



2024 | Week 33

Reading Each Other's Headline

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We often hear the phrase, "We've just grown apart," from couples who feel their marriage has reached a standstill. It can be a heartbreaking journey to end on such a note. With the many responsibilities that come between husband and wife, it's all too easy for distance to grow.

So, how can we avoid this pitfall in our marriage? How can we genuinely stay engaged with each other's lives and maintain intimacy? Is it truly possible for spouses to grow together?

DAY 1

Despite today's various communication tools that keep us constantly connected, we still experience significant disconnection. From the rising rates of depression to the numerous divorces stating the famous line, "We've just grown apart," it's truly sad to confront the reality of disconnection in an age dominated by social media and free communication apps.

We remember those years anchored in Rey's military service. Smartphones weren't available yet, and the fastest way to send a message was through email. We couldn't expect much from phone calls other than to hear each other's voices. It was only in later years that

we began to enjoy video calls, which helped us cope with the longing for each other during long deployments. Text messaging became cheaper, providing significant support for timely communication and keeping each other updated on our day-to-day lives, despite the great distances and boundaries of deployment. Like many military couples, we didn't take any days for granted, considering the possible dangers that could arise at any moment.

When we transitioned to civilian life after Rey's 20 years of service, we thought our communication would become easier. Little did we know there would be significant adjustments as we got used to those deployment periods and the systems we had created to help us survive. Surprisingly, we discovered there were many catch-ups needed, despite our previous constant efforts to keep each other posted on our lives, even during times of great distance. It was during these transitional years that we received a reality check regarding the impact of the communication system we had developed to endure the deployment years. This time, it needed to be dismantled and replaced, as there were no longer long months apart.

The reality of disconnection and its impact on our relationship has now become starkly clear.

Conflicts became intense, and navigating our way back to connection was quite challenging. We never anticipated that miscommunication could occur so strongly in a relationship we thought we understood well. Yes, miscommunication can happen during long distances, such as deployment periods, but we often overlook that disconnection can also take place even when couples are physically together. Even with the effort of regularly checking in with each other, instances still arise that lead to miscommunication. This surprising reality triggered many issues and often led to marital conflicts, which, if not properly addressed, could tarnish our marriage. We experienced our share of this difficult season. Even with our sincerest intentions for our relationship, things often didn't turn out in a way that provided hope for reconnection. Instead, we learned to hold on to every reason that would keep us together. It wasn't until we recognized our deep need for a Savior that we found true hope. Only then did our restored relationship with Christ give us the courage to face the reality of our deteriorating

connection and the strength to restore and relearn. It wasn't an easy transition, but the days of relearning have become our consistent motivation to move forward.

The disconnection challenging marriages today goes far beyond just distance; it is deeper and painfully impacts our hearts. Miscommunication is merely one of the many heartbreaking results. If our persistence is centered on self-reliance and pride, we will continue to miss the vital truth that we need a Savior—Jesus Christ.

Keep journeying with Christ.

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 2

In yesterday's post, we mentioned the reality of communication challenges that persist today, despite the numerous means of communication available. The sad truth is that these challenges often arise in marriages. Even with constant communication in our day-to-day routines, there remains a question of whether this simple "talk" actually contributes to a couple's efforts to create a strong connection. Ultimately, we can only determine if such a "bond" can withstand life's challenges as they arise. This realization leads us to consider whether those small gestures of communication truly impact our marital relationship.

One thing we've observed and learned from our own experience is that we often lack a good sense of the impact that small gestures—like checking in on each other—can have until we learn God's true design for marriage and our roles as couples. This may seem a distant connection, but if we take time to reflect on our life experiences, particularly in our marriages, we'll find that challenges don't usually come with a strong "bang." Instead, many of our deep concerns stem from accumulated bad habits or small acts that we tend to overlook or pay little attention to.

We're accustomed to checking each other's whereabouts, perhaps because we've learned from experience how valuable that simple act is in a relationship. However, its substance and impact differ

greatly when this act is anchored in God's grace, mercy, and love. We begin to view each other differently when we understand our true identity in Christ. Similarly, we learn to see our marriage through a new lens when we grasp God's intent, will, and purpose for it.

With these realizations, we discover our carelessness in making impactful "small talk," which can sometimes lead to harmful comments. These harmful remarks are not just about hurtful words but also stem from a "lifeless" approach to communication—one that is meant to encourage and uplift our spouses but instead communicates pain.

As Solomon mentioned in Proverbs:

"The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding." (Proverbs 10:21)

While we often apply this verse to Bible teachers and counselors, in the context of marriage, it serves as a powerful reminder that our words should encourage and comfort our spouses. Even in difficult and unpleasing circumstances, clear communication and effort can lead to greater understanding.

As you consider your communication routine with your spouse today, how will you nurture this act to ensure that the messages of encouragement, comfort, and understanding are clearly conveyed?

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 3 | For Husbands

We were still stationed in Prescott, Arizona when we had our second child. I was a Navy recruiter at the time, so there were days when I came home later than usual due to work demands. One day, as I opened our door, I saw my wife, Annie, standing in front of me, as if she had rushed to the door upon hearing my arrival. She was holding our newborn son while our 4-year-old eldest was playing in the living room. I initially thought something bad had happened, but Annie quickly reassured me that everything was fine. However, the weight of the day had taken its toll on her, and she felt overwhelmed taking

care of two children so close in age, with one still in the early stages of development.

I knew we didn't have much help during this season, so my intention to ease her burden was to immediately assist her and listen to her once I got home. Since then, it has become my habit to pay attention to my wife's thoughts as she adjusts to her new role. We thought we were managing well until I transitioned out of the service and changes in our family dynamics began to unfold. Looking back, I realize how God protected us as we both desired necessary changes in our lifestyles. There is nothing wrong with wanting a better, more comfortable life, but when it comes to a young, growing family, many concerns must be seriously considered. Often, these considerations require sacrifices from both husband and wife.

For 10 years, Annie has been a stay-at-home mother for our children. Before I left the service, we were blessed with the opportunity to turn her hobby into an additional income stream for our family. Throughout those seasons, our communication evolved, even though staying in touch during the day remained the norm. By the end of the day, we often found ourselves occupied with whatever catch-up we needed—ranging from TV series to phone stuff. Serious discussions typically arose only when something required our immediate attention.

It seemed normal, but we discovered how disconnected we were when we began learning about God's design for marriage and our roles within it. It was only when we committed ourselves to placing God at the center of our marriage that we became more intentional with our "small talk." Instead of merely summarizing our activities, we made it a point to share how we encountered God during our personal quiet times. This transition wasn't easy. We still experienced heated miscommunications, but we maintained our routine. We knew we needed God in our lives, in our marriage, and in our growing family. Keeping this routine was not just about checking in with each other; it became a commitment to anchor our relationship to God. We sought His guidance, found comfort in His promises, and learned to trust Him in all circumstances.

As the Apostle Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy:

"On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:7b-8)

Fellow husbands, let's not treat "small talk" with our wives as a casual exercise or mere discipline for the sake of our marriages. Rather, establish a discipline that seeks God's righteousness and godliness. God does not leave us alone on this journey; He equips us for the life and marriage He intends for us. We have His Word—His promises and instructions—clearly laid out in the Bible. We have Jesus Christ, who modeled ultimate humility, grace, and love. Finally, we have the Holy Spirit, who powerfully influences and changes our hearts, minds, and actions.

So, submit yourself to God's authority and change the course of your marriage, this time with God at the center. Start building a routine of checking your wife's daily "headline" while conveying encouragement, comfort, and understanding.

Keep journeying with Christ Jesus.

Your Fellow Husband,
Rey

DAY 4 | For Wives

When my husband, Rey, started working again, I thought our regular morning chats would be completely disrupted. We're thankful that his work schedule not only maintains some routine; he also has the chance to come home in the middle of the day for his midday break.

Even before he left the military, he would check on me during his lunchtime and ask how my half-day was going. This routine persisted, but as we grew closer to God and committed ourselves (along with our marriage) to Him, the nature of our small talk evolved. Initially, it was just a routine conversation to keep each other updated on what we were both doing that day. However, when we decided to put God at the center of our relationship, our exchanges became more meaningful. Our small talk now

involves how we encounter God's presence during our personal quiet times and how we maintain that connection amid our daily activities. This habit not only helps us stay focused on our desire to grow in our individual faith journeys but also allows us to support each other as accountability partners while God continues to transform us.

In recent weeks, some changes at work affected our midday routine because of a training schedule. It was only 1-2 days a week, and it didn't bother us much since we could always check in via text messaging. While it's not as fulfilling as having a conversation over brunch, a simple text was enough to see how our day was going. Just the other day, I was pleasantly surprised when Rey found the time to call, allowing us to share not only updates on our tasks but also God's messages to us that morning.

I've noticed how we're giving more attention to and looking forward to how God guides us each day. We're continually encouraging each other as we navigate difficult issues that require our attention. As God transforms us and changes the direction of our lives and our marriage, we are facing spiritual battles between our flesh desires and His will. As the Apostle Paul mentioned in Galatians:

"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." (Galatians 5:17)

In this world that shines a light on selfish desires and a culture of self-reliance, the spiritual realm is often overlooked. Our ignorance of the Holy Spirit and the works and temptations of Satan continue to keep us away from God. Even when we attempt to keep up with these "religious" activities, we may experience moral blindness regarding the Holy Spirit and Satan's influences, and how these two impact our lives.

So even in the simplest effort of checking in with our spouse, as we maintain that connection while God transforms us and every facet of our marriage, we will surely face painful challenges because our "old" selves are dying. How are we going to navigate this journey if we fail to commit ourselves to constant declarations and

acts of surrender to His grace, mercy, and love? If we truly walk this life with Christ, the process of "dying to our old selves" genuinely occurs. It's not a one-time declaration of faith but a moment-to-moment choice to follow Jesus Christ, be influenced by the Holy Spirit, and obey God's commands. In doing so, we truly experience what it means to rely on His grace.

It's only by God's grace that Rey and I commit ourselves to journey together as God continuously works in us and our family. Our prayer is that many couples would become curious about Jesus and make the life-changing decision to place Him at the center of their marriages.

Keep journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Wife,

Annie

DAY 5

Truly, asking our spouses a simple, "How are you?" can go a long way. Although we know how impactful this gesture can be for our marriage, we cannot deny that it doesn't always yield positive outcomes. Two factors we've noticed and personally experienced regarding the "not-so-pleasing" aspects of this gesture are:

Inconsistency

As mentioned in previous posts this week, we developed this routine early in our marriage. Our sincere intent to maintain this habit is often challenged by changes in schedules or ongoing conflicts. When misunderstandings arise, we miss the chance to engage in simple conversation. Even when important matters require our regular updates, the flow of conversation may lack encouragement and love. Instances like this truly affect the consistency of this simple yet impactful gesture.

Careless Comments Leading to Heated Discussions

Just a couple of days ago, while enjoying brunch together, a simple update shared over our meal received a sarcastic comment. Responding to the sarcasm can be provoking, often stirring negative emotions. Thank God

we were quick to recognize the moment and choose “understanding,” which helped diffuse the sarcasm.

Even with our best efforts to check in on our spouse’s “daily headlines,” we will always face challenges related to these two factors. You may have experienced this in your marriage, which may have affected or eliminated the value of this “simple check-in.” Or perhaps it’s happening now, highlighting the need for better communication between couples.

So, how can we restore the sincerity of this simple act? How can we ensure it becomes a valuable factor in enhancing our communication and strengthening our marriage?

Accepting the truth that we all have tendencies to fall into one of these dangerous zones is a good starting point for finding a better source to equip us to keep our commitment to our spouses. Acknowledging this builds healthy self-awareness that can lead us to rely on God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot establish a connection with the Holy Spirit if we don’t make a serious choice to accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. By nature, we are often unaware of the Holy Spirit’s presence, its important role in our daily lives, and our great need to depend on Him. It takes a continuous journey to learn, accept, and be influenced by the Holy Spirit. If we delay in embracing this, we risk journeying through life collecting the consequences of poor communication in our marriages.

Another important factor often disregarded is the existence and active participation of Satan in our marriages and lives today. Satan has been busy since Adam and Eve, and this “pleasing fruit” has now turned into the avenue for couples’ “small talk.” As 1 Peter 5:8 reminds us, he is waiting for us to take the bait, often stemming from sarcastic or unwelcoming comments, leading to heated discussions. We wish we could share practical ways to remain alert to this. Like you, we are also working to stay vigilant, relying on God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can see how relying on God’s grace and the Holy Spirit can lead to progress—or even breakthroughs. The key point is that we cannot have an experience with the Holy Spirit unless we allow ourselves to be influenced by

Him. We will not be influenced if we journey through life unaware and uninformed, rather than being intentional in seeking His guidance. Finally, this awareness and intention will not occur if we do not accept Jesus Christ or continually choose Him moment by moment, reminding ourselves of our commitment to the Gospel message.

It’s your choice: Will you stop the cycle of poor communication in your marriage or make a radical decision to take a different route—this time with Christ Jesus?

[If you haven’t accepted Jesus Christ, we have a collection of information to guide you in taking this initial step.](#)

[If you want to learn more about the Holy Spirit, you can view the curated resources through this link.](#)

[If you haven’t had a chance to take a closer look at and understand Satan’s tactics in our lives today, here’s a helpful article by Thomas Tarrants.](#)

Embrace radical change by being intentional in discovering the truth and applying it to your life and marriage with the help of our [DRASH 5 Steps Learning Method](#).

Keep journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie



Let's embark on a comprehensive learning experience with this week's topic by following the **D.R.A.S.H. - 5 Steps of Learning Method!**

Step 1 | Discover the Truth

- In the Bible verses mentioned in this week's topic, "Reading Each Other's Headlines"—(a) Proverbs 10:21, (b) 1 Timothy 4:7b-8, (c) Galatians 5:17, and (d) 1 Peter 5:8—what did you learn, particularly about the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives and marriages today, as well as about Satan's continuous temptation for division in marriage?

Step 2 | Reflect and Meditate on the Truth

- How do the Biblical truths mentioned in this week's topic relate to your faith journey, your marriage today, and even your relationships with others? Take a moment to meditate on these connections.

Step 3 | Apply the Truth

- Based on this week's topic and the truths that resonated with you, what actions do you plan to take in the coming days? Set a meaningful goal that supports your spouse and strengthens your marital relationship.
- What old habits or practices do you need to change as a result of your discoveries and understanding of this week's topic? How do you plan to implement these changes?

Step 4 | Share

- How and when do you plan to share your insights about this week's topic, "Date for 3, Instead of 2?!" with your spouse or your CJ² Fellows? Sharing can deepen understanding and foster accountability.

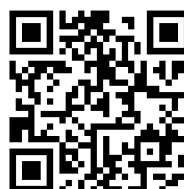
Step 5 | Help in Navigating the Truth

- Identify specific learning points from this week's topic, that encourage you to transform conviction into action. In what ways do you need assistance in navigating the journey to apply these learnings?

We pray that you encounter God through this week's topic. May His grace turn your learning experience into a transformative journey, leading to testimonies of breakthroughs that further strengthen your walk with Christ Jesus!

Let us know how this guide has helped you!

May this study tool be effective and helpful for every fellow seeker and believer who is intentionally journeying with Jesus Christ. We would be grateful to hear how this tool has significantly impacted your journey and your relationships with your spouse and others. Please share your feedback or experiences through this [link](#) (or scan QR Code)



Couples' Journey with Christ Jesus

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