



How to Keep a Busy Marriage Growing

1. Keep on _____

"Marriage involves you in all the details of domestic life and wanting to please your spouse, leading to so many more demands on your attention." 1 Cor. 7:33-34a (TM)

"Answering before listening is both stupid and rude." Pr. 18:13 (The Message)

"Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." James 1:19 (NIV)

Listening Starters! Use these this week to help you listen to each other

1. What was the best thing that happened to you this week?
2. What were your strongest feelings this week and what elicited those emotions?
3. If you could have one major wish fulfilled this week, what would it be & why?
4. What quality in your life does God seem to be working on right now? How?

2. Keep on _____

"Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action." 1 John 3:18

"Look out for one another's interests, not just your own." Phil. 2:4

"Honor Christ by submitting to each other." Eph. 5:21 (LB)

3. Keep on _____

"Isaac was sporting with Rebecca his wife." Gen. 26:8 (KJV)

Jesus told a church: *"The love you had at first is gone. Remember how far you have fallen. Return to Me and change the way you think and act, and do what you did at first."* Rev. 2:4-5 (GW)

4. Keep on _____

"Encourage each other every day while it is 'today!'" Heb. 3:13a (NCV)

"A word of encouragement does wonders!" Pr. 12:25 (LB)

"I have great confidence in you and have a lot of reasons to be proud of you." 2Cor 7:4

Affirmation Starters! Use these this week to help you affirm each other

1. From this list, circle 2 items that you think are characteristic of your spouse, friend, child, etc. Then describe to them how he/she demonstrates this trait!

Loving	Sensitive	Brave	Intelligent	Thoughtful
Generous	Loyal	Truthful	Strong	Energetic
Sexy	Decisive	Creative	Imaginative	Fun
Attractive	Interesting	Supportive	Funny	Considerate
Affectionate	Organized	Resourceful	Athletic	Cheerful
Coordinated	Graceful	Elegant	Gracious	Calm
Lively	A great partner	A great parent	Assertive	Sweet

(Adapted from The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, by John M. Gottman)

5. Keep on _____

"You have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord. Now keep on following Him." Col. 2:6

"Keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith." Col. 2:7 (TEV)

"Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed." James 5:16 (The Message)

Response Time for Couples

Use these questions to plan a time & talk date

1. What time of the week might work best for you to make into a "Time and Talk Date"? What are the obstacles? Plan a "Time and Talk Date" now-- for several weeks in a row-- even if you start with just a one hour block, the most important thing is to keep that appointment!

2. Are there areas or issues you need to talk about? Take a moment to list some of the most pressing matters:

Pray about those items together!

Sources and Inspirations

We are human Reader's Digests! Much of this outline and content is from these books and tapes we love:

Jim and Sally Conway, *Traits of a Lasting Marriage* (Wheaton: Tyndale House)

Rick Warren and Tom Holladay, *How to Keep Your Marriage Growing* (Saddleback Church audio tape @pastors.com)

Carolyn and Craig Williford, *Faith Tango* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press)

Ed Young, *Romancing The Home* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman)

Daily Meditations

Look back over the noteHere's a chance to spend some time each day this week meditating on today's topic!

Write your answers on another piece of paper this week.

This week's memory verse:

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Phil. 2:4

Monday

s from this past weekend. If you're married, which of points do you think your marriage particularly needs to put into practice?

Whether you are married or not, how can these points apply to any relationship?

Which of the points is most difficult for you in your relationships?

What couple have you met recently that displays the characteristics of a good marriage?

Ask God to help you live in harmony in your relationships. Ask Him to show you which of the points you need to grow in. Trust that He will help you!

Tuesday

One of our points was to *keep on showing affection*. Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-7. In this passage, Paul is addressing a faction within the church that thought sex was to be abstained from even in marriage. Paul teaches that healthy sexual relations are an important part of Christian marriage. Why is this important even for single people to understand?

Where do you think people get the idea that Scripture frowns on sex even in marriage?

Why is it so important for a couple to keep showing each other physical affection?

TIME magazine recently had a cover story about the lack of physical affection in most American marriages. The story placed much of the blame on busy schedules. Why is it so easy for something as important as affection to be squeezed out of our schedules?

If you are married, what can you do to make sure you keep showing affection?

According to this passage, to whom does a Christian's body belong if they are married?

This can be a delicate subject. You may need help from a wise counselor. Ask God to help you love like this in your marriage!

Wednesday

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10. One of the points this weekend was to *keep*

giving affirmation. This passage is a great example of how to affirm others. What are some ways Paul encourages the Thessalonians that you could encourage others? (For example, he says that he prays for them with thanksgiving...)

We know the Thessalonian church was a young church, not very well educated... Paul could have criticized them for this, but instead he first builds up their strengths. What does he affirm in their lives?

How can you practice this principle in your relationships with your spouse, friends, or children?

Take some time and do the "affirmation practice" exercise today with your spouse, a child, or a close friend!

As we asked you to last week, ask God to help you continue to focus on the positive aspects of your mate, children, or friends... all of your relationships.

Thursday

One of the points was to *keep on paying attention*. Why is it so easy to forget to pay attention to our closest friends and family?

Read James 1:19. How does this verse apply to this point?

Do you tend to be a listener or a talker?

Ask God to help you pay better attention to the ones you love, starting today!

Friday

Read Ephesians 5:22-33. Obviously this passage can be read in a way that is very controversial, if people define the word "submit" in a way that the Apostle Paul did not intend. A key to understanding this passage --and what it means by *submit*-- is to look one verse ahead of this section and read verse 21. There Paul tells *everyone* to submit to *everyone*. Then he gives some examples of that principle. For example, in a culture where husbands could literally throw away their wives without consequence, Paul tells the husband to love their wives *as their own bodies* and *as Christ loves the church*. What would it mean for a husband to love his wife with this type of love?

How can you each love each other the way Paul tells you to in this passage?

The second key to understanding this passage is to see how Paul summarizes his teaching in verse 33, the final verse of this passage. How does this help to clarify what he means by *submit*?

In prayer, ask God to help you grow in your love and care for others! Thank Him for His love and care for you!

Saturday

Please pray for the services this weekend and finish any devotions you may have missed. Thanks!