

## Letter No. 7

A Letter to Himself. Let's stay healthy!

My love,

Good news! You are married to a healthy specimen - heart, lungs, blood pressure and all the vitals in good working order. The health check of this morning is a good motivator to keep up our resolution to stay well, eat right, and keep active. Let's do all we can to stay healthy!

I wonder though, if we had a Marriage Health Check, what the verdict would be? Are we doing all we can to keep our Marriage thriving, not just surviving? Can we put it to the test? It has been said that these six ingredients are present in the mix of a healthy marriage: Appreciation, Communication, Time, Commitment, Shared values, Coping with crisis.

How are we doing on all of the above - dare we examine each one honestly?

**Appreciation:** Have I shown or expressed appreciation to you over the last week? It's not enough to feel it or mean it, it needs to be expressed. You are very good at that, always thanking me for little things as well as the big things. "That was a lovely meal, thank you" - it means a lot when you say these things and I don't feel taken for granted. My resolution - work harder to build you up with words and actions, show you how much I appreciate you!

**Communication:** How good am I at listening, do I hear not only the words but the meaning behind the words? We've grown a lot in this area over the years. I used to talk too much, you tended to hold back and be silent. Now we're careful to have "equal air time" and we can speak about anything without defensiveness or criticism. We know the importance of the little things - please, sorry thank you. We wave goodbye in the mornings and kiss each other hello in the evenings. It's learning that words have power and can bring life into our relationship, or diminish it. We can build love or break it down - let's go on building together!

**Time:** This is a life-long challenge, not to be so busy that we have no time for each other. It's too easy to be busy doing all kinds of things, yet fail to give time to our most precious thing, our marriage. It's a constant effort to get the balance right. As you say, they are all good things, no one is asking us to rob a bank! But even to good things we have to sometimes say No, in order to say Yes to the better thing, a relationship that's rich and full because we have both invested in it. Verdict? A lot learned, a lot more to learn.

**Commitment:** We made the commitment "til death do us part" but how does it show in the way we live and work in the daily things? Are we careful to deal with conflicts and irritations and misunderstandings, committed not to let anything stay between us that would grow to hostility or division? I know your commitment to me. I have room to make mistakes and be forgiven. I know you process decisions in the light of their impact on us. I trust you and your commitment, it feels safe and secure. It is a sure foundation.

**Shared values:** From the beginning we set out to learn about God and His ways, and to live by them. Even though we came from totally different backgrounds, together we found faith in Jesus. This affects how we live as a family. We have principles to live by that inform how we raised our children, how we deal with finances, how we relate to the world around us, the way we treat others. This has been a real strength as we've had a sense of identity and purpose in every season of life, and the journey continues!

**Coping with Crisis:** We had many opportunities to practice this one - my illness during one of the pregnancies, your emergency surgery when they didn't know what the matter was, as well as several work related crises over the years. How well did we do? I believe that because we've worked on the first five - appreciation, communication, time, commitment, and because of our shared values, we were able to pull together instead of apart when the storms hit. In fact we probably came out of each crisis stronger than before, learning to lean on each other and on God, finding strength to carry on.

My lovely man, let's keep working on each one of them, let's stay healthy!

Love,

**Trish**