

Part II: Beyond Parallel Lives: How well do you know your spouse's world?

“bless them in their work and in their companionship”

-Book of Common Prayer, Celebration of Holy Matrimony

Too often couples fall into living *parallel* lives that give the appearance of togetherness and stability. Yet parallel lives have no points of genuine connection. Couples who live parallel lives rarely share stories. They get out of the habit of exhibiting interest in or staying current with each other's feelings and concerns.

How familiar are you with your spouse's world? Do you know what stresses your spouse is currently facing? To whom your spouse is most likely to confide? Do you know something as mundane as your spouse's favorite sandwich?

It is important that couples are intimately familiar with each other's world. The more you know and understand about each other, the easier it is to keep connected as life swirls around you. How can you be a source of comfort and strength if you don't know what challenges or frightens your spouse, what is rewarding or frustrating? Comforting requires having some sense of what your spouse is doing and what it takes for him or her to do it. One of the ways we honor our spouse is to take him or her seriously. It is easier to grow apart when we live orderly, but parallel, lives; the space between you gradually grows wider. People grow apart when they forget or fail to do the simple day-to-day task of being involved in one another's lives. Two cords are stronger when braided together.

Make a date to spend time together this week. Go out to dinner or have dinner at home. Enjoy breakfast together or a late night dessert. Carve out time for just the two of you. Turn the television off. Silence your cell phones.

This date is designed to help you spend time telling stories and getting current with one another. Below are 40 questions, BUT DO NOT ANSWER ALL OF THEM. (These are new questions since Together 2011.) Take turns choosing a random number between 1 and 40, and asking each other a question. Answer 10-15 questions between you on the date; save the remaining questions for another time.

- 1 Who is your “go to” friend?
- 2 What television show did you love to watch when you were ten years old?
- 3 What is a song that always takes you back to high school?
- 4 Are you more like your mother or your father?
- 5 What were your comfort foods as a child?
- 6 Who taught you the most about respecting the dignity of all people?
- 7 What deceased relative would you like to have dinner with?
- 8 What medical problems do you worry about?

- 9 How do you think your birth order or being an only child has affected you?
- 10 What historical event do you recall impacting your childhood?
- 11 What is a guilty pleasure of yours?
- 12 When do you recall being moved by patriotism?
- 13 Do you think animals go to heaven?
- 14 What was one of your first experiences with mental illness – your own or someone else's?
- 15 What household chore do you actually enjoy?
- 16 What recital, play or performance do you recall taking part in as child?
- 17 What Christmas tradition do you especially enjoy?
- 18 Talk about a piece of art you purchased.
- 19 When were you pleasantly surprised recently?
- 20 Who do you consider a mentor of yours now?
- 21 How did your parents express affection for you?
- 22 What gift did I give you that is the most memorable?
- 23 What was the last thing you were proud of me?
- 24 When did you like about me the first time we met?
- 25 Tell about a road trip you took.
- 26 Who do you miss?
- 27 If you could be in the Olympics, what sport would it be?
- 28 What was one of the first movies you saw in a theater, and who took you?
- 29 What did you do well recently that pleased you?
- 30 Share the story about a letter or email or text that you have saved.
- 31 What was the first job for which you got a paycheck?
- 32 Who is someone that has come into your life in the last year who has been a blessing to you?
- 33 What did I do for you in the last month that was particularly supportive and helpful?
- 34 What is one of your favorite memories/stories about one of your grandparents?
- 35 What book do you remember someone reading to you as a child?
- 36 What events and/or relationships have served as navigating stars in your life?
- 37 What dangerous activity would you do if it were no longer dangerous?
- 38 When did you last cry?
- 39 Who taught you how to ride a bike and drive a car?
- 40 What do you enjoy the most about going to church?