



# The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

Volume 20, Number 3

March, 2018

## "I Think I Love You!"

He was a very famous person. He was a "teen idol" very shortly after he was a teenager himself. He made – and spent – millions of dollars during his lifetime. Despite tremendous success in the entertainment industry, he filed for bankruptcy in 2015.

David Cassidy was one of those people whose name was easily recognizable by millions, but who seemed to have problems forming and keeping close personal relationships. There were three failed marriages. One of his children was a daughter whose mother was none of those three wives.

It appears that his life ended, at least in part, because of some of the choices he had made during his sixty-seven years. The reports I read about his recent death suggested that doctors hoped to keep him alive long enough for him to receive a new liver. He died before that could become a reality.

After his death, his daughter tweeted what she said were the last words of her famous father:

*"So much wasted time."*

I can't help but wonder what Cassidy meant by that. The possibilities are almost endless. I will not take your time or the space here to explore a multitude of possibilities.


I would rather do a little self-examination. I would also invite you to join me in that exercise.

Here's the question:

*What do I (you) consider to be wasted time?*

- Is it possible that some of us are so "career-oriented" that time spent with a spouse, children, other relatives, and/or very close friends is seen as wasted time?
- Could some of us be so focused on ourselves that we believe that trying to serve others is wasted time?
- If we are not doing something that is fun, are we wasting our time?
- If we are not doing something "productive," are we wasting time by resting, reading, etc.?


Could it be that some of us spend so much time in our own pursuits that we fail to make time to "diligently seek" or pursue God (cf.

Heb. 11:6 )?

I realize that the list could go on

and on. Maybe these few suggestions are enough to make all of us pause for a while and think.

As we think and as we evaluate our own lives, maybe the following admonition from Scripture might be worthy of our consideration:

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:9-10 )*

—**Jim Faughn**, *Legacy of Faith*

## "We are All Pretty Normal If We Can Recognize Normal"

by Mikal Frazier, LMFT, LPC

When I was receiving my training as a marriage and family therapist, a frequently heard comment was: "That's not normal, but what's normal?" A chuckle would ensue with the recognition that we all have our little kinks. But maybe it's the little kinks that make us normal. Oh well,

who knows? One thing we do know is that in many ways marriages are pretty similar across the board.

Most of us had similar expectations when we said, "I do." Lori Gordon in her book *Passage to Intimacy* delineates these well. I will paraphrase:

We expected we would continue to have all the good things we were used to having. We also expected to have everything we ever wanted but did not have, and that everything that ever distressed us before would not be experienced in this marriage.

And since there are two people involved in this wonderful new union, each of these starry-eyed participants will have his or her own content to fill in these expectations. It is as if each has his or her own library case full of volumes brimming with experiences which defend these expectations. And what is more, these libraries are each carefully built and nurtured from their respective revered and treasured histories.

Add some good old garden variety selfishness and the human flaws of your partner (certainly not your own) and we have a very predictable recipe for conflict. (Sound pretty normal so far?)

When the conflict erupts, as surely it will, we each go back to our respective libraries, and pull out the volume on conflict resolution. Now notice, I am saying "conflict resolution," because that is what we expect -- that we will resolve the conflict according to our treasured volume and everyone will be happy. This is where the crunch comes in. Most of us did not

learn healthy ways in our treasured histories for dealing with conflict.

So each partner brings his or her defective pattern for dealing with conflict along with the anxiety poorly managed conflict produces, and this creates major disappointment and feelings of failure which can spiral out of control toward a seriously distressed marriage.

We now know that how a couple manages conflict is the difference that sets the happily married pair apart from those who divorce or live in misery. In fact we are living in a period when there is a vast amount of research available in the area of marriage. Besides identifying the mismanagement of conflict as the basis of marital breakdown, we have learned some other interesting pearls of information, which seem to make us all a little more normal.

Diane Sollee, director of the *Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education*, gives a rundown on many of these facts in a recent interview. She says:

- "Disagreement isn't predictive of divorce. ... Stonewalling, avoidance, disengagement, contempt, criticism, and the silent treatment are."
- Marriage matters. "It affects your health, wealth, sexual satisfaction, and your kids."
- "All couples have approximately ten issues they will never resolve - if you switch partners you'll just get ten new issues, and they are likely to be more complicated the second time around."

- Love is a feeling that "ebbs and flows." "If you learn new ways to interact, the feelings can come flowing back, often stronger than before."
- "...marital satisfaction often drops with the birth of a baby, and with each successive birth." She calls the last final stage of marriage the "real honeymoon period."
- "Sex ebbs and flows too, comes and goes. That's normal. Enjoy the flows."

A marriage education course every year can keep you up to date on effective tools to build a thriving marriage. (Diane Sollee, [smartmarriages.com/playbackinterview.html](http://smartmarriages.com/playbackinterview.html), 11/23/99)-- *The Coalition for Marriage and Family Education*

An effective tool in working with couples or individuals is to "normalize" their experience as they struggle to accomplish the kind of relationship they desire. That is my goal for this article - - that the reader understands conflict is normal and predictable and since it is so normal, there are learnable skills researchers and therapists have developed to manage the conflict. Notice I am now using the term manage. We may not always be able to resolve conflict, but we can learn to manage it, and come to a place of joy and peace. That will be material for another time.

