

One Day At A Time

By John & Kathy Colligan

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It was December 3, 1972, and we I were well into the Sunday afternoon I talks when we were asked to do a daily "10 & 10." We thought the idea of dialoguing every day for the rest of our lives was outrageous. We had at least one hundred reasons why we couldn't, and they were all good reasons. We needed time to be with our children, to continue our involvement in the schools and community, and to carry out the political activities that claimed much of our attention.

Could we dialogue every day? Would we? We made no promises that day to say our dialogue would be forever-or even for another week. Instead we decided that Sunday, fourteen years ago, that we would dialogue on Monday. After that we would see how we could work it out, one day at a time.

Those first dialogues were tough and brought out very strong feelings just like on the weekend. We had feelings about careers, male chauvinism, our further education, and our on-going political involvement. Then there was old grief, never discussed after a death of a parent.

The days rolled on and so did our dialogue as we ticked off one item after the other on our agenda. Six months after the weekend we were taught how to dialogue on Scripture, and that was added for special flavor from time to time.

Gradually, we ran out of old items to dialogue on and moved on to current questions and eventually areas that challenged us to grow: sex, material possessions, our relationship with God, and death. It was the death of our brother-in-law, Tom, that brought the reality of death home to us.

We were on a roll with our dialogue, learning new things about ourselves and each other often enough to make us want to keep on going. We wanted to go deeper and deeper to see what we would find. We dialogued everyday without fail no matter where we were-in a tent, on the beach, in bathrooms, bedrooms, living rooms, in the car (parked under a street light so we could read), and in Church. We dialogued at 4:00 a.m. before we went to bed at the end of a day and at the same hour when we were beginning a long car trip. We decided that when you miss your prime time, the time you have left is prime time.

There was the occasion when we were visiting un-encountered friends, and we didn't know how to explain dialogue to them. So we'd excuse ourselves one at a time and take out the ten minutes to write in our bedroom. A little later, we'd excuse ourselves together and take a second ten minutes to go to our room to dialogue. After three days, our thoroughly intrigued hosts congratulated us about the fantastic sex life we had! They admired the way we disappeared every day just to be together. They figured out

that making love was the only thing we could be doing. Actually this was a great idea, but we hadn't thought about it at the time.

We've dialogued through our own sicknesses when the only hour of the day when the sick person might feel a little better was spent in dialogue. We've even dialogued through a hospital stay and surgery.

Dialogue became a way of life for us, part of our spirituality as a couple. It wasn't always great! We didn't always put our whole selves into it, but it was steady and regular. We did it even when we didn't want to ...even when we were so angry with one another we knew we'd use it to garbage dump ... even when we were so busy and tired, it seemed more like drudgery than deep communication.

In the 14 years since our first dialogue, we have adopted two older children, gone through teenage years of all five of our children, been foster parents, and welcomed a niece to live with us. We have seen the birth and death of our first grandchild, shared in the anguish of an unwed pregnancy, participated in high school and college graduations for all five children, seen all of our children leave home and have had some return to live. We have also been through the death of our 21 year old son, celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary, and made a major career change in order to be more fully involved with each other and our Church.

Life has changed for us. There have been incredible moments of hurt, anger, and despair and fantastic times of joy, celebration and intimacy. And we've done it all together - as a couple deeply in touch with ourselves, with one another and with our God.

Our daily dialogue has kept us focused on living in intimacy 24 hours a day. It has kept our communication channels open and has made it possible for us to pursue growth in many areas of our relationship – outside of daily dialogue. As such, it has been the key to our growth but has also called us to work diligently and persistently on finding other ways to unity as well.

We used to be adamant preachers of the necessity of daily dialogue for every couple. We laid guilt trips on those who didn't dialogue which often strained their relationship. Now we believe in encouraging our loved ones by the example of our own lives. We recognize the fundamental, need for each couple to be free to decide to dialogue every day. If they do not they may miss a chance to grow in intimacy, but they are still great people.

In the 14 years, we've never missed a day of dialogue. We still do it by taking each day, one day at a time!

With much love,
John & Kathy Colligan