

99

THOUGHTS
ON MARRIAGE
& MINISTRY

PRIORITIZING THE
"HOLYMESS" OF
MATRIMONY

JAKE & MELISSA KIRCHER





YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER

99 Thoughts on Marriage & Ministry

Prioritizing the “HolyMess” of Matrimony

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Dedicated to Glenn...



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INTRODUCTION: MARRIAGE AND MINISTRY

Couples who hold church leadership or staff positions often believe that they shouldn't have any problems, especially when it comes to marriage and family. If someone were to find out how imperfect they really were, it would mean that they'd be considered unfit for their job or role. However, this mindset is completely false.

We've had numerous conversations with ministry couples who really struggle in their marriages and feel embarrassed and alone in their problems. Ministry has a propensity to demand much from us professionally, personally, and spiritually. Trust us, if you're struggling, you are not alone!

We like to define marriage as a “holymess.” The holy parts of a relationship go hand in hand with the messy parts—and, in fact, you can't have one without the other. The times when things are great get us through the rough patches, and the rough patches help us learn, grow, and pull closer together.

This book stems from our own personal holymess. We share these thoughts with you because we've learned them all the hard way! Some days it feels like all we do is fail. Yet every mess, problem, heartache, and struggle has matured us individually and as a couple. And we'll keep on learning. It's a process, this marriage thing.

We hope and pray that *99 Thoughts on Ministry & Marriage* will challenge both you and your spouse, and encourage you to work toward a strong, healthy, holymess marriage.

Jake and Melissa

SECTION 1

MARRIAGE BASICS



One of the biggest lessons we've learned so far is that ministry should never come before marriage.

Five years ago, Jake was a part-time youth pastor working more than 70 hours a week between his church position and two side jobs. He burned out fast. This took a huge toll on our marriage. It was very difficult to accept that after only two years of marriage, our relationship was crumbling. We recognized that we needed help. As we got professional counseling and began to share the truth about our relationship with friends, we realized that our priorities and pace of life were not honoring to God. We had ignored our marriage for the sake of the church and it only brought destruction.

As we transitioned to a new church, we began to put our marriage first. The amazing thing was that both our marriage and the ministry were the better for it! Here are a number of the things we've learned from counselors, friends, books, and seminars about the basics of keeping a marriage healthy and putting it first.

4 THOUGHTS ON KEEPING ROMANCE ALIVE

1. DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE

If it isn't broken, don't fix it. Many people use this motto when they think about marriage, but couples who ignore their relationship until problems surface do so at their own peril. A good marriage is a proactive one. This means that romance, intimacy, and connection should be a daily consideration of both spouses. Couples should make regular, consistent efforts to foster these three key ingredients of a healthy marriage. For example, both spouses can work on saying affirming things to each other every day, can talk over the dinner table, or can engage in a long, passionate kiss before leaving for work. The danger in letting your marriage slide is that problems often start out small but fester and grow until the gap between you and your spouse has widened to serious proportions. Don't wait until it's too late; do something today

to encourage romance, intimacy, and connection in your marriage.

2. TRY NEW THINGS

Part of the fun in marriage (and life) is trying new things together. This could be as simple as sampling food from another country for the first time or as involved as planning a trip to another country. Couples might want to be even more adventurous and try things that confront their fears, such as jumping out of a plane or going whitewater rafting. Whatever it is, make sure to do it as a team. When a couple can share new experiences, overcome challenges, and create unique memories together, the relationship becomes fun and exciting. Intimacy is forged during these times, and the fires of passion are often stirred up. Never underestimate the power of trying something new.

3. KEEP DATE NIGHT FRESH

The healthy habit of weekly date nights is familiar to many couples. But even when these dates are scheduled and prioritized, they can begin to feel stale and routine. It is hard to figure out what to do week after week. Here are a few creative date night ideas to keep things fresh:

- Get dressed up and go out for dinner at a fast food joint, and then go to a local arcade for some air hockey and video games—extra points if you wear heels and a suit.
- Use a GPS or phone to pick a random restaurant and go there. Make sure you're both in a flexible mood, as part of the fun is getting lost and trying new things.
- Search online or dig through a cookbook for new recipes. Head to the grocery store to get the ingredients and then cook the meal together. Enjoy with a glass of your favorite beverage and a movie.

Want more? Visit holymessofmarriage.com and click on “Creative Date Night Ideas,” where you can find an idea for every week of the year.

4. DUAL RESPONSIBILITY

In many marriages, one spouse expects the other to initiate romance. But not only is this expectation unfair, it also can create serious tension. Both spouses need to initiate romance, which includes communication, flirting, thoughtfulness, quality time, and sex. It’s the job of both the husband and wife to make their significant other feel loved and wanted, and to make the effort to keep intimacy alive in the relationship. No doubt about it, romance takes effort, especially after a couple has been married for a while. If the effort isn’t shared, one spouse will feel exhausted and resentful, and the other will feel hurt and angry. Couples shouldn’t worry about what the other spouse is or isn’t doing but should take ownership of their own actions and initiate romance without expecting anything in return. If both can do this,

the relationship will become balanced, healthy, and full of tenderness and love.

5 WAYS TO CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

5. THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES

In his book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman explains the main methods that people use to give or receive love:

1. Physical touch (which includes more than just sex)
2. Gifts
3. Acts of service
4. Words of affirmation
5. Quality time

It is important to identify your own love language and also to understand the love language of your spouse. Typically, a person has one main way they feel loved and then shows love to others using the same method. If Melissa needs quality time to feel loved, she also shows love to Jake by giving him quality time—even though his love language is words of affirmation. Spouses can feel disconnected and unloved simply because they are speaking their own love language, instead of the other person’s language. Learn to speak your spouse’s language, too.

6. BUSINESS MEETING

Marriage can often feel like a business. On a daily basis, couples must hash out schedules, finances, job issues, home needs, kids, errands, and so on. It becomes easy to allow these things to take over life and dominate conversations. When this happens, it’s natural to feel emotionally disconnected from each other. A healthy way to handle this problem is to have a regular business meeting once a week,

every other week, or once a month—whatever works best for your needs. During this meeting, tackle as many of the decisions and business-type issues as you can. Obviously, immediate needs will pop up during the week and have to be addressed, but having a regular business meeting will cut down on the amount of time you spend each day discussing responsibilities and will free up that time for fun conversations. We have found it very helpful to have our business meetings during walks. Being outside and active keeps tensions low and the conversation focused on the issues at hand.

7. KEEP IT LIGHT

Another way to avoid a stale marriage is to have fun together. Laugh together when your kids say something ridiculous, go out for ice cream, flirt as you make dinner, try a new dog park, make a mess, buy something frivolous, go hiking, or find a hidden beach. Do whatever you and your spouse need to do to have fun. Keep it light, and you'll be all right for the long haul.



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