

# STRONGER.EVERY.MONTH.



## SPECIAL EDITION: Committed Relationships

By Marissa Paledino

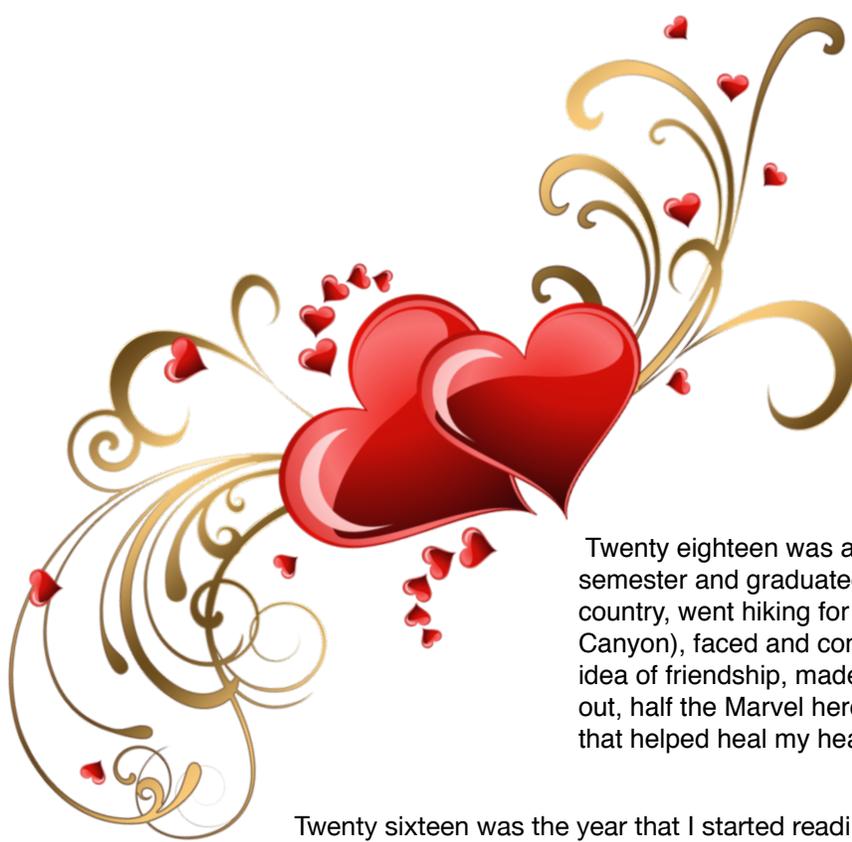
As everyone knows, February is the month of love. It's the time of the year where one can express love in a tangible way. Expressions of love don't have to be limited to just one month of the year. In fact, it should be something that we do on a regular basis. Flowers and chocolates aren't just for February.

I can say that this is not the case in our home. P. John brings home flowers or chocolate regularly. Sometimes it's funny because he'll buy me chocolate that he'll eat. In front of me, as I'm writing this article, there is a jar of chocolate covered almonds he bought for me. They are delicious and so rich in flavor that I can't eat more than two or three of them. I noticed the jar is half empty now. What makes it funny is that I probably haven't even eaten a dozen almonds. Yet every time John is in the living room, the almonds magically go down. In spite of that, I'm thankful every time he brings home something for me. It shows me that I'm on his mind and he's thinking of me.

This month's issue is a special edition because we set out to have your questions answered by very experienced people. We have asked four couples to answer the exact same questions that were submitted by you. There are many people looking for answers to questions. The problem is that most people look to peers for the answers. But how can they get real answers from someone when they are in the same boat and in the same stage as the ones seeking answers?

This issue has over a century of experience. That's a lot of years! Take advantage of these articles. Glean as much as you can and consider asking more questions on your own. Our hope is that whether you are married or single, you will learn something that will enrich your relationship or be reminded of some of the things you have heard before.





## Straight Talk: My Heart Project

By Katherine Paledino

Twenty eighteen was a monumental year for me: I finished my last semester and graduated with my bachelor's degree, I explored the country, went hiking for the first time (and second time in the Grand Canyon), faced and conquered tremendous difficulties, grew in my idea of friendship, made new friends, the *Incredibles 2* finally came out, half the Marvel heroes vanished ... and I embarked on a journey that helped heal my heart.

Twenty sixteen was the year that I started reading marriage book after marriage book. It was a suggestion for me that I took to heart. Those books helped me confront myself in a way I was scared to do before. At the time, I really didn't think there was anything wrong with the way I viewed relationships, but those books proved otherwise and made me face the opinions I had that were laced with cynicism. That year I resolved to pray for my husband and my marriage on a regular basis, which proved to be difficult. Many times I would pull those cards out of my prayer box and pretend like I didn't see them or I'd leave them open for days until the obligation and conviction to pray for them was overwhelming. But in that year, I realized there was a lot more to relationships and marriage than I gave credit to beforehand.

Twenty seventeen was internally frustrating. I continued to read marriage books and pray for my husband and marriage, but my viewpoint on it all was still broken. I had an inward wrestle with the concept of relationships and the value it holds. But I really felt God was prompting me—and challenging me—to trust Him with this part of my heart. I had no problem giving Him anything and everything, except for this part of my self—my being. Yet one particular night in the fall, I was bored, sitting on the floor against my bed, thinking of all the ways I could “better” myself. I decided to get a head start on my New Year's resolutions, which normally *never* happens. Without much thought I wrote “go on a date.” Impulsively, I crossed that out with a marker and wrote “be in a relationship.” Instead of taking baby steps, I went for the full marathon. I thought to myself, *I got this*. Not long after, I told a friend and my mom, who thought it was a great idea. Maybe not even a week later I panicked and completely regretted that I had written that goal and, worse, vocalized it, leaving room for accountability. So, to embark on changing my perspective, I bravely ended the year doing my best to clear my heart of anything negative I felt was lingering inside me or hindering me from moving forward in my resolution.

Twenty eighteen was a time when things started to drastically change for me. All the years before that, my focus had always been on marriages and relationships that failed or struggled, which tainted my overall view of marriage and made it hard for me to want to get involved in a relationship. I remember a couple of years ago telling my parents that I wasn't going to get married and that it would take a miracle for me to change my mind. I was pretty firm in my decision because that's how distant I was in my heart. But with my resolution, I dared myself to change and maintain it.

I kept my goal even though I realized and understood it was out of my control. At first the only thing I could think of to practically achieve my resolution was to read more marriage books and be open if a guy was interested in me, which, for the first time in my entire life, there was not one guy trying to get with me. But something about my course of action wasn't settling with me. For days I constantly thought about what I was going to do and how I was going to do it. Then one night God breathed life into my goal. While my resolution was technically to be in a relationship, I adjusted my goal to sowing into a marriage each month for the entire year. My perspective had been so messed up that I couldn't even think of three couples at the beginning of the year, let alone twelve. But God surprised me over and over again.

**Straight Talk: My Heart Project Continued Part 2**

By Katherine Paledino

Wholeheartedly and nervously, I put myself in a position to glean from couples that have endured, matured, and grown strong in their love and devotion to God and one another. Each month I was challenged to be more honest and vulnerable with myself and with these couples. I did my best to seize every opportunity to ask questions and learn more. As someone that avoided the topics of relationships, weddings, and marriage at any and all cost, my comfort zone was shattered in a million pieces. But it was worth more than anything I own.

Each month I learned something valuable. The responses I got were overwhelming. Many of the couples went out of their way to contact me. I really expected my interaction to be with the wives, but to my amazement, many of the husbands were vocal with their advice and expressed much gratitude. I don't think I realized how a simple card, letter, or gift would be such an encouragement to these couples. In my mind, the gifts I gave seemed minimal, but I didn't really know the impact it would have on those that received it—or certainly the impact it would have on me. I've never heard the phrase "blown away" so many times in my life. Sometimes we think or are jealous that couples "have it all," so much that we don't factor in their effort, commitment, choices, and sacrifice. Each couple's honesty and advice has been a major part of transforming my perspective. I think many people, including myself, have taken godly couples for granted, but there is a wealthy well—a beautiful source—to draw from to avoid mistakes and cultivate a loving, lasting marriage.

After each month that I sowed into a marriage, I added the couple's names into my personal prayer box. I want my resolution to keep sprouting, rather than it be a one and done thing. For me, this wasn't just a seed—it was a seed and a tree and ripe fruit. I want this to always be growing, and I want to spiritually fight for marriages to last. I realize now that having a healthy marriage requires counting the cost first. I didn't and don't want a relationship just to have a relationship. A verse that really challenged me in this was (and still is) Proverbs 20:25 (ESV): "It is a snare to say rashly, 'It is holy,' and to reflect only after making vows." I've come to understand that it's not always easy. It has wonderful moments, but it's not perfect. Whatever can be done, I want to do it. And whatever I can learn, I want to learn it—now rather than later.

One of the biggest things I did learn is that marriage builds the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God builds marriage. Each couple stressed that keeping God as the focus is the only way they got through difficulties and dark times. For them, this meant putting God at the center in a personal way and then in a marital way, acknowledging that God is the only source of love and longevity no matter the issue, argument, or circumstance. I was told that a couple should be able to do more for the Lord than they could do individually. This became the very thing that challenged my view on marriage. I found myself constantly expressing in prayer that I want my marriage to change lives and be the bridge that others can walk on to get to eternity with God. If I was going to consider marriage, then I was not going to have a temporal outlook on it. Personally, I can't imagine a marriage God isn't involved in. The sole purpose—the marital call for me—is to draw living water from my marriage and pour it over others in a refreshing way that forever impacts the course of their destiny. Now—from my *new* view—that's what marriage is really about, why it exists.

Another valuable lesson I learned—probably the greatest one for me—is that my perspective is the greatest thing I can offer God. Presenting my perspective to God as a sacrifice means I completely and totally give God everything, not keeping a small corner of my heart for selfish reasons. My perspective is comprised of all I am—my knowledge, understanding, experiences, emotions, skills, hurts, joys, achievements, failures, and regrets. Everything I am is rolled up in my outlook, and if I can give anything and everything to God, then it's the way I *choose* to view things. This means that I have to constantly put myself in check and not let my mind wander into the realm of disappointment or hurt. Offering my perspective to God is a day by day, continual sacrifice. It's a sweet aroma—incense that burns before God and changes the air of my soul.

During the process of sowing into the lives of couples, I was taught that the self dies in real, genuine love. Yes, we are to love ourselves to love others and see and speak the way God calls us to. But there's no room for selfishness or self-preservation in love. Marriage is the ultimate sacrifice, the greatest way to showcase the way God has loved me. God didn't and hasn't for one second hidden any part of Himself from me or felt I was or am unworthy of love. He just loves me and shows me the secret parts of Himself. And that's exactly what I should be replicating in marriage. There's no off day with God. His love isn't based on me; rather, it's based on Him. That truly is love in its finest and most perfect form. I intend on copying the perfect love God has graciously loved me with, and that's the most selfless thing I could do.

**Straight Talk: My Heart Project Continued Part 3**

By Katherine Paledino

The challenge of pursuing healing for my heart made me grateful for getting to know God through His patience. Throughout this journey, I've experienced so many emotions ranging from anger and frustration to hope and happiness. In each breakdown, God has been present. In each milestone, God has been there. Just examining myself in retrospect, I know that I would not have been as patient if I were God. Change did not happen over night, over a month, or even a year. I've come to genuinely revere God in His patience. For the longest time I took "Love is patient and kind" for granted. During certain stints of time, I blamed God for things I faced or found myself questioning Him continuously. I really didn't, and don't, deserve how patient God has been with me, especially when I was calloused and agitated and discontent. And I most definitely didn't deserve how kind God was toward me when I was sarcastic, unwelcoming, and indifferent. God persistently and gently shed the scales of cynicism off me and gave way to new skin. And seeing each layer, God was nearby and patient—definitely not intimidated or turned off by the sight of raw flesh.

Something else I learned through all this was to actively hear God's voice. I never gave to a couple unless I knew that I knew it was the right couple at the right time. I'm not going to lie, some months made me nervous because I didn't feel led until near the end of the month. Other times, I knew a month ahead or at the beginning. Learning to hear from God was always an opportunity for me to trust that God would help and heal me. His voice was a nudge, a whisper, in the chaos of my heart. But I tuned my internal ears to hear what He needed and wanted to say to me. God's voice was a continual reminder to keep going—even if blindfolds of hurt were snug over the eyes of my soul. His voice was comforting when I was uncomfortable. And His voice beckoned me to keep trusting in His timing, even for my future and the relationship I will have with my husband.

Despite everything, over the years I've really seen God protect me when it comes to relationships and intimacy and my view on those things. I've had more opportunities than I can count to cave or throw my purity in the garbage or remain stuck in a fractured perspective. In each season God has guarded me and encouraged me in the right direction near the right people that have helped be my eyes and discernment. I believe following wise advice from spiritual authorities or anyone with experience acts as a safeguard over your soul, body, and mind. In this very way God has prevented heartache in my life and preserved my intimacy/heart/soul, so it's not scattered in broken relationships. While I've had my own challenges, I'm grateful for God's protection and pure love. I'm thankful for the privilege to give without expectation of return, even though God has abundantly returned much to me. I'm most definitely thankful for all the couples that have imparted invaluable wisdom and advice during my heart project. And I'm thankful God never stops healing me.





# Answers To Your Questions By Ralph and Lynn Smith

## What was the hardest lesson you wished you learned early in your marriage?

**Lynn:** Probably the biggest marriage obstacle for all couples – communication!!!

**Ralph:** If it doesn't affect the entire universe, then it probably really doesn't matter. Don't nit-pick and major on the minors.

## How do you overcome circumstances where you want to give up on the other person?

**L:** Marriages can be hard work! Don't close yourself off to your spouse. If you are the party that is ready to give up, then you have just as much, if not more, work to do in your relationship.

**R:** Look in the mirror.

## What is the best technique for overcoming communication failure?

**L:** Ralph has always been one to continue to push to keep the lines of communication open. It was always easier for me to just close up. Sometimes it's just a fear of being honest with your spouse, and that can be scary. Overcome the fear, and communication becomes much easier.

**R:** Your spouse is not just your spouse; they are also your brother or sister in the Lord. Treat your spouse in no less a manner than if it were a Christian friend that was asking to speak with you about something.

## When things get hard, how do you keep the relationship afloat?

**L:** There are several different ways to respond to this question. If the 'things' are external, remember that you must stick together to overcome the difficulties. If the 'things' are in your actual marriage, just don't give up! One day at a time.

**R:** Everything in life is a choice; choose to not let things get to the point of being 'hard' (if possible). But if they do, remember that you are a team.

## What happens to your friendships once you get married?

**L:** Once you are married, it doesn't mean that you have to give up your friends. It's still important for each person to have relationships with friends (of the same sex). Just be sure that your time with friends isn't spent 'spouse-bashing'!

**R:** The marriage relationship is a special friendship and is second only to your relationship with God (which is also a friendship). All other friendships and family relationships have to fall into a particular, secondary priority.

## How do you keep your spouse happy in a long-lasting marriage?

**L:** Continue to love them as you did at the beginning of your marriage. Don't get lazy. Just because you used to tell your spouse 'I love you' all the time, doesn't mean that because you've been married for a while that you should stop. Let them know that they are the most important person in your world.

**R:** Write out a list of what you expect from your spouse ... and then burn it. Strive to meet their expectations to the degree that you are able, without destroying your own identity and character. In the process of meeting their expectations, you will find that they will do the same for you.

## Why is it important to keep dating when you're married?

**L:** To keep your marriage from becoming stagnant.

**R:** Ditto, and as bad as the world is out there, it's good for people to see married couples out with each other, especially when your marriage has reached a level of longevity.

## Once kids start coming along, what's one way to help keep your marriage a priority?

**L:** This is difficult as most marriages have both people working and then kids come along and there is even less time. Make the most of what little time you have: date night, snuggling and watching TV once the kids are in bed, etc.

**R:** Again, everything is by choice. You chose to have kids (presumably), so you have nine months to make the choices and determinations ahead of time that you know you will both need to make things work.

**What has helped you last all these years in your marriage?**

**L:** I have been blessed with the most wonderful husband in all of the world, and I tell him that all the time. Ralph's goal in our marriage is to be the chief servant. We 'fight' over who gets to wash the dishes or clean the bathroom!

**R:** Constantly remembering that I am married to someone that has been able to put up with my idiosyncrasies for so many years. I owe her.

**What is the best advice you can give for longevity?**

**L:** Be friends! Ralph and I have been married almost 35 years, and I would still rather do things with him than with anyone else. Whether it be a date night or merely shopping at the mall, it's being together that's important.

**R:** Look in the mirror; would you be willing to put up with you, for a lifetime?

**How do you overcome financial stress or setbacks in your marriage?**

**L:** We learned to tithe! Early in our marriage we didn't tithe. After some significant financial problems, an elder in our previous church taught us the significance, and we have continued since then. It made a huge impact.

**R:** Never let your feelings get in the way of making sound financial choices.

**How do finances play a roll in your marriage?**

**L:** There is no 'His & Hers' in our money or finances. We discuss larger expenditures to be sure that we are in agreement.

**R:** Always remember that you are both fellow stewards of your shared finances. You answer to each other.

**How do you keep intimacy going in your marriage, especially when kids are in the picture?**

**L:** You have to make time for your spouse. Most importantly: NEVER let your kids get into the habit of sleeping with you.

**R:** True intimacy is so much more than mere physical affection. True intimacy creates the ability to discern your spouse's strengths and weaknesses. It is your responsibility to cover their weaknesses and protect the gaps in their armor.

**What are the most important things in your marriage?**

**L:** Our friendship.

**R:** Our ability to practically know each other's thoughts and finish each other's sentences. Our constant 'competition' in trying to 'out-serve' the other.

**What's the best marriage advice you can give?**

**L:** No matter how long you are married, always continue to tell and show your spouse how much you love them. We tell each other "I love you" all the time. We hold hands when we're walking. We try to think of special little things to do for each other.

**R:** Courtesy does not end at 'I do.' Respect and admiration do not end at 'I do.' Friendship does not end at 'I do.'





# Answers To Your Questions By Alex and Dorothy Guerrero

## **What was the hardest lesson you wished you learned early in your marriage?**

I learned that marriage is not just the culmination of finding the right person to marry; it is continually growing and learning to be the right person for the one you married.

You are no longer two individuals but now one. The hardest part is realizing that every thing you do, every thing you want, every decision you make, everything that makes you happy, and every pain you feel is no longer just about you.

## **How do you overcome circumstances where you want to give up on the other person?**

We need to always look beyond the circumstances, always moving forward together toward the desired outcome.

## **What is the best technique for overcoming communication failure?**

Listening more and talking less. Most communication issues in marriage can be boiled down to assuming your spouse knows and understands what you are thinking and going to say.

## **When things get hard, how do you keep the relationship afloat?**

More than ever we need to come together. Using a water survival analogy, if each one has a life raft, putting two together can keep two people afloat better than being on their own. If they are not together, they will eventually drift away from each other.

## **What happens to your friendships once you get married?**

External relationships will still be there but are no longer the priority. Your relationship with your partner grows deeper and stronger, so much that you already have your best friend.

## **How do you keep your spouse happy in a long-lasting marriage?**

By making their happiness the source of yours. You find happiness when you make your partner happy.

## **Once kids start coming along, what's one way to help keep your marriage a priority?**

Kids happen and sometimes take a lot of your time and effort. Always find time to be close to each other and reconnect. Remember you are a partner first, then a parent.

## **Why is it important to keep dating when you're married?**

Things should not change in that department just because you are now married. When you were not married, you always looked forward to being with your partner, doing something special. Dating as a married couple is more about making everything you do together special.

## **What has helped you last all these years in your marriage?**

Our personal relationship with the Lord. We cannot go through life as a couple without understanding what Love is. Without a true relationship with Jesus, all other relationships will fail.

## **What is the best advice you can give for longevity?**

Without a true relationship with Jesus, all other relationships will fail.

## **How do you overcome financial stress or setbacks in your marriage?**

By faith. We need to come to a place that we understand, believe, and live by the words that all good things come from the Lord, Who is our source. He will provide all our needs because He says so. We are in covenant with Him in our tithing and giving, so that in due season, we will reap a harvest from His goodness.

## **How do finances play a role in your marriage?**

Finances are part of marriage. It is no longer mine or yours; it is now ours. Therefore, together both need to be good stewards of the finances of the family. It is an important tool used to achieve the dreams and goals (your own home, college for the kids, retirement) for the whole family. But again, it is the tool, not the ultimate goal; we should be careful not to lose sight of this.

## **How do you keep intimacy going in your marriage, especially when kids are in the picture?**

Intimacy is simply defined as being close to one another. Being together, doing things together, continually expressing one's love by words and action, and just being present are good ways to be intimate.

## **What are the most important things in your marriage?**

It is a cliché, but it is love. Marriage is a covenant love. Without experiencing true love in the Lord, Who is love, one cannot share this to others. One cannot share what one does not have. Love is a covenant between you, GOD, and your partner. Without understanding covenant love, one will just be swayed by life's circumstances and the emotions that come with it.

## **What's the best marriage advice you can give?**

I go back to the first question: Do not waste your time trying to find the right person you will marry. Focus on becoming the best version of yourself. God already has the right person for you; He is just waiting for you to become the right person for them.



## What was the hardest lesson you wished you learned early in your marriage?

**Willie:** Patience. I was an only child and Debbie grew up as an only child. She grew up as an only child because everyone was gone. When you're an only child, you have a tendency to not be all that patient about stuff and to not be all that considerate of other folks because you hadn't had to be. If I'd learn that lesson early, that would've made some things easier over time.

## How do you overcome circumstances where you want to give up on the other person?

**Debbie:** I think again that patience comes in because you have to be patient. Your spouse may have had a different upbringing than you, where, as he said, we both were kind of an only child. I was brought up in a Christian home, in things like going to church every Sunday ... well, twice a week. These were regular things I was used to, whereas he was not, so you have to really look at the background and the way people were raised and understand they don't see it the way you do. You have to understand that.

**W:** What we always say, when I'm talking to people who are thinking about marriage and relationships, is that the relationship has got to be the most important thing. If the relationship is first, do all the things in the meantime mount up to the relationship? Is this thing so important that it's worth the relationship? And what you'll find out is that most times, it's not. Most times it's something you're bugged about, which is not worth the whole relationship. As long as you keep that perspective, then you can get through and by things. The whole idea is is it worth the relationship?

**D:** I always say, do you want to be right or do you want to be happy and be at peace? Sometimes you know you're right about something, but that person doesn't understand the situation.

**W:** Or doesn't understand it the way you understand it.

## What is the best technique for overcoming communication failure?

**W:** Communicating. And understanding and knowing your partner enough to know how to communicate. Some people are okay being talked to or being talked at immediately about situations. For some folks, it takes a little time. They need a little time to decompress and process. So really, unless the person is standing in the street about to get hit by a car, most things can wait a little bit, most things can wait a day until everyone can talk about it in a more rational and, sometimes, less emotional moment. You may have a spouse that is a lot more emotional and needs to be emotional at the time.

Sometimes that's how it's going to be. We're back at the standards. Does that bug you enough to not care about your relationship? Most times, no. You have to understand that people communicate in different ways. People have to

be talked to differently. Once you tell someone something, a lot of times, it takes a while for them to process it and deal with it and make whatever changes they can make. Sometimes they're not going to make changes nearly as quickly as we'd like them to make. They're not going to because they're another human being; they're not you. They don't see things like you do, they don't hear like you do, they don't process like you do. You have to be aware of that. As long as you become aware of that as you get to know your partner, you'll find out that you can get through and around and by stuff.

**D:** And sometimes it requires *you* to change. You're looking for your partner to change their aspect and their ways of doing things when maybe you should adapt to them.

**W:** 'I told you.' [And your spouse thinks] 'Yeah I know, but you told me with a venom that I decided not to listen to.'

**D:** So they tune it out.

**W:** Yeah, because you told me in a way I didn't want to hear it. In order to get through communicative problems, the short answer is to communicate. But to be able to communicate effectively, you have to know who your partner is and what communication they will accept. You can't talk to everybody the same way. You just can't. It applies to every relationship, whether it's a friend, your boss, your parents, or whoever. You can't come at everybody in the same way because they're not going to receive it the same way.

**D:** I used to always say that in management because people will be like, 'You should treat everybody the same.' But you can't because everybody doesn't react the same way. You can't treat everybody in the same way because they're not going to respond to the way you're presenting it.

## When things get hard, how do you keep the relationship afloat?

**D:** Prayer. Lots of prayer. I'm a prayer person, and I have started recently even doing scripture writing and praying and keeping a journal of things that I need and desire and things that God is telling me. Really, a lot of things have come in the last few years of our marriage.

**W:** Prayer. You're going to change. That's the thing, you're going to change and evolve and, hopefully, get better. When things get hard, again, the focus on the things that are important is extremely, extremely important. Obviously, prayer and focusing on what God has promised you is the standard, but really, it always goes back to what's really important here because it's so easy to get caught up in circumstances, and for a lot of people, the circumstances are devastating. They scream a lot louder than whatever the reality actually is and how close you are going to get by it. The circumstances are banging at the door and breaking windows and turning furniture over. Sometimes the circumstances are too much for people because they don't have any perspective. So, gain perspective and maintain it.

**What happens to your friendships once you get married?**

**W:** We hugged at the wedding, and I never saw them again. ‘Come here guys, love ya’ll. See ya at the end’ ... They change—well, I got married at 27. My boys were my boys. They were important to me, and not that they’re not important to me now, but every level of relationship changes because there’s only one relationship—and there’s no other way to say it—that is more important. Your friends understand that. Your friends understand that they’re not number one on your hit list anymore. They’re still important because they help you get to where you are if they’re good friends, but they’re not the most important thing in your life. You may not get that call to go play basketball Saturday because they know that you’re doing something else. They don’t put any pressure on you. Those relationships have to change. I think people who get in trouble are the ones who put their friends on the same level as their husband or wife. They end up in big trouble because they don’t have, and I keep going back to this, perspective. They don’t really know what’s important or they haven’t learned that your relationship with your spouse is the most important relationship you have, next to the relationship you have with Christ. Things have to change. I tell people all the time, if they don’t change, you’re doing it wrong. If you say, ‘Oh man, this is just how it was when I was single.’

**D:** Or, ‘I can hang out with my friends whenever.’

**W:** You’re going to be single again soon. This is not how it’s supposed to work. Some don’t end up in your circle. I still have a couple of friends from that time, but I’m not, I know it’s amazing, a person that had a whole bunch of friends. I knew a whole bunch of people, but I didn’t have a whole bunch of friends. I have two or three friends I call friends, that I have their cell phone number in my phone ... and I’ve used it. That’s how I know they’re my friends. It’s not just people I went to high school with that I don’t talk to anymore.

**D:** Sometimes it’s tough because your spouse may not get along with your friends. They may not like them. You would hope you could all come together, but your spouse may not get along with your friends in the same manner that you do. We had some of that earlier in our relationship. It was tough for me during those first years when we were dating. I tried to keep my friendships, but when your focus changes, sometimes they can’t be your close friends anymore. I still have a lot of acquaintances but no true-blue friends that hung in there.

**How do you keep your spouse happy in a long-lasting marriage?**

**D:** Sometimes you don’t know. The truth! Fortunately and unfortunately, we change over time. What made me happy twenty years ago doesn’t anymore. Therein comes the communication again because you have to talk about it. Every now and then it can be tough to tell your spouse, ‘I don’t like that anymore, so don’t do it.’

**W:** You have to know your spouse.

**D:** In every stage.

**W:** Somebody asked the question at one of the Baptist churches in town, ‘How are you exploring your spouse?’ My answer on Facebook was, ‘I try to explore, but the landscape keeps changing.’ I thought I was okay, but the landscape keeps changing. You have to know your spouse. Because everybody’s changing. This is shifting sand on the top because of age, health, and maturity; things change. You have to know your spouse and be present because that’s the only way you’re going to know how to make them happy. Things are going to change from when you’re 27 to 57. Anybody who’s the same for thirty years, something’s wrong. Way back, thirty years ago, I used to imbibe. But I don’t anymore; I haven’t in years. It was never really problematic, but it was one of those things we used to do that we just don’t do now. That was a dynamic in our lives that changed. My friends had to deal with that, too. ‘He a holy roller now.’ It’s funny! My friends said that but respected the consistency, and they respected that I wasn’t a hypocrite about it. Things in your life change. Keeping your spouse happy over time means being present, being there, and being aware. This is important, so that way you know. But sometimes you have to ask them: ‘What do you want?’ [And your spouse says] ‘I don’t know.’ [So, you ask again] ‘Where do you want to eat?’ We do sound like the old couples sometimes, going off the blue plate special at five o’clock in the afternoon. It’s hysterical! And then we’re like, ‘Let’s just go home.’

**Once kids start coming along, what’s one way to help keep your marriage a priority?**

**W:** By keeping your marriage a priority!

**D:** Yes, always remember even though the child is very important, keep your time with your spouse more important.

**W:** We did a program about that, and it sparked some controversy. The title was *Parents Are More Important than Children*. It’s hard because, of course, children can’t take care of themselves. If the parents don’t take care of that first relationship, there’s nothing for the kid to hang on to. There isn’t any family if the parental—spousal—relationship isn’t strong. There won’t be a family, and then what does the child have? It’s like on the airplane when they say, ‘If we lose the air pressure, put the mask on yourself first.’ The relationship with your spouse has to be more important because if that relationship is strong, then you have a chance to raise the child. Something we see all the time is the focus is on the child and not the husband, and then the husband is disconnected from the family, and there’s really no family. It’s important to maintain the spousal relationship *first*, as children come. Not that you just let your kids play out in the street or the backyard for weeks on end.

**D:** There’s a proper way to do it. You have to take care of your relationship and have time for date nights and do things to keep the fire going in your relationship, so that you’re strong enough to take care of the child.

**What has helped you last all these years in your marriage?**

**D:** For me, it's the laughter and humor.

**W:** No matter how crazy and scary it gets, if you can still laugh, then you've got perspective. Sometimes it's hard to laugh, but I've always thought that funny stuff happens, even at the worst time.

**D:** He had me laughing when he was on a breathing tube in the hospital, and he couldn't even talk! But you could read—

**W:** Remember I wrote the note? I still have that note. The story is they were about to take the tube out, and I wanted to write a note to say thank you or something.

The nurse gave me a little Post-it and a pen, and I had to scribble. The nurse was cool; she looked at it and said—

**D:** 'Okay.'

**W:** And she put it in her little pocket, and I saw it later and was like, 'What the heck is this?' Even then, I was intubated and had just woken up from a coma, and it was funny. I almost just died, but that was funny. So, humor and gain and maintain perspective.

**D:** Be able to laugh at yourself and your relationship because sometimes, you know, we always say and tell people that we're cute, but a lot of times you look at us and the things that we have gotten ourselves into financially, in our home lives, and different things with raising Alex ... We took him to the hospital because he was constipated. He was a baby—

**W:** The doctor was so funny! He said, 'Is this your first baby?' We said yes. He goes, 'You'll be much better after your sixth.' I thought that wasn't funny, but it was. Alex was a really quiet baby, and this one afternoon he wouldn't stop crying. He was screaming and screaming. Of course, you think the worst, so we ran over to the hospital and said, 'He won't stop crying!'

**D:** 'He's in pain!'

**W:** He was constipated. They gave him some Pedialyte, and we were out the door. It's a funny first parents story!

**D:** Our life has been very—

**W:** Adventuresome!

**What is the best advice you can give for longevity?**

**W:** Don't die.

**D:** It all falls back to communication, keeping the intimacy, and finding things you can do. We weren't the best financially years ago.

**W:** It'd be cool to have a bunch of money. I don't hate money; money's alright. But find things you can do and spend time together. It's not even spending time, it's *investing* time. The word 'spending' for me is more of a waste and not as important. Invest time and interest in each other.

**D:** And in each other's interests. A lot of times on some of the YouTube videos I do, I tell women to find what their husband likes and learn about it. Learn what his interests are and keep an interest in it. If you don't do things

together and like the same things, then you're not going to have a good marriage.

**W:** In the fall when we come home from church, Debbie turns the TV on and asks what games are on, and we watch football. Actually, I watch the first series and take a nap, and they watch the rest of the game. We have a kid that played high school ball, and it was obviously our interest. Debbie could have done what a lot of women do and abdicate that thing and say 'That's your thing to do.' But when two-thirds of your family is involved—

**D:** You have to learn it.

**W:** It would seem like you'd be involved. Like I tell young kids that are getting married: 'You can't play basketball on a Saturday if your wife wants to go buy curtains. Go buy curtains.' Understand and figure out what it is. Be a part and invest your time and self into whatever it is they want to do. It's really important. That's the kind of intimacy that isn't a sexual intimacy, but that becomes as intimate as anything else.

**How do you overcome financial stress or setbacks in your marriage?**

**W:** I bang my head on the table as hard as I can and cry a lot. Financial problems are always going to be in the mix at some level because we live in this world right now that requires finances.

**D:** It's important to budget and know what you're going to use for certain things. Top priority: tithing. I'm a big advocate for tithing. That's why in church he said—

**W:** 'I heard an audible voice telling me to tithe.' We're learning some things. We were at Dr. Keith's Accelerate 2018 a few months ago and the idea is, even in my advanced years, to make more money. The goal is to look at ways you can make more money. The whole seven streams of income has become a big, important aspect of what we're doing going forward, and that we can do some of it together is cool. We can do our little Avon thing together because I am Tampa Avon dude.

**D:** Have a lot of streams of income coming in to keep from being stressed out.

**W:** We're building that. I think it's cool if you learn that at 23 because by 33 it's rocking, but if you don't learn that by 53, that's okay, too. What we're learning is to just get started and do something. We've been doing that together, and it's been fun. Like Pastor said, all of those things are opening up in the coming years. I'm pretty excited! When you have financial problems, again, is it more important than the relationship? It's a big deal, it's up there, and it's stressful because you have to live indoors.

**D:** And you have to have food and clothing.

**W:** It's an important thing, but when you hit a financial bump, is that enough to throw the relationship off a cliff? If it is, it's got to be an awfully big bump, *or* maybe your perspective is off.

**How do you keep intimacy going in your marriage, especially when kids are in the picture?**

**W:** Your relationship with your spouse is more important. You have to make time. You have to decide that there are things you are going to do together that you are not going to take the children to, so you may go see Toy Story 3, but you will *not* take the children. You're going to go see it together! You have people, all the millennials, that have the 'family bed' ... no! Again, cherishing the relationship you have with your spouse and maintaining intimacy is super important. If that's your focus, then everything else has to fit under that, even your children. That's hard because that sounds terrible to say, but it's *completely* necessary.

**D:** When they're small remember the doors have locks on them. The child should not be sleeping with you all the time. There are times you're going to have them in there, but trust me, your husband does not want the child in the middle of the bed everyday. And a woman should be available for her husband whenever.

**How do finances play a roll in your marriage?**

**W:** I don't think they play a huge roll in the marriage. It's something you do have to consider, obviously, so it's not like you can ignore it. It'd be cool to have enough cash, so you never think about it, but I think people that have a lot of cash think about it, still. People that are ridiculously wealthy still have their own set of challenges with where they are. The challenge may not be 'How do we get the electric bill paid this month?' The challenge may be something else. Everybody has their set of challenges. It's just keeping things in perspective, being as open as you can, and understanding that your spouse thinks about money and finances differently than you do. That's where a lot of the conflict comes in, how people think about finances and what it means to them. Generally speaking, most wives consider finances as part of a safety and security issue. Most men think of finances as a status issue. You can tell where those two things may separate, where one person is thinking about status and the other person is thinking about safety and security. Those things may be at odds, sometimes.

**What are the most important things in your marriage?**

**W:** Our faith. Our faithfulness to God and each other. Our legacy. What they're going to say when we're gone. How many people we've touched. How many lives we've improved.

**What's the best marriage advice you can give?**

**W:** Marry the right person. It boils down to marrying the right person. And marry for the right reasons. Understand what love is. Love is a decision, not a feeling. That's probably the most important advice I can give to people, that love is not a feeling but a decision because you don't fall in love, you fall in a hole. The idea is will they love you when you're not lovable? Will they be loving when I'm not lovable? It's been five years since 'the thing.' I wasn't very cute with a tube down my neck. The recovery was the worst part. I was sad a lot. The Publix Thanksgiving commercials used to make me cry. I was a mess. I was not lovable. When people can love you when you're not lovable, that's the thing. They have to make that decision first, that they're going to love you regardless. I think that's some of the best advice: marry the right person and be friends first and understand that love is a decision, not a feeling. Don't quit. Just don't quit. Can't make me quit. Too legit to quit!

**D:** I think it's important to be friends with the person before you think about marriage and an engagement. That was one of the things that helped us because we were friends for a long time. If it weren't for me, he wouldn't have probably asked me out because I asked him. We would go out with friends and all go out after work, and I said, 'Well, why don't me and you just go out?' He was like, 'What?' The best advice for marriage is to be friends first and get to know that person as a friend and then let the relationship grow. Know what the vows mean. And make the decision that you're not going to give up.





# Answers To Your Questions

By Pastor John and Marissa Paledino

## What was the hardest lesson you wished you learned early in your marriage?

**Pastor John:** For me, it was learning to control the words that came out of my mouth. Many times my words were sharp and cutting even though I wouldn't realize it at the time. I talked to Marissa like she was one of the guys, and at times she would accuse me of interrogating her. After several months of this, the Lord showed how my words would hurt her and, in turn, hurt me also. I learned Proverbs 15:1 after many many mistakes: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

**Marissa:** I learned life is real, and it's not like a movie with a preplanned ending. When I started, I never really thought we would deal with things. I thought it would be smooth and we would just grow line upon line. That was so unrealistic. I thought once we passed the initial challenges there weren't going to be anymore. It was ridiculous thinking. I have to say that every challenge or obstacle we've gone through has helped us be better believers, better individuals, and stronger people as a result. Some of the things may have been severe, but we have come out on the other side and have seen the hand of God throughout all these years.

## How do you overcome circumstances where you want to give up on the other person?

**PJ:** I don't entertain the thoughts of giving up on Marissa. Even though she may upset me and make me want to swear, the Word of God has to keep my attitude straight. When tough circumstances come, I go back to why I married Marissa in the first place. I always remember how God has not given up on me and that helps put things in perspective.

**M:** Going back to the Lord and what He wants for our lives helps me. It reminds me that I'm there to be a helper to John. I remind myself that I'm here not to just be a helper to him, but to also be his personal assistant in whatever he may need to get where God has called him. I'm willing to learn and do whatever it takes to be there for him. I know that God has anointed me to be his wife and because of that I know that I can overcome any circumstance.

## What is the best technique for overcoming communication failure?

**PJ:** You have to learn how to talk to one another without judgment. I learned that Marissa, at times, wanted me to listen to her without giving her an answer. Learning how to listen with care is important. Many times communication fails because our communication with the Lord is failing. Sometimes I have to reengage with Marissa, even if it is small talk. I let Marissa pour out her feelings to me without being quick to jump on her and judge her. Whenever I do this, she wants to communicate

with me. If not, she will go silent many times. This has taken me quite some time to learn. Learn this one quickly, and your communication will be much better.

**M:** Don't stop communicating. It's easy to shut down and bottle stuff up. I've been guilty of not wanting to share something that's on my heart or something that is bothering me. In my mind, I would think that John was busy helping others and listening to others, and I didn't want to bother him with what I was going through. He has reassured me many times over the years and has told me, 'It's ridiculous. If you can't talk to me, who can you talk to?' I like to set up a time where we can just meet to talk about certain things. There have been many times we have taken a drive to Disney just to talk in the car without any distractions. Then we can be done with it and have good quality time at the park.

## When things get hard, how do you keep the relationship afloat?

**PJ:** I reassure Marissa that we are both in it together for the long term and that the circumstance or issue is temporary and subject to change (2 Corinthians 4:18). Sometimes we will go out and do something fun like going to Disney World, just to get away for the moment. This helps put things in perspective, and it gets our minds back on each other, not on how hard things are.

**M:** Sometimes we just need to live. I don't like to constantly focus on hard things. Yes, things are going to come your way that you will have to deal with. I like to just get it done and move on. I refuse to get overwhelmed by the cares of this world that are just temporary. Sometimes I look back at things that I thought were hard at the time. Looking back, I realize most things were trivial and didn't require so much attention. I'm constantly saying, 'It's no big deal' or 'Let's not make this a big deal.'

## What happens to your friendships once you are married?

**PJ:** Our relationships were still there after we were married. Of course we did not spend the same amount of time with them as we did before, but they did not go away. Because our relationship was healthy before we got married, we knew each other's friends to a certain extent. Marissa knew I needed men friends after we got married, and I knew she needed women friends.

**M:** When we first got married, I was working a lot and didn't have as many close friends. My coworkers became my closest relationships. Unfortunately, when that is the case, the relationships don't last. And then there were the relationships that were more of acquaintances that became some of my closest relationships. Everyone is different. Treasure what you have and look forward to all the new people God will bring into your life.

**How do you keep your spouse happy in a long-lasting marriage?**

**PJ:** We both know if we are not building up our relationship with God throughout the marriage, it is impossible to keep each other happy. Both of us work on our relationship with God because we will put undue pressure on each other and then expect each other to meet our emotional, mental, and spiritual needs that only God can fulfill. As we have done this, we have tried to love each other unconditionally, just as the Lord loves us unconditionally. I would also say learn how to have a sense of humor and make each other laugh. I try not to be so serious all the time. This has been a work in progress in my life. We've also tried to do things that the other enjoys. Marissa has gone to many baseball and hockey games with me because she knows this is something I enjoy; likewise, I will go shopping with Marissa and watch certain programs on TV that she likes.

**M:** I agree with John that if we aren't building our relationship with God how could we make someone else happy? Miserable people want to make others miserable, too. Everyday I spend time in the Word and build myself up. If I'm consistent in the Word, then I know I have something to give. I can walk in love and not be selfish, just looking for my needs to get met. I want to bring the best possible version of myself that I can to make our marriage better.

**Once kids start coming along, what's one way to help keep your marriage a priority?**

**PJ:** You have to, on purpose, make time for each other. Marissa has helped me see throughout the years that the children will not be with us forever. They will start their own families, but we will still have each other. Marissa always reminds me of this. We never let the children get between us. We have learned how to side with each other, not our children. This helps keep our marriage a top priority.

**M:** I remind myself that my kids aren't always going to be there. I am a steward of my kids, and when I was needed to be hands on, I gave it my all. I like to make sure I always monitor the amount of time we actually spend together. This gives me a real picture of how much I'm making our relationship a priority. It's really easy for us to get busy and have days go by where we don't talk, but we are constantly striving against that. When I notice that too much time has passed by where we haven't spent any quality time together, I let John know. Spontaneity isn't as easy when there are kids. But we have learned to make the most of our time.

**Why is it important to keep dating when you're married?**

**PJ:** When you go out with your spouse, just your spouse and no one else, they should have your undivided attention. But if you don't date, they may think they're not the most important person in your life. All of us are pulled in many directions every day, and sometimes at the end of the day our spouse gets our leftovers. Eating leftovers every day gets old pretty quickly. We have to give our spouse our best, and dating can help with this.

**M:** Dating is important because it gives us time to just focus on each other. It helps you to remember some of the reasons you first came together. It helps ground you together. Dates don't have to just be the stereotype like dinner and a movie. Anything can be a date. We make the most of our time alone. We have had many weird dates, but it doesn't matter as long as we are together. Our first date was supposed to be a picnic out on the beach of Lake Michigan, but there ended up being a rain storm. I had everything set and ready for the date, including placemats. We had no other choice than to eat in the car. I know some people are against eating in their car, but now it's one of the things we do often. Sometimes dating means doing things I may not have been interested in. I can say that I've learned a lot of things I never knew since being married to John. I've done things I probably wouldn't have done on my own, most of which I now enjoy doing as long as we are together. That's what's important to me.

**What has helped you last all these years in your marriage?**

**PJ:** I have learned to keep God on the throne of my life and in all areas of my life. Without my relationship with God, I wouldn't have lasted. I also try to keep in my mind and heart the covenant I made with Marissa and with God when I got married. The covenant should be for all of our lives. We have learned how to forgive each other quickly. Ephesians 4:16 (NLT) says, 'And don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry.'

**M:** Focusing on the Lord makes a tremendous difference. It helps me become a giver in the relationship and not just a taker. I know as I sow into his life God will make sure all my needs are met. I can't say that it's been smooth sailing all these years. Many times people have the impression that everything goes smoothly because I'm married to a pastor. When he leaves the pulpit, he is just a man, as all the others. We have to work on the same things as all other couples. One thing I do recognize is that our marriage affects so many other people. I see the lives that would be affected by our success and our failure. I choose to go the long distance and not just give up because of stuff that really doesn't matter.

**What is the best advice you can give for longevity?**

**PJ:** We try to practice the importance of consistency in our marriage and in our personal character growth. Never let the word *consistency* quit being in your vocabulary. We have also learned over the years to draw strength from one another. When one of us is down, we pick the other up. When I went through my blood clots several years ago, I wouldn't have made it if Marissa was not strong and bold.

**M:** We laugh a lot and eat a lot of meals together, which makes time just fly by. Enjoy your lives because life is too short. Make a choice to stay in it for the long haul. Don't give up. A lot of times, couples go through things that are trivial and weren't dealt with earlier on. Before long, things pile up and then look like the only way to solve them is to get out. If you need help, seek out help. Everyone goes through things. Your marriage is worth the work. God has an assignment for a husband and a wife. When you are fulfilling the call of God on your life, there will be seasons where one of you is stronger than the other. This helps you go through the times in life that are not so pleasant. 'Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken,' Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV).

**How do you overcome financial stress or setbacks in your marriage?**

**PJ:** The Word of God has always helped us in our finances. Without looking to the promises of God regarding finances, we wouldn't have made it. As we have meditated on God wanting to prosper us, it started to work in our lives, and our attitude changed regarding lack and abundance. When financial setbacks have occurred, we have never stopped tithing and giving. We have learned how important our seeds are in the arena of finances. We have also learned not to buy things when we couldn't afford it.

**M:** I focus on what God says about finances. He is greater than any financial setback we may have. As I listen to the Holy Spirit, He will give me ways to get something done and the means to do it. Sowing is one of the greatest tools we have been given. We have purposed to sow seed continuously, even when we couldn't buy a fast food hamburger meal. When you are in faith, it's hard to feel the stress. We are always looking for what God is going to do for us, knowing He will come through for us. There have been many times we couldn't explain money in our checking. As we believed God in our finances, we have seen him answer prayers in ways we never dreamed possible.

**How do finances play a roll in your marriage?**

**PJ:** We look at finances as a way to sow into other people's lives, our own family, and each other's lives. Over the years, we have learned not to focus on what we do not have because it leads to heartache and disappointment. When we have focused on what we do have in life, when it comes to finances, it has brought joy and thanksgiving to our hearts. Don't make finances 'god' in life. I have seen in the past, when I have made finances a primary focus in my life and the cares of making sure my family and I have enough, it has brought more problems and lack. When I walk in faith and obedience to the Lord, I have more than enough. No wonder Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, 'But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.'

**M:** I know we need finances to live our lives on this earth, but I don't let it be a factor in the quality of our relationship. Whether we have money or not, it is not going to change my marriage. I choose to not let it affect our marriage. In our household, John takes care of the finances. We have money allocated for certain things and when I get it, it's my job to budget the money and get what we need with it.

**How do you keep intimacy going in your marriage, especially when kids are in the picture?**

**PJ:** We know how intimacy is important for the well-being of our marriage. As we have grown older, have more and more responsibilities, and have become busy in every day life, we have to insert being intimate into our lives. This is why date nights are so important. Intimacy happens when we are thinking about each other and are communicating with each other. Intimacy becomes more than just sex. It's about being with one another and having quality time together. This has, many times, led to sex. We practice doing something we each enjoy doing, even if one of us doesn't necessarily enjoy it. Marissa and I have learned how to keep a good attitude toward each other in those times.

**M:** Planned time together helps when there are kids in the family. Setting time and making time for one another is important to us. Every year we have planned a vacation where it was just the two of us. That would give us five to seven days of just being alone together. And throughout the year we try to take a night here and there to go somewhere overnight. It hasn't always been easy to do these things, but it's still a goal we strive for. We enjoy one another in the time we do have. Intimacy doesn't always mean physical, and there are seasons where we are closer than others. Either way, we are committed to keeping our marriage healthy.

**What are the most important things in your marriage?**

**PJ:** Laughing together is one of the most important things in our marriage. Our commitment to one another and to the Word of God is also very important. It's important to me to give Marissa things she likes such as jewelry and shoes. It brings great pleasure to me. The last thing is doing things together and forgetting about the daily grind of life. Being with each other brings a joy and contentment that nothing outside of God can bring.

**M:** Being a doer of the Word together is the greatest thing. As we do the Word, all the other things become easier. In addition, making an effort in putting love into action. I don't want to be a hypocrite. I want to be the same at home as I am in public. I don't want two different types of marriages. Along with being a doer, being on the same page is important. I know we aren't going to agree a hundred percent of the time, but I want to be in agreement as much as possible.

**What's the best marriage advice you can give?**

**PJ:** Learn how to forgive each other quickly and without reservation. When you do this, you can move forward with each other with a clean conscience and a loving attitude.

**M:** Two are better than one. Together a husband and a wife can do more than they could do alone. God has an assignment for our relationship, and it's so much better to do things God's way than to do things the world's way. Don't settle because of loneliness. And when you do find the person you will be spending the rest of your life with, take time to invest in the relationship. Really get to know one another. Give what you would like to receive and don't hold on to things. Strive to move forward.



# STRONGER THROUGH MEDITATION

## Hebrews 13:4 NLT

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

## Colossians 3:18-19 ESV

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

## 1 Corinthians 7:2-4 NLT

"But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife."

## Song of Songs 2:16 TPT

"I know my lover is mine and I have everything in you, for we delight ourselves in each other."

## Proverbs 5:18-19 NLT

"Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love."

## 1 Peter 3:1-7 NLT

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do. In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered."

## Proverbs 31:10-12 AMP

"An excellent woman [one who is spiritual, capable, intelligent, and virtuous], who is he who can find her? Her value is more precious than jewels and her worth is far above rubies or pearls. The heart of her husband trusts in her [with secure confidence], and he will have no lack of gain. She comforts, encourages, and does him only good and not evil all the days of her life."

## Song of Songs 7:6-7 TPT

"How delicious is your fair beauty; it cannot be described as I count the delights you bring to me. Love has become the greatest. You stand in victory above the rest, stately and secure as you share with me your vineyard of love."

## Ecclesiastes 4:9 NLT

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed."

## Proverbs 12:4 NLT

"A worthy wife is a crown for her husband, but a disgraceful woman is like cancer in his bones."

## Ephesians 5:22-33 NKJV

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."