

A Bit of Encouragement

BY : SUSAN SHULL

BE

Joyful



Table of Contents

01

How to Stay Happily Married

02

Deconstruction and Mere Christianity

03

A Cinderella Story



How to Stay Happily Married

Brad and I have known each other our entire lives, so we have history. We grew up on farms not 7 miles from one another. Everyone in our little community knew one another and our parents were friends.

Nancy, Brad's younger sister and I were great buddies. She was funny and talented and a joy to be with. Once after a sleepover that included hysterical giggling fits and much conversation, Brad announced to me that I had a big mouth.

The nerve. 🤔

When he had to drive us to high school functions my freshman year, Brad made Nancy and me get on the floorboard of the back seat.

He didn't want anyone to see him driving around pipsqueaks like us.

And we obediently did it. 🤔

Then everything changed the summer I turned 15.

We went to the drive-in on a double date as third wheels with my cousin, Jim, and my best friend, Diana, and while those 2 smooched, Brad and I sat in the front seat and talked thru both movies.

I have to admit at least for me, a little spark was lit that night.

Two years later, we started actually dating, and we've been talking nonstop ever since.

Our conversations are the best!

I feel at home wherever he is, and I'm so thankful I'm married to him.

On August 7, we celebrated 47 years, and the 5 years we were together before that! Without a doubt, he is my person.

Perhaps 47 years gives us some credibility....

For sure, we are not marriage experts, but we had a lot of fun looking back on our years together to make this list of tips for you. Each relationship is different, we know, and this is in no way judgment of anyone else's way of doing things.

Trust me, in our years together, we did many things **WRONG**. (But, who wants to make a list like that? 😞 Not me!)

These 28 ideas are just things that we did **RIGHT** that helped us get to Year 47 more in love than ever.

That seems like a huge victory! And kind of like a miracle.

How to Stay Happily Married.....28 Ideas

In no particular order-

ONE: Don't marry someone you think needs fixing... having the idea that living with you will fix them-not a good way to start and it won't happen.

TWO: If someone tells and shows you who they are before you even get married, and it isn't good, believe them. See number 1.

Three: Get on the same page spiritually, asap. This is soooo vitally important.

Four: Love one another's families. You aren't just marrying your spouse.

Five: Accept the fact your spouse isn't perfect and you aren't either.

Six: Love isn't enough-decide to really mean your marriage vows.

Seven: Be committed to the institution of marriage.

Eight: Don't marry a jerk. See #2.

Nine: Learn how to disagree and fight and compromise and make-up. Don't give each other the silent treatment.

Ten: Learn how to grow old together.

Eleven: Have fun together and apart. Don't count on your spouse to create your entire existence.

Twelve: Never stop dating.

Thirteen: Figure out together how to raise your kids. Be a united team.

Fourteen: Go to church as a family and mean it.

Fifteen: Decide early on: Do you have to always be right or do you want be happily married? Everyone has to give a little and take a little.

Sixteen: Get away at least once a year without kids.

Seventeen: Don't expect your spouse to make you happy-that's an inside job.

Eighteen: Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Nineteen: Forgive quickly; don't hold grudges.

Twenty: Respect one another and live in a way that deserves respect.

Twenty-one: Love Jesus more. This one should be first in the list, but admittedly, I didn't love Jesus more for many of the first years of our marriage. Now, I DO!

Twenty-two: Keep growing individually and as a couple. Keep doing new things, going new places, making new friends.

Twenty-three: Keep having fun together.

Twenty-four: Be one another's biggest cheerleader.

Twenty-five: Stay interested and interesting.

Twenty-six: Dave Ramsey would disagree, but it has worked for us to have separate checking accounts. We have our money and Susan's money 🥰 for miscellaneous things. We trust each other with our finances.

Twenty-seven: Be flexible and kind.

Twenty-eight: He always considers me and I consider him.

I've certainly not been the perfect wife, nor has Brad been the perfect husband.

But we've worked through it, raised 3 great sons, and now are enjoying each of our precious grandkids. And we have 2 daughters in law we love, too! Win!

He still makes me laugh, challenges me to think bigger, and makes everything more fun.

I love you, Brad Shull!

Let's have the absolutely best marriages we possibly can because they won't last forever, you know.

xoxo,
Susan

Deconstruction and Mere Christianity

This seems like a good time for a discussion about Deconstruction and *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis.

Truly, this is a must read for steadfast believers, the unsure and curious nonbelievers alike.

As our world continues to spin faster and faster out of control, I take great comfort in the fact that my God is still in charge. None of this is a surprise to Him and even though evil runs rampant, **good** will triumph in the end.

Are you like me, trying to stay in your own lane and not fall into the manipulation schemes of whatever kooks are in charge? So many people's chains are being jerked To and FRO by the talking heads who probably wouldn't know the truth if it came up and said hello.

I miss the days when people thought lying was a sin and something to be avoided. Now, the father of lies has people so mixed up they don't even know right from wrong or up from down. When truth is thrown out the window, I guess we get what we've got.

God help us.

Deconstruction

In the midst of the events of the last few years, there has been a lot of discussion about people who are deconstructing their faith.

I'm not exactly sure what this all means, but I've been doing some thinking about it.

As some of you know, I have been interviewing mainly female believers for the last couple few years in our facebook group, Morning Exhale. I enjoy these interviews so much and learn a ton from everyone I talked to.

One of the questions I like to ask everyone is, **"When did your faith become your own?"**

I love listening to people share what happened to turn their faith from religion to relationship.

In my opinion, that move from religion to relationship often involves deconstructing and the MOST important part, reconstructing one's beliefs.

My Story

For me, that began early on in our marriage and took several years to get through. Of course, society was much different then and most people were church goers.

I never stopped attending church during this time of basically "checking out", but I wasn't very serious about allowing sanctification. I probably didn't even know what it meant.

Good girls went to church on Sunday and I was a good girl. So, I went to church.

However, in a few short years that all changed.

My theology became VERY IMPORTANT to me when Brady came along and Brad and I decided to quit messing around and get serious about Jesus. He wanted to attend a church like he grew up in, but that wasn't my first choice.

This led to much wailing and gnashing of teeth on my part.

Funny thing, Brad doesn't remember it being nearly as dramatic as I do. Probably because much of the drama took place in my own brain.

Our brains are very good at dishing up drama. (Now that I understand how much power our thoughts have, I wonder how differently I would have handled all that if I'd known about the Creation Cycle. But that is for another post.)

Due to extenuating circumstances, Brad won the contest for several years, and then we BOTH began to question a lot of things.

I won't go into all the details in this post but we both went through a faith struggle, got into the WORD in a deeper way, trying to see for ourselves what was being taught without the filters of previous teaching and other's opinions.

Holy Spirit did a work in both of us and we bravely took a step that was very unpopular with people that we cared deeply about.

Those sad, hard, difficult days were a big PIVOT in our faith journey. All I can say about that is it is an UNSPEAKABLE BLESSING when a husband and wife are on the same page and both want Jesus most.

God has been reconstructing my faith ever since. And I am so grateful. I don't think the journey ever ends and I am here for knowing Jesus more and more and grabbing your hand to join me if you are ready and willing.

Are you?

If not, if you are still in the questioning and doubting stage, I beg you to read *Mere Christianity*.

Mere Christianity

I bought this book a long time ago and just never had the gumption to read it (the cover was unappealing and I am all about appealing book covers) until gobbling up *The Great Divorce*, also by C.S. Lewis. That book was a game changer for me and put a fire in me to read more of Lewis.

The irony isn't lost on me that I am writing this book report while the world burns. Again.

Written during World War 2, the parallels of that time and today are astounding. I love historical fiction and have read many, many books set in that time period and always assumed mankind had learned its lesson and these atrocities would never happen again.

How in the world have we let our world get into such a mess again? Aren't we better than this?

Lewis originally wrote these words as radio essays for the airwaves of England, but they stood the test of time and offer so much hope.

Mere Christianity did not disappoint. I absolutely LOVED it.

Lewis takes very complicated concepts and explains them in a way that makes total sense. I don't have the brain power to dissect these ideas, but C. S. Lewis can. And did.

What a thinker!

The end result for me? More trust than ever in Christ's sacrifice for my sin, a stronger desire to live the life He has purposed for me, and an eagerness to tell others about Jesus Christ.

Anyone who denies the deity of Jesus and turns his back on the free gift of salvation is missing out on the very best. We are making a drastic mistake if we choose the artificial, lesser pleasure of this world when we could have the supreme BEST.

Woohoo!

Prepare to Read *Mere Christianity*

This book is chockful of amazingly deep quotes but yet written in a way that makes understandable very deep subjects. And it is written in a way that draws the reader in and makes one think. You will be smarter when you are done reading this. I promise.

Grab your highlighter and pencil because I promise you that this will be a book you mark up. I took notes, underlined, starred, turned down corners. Also, I read at least one chapter multiple times-the chapter I want to focus on in another blogpost.

That chapter was all about pride.

Quotes to Ponder

I love a good list, so I will share some of my favorite quotes from the book in list form.

One:

"Christianity is a way of life, one that challenges us always to remember, as Lewis once stated, that "there are no ordinary people" and that it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit."

Two:

"The law of gravity tells you what stones do if you drop them; but the Law of Human Nature or the Law of Right and Wrong, tells you what human beings ought to do and do not."

I bet you experience this every day, just like I do. I know what I want to do, what I should do, but yet I don't do it, or don't want to.

Three:

"God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on."

And that, my friends, is why we have so many people obsessed with sugar, alcohol, fentanyl, money, gambling, pornography and every other vice appealing to our false selves. People are searching for something to fill what is lacking.

We are created for so MUCH MORE.

Four:

"You cannot make men good by law; and without good men you cannot have a good society."

Five

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

I love this one because I know there is nothing like a holiday at sea. Why do we settle for the counterfeit pleasures when we can experience eternal abundance?

Please look at the list of the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians. Who doesn't want that?

Can I sweet boss you into reading this book? I sure hope so. I truly think it could be a game changer. And then come tell me how you were impacted!

A Cinderella Story

It is another beautiful June morning here on the farm.

We got a soaking rain a few days ago and the corn and beans have TAKEN OFF-you can almost hear them grow! What a blessing nature is!

I hope you are feeling calm and centered as you read this, ready to face the challenges of the day but also intentionally looking for all the blessings, too.

Just Dreaming....

Do you remember your dreams?

Last night, I had the most fun in mine. I was back in high school and we were getting ready for our musical, Cinderella. Sandra Nichols was our chorus teacher (in this dream, not in reality) and all of us were having so much fun working as a team. There was quite a bit of drama around decorating and lighting, but it all came together nicely.

I learned right before we were set to begin that I was supposed to play the part of Cinderella. I was amazingly calm about that news considering I have a voice range of about 3 notes, but the panic started to set in when I couldn't find the right costume.

After much rummaging and stress and making a huge mess, we found the beautiful gold gown, but when I went to put it on, of course it didn't fit. It was made for a high school girl's waistline not a grammie of 6. Dang it!

Then I woke up.

I honestly have no idea why I dreamed this, but God works in mysterious ways and brought me to a lesson because of it.
#heissogood

Cinderella has me thinking about wisdom.

Know Anyone With Wisdom?

There appears to be two kinds of wisdom: Godly wisdom and man's or woman's wisdom. You know which one is the best, right?

Me, too. But here is the question for myself and maybe for you, too, if you are willing to play along with me. Where do we turn for wisdom, really? Too often, I have a history of looking to other humans.

And that is not smart if you choose the wrong humans.

The Old Testament tells us the story of the kings of Israel.

After King David died, (David was the second king, and as a boy killed Goliath with a sling and stone. You probably learned about him in VBS.) David's son, Solomon took over.

Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived because when given the opportunity by God to ask for ANYTHING, he asked for wisdom. Lots of it came from the school of hard knocks, but he recorded it and it is now scripture and available for us to read and learn from.

When Solomon's son Rehoboam took over, things went south in a HURRY. He was faced with a huge issue early on and went to two different groups of people for advice. The first was a group of older men and their advice was to serve the people kindly with words of encouragement.

In that way, all parties could get what they desired. Rehoboam ignored the advice of these older folks, and instead turned to his peer group- his friends. These young men suggested retaliation and threats of violence and heavier burdens.

This young king took the advice of those bozos and the result of it was Civil War and a divided kingdom that never truly recovered.

Actions have consequences that can last FOREVER.

He should have listened to his dad, Solomon.

Rehoboam didn't, but we can.

Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 9: 17-18

"It is better to hear the soft-spoken words of a wise person than the rant of a tyrant in the company of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, yet one wrongdoer can undo much good."

In these unsettling times, where are you going for wisdom? This is such an IMPORTANT question.

Age doesn't necessarily bring wisdom, that is FOR SURE. But I bet we all know some wise Godly people we can turn to in order to process all that is happening....to help us learn when to speak and when to hush up....to encourage us to take action and what action to take.

Scripture and prayer seem like appropriate places to turn....what an understatement!

Sticky Note Encouragement...

Maybe we could all write on sticky notes and place
everywhere around us....

Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Love God and your neighbor as yourself.

Pause.

Do the next RIGHT thing.

Sometimes I wish our fairy godmothers would come make
everything right, don't you?

But we don't live in a fairy tale or even a high school
musical, so let's grab the metaphorical hand of Jesus, pray
for more fruit of the spirit and love the people right in
front of us.

And turn off the news.

Hello.



I'm Susan! I'm a farmwife who loves Jesus and I'm also a Christian Life Coach. Not sure what that is? [Find out more here!](#)

I hope this encouraging ebook blesses you as you and gives you some inspiration to choose joy in your everyday life!

For more resources, see the links below. I'd love to get to know you, so please feel free to reach out!

- Susan

Resources

- [Free Facebook Group](#)
- [Resource Library](#)
- [Clean Heart Club](#)
- [Private Coaching](#)
- [Instagram: @avintagefarmwife](#)
- [YouTube: @susanshull2010](#)

