

7 Keys to Being a Good Spouse and a Good Parent at the Same Time

by: Dave Willis

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One of the most common questions [my wife Ashley](#) and I get asked in person and online (and one of the biggest questions we struggle with in our own marriage) is, ***“How do I balance being a good spouse AND a good parent?”***

That’s a great question, isn’t it? It has HUGE implications, because the decisions you make about how you’re going to invest into your marriage and into your children will shape your life and your legacy. **If you’re in a place right now where you feel like you’re failing at one or both responsibilities, don’t lose hope!** Just the fact that you’re reading this right now shows that your heart is in the right place and you want to keep growing, so give yourself some grace. We ALL need grace.

Let’s start with the good news...You can (and should) be a good spouse AND a good parent at the same time. In fact, those two roles often go hand-in-hand. When you’re modeling a healthy marriage, your children directly benefit. When you’re being an active parent in partnership with your spouse, that collective teamwork will bring you and your spouse closer together too.

As you’ve probably discovered, it can be REALLY DIFFICULT to keep all the plates spinning between work, sleep, career, hobbies, extended family and home. In our crazy-busy culture with 24/7 connectivity to the online world, we sometimes have to fight hard to stay fully present and engaged at home. **Below are the 7 ways that have helped us and countless others grow simultaneously stronger in marriage and in parenting.** We certainly haven’t mastered any of these, but we’re making a little progress every day. These can work for you too! Give them a try.

In no particular order, the ***7 ways to become a better husband/wife AND a better mom/dad at the same time are...***

1. Work hard to bring more peace and less stress into your interactions with everyone at home (*I struggle with this one big time which is why I put it first on the list...I’m reminding myself!*).

2. Don't let "scorekeeping" of hurts or grudges take root in your home. With your spouse, with your children, and among your children in their interactions with each other, make sure grace is flowing freely. When families "keep score" of each other's wrongs, everyone loses. When families and spouses forgive, everyone wins.

Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting and it doesn't mean our pain doesn't matter. Forgiveness means choosing to let go of the anger, the pain and the toxic temptation to seek revenge. Forgiveness means putting all that in God's hands so we don't have to carry it anymore. It means choosing to pursue healing instead of bitterness.

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#3 is vital because it defines how you give and receive love...

3. Create a climate at home where LOVE is communicated through your words AND your actions. Be affectionate with your spouse and also be affectionate with your kids. Serve each other. Learn each other's "Love Languages." Above all, make sure everyone under your roof knows that he/she is loved unconditionally.

4. As you love each other, make sure ENCOURAGEMENT sets the tone in your home. Be your spouse's biggest encourager; not his/her biggest critic. Be your kids' biggest cheerleader; not the one who is always correcting them (although some correction is simply part of parenting). Build each other up so much that nothing in the world can tear them down. Make your home a safe and sacred refuge of encouragement and love.

#5 is specific to your marriage. This is huge...

5. Make your marriage a top priority even while your kids are young. Don't put your marriage on the back burner. Give your kids the security of seeing their mom and dad in a loving, committed relationship. Have the kind of marriage that makes them want to grow up

and get married! Your kids are going to move out (hopefully), but your spouse never will (hopefully). Stay focused on your marriage or you'll end up with an empty nest and an empty marriage.

#6 Cherish the moments even when you're in the exhausting stage of raising very young children. These times will pass by so quickly. Don't miss them and don't wish them away. The days might seem long right now, but looking back, the years will seem like they flew by! Be present. Savor the moments. The little things end up being the things that will matter most.

7. Keep growing in your love for your spouse. The more you love your spouse, the more capacity you'll have to love your kids. The more you laugh with your spouse, the more laughter will fill your home for your kids. The more you pray with your spouse, the stronger a foundation of faith you'll be imparting to your kids. The more honest you are with your spouse, the more a climate of honesty will be present in your home with your kids. **The stronger you make your marriage, the stronger your family will be.**

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