



Bulletin

OCTOBER 2018

A PUBLICATION OF FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases . . ." Lamentations 3:22

GOD IS FAITHFUL

BY MIKE NAPPA

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IS FOUNDATIONAL TO OUR FAITH. WITH the assurance that He fulfills His promises, our faith is meaningful and our eternal destiny is secure.

Schedule a weekend breakfast with your child to help him see God's faithfulness in action. On the selected day, get up while it's still dark. Grab some blankets and a thermos of hot chocolate, and find a place with a good view of the eastern sky. Ask: "What would happen if the sun stopped rising?"

Wait for the sunrise, then ask: "Why do you suppose God is faithful to always keep the sun shining in our lives?"

Read Lamentations 3:22-23. Discuss the following questions with your child:

- How would you summarize these Scriptures?
- How is today's sunrise an example of what God says in His Word?
- When are other times we see God's faithfulness at work in our lives?
- What are five ways we can imitate God's faithfulness this week? Let's brainstorm ideas!

Continue your early morning date by going somewhere for a special breakfast or by preparing your child's favorite breakfast at home. Wrap up your time with prayer, asking God to help the two of you always be faithful in your relationship with each other.

We have a normal marriage—with the occasional argument. Sometimes our quarrels spiral out of control. Do you have any advice on a better way to handle disagreements?

ANSWER:

Every couple will have disagreements. Here are a few positive ways to deal with them.

1. *Pick the right time and place.* Get away from the telephone, TV, email and other distractions. Pick a soothing, peaceful environment.

2. *Be prepared.* Understand that emotional events like birthdays, weddings, holidays, anniversaries and graduations are natural breeding grounds for disagreements. People tend to be "wired and tired." Try to get plenty of rest before those events, and give your spouse extra grace and forgiveness.

3. *Talk about yourself.* When discussing disagreements, learn to use "I" statements, such as "I think" or "I feel"—rather than "you say" or "you always."

4. *Listen more than you talk.* Seek to understand where your partner is coming from, even when you may not agree with his or her viewpoint. Learn to listen instead of just trying to figure out what you're going to say next.

5. *Keep your fingers to yourself.* Pointing fingers may be acceptable when correcting toddlers or pets, but it's not healthy between spouses. Pointing is a form of attacking.

6. *Keep your arguments out of the bedroom.* That's the place for unity and intimacy, not hashing out differences.

7. *Remember that it's your problem too.* If there's trouble in your relationship, it belongs to both of you.

8. *Learn to see through conflict.* Search for the real issues that often lie beneath the

surface. Say, "Wait a minute. What's the *real* problem here?"

9. *Bring God into the conversation.* Ask Him for wisdom when you can't seem to find answers. Nothing will put a heated argument on pause more quickly than two small words: "Let's pray."

10. *Remember your vows.* Don't threaten divorce during conflict. Threats will only intensify the pain—and leave scars. "For better or worse" will not be stricken from your vows simply because you're in the middle of a major disagreement.

You can't eliminate disagreements in your relationship. But by taking a proactive approach early in your marriage, you can learn to address conflict in a way that makes everyone—including the Lord—smile.

(Adapted from the *Complete Guide to the First Five Years of Marriage*, general editors Phillip J. Swihart and Wilford Wooten)



Tough Questions from Kids

Why do people get sick even when God is watching over them?

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

We have sickness in the world because sin brought it in. God does not promise that He will keep all pain and sickness away from us, although He does promise to always be with us. And, of course, we can't forget about heaven. We know that God will end all sickness there.

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY BULLETIN (ISSN 0897-537X), vol. 31, no. 9, October 2018. Mark Taylor, publisher; James Kraus, editor; Lindsey Bergsma, designer. Published monthly by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 351 Executive Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188 in cooperation with Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO. © 2018 Focus on the Family. All rights reserved. *Focus on the Family* and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks of Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920. Cover photo of woman and girl walking © Jon Fleischman | Unsplash.com. Image of man tossing girl in the air © Lauren Lulu Taylor | Unsplash.com. Image of two people sitting outdoors © Vincent Guth | Unsplash.com. Image of boy reading © Samantha Sophia | Unsplash.com. Image of couple sitting near water © Jessica Oliveira | Unsplash.com. Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Subscription \$14.00 per month per 100 copies. Canada: \$16.00 per month per 100 copies, payable in Canadian funds. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Focus on the Family, Subscription Services, P. O. Box 405, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR TEEN

An eye roll (or 20). A smashed bumper. Indifference and disrespect. Eating the last of your favorite ice cream, for crying out loud! For some parents, the teenage years test the bonds of unconditional love like no other parenting season. We can't force our children to behave respectfully, love us wholeheartedly or—let's be honest—even like to be around us. What's a parent to do?

Figuring out a teen sounds like an impossibility, akin to understanding quantum physics or capturing video of Bigfoot. While it might be impossible to wrap our minds around our teens' moody landscape and catawampus decision-making, we *can* get to know them as individuals. Sure, you know your son still gets hungry at 4 p.m. just as he did when he was 5, but do you know what his greatest fears are at 16? You might know your daughter would rather be grounded for a week than clean her room, but do you know who her best friends are and *why*?

Show love by taking time to know their evolving likes, dislikes, fears, hopes, conflicts and accomplishments. Your teens are changing quickly, which means you have the joy and responsibility of continually discovering them—who they are and who they are becoming. Showing an interest in your teens might not spark instant reciprocation, but they will likely soften when they see you genuinely care to know the real them.

—*Jessie Minassian*

BEDTIME MEMORY VERSES

I have always longed for my children to memorize Scripture, but I've abandoned nearly every memory system I've tried. Then a couple of years ago, I chose a psalm, printed it out and taped it to one of my children's bed frames.

Every night, I called the kids into that bedroom, and we recited the entire passage together before prayers. They took to the routine and could eventually recite the psalm from memory.

No matter how exhausted I was, the paper taped to the bed frame reminded me that it was time to read this psalm. Once we all had it memorized, we put up another Scripture passage.

—*Tammie Haveman*



A MARRIAGE THAT'S 'GOOD ENOUGH'



I've yet to meet an engaged couple, starry-eyed in love, who say they want their marriage to simply be "good enough." To many of us, that sounds second-rate. We long for a dreamy life with our spouse. Our hearts crave a relationship full of love and acceptance.

So it was with some confusion that I found myself agreeing with how Dr. John

Gottman describes a "good enough" marriage in an *NBC News* article: "I think the 'good enough' relationship is one in which you get treated with respect and love and affection, and those are the essential ingredients."

Gottman explains that the "good enough" relationship requires trust and commitment as a baseline for happiness and that "the good enough relationship is one that you don't have expectations that are too high or too low." So, in essence, Gottman isn't suggesting we alter our expectations and accept mediocrity; however, constantly striving for the "perfect" relationship will leave us unsatisfied.

Imagine what could happen if we simply embraced our marriage as being "good enough"—in essence, being satisfied with being loved, sharing friendship and intimacy. If we are comparing our relationship to our best friend's marriage or a relationship Hollywood concocted that portrays unrealistic perfection, we may be left feeling dissatisfied because our marriage may not stack up against them. We need to learn to be content with our relationship—neither settling nor striving for something that is unrealistic.

Whatever issues within your marriage need to be addressed, work through them openly and honestly with your spouse. Any marriage will always need improvement, and being patient during adjustment periods is essential. Also recognize and applaud what is going well in your marriage.

As Greg and I approach our 26th wedding anniversary, I'm content sitting with him and watching a Hallmark movie. Who knew that 26 years in, marriage moments like those would not only be "good enough," but also precious. Or that keeping our friendship alive through the laughter of practical jokes would be so connecting and sweet. What we have learned, more than two decades later, is that yes, our marriage is good enough!

—*Erin Smalley*