

The Impact Paying off Debt Has on Your Marriage

This past fall, I was at a gathering made up mostly of authors, bloggers, and speakers and I met Cherie Lowe. We all had the opportunity to share our “hustle,” or what we were working on at the time.

Cherie brought a book with her. It was her soon to be published book, *Slaying the Debt Dragon*, about her and Brian’s (her husband) debt freedom story. By now, debt freedom stories are shared all the time, but theirs wasn’t the typical story. Their story was \$127, of debt paid off in less than four years!

That was amazing, but that wasn’t the thing that resonated most with me. What stood out was the way Brian led his wife and family through it, when initially Cherie wasn’t “buying in.” Since I met Cherie, and later Brian, we’ve become friends, and their story has taught me a lot. With *Slaying the Debt Dragon*, I got a book on paying off debt that has taught me just as much about relating to my wife as it has in helping us slay our own debt dragon. Here are some of the most beneficial lessons I learned:

Your example is your best leadership tool as a husband. Cherie wasn’t necessarily on-board with their debt slaying journey early on. Brian didn’t hound her about it. He diligently took action and led by his example, which she soon followed. If your wife doesn’t follow you, you have to stay at it. Your consistency can encourage her to follow.

Having a vision is crucial. If we are going on a trip and we are the driver, our wives need us to know where we are going. Casting the vision and keeping it in view will help you stay on track. One quote you are probably familiar with is “fail to

plan, plan to fail.” It’s important in the finances of your marriage. The Bible teaches the same principle in Proverbs 29:18 saying, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Anybody with financial success has a plan; it doesn’t happen accidentally.

Keep your relationship a priority. Getting out of debt takes a serious focus and commitment, but not at the cost of your relationship. Keep your relationship first whether you are dead broke or have wealth beyond your dreams. Making sure your wife knows she is number one, and do the things that help your relationship grow.

No matter what financial challenges you are facing, look at it as an opportunity to grow your relationship. If you are in debt, use the three points above to help you through them.

What has been your No. 1 tool in leading your family through tough times?

Jackie Bledsoe is an author, blogger, and speaker, but first and foremost a husband and father of three, who helps men better lead and love the ones who matter most.

For the original article, visit .

1929 Preacher Prophecies Judgment on America

“Civilization and society rest on morals. Morals rest on religion. Religion rests on the Bible and faith in God and Jesus Christ.” Those were the words of Billy Sunday, who was a famous professional baseball player in the 1880s before he

accepted God's call as an evangelist.

Sunday was just as influential in the church world as he was in the sports world, and we would do well to remember his words today. Indeed, morals rest on religion and religion rests on Bible and faith in God and Jesus Christ. But civilization and society at large are rejecting morals, religion and Christ.

Sunday saw an epidemic of immorality back in 1929 that lit a fire under him and anyone who would listen to his theatrical preaching. In a YouTube video called "Billy Sunday Burns Up the Backsliding World: Whirlwind evangelist swings into action at Boston," Sunday had a warning for America.

Billy Sunday's 1929 Warning

I've watched this YouTube video many times now. I am so grateful that someone recorded it and that folks have posted it on YouTube—and that YouTube hasn't taken it down. In the video he makes this prophetic declaration:

"America needs a tidal wave of the old-time religion. America needs to be taken down to God's bathhouse and the hose turned on her. And the time isn't far distant when the wheels of God's judgment are going to go sweeping through this old God-hating world.

"And I want to take a pledge and this audience to join me in pledge—that you will never rest until this old God-hating, Christ-hating, whiskey soaked, Sabbath-breaking, blaspheming, infidel, bootlegging old world is bound to the cross of Jesus Christ by the golden chains of love."

A Tidal Wave of Religion or Tsunami of Perversion?

Unfortunately, we didn't see the tidal wave of religion that Sunday declared. Instead, we're bracing ourselves for a tsunami of perversion.

A few weeks ago, I released a prophecy about this tsunami of perversion. Yes, we've seen the rumblings of this rising perversion but I believe it's going to grow darker still. When you think of perversion you probably immediately think of sexual perversion—and I believe that's part of it. The Bible has plenty to say about sexual perversion in Romans 1:21-28 alone and we're seeing that passage playing out right now.

Only a tidal wave of religion—the greatest Great Awakening the world has ever seen—can reverse the course of judgment Sunday prophesied. In 1929, Sunday saw a world that was God-hating, Christ-hating, whiskey soaked, Sabbath-breaking, blaspheming, infidels and bootlegging. He probably couldn't have imagined the state of the world nearly 100 years later.

We need more preachers like Sunday in this hour. We need prophetic voices that will rise up and speak the hard truths. We need apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers who aren't intimidated by seeker-friendly crowds with itching ears that will only tithe to prosperity preachers. And we all need to take on Sunday's pledge to never rest until this old world is bound to the cross of Jesus Christ by the golden chains of love.

Pockets of true revival are breaking out across America. Want to know more about the next great move of God? Click here to see Jennifer LeClaire's new book, featuring Dutch Sheets, Reinhard Bonnke, Jonathan Cahn, Billy Graham and others

Jennifer LeClaire is senior editor of Charisma. She is also director of Awakening House of Prayer in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and author of several books, including *The Next Great Move of God: An Appeal to Heaven for Spiritual Awakening*; *Mornings With the Holy Spirit*, *Listening Daily to the Still, Small Voice of God*; *The Making of a Prophet* and *Satan's Deadly Trio: Defeating the Deceptions of Jezebel, Religion and Witchcraft*. You can visit her website [here](#). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow

her on Twitter.

One Thing Sons Need From Their Fathers

Many men spend their whole life searching for something they can only get from their fathers. It's the missing link from many men's lives.

The one thing a son needs from his father is validation.

The dictionary describes validation this way, *"to recognize, establish, or illustrate the worthiness or legitimacy of."* Put another way, sons need to know they're good enough and accepted by their fathers.

Many cultures have encouraged validation through various rites of passage for young men. Young Jewish boys are confirmed to manhood through the celebration of a bar mitzvah. One African tribe requires their young men to go into the jungle to kill a lion with only a spear. The ancient Spartans would send young warriors out to see how many slaves they could kill with only a knife. All of these rites of passage were designed to validate a young man from childhood to manhood and to prove himself among his tribe.

Young men still have the need to be validated today. This is one reason gangs are so popular. When a young man doesn't have a man in his life to help him navigate this process, he'll look to his peers for it. If they don't get it from you, they'll look somewhere else for it.

I don't have all this figured out yet, but I've spent the

greatest part of my ministry preparing young men and women for life and ministry. I also have a son at home who has taught me a few lessons along the way.

Here are five practical ways to validate your son:

1. Call him "Son." Your son needs to hear you call his name, but he also needs to hear you call him, "Son." Even Jesus needed to hear this from his Heavenly Father. In Matthew 3:17 at his baptism his father said, "And a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" If Jesus needed to hear this, how much more so does your son need to hear this?

A son needs to hear his father speak identity and purpose over his life. When you call him "Son" it speaks of your approval and acceptance. Your son will know he belongs to you.

2. Involve him in your day-to-day routines. He needs to feel wanted. He needs to know he was made for a purpose and to produce something. My son helped me in the yard the other day and to be honest, he got in the way more than he helped. I hate to admit it, but he slowed me down. While I felt a little frustrated I looked down at his face and it said it all. He had the biggest smile on his face as he was doing what he could to help me.

I had to take a step back and look at the situation a little further down the road. He was learning that entrepreneurial men work hard. I was teaching him a work ethic.

3. Wrestle with him. He needs to test his strength. He needs to be tested. In essence, he needs to feel resistance. Physical strength is only built through added resistance. When you engage him in sports he is put in an environment where he can face challenges and learn to grow through them. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." It allows him to face resistance and difficulty without the negative consequences. He can learn

these lessons early when the potential consequences cost more later in life.

4. Avoid babying him. There are times when he's going to fall and hurt himself. It's natural to want to make sure he's OK, but it doesn't mean you have to be the hovering helicopter parent. He needs to know there are times he'll need to get up and dust himself off.

Mothers are naturally more nurturing than fathers, but fathers need not be afraid to challenge their sons. He needs to learn to play through the pain. There are times when a man needs to rest, but there are times when he has to do what only he can do.

You're teaching him to have courage and not give up when life gets hard. I'm convinced this is one reason so many men give up and walk out on their families. They were never taught to overcome difficulty with perseverance and resilience.

5. Schedule "man-time" with him. He needs one-on-one time with you. It might mean taking him to lunch or to get ice cream. He needs your undivided attention where you spend time with him engaging in a life-sharing activity.

Every boy's personality is different, so you'll have to take some time to figure out what he enjoys doing. It's a time for you to talk about life. Why not parent on purpose and lead the conversations?

I would rather my son learn about life from me than have him learn it from a TV show or from someone who doesn't care about him as much as I do.

While no one is a perfect father, we can do our best to help our sons to grow into the man God desires them to be. I'm trying to help my son navigate this process well because I would rather be his guide on the journey of manhood than for him to wander aimlessly down the path of life. He only gets

one shot at being a man, so I want it to count.

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10 Scriptures for Workout Motivation

I spoke last week at the wonderful Community Bible Church here in San Antonio on the subject of honoring God with our bodies. One concept I emphasized is that the living and active Word of God was given to live and act in *all* areas of our lives, from our marriages and money to our holiness and health.

We can attend church every week, volunteer our time to serving the sick and needy, never utter a curse word or gossip about a single soul, but if we neglect to take care of our bodies, our temples of the Holy Spirit, we are not living the Christian life the Lord intends for us.

Romans 12:1 says we are to "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship." Notice that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the apostle Paul, tells us to give not just our spirits, not only our souls, but our *bodies* to God.

First Corinthians 10:31 underscores this command with another

like it: "Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God."

We see that God is indeed interested in how we treat our bodies. Keeping them strong through regular workouts (which wasn't as much of an issue 2,000 years ago like it is today!) and maintaining a healthy diet (there were fewer dietary pitfalls around the Mediterranean, and elsewhere around the globe, before GMOs and processed foods came along) are habits that please and glorify our Creator. When we choose laziness and excuses over discipline and obedience, we not only set ourselves up for obesity and an increased risk of various diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, but we move toward a Christian walk devoid of the strength, confidence, energy and longevity that God wants for us.

I know that working out is often the last thing we want to think about some days. With myriad responsibilities at work, stress-inducing assignments at school and an exhausting schedule with kids and countless other activities and chores, the word "exercise" can be tiring just to say. But we all know that exercise, despite the negative emotions we may ascribe to it, actually increases our energy levels, boosts our moods, clears our heads, reduces stress and gives us the strength, immunity and flexibility necessary for life's everyday tasks.

So, how do we find the motivation to work out on the days we feel like forgoing the gym (or track, trail, studio, etc.), kicking up our feet and eating a box of Cheez-Its for dinner? I have found that the best source is the Holy Bible. In it, we are reminded that life isn't about appearances or pleasing others, and that indolence and idleness are vices to be purged as we become sanctified, day by day. The Word exhorts us to do all things *as unto the Lord*, and to be hardworking and diligent laborers in His kingdom.

Here are 10 verses that I believe will encourage and motivate you to get your workout in, especially on days when the couch

is calling your name like a Siren's song:

1. *"May the very God of peace sanctify you completely. And I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).*
2. *"I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).*
3. *"So, therefore, I run, not with uncertainty. So I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I bring and keep my body under subjection, lest when preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:26-27).*
4. *"Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).*
5. *"What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).*
6. *"but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40:31).*
7. *"She clothes herself with strength, and strengthens her arms" (Prov. 31:17).*
8. *"Now no discipline seems to be joyful at the time, but grievous. Yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift up your tired hands, and strengthen your weak knees" (Heb. 12:11-12).*
9. *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).*

10. "No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

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For the original article, visit [www.dianataylor.com](#).

'It's Time for Women to Go to War'

Women, in a unique and powerful way, are God's search and rescue team. When God's heart is pursuing a lost person, often He sends a woman on the chase.

God knows that women have been especially created to care extravagantly about people who need a bit of help and some extra tender loving care. After all, God should know what women are capable of ... He created women just the way we are for His particular purpose.

And, may I just say, that God's purpose for your life should be your purpose for your life. No questions asked. No excuses given. Just your life for God's will.

For much of my life I have been content to be a nurse who quietly, gently and kindly gave encouragement to those who were bruised on the battlefield of life. What joy and what safety I have in fulfilling that merciful role. I have loved being a vital part of God's Red Cross.

Recently, however, God has spoken a word to my heart that has emphatically changed my focus and my job description.

God spoke to me and said, "It is time for women to go to war!"

There is a battle raging for the lives of men, women and children, and it is time for the women of this generation to exert their influence and their power and to strategically battle on behalf of those who are caught in the crossfire.

You see ... women can either be content to care for the wounded or we can rise up and fight so that there will no longer be so many who need critical care. We must lend our voices, our hearts, our gifts and our time to the great commission and thusly prevent someone else's pain.

It's time for the women of God who are alive on the earth today to rise up against the powers of darkness, against the slavery of sexual predators, against the thief of depression, and against the lie of eating disorders.

It's time for the women of God of this generation to say, "No More!" to abuse, to pornography, to addictions and to self-harm.

It's time for the women of God to raise a standard of moral purity, to demonstrate the strength that is only extracted from the joy of His presence and to live the abundant life that only Jesus gives.

It's time.

I believe that God is raising up a generation of Esthers. He is not raising up just one "Esther" but He is raising up an

entire generation of women who have been born for such a moment as this moment. God is raising up a generation of women who know the power of fasting, who are not intimidated by the compromise of the culture and who are willing to stand against demonic spirits. God is raising up a generation of women who are not afraid of dying but are determined to live boldly and courageously on the battlefield of life.

What will your role be? Because you will, indeed, play a role in the plan of God during your lifespan. Will you cower or will you care? Will you be afraid or will you be a force to be reckoned with? Will you truly live or will you merely die?

It's time for the women of God to go to war. It's time.

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books, *No More Ordinary*, *Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* and *Defiant Joy!* Her most recent book, *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*, will be released on August 1. Her teaching DVD, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming.

5 Common Areas Where Women Want Men to Take Initiative

My wife loves being out in the wilderness. Before we were married, we took a group of teenagers on a weeklong backpacking, hiking and camping trip. As a former trail guide

in Colorado, she initiated doing the trip and recruited one of her guide friends to help lead it with her.

I have never been much of an outdoorsman. The farthest out into the wilderness I normally go is the 15th hole on a golf course. I assumed they had everything covered so I passively followed. Not once did I offer help and I'll admit that there were times when I had a less than positive attitude.

When we came off of the trail, I could see she was a little upset. My occasional bad attitude was reason enough, but the thing that really got her was that I took no initiative to help lead. It was all on her and that made her feel alone.

Meanwhile, at the time, I thought everything was fine. This was partly a communication problem, but I have noticed that our relationship experiences difficulty when I lack initiative. When I sit passively rather than taking the lead or coming alongside my wife, both of us end up frustrated.

Here are five common areas where women are looking for men to take initiative:

1. Leadership. Women want men to set a standard and direction for the family. They desire us to point our families to a higher moral character. This is not to say they want everything dictated to them. They are as much a part of determining the values of the family as us. However, they want us to carry the weight by living it out consistently, communicating it effectively and reinforcing it.

2. Attention. Women want men that have eyes and ears for their family. They want full engagement and focus in conversation with both them and the kids. If you are like me, it's easy after a long day to want to checkout. I have to remind myself, sometimes daily, that my family deserves, at least, as much attentive interest as work. When we enter the front door, they want us to zero in and pursue.

3. Planning. If there was ever a place where my wife and I were opposites, it's this one. It's tough enough for me to figure out what to do today, let alone think ahead. My wife, meanwhile, already has our daughter's birthday planned ... in 2016 (Not really, but kind of). Whether you are a planner or not, they want our engagement here: vacations, date nights, family outings, meal plans, etc. It makes them feel cared for when we think things through with them and help them plan. They feel even more cared for when we bring it up before they do. When we leave them alone to plan, they feel alone. That's the last thing they want.

4. Home Improvement. I haven't met a woman yet that doesn't want a beautiful home. Right or wrong, in some ways, it is a representation of them. They want us to notice the small details they add to make the home look better and appreciate it. Carrying our share of responsibility for household cleaning is a way to take weight off their shoulders. However, probably the thing they want most is to dream with them about the ideal home. It's not really about size and wealth as much as it is creating a life together.

5. Finances. Women want a sense of security. It's not about having a large salary, but an understanding and clear picture of the financial details. Security comes in by our driving the financial conversation, setting goals, and accountability. This doesn't mean dictating to them like a subordinate, but initiating the discussion of fiscal health and vision. Then it involves strategizing with them on how to reach those goals.

How does showing initiative help our relationships?

B.J. Foster is the content manager for All Pro Dad and a married father of two. For the original article, visit [.](#)

When It Comes to Your Body, Don't Be Like Esau

After I wrote "What Eve Believed," I was intrigued by others who made wrong choices about food in the Bible. Why did they make the wrong choice?

For instance, the Esau Bible story in Genesis 25:29-34 is another great warning about how *not* to respond to eating temptations. You can learn from other biblical stories so that you can make the right choices and achieve better weight loss results.

Who was Esau? He was Abraham's grandson, Isaac's son and Jacob's fraternal twin brother. Esau's food problem happened when he was caught in a vulnerable moment.

But he wouldn't have made the wrong choice if he valued what he had from the beginning.

Here's the story:

"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field and he was famished. So Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me some of that red stew, for I am famished.' Therefore his name was called Edom. Then Jacob said, 'First sell me your birthright.' Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; of what use is the birthright to me?' Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me this day.' So he swore to him, and he sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. Then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright" (Gen. 25:29-34).

Let's examine Esau's descent:

- He was tired and hungry.
- He minimized his future blessing.

- He magnified his current condition.
- He decided that satisfying his flesh now was more important than receiving a natural and spiritual blessing later.

A common saying is that you shouldn't make important decisions when you are hungry, angry, lonely or tired. In Esau's case, he was both tired and hungry.

Jacob, his brother, took advantage of Esau's weakness. He asked for Esau's birthright.

What was the birthright? In the Israelite law (written later in the Scriptures), the firstborn son's birthright was to receive a double portion of what His father had. Even though they were twins, Esau was the firstborn. Isaac had received Abraham's blessing and Esau was next in line.

The Lord's blessings upon Abraham were to:

- Make him a great nation
- Make his name great
- Make him a blessing
- Bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him
- Bless all the families of the earth through him

So Jacob was asking Esau to trade all of those permanent blessings in exchange for a temporary bowl of stew. I say temporary because food:

- Gives your tongue a taste
- Fills your stomach, taking away hunger feelings
- Goes through your digestive system so nutrients are extracted for the body's use
- Exits your body when the nonuseful matter is eliminated as feces

When you weigh the end results of food against the end results of the birthright, what was most important and lasting? The

birthright, of course.

What was Esau left with? The food would be eliminated eventually (leaving him hungry again) and his birthright would be gone.

Esau probably never took the time to think about his birthright and the benefits of it. He probably never saw himself taking possession of it. He likely never considered what possessing the birthright would ultimately mean for his family's future.

Instead, Esau played a mental trick on himself because he was only thinking about satisfying his own flesh at the moment. He minimized the importance of the birthright by saying that the birthright did not matter because he was going to die.

Now, was Esau really going to die if he didn't eat that bowl of stew right then? No. Esau was strong and healthy enough to have been working in the field moments before. So he couldn't have been about to die, could he?

Instead of taking Jacob's bad trade, Esau probably could have:

- Eaten a piece of fruit or a vegetable to get some quick nourishment
- Made his own stew
- Ask someone else to make him something to eat

He had alternatives. Since other people lived with them, including their mother and father, none of them would have let him starve to death.

So Esau told himself a lie because he valued pleasures he could get now (the stew) above pleasure he could get later (the blessing). If he had valued his blessing, Esau would not have given it away so easily and cheaply. What Esau did is called "delay discounting" in modern terms.

Researchers once did a study of people who overeat regularly

versus people exercised self-control with food. They found only one difference to separate the two groups:

The overeating people diminished the benefits of waiting on future benefits, like Esau. In contrast, the people who exercised self-control valued future benefits above temporary gain.

When it comes to health and weight loss, here are some future benefits that may await you. God's will for you is stated in 3 John 1:2: "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, even as your soul is well."

These benefits are included in your health birthright:

- Boosted energy
- Increased confidence
- Improved quality of sleep
- Greater mental focus
- Enhanced shape and muscle tone
- Increased muscle strength
- Improved flexibility
- Better mood control
- Added glow to your skin
- Enhanced balance and coordination
- Improved endurance
- Reduced depression
- Increased ability to handle stress
- Improved circulation
- Clearer skin
- Freer breathing
- Increased optimism about life
- Amplified desire to tackle other life goals

Take a moment to consider if you are making an "Esau" mistake:

- Are you trading your health birthright in exchange for poor food choices?

How often do you think about your health birthright and the benefits of it? Do you often imagine the feelings you would have when you take possession of it? Do you consider what possessing the health birthright would ultimately mean for your family's future?

If not, take a few moments to do that everyday. This will help you make wiser choices when the enemy offers you a bad trade.

Imagine possessing your health birthright fully. What will you be able to do, have, and share having it? See it and feel it in your body! If you can't see it, then ask the Lord to open your Spiritual eyes so that you may see.

Ask the Lord for wisdom as to what you can do to make wiser choices in your health. Then listen for the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. When He tells you to do something that will change your health for the better, do it immediately.

The more you ignore the Holy Spirit's effort to help, the more it will be harder for you to hear Him later.

But when you cooperate with Him, your whole life will start to change for the better. You will be blessed and take full possession of your health birthright.

Remember, this Earth is ultimately not our home. All who name the name of Christ has an assignment from Jesus: "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'" (Mark 16:15).

Whether you are a formal minister or not, you have a responsibility to share the Good News with those God has brought into your life. People pay far more attention to what you do than what you say.

May our choices be wise ones to accurately reflect the wisdom of our God!

Are you ready to take full possession of your health

birthright? Check out the Take Back Your Temple program to learn how you can release excess weight and feel better than ever before.

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

For the original article, visit .

How to Evaluate Your Relationship With Your Spouse

Every marriage needs evaluation. When you evaluate your marriage, you're hitting the pause button and looking at the condition of your relationship in a careful and thoughtful way.

By doing so, you'll both see what you're doing well along with areas in which you need to grow individually and as a couple. A meaningful evaluation of your marriage leads to acceleration in the growth of your relationship.

As you assess your relationship, if you're the one asking the question, listen without being defensive. If you're the one answering, be honest without exaggeration or personal attack. Avoid using *always* and *never* in your conversation. These words can uselessly sidetrack your conversation and frustrate your spouse.

This assessment can be done all at one time or it can be done by addressing one question each week over a period of time.

You decide. It's also a good idea to take notes.

Here are the key questions you and your spouse should each ask and answer to evaluate your marriage:

1. How can I be a better spouse to you?
2. Have I seemed oblivious to anything important going on in the family?
3. What is one thing that you want or need from me?
4. What have I done recently that really encouraged you or made you feel loved?
5. Do I argue fairly?
6. What do you think about the way we spend time together? How could it be better?
7. What would be one thing you wish I would start doing? Stop doing?
8. What do you wish I would say to you more often? Stop saying to you?
9. In what areas of our marriage do you trust me most? The least?
10. On a scale of 1 to 10, am I a good listener? How well do I understand you?
11. Do you feel I support you with the kids? In front of the kids?
12. Do I compliment you enough? Do I criticize you too much?
13. Do you feel free to be yourself?
14. How do you know I love you?

By the way, if your spouse says something that you don't agree with, that's OK. This is not a time to address and resolve contentious issues. Just let them share their thoughts and feelings without correcting them. Remember, their perception is their reality.

And, here is list of questions to help you evaluate your relationship with your child.

When evaluating your marriage, what other questions do you

think you should ask your spouse? Please share your thoughts below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)

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