

The
ONE
YEAR®

SIGNATURE
SERIES



THE ONE YEAR®

LOVE TALK

Devotional

FOR COUPLES

DRS. LES & LESLIE

PARROTT

Les Parrott
Leslie Parrott



See You
Lillian Parrott

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The One Year Love Talk Devotional for Couples

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INTRODUCTION

Most people fail in the starting. —MAUREEN FALCONE

WE'VE GOT A CONFESSION to make right at the start. The two of us are busy. Sometimes hurried and harried. We live in a busy household in the city of Seattle with two little boys and a jam-packed schedule. We feel the press of impending deadlines. We don't always have the luxury of time to talk like we want. But that's not our confession—that's life!

The confession is that we wrote this One Year devotional for ourselves as much as we did for you. It's not a hard-hitting, roll-up-your-sleeves kind of book with challenging techniques, tips, and tests. We've written plenty of those kinds of books, but this is not one of them. This is more contemplative, reflective. Not so much a study in "how-tos" as it is an experience in having time to talk about what matters most as you walk together with God.

Along the way we've found something to be true for us that may become true for you as you read these daily meditations together. Sometimes we feel as though we are shoehorning into our lives these four or five minutes of reading and talking and sometimes praying. On occasion, we feel as though we are even forcing it. "There, we've had our 'time together,'" kind of idea. "Now we can check that off our list and get back to the real tasks at hand." You might feel the same way occasionally as you go through these pages.

That's okay. Some days you'll have more time than others. What we have also found is that the daily effort, even if it was very little, seemed to make a big difference. In fact, we've come to call these little meditations our "penny moments." Why? Well, because pennies are a dime a dozen, so to speak. Without much effort, one could find a penny on the floor or in a parking lot. And without much effort you can spend five minutes at some point in your day on a meditation from this book. No big deal.

Or so it seems.

In truth, these penny moments seem to add up when a husband and wife begin to collect them, just like actual pennies do, and even compound. For example, did you know that a one-cent-per-case increase of Coca-Cola would bring the company an additional \$45 million a year? Or that if Krispy Kreme increased the cost of each donut by one penny, the company would increase profits by \$27 million?

It's hard to believe, but it's true. And it may seem hard to believe that the few minutes you'll spend each day, over the course of using this book for a year, could have a huge payoff, but we are confident that it will.

It says a great deal about you and your marriage that you have decided to start this process. We wish you every success as you join your spirits together in this daily routine.

Les and Leslie Parrott
Seattle, Washington

SETTING YOUR SAIL FOR THE COMING YEAR

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. PROVERBS 3:5-6

YOU’RE DRIVING TO A NEW location when the following takes place:

“Does this seem right to you?” she asks.

“I’m not sure, but let’s see what’s up the road a bit,” he replies.

“Why don’t we ask for directions,” she urges.

That’s when you know you have arrived at one of those prototypical marriage moments. And that’s when your husband begins to drive faster, right? “I know where I’m going,” he will say, as if he’s suddenly tuned into an internal gyroscope that only he can read.

We all know an experience like this. And more than likely we will repeat it many times. But when it comes to setting out on the metaphorical journey of marriage each year, we can’t afford to wander without a clear sense of direction. So we dedicate this first meditation to helping you set your sail for the coming year.

What does it mean to set your sail? It means being proactive about where you’d like to be as a couple twelve months from now. Rather than simply reacting to outside forces, it means taking charge and sitting in the driver’s seat. Far too many couples ride like passengers on a bumpy bus, watching the scenery flash by their window as life passes by.

We’ll be honest. Setting your sail for the coming year is not easy. It requires initiative. It will ask that you take responsibility for the condition of your marriage. It will then demand that you make the sacrifices to make your dreams a reality. In other words, the kind of marriage you want will be forged by your efforts. You will never achieve your ideal marriage as a mere passenger; you and your spouse must have a hand on the wheel. It is as George Bernard Shaw concluded, in his play *Man and Superman*: “Hell is to drift, heaven is to steer.”

Some couples look for any reason to avoid charting their courses; they go through life piling one excuse on top of another for the state of their marriage: fate, in-laws, lack of money, temperament, the government, or even their church. Setting your sail does away with the blame game and puts an end to excuses. It gives you the opportunity to make your marriage everything you want it to be.

Take a moment here at the beginning of a new year to talk with each other about where you want your marriage to be in twelve months. Be as concrete as you can: What awaits your relationship out on the horizon in a year’s time, and what can you do to ensure that you will get to the destination you desire?

Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction. —ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY



JANUARY 2

THE MISSION OF YOUR MARRIAGE

The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control." Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD. PSALM 32:8-10

FEW OBSTACLES CAN deter a person who has a passionate mission. It's what propelled William Tyndale to work for years in translating the Bible into English for a lay readership of the sixteenth century. It's what emboldened John Adams to envision a new nation, the Wright brothers to build the first successful airplane, and NASA to land a man on the moon. Obstacles abounded in every case, but it was a mission that kept them going.

If you don't see the value of having a mission or purpose, you need to know about Ramchandra Das, who lives in Bihar, India. In order to access nearby fields for food and work, Das and his fellow villagers had to take a 4.3-mile trek around a mountain. In time, he and the villagers grew weary of this obstacle, and Das became a man on a mission. With just a hammer and chisel, he cut a 33-foot-long, 13-foot-wide tunnel through a narrow area of the mountain. It took him fourteen years.

But Das wasn't the first person to embody such a mission. He was inspired by another villager, who cut a 393-foot-long, 33-foot-wide, 26-foot-high passage through another mountain so that villagers could reach a local hospital. That man landed on his mission when his wife died because he was unable to get her to the hospital.

Few obstacles can deter a person with a passionate mission. That's why, on this second day of the new year, we want to challenge you to explore your mission as a couple in your marriage. It goes right along with setting your sail for the coming year. In fact, what we are proposing is nothing short of building a compass for your relationship—a compass in the form of a marital mission statement.

We know this may sound intimidating—or corporate—but it's easier than you think. Simply begin with the words: "Our purpose as a married couple is . . ." We know that could lead in a hundred different directions, but how would you two finish that sentence? What comes to mind first? Take a stab at it. There are no right or wrong answers. This is simply a start in the process of articulating the mission of your marriage. So draft some ideas and don't get hung up on making this the perfect and ultimate statement. You're not writing it in stone. You're just setting a measure for yourself to gauge in the coming months. Try it today.



Intimate relationships cannot substitute for a life plan. But to have any meaning or viability at all, a life plan must include intimate relationships. —HARRIET LERNER

IN GOD WE TRUST?

You are God, O Sovereign LORD. Your words are truth, and you have promised these good things to your servant. 2 SAMUEL 7:28

IN HIS BOOK *RUTHLESS TRUST*, Brennan Manning tells a poignant story about the brilliant ethicist John Kavanaugh, who worked for three months at “the house of the dying” in Calcutta. Kavanaugh was seeking clear direction on how best to spend the rest of his life. On the first morning there he met Mother Teresa, who asked what she could do for him. When Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him, she asked what she could pray for. He said, “Pray that I have clarity.”

She said firmly, “No, I will not do that. Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of.” When Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have the clarity he longed for, she laughed and said, “I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God.”

How does that strike you? If you’re like us, it’s a bit jolting. After all, we all want clarity to know what God wants us to do! But once we feel we have the clarity we’re looking for, we are far less likely to depend on God’s continuing guidance. In the last two days you have given some thought to the direction you want for your marriage in this coming year. You have begun to “set the sail.” And you’ve also considered your marital mission, viewing it as a kind of compass for where you are heading. And if you’ve done this with any sincerity and effort, you are likely feeling somewhat secure in knowing where you’re going and what you need to do. But we would be remiss if we didn’t point out that no matter how mission-minded you are, and no matter how clearly you see your goals, you are certain to stumble along the way. You are certain to encounter a jolt or experience dark clouds that seem to linger too long. In these times, it’s your trust in God that will see you through.

Read Deuteronomy 1:30-33 together as though it were written specifically for the two of you. Think about its imagery and how it can apply to your marriage journey.

This is our prayer for you as you’re setting your sail for the coming year of married life: that in the times when you have clarity and in the times when you don’t, that you would always trust God to go ahead of you and to care for you.

Courage, brother, do not stumble, though thy path be dark as night: There’s a star to guide the humble: Trust in God and do the right. Let the road be rough and dreary, and its end far out of sight, foot it bravely; strong or weary, . . . trust in God, and do the right.

—NORMAN MACLEOD



YOUR PERSONAL TIME CAPSULE

In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name. MALACHI 3:16

TUCKED AWAY IN THE corner of the basement of our house is a tightly wrapped box labeled, “For John Parrott—to be opened on his sixteenth birthday.” There’s a similar box earmarked for John’s little brother, Jackson.

What does each of these homemade time capsules contain? A copy of the newspaper on the day the boy was born, his birth announcement, a letter from Mom and Dad, and about a half dozen trinkets, photos, and memorabilia that are sure to generate conversation for a sixteen-year-old boy when he opens it on his birthday.

Time capsules aren’t just for kids, of course. Instant archaeology has long been created by civic groups, schools, churches, and businesses. The first such capsule of note in America was the dream of a Civil War widow, Mrs. Charles Deihm. At the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, Mrs. Deihm closed up some commemorative items in a “century safe” to be opened in 1976. President Ford had it duly unsealed, revealing several items of historic Americana.

Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, daughter of the publisher of the *New York Times*, buried a time capsule in the Times Tower in 1904 and was on hand to open it in 1964. In 1977 a two-disc gold record set titled *Sounds of Earth* was mounted on the *Voyager 2* spacecraft before its launch. The set includes recordings of Chuck Berry, Mozart, and a human kiss, as well as instructions for playing them.

There’s something intriguing to the human spirit about leaving messages and artifacts for future delivery. And it’s a pretty good exercise to consider what you might put in a personal time capsule—especially at the start of a new year. That’s why we want to suggest you consider a time capsule for your marriage. Whether you actually build one or not, consider what you might put into your time capsule. If it were to be opened in one hundred years by your grandchildren and great-grandchildren and you wanted them to know about your relationship specifically, what would you include? What artifacts would you want them to see and talk about as they relate to your marriage? It’s a useful exercise, one that may help you be more intentional about your marital legacy.

While you’re at it, what would you place in a time capsule to be opened on your fiftieth wedding anniversary? Do any artifacts come to mind? How about a simple letter from each of you to the other that won’t be read until that day?



One of the truths about time capsules is that they are as much for the here and now as they are for the future. —CATHLEEN O’CONNELL

DOING GOOD TOGETHER

Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. GALATIANS 6:10

THE FILM PEARL HARBOR tells the story of two friends, Rafe and Danny, who survive the attack on Pearl Harbor and enter into World War II as fighter pilots.

In response to the Japanese attack, the Americans plan a risky, top-secret strike on Japan called the Doolittle Raid, and Rafe and Danny are recruited for the mission. Because of the tremendous risk, Colonel Jimmy Doolittle gives every pilot the choice to back out, but they all choose to go.

On the aircraft carrier en route to Japan, Rafe and Danny are painting logos on their airplanes when Danny quips, “Hey, Red, you think they picked us because we’re young and dumb?”

“No, Goose. We’re the tip of the sword,” says Rafe.

Colonel Doolittle, off in the shadows, looks at his two key pilots and tells his fellow commander, “We may lose this battle, but we’re going to win this war. You know how I know?”

Doolittle points at Rafe and Danny. “Them—because they are rare. At times like these you see them stepping forward.” After a long pause, he adds, “There’s nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.”

And he’s right. A volunteer is a person who is working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for his or her time or services. Like Rafe and Danny, volunteers feel the mission deep in their hearts. It compels them.

Chances are, at some point you have each volunteered for something or someone. But have you considered volunteering for something together as a couple? Does that fit into your mission for the year? We raise the question because volunteering as a husband-and-wife team is sure to strengthen your relationship—but not only that, it’s sure to help you leave a legacy as well. As writer Albert Pike has said, “What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”

So what act of kindness for others can you do together? What is the need around you? Is it mentoring a younger, less experienced couple? Maybe it’s caring for an elderly shut-in who has few visitors. Or helping out in your church’s youth program. Whatever the activity, we urge you to build it into your own mission for the year. It is these acts that will be the most radiant pages of your love story.

Unselfish and noble actions are the most radiant pages in the biography of souls.

—DAVID THOMAS

