

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What was the best marriage advice you ever received?



Shortly after my wife, Merry, and I were married in 1971, she and I were at a party. In telling what I thought was a humorous story, I sarcastically said something negative about my wife, and everyone laughed. When we got home that evening, Merry told me that I had hurt her feelings. I responded that I was only trying to be funny. She suggested we make it a practice to never say anything negative about each other in public. After some discussion, I agreed to do this.

There were a few slip-ups over the next few months, but after gentle reminders of our agreement, I developed the habit of never saying anything negative about Merry to others. She has done the same when she talks about me.

Overall, this has had a wonderful effect on our marriage. Focusing on the positive things about each other in both our public and private conversations has resulted in our building each other up rather than tearing each other down.

Bob Heiner, Tennessee, USA

I don't recall any of the advice given on my wedding day, but fortunately I had received plenty of good advice on marriage through 20 years of observing my parents. As my mom watched science fiction movies with my dad (even though she preferred musicals), I learned about putting my spouse's wants before my own. Watching my dad

consistently open doors for my mom taught me to always treat my spouse with consideration and respect. In seeing my parents go on dates—walking together or simply talking somewhere away from children—I learned that continued courtship is important, even if time and money are short. And as they fulfilled their callings willingly and took eight sometimes cantankerous children to church each week, I learned that the surest way to enjoy an eternal marriage is for both partners to stay close to the Savior.

Crystal Sexton Taggart, Washington, USA

A stake president gave me two admonitions that have served me very well:

- Never let a day go by without telling your spouse, “I love you.”
- Never let a day go by without praying together.

My wife and I implemented his advice right after we were married, and it didn’t take us long to see its emotional and spiritual benefits. We know that at least once every day we will have a point of balance and unification when we are tuned into each other and into the Lord.

My wife and I have adhered to this counsel and have been happily married for nearly 17 years.

Jon Fullmer, Utah, USA

The best marriage advice I ever received was from my dad, Richard Hopkins, who told me that an accomplishment for one person in a marriage is a victory for both. My husband, Mark, and I have made this one of the rules we live by.



GIVING AND RECEIVING HAPPINESS

“The marriage that is based upon selfishness is almost certain to fail. The one who marries

for wealth or the one who marries for prestige or social plane is certain to be disappointed. The one who marries to satisfy vanity and pride or who marries to spite or to show up another person is fooling only himself. But the one who marries to give happiness as well as receive it, to give service as well as to receive it, and who looks after the interests of the two and then the family as it comes will have a good chance that the marriage will be a happy one.”

Spencer W. Kimball, “Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 43.



If both husband and wife commit to putting the other’s needs first, selfishness is taken out of the equation.

For example, if one spouse graduates from college, it brings honor to the family and should be celebrated as a joint accomplishment. (After all, for one spouse to graduate, the other had to support the effort by sacrificing time and perhaps by contributing

financially or helping more than usual with childcare.) And now the whole family is better off because of it.

The same concept applies to other accomplishments—serving well at Church, doing well at music or sports or other talents, getting a promotion at work, and so forth.

This advice has worked so well in our 25 years of marriage that we decided to apply it to our six children as well. The accomplishment of any child is a victory for the whole family. Other children should not feel pressured to accomplish something similar, nor should they resent the success of their sibling; instead, we celebrate what one has done to bring honor to everyone.

Linley Baker, France

The best marriage advice I ever received came from my father, who says that the key to a successful marriage is to “put the other person first.” It’s simple advice, but I have found that if both husband and wife commit to putting the other’s needs and wants ahead of their own, selfishness is taken out of the equation. As I apply this counsel in my own marriage, there is less conflict and fewer arguments, which leads to more understanding and an increase in the Spirit, love, and cooperation.

For instance, when my husband was in school studying to be a civil engineer, he wanted to participate in a steel bridge-building competition. He thought it would be a good academic and career opportunity, but it would mean spending long hours at school—and away from home. I



Working together on common household tasks has given us built-in time to talk.

realized that this would require sacrifice on my part, but I remembered my dad's advice and decided that if participation on this team was important to my husband, I could put his preferences ahead of my own.

The months that my husband spent preparing for the competition ended up being a good experience not only for my husband and his team (some of whom have become good friends to our family), but also for me. In the beginning, it took a conscious effort to remind myself to think about my husband first, but the more I supported him and saw the results that came from doing so, the easier it became. My husband has in turn—many times—given me opportunities to pursue things that are important to me.

For being so simple, my father's counsel has had a huge impact.
Suzanne Affleck, Nevada, USA

The best advice I received was not to discuss important issues after 10 p.m. When the hour is late and one or both spouses are tired, discussions can more easily become heated.

When my wife and I are talking at night and notice that the discussion is not progressing, we look to the clock. If it's after 10 p.m., we end the discussion for the night.

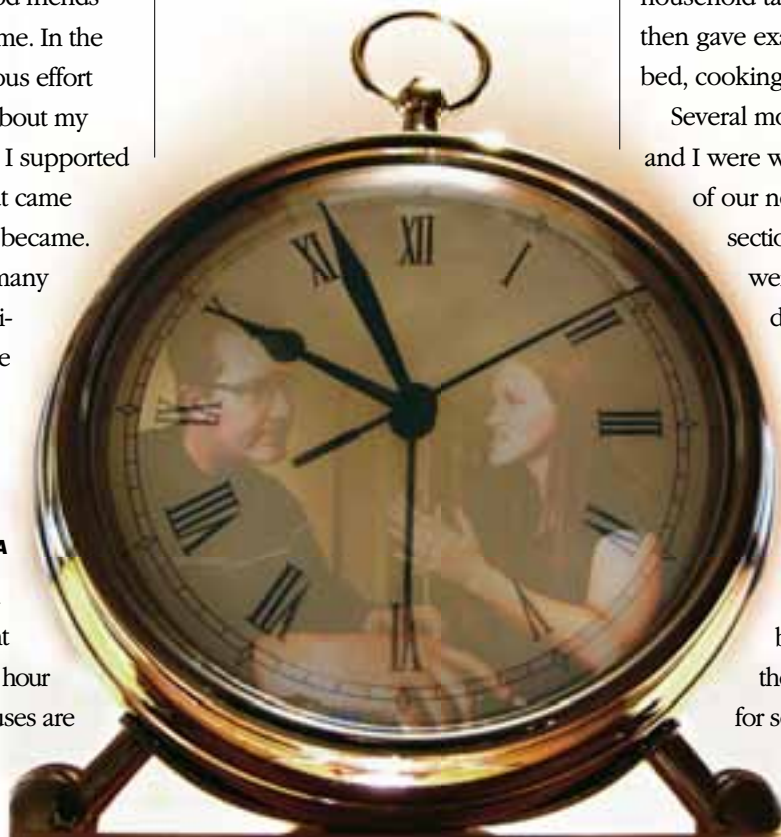
Because discussions don't always progress when it's late and we're tired, my wife and I have agreed not to talk about important issues after 10 p.m.

The next morning, both of us are more agreeable and are typically more willing to come to a compromise.

Clark Hatch, California, USA

The night before my wedding, I stayed up until 3:00 a.m. talking with my dad. Since he and my mom had been married for 50 years, I asked him if he had any marital advice for me. He suggested that I complete common household tasks with my spouse and then gave examples like making the bed, cooking, and washing the dishes.

Several months later, my husband and I were working in the backyard of our new home, him in one section and me in another. We were both content doing our different tasks, but then I remembered Dad's counsel. I shared it with my husband, and he came to assist me in the flower bed, digging holes in which I could plant mums. This turned out to be a great arrangement, as the soil had not been tilled for some time and was quite hard. The job would have been much more



*My father told me,
"Marriage is like
rowing a boat. If both
of you pull the same
way, you will go
somewhere."*



difficult for one of us to do on our own than it was for us to do together.

This kind of cooperation became a ritual for all our yard projects, from watering the lawn to making plans for the garden. Not only do we enjoy a great-looking yard, we have also gained from spending time together, planning together, and talking together.

My husband and I have discovered that love grows in a similar way to flowers and plants. The more cultivation and work we put into our relationship, the more beauty and bounty we get in return.

Elizabeth Bliss, South Carolina, USA

During an interview with our stake president shortly before my wife and I were married, he gave us several pieces of counsel. One of them was to attend the temple as often as possible. Doing so has helped us remember our covenants with the Lord and with each other. Putting those covenants at the forefront of our minds through regular temple attendance helps us remember the things that matter most, even amid the distractions of everyday life. It has reminded us of the plan of salvation and the eternal nature of families. And it has helped us center our lives on the eternal, not the temporal.

Relatively speaking, my wife and I are still newlyweds (we've been married almost two years), but we

feel that abiding by this counsel has given our marriage a wonderful start.

Kent A. Burton, Arizona, USA



WASHINGTON D.C. TEMPLE PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

My sister and brother-in-law were married in the Washington D.C. Temple, and after the ceremony, I heard their bishop give the couple this counsel: "When you can either be right or have peace, choose peace." His advice has helped me keep the right perspective with my own eternal companion. Of course, this bishop wasn't encouraging unnecessary submission; rather, he was pointing out that when spouses exercise humility to seek the greater good, both are blessed. It taught me that even when my husband and I disagree about important things, we can do so in a respectful, peaceful, and loving way.

Jolynne Dougherty, Pennsylvania, USA

The best marriage advice I ever received was from my father. He told me, "Marriage is like rowing a boat. If both of you pull the same way, you will go somewhere." That made sense to me because I remembered being in a boat with a friend, going around in circles and not making any distance because we were pulling our oars in opposite directions.

My husband, Emmitt, and I have been married for more than 50 years, and we can testify that my father's advice is sound. We set a goal to be sealed in the Washington D.C. Temple and then pulled together to reach that goal. What a wonderful blessing that is!

These two steps—setting goals and pulling together to achieve them—are important in building a happy, successful marriage.

Shirley Napier, North Carolina, USA

The day my husband, Alan, and I were married is somewhat a blur to me, but I clearly recall the ordinance worker who sealed us counseling us to keep our marriage within our marriage. Those words did not hold significance for me right away, but in the time that has passed since, they have become a cherished motto for my husband and me.

Alan and I share a high level of trust. Both of us know that we'll say only positive things about each other to outside parties.



Like other couples, we have experienced uncertainty and sorrow as well as joy and great blessings. There have been times when we could have easily turned from one another or turned to our parents before turning to each other. But by keeping our marriage within our marriage, we find that we *want* to share our ups and downs with each other. By turning to each other and then together, turning to the Lord, our marriage has become stronger, we have more easily faced our trials, and the precious moments we share have become far more meaningful.

Nicole Larkin, Kentucky, USA

As I have been deployed with the military far from home, I have had plenty of time to reflect on my marriage and on what I can do to improve it. My deployment has created challenges for our family as well as for me personally. There are many temptations, and some commonly justify temptations by rationalizing that we are so far from home nobody will ever know what we do or don't do.

But some advice I received from a priesthood leader early in my marriage has helped me resist such temptations. He counseled me, "Be the kind of

person your wife and family think that you are." That advice I received years ago has given me the strength to be the husband and father I know I need to be—the husband and father my family thinks I am. It has motivated me to live in such a way that I know that my reunion with my family will be one of joy, not of regret.

I believe that personal worthiness is key in having a successful marriage. I am grateful for the advice of my priesthood leader in helping me strive for that.

Erik Richardson, New Mexico, USA

My husband, Ron, and I had been happily married about three years when we had a little fight. I cannot remember any of the details except that I called my mother and asked if the children and I could come "home" to her for a little while.

I shall never forget the excitement

My deployment has been challenging, but a priesthood leader's advice has helped me be the kind of person that my wife and children think I am.

in her voice as she said, "Oh, yes—if you bring Ron with you!"

We never went, but that is the best marriage advice I ever received. Ron and I have now been married 55 years.

Maxine Rodgers, Canada ■

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Q&A feature will focus on the following topic:

I often feel overwhelmed because I don't feel I measure up to all that's expected of me in living the gospel. How can I learn to rejoice in the gospel when I feel like I may never be able to become or do all that the Lord requires of me?

If you would like to share your ideas, please label your submission "Joy in the Gospel" and follow the guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" on page 2. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by October 16.