

Dear Editors,

We don't know if you can use this testimonial to daily dialogue, but this is our story.

Michael & Maria Frazier

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5000 Decisions to Love

When we drove home from our original weekend, we were filled with the Spirit and knew that we would always use that wonderful tool called the 10/10 from then on. What a blessing we were given! We were so faithful and every day we'd take out our notebooks. Sometimes we'd write separately and sometimes we'd write together and of course, we'd always share our feelings about the day's question. For the first few weeks, we didn't miss a day. But, then like many couples, one of us was too tired from the days work or maybe one of us just didn't feel like it and we skipped a day. We remember that first skipped day and how guilty we both felt. We vowed to never skip again and we were right back with our daily 10/10's. But then a few weeks later one of us was just too tired and our kid's homework need parental attention so we skipped another day. It seemed a little easier and we felt less guilty that time. Other speed bumps of life inevitably came up and we skipped 2 days and then 3 and pretty soon we skipped a week. We didn't have a community in our area but we attended several share group meetings in neighboring areas. After each meeting we were once again charged up and made that daily 10/10 for a while but quickly fell into the same hole.

Soon we only dialogued at the share group. We'd try to continue for the rest of the month but in a day or so we'd fall away again. We loved the "dream" and we really tried to live it but little by little we were becoming married singles again.

Little things in our individual lives were beginning to get under our skins again and we weren't really putting each other at top priority like we did right after our weekend. One area of our relationship that always seemed to separate us was how to deal with our children. Maria was the "tuff-love" parent and Michael was the "avoid-conflict" parent. Our kids always knew how to use this difference to get their way and consequently put a wedge between the 2 of us in our relationship. But that wasn't the only problem. The Devil seems to know how to make subtle differences seem like huge roadblocks. Finances, friends, sex, even church ministry seemed to create impasses for us. Once a month we'd do the 10/10 at share group meeting but deep down we knew that we just weren't as close as we were that Sunday evening after our weekend. We even revived and led a local community share group that had broken up a few years earlier. We loved scheduling this share group, giving mass talks and giving the presentations, but we longed for that closeness we once had but was slipping away. We even thought that we were beyond needing daily dialogue and the once or twice a month was enough. But where was that closeness?????

Divine Providence intervened. Frank and Sherry Males from the Crystal Lake Illinois Community had befriended us and they knew of our struggle with daily dialogue. They never pushed but always encouraged us every time we saw each other. Every time we saw them, Frank always asked how our dialogue was coming along. We always

responded with a lame “OK”. One evening they phoned us to tell us of a Marriage Encounter function called the Sunday Night Couple Experience. We had never heard of any kinds of additional weekend support functions but Frank and Sherry assured us that we wouldn’t be sorry we went.

This was a 2-day mini-weekend presented by the National Executive Couple, Bill and Mariann Boylan and held in a church in Elmhurst. We signed up only because of the encouragement by our friends. The Sunday Night Couple Experience was geared to lead couples back to that closeness they felt on that Sunday night of their original weekend. Well, it certainly did! It also stressed the importance of daily dialogue and taught that skipping a day once in a while usually led to skipping more and more days until the couple was only dialoguing once a month or less – like we were! We made a commitment that weekend to dialogue daily no matter what happened or how we felt.

When we came home that Sunday afternoon, we really felt that same closeness we felt after our original weekend. We were blessed to find a time of day we could do our daily 10/10 that was amenable to our lifestyle: as soon as we both came home from work, before supper. We began to use the style of dialogue we learned on that Sunday Night Couple Experience. We choose a question, usually the daily M.E. Calendar question, write about our thoughts, our feelings, how our needs are affected and any options that come to mind concerning our thoughts. We exchange our books, read each other’s letters and dialogue about each other’s feelings. We always finish our 10/10 with shared prayer. Sometimes we don’t think the calendar question fits us so we’ve come up with a couple generic questions like “How was my day today and HDIFAT?” or “What was my strongest feeling today and how do I feel about it now?” Or if something had happened that day that seemed to affect one of us or both of us strongly, we formulate a question about that.

We still don’t know if we’re doing dialogue right, but every day we learn something about each other and we come one step closer to each other. Our relationship with each other and with God continues to deepen every day and after 34 years of marriage, that’s truly a miracle. And, we’ve continued to carry out that commitment to daily dialogue ever since that Sunday Night Couple Experience. We’ve managed to dialogue the day our son was in the hospital after being nearly killed by some local thugs. We did our 10/10 the day Michael was so sick with the flu he needed a bucket next to him as we wrote. We’ve managed our daily dialogue over the phone when we’ve been a thousand miles apart. And we didn’t skip even one day when Maria was in the hospital a few weeks ago for several days with a deadly blood infection. We’ve decided to continue to grow in our relationship each day until one of us leaves this world.

We’re not bragging about our daily dialogue, but only trying to encourage others with this Gift given to us by God. We know that without God’s Grace, we could not continue. As Jesus tells us: “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (2 Cor 10:17 NRSV). When we made that daily dialogue commitment, we also decided to begin numbering each daily dialogue letter and if we skipped a day, we’d have to start all over again. In May 2004 we will write our 5000th daily dialogue letter without skipping a day. We’re not

at all special. We know other couples have far surpassed this but we just want you to know what a blessing this has been in our lives. We want to thank Frank and Sherry Males, (Sherry passed away some years ago) for pointing us in this direction. And we certainly want to thank God for showering us with his great love in our letters.

Anyone can make the commitment to daily dialogue. Dialogue about it and pray daily together. Live the dream.

Michael & Maria Frazier

Michael has been a Permanent Deacon in the Rockford Diocese for 22 years and Maria is an elementary school librarian. Together they coordinate their home parish marriage preparation program and they are a senior presenting couple for their diocesan Engaged Encounter.