

The Challenge to WEDS

By Kenneth & Marguerite Burton

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As with many couples, Marguerite and I often found ourselves unable to dialogue when days consisted of only 24 hours. Many pledges and commitments were made but tight schedules dampened our efforts. We once even agreed to dialogue daily before going to bed, no matter how late it got, no success there either. Yet, there is one thing that might be stronger than a lack of time, and that is the right motivation.

Marguerite and I were gathered with five other couples for a Marriage Encounter meeting. In conversation that evening, many of us discussed our difficulties with consistent dialogue. The idea of a challenge arose. A challenge for all was proposed. Marguerite and I accepted with some trepidation. The rules were kept simple. It would be only a 30-day challenge. Each couple gained a point for every day of dialogue and three bonus points given for each couple recruited for the upcoming weekend. At our next planned meeting, we would compare points and the lowest would treat the other couples to dessert and coffee at a fine area restaurant.

Realizing our disadvantage (because of difficult schedules) I also recognized that I didn't want to pay the price of low couple on the totem pole. We faced the upcoming DIALOGUE DILEMMA with renewed DIALOGUE DETERMINATION. Accepting that a dialogue a day meant within a 24-hour period, we had to have a battle plan. We would have to write at work no matter what, for the following day's dialogue. This had to be done on days when we could not otherwise fit in W.E.D. and S. within the same 24 hours. We would begin arising even earlier to squeeze in our EXCHANGE, DIALOGUE, AND SELECT. Then later, at work, WRITE again. If everything went according to plan, we would have W.E.D. and S. within each 24-hour period.

There were a few near misses. One day came and slipped by too quickly for us to dialogue. I had to rush to work and seemingly would not be home until after midnight. That would put us into another 24-hour period. My heart sank but I hoped that only one missed day would not lead to "picking up the tab". It would take a miracle to salvage this one, oh me of little faith. My relief came to work early. He said he was restless, so he came in. He suggested that both of us need not be present. I nearly flew home. Marguerite and I were able to W.E.D. and S. before midnight.

Another close one was on a Sunday. Knowing that I had to be at work by 4 p.m., the day was planned to allow dialogue before I needed to leave. Church would be over about noon. No shortage of time here, but you see there was this fellow with a problem. His car had become stranded in a town approximately one and one-half hours away. No reason for despair. A three hour round trip would allow sufficient time for our dialogue. Well, you know the punch line. We got tied up on the trip. It would be a race just to get me to work on time. One of little faith again. We found an old sheet of paper and a styrofoam cup in the car. Marguerite always has been kind of innovative. We selected.

Marguerite drove while I wrote on the cup. She pulled over. Then she wrote while I drove. We exchanged and dialogued while we strained against the speed limit. One more day successfully dialogued.

Then there was the minor snag of Marguerite's trip to Washington, D.C. Fortunately, there was an agreement with the other couples that we could select four questions before she left. Each evening she wrote. When she returned, we exchanged and dialogued for all four of the days she was away.

Marguerite and I both agree that the most important ingredient in marriage is communication. The Marriage Encounter method of dialogue offers the communication tool which allows us to approach any subject openly and lovingly. Especially those subjects that used to be too sensitive to touch: children, budget, etc. No Encountered Couples should long stray from dialogue. Of course we certainly understand the strain of a difficult schedule. Yet nothing is impossible, nothing that a good challenge can't fix.

Therefore, Marguerite and I challenge you all to challenge each other or other couples. Remember, the day that love ceases to grow, it may have begun to die. Love one another. Keep it growing; cultivate it with the tool of dialogue.

Most lovingly yours,
Ken & Marguerite Burton

P.S. We were among the couples that didn't miss a day. We even had some bonus points from recruiting. Though we did not come in first, we're NOT picking up the tab!