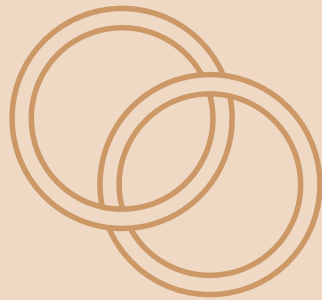




JOURNEY MARRIAGE

21 Day Devotional

Day One

Cultivate Communication

Read:

"The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Proverbs 18:21

Think:

Cultivating communication is a daily decision to love God and your spouse over yourself. One of the crucial elements that can either build up or tear down a godly marriage is the way we communicate. Today's verse reminds us the power our words hold — they have the ability to bring life or death to our relationship.

Our words should be constructive, uplifting, and beneficial to our spouse. But sometimes, we may slip up and unintentionally hurt each other with our words. Just as the Lord forgives you, extend grace and forgiveness to your spouse. James 1:19 urges us to be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." Communication is a two-way street. Take time to listen to your spouse's thoughts and feelings without interruption.

So, what can you implement in your marriage to cultivate communication?

Pray together: Begin and end each day with prayer together. Thank God for your marriage and your spouse, bring your concerns to Him together, and ask Him for guidance, wisdom, patience, and understanding.

Carve out time to communicate: Taking time to communicate daily with your spouse will make you better at it and allow you to know your spouse more deeply.

Choose the right time: Pick appropriate times for important discussions; don't bring up sensitive topics when either one of you is stressed out. Schedule check-ins where you can discuss your marriage, address concerns, and celebrate achievements.

Cultivating communication within your marriage takes effort and a commitment to grow together. You can create a strong foundation for your marriage by prioritizing communication.

Question for him:

- Would your wife say you are good at listening to her thoughts and feelings without interrupting? What's one thing you could do to try to understand her point of view better?

Question for her:

- Would your husband say you are good at listening to his thoughts and feelings without interrupting? What's one thing you could do to try to understand his point of view better?

Question discuss together:

- How can we better prioritize our prayer life together?

Day Two

Hearts Aligned

Read

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

Colossians 3:1-2

Think

Sometimes, it can feel like we speak an entirely different language from our spouse. We say one thing, and they hear another. We expect our spouses to read our minds and know our thoughts and feelings instead of telling them how we really feel.

Marriage is a gift from God. It is meant to bring us joy and is meant to be a visible example of God's love. But, communication is often the biggest hurdle to what marriage is intended to be.

So, how do we communicate? We need to remember communication starts with you. Matthew 7:5 reminds us of this. It's easy to point a finger at our spouse. "If only you would..." or, "You always..." or, "You never..." The end of those sentences may be an area of weakness for your spouse, but we can't control their actions. Improving communication starts with turning the finger back on ourselves and asking the Lord to show us our sins.

In marriage, guarding your heart against bitterness, anger, and malice is crucial. Examine your heart. Luke 6:45 reminds us that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Our words and actions flow from what lives in our hearts.

The foundation of a Christ-centered marriage is built on setting our hearts on things above, as Colossians 3:1-2 teaches. It's a deliberate choice to focus on Christ and His teachings, allowing His love and grace to permeate our relationship. We create a solid foundation for our marriage by aligning our hearts with heavenly virtues, and it changes the way we communicate with our spouse.

Better communication won't happen overnight. It's going to take work, and a daily decision to choose loving God and our spouse over ourselves. But, when we allow God to show us how to communicate, we will have a stronger marriage.

Question for him:

- Are you quick to point out your wife's faults, or are you willing to acknowledge and address your own shortcomings in communication?

Question for her:

- Are you quick to point out your husband's faults, or are you willing to acknowledge and address your own shortcomings in communication?

Question to talk about together:

- What practical steps can you actively take to improve your communication on a daily basis?

Day Three

I'm Sorry

Read

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

Think:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Why were we taught such a blatant untruth as children? Harsh words can definitely harm — especially when thrown at a significant other.

So often, what starts as a minor disagreement, spirals into a fight neither of you want to back down from. No one likes to admit they're wrong. But, as difficult as it is, accepting responsibility and reconciling is more important than being right.

We are called to forgive those who hurt us. When Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone, Jesus said, "...not seven times, but seventy times seven." There is no limit to forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22). God never put a limit on the number of times He was willing to forgive us, and we are to do the same for our spouse. God forgives us because He loves us.

A proper apology may be challenging, but it's amazing in the end. We simply need to say: "I'm sorry. I was wrong. I love you. Please forgive me." Then, talk about what you can do better going forward. Modeling God's forgiveness and compassion is one of the most incredible things we can do to strengthen our marriages.

What does it look like to choose love in marriage? It means not reacting in the moment. It means holding your tongue when you want to speak your mind. It is committing to pray for your spouse. It is elevating your spouse's needs over your own. It means choosing to forgive before your spouse asks for forgiveness.

Winning the argument is never worth losing the marriage. Unity in marriage isn't the result of two perfect people living life. It's what happens when two flawed people learn to forgive.

Question for him:

- Have you held something against your wife when you can choose to forgive?

Question for her:

- Have you held something against your husband when you can choose to forgive?

Question to discuss together:

- How can you love each other better when you disagree and argue?

Day Four

Joy In The Journey

Read:

"Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:9

Think:

There is no secret formula to a lifelong love. It takes commitment. It takes work. And it takes time, time spent together. We are all guilty of letting life get in the way; and they're usually good things: work, volunteering at our kid's schools, running kids from one sports event to the next, and personal hobbies. Life passes us by, and we put off spending time with the most important person, our spouse.

The verse from Ecclesiastes reminds us of the importance of enjoying life with our husband or wife because time passes quickly. This verse encourages us to find fulfillment and meaning in the togetherness of marriage. It acknowledges the reality of life's toil and challenges but directs our attention to the joy found in the companionship of a loving spouse. As we navigate the complexities of life, God invites us to discover profound satisfaction in the shared journey of marriage. It's a partnership designed by God as a source of joy, support, and love.

How does spending time together look? It can look like having a regularly scheduled date night or staying in and snuggling together on the couch, watching a movie, and eating popcorn. It can be waking up earlier to drink coffee and have quiet time together. It doesn't have to be complicated. But making time to connect regularly with your spouse helps you communicate better, connect, and enjoy your life together.

Question for Him:

- What specific actions can you take to create more quality time for you and your spouse amid life's busyness?

Question for Her:

- What specific actions can you take to create more quality time for you and your spouse amid life's busyness?

Questions to discuss together:

- Are you balancing work, family, and personal commitments in a way that allows for meaningful connection together? Do you need to re-prioritize?
- Are there specific activities or rituals that you used to enjoy but have neglected recently, and how can you reintegrate them back into your lives?

Sunset Resolution

Read

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)

Think

When was the last time you argued with your spouse? Can you even remember what it was about? Was it something over nothing, small and trivial? When we fight, it feels as if we're fighting about something. But when we look back at our arguments, they can seem petty and insignificant — for instance, your husband left his clothes next to the hamper instead of putting them in again, or your wife's chicken is "always" overcooked.

But, a lot of the time, these "nothing" fights stem from miscommunication. We fight over little things when there's something more significant going on. Maybe you're exhausted from being the default parent, stressed about work and finances, anxious over a friendship or family drama, or resenting a disconnect in your marriage.

In today's scripture, we are encouraged not to let unresolved anger linger but to address and resolve conflicts promptly. It's usually not the big problems that cause the most damage. But allowing anger to fester, enables the enemy to gain a foothold in our relationship. These little arguments compound over time and can cause the most damage if we don't resolve them quickly. When we recognize that our "nothing" fights may mask deeper issues or unmet needs, the urgency to address them becomes even more apparent. This verse calls us to a proactive approach in dealing with our conflicts, seeking resolution before the sun sets on our anger.

We grow in our marriages by facing our conflict instead of ignoring it. Revealing the issue allows us to have an honest conversation. It enables us to have an opportunity to empathize with each other, which will lead to a better connection and, ultimately, a stronger marriage. Embrace the challenge not to let the sun go down on your anger and address the little things then and there.

Question for him:

- When was the last time you had an argument, and what was it about? What specific triggers escalate minor disagreements? How can you manage these triggers to prevent unnecessary conflict?

Question for her:

- When was the last time you had an argument, and what was it about? Are there any lingering frustrations or feelings of resentment from past arguments? How can you address these feelings and emotions and prevent them from influencing future conflicts?

Question to discuss together:

- How well do you adhere to the principle of not letting the sun go down on your anger, as advised in Ephesians 4:26-27? What changes can you make to ensure prompt resolution of your conflicts?

Sweet Like Honey

Read:

"Kind words are like honey — sweet to the soul and healthy for the body." Proverbs 16:24

Think:

Honey is not only a delicious treat. Did you know honey has been used worldwide for years as a healing agent in wound care? How cool is that?

We've all probably heard a spoonful of honey can help relieve sore throats, and local honey is good for allergies. But it has so many other uses. When applied to wounds, honey has a soothing effect, reducing inflammation and promoting healing. In the same way, gracious and comforting words have a similar soothing effect on our emotional wounds. They provide comfort, understanding, and reassurance in times of distress, promoting emotional healing.

Honey is known for its natural antibacterial properties, helping prevent infections and promoting a sterile environment for healing. When we speak positive and affirming words to our spouse and the people around us, they act as an emotional antiseptic, preventing the spread of negativity and fostering an environment where emotional healing can occur.

Lastly, the natural sugars in honey provide a calming effect and help reduce stress levels. Our gentle and kind words act as an emotional balm. When our husband or wife comes home stressed and upset, we can lend an ear, hold back our opinions, and ask God for wisdom and help to extend divine grace. We can reduce our spouse's stress levels and tension through the power of our words. Our words help create a sense of security and peace within our marriage.

Just as honey tastes delicious and has so many healing properties, our words have the power to bring joy, nurture, and strength to our marriage. Let your speech be seasoned with grace, kindness, and love in marriage. Commit to speaking words of affirmation, encouragement, and gratitude to your spouse.

Question for him:

- In what ways can you better understand and meet your wife's emotional needs through the power of your words?

Question for her:

- Are you mindful of the impact of your words on your husband's stress levels, and how can you contribute to reducing tension through positive communication?

Question to discuss together:

- How can you be more intentional about using words of grace, kindness, and love in your daily interactions?

Day Seven

Take It Slow

Read:

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry," James 1:19

Think:

Has your spouse ever called and excitedly told you they got a great deal on a hotel? You're leaving tonight for a quick trip with the kids! Pack the bags and be ready in three hours. They promise to help with whatever you need, but all you're thinking is how they've ruined the plans you thought you had for the weekend. You roll your eyes, grumble something back about it not being a good time, and immediately feel stressed out. They get upset because you're not excited, sparking an argument about how you're "never" on board for their spontaneous ideas.

But, after packing the bags and getting everything ready, you realize it didn't take long, and you've wanted to get away; the plans just took you by surprise. Your spouse comes home, you apologize, and you have a great weekend. At the end of your trip, you thank your spouse for helping you become more spontaneous and promise to be quicker to listen next time instead of blowing up at them.

One of the greatest skills of communication is learning to be an effective listener. In marriage, the wisdom from today's verse gives us three commands. It encourages spouses to prioritize listening, understanding, and patience over hasty reactions.

Taking the time to listen to our spouse truly is one of the highest forms of respect and validation we can give them. By listening, we show our spouse, "You matter to me, I love you, and what you have to say is important." Our spouse deserves our concentration and attention. As James advises, we must make every effort to be quick to listen and slow to speak. In our relationships, let's strive to truly hear each other. Be present in the moment, put aside distractions, and listen to what they have to say.

Questions for Him:

- Do you genuinely try to listen to your wife without zoning out and scrolling on your phone, interrupting, or formulating your response while she speaks?
- Do you actively seek to understand your wife's perspective and feelings, even if they differ from your own?

Questions for Her:

- Do you genuinely try to listen to your husband without zoning out and scrolling on your phone, interrupting, or formulating your response while he speaks?
- Do you actively seek to understand your husband's perspective and feelings, even if they differ from your own?

Question to discuss together:

- Are there specific communication patterns or triggers that lead to quick reactions instead of thoughtful responses?

Heart to Heart

Read:

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:2-3

Think:

When we hear the word intimacy, our minds often jump to sex or physical touch. The word intimacy comes from the Latin word *intimus*, meaning "inmost." It's hard to have sexual intimacy unless there is spiritual intimacy and emotional intimacy. It takes *real* intimacy to have a good marriage.

Through emotional intimacy, couples share their deepest thoughts, feelings, and desires, boosting emotional intimacy. This emotional closeness fosters a sense of safety and security in the relationship, strengthening the bond between the couple.

As humans, building intimate relationships is in the very fabric of our beings. We long for closeness and to have deep-rooted connections. Intimacy in marriage doesn't just consist of one thing. It's a combination of both emotional connection and physical affection that brings us closer together.

Great communication is important for emotional intimacy. Listening for the sake of understanding and not fixing, with our spouse's interests in mind and not our own, leads to a deeper emotional connection toward our spouse, bringing out a desire to show physical affection.

Intimacy cannot be forced, but it can be improved. We need intentional conversations that reach the heart to build a deeper relationship. Growing closer to your spouse requires you to have conversations that go deeper than a recap of your day or your to-do list. Having deeper conversations will affect your emotional intimacy and, in turn, your physical intimacy.

Questions for him:

- Are you actively listening to understand rather than focusing on solving issues during your conversations?
- What's one thing on your mind that you haven't talked to your wife about yet?

Question for her:

- Do you approach conversations to understand your spouse rather than immediately seeking solutions?

Questions to discuss together:

- What are some practical ways to improve communication in a marriage?
- What do you enjoy doing together? Schedule some time this month to make that happen.

Day Nine

Eros Love

Read:

"Oh, that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is more delightful than wine. The fragrance of your perfume is intoxicating; your name is perfume poured out. No wonder young women adore you. Take me with you — let us hurry. Oh, that the king would bring me to his chambers." Song of Solomon 1:2-4

Think:

Love can be complicated; it can be many things. It can be an emotion or an action. It can be a noun or a verb. You can feel it or know it is missing. Love has become a code word for a lot of things. It can mean acceptance, forgiveness, kindness, tolerance, or truthfulness to name a few.

Consider the different definitions of love from the Bible:

Eros refers to physical or sexual love.

Philia means warm affection or friendship.

Agape is the sacrificial, unconditional love of God.

Eros was a person of Greek mythology. He was the Greek god of love. In early Greek poetry and art, he was handsome in human form, carrying a lyre or bow and arrow, and later became known as Cupid in Roman mythology. He is depicted as a child carrying a bow and arrow. That's where we get the cute little cherub we often see on Valentine's Day cards.

In the Bible, eros represents the physical intimacy between a husband and wife. Within the boundaries of marriage, this eros love is to be celebrated. Sex between a husband and a wife is God-ordained and a beautiful communion of love and trust.

The love between a husband and a wife should be, among other things, an erotic love. However, a marriage based solely on erotic love will fail. The thrill of sexual love tempers and wanes. Don't let one or more types of love falter in your relationship, and don't take for granted the special, unique love you share for your spouse. Healthy marriages will have what God intended: a mix of *Eros*, *Agape*, and *Philia*.

Question for Him:

- How can you understand and fulfill your spouse's emotional and physical needs more effectively?

Question for Her:

- How can you understand and fulfill your spouse's emotional and physical needs more effectively?

Questions to discuss together:

- What changes or improvements can we make to enhance our intimacy and physical connection?
- Are there any unspoken expectations or concerns we need to address?

God's Design

Read:

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'" Matthew 19:4-6

Think:

Cultivating passion and intimacy is one of the most important keys to enjoying a successful marriage. Sex is not dirty. It is beautiful and a desire that God put inside of us.

The enemy will love to attack this part of your marriage. He knows how important it is. The world has perverted sex. Satan knows how much power there is in cultivating a good sex life. Intimacy is a big part of life and affects people in many ways. God created intimacy and sex to be a loving act between husband and wife.

Developing a more intimate relationship with your spouse is more powerful than you may know. Because intimacy brings unity and unity with your spouse is one of the foundational building blocks of your marriage.

Sex is meant to strengthen your bond. It brings two people into a closeness that cannot be found in any other way except through the right relationship, as God intended, through marriage.

God can heal and redeem our wounds from the past, and God can bring us into a new place of freedom where we can truly enjoy our sexual relationship with our spouse.

Question for Him:

- How do you protect yourself against potential attacks on your sex life from external influences?

Question for Her:

- What efforts do you make to contribute to a positive and healthy sex life?

Questions to discuss together:

- Where is your sex life on a scale of 1-10?
- What are some positive aspects of your sex life you can celebrate?

Day Eleven

How To Be Romantic

Read:

1 John 3:16 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."

Think:

Take a minute to remember when you first started dating your spouse. You couldn't wait to see them and stayed up late talking on the phone or texting each other. It was all butterflies and smiles each time you saw each other. Romance makes moments like these possible. But real romance requires more than a fleeting moment. Real romance is so much more than just the butterflies you get when you first start dating or have your first kiss. It matures over time as you pursue your spouse the same way God pursues you.

Love is an action. Today's scripture shows us that God loves us SO much that he sent His Only Son to pay the ultimate price for our freedom. Jesus' action stirs our affection for God and models extreme romantic pursuit.

Love involves sacrifice. Jesus willingly offered Himself (1 John 3:16). We can learn from His example and lay aside our pride, preferences, and fleshly desires to pursue one another.

As we pursue God's heart and learn that He's been romancing us all along, we find Him waiting, arms open, full of affection, comfort, and sheer delight. As we experience God's love, we can't help but share that with our spouse!

God designed us for so much more than helping your partner feel special. Romantic interest sparks a desire to know more about a person. We have a hunger and thirst that tells our hearts there's always more to know and experience about each other.

Question for Him:

- What romantic things have you stopped doing that you could start doing again?

Question for Her:

- What's the most romantic thing you and your spouse have ever done for each other?

Questions to discuss together:

- How is God pursuing you right now? How have you seen Him pursue you in the past?
- What's one way you could show love to each other today?

Day Twelve

Let's Talk About Sex

Read:

"Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." 1 Corinthians 7:5

Think:

Many people shift uncomfortably in their seats when the topic of sex is brought up. God created sex, and it is good! Sex is essential to a happy marriage! It is holy and good!

Sex isn't only for reproduction but for recreation. It is meant to be fun! In today's verse, we can see God's design for sex. Paul talks about a husband and wife willingly meeting each other's needs through good communication and mutual submission. Both partners will rarely be "in the mood" simultaneously, so working together to find balance is important.

Paul warns against delaying sex for extended periods because it leads to frustration and, ultimately, it can lead to temptation! Sex should never be withheld for manipulation — "I'll give you sex if you..." OR "You can forget about tonight, honey!"

We are the only person who has the exclusive privilege of fulfilling our spouse's sexual needs! It's a gift. Be intentional and make every effort to keep ramping up romance. It honors your spouse and maintains closeness!

Question for Him:

- Have you ever unintentionally used sex as a form of manipulation or bargaining within our relationship?

Question for Her:

- Have you ever unintentionally used the withholding of sex as a means of manipulation or bargaining in our relationship?

Questions to discuss together:

- What intentional steps can you take as a couple to ramp up romance, honoring and maintaining closeness in our marriage?
- If you're married, think of something fun you can do tonight or this weekend to show your spouse you're in the mood! If you're in a dating relationship, do something to make your significant other feel special.

Day Thirteen

Protecting Intimacy

Read:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10

Think:

Marriages are under attack. Families are under attack. Undoubtedly, the enemy is waging war against the very first relationship God created between humans. He has no power in your marriage and homes unless you give it to him.

He can only enter in the cracks you show. He knows how important sex and intimacy are, and he knows how much power there is in cultivating a healthy sex life. What kind of openings are there in your marriage? Unforgiveness? Bitterness? Apathy? Secret sins like pornography? Idolatry of your children over your spouse? Adultery? Pride? Selfishness?

If you keep trying to hide all of those things in the dark, the thief will keep moving deeper and deeper into your heart and mind. You can choose the path of absolute destruction or the way of abundant life.

You have to choose each other every single day. Even when it is hard, and your expectations are not met, and you don't like each other. Choose to love Him even more and choose the abundant life that He offers. Choose your marriage.

Question for Him:

- Are there any cracks in your personal life that might be affecting your marriage and allowing the enemy to gain a foothold?

Question for Her:

- Are there any cracks in your personal life that might be affecting your marriage and allowing the enemy to gain a foothold?

Question to discuss together:

- How can you work together to strengthen your marriage against potential attacks from the enemy?

Day Fourteen

What's On Your Mind?

Read:

"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women. As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right-hand embraces me! I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." Song of Solomon 2:1-7

Think:

After reading today's scripture, we can see that Solomon and his wife really aren't that different from many couples today. She is insecure about the way she looks, and he has to deal with those feelings, or they will become an intimacy blocker. She wants to know if he really thinks she is beautiful.

Solomon quickly assures her that he does find her beautiful. In his eyes, she is the most beautiful. The power of his words brings down her walls of self-consciousness and insecurity. She becomes secure in his faithfulness and adoration of her and is able to express her feelings without fear or rejection.

How often do we assume our spouse knows how much we love and appreciate them? We have to tell them! Our words matter. Our spouses don't see themselves the way we see them. If your wife has a great sense of humor, tell her! If your husband is an amazing leader, let him know! When we regularly tell our spouses why we love them, we're on our way to achieving the intimacy God intended when He created marriage.

Question for Him:

- When was the last time you complimented your wife? Is there anything that holds you back from doing that?

Question for Her:

- When was the last time you complimented your husband? Is there anything that holds you back from doing that?

Questions to discuss together:

- How could you show your appreciation for each other today?
- Is there something you appreciate about your spouse that you assume they know?

Day Fifteen

First Love

Read:

"Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

Colossians 3:18-20

Think:

After getting married, most couples' next "natural" progression is adding kids. When we meet that sweet baby, we have so much love. We feel joy, doubt, anxiety, fear, and happiness as they grow and change.

It's easy for our focus to shift to our kids and let our marriage take a backseat. Especially in the beginning when you are trying to figure out this new role of caring for a child. But, before we know it, we feel less like husband and wife and more like roommates. We get so caught up in the daily craziness of school, sports activities, and work that we feel like ships passing at night.

But marriage is meant for so much more. God designed us to experience intimacy with God first and our spouses second! Then, together, raise, grow and pour into our children.

In Colossians 3:18-20, husbands and wives are told to love and submit to each other, but the relationship between parents and kids is different. Our spouses are with us for life, and our kids are our legacy.

The best gift we can give our children is the example of a godly marriage—two parents pursuing a personal relationship with Jesus and a deep love for each other. When our children see this, it serves as an example of what their lives with Jesus and future marriage can look like!

Every family has its flaws, and no family is perfect by any means, but we can make a choice to be different and be godly examples to our children. We can check our priorities and choose to honor God first, our husband or wife second, and our kids third.

Question for him:

- How are you actively showing love and submission to your wife, as suggested in Colossians 3:18-20?

Question for her:

- Are there ways you can actively submit and support your husband in his role as the spiritual leader?

Question to discuss together:

- How can you ensure that God, your marriage, and your children are prioritized in a healthy balance? What adjustments can you make in your daily routines to reflect these priorities?

Day Sixteen

Parenting Goals

Read

"Train up children in the way they should go; even when they are old, they will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

Think

As parents, is it our goal to raise the most athletic, beautiful, and intelligent children? Or is the goal to mold and shape our children according to their unique gifts, talents, and abilities to glorify God? As parents, we should strive to help our kids mature and grow in their relationship with God.

Our children learn from us. Most of what they're learning is caught, not taught. So, are you modeling a good example of respect, love, grace, faith, obedience, confidence, and love? Are you showing your children what it looks like to put God first in your life in everything you do?

Honoring God must be seen and practiced within the home, prioritizing your children's spiritual development above everything else. Teach your children to pray and read their Bible. Teach them to turn to God and to place their trust in Him. Get plugged into the Church where they can learn and expand their knowledge of the Bible. Kids who understand a relationship with Jesus from an early age have a solid foundation to build on and are on course to live within God's blessing as they grow older.

Question for him:

- Are you consistently putting God first in your life and showing your children what it looks like to prioritize a relationship with Him?

Question for her:

- How do you contribute to your children's spiritual development at home?

Question to discuss together:

- Do you have a vision statement for your family? If not, take some time to sit down with your spouse and write one out. Think of some ways you can cultivate that vision as a family.

Day Seventeen

Parenting Perspectives

Read:

"Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him." Psalm 127:3

Think:

Today's verse speaks the profound truth that our children are not merely a result of chance or biology but a deliberate and beautiful gift from the Lord. As parents, we have the responsibility of caring for and nurturing our precious children. Parenting is a privilege that comes from God.

The beginning of Psalm 127 talks about building. Culture today prioritizes building education, resumes, and careers over building a family. Children are often seen as a burden or liability that slows us down in our goals or dreams. Our culture seeks to run away from the sacrifices involved in parenting. Many say that children are inconvenient, noisy, and expensive. But the Bible actually prioritizes building a family with quivers full of children. That's a really different perspective than the world around us today.

Having children is part of God's design in creation. It is how God fills the earth with His people. We should treasure children. It is good and right that our love, relationships, and marriages lead to the blessing of having children.

C.S. Lewis said, "Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work." The world places so much value in achievements and success, but Lewis reminds us of the eternal significance of our role as parents. Our children are not burdens or obstacles but the heart of our most important calling.

Completing mundane tasks and keeping up with the daily challenges of life can make you lose focus on the calling God has placed on your life. Be reminded that every moment you spend nurturing, influencing, teaching, and loving your children is an investment in their future. We are raising up the next generation who will advance the Kingdom. Embrace the unique responsibility of guiding these precious lives toward the light of God's love.

Question for him:

- In what practical ways can you ensure you are investing time and effort into nurturing, influencing, teaching, and loving your children as a Dad?

Question for her:

- In what practical ways can you ensure you are investing time and effort into nurturing, influencing, teaching, and loving your children as a Mom?

Questions to discuss together:

- How do you view children? How does your view compare with what the Bible says?

Day Eighteen

Family Traditions

Read:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Deuteronomy 6:5-7

Think:

Some people say that when you marry someone, you marry their entire family. This statement holds some truth to it. When two people come together in marriage, they bring their routines, habits, and traditions with them, and often, they will be different from your own. We feel a lot of pressure when we enter into a marriage because we have the task of merging two separate lives into one.

It's important to remember we get the opportunity to form a new family with new traditions when we get married. We can do things differently from the way we were raised, we don't have to replicate our childhoods with our own children.

In Deuteronomy, God commands you to love Him and love others. He calls us to love Him with all our hearts, soul, and strength and pass His commandments on to our kids.

God's Word should be the focus of our hearts and the center of our families. When we seek to please God, instead of appeasing our in-laws or parents, we set up our marriage and family for success. This may mean you build a completely different life from the one you were raised in - one where Christ is the center, where you pray together as a family, and attending church is a priority.

As our kids grow up, they are able to see examples of godly parenting, and we have the opportunity to teach them about a God who loves them more than we do. We get to pass our faith on to them.

Questions for him:

- What do you want to keep or change from your upbringing?

Questions for her:

- What do you want to keep or change from your upbringing?

Questions to discuss together:

- What are your dreams for your family?
- What is the legacy you want to leave your kids?

Day Nineteen

Parenting With Purpose

Read:

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”
1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Think:

After becoming a parent, you might look down at your child and wonder how and why they didn't come with a handbook. But God's word tells us a lot about parenting. As parents, we are entrusted with the incredible responsibility of shaping the next generation. Today's verse gives us a roadmap for parenting with purpose.

Be watchful: Parenting requires us to be vigilant. We live in a world where it's easy to become distracted. Everything is pulling at our attention. But as parents we must be attentive and aware of their kids' needs, struggles, and the ever-changing world around them. Being watchful means staying connected, listening, and observing so that we can respond with wisdom and love. Stay active in their lives.

Stand firm in faith: As our children get older, parenting becomes more complex. We build the foundation for our kids. Our foundation is built on our faith in God, His promises, and the values rooted in His word. We impart our beliefs and the strength that comes from standing on His unchanging Word. Pray over your children and their circumstances and trust in the Lord. Be confident He will show you the right path when it comes to raising them.

Act like men (or women), be strong: This is a call to responsibility and courage. Parenthood is not for the faint-hearted. It requires physical strength, emotional strength, and spiritual strength. It means we need to lead by example by showing resilience in the face of challenges, demonstrating integrity and strength that comes from a reliance on God.

Let all that you do be done in love: Love is the cornerstone of effective parenting. Every teaching moment and every decision we make should be done through a filter of love. Love fosters trust, nurtures growth, and creates a secure environment for our children to flourish. No matter what they do or the decisions they make, love your kids. Love is patient and kind. Love endures all things. Love never ends. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Question for Him:

- How are you standing firm in your faith as a foundation as a Dad?

Question for Her:

- How are you standing firm in your faith as a foundation as a Mom?

Questions to discuss together:

- How can you improve your communication and stay connected to your children?
- Are you allowing God's word to inspire and influence how you parent?

Day Twenty

Empty Nest

Read:

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." Ecclesiastes 3:1

Think:

The house is eerily quiet, and the refrigerator half-empty. The washer motionless. Dinner moves from the kitchen table to dining in front of the TV. Even with 18 or more years to prepare, the abrupt stillness of an empty nest can hit hard. This sudden hush can catch parents off guard after focusing on getting their child/ren off to college.

As parents, we give everything we have to our children when raising them. We feel a calling to raise them to live and love like Jesus, to follow Him, and that's a huge task.

Sometimes, parents may forget that we don't have children just for our enjoyment. Instead, our goal as parents should be to prepare our children for adulthood—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We are parenting for the next 20 years, not just the next 20 minutes. So, naturally, there will come a time when they will no longer be with us and leave to form their careers and families. This is the main reason God has entrusted our children to us. The "empty nest" is part of God's pattern for our lives.

Billy Graham wrote, "It's a time of great adjustment—even stress for some couples, but with God's help, it can become one of the most fulfilling times of your life."

After years of non-stop school and church activities, sports, and running kids around, how's your marriage? Are you moving toward each other instead of filling the time with other things? Is conversation mostly centered on the kids? Take time to work on your relationship, find an activity you can do with each other, and consider attending a group together. The empty-nest years provide a wonderful opportunity to recalibrate and strengthen your marriage. Don't let the empty-nest name define your season as "empty." Once your kids are grown, your marriage isn't just empty of kids; it's full of promise for a new future!

Question for Him:

- How do you envision your life together once your children have left the nest?

Question for Her:

- How do you envision your life together once your children have left the nest?

Question to discuss together:

- How can you intentionally invest in your relationship during this season of change?

Day Twenty one

Self-Less, Serve More

Read:

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2:1-4

Think:

When last did you consider your spouse's feelings and needs above your own? Do you keep score? One of the easiest ways to show love to your spouse is to serve them.

Marriage forces couples to push past selfish desires and needs to serve their spouse. It's about living to give, not to get. Our marriages should mirror Christ's love for His bride – the Church. We have the opportunity to imitate His love by meeting our spouse's needs.

Serving our spouse means we put their needs above our own. This takes patience and humility. It's easy to put our spouse on the back burner with the demands life throws at us when we have kids, work, and a house to maintain. But, our marriage should come first. As we sacrificially put each other first, we show our children what real, sacrificial love looks like.

For women, serving their husbands can look like focusing on them when they come home from work, listening to their day instead of giving their opinion, encouraging them, and placing their trust in him to lead their family.

For men, serving their wives can look like listening to them vent their frustrations. It could also be making the time to complete some of the tasks off the honey-do list that you've put off.

Showing selfless love requires us to give the deepest parts of our hearts to one another. Serving and submitting to each other shows our spouses how much we love them.

Question for him:

- What are three things you love about your wife? How can you show her this week how much you love those things about her?

Question for her:

- What are three things you love about your husband? How can you show him this week how much you love those things about him?

Question to discuss together:

- Fill in the blank: One way you could serve me better is to _____.