



GOING DEEPER AS A COUPLE
& SETTING RHYTHMS OF
— DEEP CONNECTION —

MONTHLY MARRIAGE WORKSHOP
MONTH 2

JEFF & ALYSSA BETHKE

THE 'WHY'

This month's theme is all about going deeper as a couple. All of us know how easy it is in our marriages to get stuck in the routine, surface level area of life. But God has so much more for us, and marriage is a such a deep well that can be drawn from. And the reason why it's so important is that a marriage that has a deep connection is a marriage that can change the world. It's foundational and affects every other area of life (kids, work, hobbies, etc.).

THE 'HOW'

After doing this month's action plan, you will walk away with:

1. Tools to break the usual ruts every marriage encounters.
2. That 'one question' every couple needs to have (this will make more sense later on).
3. A jumpstart to starting new connection rhythms in your marriage.

WEEK 1

Join us April 8th at 4:30 PT for our live webcast on our private Facebook page.

A couple of months ago Jeff and I were on a walk with the kids, and we noticed the path we were taking had about a quarter mile stretch where the sidewalk was seemingly destroyed. It was broken apart, protruding upwards at some points, and altogether not smooth nor flat.

Then a little farther ahead I saw some yellow tape and a little blocked off section with signs from Maui County (where we live). Inside the work area, the sidewalk was completely taken out and you could see what was underneath the sidewalk. It ended up being roots from some Monkeypod trees. Enormous roots, in fact. The county was trying to reroute the roots or trim them in places because it was those roots that were killing the sidewalk path.

Jeff and I were mesmerized. I never really realized that roots of a tree could break through things even as hard as concrete.

Then I thought, what a great picture of marital health. That when we have depth, and when we have roots, we have the strength to walk through any problem--even the hardest ones. But just like the roots of the tree, it takes time, lots of time. Notice with any tree's roots; you can't stare at the roots and see any growth happen. It's going on every day, inch by inch, and you can look back a month from now or a year from now and notice the difference. It's when you're not staring at the growth that you can see the growth.

So this month I want to focus on one thing--going deeper. As a couple and individually. Because that's where the joy and strength are found, and the foundation is built.

Because here's the reality--most of us no longer always feel a deep connection with our spouse. The job, the kids, the bills, and the responsibilities stack up to steal our connection and depth. And sure we love each other and still have fun with each other, but we know we can go deeper.

And that's what we will be chatting about more in-depth on April 8th, looking at some of the top reasons why going deeper is a must in your relationship, and we will briefly chat about the main things that prevent us from it and how we can kick those to the curb!

This month we tried to break the content up into three sections, for you to let every question and exercise breathe a little. The first week will mainly be on the webcast and us getting our wheels spinning, and then below you can find each week's question and exercise.

WEEK 2

Below is a few step process to hopefully bring a greater depth to your relationship. It's a mix of questions to ask, a few exercises to do, and a few actions to take.

Now to begin, we need to make it 'bite sizeable', I like to say. Meaning, only dig into one area of growth with your spouse rather than changing and addressing a million different things in your marriage. So to start, and to hone in on this one thing, both of you ask each other the question below:

What do you think is the number one thing keeping us from greater depth and connection in our marriage?

Be fairly specific. For example, it could be kids, work, tiredness, etc. but zone in more by saying, for example, if it's kids, that, "The sheer responsibility and hands-on energy it takes to parent our toddlers well I think is our hardest challenge in protecting our connection time." Jeff and I when we answered this we had different answers. For me, it's usually the hyper-focused and ever-present needs of the kids. My mama's heart is always attuned to their needs, primarily because they are usually quick, and seemingly urgent needs (I need food, I need to go the bathroom, etc.). And so I can keep my head down in the day to day of the kids and miss Jeff. And Jeff's was proactiveness. He says that the week's where he just feels a little more sluggish or not "on top of it" one of the first things that slip is our heart to hearts and marital connection. And so for both of us, it's so helpful to mention both of those and put them on the table because now we can help and serve each other with them! Jeff can take the kids or make sure he's reminding me to make space and moments outside of their immediate needs. And what helps Jeff a lot is if once a week we have our 'business meeting' and plan out our week and lay out all the priorities and this is usually when we schedule a date night and times where we will intentionally connect.

Now, after you both answer it, talk about it. Was it the same answer? Why did you give that answer? And please note do not try to solve and fix the problem by the end of the night (husbands, I'm talking to you :D Jeff would say himself that he's a fixer, and has to slow things down when we talk about things like this). We have all month! This is just to get stuff to the surface so that we can work on it this month.

Then after you've chatted about the answer then ask yourself another question:

What is one manageable and easily attainable change we can make specifically in regards to our answer?

Again, no need to shoot for the moon. It's unbelievable how little changes, that if done intentionally in your marriage, can lead to an enormous impact. Brainstorm. Write down your ideas. For example, I remember having this conversation with Jeff a while back. And one of my answers to the first question was my tiredness, but not realizing how tired I was until too late (where I'd then get grumpy or emotional, etc.). So an easy solution was that at the start of every week, Jeff asks me, "When can I give you an intentional break today?" And then we pick a day and time, and it usually involves me going to a coffee shop for a half day, or he takes the kids, and I stay home. No agendas or anything more than that. But it's done wonders for our marriage. And it's funny how it's an individual act for me (tiredness, and getting a break) yet it directly correlates to us connecting and going deeper as a couple. Also, another solution we came up with is we specifically set a bedtime for our kids. We chose the bedtime specifically based on the question, "When do we need to put our kids down to sleep for us to have the intentional time we want after they go down?" The answer for that was 6:30 PM. They go down great at that time, and we now have multiple hours every night that is "our time."

WEEK 3

Another way to connect deeply is to ask really good questions. I don't think there is anything better in a marriage than to be a good question asker. So many of us rarely bring up the depths of heart unprompted. In a marriage, the other person's heart and deepest vulnerabilities need to be cultivated and tilled and tended to like a garden. And questions are the best shovel.

So this month's challenge and activity are:

Set aside time this month, for at least 30 minutes of undivided attention between just you two. Put it on the calendar if you have to. Put away every distraction like computers, phones (turn it off, put it in another room if you have to), put the kids to bed or take them to

grandmas. Then ask each other the below questions, and feel free to write them down.

1. What's one thing you're thankful for that I've done lately?
2. Is there anything I've done recently (past few days or week) that unintentionally hurt you or that I need to apologize for?
3. When you come home from work, what can I do or say that will make you feel most loved?
4. What are the main stressors currently in your life? What can I do to help with those or alleviate that, even if only in a small way?
5. Is there a way you feel most loved that I can get better at (i.e., more physical touch, words of affirmation, etc.)?
6. When do you feel we are at our closest? Most connected?
7. Tell me about one of your favorite times we've ever connected on a deep level (a conversation we had, a date night we had, an activity we bonded over, etc.). What about that time do you think made us connect so deeply?
8. How can we replicate that in small ways?

Then, after these questions, you should have a really good idea on how to move forward this month with building a deeper and stronger connection. To end, come up with a short ACTION LIST that will help be your boundaries in your marriage to keep you connected deeply. Jeff and I call these our 'rhythms,' and I like to think of them like the bowling lane bumpers that keep the marriage in line and focused on each other and the depth of connection that gives fire and joy to everything else. And to give you a headstart, I wrote below some of the small, easy things we try to do to keep our deeper connection in the 'lane,' per se.

One intentional moment of connection EVERY DAY. This one is huge, but also small and so easy to get into a habit of. For us, it is usually 5 to 10 minutes max every day. The downside is most couples think they are talking all the time and what they don't realize is that unless there is a solid intentional heart level conversation every day, then the tone of the marriage quickly becomes surface level. For us, this is usually first thing in the morning or right after our kids go down to bed. And it usually involves us asking the same few questions, like "how is your heart doing?" or "how can I serve or support you today or tomorrow?"

Choose to spend time together rather than apart (Jeff here, commenting on this one). This one we committed to a few years ago, and it's been a game changer in our marriage. I think

this one tends to touch the guys more than the ladies, but essentially I realized I was spending a lot of extra time away from Alyssa to play basketball, hang out with my guy friends, go to a movie, etc. And none of that is wrong at all. But honestly, with the kids, work, and our marriage, I realized I didn't have time for much else if I was going to give those three things my best. And so now as a whole I say no to most extracurricular invites. I don't tend to do a ton of men's bible studies, and I have crafted my hobbies more around something we can all do as a family. Now don't get me wrong, my favorite thing to do is see a movie by myself, and Alyssa sends me out the door to them all the time knowing it's how I recharge. That's different. What I'm saying is, to have a deep connection with your spouse, and if they are your best friend, then they need to be treated like a best friend. Hang out with them. Do stuff together. Enjoy them. Be with them. And can I tell you what? When you do, you realize they are the best, and there's nothing better than to build an amazing friendship and marriage at the same time.

These are just two quick ideas to hopefully spur on a good handful of principles to surround your marriage with. And don't worry if they don't all come to you at once! Take time to think about it and come back to it. And try stuff and see if it works, and scrap it if it doesn't! We are always testing and changing things to see what gives us the best connection and depth and joy.

Lastly, I want to end each month with a fun date night challenge. Here's this month's which I think goes right in line with the theme, and you can wait to do this one for next week (the last week of the month).

WEEK 4

Date Night Challenge: Do one activity this month that is solely the interest of your spouse and not yours (so if you each do this, it should be two date nights). If your husband likes basketball and you don't, shoot a few hoops. If your wife sews, then make a pillow together.

If your wife likes to do yoga, do yoga. Whatever it is, do an activity together that you usually do alone. And ask good questions like, “Why do you do this, how long have you done it, what do you like about it, tell me your favorite story revolving around it? I can tell you from experience this is some of the most fun we have ever had and it brings you so close together so quick.

COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

Last month we built something together and created a mission and vision together, that a lot of us have hung up in our house, and painted or designed to remind ourselves. And we ended up doing a handful of fun giveaways to help people design their own, and also gift special things to some of the best ones for people who had already done it! We want to do something similar for this month. So for this month, we want each spouse to write a one-page letter to their spouse, with the main theme of going deeper. It can be primarily a love letter to your spouse, or it can be sharing deep heart level things about yourself that maybe you haven't shared before with your spouse. We will all give our spouse this particular letter the last few days of the month.

Every so often we will do a special addition to the monthly PDF called ‘Guys & Girls Corner.’ The Guy’s Corner and Girl’s Corner letters are a more personal reflection and a letter from both of us. Sometimes the letters will be from Alyssa to the girls and Jeff to the guys, but sometimes we might switch and write to the opposite gender to give a helpful word of perspective or encouragement. We hope they bless you! This month Jeff is writing to the guys, while Alyssa is writing to the girls.

GUY'S CORNER

(FROM JEFF)

Guys,

Let's talk real for a second. This first month is all about going deeper. And if we are honest, this is usually something we as men don't do as well, yet our wives are waiting and hoping for us to take the initiative in. They are waiting for us to chase their hearts, to draw them out, to communicate to them deeply.

If I'm honest, I used to abdicate this responsibility by just throwing my hands in the air and conceding that I'm just not wired like that. Which by the way, most times when we use the "I'm not wired like that," it's an excuse not to serve or love or grow with your spouse. So first check your heart. What is preventing you from going deeper with your wife? From being intentional? From chasing her heart? Self-awareness is the first key to a healthy marriage and to get us guys to a place of going deeper well with our spouse. And then secondly, realize at the end of the day you are good at going deep with something. There is something in your life you think about a lot, are constantly thinking about, or tinkering with trying to make better. For me, the immediate thing I think of for that is all the video stuff I shoot and keeping up with the newest cameras and tech and best practices. I think about that stuff a lot. And I super deep down the rabbit hole of finding the best and knowing the best. So what is that for you? And then try to transfer some of that energy, or use that way of thinking, but shift it towards your spouse. Think about your marriage. Invest in it mentally.

As husbands, we have this beautiful opportunity to shift the tone and spirit of an entire home and marriage by what we bring to the table, and the tone we set. What if this is the month where we start setting a ton of investing? I believe in you, and we are in this together.

Jeff

GIRL'S CORNER

(FROM ALYSSA)

Girls,

We started the first month with the topic of 'going deeper' because that by far has been the number one roadblock or hard spot mentioned by you all to Jeff and me in emails, messages, and in videos. And trust me I get it. So many of us dream of connecting on a much deeper level emotionally with our spouse than we currently are. And it's for a range of reasons--kids, laundry, bills, work, stress, etc.

But I wanted to talk heart to heart with one specific and small thing that helped Jeff and me greatly in this area. And that was not to be afraid to pursue him. I know at first that sounds strange because if you've grown up in church, you probably think that's his job. And in some sense it is. A marriage that thrives is one where the husband is invested emotionally in the marriage and the family and chasing after the hearts of his wife and kids.

But this doesn't mean we can't pursue him emotionally too. I don't mean that we can't pursue his heart, his dreams, or his love language; because we can.

I know the cycle that we wives can get stuck in. It is metaphorically sitting around waiting for our husband to do things (that we've rarely communicated) and then getting upset or frustrated when he doesn't. We may think big things that simply aren't true like, "He must not love me." It's a really bad cycle that just builds resentment and emotional disconnect. But there's an easy way to break the cycle--by you pursuing him. It takes our eyes off ourselves, and immediately shifts our attitude to service, which leads to so much more joy. And also, a lot of times the husband will take notice and raise his eyebrows and start wondering what's going on. And in return, his heart will soften, and he'll tend to start pursuing back. In some sense, you're creating a cycle of love and service and pursuit, instead of one of resentment and bitterness. And of course, there are things that only he can do, and that he needs to do to pursue your heart, and you can't pour out without being poured into forever. But what would it look like this month to try and reframe the usual cycle of pursuit and instead you take "going deeper" by the reigns and think of creative ideas and ways to love and serve your husband? I know with Jeff, he's so easy to please (the things he feels loved by are so small and relatively easy), and when I'm making an effort, especially in those seasons of tiredness and busyness, he begins to come alive in a different way and pursue me back so much better.

Love you girls, and I'm in your corner!

Alyssa

THINGS TO COME THIS MONTH

Just a heads up on the flow and plan this month. We want to make sure you guys can catch the vision for the month and hopefully feel served all month long on this topic!

WEBCAST // APRIL 8TH 4:30 PST

HUSBAND ONLY CHAT WITH JEFF SOMETIME DURING THE SECOND WEEK.

WIFE ONLY CHATS WITH ALYSSA SOMETIME DURING THE THIRD WEEK.