

Spiritual Tip

Prayer - Ask God Specific Questions

By Rick Warren

While you're waiting for God to speak to you, you need to be ready for God to give you a mental picture. Habakkuk 2:1 says, "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me" (NIV).

Why does he say "look to see"? Doesn't it make more sense to say he will "listen to" what God says?

God's voice is often visual. Sometimes God speaks to you by putting a mental picture or image in your mind. Some of you may think, "That's kind of weird — God putting a picture in my mind." If NASA can receive pictures from Mars, don't you think God can put a picture in your mind? Of course he can.

So how do you look for a mental image from God if you're not a visual thinker? Here are two ways that help me:

Ask God a specific question. James 1:5-6 says, "If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to tell you" (TLB). Those verses tell us three truths.

First, God wants you to ask him for advice. You're not bothering him. He's interested in every detail of your life, and he's waiting for you to ask.

Second, the more specific you are, the better, because it builds your faith when you ask God for something specific and then he answers. Don't be general in your prayers.

Third, God wants you to expect an answer. Don't pray and ask God for help unless you expect that he's going to help you.

Look into God's Word. After you withdraw and as you're waiting and watching for the Lord, you need to get into the Bible. I can't tell you how many times God has taken a verse and, even after I've read a passage a hundred times, it suddenly pops out at me, and I see something I've never seen before. God uses the Bible to give answers to your specific questions.

The Bible says, "Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in your law" (Psalm 119:18 TEV).

Ask God to show you new truths and his wisdom as you study his Word and wait on him to speak.

Talk It Over

- * What is something that you asked God for specifically? How did he respond?
- * How do you need God to provide for you today? Do you expect him to provide for you?
- * Why do you think it is so hard for us to wait on the Lord?

Marriage Tip

No. 95

5 Things Men Can Do to Stoke the Fires of Love in Marriage

By Dr. David B. Hawkins

What's love got to do with it?

Everything!

In today's world there are many that seem to believe they can be involved in a relationship, even marriage, and allow true love to be a peripheral aspect of the union. The sacrificial, committed giving talked about by the Apostle Paul seems to be absent in many relationships.

I'm working with a fifty year old man, Garth, who is much like many other forty-somethings who have awakened to find they have been spiritually, physically and emotionally lazy. They have realized, too late, that love means giving more than taking. He now finds himself alone and fearing his wife of twenty-five years may not give him another chance.

Interestingly, Garth is similar to many men who call me when their marriage is falling apart but not before. They wait until their marriage is falling apart around them before they pick up the phone. They live in near abject denial, lying to themselves about the severity of their situation, before deciding they must do something to save something that really is precious to them.

You may think I'm being too hard on men. Perhaps. However, study after study show that most men lack the ability to create close friendships, falter when it comes to intimacy in marriage, leave much of the emotional responsibilities of the family to their mate and are spiritually absent. Ouch!

Now that I've given the bad news, let's talk about what men can do to be an integral part of their marriage and family and ways they can restore their love life. Let's explore necessary steps to keep the home fires strong and vibrant.

One, step back and honestly evaluate your marriage. While the truth may initially hurt, it will also set you free. The truth will allow you to make course corrections, much as feedback on the job helps us stop drifting and move intentionally toward a healthier relationship.

Two, take responsibility for your marriage. While I certainly am not implying that men are solely responsible for the direction of the marriage, they play an instrumental role. As men take responsibility for loving their wives as Christ loved the church, sacrificially giving to her, she will most often respond lovingly.

Third, ask your mate how you can be a better partner. When asked, she will give you important information. Be gently curious, showing that you really do care about her and how she feels about the marriage. Prepare yourself for criticism and show that you value the feedback.

Fourth, set incremental goals. You will not turn your marriage around in one fell swoop. Determine one or two areas of your life and make necessary changes. Even a five or ten percent change can feel monumental to both you and your mate. For example, determine to become a better conversationalist, sharing personally with your mate for fifteen minutes a night. Go out on a date once a week. Read a self-help book together.

Finally, celebrate your marriage and your mate. Consider what would happen if you lost your mate. Divorce doesn't happen in an instant, but rather after years of neglect. You can choose to appreciate your mate and your marriage and reap wonderful benefits in the process.

In summary, love has everything to do with happiness in life. When our marriage is not doing well, we will feel the immense emotional drain from it. Invest in your marriage, and your relationship skills, as you have in your career. You'll be glad you did.

Parenting Tip

To The Parents Raising The “Shy” Girl

By Kathy West

I recognized that girl. She was me.

I once taught a group of astonishingly wise and funny 10-year-olds. They fell all over each other to share thoughts and questions—except for one, quieter girl.

She spoke only when invited and her voice got lost if others started talking, too.

One day, when a new kid joined us, we all introduced ourselves. The quieter girl paused before her turn, so a more outgoing kid jumped in. “That’s Allie. She’s quiet.”

The words—she’s quiet—were said without meanness, but also without kindness. A statement a fact. Something in the words, though, felt insufficient and incorrect. She was also a thoughtful friend, a clever artist, and a good babysitter. I cringed, hoping she wouldn’t interpret quiet as an insult or judgment.

I had done that when I was her age.

I longed to be the girl who made ten friends at recess, always spoke up, and jumped in front of the class to make people laugh. But I held back, unsure of the first thing to say. Any time I sat alone at lunch, I silently scolded myself for being too shy.

Chances are, you know a “shy” girl. Or you were one yourself.

Not all quieter girls face the same challenges. But if your quiet girl’s experience is anything like mine, you can support her in a few essential ways...

Give her words that will ease her worry.

It can start early: her inner judgment of herself, her wish to be more gregarious among strangers, her fruitless struggle to become somebody else.

Even at a young age, she notices the dazzling world and its brilliant people. And she worries that if she doesn’t somehow learn to be louder, more outgoing, more spontaneous, then something will be wrong with her. She fears she will be left behind.

Don’t call her “shy.” Shyness is not a label a girl aspires to, and so the word wounds. By calling her shy, you say that her quieter way is something to fix or change. She needs to know her sensitive nature is a strength. Equipped with more accurate words—mindful, thoughtful, or detailed—she can move through the world being gentler to herself.

Tell her she is loud enough.

She doesn’t share her detailed, interior conversation with just anyone.

She thinks before speaking—sometimes for so long that the moment passes. Add to that her naturally quiet voice, and she may feel incapable of being heard.

If she wishes for too long to be loud, she may start to believe that the only way to speak up is to get upset. She will pick verbal fights or create emotional meltdowns, just to make people hear her. It won’t work. She’ll still feel voiceless.

Listen to her. Invite her to share. Help her find familiar people and comfortable spaces where she can speak freely. And then remind her to speak in her way.

A whisper can sometimes be heard more clearly in a roomful of voices than a shout.

Little hint. She may find her voice in surprising places. Small talk’s not her friend, but she may shine in more organized spaces: in front of a classroom, behind a microphone, or on a stage. Don’t dismiss the possibilities.

Let her hurry up and hesitate.

She doesn’t mean to, but she waits.

She just wants more details before she acts. Messages from many sides will urge

her to ignore her natural hesitation, to stop being timid, to just act already.

Clearly, she won’t get anywhere if she doesn’t take a step. She won’t hit the target if she never throws the dart. But that doesn’t mean she has to grab the dart and just fling it.

Let her set her stance and take a moment to aim.

Suggest that she sit quietly with a decision before she acts on it. If she does, she will make the better choice. Every time. Not because sitting quietly is the best way for everyone to make decisions—but because it’s the best way for her.

Encourage her to forget about being forgettable.

She is an observer. She catches nuances and details.

Because she notices (and therefore remembers) things that others sometimes don’t, she will often remember, in great detail, people who do not remember her. After she’s jogged enough memories (we were in Mr. Oster’s 8th grade science class together, remember?) she may come to believe that no-one will remember her face, that her absence will not be noted.

If you believe you are forgettable, you start to behave in ways that prove you right.

Point out her tendency to discount herself, to assume that others don’t notice. Show her you notice with small gestures: a note, a thoughtful gift, time to connect. Allow her some quiet, comfortable time to be alone. A quiet girl who’s content in her own company invites others to join her.

Let her know how powerful she is when she listens.

Quiet girls get mistaken for good listeners. She might be one. She might not.

Sometimes, she won’t want to be a good listener. She doesn’t want to be a receptacle for everyone else’s stories, a sounding board for everyone else’s

troubles, tuning everyone else’s strings and never getting a moment to make a sound of her own. It’s valid for her to want to express her own voice.

But here is the secret. True listening is the surest step toward being heard.

Everyone in the world is looking for someone to witness who they are. When she becomes that witness, she connects with others in a meaningful way, deeper than small talk can take her. And since small talk fills her with dread, this is good news.

Tell her: Leave your ears open. Practice listening. It’s worth the stories you’ll hear.

Above all, I would tell her this:

When you were younger, you didn’t think of yourself as quiet or loud. You didn’t judge what you were. You were just yourself.

Be that self today—you’re enough, you’re plenty.

<http://thechildwhisperer.com/shy-girl/>

See also “bossy” girl, “louder” girl, or “dreamer” girl.

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