

LIFE'S INSTRUCTION BOOK ON MARRIAGE

[PROVERBS ON MARRIAGE]

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1. We teach others (our spouses, kids, etc.) how to treat us.
2. Some of the most sensual touches in marriage are not sexual (e.g., a back rub, leg rub, foot rub, head rub).
3. Love is a choice, not always a feeling.
4. Trust may take a lifetime to build but only a second to destroy. Whatever you do, don't break your spouse's trust.
5. A marriage can survive for a time without love. It cannot survive without respect.
6. If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got. (Paraphrase "*only an idiot does the same thing over and over again and expects different results.*") Try new things to improve your marriage.
7. Would you rather be right than happy? Loving compromise is what marriage is all about.
8. There are some things in life and marriage which I wouldn't take a million dollars for what I learned, but I wouldn't give a nickel to go through again.
9. The things which I most dislike in my spouse are probably things I dislike in myself. It is easier to blame my spouse than take a hard look at myself.
10. If I don't love and respect myself, how am I to respect my spouse? After all, how can I respect someone who would marry a loser?
11. Trust and respect are earned over time.
12. "*If you sleep with dogs you'll wake up with fleas.*" Point? Choose well the people, places and things with which you associate. They rub off, and they will either build up or tear down a marriage.

13. If it is too big to fix; if the hurts run too deep, then you are a candidate for a miracle. Give God a try.
14. If you hold on to bitterness and unforgiveness, you are embracing marital cancer. It will eat you and all those you love alive. Be big enough to forgive and never, ever, bring it up again. Some things are best left buried.
15. It takes two to make a good marriage. It only takes one to destroy a good marriage.
16. Some of the most precious gifts in marriage are those which don't have a dollar sign in front of them; a little love note, a "*thank you*" saying "*Well done!*", choosing to forego what you want in order to make your spouse happy.
17. Good marriages are not a 50/50 proposition. Each partner should give 100%.
18. Making a big deal over little things is stupid. So what if your spouse squeezes the toothpaste "*the wrong way*?" If it bothers you that much, buy your own tube of toothpaste. A hundred years from now what difference will it make whether the toothpaste was rolled or squeezed, or whether the toilet paper rolled over the top or hung down from the back? Relationships are what's eternal.
19. If I could step outside myself and step outside the marriage and observe, to my dismay I would probably discover that just as my spouse causes me grief, I cause him/her untold grief.
20. Just as TIME IS LOVE for a child, the same is true in marriages. We spend time with that which we love and love doing.
21. Actions speak louder than words.
22. The best indicator of future behavior is past behavior. Your spouse will start believing you when your behavior proves it.
23. All of us are selfish by nature. To be a truly loving, giving person requires divine grace.
24. Am I a giver or a taker when it comes to my marriage?
25. If I got out of my marriage what I put into my marriage, would I be content? How you answer is probably how your spouse feels.
26. The happiest marriages are built, not on sex, but on love and friendship.
27. Most often, when you run down your in-laws you are running down the people most loved by your spouse. Be careful what you say and how you say it.
28. You may may feel like a victim of your past, but you are still responsible for your

current behavior.

29. You can delegate authority. You cannot delegate responsibility. Don't blame your spouse for not doing what you were responsible to do.
30. Do something old fashioned for a change. Go out on a date with your spouse, without the kids. (P.S. Going through the drive-up window at McDonalds on the way home from work is *not* a date.)
31. As amazing as it seems, people are different. That is why you probably married the one you did. Embrace the differences. If you don't you'll forever be unhappy.
32. If you feel you married the wrong person, don't sweat it. Most married couples feel that way at one time or another. Rather, choose to make him/her the right one.
33. When you begin a sentence with "You...", you automatically put the other person on the defensive. Try making "I" statements instead. "*I felt . . .*"
34. Aggressive people hurt others. Passive people allow themselves to be hurt. Healthy assertiveness is where you respect both the other person and yourself.
35. Rather than focusing on who is right and who is wrong, focus on making the marriage work. Stubbornness can kill a marriage. A lot of people who get divorced were "*right*."
36. Be willing to bend. If you don't you may break or you will break your spouse.
37. When was the last time you did something nice and unexpected for your spouse?
38. Every act of sin or ignorance in marriage may be forgivable, but not every act is erasable. The consequences of some behaviors are irreversible. Think before you act.
39. A famous preacher once said, "*There are two things you should never rush into, cremation and divorce.*"
40. *Hurt* people, hurt people.
41. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if it ain't working, it needs fixing. Never be too proud to see a counselor.
42. If you think counseling is expensive, try divorce and alimony!
43. Nationally, approximately 60% of first marriages end in divorce. 70% of second marriages end in divorce. 80% of third marriages end in divorce. You are much better off making your first marriage work. (P.S. 99% of the people usually think they are the exception to the rule, and 99% of the people are wrong.)

44. Marriage solves few problems, because, you take your individual problems and add them to your spouses problems. As you solve your problems together you both become stronger.
45. Contrary to popular opinion, God didn't put you together to be miserable.
46. Marriage is a commitment, an agreement. You may not be responsible for what the other person does, but you are accountable for your own behaviors and actions.
47. The most sensitive sexual organ you have is your mind. Guard what you put into it. (e.g., Pornography and smut will pollute what is pure and wholesome and will plant seeds of discontentment and unfair comparisons.—How many of you would like to be compared to a centerfold model?)
48. One of the greatest gifts you can give your spouse is acceptance of who they are, not who you wish they were. (P.S. They're probably not going to change, so you might as well learn contentment or be miserable.)
49. Opposites attract. That seems to be true, especially in marriage. If you can embrace and capitalize on your differences, between the two of you, you will be able to cover a lot of bases and multiply your effectiveness in whatever you do. Focus only on your differences and you can go crazy.
50. Problems and difficulties in marriage can either make you bitter or better.
51. When we speak the truth, let it be in love.
52. Don't gossip or talk down about your spouse to others. If you have negative stuff to say, work it out with a counselor or with your spouse directly. What you say behind your spouse's back has a strange way of getting back to your spouse.
53. The Bible says not to let the "*sun go down on your anger . . .*" If you follow that advice you sleep a whole lot better and wake up a whole lot happier.
54. Forgive and forget.
55. Avoid archaeological digs, where you dig up each other's failures and unpleasant pasts.
56. If you are going to fight, fight fair. Stick to issues. Keep it current.
57. Sometimes the best words are those never said.
58. Whoever said, "*Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words will never hurt me*" was a liar.

59. Dreams die hard. If they are to be buried let each one bury their own dreams. Don't try to bury the dreams of your spouse. Who knows, maybe the dream is still alive in them.
60. People who have no dreams have little to look forward to in the future.
61. Spouses are not mind readers. Say what you mean.
62. Happiness in life and in marriage is finding out the will of God and doing it.
63. If you believe that God is all loving and all powerful, then it means all the love and power behind the entire universe is focused on loving you and your spouse to the degree you are able to receive it.
64. Visit a planetarium or drive out into the country just to look at the stars. It will give perspective to your life.
65. What you *do* (your behavior) is a product of character. There is a difference between being a character and having character.
66. All of us grow up having certain "*tapes*" (messages we tell ourselves), such as "*I'm dumb,*" "*I'm ugly,*" "*whatever I do it is never good enough,*" etc. The trouble with a tape is that you are letting something in the "*then and there*" effect the "*here and now.*" If you don't like the tapes which are playing in your head, change the tapes!—What are your *tapes* about marriage?
67. You cannot change or heal in your marriage that which you do not acknowledge.
68. Sometimes silence is golden. Other times it is just plain yellow.
69. There is a simple formula which seems to work well in trying to talk to your spouse about difficult topics: "*I felt _____, when you _____, because _____, and I wish that next time you would_____.*"
70. Most problems in marriage could be avoided by simply following the Golden Rule, "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*"
71. Which is more important to you, things or people? Has your spouse gotten the message?
72. Spending time together is important. Schedule it into your appointment calendar.
73. If you don't make time in your life for the important, the trivial and mundane will always crowd out the important.
74. If you don't schedule quality time together, it probably won't happen, especially

after you have kids.

75. As with many things in life, good marriages boil down to three important things: choices, choices, choices.
76. Michelangelo once said, *“Trifles make for perfection, but perfection is no trifle.”* What is true in art is also true in good marriages.
77. Look at your life. It will be a mirror to the beliefs you hold about your life and your marriage.
78. Sometimes the best way to handle a crisis is to say, *“So what!”* and not make a big deal out of it. (e.g., *“So what if you burned the roast. We can go out for supper tonight.”*)
79. When your wife has a wreck, don’t ask how the car is first.
80. Pick your battlefields carefully. Remember you have to live with this person.
81. Lighten up. It is ok to laugh and have fun.
82. Know your spouse’s dreams and treat them with tender loving care.
83. Is your life, your marriage, on track with what God wants?
84. When you yell it is a sign that you are already out of control.
85. Ask the question, *“When and how do you feel most loved?”* How you think they want to be loved may not be how they best receive love. What you like and what they like may be totally different. Don’t assume anything until you ask.
86. Happiness in marriage is finding out each others needs/wants and doing your best to meet them.
87. It is ok to take turns.
88. Remember to say *“Please”* and *“Thank you.”*
89. Beliefs determine behavior. Behavior has consequences.
90. What we fear in marriage and in life we often create and make happen. Fear can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.
91. Try not to make any life-changing decisions or talk about major problems late at night. Things often look brighter and more in perspective in the morning.

92. Rarely do major decisions have to be done immediately. If “*selling the farm and moving to a tropical island*” is a good idea now, it will probably be a good idea a month from now. Give time and thought to major decisions. Seek advice and then act.
93. It is hard to steer a parked car. The same is true with marriage. Do something to get off dead center and get some movement.
94. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
95. Is what you are currently doing working or not working?
96. You create the atmosphere in which you want to live.
97. What if it is no accident that you married the person you did? What gift(s) are awaiting you which you have not discovered?
98. You have a choice. You can focus on your failures, or you can focus on your future.
99. Rather than asking “*Why, God?!!*” maybe we should ask, “*God, what are you trying to teach me?*”
100. Three killers in marriage: emptiness, loneliness and boredom.
101. Whatever you don’t share, be it good or bad, you keep.
102. Finish what you start (unless it is wrong).
103. Violence begets violence. Love begets love.
104. If the point you are trying to prove becomes more important than your spouse, you’ve already lost.
105. Failures of the past in the *then and there* should have nothing to do with the successes of the future. If anything they should help, because now you know what NOT to do. Never give up unless it is for something better.
106. What we sow we reap. Sow love and faithfulness and you will never be sorry.
107. Pain is part of growth; in marriage and in life. Most growth occurs outside our comfort zones.
108. Only a fool refuses to consider advice or suggestions from another, even one’s spouse.
109. To love your spouse is to love yourself.

110. Without God in your marriage, what do you really have?
111. The one with the most secrets loses.
112. Your spouse is not the enemy. Don't treat him/her as such.
113. The divorce rate among couples which pray together on a regular basis is roughly one out of every 350 as opposed to the national average of one out of two.—Try it. It works.
114. Fortunate is the couple that can volley ideas back and forth without getting angry or taking things personally. A world of wonder and learning awaits them.
115. Strive for unity, even if it is agreeing to disagree in love.
116. Model for your kids the kind of marriage you would wish upon them.
117. Give each other the benefit of the doubt. Think the best until proven otherwise.
118. Read together.
119. Do chores together. It cuts the work in half, and it provides you additional time together.
120. Have a garage sale and spend the money you earn on something special.
121. Reach out to others in need. It models for your kids what real caring and giving is all about.
122. Be willing to sacrifice short term pleasures or expenditures to get what you really want in the future.
123. Go bike riding together, or get a tandem bike. It is both exercise and togetherness.
124. What difference would it make to you if you, in your heart of hearts, really believed God loved you?
... if you believed God loved your spouse?
125. When your spouse is sick, go out of your way to show TLC(tender loving care).
126. Make birthdays special. Be creative.
127. Take plenty of family photographs and/or family home videos.
128. Have good relationships with your banker, your pastor/priest, a lawyer, a mechanic and a doctor. Make sure you each know them.

129. Have a will drawn up. Leave nothing to chance, especially regarding the welfare of your spouse and the custody of your children.
130. Have a smoke alarm, and know what to do in case of fire.
131. Don't interrupt. Learn to be a good listener.
132. Visit each other's relatives. Value them and treat them with respect.
133. If money is a problem, seek financial advice from an outside third party you both respect. Money is important, but not more important than your marriage.
134. Each should have an allowance that is his/hers to do with as he/she pleases.
135. Do whatever it takes to get debt-free as soon as you can.
136. Try turning off the TV and just talking.
137. Don't expect more from a vacation than is healthy. Relax and go with the flow. There is more to a vacation than setting a new land speed record from your house to your destination.
138. Discuss your expectations before going out on a date or on a vacation. Be willing to compromise so you both "*win*."
139. When you get into the win/lose mentality, there are only losers, never winners.
140. It is a fact of life, someone has to take out the trash. If nothing else, take turns.
141. If you make a promise or commitment, keep it, even if it is at your own expense. Your integrity is at stake.
142. To forgive is always costly. Not to forgive is even more costly.
143. Return phone calls.
144. Write down important dates so you won't forget, especially your anniversary.
145. If you are in the middle of an important talk with your wife or kids, let the phone ring. If the phone call is important they will call back.
146. Go to the library sometime and browse the shelves together.
147. Do what you did at the beginning when you were first in love.
148. Sometimes you have to fake it until you make it. If you show acts of kindness or

love, whether you feel like it or not, usually the feeling of love will come back.

149. If you're cold and your spouse isn't, put on more clothes. If your spouse is hot and you're not, turn on the air conditioner and put on a long sleeve shirt/blouse.
150. With one in every four or five Americans having an incurable sexually transmitted disease (Herpes, AIDS, warts, etc.) you can't afford risking an affair. If you have one you may get more than you bargained for.
151. If your spouse has a history of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, verbal, etc.) be committed to their healing. Be understanding. It will take time. Become informed about the type of abuse(s) your spouse suffered. Read about it. If you understand the "why's" behind their behavior it will be easier for you to forgive their mood swings. A good book to read is *The Wounded Heart* by Dan Allender.
152. If you're going to be late, call.
153. Read. Read. Read.—Learn how men and women tend to be different. Educate yourself on such things as child rearing, child disciplining, helping your spouse be sexually aroused, etc.
154. Try to find things you can do together (e.g., remodeling projects, hobbies, going to movies, eating out, going to school events, taking nature hikes, etc.)
155. As a point of diplomacy, never say, "*I told you so!*"
156. Tough love sometimes allows one's spouse to suffer the consequences of their own behavior; like the wife who got tired of cleaning up the mess after her husband came home drunk. One morning he woke up in his own vomit from the night before. He gave up drinking.
157. An unexpected greeting card which says "*I love you*" is a good investment.
158. Would you wish your marriage on your kid's marriage? What are you modeling for them? More is caught than taught.
159. Be true to your word at all cost. If your spouse has trouble trusting you in the small things, what makes you think they can trust you in big things?
160. Be respectful. Don't change the topic. If it is important to your spouse, then choose to make it important to you.
161. Name calling, cruel criticisms and judgmentalism will sap the lifeblood out of any marriage.
162. There are several self-defeating games married couples often play: "*Get them before they get you,*" "*If I can't have it my way I'll take my toys and go home,*"

“Rather than tell you what I think I’ll just be a problem,” “Since he/she did it to me, I have a right to do it to him/her.” “I’ll just gossip to get even.” “I’ll tune out, cop out and just not participate.”—Don’t do these things. You may win the battle by doing these things, but you will lose the war.

163. Marriage is a lot like growing a crop. If you tend and fertilize it, it will grow. Neglect it and let the weeds grow and it will eventually die.
164. Rebellion and self-will will destroy a marriage as fast as anything. Good marriages are partnerships, not hard-headed dictatorships.
165. If you were a doctor, would you have any medicine left over for your spouse? Love others, but don’t neglect your spouse.
166. There are some basic needs in life and in marriage: to love and be loved; and to feel worthwhile to oneself and others. When these needs are not met, pain and depression occur.
167. If you’ve been working and sweaty, shower or at least wash before you go to bed.
168. Assume an open body position when talking with your spouse. If you talk with your arms folded and your legs crossed you are sending non-verbal messages of, “I’m closed to what you have to say, and I’m afraid you might hurt me.”
169. Try to get enough rest. Nobody likes living with a grouch.
170. If you’ve had a bad day, work extra hard not to take it out on your spouse . . . who would in turn take it out on the kids . . . who would take it out on the cat . . . who would take it out on the mouse, etc.
171. Call your spouse at work and leave a sweet message on his/her voice mail or answering machine.
172. Try to find beauty in the ordinary.
173. When was the last time you cooked some popcorn-and played a board game?
174. If you had but one day to live, are there things you would need/want to tell your spouse? You best tell them for we do not know what tomorrow will bring.
175. If you’ve dug yourself in a hole by what you’ve said, stop digging. Apologize and reverse your direction.
176. If you want to make your spouse feel needed, ask his/her advice.
177. Don’t take correction personally. They are doing you a favor. If the fly on your

pants was unzipped, wouldn't you want your spouse to tell you? The same principle applies to other areas of your life. They probably know you better than anyone. Listen to them.

178. Don't nag. Leave a reminder note.
179. Whether it be at work or in marriage, you probably will not accomplish as much in a years time as you would like, but you can probably accomplish more in five years than you imagine.
180. Your habits, be they good or bad, have a major impact on your family.
181. Take care of yourself so you can take care of the others in your family.
182. Anger and uncontrolled tempers are transmittable diseases.
183. Most marital unfaithfulness comes out of unmet needs. As best you can, meet your spouses needs.
184. Make choices which foster spending time together as a couple and as a family. "*You never hear a man on his deathbed say, 'I wish I would have spent more time at work.'*"
185. Commit your future to God.
186. If you selfishly seek happiness, it may elude you. Strive to live and make your spouse happy and you will find happiness yourself.
187. There is a huge difference between lust and love. Love has depth. Lust is a cut flower which looks good for a time but then withers.
188. The eyes are the window to the soul. When was the last time you looked your spouse in the eye?
189. There are three "S" words which should strike fear into every marriage: stubbornness, selfishness and self-centeredness.
190. BE . . . DO . . . HAVE: **BE** committed to **DO** what it takes to **HAVE** what you want in your marriage.
191. Budget your income so you will have money for that which is important.
192. You may not be able to control the weather outside, but you can control the atmosphere in your home.
193. Why worry when you can pray?

194. When asked at their 50th anniversary what had been the best part of their marriage, the husband replied, *“I hope it is yet to come.”*

195. Habits, be they good or bad, cut deep groves into the life of a marriage. It usually takes a jolt to get out the rut.

196. If we have experienced pain, we are not so quick to laugh or take lightly another’s pain.

197. A sharp tongue has ripped many a sail and set may a marriage adrift.

198. Men often give love to get sex. Women often give sex to get love. The man may get what he wants while the woman may leave feeling empty and used. Unless a mutual love relationship is built, such marriages are headed for big trouble with neither being satisfied.

199. Practice open communication: *“This is what I’m hearing/seeing . . .”* *“This is the way it makes me feel.”* *“This is what I need from you.”*

200. Good marriages are a lot like tea bags. You don’t know good they are until they get into hot water.

201. Life is short—a split second compared to eternity. Live in the now, prepare for the eternal.

202. We make problems harder by thinking about them being hard.

203. When God measure a person or a marriage, God puts the tape around the heart, not around the head.

204. There is a high cost to having a good marriage; an even higher cost for having a bad one.

205. If you continually hold your feelings inside, your emotions become like a pressure cooker. You, and all those around you, are in danger if you ‘pop the lid.’ It is better to release the pressure gradually through spending time with friends, exercising, praying, etc.

206. It takes courage to keep pressing on to make our dreams come true. It is much easier to slip back into our comfort zones and go back in our security cages.

207. How long do we have to live? How long does our marriage have to last? One day at a time!

208. Behavior is determined by character.

209. The one who has a wonderful spouse, but fails to realize it, has no real advantage

over the person who has a poor spouse.

210. Integrity is keeping one's promises and commitments no matter the cost, and making it right when one fails to keep one's agreements.

211. Couples cannot consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with what they believe.

212. One of the most true, awesome, and fearful realities is that our sins, as well as our moral integrity, will likely get passed on to our children.

213. The reason you need to get your act together, is that you are the only guaranteed safe haven your kids have in this world.

214. A marriage thought: the only place where success comes before work is in a dictionary.

215. There are many ways to communicate other than verbally; giving gifts, touch, quality time, looks, acts of love and service, to name a few.

216. The more you love God, the better you will love your spouse and family.

217. Marriage is a major investment of time and money. Invest as if your happiness depended on it.

218. Two couples went for a walk. One couple saw only mud, the other couple the stars.

219. Get out of the habit of making excuses. Accept responsibility for your actions.

220. There is no loss in this life, if you are faithful, but what God has all eternity to repay.

221. Attaching value to something or someone is a choice. If, in your mind you say, "*This is valuable and worth cherishing*" then at that point it becomes so. There are probably people in this world who would probably be willing to die for what you take lightly.

222. If you had a choice between believing a lie which made you feel good, or the truth, even if it was hard to receive, which would you choose? If you say, "truth," then don't get mad at your spouse for giving you honest feedback.

223. No matter how busy you are individually, try to have at least one mutually shared dream or goal in your marriage.

224. On a percentage scale, how much energy are you putting into your marriage? 100%? 75%? . . . That is probably about how much you are getting out of your marriage.

Your are cheating yourself and your spouse if you are giving less than 100%.

225. Do you put as much energy into your marriage as you do other facets of your life? Is that the way you really want it?

226. Continuity and integrity are a hard team to beat.

227. Plan your weekly schedules together to allow yourselves the most shared time together.—Be creative about it.

228. If one spouse does all the giving, or is the one to give in to the other's wishes, then resentments are inevitable. Marriage is to be a partnership, not a dictatorship.

229. As a rule, men look for significance, while women look more for security. For men who are risk takers, realize that you threaten your wife's base of security. Be sensitive, and do as much as you can to show her that you have sought wise counsel and are proceeding responsibly. Life will be much easier for both of you if you do.

230. Don't promise more than you can deliver. Better to have your spouse pleasantly surprised than built up only to be followed by disappointment.

231. When you love your spouse, even when he/she is unloveable, you begin to understand what God puts up with daily in His love for us.

232. It is possible to love someone while not loving all their behavior.

233. Marriage is like a pilgrimage. You're more apt to reach your final destination if you as a couple choose good traveling companions along the way.

234. When you have kids, don't forget to love and spend quality time with your spouse.

235. The nature of man and animal is to quit trying once they have met with continual failure or have been placed in no-win situations. If your spouse has quit trying to please you is it possible they have quit because they feel that whatever they do it will never be good enough?

236. Happiness in marriage is learning to be content with what you have rather than what you don't have.

237. As much as possible don't change the rules of the game once you are married. The best surprises are no surprises. Play by the rules you agreed on when you said your vows.

238. You don't have to "want to;" that is a feeling. You just have to "want to want to," and that is a choice.

239. The pain of rejection often runs deep and may trigger painful memories of

childhood rejections. Therefore, how you express constructive criticism to your spouse is important. Remember the acronym “SET.” Begin with a **S**upportive statement (“I’m for you.”), followed by an **E**mpathetic statement expressing feeling (“I know this is hard for you and I hurt for you.”), followed by the **T**ruth statement (which is what they need to hear). Practice the “SET” formula and they will probably feel less rejection when you tell them something unpleasant. They will feel like you really care.

240. Telling your spouse only half the truth is still a lie.

241. If you mess up, don’t minimize it like the guy who said to the judge, “But your honor, look at all the people I didn’t shoot!”

242. When your spouse talks to you or asks you a question, answer immediately as a point of courtesy.

243. Seize each crisis as an opportunity.

244. A wise elderly woman once said that if she had her life to live over again she would only weep for sin. The trials she would embrace as that which builds character. Whatever doesn’t kill you makes you strong.

245. Motives (why you do what you do) and expectations (what you hope will happen) need to be weighed on the scales of love. Is what I want right? Are my expectations reasonable and pure?—This is especially true of friendships with the opposite sex.

246. Don’t allow your kids to “divide and conquer.” Maintain a unified front with your kids. Never override what your spouse has told the kids. If necessary, confer with your spouse privately and then issue a joint decision.

247. Character is built, not on the first try, but the 4th, 5th, 6th, . . .

248. State what you want as a positive rather than a negative. To say, “I wish you’d stay home this weekend.” sounds a lot better than saying, “No, you can’t go.”

249. If you want to cultivate creativity and grow your minds, shut off the TV. Try having a “mind enrichment hour” once a day where you as a family all read, study, do homework, etc.

250. Faith is the antidote to fear. Love is the antidote to hate or indifference. Truth is the antidote to lies.—Good marriages incorporate faith, love and truth.

251. To be indifferent to your spouse is a greater insult than to hate or be angry.

252. You are intentionally or unintentionally shaping the future destiny of your spouse. The happiness of your spouse’s tomorrows hinge to a large degree on the choices you are making today.

253. In love, God demands all—all of you, all of your marriage. He is satisfied with nothing less.

254. More than almost anyone else, you hold your spouse's well-being and potential for growth. You can set your spouse free to soar and reach for the sky, or you can keep them chained by your attitudes and behavior.

255. The less you need, the freer you become.

256. Keeping up with the Jones has wrecked many a marriage.

257. What if your spouse said, "I'll take you out for dinner and you can have whatever you want. You can have pizza, or pizza, or pizza."—How would you feel? There is no choice. God could have made us the same way. God could have said, "You have a choice. You can love Me, or love Me, or love Me."—No, for real love to exist there had to be a choice. Otherwise we are but robots. Do you want your spouse to love you? Then he/she cannot be a robot. His/her love must be freely given or it is not love at all.

258. Without relationships all the possessions in the world would seem empty.

259. Imagine a golfer who hit a hole in one, but no one saw him do it and he had no one with whom to share his feat. Think of the let down. Half the joy in any accomplishment is having some with whom you can share the joy. Set aside your own agenda long enough to reflect your spouse's joy in their moments of triumph.

260. Your spouse, contrary to what you might like sometimes, is not a vending machine but a person.

261. Whether it is in business or in marriage, if you meet the needs of others, your own needs will likely be met.

262. God doesn't play games with our lives. While God is not the author of evil, there are reasons for what God allows. If we had but eyes to see, we would know that all the reasons stem from love and goodness.

263. Pray for a dream larger than the two of you could imagine.

264. We all love beauty . . . whether in art, music, nature, cars, work or play. Put some creative energy into making your world and your spouse's world a more beautiful place.

265. A smile and a look of love are priceless. (They also improve your *face* value.)

266. The most wholesome, rewarding activities (whether work or play) are between people who respect and take each other seriously.

267. God is the author of beauty, love and wisdom. To the degree your marriage reflects

these qualities you reflect the heart of God.

268. It is hard to give what you don't have. You need to have outside sources of emotional and spiritual support so you will have a reserve from which to give to your spouse. A spouse who expects all of his/her emotional needs to be met by the other spouse is not only asking the impossible, but is also introducing a tremendous amount of stress and pressure into the marriage.

269. Creativity and imagination make wonderful presents any time of the year.

270. It is hard to give love if you refuse to be loved. Love is a two-way street.

271. Anyone can criticize. However it takes insight and knowing a person to help another understand their behavior and provide the love to motivate them to change.

272. When you compromise yourself, you compromise your mate.

273. The epitaph on the tombstone of a failed marriage often reads, "I did it my way."

274. Intimacy rarely happens without risk.

275. A well known preacher once said, "It is never too late to start doing what is right."

276. To do little acts of kindness is a big deal.

277. You have already impacted your spouse for life. How you will impact them in the future is largely up to you.

278. Take good care of your future because that is where you and your spouse will spend the rest of your lives.

279. Direction is more important than speed of travel. No matter how slow or fast you are going, if you're headed in the right direction, you'll get there eventually. Be sure your marriage is pointed in the right direction.

280. Character, trust, and love make a far greater inheritance for your kids than monetary wealth.

281. No matter how hard you try to idolize your spouse they are bound to fail. That is the nature of any idol; to break the heart of the worshipper.

282. Avoid making major decisions when you are depressed, tired or angry.

283. What you bring to your marriage will likely be an extension of what you think about all day.

284. Challenge your spouse to greatness. After all, look who he/she married.

285. Even cooking dinner or cleaning the garage can be a work of art.
286. Don't make undesirable jobs even worse by having a bad attitude.
287. Don't remain in the victim role or stay on a pity party. If you do you will have few people at your party.
288. None of us are totally loveable. Remember that the next time you are tempted to be critical.
289. To forgive an inexcusable act is a work of God's grace.
290. Your responsibility is to listen to your heart and ask, "What would God want me to do?" Once you know the answer, do it.
291. Check out the facts before jumping to conclusions.
292. Just because a certain look, phrase or behavior meant something in your family, don't assume they meant the same things in your spouse's family. Don't presume the worst. Inquire first.
293. When you verbally explode it is like throwing a hand grenade in the living room. Don't expect things to automatically go back to normal. You would have been better off not to have thrown the grenade in the first place.
294. The one who loves God is better able to love his/her family.
295. Real success in life rarely has a dollar sign in front of it.
296. Love seeks what is good and best for the other.
297. Life and marriage is hard enough without worrying about all the "what if's."
298. God never panics. Take heart.
299. A strong family and a strong faith are the best defense your kids have in a hostile world filled with violence, drugs and gangs.
300. Trouble colors all marriages. Thankfully, we can select the color.
301. Greater harm is often done through our denial of wrong doing than in the wrong itself.
302. If your marriage conforms to the sickness of society, it too has become sick.
303. Family tradition without truth is nothing more than time-honored errors.

304. Simplify your life as much as you can. You'll be happier and less stressed out. There is more to life than increasing its speed.

305. Viewed from eternity, which of the choices you are currently making will matter? One hundred years from now will driving a new car have mattered more than having family time?

306. Don't compete with your spouse. You're on the same team! When he/she wins, you win.

307. If you live to be age 75, and you are married to your spouse the whole time, how many more days do you have to live together? How many days have you already lived together? (Get out the calculator. It will help put your life and marriage in perspective.)

308. After each meal clean up after yourself and hang around to visit with your spouse. If the meal was good (and even if it wasn't) say "thank you."

309. The only one in your family you can really improve is yourself.

310. To grow one's heart and soul is far more important than growing one's bank account.

311. Before worrying about what others will think, ask what your spouse will think?

312. Money is not morally neutral. Either you control it or it will control you and your marriage.

313. How you spend your time and money accurately reflects your real priorities in life. God and family should be at the top of the list.

314. Your marriage will either advance or hinder the kingdom of God.

315. Just because you cease to feel "in love" is not excuse to quit loving, any more than not feeling like changing a diaper is an excuse not to change it.

316. You have a choice: communicate or allow the walls of isolation to grow.

317. Don't go looking for greener pastures. Fertilize and water the one you're in.

318. Each of you brings a past into your marriage. You can't change that fact. What you can do is to work on being free of its dominion over your lives.

319. When things seem too overwhelming step back, look at the stars and remind yourself that there is a very big God out there who loves you.

320. 100% of each generation dies -- a profound thought. Each of us are one breath, and one heartbeat away from eternity. Live to have no regrets. Learn from your past, lay it

behind you and then look to the future.

321. Learn the love language of your spouse. Some respond to touch, some to gifts, some to quality time, some to acts of service, some to words of love. Your love language may not be the same as your spouses. Real love is loving them, not as you would choose, but in the way which means the most to them. (See the book, *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman.)

322. Love cannot be demanded, only requested.

323. Part of being married is to fill the love tank (bank) of your spouse.

324. Quality or recreational time with your spouse is time alone, doing an activity that one or both of you chooses, which the other agrees to do out of love, in which both of you know why you're doing it.

325. Martin Luther said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." Point? All of us face temptation in marriage which are destructive and marriage threatening (e.g., affairs, flirtatious relationships, old loves from the past, etc.). At all costs, do what is best for your marriage. Don't give the 'birds' a chance to 'nest.'

326. If one or both of your parents were alcoholic or addicted to drugs, you stand upwards of a 90% chance of becoming addicted yourself. For the sake of your marriage, never start. You are physically, emotionally and even spiritually predisposed to becoming an addict. You saw what it did to your parent(s), don't let it happen to you.

327. Even if your spouse is having a 'bad hair day,' you don't need to let it pull you down. Be sensitive and caring, but letting your spouse pull you down won't help either of you. And, never repay insult for insult.

328. Don't buy your wife a riding lawn mower for her birthday (unless she requests it).

329. Sometimes a non-practical gift, such as flowers, can mean a lot. It lets them know they are valued for who they are, not just for what they do.

330. If you've had a bad day and are feeling rotten, don't take it out on your spouse. If you do your problems may double. Tell them how you are feeling and ask for their support. You'll both feel a lot better.

331. Pick up after yourself.

332. When was the last time you and your spouse took a blanket on a beautiful spring or fall day, lay on a grassy hill, and just looked at the clouds and birds?

333. Sex is often like a mirror to the marriage. If you aren't feeling close emotionally, it

is hard to feel close physically.

334. Having sex when you are not feeling emotionally close usually has one of two effects: it may draw you closer together and be a motivator to work on your relationship, or it can feel empty and widen the gap between you. Telling your spouse *why* you want to make love is important.

335. There are five “A” words which are important to any marriage: Acceptance, Appreciation, Availability, Affection and Accountability. (Take a pad of paper and creatively think of some ways you can show your spouse these five things.)

336. Never criticize in your spouse what he/she cannot change (e.g., physical features).

337. When you are out in public, be emotionally sensitive to your spouse. Don’t leave them hanging, especially among a lot of strangers, while you are off socializing.

338. If you are forever late it sends a message that your time is more important than your spouse’s time.

339. If there are reasons why you like to be late let your spouse know (e.g., “I hate making small talk, so if I arrive after the meeting has started I can avoid what I hate.”) If need be, take two cars. It is not fair to make your spouse suffer because of some hidden agenda of yours.

340. Seventy percent of all Americans have lived in broken (divorced) homes, either their parents or their own marriage(s). Unless the pain and anger of this brokenness is healed it may shatter or tarnish any and all future relationships.

341. Battering and physical abuse may leave outward scars, but the deepest scars are those of the soul caused by emotional/verbal abuse.

342. Anger and depression never happen in a vacuum. They are secondary emotions. There is always something behind them. Find and cure the primary causes and you automatically take care of anger and depression.

343. One of the most powerful gifts you can give to your family is the gift of being a good example. It is hard to respect someone who says, “Don’t do as I do, but do as I say.”

344. The essence of selfishness is “I, Me or Mine,” rather than “You, Yours or Ours.”

345. Have a generous spirit, especially when it comes to your spouse.

346. Treasure each day for when it is ended it is ended forever.

347. Never be afraid to make amends.

348. Stick together and don’t let divorce be an option. Take the word divorce out of

your vocabulary. Make your marriage work.

349. Set measurable goals. To say I want a “good” marriage is vague. What does “good” mean? However, to say, “I want to have one date a week where we freely communicate” is measurable.

350. Identify problem areas. Make a plan taking into consideration your various options, then do it. If it doesn’t work, try something else. The important thing is to do something.

351. Encourage your spouse to do some fun things just for themselves. It’s like the sign which said, “When mama ain’t happy, nobody is happy.”

352. Don’t bury your talents. Support your spouse in the use of their talents.

353. Give your spouse a good morning kiss/hug, a goodbye hug/kiss and a welcome home hug /kiss.

354. The first one home should start supper.

355. Eat wisely. Exercise regularly, preferably with your spouse if possible.

356. For something different, pick a new hobby or topic of interest that the two of you can learn or do together (e.g., just for fun learn sign language).

357. The basis of most friendships is shared interests. Work on finding and doing things you both like. Each of you may have to do some giving and taking.

358. Take plenty of family photos.

359. Try to build special memories (wild and crazy things such as a family water balloon fight, picnics on the living room floor, etc.).

360. Close the shower curtain.

361. A wise person receive instruction (even from a spouse). Only a fool rejects constructive criticism. Receive it graciously with a “thank you!”

362. Avoid comparisons between your spouse and others. Focus on your spouse’s good qualities.

363. What are some of your values which, as a family, are non-negotiable?

364. Beware of the things which rob joy and peace from your family. Keep them far from you.

365. Each of you should have certain rights: to be listened to, to express your own opinions without fear, to say “No,” to ask for what you want, to have your own friends, to live without fear, and to worship God.

366. Don't steam up the bathroom by taking a long shower when your wife is rolling her hair.

367. On average, women speak 25,000 words per day; men about 12,500. Guys, don't use up all 12,500 words at work. Save some for when you get home.

368. We all have choices, no matter what the situation. We may not like the choices, but we always have a choice; even if it is nothing more than choosing a positive attitude.

369. I recently read a plaque which said, "So this isn't 'Home Sweet Home.' Adjust!". . . There is sad truth in this statement. I would say, "Adjust, but never give up trying to make it 'Home Sweet Home.'"

370. Spend time together after making love. Don't immediately hop up and turn on the T.V. to check the football score or throw a load of wash in the washing machine. Cultivate intimacy before, during and after love making.

371. Listen to some good talk radio, especially when you are in the car, such as *Focus On The Family* or *Dr. Laura Schlessinger*.

372. Play the Guessing Game. Each person around the dinner table gets to ask one question to one person seated at the table. No one can be asked two questions until everyone has been asked at least one question. Take turns. Questions can range from "What is your favorite color?" to more in depth questions such as, "What is something which makes you happy?" "What makes you sad?" "If you could change one thing about your life right now, what would it be?" This is a good way to find out what is going on with your family, to get ideas for Christmas presents, etc.

373. If you have advice to give, ask them if they are willing to receive it.

374. Be careful how you express anger. If your spouse feels *shot out of the saddle* or *blown out of the water*, don't expect them to be open and non-defensive. You just created a crisis.

375. Tenderness, sweetness and an understanding spirit are incredible investments to your marriage.

376. Avoid nagging, pleading, scolding, yelling, complaining and accusing. You don't like it. Neither does your spouse. Good manners work in society and at home. Being rude is inexcusable. Remember, you teach your spouse how to treat you.

377. Are you sensitive, romantic and a good communicator? How do you think your spouse would answer that question? If you don't like the answer to either question, you can choose to change. Ask your spouse for help. Just as you learned to speak as a child, you can learn to speak the language of love as an adult. The question is, "Are you committed to learning something new, or will you use the excuse about being an old dog

that is too old to learn new tricks?”

378. We often crave what we can't attain and disrespect what we have. This is a statement about who we are, more than who our spouse is. It often boils down to the fact that we don't respect ourselves, so we blame and disrespect our spouse.

379. If your marriage is stagnant, try something new. Put some creative unpredictability into your marriage.

380. Change what can be changed, and learn to live with what cannot be changed.

381. Most behavioral traits have positive and negative aspects. A person who is emotionally sensitive may also be easily hurt. A good business person may be a Scrooge at home. What drew you to your spouse, his/her positive traits, may be the very things that drive you crazy. Emotionally step back and refocus on the good that your spouse brings to your marriage. Then the negative quirks may not bother you as much.

382. You are responsible to help meet your spouse's emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs. That comes with the territory when you said, "I do!" when you got married.

383. A complaining negative spirit is a real drag to be around. Being thankful for what you have, rather than what you don't have, will make both you and those around you happier.

384. When you change your actions and reactions, you change your marriage!

385. Avoid sweeping generalizations; "You always . . ." "You never . . ."

386. Focus on what is working for you in your marriage and do more of it.

387. If you have something negative to discuss, carefully select the timing, manner and setting.

388. Feelings do not dictate behavior. You choose your behavior. Feelings cannot make you do anything.

389. Get your creative juices going. Take on some new challenges.

390. You don't have to approve of everything your spouse does in order to show love and respect. If you want freedom, then you must grant them freedom to be different from you.

391. Increase the number of hugs and kisses you give each other.

392. If your spouse has major mood swings, then mark them on a calendar. If there is a pattern then urge them to seek medical help or psychological counseling. There may be an easy remedy.

393. Honoring the marriage commitment itself can be a source of happiness, especially when it has been cultivated over many, many years.

394. There is a cost to everything you do; a cost of time, money, or emotional energy. These directly affect your marriage and your spouse. Spend them wisely. Be accountable to each other.

395. When you choose to marry you are in effect saying, "I want to learn to share and be unselfish." (This is especially true if you have kids.) Remember, marriage was a choice you made and you must live with your decision. Embrace the decision, and your character and integrity will grow. At the end of your life you will find that you are truly rich.

396. How you bring up your children will be colored by the love you show your spouse. Your love for your spouse is a safety net for your kids.

397. Kids never totally get over their parent's divorce. Divorce will leave a hole in their lives. Avoid it like the plague. If divorce occurs make sure that you are not the one responsible.

398. Marriage means something. The question you must answer is "What?"

399. You would never drive a car based on feelings; otherwise you'd probably ram the guy who cuts in front of you or slam on the brakes if someone is tailgating you. The reason we don't drive by feelings is that it would end up hurting us, our car and others. If we drive our cars using our minds and common sense, rather than our emotions, why do we often do just the opposite in marriage? How often do we hurt our spouse because we "feel like it." A wrecked marriage is a whole lot worse than a wrecked car.

400. A good household rule for all to follow is, "No put-downs."

401. Praise what you like and appreciate about your spouse.

402. If your spouse is stressed out, be nice and do some of their household chores for them.

403. Is your occupation/vocation hurting or destroying your marriage? Are you so stressed out or busy that you have no time and/or energy for you spouse? If so you may need to ask the hard questions: "Is what I am doing to my spouse fair?" and "Is it time for me to start looking for a new job?"

404. Talk about upcoming holidays and figure out how you can act as a team. Find out what each of you would like to see happen and then creatively think of ways you can each do what you like to do.

405. Take naps together once in a while.

406. Hold hands in the car.

407. Do what you did when you were first engaged or married that was fun.
408. Chill out. Whatever marriage problems you have didn't occur over night and they probably won't get solved over night. Lower your expectations a bit and work on enjoying your partner in the midst of your problems. People are permanent, your problems are probably temporary.
409. Marriage is a lot like a math problem. If you don't start with the right premise you won't come up with the right answer. A good premise (foundation) to start with is God. After all it is *holy* matrimony.
410. Fidelity isn't an instrument played in a country western band. However, it can sure put a song in your marriage.
411. Doing what comes natural isn't always wise or loving. Animals in a barn lot do what comes natural. That's what sets us apart from animals. We can choose to act unselfishly which is not natural.
412. Love produces love, just as hate produces hate, and indifference produces indifference.
413. Love is often costly, but so is a Porche.
414. The goal of marriage is a mutually fulfilling relationship where neither one is the martyr or the victim. Since that is what you both want, why not shake hands and begin to creatively talk on how you can make it happen.
415. Fear and/or hostility will kill sexual passion. No wonder the Bible says, "Don't let the sun go down on your anger."
416. Sexual problems in marriage are often a mirror of the marriage. When love, respect, communication, and understanding are present you will find sex a lot more fun.
417. Read and learn about sex in marriage. Sexually men are more like microwaves and women are like crock-pots sexually. Work on not blaming the other for not being like you. Learn to cook with both!
418. Read *Love Life For Every Married Couple* by Dr. Ed Wheat.
419. Sex without love and commitment usually creates resentment.
420. Work on creating a romantic atmosphere.
421. A light touch, rather than grabbing/pawing, is often a turn-on for a woman. Go around first base before you try to score at home plate.

422. Use foreplay as a time to communicate your love verbally.
423. Don't only say nice things to the other when you want to make love. Otherwise it will be interpreted as, "Oh no, here we go again, the butter-them-up salesman routine; anything to get what he/she wants."
424. Use your imagination and creativity to make all aspects of your marriage better. Get out of the rut.
425. Like weather, there are emotional climates. Never yell at your spouse unless you want stormy, chilly weather.
426. There are tremendous advantages that married couples have in society, not to mention the legacy you can pass on to your kids. Don't abandon ship the first time the seas get rough.
427. What your mind dwells on becomes branded on your brain. If you focus on seeing only the negative you will get what you see.
428. If you have forgotten the good qualities about your spouse, ask some of his/her friends what they like about your spouse. You may be amazed.
429. Defend your spouse when others speak negatively of them, especially when your parents do.
430. Shared emotional experiences, whether negative or positive, tend to bond couples together.
431. When you talk to your spouse make eye contact. Let them know you care.
432. When you get your way by nagging, beware! Resentments are building in your spouse. Nagging may work in the short term, but it will not get you what you want long term. Nagging is disrespectful and it is like shovels full of dirt on the casket of marriage intimacy.
433. When one spouse is domineering and over controlling it is usually a sign of lack of trust. It may stem from a history of abuse where as a child their trust was shattered. They may think, "As long as I am in control nobody will hurt me."
434. Avoid emphatic replies which cut off communication. A harsh sounding "NO!" is guaranteed to get a response, but not the one you desire. A kind reply with a reason attached to it is far compelling and less destructive.
435. Help carry in and put up the groceries.

436. Infatuation with another person other than your spouse is likely rooted in fantasy. You are probably seeing the other person in ideal settings where they are putting their best foot forward. You are not seeing them when they awaken with dragon breath or when they yell at their kids.—Nip such fantasies in the bud.

437. If you focus on how the other person is to love you and why they should love you, you will likely be disappointed. Focus on loving them and forget your own selfish interests and you may receive what you crave.

438. Good marriages have a sense of belonging, a sense of “home,” where one feels free to be oneself. The best way to achieve this is to treat others in your family as you wish to be treated.

439. Beware of spending long periods of time away from home. It doesn't foster intimacy or security.

440. The number one destroyer of intimacy and creative togetherness in most families is the television. TV is addicting, just like alcohol or drugs. It fosters unhealthy comparisons, selfishness, immoral values and fantasy thinking. Consider having one night a week where the TV is shut off? When you do watch TV sit close together and choose healthy program-ming.

441. Contentment with what you have (rather than what you don't have) is both a blessing and a choice; a state of mind.

442. Avoid spending money impulsively. Make a budget and stick to it. In the long run you will be happier and less stressed. Carefully keep track of all your spending for one month to see where your money is going. Is your money going to what you truly consider important?

443. Some marriages explode and blow away. Others just dry up and shrivel on the vine. In either case, the results are the same: a dead marriage.

444. If God is for your marriage, who can be against it?

445. Should you ever separate (God forbid) or your spouse ever file for divorce, before you burn your bridges and say or do things you may later regret, read “*Tough Love*” by Dr. James Dobson.

446. As strange as it may sound, if your spouse has developed a close friendship with a member of the opposite sex, rather than treating this person as an enemy, befriend them. Invite them over to have dinner with you and your spouse. Doing this will help remove the fantasy component from their relationship. Further, if the other person is your friend, they are less likely to stab you in the back.

447. Don't take your spouse or the things they do for granted. Enjoy them while you can.

448. An estimated 50% of all American families experience at least one case of adultery and infidelity in the course of their marriage. Such should never happen, but if it does, and you choose to remain married, healing and forgiveness is possible. Get counseling and involve God in the healing process.

449. Sincerity is no substitute for the truth. Many a person has been sincerely wrong. Don't paint what you think will happen in the future as fact. Things don't always work out the way you plan. If something doesn't come to pass, which you said would come to pass, it erodes your spouse's trust and you come out a liar. Better to say, "If all goes well . . ."

450. If you get an unwanted thought stuck in your head (e.g., the greener grass syndrome), the best way to get rid of it is **not** to try to quit thinking about it (that only reinforces the thought in your brain). Rather, think other positive thoughts (e.g., the good things you have in your spouse). The best way to get rid of a negative thought (or song or anything) is to substitute what you'd like to be thinking for the negative thought.

451. If you didn't have good parents or role models growing up then, for your families sake, take a parenting class. The reason? It is hard to model what you have never observed. The same goes for being a good spouse. Either get advice from someone who has a good marriage or from a counselor who has a good marriage. (Beware of getting marriage counseling from someone who is divorced!)

452. Love is like new fallen snow. It can hide a lot of imperfections and cover many a mistake.

453. You will automatically repeat the mistakes of your parents (or else you will over react and make just the opposite mistakes) unless you make a conscious effort to change. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, "The devil usually throws lies into the world in pairs. If he doesn't catch you at one extreme he will catch you at the other."—Seek healthy balance.

454. You cannot change anyone, especially your spouse. You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make them drink. (About all you can put a little salt in their oats.)

455. Don't expect others to be willing to change if you are unwilling to change.

456. If you feel depressed don't play depressing music. Reinforce the positive.

457. Never, never, never contemplate suicide. If you get to that point, get help; immediately! It may be physiological, psychological or even spiritual, but get help. Suicide is a cruel thing to do to a spouse or children. They never, ever, get over it completely.

458. Just as you don't walk into an airport and joke about having a bomb, be sensitive about what you say to your spouse, even in humor.

459. Some of the cruelest words spoken are sometimes spoken as a joke. Don't mask

anger behind humor or satire.

460. Work on being friends.

461. If your spouse is going through a hard time give support, not criticism. Ask “What can I do to help?”

462. Always keep growing, keep learning. Some people are buried at age 80 but they died at age 35. Treat your mind like a muscle that needs exercising. Grow as a couple.

463. As you get older, you probably won't change, you'll just become more of what you've always been. If that thought is scary, better start changing now.

464. As we get older our comfort zones also become narrower and we become more set in our ways. Begin expanding your comfort zones now to allow for shrinkage in the older years.

465. If your spouse knows how to do something which you don't (like doing taxes, cooking, check the oil in the car, etc.), ask them to teach you. After all they may not be around forever.

466. Ignorance is never a good excuse.

467. Mark Twain once said, “I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.” If you are a worrier, you put yourself and your spouse through needless pain. Learn to hand your problems (real or perceived) over to God. Also diffuse your fears by being proactive, not reactive. Take charge. Just don't wait for the sky to fall.

468. Get a book of *Calvin and Hobbs* (the cartoon strip). Read it together and have a good laugh.

469. Watch the TVshow, *America's Favorite Home Videos*. Then reminisce about some of the funny things which have happened in your family. Write them down. Build a reservoir of shared laughter. (Some of the best things in life are free.)

470. In all areas of life, do what you know you should do, and life will go so much better.

471. Some people are morning people, some aren't. If you are and your spouse isn't, or vice versa, give each other space when you first get up. Some people just aren't human until they've had their morning cup of coffee.

472. When you borrow something ask permission first and be sure to return it the way you found it (or even in better shape).

473. If you are a person who makes “piles,” around the home, keep them located in one area and not all around the house. If you are a clutter person (and your spouse isn’t) confine your clutter areas.

474. Keep the house looking as nice and clean as you can so it will be a place your spouse (and kids) will be proud to call home.

475. Help around the house and play with the kids. Give each other a break.

476. Happiness is usually a choice.

477. It is my marital duty to *come from the heart* and not just my head.

478. Are my belief concerning marriage a position (a philosophical idea) or a real practice? In other words, do you walk the walk and talk the talk?

479. Am I accepting or judgmental?

480. Is my love unconditional?

481. Live in such a way that if something happened to you, you would be missed. How sad it is to hear someone say, “Oh, he/she was never here anyway.”

482. SOMETHING TO PONDER: To help me keep life and marriage in perspective, I sometimes like to remind myself how big our universe is and how big God must be; big enough in fact to take care of all my problems. For example, driving at 55 m.p.h. it would take us 193 years to drive to the sun. It would take us 52 million years, driving at 55 m.p.h. to drive to Alpha Centauri (the closest star to earth, not counting our sun). The upper left hand star in the constellation Orion is the largest star we can see with the naked eye. Its name is Betelgeuse (pronounced *beetle juice*). It is so big we could put 160,000,000 of our suns inside it. If our earth was the size of a golf ball, Betelgeuse, by comparison, would be a ball 2 miles high. If our Milky Way galaxy, which is made up of around 250 billion stars, was reduced to the size of North America (Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico) our solar system (sun and 9 planets) by comparison would be about the size of a coffee cup. Now, doesn’t that make you feel better!

483. Within each person is a God-shaped vacuum which only God is big enough to fill. We do our spouses a great injustice when we ask them to fill that hole.

484. Knowing God’s will for your marriage isn’t all that hard. Asking a few simple questions usually is all it takes: “Is it the loving thing to do?” “Will I feel at peace if I do what I am planning?” “Will it bring me closer to my spouse and family?” “If I had a blank check signifying what I want to do, would God endorse it?” “Is it in keeping with scripture?” “Will I be able to thank God for it once I do what I want to do?” If the answer to all these questions is “Yes,” you’re probably in God’s will.

485. Would you take a million dollars for your eye-sight? Would you take \$500,000 for your right arm? If you say “No,” then your worth as a person is already up to one and a half-million dollars. See, you do have worth and value, and so does your spouse! Enjoy what no money can buy.

486. Be enthusiastic for life.

487. Be enthusiastic for your marriage.

488. Whatever problems you have in your marriage you helped create. Rarely are they all one person’s fault. Take accountability for your own stuff and get counseling if necessary. Just as you helped create the problem, you can help create the solution. Write the last chapter of your marriage so that it has a happy ending.

489. To better understand your own marriage and to predict future problems simply ask the question, “Could my dad (if you are the husband) be married to her mom.” (vice versa if you are the wife). How you answer that question will likely determine how compatible you will be in marriage. Most of us unconsciously model our parents; guys imitate their dads, girls imitate their moms. If you think your respective parents could be happily married, then you will likely get along well with your spouse. If you say it would be World War III if your parent was married to your spouse’s parent, then tighten your seat belt. You’ll likely have a lot of differences to resolve in your marriage.

490. Every time a couple divorces the odds of them being happily married again decreases significantly. If they couldn’t make the first marriage work it is even less likely that the second or the third or the fourth will work any better.

491. Maintain your relationship with your spouse so that when your kids are older and leave home you’ll still have each other. Don’t allow yourself to wake up married to a stranger once your kids fly the nest.

492. Integrity and faithfulness will mean far more than beauty when you are old and gray.

493. Embrace life and be all that you can be. Life and time are too precious to waste.

494. Cultivate a taste for healthy food and good books.

495. Be a risk taker in those areas which matter most. Pray and chase the dream.

496. Do yourself and your spouse a favor; get a job you like. Choose a vocation so that the older you get the more skilled and valued you will be as a person.

497. They say it takes about 20 affirmations to out-weigh one negative criticism. Stay positive.

498. Grow your mind. Grow your marriage. Grow your faith.

499. The most important decision you will make in marriage is what role you will allow God to play in your marriage.

500. If you each keep your life “filled” with God’s love, and you rest in the fact that you are loved by God, you’ll have a well of love from which to draw to keep your marriage well watered and growing. People who do not feel loved by God have very little love to give.

Author’s Note:I feel a bit hypocritical writing these. Many of these little instructions I have learned the hard way in my own marriage. There are very few of these points which I have learned well. Most of them are ideals to which I strive, but have yet to attain.

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