

Is Your Prayer Life Stuck? – Write It Down

By Rick Warren

“The LORD gave me this answer: ‘Write down clearly on tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance.’” (Habakkuk 2:2 TEV)

If you want to hear God speak, you need to withdraw to a quiet place, wait patiently and expectantly, ask God to give you a picture of what he wants to say to you, and then write down God’s responses to your questions.

In the book of Habakkuk, the Lord commands the author to “Write down clearly on tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance.” Habakkuk 2:2 (TEV).

That’s how we got the book of Habakkuk. In chapter one, Habakkuk wrote down what he said to God. And in chapter two, he wrote down what God said back to him.

That’s also how we got the book of Psalms; it is David’s quiet time. David meditated on the first five books of the Bible, the Torah, and then he wrote down his thoughts, and they’re called psalms. In many of the psalms, he starts out with what he’s feeling and then ends up with what God says.

If your prayer life is stuck in a rut, and you tend to pray the same things over and over - “God, be with this person” or “Bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies” - then here’s what you need to do: Start writing out your prayers.

“What? You mean I don’t have to say them?” That’s right! Writing them down is a prayer. God can hear it in your thoughts. Just write it down.

Is it OK to write out a prayer and then read it? Of course it is. When you’re writing it, you’re praying. When you’re reading it, you’re praying.

This is called the spiritual habit of journaling, and it’s one that all Christians should understand and practice.

A journal is not a diary. A diary is about the things you did. A journal is about the lessons you learned — the mistakes you made and how you learned from those things.

Talk It Over

- What are different ways of writing things down besides paper and pen that you’re more comfortable with?
- What has God been teaching you that you can journal about today?
- Start a prayer by writing down your answers to these questions: What attributes of God do you love? Who in your life needs God’s intervention? How do you need God to provide for you? What can you thank God for today?

Why Many Children Do Not Feel Loved!

By Dr. Gary Chapman

Most parents love their children, but many children do not feel loved.

When children don't feel loved, they do poorly in school, they don't respond well to discipline, and they are filled with anger.

I believe that inside every child is an emotional love tank. When the tank is full (the child feels loved by their parent(s)), the child grows up emotionally healthy.

But when the love tank is empty, the child will grow up with many internal struggles.

Loving children effectively requires parents to express love in a language that the child understands. In my research I discovered the following five basic love languages: physical touch, words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, and acts of service.

Every child has a special way of receiving love. When Dr. Ross Campbell and I wrote the book, **The Five Love Languages of Children**, we discovered that children too understand love in the five basic ways.

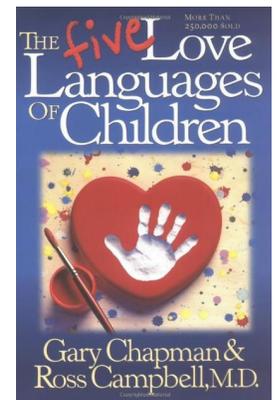
If you have several children, chances are they each understand love in a different way.

Often parents think that the ideal is to treat each child in the same way. They think of this as equality. However, a hug means more to some children than to others. So if each child gets a hug, some actually receive more effects of love than others.

Quality time for an ice cream cone or a walk in the park can mean a lot to one child but relatively little to another. A gift that you bring home can make one child really feel loved, but another hardly notices.

Discovering the primary love language of each child is the key to effectively communicating love.

Do you know how each of your children receives love the best?



Marriage Tips

Seven Secrets To A Lasting Marriage

Based on Markman, Stanley, Blumberg, and Orbuch

"I do" is only the beginning they say. With the wedding season and the stress of nuptials underway, it's easy for couples to think the hard part is over after the walk down the aisle. But relationship experts who've studied marriages over the decades say the work has just begun, especially for today's bride and groom.

"Modern marriages require more communication skills, conflict management and negotiation," says Howard Markman, a University of Denver professor.

"Instead of just fighting about money or how frequently to have sex, couples are also fighting about time spent on Facebook or whether it's OK to send a text during a romantic dinner or bring a laptop on a getaway weekend," says Markman. The updated **"Fighting for Your Marriage"**, with co-authors Scott Stanley and Susan Blumberg, reflects changes in marriage and romantic relationships from when it was first published in 1994. It also includes an instructional DVD based on the PREP strategies to handle conflict.

To foster more happiness, closeness and longevity in your marriage, here's some advice from Markham and his co-authors, and Terri Orbuch, author of "5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage From Good to Great".

DO SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Everyday issues and annoyances that accumulate over time lead to unhappiness and divorce, says Orbuch, project director of the National Institutes of Health's Early Years of Marriage Project, which has followed nearly 400

couples since they wed in 1986. Of those couples, 46 percent have divorced (a figure that is close to the national average of 40 to 45 percent).

"The toilet seat that wasn't put down becomes 'He doesn't listen to me or pay attention to me,'" Orbuch says. "That becomes 'He doesn't respect me,' and then we have a huge issue that slowly eats away at marital happiness over time."

KNOW WHEN TO HOLD THEM

When trying to discuss an issue with a partner, know when to bring it up. Avoid that moment when someone walks through the door after a long hard day, while watching TV, or when entrenched in your children's activities. And even though 11 p.m. is the most common shared downtime, don't talk about it then either. Talk when both partners are calm, and not irritated or sleepy.

BABY STEPS WITH TEXT

Orbuch suggests couples send an e-mail or text message to start an issue, not discuss or resolve one, and then set up a time to hash things out.

Orbuch says men appreciate a heads-up about difficult conversations, like to have a set appointment, like to know what's coming, and will be even happier talking the situation through if it's approached during a shared activity, such as going for a walk together.

MAINTAIN PASSIONATE SEX

Passion is high in the beginning. But injecting newness, mystery and arousal-producing activities will stoke it over time. Knowing exactly what your partner likes to do every Sunday morning is an example of "companion at love," built on friendship and support, experts say. But that won't fuel passion.

Anything new and novel shared together will surprise and increase

adrenaline. For example, take a new class together or whisk him or her away to a movie in the middle of the afternoon.

THE 1-MINUTE RULE

Spend at least that much time daily talking about anything besides work, family or the state of the relationship, be it good or bad. So what do we talk about, couples asked? Politics, sports, movies or other more meaningful things. Ask your partner what he or she is most proud of doing in the last year. Who is he or she closer to, their mom or dad? If you are on life support, should I pull the plug?

"We start out asking those questions in the beginning, but after many years of marriage, people stop asking," Orbuch says. Happy couples know what each other's top three expectations are, be it trust, respect or fidelity, for example, and they keep asking over time.

GIVE MEN THE AFFECTION THEY CRAVE

Men crave "affective affirmation" or compliments and encouragement from their wives. Women still need it from their husbands. But if they aren't getting it from them, they have access to it from their mothers, sisters, best friends and even strangers who make comments about how good their hair or clothing looks. Men don't get it from their buddies, family or from work colleagues, Orbuch said.

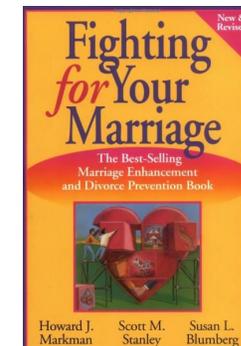
Markman tells couples to send a text during the day randomly saying, "I love you," or "I can't wait to be in bed with you tonight," rather than "What's for dinner?" Say thanks for putting on that first pot of coffee, or for making a favorite dinner.

DON'T LIVE TOGETHER UNLESS YOU ARE PLANNING A FUTURE TOGETHER

Today's couples are getting married later in life and living together more often for longer periods of time. But couples should avoid living together out of convenience (i.e., saving money) or as a test for compatibility. Markman's study found that people who lived together without any commitment to marry are 25 percent more likely to get divorced once they did marry.

"Couples today tend to slide into relationships and marriage without making a conscious decision," Markman says. "What happens to many couples is they start accumulating things, including kids, and then they get married out of pressure."

Markman, Stanley, Blumberg, and Orbuch are all well-known researchers in marriage and relationships.



Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

For more:

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