

# Protect Your Marriage From Divorce With These 4 Vital Keys

Talking to some friends recently about our mad marriage “skills”—which we think must be fairly decent since we don’t throw knives at each other—I began to think. What are four core areas that have helped us be successful over the past 14 years? Like any good list, all my points start with the same letter.

## **Community**

The Bible says “Don’t stop meeting together with other believers.” (Heb. 10:25, ESV). Steve and I, from the very beginning, enmeshed ourselves in a group of friends with a common commitment. We have young couples just like us to older couples with proven track records and life lessons to share. Doing life alongside these treasured friends has kept us accountable and encouraged.

## **Conviction**

We both make private space for God to speak to us about our character. “The Word of God is living and active ... able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12, MEV). The Bible was written by the designer of our souls, an expert on relationships. He didn’t write it because he demands perfection in order to be pleased. No, God knows how we need to operate in order to live life to the fullest. It brings him both joy and honor when we are living from a place of strength.

## **Communication**

I love doing life with Steve, having children, owning a

business and creating a home together. All these blessings from God have to be diligently managed as a team, or chaos will ensue and rob us of the joy they are intended to bring. This requires lots of talking, listening and compromise. We make time and space for this communication, and we do not bury issues, though we may occasionally table one until emotion dies down. We value the relationship so much that we won't allow it to be eroded from neglect or permit a reaction that wounds the other. When friction arises, we explore it and allow this to strengthen our character and commitment.

## **Connection**

Our family is the first priority; It takes precedence over every other issue and relationship. We learned we could not over schedule our family, because a hectic pace of life can eventually lead to a breakdown in vitality. Steve and I have daily rituals that create an opportunity for us to connect. It's actually simple, like regular oil changes on a car. When we have coffee together every morning and eat dinner together every night, we slow down, sit down and look in one another's eyes. These are small investments that add to the longevity of a marriage. It's each spouse demonstrating, "I see you, I love you and I believe you to be worth my time and attention."

While there are certainly more than just four areas, the current season of our lives has focused us back on these. God is continuing to help form our family for the better, even as I write this. May He bring the same life and hope to your marriage and family.

**Melissa Brendtro** *blogs at Life of the Family in Nashville, Tennessee.* {eo}