



STOP
BEING
A
WIFE

40 CHALLENGES TO UNVEIL THE WIFE
YOU WERE CREATED TO BE

Ashley Ashcraft

Testimonials

Stop Being a _____ Wife by Ashley Ashcraft is simply brilliant. And when I say simply... I mean simple. Her 40 Day Challenge is so doable that any wife in any season of marriage, struggling with almost any type of struggle, can surely succeed in this transformative journey. Whether you need to stop being critical, bitter, resentful, selfish, hurt, or nagging... the goal is the same for us all. Transformation. This isn't a book with chapters full of words, just a powerful introduction with a handful of life-transforming (marriage altering) Scriptures, followed by 40 daily (and doable) challenges that will surely help you move out of your _____ rut and into a place of service, intimacy, and blessing."

Wendy Speake,

author of *The 40-Day Sugar Fast, The 40-Day Social Media Fast, Triggers, and Parenting Scripts*

Marriage is our most important earthly relationship, yet it is so often neglected by distractions or the "urgent" rather than the "important." *The Stop Being a _____ Wife* challenge was the perfect reminder to daily engage in showing love for my husband. We found ourselves eagerly looking forward to each day to spend time reminiscing on the past, enjoying today, and casting vision for our future. This marriage challenge is simple and powerful.

TRACY LYNN DOUGHERTY,

founder of *Equip and Encourage Women*

The *Stop Being a _____ Wife* challenge provided ideas and encouragement, allowing me to serve my husband in ways that my "mom brain" would not have readily identified. Marriage is a work in progress but finding ways to incorporate laughter and bring emotional closeness along the journey is a great gift, one that Ashley's challenge brings!

KIM CRIST,

military spouse, homeschool mom, and nurse

Your challenge made me remember that I needed to nurture my marriage more and get out of the everyday routine. It sparked a new joy in doing little things for my husband and loving him in small ways. Also, it was fun to secretly be loving and praying extra on my hubby.

JULEE DEGROAT,

designer, homeschool mom, instructor, and foster parent

I highly recommend this challenge! As a wife with four children, I know I set the tone for our home. This challenge helped remind me each day to serve my husband in a selfless and tangible way. Each day brought something fun or thoughtful to try to better respect and honor my husband who does so much for our family. Thank you for writing this challenge! I look forward to participating again.

ANDREA VAUGHAN,

pastor's wife, military spouse, and homeschool mom

**STOP
BEING**

A _____

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A wedding photograph of a bride and groom. The bride is wearing a white lace gown and a long veil. The groom is in a dark blue military uniform with a gold stripe on the leg. They are standing on a stone bridge with a brick walkway, surrounded by green trees. A yellow brushstroke is at the top of the image. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white rectangle.

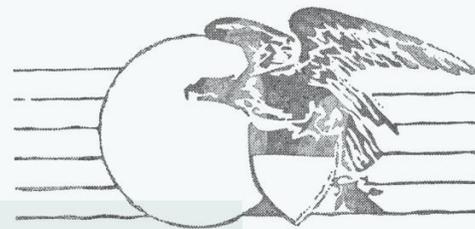
TO TIM

*Thank you for showing me Jesus.
It changed everything.*

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FORWARD



Dear Reader,

I'm Ashley's husband, a prime benefactor of this challenge. Ashley will tell you how much it changed her by embarking on this journey and how it can change you. But in so doing, it changed me! So much so that it inspired me to commence a 40-day challenge of my own. I pray it will ignite the same excitement in your husband that it did for me—I know it can.

I'm that workaholic husband responsible for relocating my wife and kids around the country in relentless pursuit of the next thing. Sometimes my work caused me to leave Ashley to hold down the fort all by herself for months at a time. Why should she sacrifice another single thing, let alone 40 days worth of service? But by divine design, God worked through Ashley's heart to reinvigorate passion and pursuit in our marriage. And I can think of no one more qualified to change my heart than my wife. You ladies have that kind of God-gifted power!

At the crux of this brilliant book is a scripture verse that comes to mind: "For Christ did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). My wife chose to serve me, even on days when I deserved it the least. And it caused us to connect on levels previously unimaginable. We've found that our marriage does best when we're intentionally serving one another. So whether it's making him a meal or leaving him mesmerized, this 40-day challenge is sure to make miracles. God bless you—and have fun!

Tim Ashcraft

Happy Husband
Somewhere, USA
(Probably moving)

Introduction

ARE YOU READY TO STOP BEING A _____ WIFE? I don't know your fill in the blank, but I get you. Is the wife you desire to be buried by life's circumstances? Maybe you're burdened by financial concerns, health issues, past trauma, unforgiveness, anger, job frustrations, marital problems, or parenting concerns. Whatever it is, it's easy to become hidden in this world. But let me give you hope—if you love as Jesus says to love, you *can* emerge brighter than ever. You *can* stop being a _____ wife.

My husband is an attack pilot in the Army. Neither of us had a clue what sacrifices lay ahead when we pledged our vows at age 24. A very wise Army wife once preached that as military spouses we're not victims, but volunteers. Unfortunately, I'd spent over a decade living in the victim mentality. Eleven moves in eleven years and countless separations left my heart hardened, and exhausted—*really, really exhausted*.

Life would be so much easier if we could stay in one place. Why can't we just get out of the military? This issue or that problem would have never happened if we got out as I wanted. Our kids wouldn't have so many challenges if we could raise them with stability and the rest of their family. I'm sick of having to take down and set up my life every year. I feel called to serve at this ministry, but here we are moving again, making it impossible. He's always on his phone working! His hours are so long our kids don't even get to see him around the dinner table anymore. There he goes, off on another training, trip, or deployment, leaving the kids and me behind with no help.

I'm not proud of the negative attitude I carried while at the same time trying to live sold out for Jesus. When I'm operating out of the Holy Spirit, I know that my husband believes God called our family to serve in the military and that we are doing His kingdom work wherever He leads us. But, the enemy is an expert at planting lies, isn't he?

In 2020, we were in the middle of figuring out serious health complications, life with a special needs child, a legal battle, planning military move number twelve, and buying our first house. I felt depleted of joy in my marriage, and something had to change—it wasn't my husband, it wasn't my circumstances, it was me. *I* had to change.

*You, my brothers, were called to be free.
But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful
nature; rather, serve one another in love.*

GALATIANS 5:13

I decided to start a 40-day wife challenge in February of 2020 and invited my blog readers along for the journey. I could not have imagined the excitement and joy about to infiltrate my life as I discovered the key to a happy marriage—serving in love. Are you ever like me in wondering why you can't just follow Jesus from the beginning? I make it so much harder on myself when I try to do things my way!

*But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be
a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever
wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone
else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but
to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

MARK 10: 43-45

In serving my husband—putting him first, and loving him intentionally—the trajectory of my marriage changed. My husband lived those 40 days surprised, awed, cherished, encouraged and inspired. So much so that on the last day, he vowed to create his own challenge. For the next 40 days, he served and loved me in return.

And I lived those 40 days excited, eager, giddy, and closely connected to Christ. I couldn't wait to give my husband the next surprise that would make him swoon or write him a note that would make him smile. Don't get me wrong, there were days when the last thing I wanted to do was serve him after a night of restless sleep,

homeschooling, and 15 hours of parenting three little ones. However, I persevered and fulfilled each challenge for the sake of my marriage. And it was always worth it. Loving well is always worth it.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

JOHN 13:34-35

Please note: You love. You pray. God works. This book does not promise to transform your husband's heart, make him love you more, or increase his faith in God. If your husband is not a believer, partner with God by modeling the love of Jesus.

In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live when they observe your pure, reverent lives.

1 PETER 3:1-2

On that topic, it's important to understand that the type of love and service Jesus called us to (and that I'm exploring through these challenges) is one of mutuality when it comes to a Godly relationship between husband and wife. This is because Christ commands all of His disciples to love and serve one another humbly.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

EPHESIANS 21:5

God designed the man to be the spiritual leader, modeling Jesus' example and the woman to be his helper—a strong, intelligent, equally worthy partner. Don't miss this: you are not subservient to your husband. You are a called and capable daughter of the Almighty, purposed to serve in love.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...*

GALATIANS 5:22-23

Now, you may wonder if you should tell your husband that you're doing this challenge or keep it a surprise. That is up to you. I told my husband about the challenge but some women decided to keep it a secret the whole time.

This challenge does not have to be completed in exactly 40 days. Certain challenges require some planning. For example, one challenge asks you to plan a unique date. Let's say you decide to go ziplining but the course is booked for the next two months. Go ahead and buy the tickets. You can tell your spouse about it now or keep it a surprise.

I do suggest that you read the challenges for 40 consecutive days though. Most challenges can be done on the same day and whenever they can't, just slip them in another day of the week. I believe this 40-day challenge will be the most effective for you and your husband if you do it with consistency. Your extravagant love won't be as evident if you do it here and there. We're going for a powerful, in-your-face, can't-ignore-it kind of experience.

I'm so eager for you to begin this challenge and experience the benefits of loving selflessly. Realizing the marriage I want starts with me was groundbreaking for the heart-change that needed to happen. I can't promise your husband is going to be so inspired he'll compose his own challenge in return, but that's not the point. The point is for you to learn to love well.

Before we begin, let me share my fill in the blank with you. Actually, more than one. I wanted to stop being a critical wife, a boring wife, a "no" wife, and a joyless wife. I was so ready to have fun in my marriage, to live the abundant life God promises, and to live in love despite my circumstances. And boy, did I ever! I surprised myself

and I definitely surprised my husband. On the last day of the challenge, I asked him to fill in a new blank for me. He called me a sensational wife.

Whatever "blank" came to mind when you filled in the title of this book, I have complete confidence that Jesus will redeem you and fill you with hope—if you let Him. I am praying for you. In the prayer below, fill in your name wherever there is a blank space.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you that you have blessed _____ with the gift of marriage. Lord, help her to see it as such. I pray that _____ will fully embrace these 40 challenges and that You will use this time to transform her heart. Show _____ how to let her walls fall, let her inhibition go, and let You take the reins. Help her to listen for and listen to the Holy Spirit's leading. And God, if she is a mother, I pray for the little eyes and hearts that are watching her. I pray that marital love overflows from her home. Help _____ to model for Your next generation what it looks like to love with excellence, to respect fully, to serve eagerly, to forgive freely, and to enjoy marriage! In Jesus' loving name, Amen.

01.



CHALLENGE

*Send him a flirty
text message*



When was the last time you flirted with your husband? Before starting this challenge, it had been too long since I pursued my spouse this way. How boring! Now that I've seen the benefits of prioritizing flirting, I can tell you I flirted on my way out the door this morning. Go on, take his breath away!



30 SECONDS



SONG OF
SOLOMON
5:10

"My love is fit and strong, notable among ten thousand."



10 MINUTES



PHILIPPIANS 2:4

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

CHALLENGE

*Give your husband
a massage*

Today is about embracing the blessing of physical touch and selflessly serving your spouse. A massage is a simple yet profound way to love your husband—a true gift of humility and intimacy. If you're like me, this isn't something you go around offering up all the time, but I'm ready to change that. Let's get those hands moving!

CHALLENGE

Buy your husband an unexpected gift

03.

Go as simple or as extravagant as your wish. Maybe this means a quick pitstop at the gas station for his favorite candy bar, or maybe you order that high price item he's been eyeing for months. Whatever you choose, make sure it's personal. He'll notice that you went out of your way to make him feel loved.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."



10 MINUTES



JAMES 1:17



10 MINUTES

PHILIPPIANS
4:804.
CHALLENGE

*Make a list of the
qualities you love*

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

My critical nature desires to ruminate on the negative so I have to actively work against this tendency. Through memorizing and reciting Phillipians 4:8, I've retrained my brain to think on the things listed in this verse. My pessimistic thoughts still try to break through, but I immediately take them captive by meditating on this scripture verse instead.

To work towards becoming a Phillipians 4:8 wife, make an all-encompassing list of the qualities you love about your husband and share it with him.

05.



15 MINUTES



ECCLESIASTES 8:15

CHALLENGE

Plan a unique date

It's time to get creative! Research shows that out-of-the-box dates create a bonding experience between partners. Let's put dinner and movie on pause (for at least one date) and plan something that is fun, exciting, adventurous, or straight-up crazy! Think ziplining, ax throwing, boating, an escape room, archery, or a couple's class outside of your comfort zone.

"So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun."

06.



CHALLENGE

*Prepare his favorite
meal or dessert*



Maybe your guy swoons over a simple plate of nachos and a heaping pile of cheesy goodness is his love language. However, I challenge you to go big—go gourmet. Pull out the cookbook and put in the effort to conjure up something extra-special.



30-60
MINUTES



1 CORINTHIANS
10:31

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."



30-60 MINUTES



PSALM 133:1

"How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony!"

CHALLENGE

*Do something together
that he enjoys*

Today, you are sacrificing your own interests to bond with your spouse. Does he like fishing, but you never tag along? Off you go! Could you not care any less about sports, but he's a sports fanatic? Watch a game together. Whatever he loves to do, do it with him.

CHALLENGE

Write your husband a handwritten letter describing your favorite memory together

08.

Have you noticed that the scriptures are replete with people recalling God's goodness and miracles? It's the perfect tool to immediately put hope and life back into one's heart and mind. Apply this same principle to your spouse. Reminiscing on a cherished memory reinvigorates both your souls.

"I remember the days of old; I meditate on all you have done; I reflect on the work of your hands. I spread out my hands to you; I am like parched land before you."



5 MINUTES



PSALM 143:5-6



1 MINUTE



SONG OF
SOLOMON
4:7

"You are
absolutely
beautiful, my
darling;
there is no
imperfection
in you."

09 CHALLENGE

*Wear his
favorite outfit*

Are you ready to get dolled up today? Or, maybe your husband prefers you in jeans and a t-shirt. Maybe he loves to see you in something particular at bedtime. Whatever he fancies, let him enjoy your beauty today, accentuated by his favorite outfit of yours.

10.



10 MINUTES



MARK 11:24

CHALLENGE

*Spend ten minutes in
prayer for your
husband*

Make this challenge a priority today. There is nothing more significant and impactful you can do for your spouse than to pray for him. What is your God-sized prayer for your husband? Go big and bold and expectant on this one!

"Therefore I tell you,
whatever you ask for in
prayer, believe that you have
received it, and it will be
yours."



CHALLENGE

*Light candles, put on music
and see what happens*



Physical intimacy with your husband is a gift God wants you to enjoy. It is designed by God, in part, as a way to experience the Lord's unfathomable love. Initiate intimacy with your spouse today, and intentionally focus on making him feel *cherished*.



30-60
MINUTES



SONG OF
SOLOMON 1:2

"Oh, that he would
kiss me with the
kisses of his
mouth! For your
caresses are more
delightful than
wine."



2 HOURS



DEUTERONOMY

20:4

"For the Lord your God is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."

CHALLENGE

*Watch the film
War Room*

1 *War Room* changed the way I live my life. After watching this film, I created a prayer closet and got serious about the business of fighting my battles through prayer. Several houses later, my "war room" now resides in a prayer journal. Within these pages, you'll find a picture of my husband, a list of my specific prayers for him, and a calendar of daily spouse prayers to lift him up to the Lord. Do not underestimate the power of God to work through your prayer life! Prayer is a daily necessity for your soul (and your husband's!).

CHALLENGE

Play a game together

13.

There is something so simple and good about playing a game together. The nostalgia of childhood returns, and with that, the weight of our adult world seems to disappear for a few moments in time. Embrace the sweetness of being innocently *together* and *playing* (with a splash of competitive banter, of course).

"The streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in them."



15 MINUTES



ZECHARIAH **8:5**



5 MINUTES

JOHN
10:10

"A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance."



14

CHALLENGE

Read this letter

Have you ever heard something said over and over, but the truth of it never really hit you where it mattered? When I read "A Screwtape Letter for the Unappreciated Mom," something finally clicked within me. I had the head knowledge to understand that Satan was out to destroy my marriage, but reading this brief letter empowered me to see Satan's lies. This satirical spin-off of C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Screwtape Letters*, gives wives and mothers a powerful glimpse behind enemy lines.

Do an online search for the title listed above, written by Kelsey Shade.

15.



30 MINUTES



1 JOHN 3:18

CHALLENGE

Work with your kids to do something special for your spouse

This could be as simple as a painted handprint, or something much more unique and grand. I urge to you embrace your child's imagination. If your little girl wants to make a fairy wand for her daddy, then get to it, Mama! If you do not have children, invite a friend or family member to partake in this challenge.

"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

16.



CHALLENGE

Do not complain about your spouse today



Try these four practices:

1. Ask God to see your husband through His eyes.
2. Memorize and recite Ephesians 4:2.
3. Remind yourself: your spouse is not the enemy.
4. Ask God to reveal your faults first and deal with those instead.



24 HOURS



EPHESIANS
4:2

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

CHALLENGE

Leave him a surprise on the driver's seat of his car

17

This one has fun written all over it. What could you surprise your man with that will leave him grinning all day? Bonus points if you can get him thinking about you non-stop and dying to get home to say thank you.

"A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great."



10 MINUTES



PROVERBS 18:16



60 MINUTES



PSALM 77:11

"I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old."

CHALLENGE

Relive one of your favorite memories together

Remembering our favorite times together as a couple refocuses our hearts. The simple act of recollection brings our fondness for one another to the surface. Over and over in the scriptures, the writers tell us to remember God's works. There's something profound that happens in remembering. Let's do the same with our spouse; however, let's go a step farther by recreating one of our best moments together.



5-60 MINUTES

TITUS
2:4-5

"so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered."

10

CHALLENGE

*Pray for your role
as a wife*

I didn't realize how imperative prayer was for the health of my marriage when I first became a wife. Now, I know that prayer is absolutely essential for a marriage that aims to abide in Christ. Not only do we need to pray for our spouses, but we need to pray for ourselves. Seek God's wisdom, ask Him to reveal the areas where you need to mature, listen to Him, and pray for God to show you how to glorify Him in your role as a wife.

20.



5 SECONDS



PHILIPPIANS 2:4

CHALLENGE

*Ask your husband,
"What can I do for
you today?"*

This is a simple question you can ask your spouse to show sincere love and sacrifice. I think Jesus would be so pleased to hear us ask this question every day! Let's make a diligent effort to be the selfless servants God desires.

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."





21.

CHALLENGE

*Enjoy a movie together,
his pick*



Does anyone else feel like they spend more time trying to agree on a film with their spouse than actually watching one? Let's keep this simple and leave it to the guys. Just enjoy the quality time and cuddling!



2 HOURS



ROMANS
12:10

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."



10 MINUTES



1 PETER 4:8

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

CHALLENGE

*Learn your spouse's
love language*

Did you know we each have our own love language, the way we show and receive love? Engaging in a meaningful face-to-face conversation on the couch does wonders for me; however, my husband needs physical touch to feel loved. When I choose to focus on my husband's love language a whole other world opens up! Discovering your spouse's love language can be revolutionary for your marriage. Ask your husband to take the free 5 Love Languages quiz online and learn how to love him based on his results.

P.S. Make sure you take the quiz too!

CHALLENGE

Make him breakfast in bed

23

This one is too simple. I recommend you go beyond his usual breakfast fare and add that special extra something. If he's an eggs guy, add some onions, peppers, and ham to dress up his typical scrambled eggs. If he likes pancakes, add strawberries and whipped cream or toss some chocolate chips into the batter. Whatever he likes, spice it up a bit!

"for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things."



20 MINUTES



PSALM 107:9



60 MINUTES

JOHN
13:35

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

24.

CHALLENGE

Set up an at-home date

Get as creative as your like or go back to the basics. Maybe you prepare a candlelit picnic in the living room or make a drive-in movie theater come to life. Consider setting up a little painting studio if he's the artsy type or gather all the necessary ingredients to make a gourmet meal if he's into cooking. Think about what your man would appreciate and make it happen!

25.



10 MINUTES



JOHN 13:15-16

CHALLENGE

*Give your husband a
foot rub*

We're going to pull a Jesus today and spend some time serving our spouse via the feet. Why? Because Jesus modeled this for us. He demonstrated to his disciples that the most humbling of duties was not beneath Him. Serving others was essential to His ministry. I've discovered it's also essential to a joy-filled marriage.

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."

26.



CHALLENGE

Write out a personal prayer for your husband and present it to him



Marriage was designed by God, and He longs to be a part of yours. One way to include Him is by developing a daily habit of praying for your spouse. Write out a prayer for your husband, and present your words to him. Don't concern yourself with fancy language, just be genuine. If you need help, you'll find a plethora of spouse prayers online.



10 MINUTES

ROMANS
12:12

"Rejoice in hope;
be patient in
affliction;
be persistent in
prayer."



5 MINUTES



ECCLESIASTES 8:15

"So I commended enjoyment because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy himself, for this will accompany him in his labor during the days of his life that God gives him under the sun."

CHALLENGE

Leave something under his pillow

Have some fun with this one. Be as sweet, flirty, or humorous as you want! Again, be mindful of what your spouse would appreciate. If he's a jokester, play into that. If he's a romantic, consider writing a sweet love note. Would he appreciate something more seductive? Then leave a little something-something to excite him.

CHALLENGE

Forgive him

28.



I've heard it said that to be good at marriage you have to be good at forgiving. Isn't that the truth?! You see, God desires for us to operate in His grace and experience the freedom of forgiveness. Our Heavenly Father forgives us daily and commands us to do the same. Is there an offense you still need to forgive? Today is the day. If you need help walking through the forgiveness process, Christian counseling is an excellent resource.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."



10 MINUTES



EPHESIANS **4:32**



20 MINUTES

EPHESIANS
4:3

"making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

29.
CHALLENGE

*Go for a walk together
and hold hands*

Invite your spouse on a walk today and increase your connection by holding hands. You'll check off a couple of love languages with this task—quality time and physical touch. Throw in a compliment while you're at it and you'll hit on words of affirmation, too! Erin Smalley, the strategic marriage spokesperson at Focus on the Family, offers a priceless tip: if you're feeling disconnected from your spouse, invite him on a walk. My husband is all too familiar with hearing the words "I feel disconnected." Erin's advice helps me to see that *initiating* the connection myself is far smarter and simpler.



30.



10 MINUTES



PROVERBS 17:22

CHALLENGE

Play hide and seek

It's day 30 and yes, I'm serious about this challenge. There's something really fun about bringing out your inner child. You can play this game together at home or get creative with it and find somewhere unique when you're out and about. I guarantee some good laughs with this one.

"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."



CHALLENGE

*Commit to speaking respectfully
about him*



Men crave respect. It's how God made them. As such, I've learned how vital it is to speak well of my husband to others. That wisdom seems like common sense, but I still have to catch myself—you know, that whole sinful nature thing. Join me in making a lifetime commitment to speak respectfully of your man in public. In doing so, you honor God and set your husband up to show you the love you yearn for in return.



10 SECONDS



1 THESSALONIANS
5:11

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."



24 HOURS



MATTHEW 6:17-18

"But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

CHALLENGE

*Choose one day to fast
for your husband*

Does anyone else think fasting seems scary, intimidating, or unattainable? I remember first hearing about fasting when my Bible study teachers fasted for their soon-to-be daughter while on a plane ride over to China to bring her home. This couple was so spiritual that, of course, they were fasting, but me, oh no, not me.

Here's a quick truth. Fasting is accessible to everyone and it's not complicated. Fasting is simply abstaining from something to spend focused time in prayer and seeking God's will. Consider fasting from one meal if it's your first time. When you would normally eat, pray for your spouse. When you feel hunger pangs, use that as a reminder to pray. If you can't abstain from food for health reasons, fast from social media, coffee, sugar, or your phone. When you feel the urge to indulge in those, pray.

CHALLENGE

Enjoy a dessert topping together

33

Now that we've talked about fasting, let's talk about indulging—in your marital intimacy. Get out the whipped cream, chocolate syrup, or caramel sauce and enjoy a treat together any way you like it. Maybe it tops your ice cream. Maybe not. You're married—have fun together!

"Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love."



15 MINUTES



PROVERBS **5:18-19**



10 MINUTES



PROVERBS
3:13-14

"Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold."



34. CHALLENGE

Pick out a marriage devotional to read together

Three reasons I love marriage devotionals:

1. The material validates and encourages the actions I would like to see in my marriage.
2. Reading devotionals together promotes quality time. If your spouse needs an incentive, read together in a bubble bath or naked in bed!
3. God convicts me of areas that I need to grow in to be a more Godly wife. The devotional isn't a ploy to change your husband. Remember, the change starts with *you*!



35.



? MINUTES



SONG OF SOLOMON 6:3

CHALLENGE

Come up with your own challenge

I've loved providing you with challenges so far, but today, it's your turn. I want you to think about your unique husband and what you can do to love him extravagantly. I bet you already know that *one* thing you can do or say that will make his day better than he ever imagined.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."



36.

CHALLENGE

Write on his bathroom mirror



My husband has a God-given respect meter and I get to decide how it registers each day. When I obey God's command to respect my husband, he soars. When I disobey and follow my fleshly nature, it's devastatingly clear how much power I hold. Grab a dry erase marker and complete the following statement on your husband's bathroom mirror: "I respect you because _____."



2 MINUTES

EPHESIANS
5:33

"However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

**10** MINUTESPSALM **77:11**

"I will remember the Lord's works;
yes, I will remember your ancient wonders."

CHALLENGE

*Reminisce about your favorite
intimate moments*

This one is so simple yet quite fun. It may even lead to more than mere conversation! Over and over in the scriptures, God tells us to "remember." He wants us to recall His miracles so that we're encouraged to keep hoping. Let's apply this biblical concept with our spouse by reminiscing about our favorite sexually intimate moments together. God created this blessed act (in part) to bond us, and remembering the highlights rejuvenates our hope.

CHALLENGE

Find resources for biblical sexual intimacy

38.

As a married Christian woman, I had no idea how much information I was lacking on a healthy view of biblical sexual intimacy. Authentic Intimacy is my go-to resource for this area of life and has played a significant part in helping me to retrain my body and mind. Subscribe to their podcast, *Java with Juli*, and order Dr. Juli Slattery and Linda Dillow's book, *Passion Pursuit*. This study is one of the best things I've ever done for my marriage.

You'll appreciate the above resources, but your husband is *really* going to love this next one: Dr. Jennifer Degler's CWIVES Dare of the Month newsletter. Subscribe for free and see what I mean!

"...and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."



5 MINUTES



2 CORINTHIANS 3:17



10 MINUTES

ISAIAH
32:8

"But the noble make noble plans, and by noble deeds they stand."

39.

CHALLENGE

Write a mission statement

I don't know about you, but I'm a much more effective individual when I define my goals. Otherwise, I'm just out there dreaming and not fully accomplishing my vision. It's like that for my role in marriage. I tried my best to be a "good" wife for the first ten years, but there was no set goal in mind. Instead, I needed to cast vision like a business. What is your mission as a wife? Write it down in one to two sentences and share it with your husband.

40.



TIM & ASHLEY'S VOW RENEWAL

CHALLENGE

Rewrite (or reaffirm) your vows



Congratulations—you made it to day 40! I pray you are standing proud, unveiled in all your true worth as a wife. On this last day, I want you to look at your original wedding vows. Do the promises you recited still adequately express your commitment? Or, do you need to update them to reflect your new mission? Once you've decided, and rewritten if necessary, read your vows to your husband. Consider making this a special occasion. Extra credit: Invite your husband to participate by rewriting or reaffirming his vows too.



30-60
MINUTES



PROVERBS 3:3

"Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart."

Bonus

41.



30 SECONDS



JOHN 12:26

CHALLENGE

*Start being
a _____ wife*

For 40 days, I asked you to journey with me on this expedition to *stop* being a _____ wife. It's time to flip the script. Fill in this new statement: I'm ready to *start* being a _____ wife. Let's keep going, Friend. I believe in you!

"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

ASHLEY Ashcraft

I'm sincerely proud of you for choosing to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your marriage over these last 40 days! Jesus calls us to love others selflessly and I pray this challenge has given you an insatiable desire to keep serving your man (and that he's serving you in return!). Your role as a wife, mom, and child of God has never been more important than RIGHT NOW. So, what's next?

1. Look into the resources on the next page.
2. Consider seeking Christian counseling for yourself or as a couple.
3. Connect with me on Facebook and Pinterest for practical and encouraging advice to keep you moving forward in your pursuit of a Godly life.

I'd love to pray for you as our time together comes to end.

Dear God,

Thank you for the life of this precious woman. I praise You that You have given her the desire to love and serve her husband with excellence. Heavenly Father, I ask that You draw this couple into deep intimacy, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Give her husband an unshakable passion to pursue his bride with genuine love. Help him to be the spiritual leader of their family. Lord, show this couple how to follow You and find eternal joy in their marriage. In Jesus' faithful name, Amen.

Keep looking up,

Ashley Ashcraft



RESOURCES

BOOKS

Passion Pursuit by Dr. Juli Slattery and Linda Dillow

What Did You Expect? by Paul Tripp

The Love Dare by Alex and Stephen Kendrick

Love & Respect by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas

The Meaning of Marriage by Timothy Keller

Kingdom Marriage by Tony Evans

Enjoy! by Dr. Clifford and Joyce Penner

PODCASTS

Java with Juli

Focus on the Family

Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk

FILMS

War Room

Fireproof

WEBSITES

Authentic Intimacy

5 Love Languages

Jennifer Degler's Dare of the Month

