

January 27. *Marriage means being there for each other no matter what!* A strong marriage rarely has two strong people at the time. It requires a husband and wife taking turns being strong for each other in those moments when the other feels weak. Your spouse should never have to face any obstacle without your full partnership, encouragement, and support. You might not always be able to offer the perfect answer or the perfect solution, but simply by offering yourself and your support you can create a perfect opportunity for growth in your relationship.

*Reflection: Does my spouse know that I will be there for him/her no matter what? **Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2***

January 28. Treat your spouse like a priority; not like an interruption. Never take your spouse for granted. Make sure he/she knows that you value your marriage more than any other part of your schedule. You can show your spouse the place of priority he/she always holds in your heart by simply answering the phone whenever he/she calls, always being thoughtful, and remembering that you're never too busy to be thoughtful and respectful to each other. *Reflection: Do my words and my actions consistently communicate that my spouse is a top priority? **Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10***

January 29. Celebrate together in the good times and lean on each other in the hard times. Marriage is "for better or for worse." Your marriage will experience both extremes. When your spouse is happy, you should be the first to share in the celebration. When your spouse is sad or even heartbroken, you should be there for support. In those moments of pain your spouse won't need you to cheer them up or to offer advice. Simply be there. Hold each other. Pray together. Cry together. These moments of shared pain will become some of your most intimate shared memories. *Reflection: How can I better celebrate with my spouse in good times and better support my spouse in difficult times? **Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15***

January 30. The happiest couples are a little "weird," because they've learned that "normal" isn't working. What our world calls "normal" when it comes to marriage is actually unhealthy. When we look around at our culture, it's apparently normal for a couple to be unhappy, disconnected and eventually divorced. If you want your marriage to be healthy and happy, you must be countercultural at times. Be willing to do things others don't seem willing to do. Base your value system on God's timeless truths instead of the world's fickle trends. *Reflection: What habits to healthy couples embody that stand out as different or maybe even "weird"? **Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2***

January 31. Celebrate your spouse's strengths instead of pointing out weaknesses. When we focus on something, it starts to seem bigger. If you choose to focus on your spouse's strengths, they'll seem even bigger, but if you focus only on weaknesses and flaws, you'll see them even when they aren't really there. If you must focus on flaws, always start with your own flaws. You are the only part of the marriage that you truly have the power to change. Always be willing to build up your spouse instead of looking for ways to tear him/her down. *Reflection: Am I better at celebrating my spouse's strengths or at pointing out his/her weaknesses? **"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? Matthew 7:3***

February 1. Don't treat your spouse the way your spouse treats you. Treat your spouse the way God treats you. There's a natural tendency to want to "keep score" in marriage. We want credit for all our good deeds and we want payback for any wrongs our spouse might have committed towards. The problem with keeping score in marriage is that both spouses always lose. God gave us His best while we were at our worst, and He calls us to love each other in His perfect example of love. Give your best even when your spouse is at his/her worst. People need love most when they deserve it least. *Reflection: Do I freely give my spouse the love and grace that God has freely given me?* **Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. Romans 12:17**

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