

## Take Time to Enjoy Life!

As I (Rick) was seeking Father about what to share with this next Marriage Encouragement, I was awakened early in the morning three weeks ago with this topic being spoken into my heart. Since then, the last several weeks have been full of helping people deal with depression and fears about the lockdown and COVID 19 vaccinations, a couple moving towards divorce, and my own frustrations from the chaos and turmoil in our country since the election fiasco in November 2020. The problems were trying to get bigger than my relationship with Father and my wife and my relational circuits were getting dimmer! Fortunately, over the years Sue and I have started developing some healthier ways to stay relational and return to joy, so we have been able to keep a positive focus and cast all the cares on the Father during this time!

As I have thought more about the idea of taking time to enjoy my life, I realize how much I have changed over my 72 years of life and 50+ years of marriage. For many of those years, I was very passive, shy, withdrawn, avoided conflict, and stayed busy with my job and doing projects. Unfortunately, my relationship with Sue and my two sons suffered from a husband and father who was not there emotionally, unable to give much love and nurture, or was physically gone a lot working and being involved in other activities like National Guard. Even when I was home, I wasn't available to build healthy relationships. When I look back, I realize for the first 50 years of my life I missed a lot of opportunities to enjoy life the way Father wants me to. Therefore, I would like to spend the rest of my article sharing with you some of the things I have learned and wish I would had implemented earlier in my own life!



**Celebrate life - Enjoy the moment** You don't have to go on some expensive or exotic trip to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. Sue and I keep a lookout for pretty sunrises and sunsets when we are at home or walking. Father puts on some spectacular displays of yellows, oranges, and reds in the sky that put a smile on our face and joy in our heart! It's even better when we take the time to hold each other and watch the "light show" together! When we take walks alone or together, we are constantly looking for that pretty flower or flowering tree or bush that lighten our spirits, and we express our appreciation to our creative heavenly Father! We have several young children that live around us and it's always fun to pause and watch their joyful and carefree play with each other as they run squealing through water sprinklers or imagine going on some great adventure. It always brings back good feelings about when our two boys were young and we played with them!



**Enjoy your children** If you're blessed to still have children in the home with you, then take time to have fun together as often as possible. Wrestle with them; engage in activities together that test their strengths and skills; encourage them and be their best cheerleader; have game nights and family movie nights. Do things that will let them know that you are pleased to be with them and love them just where they're at right now. If there was one thing that I wished I could do over again, it would be to spend more time interacting with my two boys growing up. I missed out on a lot of the rich fellowship and comradery during those tender and formidable years when they were young.



**Enjoy your spouse** On purpose, make time to connect with your spouse every possible day, even when travelling by phone or Facetime. I really found out the difference between quality time together and just being in the same room or house when I retired. Sue always wanted

more time with me, so I thought when I retired, she would finally be happy since I was now home 24/7. She still wasn't satisfied until I finally started not only being there, but looking into her eyes, engaging in meaningful conversation, and physically touching! Start having a fun night every week and plan fun activities to do together. Watch and do things that make you laugh or bring a smile to your face. Do and say things that will let your spouse know that you really love and cherish them and are pleased to be with them. Touch! Hug! Kiss! Hold hands! Put your arm around their shoulder or waist! Keep the passion alive in your marriage! Be creative and sexy! Help each other and support their goals and the desires of their heart. Become one of God's unbeatable teams!



**Enjoy each day together** Whether you live to be a 120 or not, life is still too short not to enjoy it to the fullest every day! Each day and each moment is too precious to let it go to waste. Sue and I on purpose are taking more time to just enjoy what is around us and each other. The level of joy and peace that we now experience in our marriage has made us more sensitive to when things start to get out of focus or balance in our marriage. We are now quick to stop negative emotions and feelings from affecting our love for each other or let problems get bigger than our relationship. We help each other get back to joy, peace, and rest as quick as possible. To help us get there, we might tell each other a story about some fun or positive thing we have done together and express how that makes us feel just thinking about it. Or we also might quiet ourselves with some deep breathing, sit facing each other, look into their eyes, and express something we appreciate about each other. You'll be amazed how quickly that can change the atmosphere in the home!

## **Be a joy starter too in your marriage and home!**

### **Dialogue Questions**

1. What are five things that we could change in our marriage that would bring more joy to each other? Express how each one would help you enjoy your spouse more and how that makes you feel.
2. Make a list of ten things that you appreciate about your spouse. As you write down each one, how does that make you feel? (Keep the lists handy and bring them out to help calm a difficult communication, to lighten up some heavy or overwhelming situation, or when you might be having some negative thoughts about your spouse!)

### ***Fun Night Ideas***

1. Come up with a list of your spouse's best qualities and character using each letter of the alphabet. Do this together as a fun activity or make separate lists and then share them with each other. (You may have to be creative or have some fun with some of those more "difficult" letters like "x" and "z")
2. Explore a new area around where you live. Just start driving and when you come to intersections randomly turn one way or the other. You can also follow yourself on a map or iPhone and chose which way to turn from the map in case you're concerned about getting lost! Stop and enjoy any special scenery, buildings, small towns or stores you discover along the way. Finish the trip by stopping for some sweet treats to share together!