

THE STAY-AT-HOME MARRIAGE

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How's your marriage? A good question to ponder at any time, but one we are all considering in the days of COVID-19 and some version of truly living 24/7 with our spouse. If yours is like most marriages—and I might venture to say ALL marriages—you're going through some adjustments. You're working from home, newly laid off, trying to homeschool, feeling financial stress or concerns for the future, worried about health and loved ones, and/or asking “Do we have TP?”.

While some relationship issues pale in front of others, it's still important to acknowledge that **change is stressful**. Our routines have been disrupted, and that alone can cause stress. Personally, I go from “work” to “home” in 10 seconds now—there's no more 30-minute commute to decompress.

You may feel like your marriage is struggling, but proportionally—when you factor in so much more time together and all the stress—it's probably just about like it was before. While the extra time at home might expose some growth areas, it might also be a great opportunity to grow your relationship! **Look for the opportunities in your new situation. Look for the good things you want to take with you going forward.**

To that end, I want to encourage you, and offer some suggestions on how to connect with our spouse.

- **Give each other some grace and mercy.** We all have good and bad days, but spending more time with each other makes it harder to hide our own growing edges. At my house we've had to apologize more often—for some grumpy periods and for just being out of sorts. When we can cut one another some slack, we will eventually need the favor returned (I know I will especially!).
- **Compliment your partner daily.** Find one positive thing you appreciate about your spouse and let them know. *“Honey, I love the way you put on your socks!”*
- **Acts of Love.** What is your spouse's love language? When was the last time you “spoke” it? Leave a post-it of appreciation and words of affirmation; give a small love gift (I recently received my favorite candy bar!); perform an act of service; give a hug or take their hand for no reason (Guys—non-sexual!); or just spend some focused quality time together.
- **Give some space.** We all respond to stress and crisis differently. Give your spouse permission to have their own ways of responding and coping (as long as they are healthy!).
- **Date Night.** ...Really? Sure! Make a special meal, get dressed up, set the table fancy, and maybe even flirt a little! :) Or, maybe, have a picnic in the yard. You might even have a few little waitstaff around your house who would have fun serving you!
- **Express your needs.** What do you need from your spouse right now? How can your spouse help you if they don't know what you need? It might be as simple as, *“Honey, it would bless me if you could take a shower this week”* or *“Hey, could you let me have an hour free to _____ (i.e. wash the cat)”*
- **Take some intentional time to talk.** Not about daily tasks or schedule, but to have a deeper talk. *How's your soul? What's your biggest concern in life right now? How are you and Jesus doing? Tell me the high and low from today.* You'll find that 15 uninterrupted minutes daily on the couch can make a huge difference.
- **Netflix and Chill.** My adult children tell me that I can't use this expression, but you get the idea. Don't forget to make time for each other and enjoy physical intimacy. Can you think of a better time to plan for a noon-time rendezvous?

- **Adjust your expectations.** Everyone talks about communication in marriage, but I've found the bigger issue is unnamed expectations and disappointment when our spouse can't read our mind or "should have known." Talk about your new hopes and expectations for this season.
- **PLAY!** Don't forget to have some fun. Joke with one another, tell bad puns, chase someone with an ice cube, build a blanket fort for watching TV, text a picture of you making your best funny face, etc. It's a great stress-reliever and reminder that life doesn't have to be serious 24/7.
- **Stay positive.** Focus on what you do have. An attitude of gratitude will carry the day.
- **Love deeply.** Above all else, we are called to love each other with kindness and gentleness. Philippians 1:9 says, "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight."

BETHANY RESOURCES

- **Pastoral Support**
If you're feeling stuck in your marriage, Pastor Phil (*Pastor of Congregational Life*) or any of the other pastors would be honored to come alongside your marriage to offer counsel and support. Email philm@churchbcc.org.
- **BCC Mentor Couples**
We have couples ready to mentor you couple-to-couple, via phone or video call. Email marriagementors@churchbcc.org to get connected with a mentor couple.
- **Need Prayer?**
Text "praying" to 64600 or email your request to staff@churchbcc.org to be prayed for throughout the week.

BETHANY RESOURCES

- **Marriage Minute**
Subscribe to a daily email from the [Gottman Institute](https://www.gottmaninstitute.com).
- **Watch These Video Tips** from Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott
<https://www.lesandleslie.com/video-library/>
- **Funny Marriage Videos**
 - [Barnes & Miner Bringin' Marriage Back](#)
 - [The Communication Song](#) (Husband/Wife Stand-Up Comedy Team Barnes & Miner)
 - [It's Not About The Nail](#)
 - [Flight of the Conchords - Business Time](#) (Heads up: PG-13 content)