



# Spiritual Tip

## Prayer Tip: Review the Answers from God that you receive.

(From: The All-Time 10 Best Tips on Prayer by Jim Stephens, [www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf](http://www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf))

Another value of writing it down the messages that seem to come from God is that you can REVIEW them later.

This gives you the opportunity to analyze with both your rational mind and your emotional heart whether the message is really from God. If you have a good friend whose spiritual wisdom you trust, I can suggest that you show it to him or her if you have doubts. It's often advisable to be cautious with spiritual messages because they can be deceiving.

The helpful messages that I attribute to God are the ones that uplift me to a very high ideal for myself and hold me to a very high standard of personal conduct. They are very forgiving and very encouraging. They are very empowering, but they are also righteous.

The kind of messages that predict a certain event at a specific time, in my experience, are not very reliable. Another example might be a message that tells you to perform a certain action which could seem crazy. God occasionally in the Bible told people to do crazy things like building an Ark, but I think that He would also give a more complete understanding of the big picture and why that was the proper action.

In time, as you pay attention and are looking for messages from God, you'll find them.

Each of us is unique and God will speak to us uniquely, but you'll know it's a message from Him. The dream or thought or experience from God will be qualitatively different from the usual. It will endure longer and remain vivid whereas others fade quickly with time.

God is willing and able at any moment to send you a message. He only needs your tuning in to His "channel" and being willing to receive it.



# Marriage Tip

## Dr. John Gottman's Marriage Tips 101

Since 1973, Dr. John Gottman has studied what he calls the "masters and disasters" of marriage. Ordinary people from the general public took part in long-term studies, and Dr. Gottman learned what makes marriages fail, what makes them succeed, and what can make marriages a source of great meaning.

By examining partners' heart rates, facial expressions, and how they talk about their relationship to each other and to other people, Dr. Gottman is able to predict with more than 90% accuracy which couples will make it, and which will not.

What advice does Dr. Gottman have to offer? Below are some of his top suggestions for how to keep your marriage strong.

**Seek help early.** The average couple waits six years before seeking help for marital problems (and keep in mind, half of all marriages that end do so in the first seven years). This means the average couple lives with unhappiness for far too long.

**Edit yourself.** Couples who avoid saying every critical thought when discussing touchy topics are consistently the happiest.

**Soften your "start up."** Arguments first "start up" because a spouse sometimes escalates the conflict from the get-go by making a critical or contemptuous remark in a confrontational tone. Bring up problems gently and without blame.

**Accept influence.** A marriage succeeds to the extent that the husband can accept influence from his wife. If a woman says, "Do you have to work Thursday night? My mother is coming that weekend, and I need your help getting ready," and her husband replies, "My plans are set, and I'm not changing them". This guy is in a shaky marriage. A husband's ability to be influenced by his wife (rather than vice-versa) is crucial because research shows women are already well practiced at accepting influence from men, and a true partnership only occurs when a husband can do so as well.

**Have high standards.** Happy couples have high standards for each other even as newlyweds. The most successful couples are those who, even as newlyweds, refused to accept hurtful behavior from one another. The lower the level of tolerance for bad behavior in the beginning of a relationship, the happier the couple is down the road.

**Successful couples know how to exit an argument.** Happy couples know how to repair the situation before an argument gets completely out of control. Successful repair attempts include: changing the topic to something completely unrelated; using humor; stroking your partner with a caring remark ("I understand that this is hard for you"); making it clear you're on common ground ("This is our problem"); backing down (in marriage, as in the martial art Aikido, you have to yield to win); and, in general, offering signs of appreciation for your partner and his or her feelings along the way ("I really appreciate and want to thank you for...."). If an argument gets too heated, take a 20-minute break, and agree to approach the topic again when you are both calm.

**Focus on the bright side.** In a happy marriage, while discussing problems, couples make at least five times as many positive statements to and about each other and their relationship as negative ones. For example, "We laugh a lot;" not, "We never have any fun". A good marriage must have a rich climate of positivity. Make deposits to your emotional bank account.

For additional resources, visit: <http://www.gottman.com>

# Parenting Tip

## Why Apologize To Your Kids?

By Joe White, Lissa Halls Johnson

### Asking Forgiveness Increases Respect

Asking for forgiveness is an admission that you've made a poor decision - and it can be humiliating to admit you're wrong - but kids say they respect their parents more when they apologize.

Nobody likes to apologize. It's embarrassing. We feel ashamed, sad, foolish.

It's tough to get those words out, even if they're the only way to move beyond the wreckage of a parent-teen conflict and start healing.

Why is that difficulty of apologizing multiplied when we need to apologize to our own kids? See whether any of these reasons might apply to you.

1. Until now, your child has looked up to you. Asking forgiveness is an admission that you're not perfect - which implies that maybe you don't always make the best choices as a parent. You're afraid this will cause your teen to doubt all your

decisions, or to find further excuse to defy you.

2. It can be humiliating to admit you're wrong. It feels like assigning yourself to the penalty box. The truth is that it takes strength to acknowledge your faults, and can help your teen relate to you as a fellow mistake-maker - but it's not much fun.

3. You want to model perfection so your teen will strive for a higher goal. Unfortunately, models of perfection discourage kids who feel like they're constantly messing up. If they can't be perfect, why try at all?

4. You fear that if you admit you're flawed, your teen won't respect you anymore. Actually, the opposite is true. Kids say they respect their parents more when they apologize.

What happens when parents apologize to their kids?

Understanding, forgiveness, closeness and love.

Does asking for forgiveness really reduce the distance between parents and teens? Can it defuse rebellion? These teens seem to think so:

"The fact that my mom is willing to humble herself and admit that she has made a mistake helps me to respect her a lot. It makes it so much easier for me to apologize and want to change when she will meet me in the middle. It also makes it easier to identify with the things she tells me and helps me to pay attention to her advice by her taking away an attitude of superiority."

"It greatly encouraged me that my dad thought it was necessary to confess his sin. It set before me an example of what is true and right. I will never forget this."

"When my parents apologize to me it lets me know that we all make mistakes when we're young and old - and helps me realize that we're all in the same boat. It helps me see that they are trying hard, too."

"When my parents tell me they're sorry, I feel as if they really do care about me and how their mistake affected me. It reminds me that they are not perfect either and that they are still learning from mistakes. Above all, their apology reminds me that they really do love and care for me."

"My parents were always very quick to apologize. This is probably

the reason that I don't remember any exact incidents where they hurt me."

"My parents have never had a problem with saying, "Sorry." It never made me feel better right away, but I couldn't stay mad at them. And it made it a lot easier to say that I was sorry when I screwed up."

"When my mom apologized, it helped me to see that she understood me. It made me feel closer to her."

"When my dad apologized to me, this greatly improved our relationship. I stopped thinking of him as perfect and started thinking of him as a human. When that happened, I realized that I could hang out with him and be friends."

I don't know about you, but I can't read those words without wanting to figure out something to apologize to my kids for!

**Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry,  
FFWPU**

**For more:**

Marriage Tips, Resources, or copies of these Sunday Inserts visit:

[www.TheMarriageLibrary.com](http://www.TheMarriageLibrary.com)

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