

4 Life-Changing Ways God Wants You to Invest in Your Marriage

About four months into dating, my husband and I began to embark on the topic of marriage.

One of the things we talked about on those dates was the importance of the husband and wife relationship after children are born.

After children come, so often the investment into marriage gets pushed aside with all of the diapers, night feedings and sleep deprivation.

While it may not be reasonable to expect that during those early years a wife will be able to invest in the same way she invested before children, it is important to continue to give in order to keep the marriage healthy.

This can be hard at times.

Even now that my children are older, there are nights when I put them to bed, and I just want to be left alone. I don't want to talk to anyone or have anyone talk to me.

I don't want anyone to touch me, look at me or expect anything from me.

I've given pieces of myself all day long to little ones who still don't understand how exhausting that can be, and while my husband is very sympathetic to that, I know how important it is that we continue to function.

There is the temptation to put our husbands on the back burner during these years, fully expecting that when our kids get a little older, we can pick up where we left off.

But life doesn't work that way.

Life moves forward, and nothing just stands still waiting for us to get around to things. What doesn't move forward with us moves backwards.

As mothers, we are concerned for our children's basic needs, and one of the greatest emotional needs a child has is a mom and dad who have a healthy relationship.

Ignoring this basic need can potentially have dire consequences later.

This is something I'm reminding myself in this time of transition in our home—a time that, believe it or not, requires more from me now than ever before:

- I need to still invest in my marriage.
- I need my marriage to function.
- My husband needs me to understand the importance of our relationship
- My children need us to function

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1. Pray for your marriage.

I'm serious about this. So often we pray for our husbands, but we need to pray for our marriages. For that sacred and holy relationship—unlike any other relationship on planet Earth—that God designed as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

Satan hates this relationship.

He is doing everything he can to destroy this relationship globally and ours personally.

If he can distract us, make us offended and bitter, or just

indifferent and apathetic, he will. And the best defense we have against his strategy is prayer.

I love this book by Darlene Schacht of Time Warp Wife, *100 Prayers for Your Marriage* and her website, Today's Marriage Prayers

2. Don't try to fix him.

I know, you can probably rattle off a handful of things right now that you'd like to change about your husband. I know I can.

But can I tell you a secret?

He's not broken.

So don't try to fix him.

It won't work. You know it. I know it. Any attempt we make to fix our husband will only backfire on us. It will only result in fighting, tension and a thicker wall between us.

Instead, I invite you to join a challenge with me. It's revolutionary, a little scary and very humbling. You may not want to at first, I know I don't want to, but I know I need to.

Want to know what it is?

Rather than trying to fix my husband, I'm going to work on me. Part of praying for my marriage will include prayers for God to change me, and as He reveals things about me I need to change, I'm going to work on fixing them.

3. Don't compare him to other men.

The longer we're married, the more we're tempted to look at other men and other marriages and compare.

The thing is this: What we see is what others let us see. What

we don't see is who they are and how their marriages function behind closed doors when we're not looking.

Here's what I've had to remind myself over and over:

My husband isn't my dad. He's not as mature as my dad, he hasn't had the life experiences my dad has had, and as similar as he is to my dad in many ways, he still has a different personality than my dad.

To compare him to my dad will only defeat him and disappoint me.

My husband isn't my friend's husband. As wonderful a picture as my friend has painted of her husband (And what a good wife she is for doing that! We could all take a page out of her book), she refuses to focus on his faults. And every man has faults.

To compare the faults I see in my husband to the faultless picture of a husband my friend has painted is unfair to my husband and will only cause ungratefulness in my own heart and resentment in the heart of my husband.

My husband isn't the hero in the novel I'm reading right now. First of all, the man in the book isn't real; he is the figment of someone's imagination and likely a character the writer wishes existed.

To compare my husband to a fictional character is very unwise. It is idolatry and potentially adultery. It's a recipe for marriage disaster.

My marriage functions best when "love overlooks a multitude of sins," when it "believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things," (see 1 Cor. 13) and when I choose to make his best qualities my focus.

4. Don't be married to everyone around you.

I know, you're confused right now. But let me tell you a story.

Early in our marriage, I found myself in a precarious juggling act of trying to please everyone around me. I was far too open with others, and my openness invited others opinions and unsolicited advice.

Being the pleaser and chronic rule-follower I am, I tried very hard to make sure I lived up to everyone's favorable opinion and follow their advice.

This put a lot of strain on our home. Especially because my husband walks to the beat of his own drum.

I was trying so hard to please everyone, and he wasn't cooperating. This left me very stressed-out and worried about what people thought of us—well, me.

At one point, I hit a crisis inside and while praying, heard God say this:

“Rosilind, it's time to kick these other people out of your marriage. You are married to one man, and these other people have no place in your marriage.

“Your home is meant to be a castle, not a commune. It's time to kick everyone else out and lock the door. Pull up the drawbridge. Dig a moat. Put alligators in it if you have to, to keep them away!”

Suddenly, I had a revelation, and it agrees with what Paul said: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands” (Col. 3:18a).

I love the word “own” because it clearly defines to whom we submit. We're not supposed to submit to everyone; we're only to submit to our own husbands.

Inviting others into our marriage only confuses and strains

the marriage.

Will you join me in asking God to help you revive your marriage and in doing those practical things in your heart that will cause love, honor and respect to flourish again?
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Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together, they live with their two active boys in the country, where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associate degree in practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of "A Little R & R," where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You may follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

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