

Daily DIP

Determined. Intentional. Purposeful

MARRIED LIFE WEEK 2018

DAY 1

The Testing of Faith

by THE SANDOVALS

"Mommy, I got in a fight at school today." As if I had jerked awake from a dream, I looked back at my 4-year-old in the rearview mirror. "What do you mean you got in a fight?" "I got in a fight with Sasha, that God is not a liar. Sasha says He lies but Bella and I said He doesn't. Some people don't know about God, but I do because I am smart."

I tried to not let her see the tears slowly falling down my face. It had been a rough 48 hours. I was alone caring for the kids while my husband was supporting his family in the ICU. Life and death hung in the balance for his family and was putting a strain on our marriage. Would he ever smile again? Why is he retreating into himself? How can I help him see this right? God, this is hard, but You're not a liar. "Mommy! Where's Daddy?" - the question startling me back into the moment.

*"Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
for I trust in You. Teach me the way in which I should walk,
for I lift up my soul to you." —Psalm 143:8 AMP*

*"God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man,
that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken
and will He not make it good and fulfill it?" —Numbers 23:19 AMP*

Reflection...

1. How would you want your spouse to support you during the trials of life? What actions do you appreciate, and what actions don't help as much?
2. When the challenges of life come, what are you doing and what can you do to prepare to keep your faith strong?
3. Being a good listener goes a long way in validating our spouse during rough times. Using the speaker-listener technique, paraphrasing, eye contact, etc. are great tools in building trust to allow for more open, vulnerable conversations. Take inventory of how you listen. Do you interrupt? Do you hear your spouse's heart even if you disagree? How can you do a better job making him/her feel heard?

DAY 2

Those Little Foxes

by THE O'DONALDS

"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyard." —Song of Solomon 2:15

We heard the small steps from down the hallway and knew it was just a matter of time before Babygirl opened the door and climbed into our bed. The past two months had been rough for us all, especially Babygirl who used to be such a great sleeper but now couldn't fall asleep unless one of us laid down with her. *Oh, those little foxes!* It started as a fever, then suddenly at 3am we rushed Babygirl to the ER because she was having a febrile seizure! We were all so shaken! For the next week we monitored Babygirl's 101+ fever. *Oh, those little foxes!* Our intention was to get back into our morning routine. We all wanted to leave for work and school but then the car battery died! The sensor light went on while running errands, and the invoice after it all was fixed read \$1000! *Oh, those little foxes!*

Song of Solomon talks about how the little foxes ruin the vineyard. We have seen firsthand how those little foxes try to destroy our vineyard of health, happiness, and wholeness in our marriage and home. Foxes are known to be sly animals that will try any number of tricks to get their prey. Whether it's lack of health, time, or finances, the enemy is on a seek-and-destroy mission on marriage and family. "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the fullest," (John 10:10). The enemy sends foxes on assignment to sneak into our marriages, and chomp on the vines without us realizing it. We have to continually remind ourselves who the enemy really is. Our biggest struggle in recent times has been fighting those little foxes assigned to ruin our vineyard of finances. This has resulted in hurt, resentment, and looking at each other as the enemy. Once we came into one accord and stood on God's promises, we determined as a family that we are on the same team, and asked God to help us see who the real enemy is.

We cannot say we've received the miracle of regrowing our financial vines, neither can we say that the foxes have stopped visiting. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble but take heart! I have overcome the world," (John 16:33).

Reflection...

When you have financial difficulties, unexpected expenses, or bad money management, do you blame and criticize each other, stop tithing, OR do you renew your mind to biblical stewardship and trust in Jehovah Jireh (1 Cor. 9:8)?

When you're sleep deprived, exhausted from caring for your sick spouse, child, or family member, do you get angry with God, fall prey to the flesh and take it out on your spouse or yourself, OR do you take comfort knowing He gives strength to the weary (Is. 40:29)?

When your time is stolen, you've taken on too much and are overwhelmed, and you don't have the desire or time for intimacy, do you withdrawal, develop resentment toward each other, OR do you reprioritize and ask: 1) Is it really important? 2) Do I need to do it now? (Ecc.3:1)?

Don't allow the little foxes to ruin the Vine that connects you to your spouse and to the Gardener (John 15:1-7).

DAY 3

Holding Hands Through the Storms

by THE OCASIOS

We always find it beautiful when we come across an image of an elderly couple holding hands. Why is that? How is that sweet image able to soften our hearts? Could it be because we recognize that they made it, that they're victorious? Is it because they've achieved something we only dream about but for one reason or another life happens and we don't think we will get there? What a blessing to grow old with the person you love! Now do me a favor—close your eyes and picture yourself at eighty years old, sitting on a park bench, holding hands with your spouse? Hold that image for a few seconds, take a few deep breaths as you seal it in your memory. Let the image give you peace, feel love and appreciation; let that image sink deep inside your soul and save it there.

*"Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate,"
God reminds us in Mark 10:9.*

For when the storms of life seem overwhelming, think of the peace you felt when you recorded the image deep inside your soul. The enemy will sway you left and right, over and over again through the years, he will try to make you think you are sinking but if you are grounded on the Word of God, "no weapon formed against you shall prosper," says Isaiah 54:17. According to Peter we are to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, is walking about, seeking whom he may devour," (1 Peter 5:8). You must make Jesus number one in your life and remember that image of the two of you holding hands after a lifetime of memories. You may think, "How will that image sustain me?" When you make God your anchor, you are sustained by declaring Jesus is your Lord and Savior. He says in Romans 8:28, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Reflection...

Continue to hold hands through the storms of life. Declare the blood of Jesus over your lives with God always at the center, seek Him everyday, and in the end you will bring that beautiful image to life.

DAY 4

Making Every Effort

by THE BROWNS

Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. —Ephesians 4:1-4 NLT

My husband and I often can't wrap our minds around just how amazingly blessed we are in our marriage. We love recognizing God's hand on our marriage, and we love the fact that we'll only continue to grow closer together for the rest of our lives. Yet in the course of our day-to-day interactions as husband and wife, there are a number of situations that have the potential to cause division. I get frustrated when I ask Brian four times to take the car to the shop before he does it. He's annoyed when he finds me lying on his pillow while there are others I could have used. I sometimes find myself sighing with discontent when trying to have a serious conversation but he continues to joke around; or he's disappointed in my inability to "lighten up." These are just little things, never mind the more pressing issues a marriage can sometimes entail—breakdown in communication, boundary challenges with extended family, differing expectations, etc. Ephesians 4:1-4 reminds us that while these moments may occur, we should "make every effort to keep ourselves united in the Spirit." The Word shows us that God has equipped us with exactly the tools we need to make that happen. The tools mentioned are humility, gentleness, and patience, all of which we have been given through the Holy Spirit. We just have to choose to operate in them.

We constantly remind ourselves that we are not perfect. We need to "make allowance for each other's faults" out of our love for one another, just as God looks beyond each of our faults because of His love for us. It doesn't mean we just overlook those flaws but that we bring them to each other's attention humbly, gently, and patiently. We speak the truth to each other in love. This approach helps keep the peace and inspires growth in us both. Now, if we're being honest, we have to admit there are times we want to be stubborn. I might think to myself, "Why do I need to make every effort if he's just going to keep procrastinating?" Or Brian may think, "I've got something to say about how you offended me, and you're going to hear it." If ever you find yourself wondering, "What's the point of making the effort?" remember in verse one Paul begs us to "live a life worthy of our calling." God has a unique and purpose-filled calling for your marriage. You should make every effort to keep yourselves united because that's what it looks like to live a life worthy of the beautiful calling God has for your marriage. Verse four says you have been "called to one glorious hope for the future." You are called to make every effort because when husband and wife approach each other with that heart, then God is able to make that glorious hope for the future real in your marriage. Claim that glorious hope and walk in it together as one.

Reflection...

1. What situations or circumstances have the potential to cause division in your marriage?
2. What does it look like for you personally to make every effort to keep you and your spouse united in the Spirit?
3. What areas of unrest should you give to God in exchange for peace that will make you truly one with your spouse?

DAY 5

Once Again

by THE DANCYS

It's Monday morning again...already. We've probably jammed far too many activities into one weekend. As we prepare for another work week, we're discussing our busy schedules, and what starts out to be routine quickly turns tense. I ask myself, "how did we get down this road again?" as my husband laments, "we're in disagreement!" Indeed! I have more I want to say—different opinions to express—but do I choose to go along to get along? With only ten minutes left before I need to leave, we have few options. Feelings of discouragement and frustration are exchanged. But something else starts to occur...even in the midst of traveling around the same mountain for the umpteenth time, we can recall how God has protected our well-seasoned marriage. He has done so much with our union and He will continue to do so. In the few last moments we have together before we each head off to work, we stand amazed at how involved God has been in our marriage.

Now during the time spent apart in our respective workplaces, I think about the many blessings of being in God's will. I also ponder the negative impact of being outside of His will, attempting to fix things on our own without His assistance. Would we really want to be in control and not allow God to be in the lead? We already know the answer by now—the ability to have success on our own is very limited and the potential for failure is real.

So today, once again, we rest in the understanding that God is a redeemer and a restorer of relationships. Our journey, our reflection: Will this be just another experience with no opportunity of growth or improvement? Or will this be an opportunity for "reflective" experience which requires much thought for real growth and advancement? Our beautiful marriage comes with bumps and potholes and is not always a joyful journey but it is truly a privileged one, predestined by our Redeemer. He heals and restores and we trust Him.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands." —Psalms 138:8

DAY 6

Instruction for a Christian Marriage

by THE RODRIGUEZS

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” —Ephesians 5:21-28

If anyone has ever spoken to my wife and I about marriage then they have heard us say, “Marriage is not easy. If it was then it would have been called “easy”. Remember this, marriage is two individuals coming together who have been living independently and have their own way of doing things. Now married they will more than likely be asked to think about things and do things differently. It is human nature to resist such as the body resists an intruder into its bloodstream. I know it can sound daunting but we have at our disposal the greatest Book of instruction for maintaining a healthy marriage. If you read the verse above you'll see that these instructions are fairly straightforward. Love and respect one another as you would do for Christ. Submit to one another as Christ submitted to the cross knowing that glory awaited Him.

I know reading how-to is easier than actually putting-it-into-practice but we're human and practice makes perfect. Please understand that submitting to one another is not a form of defeat, it's understanding that alone we don't have all the answers in life and that our way may not be the best way. I joke around and tell my beautiful wife that “I wear the pants,” but then she jokingly comes back with, “you do, but I control the zipper.” As funny as it sounds, it's true. If the husband is the head of the marriage then the wife is the body. The head cannot live without the body and the body cannot live without the head. We are one body with the common goal of living in the words of the Lord. A husband and wife working together can achieve greatness.

Here are some tips to help you on your path...

1) Trust each other in everything: mistrust can be the biggest thing to destroy a marriage. If you don't trust one another then how can you build a life together? If there are trust issues, fix them immediately. 2) Communication is key: the only way your spouse can understand you is if you communicate. Don't hold it inside because it will only fester, and one day it will come out forcefully and will most likely hurt your spouse. 3) God's Word - the Bible - is the best helper in maintaining a healthy marriage. Read verses together that are meaningful to you. Talk about them and explain what they mean to you. Remember that everyone interprets things differently. 4) Q to the T: Quality Time! We're all busy doing something, running around at a pace that would have terrified our ancestors. With work, kids and everything else it's difficult to find one-on-one time with your spouse. My wife and I have a dry erase calendar next to our front door to remind us what we need to do for that day. Do yourself a favor and make time for one another. Go for a walk, have dinner together, read the Bible, talk. 5) LOVE: Listen. Overlook. Value. Encourage.

Remember: The enemy hates marriage. Show him that you're united in body and soul and he will never win!

DAY 7

A Struggle and A Pruning

by THE MURRAYS

"He who finds a wife [or husband], finds a good thing." —Proverbs 18:22

We both know we have found something good...real good...God-good. And so have you! Finding something good and doing God-good towards them forever in this flesh may bring struggles. The daily dance of marriage exposes our miss-steps. On our 22nd anniversary we had an argument. A day that should have been joyful and filled with celebration ended up with frustration and hurt feelings. We both dug in our heels and held our individual ground. There are those times when the struggle is real. The struggle to love each other as Christ loves us, to love in the midst of hurt, through anger or disappointment. The struggle to fulfill the command of John 15:12: "My command is this: love each other as I have loved you."

We did the only thing we could do in the midst of our struggle...pray. It wasn't easy but our source of strength in times of need, the true foundation of our marriage, lifted us both. We chose to give the Holy Spirit permission to lead us. We released our wills to His and believed in His Word. I Peter 4:8 says, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." We were both restored and better than before. Devil – you lost! God uses struggle for His purpose, to prune us. We learned to love despite hurt, to humbly ask for forgiveness and to be sensitive to each other's needs. God wants to use our struggles to draw us closer to Him, and in so doing draw us closer to our spouses.

Reflection...

How do you react when your spouse offends you, when your flesh wants to get even?

"My command is this – love each other as I have loved you." — John 15:12

DAY 8

That Still Small Voice

by THE BULKLEYS

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." —2 Corinthians 1:3-4

These days I have become more and more aware of being Jesus to others when going through difficult situations. This is something I experienced during probably one of the loneliest, darkest, and most difficult periods of my life. My mom - an amazing wife, my best friend, and the caretaker of my two little girls passed and went home to be with Jesus. It was a very solemn period which left a hole in my heart. I came to the Lord as a young girl and understood God's promises and principles but because of the grief and sorrow that I was feeling due to the loss of my mom, I became numb to the knowledge of these truths.

During this time my husband represented that "still, small voice" of Jesus in my life. He was there to bring comfort, to listen to me, cry with me, and speak God's life and hope over me without any resentment or judgments for the feelings that I was experiencing. My husband would allow me time to just "be" and to find my way back to the path that God was laying out for me. He provided the strength I needed when I couldn't muster my own, and would listen to the cries of my heart when I had to let it out. It was during this time of reflection, seeking God's promises for my life again, and the renewing of my heart and mind that God brought me from a place of utter sadness and loss, to a place of true restoration, strength and peace.

Sometimes, when our spouse, child, friend, co-worker is going through a period of desperation, hurt, or sorrow, we need to step in and be that "still, small voice" of our Savior Jesus Christ that listens with care and speaks life. It is during these times that He picks us up, speaks to us with gentleness and comforts and embraces us with His love. This is the care that I felt from my husband when I was hurting the most.

Reflection...

Take a moment and ask yourself, who will I be that 'still, small voice' of Jesus for today? How have I received God's comfort, and how am I comforting others with that same comfort? How am I reflecting the unconditional love and acceptance of Jesus to my spouse in our difficult moments? How am I leading the burdened back to the feet of Jesus?



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