

GrowInGrace Marriage Newsletter

Issue No. 11



Life Lessons I'm Learning by Laurie

Happy Holidays, I'll take some Thanksgiving, with a side of forgiveness, but skip the bah humbug!

By the time you read this newsletter we will have celebrated Thanksgiving 🍕 and will officially start the Christmas 🎄 season. Christmas... Decorating the tree and baking cookies. Christmas parties and buying presents. Busy, busy, busy! Hustle, hustle, hustle. “Isn’t there anybody who knows the real meaning of Christmas?” says Charlie Brown. Then Linus steps forward and recites from the book of Luke, the true meaning of Christmas.

But what are you to do with strained relationships? Seeing family members that like to start a fight for the fun of it! Make sure to read the - **Holiday Extra - 5 tips to avoid Controversial Topics at the Holiday Table.**

Do I have the answer to all your holiday woes? No, but I do have the answer on where I need my focus to be, Linus had it right ... Jesus! That’s what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown.

Merry Christmas!

Love, Laurie



Featured Podcast

- Blended Kingdom Families -

Scott & Vanessa Martindale

How to Stay Thankful During the Holiday Season

[listen to podcast](#) .. (Nov 24, 2025)

*Thinking about someone?
Don't miss the opportunity
to let them know!*

Vanessa Martindale shares an encouraging message on the power of gratitude during the holiday season, especially important for blended families navigating holiday transitions, co-parenting challenges, grief, or unmet expectations.

Through Scripture, practical examples, and personal reflection, Vanessa explains how gratitude shifts our perspective, softens our hearts, strengthens relationships, and invites the peace of God into every circumstance. She offers simple practices to cultivate gratitude, along with reflection questions to help families reconnect with God and one another during the holiday season.

We pray this episode blesses you!

THINK ABOUT IT – DISCUSS IT – APPLY IT

- 1.) Do you agree that gratitude helps shift our perspective and helps us see God working in our difficulties?
- 2.) Tension can arise when we get together with others we may not see eye to eye with, especially if they've hurt us. Colossians 3:15 tells us that we are called to peace. How can we find appreciation for others and tap into the peace that God can give us?
- 3.) Vanessa mentioned how finding 3 things that you're grateful for in every situation can shift our mindset. How can you apply this practice?

Not Your Hallmark Christmas

'I Do Everyday' Family Life ® - By Lisa Lakey (12/1/25)

I love a good romance. I'm more than happy to curl up with a blanket and a bucket of popcorn and waste an entire day watching chick flicks. Throw in a snowy day, a Christmas mix-up, and a happy ending? You had me at Hallmark.

My husband, not so much. If nothing's being blown up, shot down, or wrecked (apparently emotions don't count here), he's out.

That's a pretty good picture of who we are.

I entered marriage with a Hallmark Christmas mentality. I wanted to experience love and laughter with a cute guy (nailed that part!) and experience my happily ever after. Sure, we'd have a few arguments here and there that would threaten to pull us apart, but we'd always find our way back to each other. We were "meant to be."

The problem? Our life often looks more like an action film. There have been car wrecks, verbal blow-ups, and feelings of being shot down by the one we love the most. And y'all, it rarely even snows here.

But that's reality. Hallmark movies, in all their fun, are fake. Reality? It's not so bad. It's been filled with laughs, romance, miracles, and struggles that made us stronger.

The problem would come if I compared my marriage (especially my husband and our romance level) to the fake standards of what I see in a Christmas flick.

My husband may not be an undercover prince with a castle in some unnamed European country, but he is a strong provider for our family, loves me despite my many faults, and gets my sense of humor. We may not have the mounds of snow, but we've shared carriage rides around a town square and snuggled by a fire during an ice storm (but then we lost power for two days and it was crazy cold).

Bottom line? Trade that Hallmark movie mentality for a real love story. Enjoy the romance flicks, but love your own romance more.

[Feeling the holiday spirit? Here are "10 Ways to Prepare Your Heart for Christmas."](#)

The Good Stuff: And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." ([Luke 2:10](#))

Action Points: Grab a couple of mugs of cocoa, curl up by the fireplace, and recall your own romantic moments. How did you meet? How did he propose? What stands out in your own life movie? Where have you seen challenges grow you more closely together?

Wifely Wisdom

This year, I'm focusing on "Presence" instead of "Presents"

LLE



Couples Corner

Send us your prayer requests

We're in your corner praying for your marriage!



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The 'Rose Suchak Ladder Co.'

A Holiday Lesson on Childlike Faith - by Aaron Eckard

There's a cute holiday movie that I enjoy watching during the Christmas season where Tim Allen finds himself not only in the role of Santa Claus, he actually becomes the jolly old fellow.

His character in the film has a son named Charlie who has enough imagination & faith to believe things into existence.

In Matt. 17:20, Jesus says that if we have enough faith, even the size of a mustard seed, we can accomplish great things. It may not be His will for a ladder to appear out of thin air, providing Santa a way to climb onto the roof, but I do appreciate the innocence of a child that is not limited by obstacles such as "reality".

Too often we grow up into adults who no longer have an imagination. Though having eyes, we do not see and having ears, we do not hear.

God desires that we would have the heart & faith of a child. Christmas is the perfect time of year to see the world through the eyes of a child. After all, didn't God demonstrate this by becoming a child for us.

-Aaron



Love in Action!

Sit down with your spouse and watch their favorite holiday movie, even if it's "Ernest Saves Christmas"

KnowWhatImean Vern?



- Holiday Extra -

5 Tips To Avoid Controversial Topics at the Holiday Table

The season is upon us: the time of holiday dinners, with heaping helpings of awkward conversations.

Controversial topics gravitate to the dinner table, returning unwanted year after year. Chances are, your family's holiday meals lie somewhere on the awkwardness spectrum, between Aunt Bethany's Pledge of Allegiance prayer from National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation and the "milking animals" discussion from Meet the Parents.

Every year we convince ourselves it'll be different, that somehow our celebratory meal will be full of joy, peace, and normal conversation. How do things go so horribly wrong? Could we all truly get along—even if only for 30 minutes of face-stuffing glory?

Read **Avoiding the controversial topics at your holiday table** to gain some insight to bringing some positivity around your table this season.

- FamilyLife ® [5 Tips <Link>](#)



FOR MEN ONLY

My Wife's Prayer List

'I Do Everyday' Family Life ® - By Brian Goins (12/5/25)

No. 1 on my wife's prayer list? That her husband would pray with her.

You might think a seminary-trained, church-planting pastor and FamilyLife Weekend to Remember® speaker would walk out of his prayer closet daily, grab his wife's hand, and confidently lead her before the throne room of God—all before bacon and eggs.

But for 23 of our 25 years of marriage, the No. 1 thing on my wife's prayer list was that I would pray more often with her. When I was single, I think I prayed a lot more for a wife than when God finally gave me a wife.

It's not like we didn't pray. I mean, when you log the time before dinners, holidays, kids' bedtimes, communion, and the holy flares we shot off before crucial kids' playoff games, it certainly adds up. But I knew deep down our prayer life together felt more rote than right.

I can't tell you exactly why it has been such a struggle in my married life. You can point to the usual suspects: no models, insecurities, laziness. As a student of Scripture, I'd salve my soul with the knowledge, "There's no explicit command in the Bible about a husband praying with his wife; certainly nothing about frequency."

Though the Apostle Paul said, "nourish and cherish" your wife (Ephesians 5:29). And I often heard the half-brother of Jesus slice through my sanctimonious veil with the words, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin" (James 4:17).

So yeah, no chapter and verse, but I knew what my wife needed to feel nourished and cherished. For her man to grab her hand more regularly and practice the presence of God together.

About two years ago, we picked a time that worked for both of us. It may not be daily, but it's consistent ... and my wife wrote "answered" by that prayer request.

[Looking to jump-start your prayer life? Check out The Story of Us: A Couples Devotional.](#)

- Husband Hack -

Holidays are meant to be a time of celebration, joy and laughter. We may also find that unmet expectations can bring disappointment and added stress.

Let's face it guys, women spend significantly more time and effort on holiday planning than we men do. I know because I Googled it. 😊

This holiday season, show your wife how much you appreciate everything she does.

Even if you only do this for 1-day, which would shock most ladies, use ALL-FIVE of the Love Languages to tell your wife how very much you appreciate EVERYTHING she does.

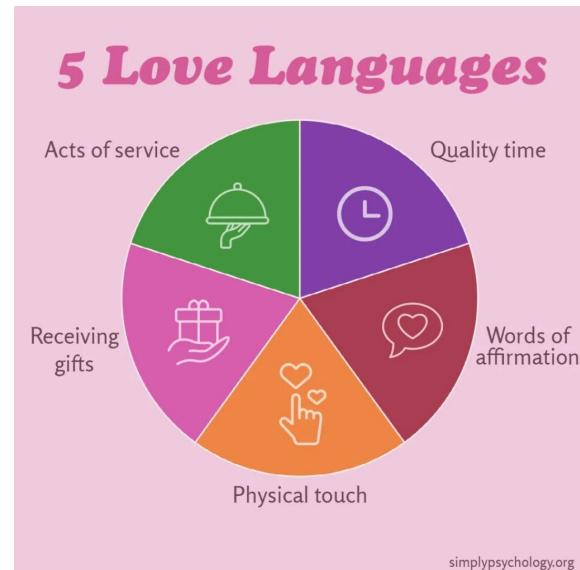
Believe me, it'll be worth the effort!

- AE ❤

The best partner is one who prays for you!



✉️ Receive the 'I Do Everyday' email daily <[link](#)>



Say it with chocolate!

