

10 Questions to Ask Your Wife Every Year (originally published in Dennis Rainy's *Stepping Up*)

The best remedy for marriage conflict is marriage communication. Disagreements, fights, impasses, separations and divorce can be traced back to poor communication more than any other factor. Likewise, listening amounts to some of the best relationship medicine around.

Listening works best when we ask good questions. Good questions indicate bona fide concern. The man who asks good questions is already well on the way to communication excellence.

The best questions also serve as conversation starters. Remember, you are interested in her. But, once you start talking, she's going to ask stuff too. The more you know each other on a deep level, the easier it is to fall in love all over again.

Here are 10 questions to ask your wife every year:

1. What do you think is going right in our relationship?

It's been a while since you took the marriage vows. But it's still true that positive affirmation leads to more productive change than negative evaluation. It's helpful to identify our strengths. Once we know them we can play to them. Building each other up is always a win-win.

2. Where would you like our relationship to be this time next year?

It doesn't matter where we are, there's always room to be better. She might say, "I'd like to see more spontaneous affection." Or, "I want us to be moving forward together in our faith." She could say, "I want our relationship to involve more fun!"

3. Will you please marry me, all over again?

Say it with flowers. Say it like you mean it. Make sure your wife knows how much you cherish her.

4. I'd love to hear about your dreams for the future

A wise Hebrew writer once wrote, "Without a vision, the people perish." Listen to your wife, imagine great things together, and then step into the possibilities.

5. Is there anywhere you'd like to visit this coming year?

Indulge a little whimsy. Listen, laugh together, fantasize about fabulous vacations, and then tuck the information away somewhere, so you can possibly plan a trip. A good husband listens to his wife's dreams. A great husband weaves them into their plans for the future.

6. Do you think we're doing OK financially?

This needs to be an ongoing conversation. However, like any small business (and a family is like a business in many ways), the directors need to have a comprehensive annual meeting to evaluate the finances and the plan for the coming year.

7. How are you doing health-wise?

Encouraging one another involves accountability. Partners should never remain ignorant when it comes to health concerns. And not just physical health. It's also important to take inventory of each other's emotional well-being.

8. If you could change one thing about our priorities as a family, what would it be?

Notice this isn't an invitation to criticize, but more an opportunity to grow together. Possible answers might include:

- I'd like to see less TV time and more family time with one another at home.
- We're not eating together enough. I'd like to see dinnertime valued a little more.
- We say, "We can't afford a family vacation", but then we eat out 2-3 times a week. Maybe we should shift that one around!

9. Is there anything I devote regular time to that you see as a possible threat to our family or our relationship?

Patterns take time to emerge. When we look back – or from another person's point of view – sometimes we can see more clearly. Ask your wife if there are any adjustments you can make (Consistently late for dinner? Too much golf? Too many evenings with "the boys"?) that would help her to feel more secure.

10. Are you happy?

It's a good question even if she says she's happy already. "What can I do to make you more happy?" is a great discussion. Again, this is where good, active listening is very important. And your wife's greatest happiness will always be found in God, so encourage her to grow in her faith.