

Practically speaking, how do you experience the abundance in Christ even when life (or marriage) is far from beautiful?

Day 27: 5 Ways to Stay Connected with Your Spouse Even When You're Apart

[By Carlie Kercheval](#)

For those of us who have husbands who have to travel and can be gone for very long periods of time, it is vital to the survival of our marriage that we stay connected. Things that disconnect, by very definition, are severed from one another. As with anything in life, once something is disconnected, it no longer functions in the capacity it was intended to do so. And the same is true with marriage.

I am very familiar with being apart from my husband for very long periods of time (12-18 months at a time). For me, my husband is in the military and has been deployed 7+ years in the past 10 years of our marriage. Despite our separations, I am blessed to report, that we are closer and happier than ever. We recognize that the success of our marriage relies 100% on our trust, commitment, and hope in Jesus Christ.

I want to share with you five ways that we have managed to have a healthy, thriving marriage in the midst of all our time apart. The key to this list is doing them all, not just some, to see phenomenal connection when physically apart. As I type this list, my husband is nearly 3,000 miles away for a few months of training, so I am living these out even right now.

Pray, pray, and pray. It is of utmost importance that you pray for your husband and pray together to keep that divine, God-given connection you are called to walk out in your marriage. My husband and I pray for one another every single day we are able to communicate with each other. We pray together in person (when he is home), other times we pray on the phone, via email, or via Skype. Regardless of how or when we pray, we do it. We are committed to seeing our marriage work, and this is a crucial part of that process.

If your spouse is an unbeliever, then just continue to pray on your own and with a prayer partner that is committed to seeing your marriage succeed. What ever you do, don't give up!

Be completely honest with one another. To some this may seem like common sense, and to others terrifying. It is absolutely imperative that you are completely honest with your spouse with the good and bad things. Does that mean that you give them a play-by-play of your day down to the second? No. It simply means that if anything that could hinder your relationship comes up – tell them. Tell them in the way that you communicate best. For some this will be talking. For others it will be writing. However you do it, just

do it. This one step alone will open your marriage up to the possibility of actually fulfilling your vows to one another!

Go out of your way to make your spouse feel special. This will mean different things to different people. What is your spouse's love language? If you know it, "speak" it to them every chance you get. If you don't know their love language, check out Dr. Gary Chapman's book, "The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts" and it will open your eyes to one of the most magnificent ways to communicate with your spouse! My husband's love language is words of affirmation. I always make sure to affirm him with my speech and through little notes throughout the day. The notes may be handwritten (letters when he is away), emails, or texts. I know it makes him feel so special to hear me speaking life-giving words about him. I want nothing more than to build him up, and thankfully this allows me to do so in the way he best receives it!

When you are physically together, don't deny your husband physical intimacy. I know, I know. Some of you are saying, "But Carlie, what does this do for my marriage when we are apart?" I can tell you from experience, it carries its weight in gold. My husband has told me how much more he values and honors our marriage because I choose to honor and value him in this area of our relationship regardless of how I feel.

Sure, I am tired a lot. I am a stay-at-home homeschooling mother of three amazing blessings. I run several online ministries, publications, and businesses. And the list goes on and on. But at the end of the day, my priorities still remain: God, husband, children (in that order).

Forgive. Real forgiveness, the kind only found in the life and heart of our Savior Jesus Christ, is essential in marriage. Make it your mission in life to forgive your spouse – being an example of God's love no matter the circumstance. If you ever find this hard, read John 19 in your Bible, I guarantee this will get your focus back where it needs to be!

Don't let loving and connecting with your husband stop when he is home. Continue to implement these simple steps to ensure ease of application while your spouse is away. Believe me, if you do these things, it will make a lasting impact on your marriage and teach everyone watching you (children, family, friends, etc) that the love of God is real and biblical marriage is possible!

Day 28: Why I'm Not a Pastor's Wife

[By Kari Patterson](#)

I was 18 the first time I saw him, standing there up front, holding the mic. Unimpressed, I slouched down in my chair and folded my arms, thinking, “*That’s* the kind of guy my mom would want me to marry.”

Famous last words.

Five years later I did in fact marry this man. People change. And *I* changed when I fell in love with Jesus and began following Him. Suddenly this godly, kind, handsome guy at the mic seemed *really* appealing. By the time we married we were both working as missionaries and accustomed to the ministry life, so the transition into marriage and ministry life was easy. We got a joint checking account and continued life as normal.

But our ten years of marriage and ministry have been anything *but* normal.

One year in we moved to another state for a pastoring job, only to discover disaster after disaster. Determined, we filled every random role available—leading the 55-and-older ministry (which was in reality the 80-and-older ministry), leading community groups in cities we didn’t live in, coordinating the couple’s Valentine’s dinner (I still have nightmares), and living in a windowless apartment with rotted out floors. We later moved back and juggled seminary with babies and three-hour round-trip commutes, odd jobs, living with parents, internships, then a pastoring position and another final leap into the wide-open unknown world of church-planting. All of this involved 13 moves, 6 churches, 2 kids, and I’m tired just writing it down.

But, while I don’t recommend so much change in a short amount of time, the benefit was a wide variety of experiences and the opportunity to observe many ministry marriages. So, out of this experience and observation, what stands out as most important are **three memorable quotes from wise women I’ve met along the way:**

“I am not a pastor’s wife, I’m *Seth’s* wife.” –*Hannah Trimmer, married 11 years*

There is no biblical role or office of pastor’s wife. In my opinion, the setting apart and pedestal-placement of ministry wives is one of the greatest dangers to women who are married to pastors. If my emotional energy is spent on maintaining some persona, meeting everyone’s expectations, or playing a part, I won’t

have the strength to meet *my* husband's needs. I've found the most joy and freedom to stand by my man when I ditch the Pastor's Wife deal and just be *Jeff's* wife.

“Keep his underwear drawer full!” –*TaLisa Rogers, married 16 years*

This priceless piece of advice came during our engagement, and I've tucked it away as sacred ever since. The point: In the midst of all the “spiritual needs” around you, do not overlook meeting the basic, necessary, physical needs of your man. Having good meals (not gourmet!), an ordered home (not perfect!), clean clothes (especially underwear!) allows your man the brainspace to fulfill the ministry at hand. During one particularly stressful season (Oh my, I can't believe I'm sharing this) we had such limited space that I used a hanging shoe-organizer with seven slots and put in each slot one pair of underwear, one pair of socks, and one undershirt. Each day Jeff just pulled out his day's garments and never had to think twice. He loved it and still says this was one of my most ingenious ideas (but he'd rather I not post photos).

“My job is to seduce the pastor.” –*Pam Hunter, married 45 years*

Sex. Well, there you have it. I'm so sorry to shock all the parishioners but pastors have pretty intense drives, if you know what I mean. And preaching just revs everything up (I'll leave it at that), while frequent discouragement necessitates comforting and tangible support, often through physical intimacy. *No one else can support your husband in this way.* Other people can run the children's ministry. Other people can counsel others. Other people can do the books and clean the office and meet with crying women. *No one else can meet your husband's legitimate physical needs.*

This quote was spoken to me by my own pastor's wife, who I've watched for 28 years. She's been wife to a pastor for longer than I've been alive. She has juggled, hosted, counseled, prayed, served, laughed, cried, listened. She is one of the wisest women I've ever known. And as they just celebrated 45 years of marriage, having touched thousands of lives, she maintains that *this* is crucial to the vitality of a marriage in ministry.

Yes, maintaining your marriage in the midst of ministry *is* difficult. But thankfully we have wise women who have gone before us and lovingly encouraged us with their words. I pray these bring a smile to your face and hope to your spirit as you walk the road as a pastor's wife today.

Day 29: Loving Your Husband through Loss and Grief

[By Naomi Costales](#)

On February 27, 2004, our son went home and back into the arms of our Savior, Jesus Christ. He was two months old. We were devastated. The passing of our son took our marriage to a new level of testing. How were we going to handle this...together?

Grief affects people differently. When it is a child's death, the wife might feel her grief is worse but in reality the husband is suffering just as much. I learned this lesson after our son died. My husband was grieving as deeply as I was. His tears were just as often and his heartache just as deep. Our pain was really no different. How could I be a wife that would be there for him in the midst of my own grief?

As we began to work through our grief, I realized I needed to be in prayer for my husband. Being the leader of our home, I believe he carried the burden of trying to maintain being the strong one for me and our family while he was dealing with the loss. I knew he needed to be covered in powerful prayer so that his grief would not be a hindrance to his responsibilities to his family or to his own healing. Grief can become a prison we keep ourselves in if we do not allow ourselves to heal and what better way to bring about healing than placing our broken hearts in the hands of God. So, I prayed for him daily.

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:3)

There were moments where he needed me to be the one he could lean on. Sometimes, I needed to put aside what I was feeling so that he could work through what he was feeling. We both lost a son, not just me, and he was hurting too. It was very important that we talk through our feelings. I needed to be a good listener as much as I wanted to be heard. I am a firm believer that grief is better dealt with when verbalized so we shared many conversations during that season of life. I listened to his heart as he poured it out. He listened to mine. There was no fear that the other would be hurt by what was said. It was very important to be open to what was being shared. Together we would come to understand how we felt about what we were going through as individuals and as a couple. Most importantly, we learned much about trusting the Lord through all this keeping in mind that the Lord does not change so we are not consumed. (*Malachi 3:6*)

Something else we avoided at all costs was blaming one another. It was not his fault and it was not my fault. We knew all efforts were made to save our son's life so blaming one another would only produce strife and hurt feelings. Instead we chose to trust the Lord with all that had happened knowing that ***“from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”*** (*Romans 11:36*) We

encouraged each other to get up and go to church and to read our Bibles. If he was having a rough day...we had many of those days while on the path of healing...I would encourage him to pray. When I encouraged him, I felt encouraged. I know it worked that way for both of us. James 5, verse 16 says ***“confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*** Amen to that!

Encouragement we found from Paul, the apostle, was his words,

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18)

The passing of a child is not an easy time in a marriage. We have seen some marriages break up because they don't know how to deal with the grief...together. It is not an easy process but it takes being intentional in effort, being aware that the loss affected both of you, and not letting your faith wane. It is during this time, you both need the Lord more than ever as well as each other. For me, the Lord reminded me in my heart that my husband grieved as deeply as me and then he showed me how to love and be there for him. The Word promises that the God of all comfort comforts us in our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) He did that for me and I was able to live with and love my husband through our grief.

Day 30: Taking Up of the Cross in Marriage

[By Juana Mikels](#)

Mike Mason, author of *The Mystery of Marriage*, likened marriage to an oak tree standing in the living room. On his honeymoon he was filled with the terrifying idea of the giving up of his privacy forever and thought he had made a grave mistake.

I can totally identify with Mr. Mason. When you are married, it's like the oak tree is always there—no matter what you do.

There is a huge “other” that is always there.

For the Christian woman who wants to obey God and take Him at His word, she must leave her parents and cleave to her husband. She must give up her name, possibly move to another part of the country, she can't make unilateral decisions—she must in effect—take up her cross.

I can hear some of you young brides right now. *What do you mean take up my cross in my marriage? I love my husband! Just the thought of my getting to say “my husband” is thrilling since I get to use that term now! That is not my cross to bear—it is my joy to serve this man! I've waiting my whole engagement just to be near this man each day, and wake up beside him!*

Yes, we have companionship in marriage. Man was not made to be alone, “cut off,” but to have a helper. But I've had to learn the lesson of taking up my cross in my marriage the hard way. You see, when I was a young bride, I left my husband.

I thought that I could do better. I thought that I would be better off starting with a new husband. I didn't yet have anyone who would take me to be his wife when I left my husband, but I wanted to make it my quest to find that higher love that I believed had to exist. I had come to the wrong conclusion that I had married the wrong person, and that I needed to search for the “perfect love.”

You see, I was not a Christian yet, and I had no idea that no person could meet all my needs. Only God can do that! I was looking for what didn't exist in humanity except in the person of Christ!

Once we meet the source of unconditional love in the person of Jesus Christ who died for us and we receive Him into our lives, we can then learn how to love our husbands as Christ intended. He teaches us how to love by modeling his love and forgiveness to us!

For me, the verse that helps me probably more than any other verse to be the wife that I need to be is not from the hallmark Proverbs 31 godly woman passage (much as I love that text) —It's Luke 9:23.

God's instruction to us there reads:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Did you notice the word "if" there? We don't have to be his disciple. But once we make up our minds and come after him, Jesus is very clear with what we are to do.

Don't you love that? You might not like what he says, but he does not leave it open to us that it's "good advice" for the Christian. It's a mandate for the Christian.

Deny himself.

Take up his cross daily.

Who does the married woman intersect daily with more than any other? The man with whom she lives with and shares the same bed! Her husband! Wives, there's our biggest laboratory to experience self-denial and the taking up of the cross

I think we can so easily get complacent and sloppy and miss seeing the taking up of the cross in our marriage. God didn't say take it up everywhere except your husband.

He doesn't say you get a free pass and may bypass self-denial to your husband—he doesn't count. Oh, but how easy it is to overlook that God is speaking to us directly from our husbands!

I just had a chance to do this. Literally.

We serve a very practical God, don't we?

Just 15 minutes ago, I was typing this post, and got as far as the Proverbs 31 verse above and knew in my mind I was about to type my cornerstone verse: Luke 9:23—*the taking up of the cross verse*.

I suddenly heard our garage door motor below my chair, and I looked out the window and saw my husband pulling up in his cute little silver sports car.

My very first thought was not, “*There is my beloved!*” but more like “*What is he doing home? It’s not lunchtime for 90 minutes yet! This post is due today, and I don’t want to be interrupted!*”

Translation: Mason’s metaphor of my oak tree was walking back in our home. God uses that oak tree to reveal my selfishness and sin, which has to go.

I’m afraid it gets worse, (or better put, I got worse before I got better—*unconfessed sin can lead to more sinfulness. It is far better to keep short accounts. Stop. Think. Realize your thoughts and confess them at once and turn from them. This is true repentance!*)

He walked into the kitchen and we chatted for a bit about how he left some keys here that he needed for work. Then he wanted to remind of some things he wanted me to make a list of for our cleaning service (we are blessed that we have enough discretionary income that we have a service that comes every two weeks).

He is a good provider, and he wanted to make a list to tell the maids to clean some troublesome areas or give us advice how to get it clean (like mold in the shower grout). He wasn’t even asking me to scrub it, but to get a pencil and make a note.

What was my reaction in my heart? Gratitude? I am ashamed to tell you that I was totally annoyed. I wanted to finish this post and I was wishing he had just picked up his keys this morning so I could have finished my train of thought before he arrived home for lunch—not now! I didn’t want to think about dirty grout!

He kissed me and left.

That’s when it hit me.

Deny yourself. Take up your cross.

I blew it! I should have stopped, and trusted God to give me my thought back, and instead give my husband my full attention in spite of my wanting to continue to type. That would have been my taking up of the cross for this morning!

J.H. Newman writes, *“To take up the cross of Christ is no great action done once for all; it consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us.”*

Be on your guard in your marriage. God will give you many opportunities to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him.

Ask yourself daily, *“Where does God want me to take up my cross this day?”*

Jolene titles her blog, “The Alabaster Jar,” for the woman who poured an offering on Jesus’ feet. Can you offer to Him anything that cuts across your will in your marriage? See it as your chance to die to yourself. By God’s grace, I will be joining you.

Let’s gladly take up the cross from the nail pierced hands of the One who loves us with an everlasting love—*and follow Him.*

Let’s let His love transform us—which will transform our marriages.

Day 31: 10 Tips to a Thriving Marriage

[By Jolene Engle](#)

1. Stay desperate for God. He is your Source of strength, hope, joy, peace, comfort, and love.

Your relationship with Christ needs to be thriving in order for your marriage to thrive.

2. Seek out activities that will cause you to thrive in your spiritual life. When you're spiritually thriving, it's easier to minister to your husband.
3. Eliminate activities that cause you to stress out and lash out at your husband. Sometimes we women have a tendency to put too much on our plates and our husband gets the worst of us!
4. Keep an eternal perspective about your life and your marriage. Everything we go through is to bring glory to the Lord.
5. Accept your man for who he is and where he's at in his spiritual growth (or lack thereof).
6. Become best friends with your man.
7. Enjoy the act of marriage.
8. Forgive your man. He falls short just like you do.
9. Do your part of being obedient to the Word of God and let God do His part by working on the heart of your man.
10. Let things go and trust the Lord. Allow His spirit to move in your marriage. God always does a much better job of strengthening and redeeming a marriage than what we could ever do. Allow the Messiah to take your mess and turn it into a message that will bring Him glory.

'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zec. 4:6

Now just for fun, pick 2 tips (or all of them!) that you know you should apply to your marriage.