31 Days to Becoming a Happy Wife

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To Noelle and Lucy
May you grow up to be wives who truly live happily ever after.
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Are You a Happy Wife?

Before you begin your 31-day experiment in happiness, take a moment to assess how happy you are in your marriage today. Keep in mind there are no wrong or right answers. You don’t have to impress or fool anyone, so be totally honest in your answers. Read each statement and mark if you mostly agree or disagree.

1. I believe that I have control over my happiness, not my circumstances.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

2. My husband and I do not yell at each other or give each other the silent treatment.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

3. I am flexible and can adapt easily to meet my husband’s needs and to life’s many changes.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

4. I get enough rest each day and am in good health.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

5. I am not jealous of other wives who may have more adoring husbands or more material possessions.
   - Agree
   - Disagree
6. I enjoy making love to my husband, and being physically intimate really brings us together.
   - Agree  - Disagree

7. I have not complained about my husband to anyone in the past month.
   - Agree  - Disagree

8. I think happiness is a skill I can learn and improve upon.
   - Agree  - Disagree

9. I have a clear vision of what I want in my marriage.
   - Agree  - Disagree

10. My family and friends would tell you that I smile a lot.
    - Agree  - Disagree

11. My husband and I go on regular date nights that are fun.
    - Agree  - Disagree

12. I believe my husband is the leader in our marriage.
    - Agree  - Disagree

13. I express prayers of thanks for my husband to God on most days.
    - Agree  - Disagree

14. After my husband has apologized sincerely, it’s easy for me to forgive him.
    - Agree  - Disagree

15. If I run into an old friend, my face lights up as I describe to her what my husband is like.
    - Agree  - Disagree
Total the number of statements you agree with:

1-5: It’s hard for you to remember when marriage was fun and easy. It seems like an uphill battle on many days, and you get tired of trying to make things work. Take this book seriously day by day with a sincere heart ready for change.

6-10: Things in your marriage aren’t too bad, but they’re not outstanding either. Your marriage is more stable than many of those around you, but you know it could be much happier. Make the decision that having an average marriage is not good enough for you. You want to take it to the next level and live with more joy at home.

11-15: You have a peaceful home and practice many habits of the happy wife. By making a few adjustments, you will radiate more joy and experience greater satisfaction in your marriage. Today life is good, and tomorrow will be even better.
Focus 1

Becoming HOPEFUL

A

P

P

Y
Day 1

Happiness Begins with Me

*I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

*Psalm 40:1*

There we were—my Realtor husband and me—standing in front of our new home, grinning and holding a bright red SOLD sign for the picture. The excitement of moving into a great house had temporarily eclipsed the massive stress of packing three weeks before Christmas. I couldn’t see one thing wrong with my dream house.

And then we moved in.

The sink in the master bathroom started to leak. The plumber was supposed to come in the afternoon, but couldn’t come until after dinner-time. While he toiled around under the sink, James and I were standing on top of our bed trying to fix the ceiling fan and light. My arms ached as I held up the light while James worked with the wiring. Let’s just say it didn’t work the first time (or the second, or the third). My dream home was ending up to be a lot of work.

Isn’t that kind of like marriage? You marry Prince Charming and there’s not a blemish on him. He looks perfect. And to be fair, there’s not a blemish on you either, Princess. But as you begin to do life together day after day, you soon realize you need to put some elbow grease into the relationship to keep the magic alive.

Did working on my home diminish the joy of living at my new address? No, on the contrary, the work I put into my home makes me more satisfied and proud to call it mine. The fact that a marriage takes work isn’t supposed to be negative. It’s what makes it *real.* In fact, it makes it really good.
Mr. Wonderful

Do you remember when you realized you had met Mr. Wonderful? I fell in love with James in a pretty unusual place for twenty-year-olds—a nursing home. You might say he had me at Jell-O. One fateful Friday night, James and I were part of a van load of graduate students heading out to volunteer at the local nursing home. As he shared a story with the dozen or so elderly residents gathered in the recreation room, a few of them may have been dozing off, but I was fully awake. I prayed in my heart, Lord, I really want to marry that man!

We became good friends during those nursing home visits, Toastmasters meetings, and trips to Dairy Queen. But to my dismay, James told me in no uncertain terms that our relationship was totally platonic. It took me many months to release my feelings of love to God. After all, my stomach still did flips when I saw my “friend.” But one day I told God, I’m tired of hoping. I give up my dream of marrying James.

A few weeks later, a funny thing happened. James asked me on a double date. Then he asked me on a real date. He was planning to tell me about his change of heart over an ice-cream blizzard at Dairy Queen, but thankfully an older and wiser friend lobbied for a better location. So over chocolate cake at Outback Steakhouse, he pulled out a yellow rose and a red rose from his jacket. He said he was glad we were friends and wanted to find out if there was more.

Less than a year later, we were walking down a center aisle saying those magic words, “I do.” Boy, was I glad there was more.

Misplaced Hope for Happiness

James had a job in Dallas, so I moved from a dream job in Virginia Beach to join him. But I didn’t mind, I was married! We lived in a one-bedroom apartment on the fourth floor, which we named the Love Nest. We were low on furniture but high on love. One day we even resorted to draping black garbage bags around our windows to simulate window coverings. They seemed to do the trick so we left them on for months. I was a happy wife even with black garbage bags around my windows and four flights of stairs to walk up and down each day.

My happiness wasn’t dependent on fancy surroundings or a working elevator. I was just so happy to have someone to have and to hold forever.
Little things didn’t bother me. Daily talks, kisses, and sweet nothings filled my love tank each day. But that natural happiness gradually diminished as bills and responsibility increased.

Can you relate?

Maybe instead of taking you out to dinner in the evening, your husband is staying late at the office again. He doesn’t sit and give you his undivided attention like he used to. When he kisses you, sometimes you don’t feel that spark. And if you’re not careful, you might find yourself thinking, You don’t make me happy anymore.

I love the story John Maxwell shares in his book Make Today Count. He and his wife, Margaret, had been married for a few years. He was speaking at a pastor’s conference, and she was presenting a session for the spouses. He writes:

During the Q and A time, a woman stood up and asked, “Does John make you happy?” I have to say, I was really looking forward to hearing Margaret’s answer. I’m an attentive husband, and I love Margaret dearly. What kind of praise would she lavish on me?

“Does John make me happy?” she considered. “No, he doesn’t.” I looked to see where the closest exit was. “The first two or three years we were married,” she continued, “I thought it was John’s job to make me happy. But he didn’t. He wasn’t mean to me or anything. He’s a good husband. But nobody can make another person happy. That was my job.”

It’s My Job

A happy you has to exist before there can be a happy wife. Happiness begins with a choice you make. When you wake up in the morning, you don’t only decide what you are going to eat for breakfast. You decide whether you’re going to be irritable or even-keeled, cheerful or melancholy. An attitude isn’t thrust upon you. You have the great honor of choosing how you will respond in your marriage on any given day.

Author Cindi McMenamin said,

When I wrote When a Woman Inspires Her Husband, I told my readers that for years I was praying that my husband would
change and adapt to me. I finally had to say, “God, change me. Make me the kind of wife he needs.” When I became more adaptable, all of a sudden there was a different equation. Our marriage changed for good and I became a happy wife.²

Happiness in marriage can be found in some counterintuitive places. Through serving your spouse instead of waiting for him to serve you. Through seeking God instead of seeking your own good. Through making wise choices instead of waiting for great circumstances.

It’s not up to your husband, your address, or your circumstances to make you happy. You are the one who ultimately makes the decision to choose joy. When you place your hope in your marriage to make you happy, you will be disappointed. But when you put your hope in God, you will find enough joy in Him to last you a lifetime.

A Clean Slate

It’s easy to cave in under the pressure of the fixer-upper marriage and the less-than-perfect life. As you look around, you see a lot of people singing the blues about their marriages. Becoming a happy wife seems impossible on many days. Yet this desperation is where hope can really shine. Is it possible to regularly experience joy in your marriage? Can you really be happy in your current situation? If you are married to a decent man who is not abusive, I am here to tell you that happiness can indeed start with you. But you must begin by placing your hope in God.

Every New Year’s Eve, more than one billion people around the world tune in to watch a ball drop about 140 feet down a flagpole. Why all the hubbub around a shimmering ball in Times Square? Perhaps it’s because we are inexplicably drawn to the hope of new beginnings. A clean slate of 365 days, bright with no mistakes.

God is a God of new beginnings. Isaiah 43:18-19 says it so beautifully,

“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.”
No matter where you are in your marriage, you can become a very happy, hope-filled wife. Now is the time for renaissance. I like how novelist Susan Meissner puts it, “Renaissance is a word with hope infused in every letter.”

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**Today’s Picture**

Remember the first time you kissed your husband? Let your mind dwell on that magical tingling you felt in the pit of your stomach. Picture yourself feeling this way again when you next see your husband today.

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**Today’s Prayer**

*Lord, thank You for giving me a wonderful man in my husband. Help me to realize that it is not his job to make me happy. I give You my attitude and ask that You would help me choose joy every day and to take responsibility for myself. I do not want to follow the pattern of this world, but I want to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. Flood me with love for my husband today.*