

Unpacking *Boxes*

Marriage Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the quotes below about marriage. What insights might you gather? How might they apply to your life?

A. “Their common ground, once the fertile field for affection, now lay fallow from neglect and saturated with the toxins of day-to-day battles.”

B. “The barren ground held hidden seeds of love. But neither knew how to cultivate them.”

C. “...the intensifying collision of their differences eroded their mutual attraction and respect,”

D. “Angelica and Tim made progressively more complex efforts to repair their relationship. Self-help books. Visits with Father Hu, their parish priest. Marriage counseling. Individual psychotherapy. Antidepressant medications. They even conceived and bore a second child. Nothing worked. They were stuck.”

E. “Angelica was so very proud of her father—and so utterly disappointed in her husband.”

F. “...marital bliss disintegrated into fights about long hours of work and the strains of motherhood.”

G. “A broken family is a fate worse than death.”

H. “If you want to be with me, you need to trust me.”

I. “Love can get buried under all the layers of life.”

J. “Couples take comfort in each other’s annoying idiosyncrasies. They bicker and complain. And they don’t know their good fortune until their personal antagonists are gone.”

K. “When Kumani complained of marital strife, her parents fanned sparks of disappointment into a raging inferno. Then they watched with satisfaction as the marriage burned to the ground.”

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L. “How I wish you could understand me. Instead, you labeled me, put me in a box and kept me on a shelf, far away from your heart and removed from everything you hold important in life.”

M. “Women are water, the fountain of life. Men are oil. They help unstick the gears of everyday living. Marriage is a sealed jar. By nature, water and oil don’t mix. If you expect them to blend on their own, you become disappointed and disengaged. If the marriage jar just sits there, the water and oil remain separate and lifeless. Move the jar, and the water and oil dance and glisten. And the more you swirl it, the more beauty you see. If you go back to neglecting the jar, the two will separate again. That’s what marriage is about.”

2. Would it have been better for Angelica and Tim to divorce? Why or why not?
3. How might Angelica and Tim better handle the stressors in their marriage?
4. Angelica and Tim each cheated on one another. As they move on, how do you think that may affect their marriage?
5. Why would Angelica choose to go on the run with Tim? Is it more about her marriage, children, or life circumstances?
6. Do you think Angelica and Tim’s marriage will survive in the long run?
Why or why not?
7. Which kinds of beliefs and behaviors help create and sustain a healthy marriage? Which kinds undermine the success and fulfillment of a marriage?
8. How do you believe the advent of children into a marriage affects the relationship? In which ways do children strengthen and weaken the bonds between spouses?
9. How can parents balance the love and attention between their each other and with their children? How is this different or more complicated for blended families? What might be some strategies for success?
10. Do you believe “familiarity breeds contempt” and that marriages can get stale, indifferent, or hostile over time? Why or why not?

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