

Marriage First: Staying Connected When Life Gets Full

With Rich and Shelly Howard

Susan Macias (00:02.426)

Hello and welcome to another webinar put on by THSC. We are so glad you are here and we are thankful for our first sponsor today, Marmos Security. You're gonna hear a little bit more about them later. But for now, why don't you drop in the chat where you are joining us from. I am Susan Macias. I am the Director of Events here at THSC.

I'm also was a homeschooler, retired after 27 years, homeschooled seven kids and love to help this generation come along and successfully do what God is calling them to do. We wanna be here at THSC to help you on that homeschool journey. So what can you expect today? We've got live chat support. Our customer relations team is standing by to answer any questions you have.

So if you have questions, whether they are directly about this, webinar or they're about something else, you can drop them in the chat. We have people there ready to answer questions. They want to coach you, encourage you. One of the greatest things we have with THSC membership are our incredible customer relation coaches. They just do such a fabulous job. A copy of this webinar will be emailed to you after this presentation and you'll have access for a week.

If you are a member of THSC, this webinar will go in the portal and you'll be able to have lifetime access. So that's always a great thing. Another thing you want to know is that after this presentation is over, we will have a Q &A time. We have some questions that have been submitted, but if you have a question for Rich and Shelley, please feel free to put that in here. And so that way we'll have them ready and we'll pass them on if we have time.

So right before I introduce Rich and Shelley to you, I want to give you a heads up about these great events we have coming up for THSC. We have graduations all around the state of Texas this year. We are super excited. Look at all those graduations. We have added in areas that were not serviced before. If you have a senior graduating, this is a great opportunity to give them that experience of graduating with a group, cap and gown, throwing their cap up. They get to march into pomp and circumstance. So you see that QR code on the screen and that will, and there will also be a link in the chat.

Susan Macias (02:24.174)

It'll take you to the list of our graduations and you can get more information about that. Another thing we have is our leader summits. We have two of them. Last year was an inaugural year for

leader summit and the leaders came away just singing praises of this event because it was so encouraging to them. We have one in Dallas, Fort Worth on April 18th and one in Houston on May 27th. And this is just for leaders to have the opportunity. They serve everybody, we wanna serve them.

So we have a great opportunity today. If you are a leader or have a friend that is a leader that you know would have a desire to go to this event, place type leader in the chat. We are gonna give away a leader ticket to the summit. You have to be on the call at the end. And those that are on the call that have put leader in the chat will know that you are somebody that would be interested in that ticket and we're gonna choose a winner for that.

And then the other thing we have coming up is our big state convention. We are so excited. It's May 28th through 30th in the Woodlands. You see on there we've got Rick Green. We're gonna have some big fun with our 250th birthday as a country. S.D. Smith, who is the author of the Green Embers series, amazing series and an encouraging guy. And then Christie Faith, who has so much homeschool knowledge. Those are all our...

Headline speakers, but we also have other great speakers like Rich and Shelley who are going to be there who are going to be able to encourage you and give you the information you need. You see the code that is on there like QR code and you can put that in there and get tickets. We have a giveaway as well for that And if you put convention in the chat, you would be interested in going to that Houston convention We don't want to give a ticket away to somebody who wouldn't be going

So we're asking you to put convention in the chat. If you're on the call at the end, we are gonna choose one name randomly and give a convention ticket away. Okay, so all of this, we are able to bring these great value packed webinars to you because we have sponsors and we have advertisers. We wanna tell you about Safe Homes. It's a community of technologists, cybersecurity professionals and homeschool partners who've experienced firsthand how unsafe and unmonitored internet access and how that can impact a family.

Susan Macias (04:42.948)

Their mission is to educate and equip homeschool families with the cybersecurity knowledge that they need to keep their kids and their home safe. They have free resources that help families take control and protect what matters most. So take a quick look at that and you can use the QR code for a special discount.

Now we have an ad.

Susan Macias (06:19.692)

All right, now we get to go to our special guest, Rich and Shelly Howard. It's my privilege to introduce them to you today. They are long-time parenting and marriage leaders and co-founders of One Family. The Howards have been married for 37 years and have two sons, aged 25 and 28. They're passionate about serving families through One Family.

A non-profit ministry designed to equip parents for success, encourage them during challenges, and sustain them for the marriage and parenting journey. They have found that great families need a great strategy to create the family they love. And Rich and Shelley, we are so glad to have you. Please take it away.

Rich & Shelly (07:00.906)

Thank you. Well, it's great to be here. We have been basically, as you mentioned, doing this for over 20 years. And we always like to show a picture of our own family just to give you a little bit of context. This was actually at Thanksgiving and these are our two boys, our oldest in the red there just got engaged. So we're pretty excited about that. But

You know, it's amazing you look at that and we always reflect on the journey. It's a marriage and parenting journey that we're on. And so how can we do that well? And so that's really what we focus on with our ministry. Yeah. And so one of the things was we took a parenting class at our church many years ago and you know, it really helped us in our marriage. And then right after that, we were asked to start leading classes at our church. And we quickly found out that a lot of the families that were coming to the classes actually had a marriage component that was the root issue of a lot of the parenting things that they were trying to address.

And so we quickly got certified in three different marriage curriculums, if you will and started coming alongside people in their marriages right away. And so we've been doing this for over 20 years, as we said, and we also speak to a lot of groups. The thing we get asked to speak on the most is marriage. And we're thrilled about that because it really does need to come first. And so we're going to unpack that today. But I love this quote. One of the worst mistakes a parent can make is to allow children to take priority over a spouse.

While you might think you are helping your children, it doesn't work that way. Focusing primarily on the children can threaten your marriage's stability, and when your marriage loses stability, your children suffer. And that is from an author, Dr. Steven Stevens, who has a book called Marriage Experience the Best. Meaning, that's having the best marriage is going to help you have the best family, and it's going to create a life-giving home environment for your children to grow up in.

Rich & Shelly (09:20.47)

Right. So one of the things that we found was it's just so easy to start taking one another for granted. I mean, life gets really busy and you all are homeschooling on top of it. And that's even another layer on. So once you add kids and education and

All the activities, your job demands. A lot of times, you know, it's just in-laws and family and, you know, just all the other obligations that come along. Before you know it, the most soul-filling and kind of the intimacy in your marriage, it starts to suffer. It actually just takes a back seat. Because we think, well, you know, we're adults, we can handle it.

But really we need to keep this very strong and left unchecked, just the health of our marriage quickly just becomes an afterthought. We just think, it's fine, we're fine. We've got these other really pressing things that we're dealing with. And I think this happens really early. We speak to a lot of young parents and typically the dads are kind of feeling a little left out or maybe they're stepping out because they don't really know how to engage in this new framework of their relationship and their marriage.

Then, now, moms are wanting more engagement most of the time, but not really knowing how to get their spouse involved. And so, again, you also might have different parenting styles. And that was something that we found.

We had very different parenting styles and we didn't know that. It came about as we took this parenting class and we had to learn to really be a team. But you know, we do take our spouse for granted and we found that the emotional connection was lacking as well. So not just the logistical things, but the emotional connection and that that changed the atmosphere in our home when we started putting the emphasis back where it should be.

Rich & Shelly (11:28.478)

Yeah, and you know, it was just from our own standpoint. One of the things that really surprised us is, you know, as we were raising our boys, you know, you get into different friend groups, right? Whether it's, it could be like maybe a homeschool co-op that you're involved with, or it could be with activities, sports whatever it might be.

And all of a sudden your kids, friends, parents become your friends. And so we grew up and we had just a lot of great families that we were connected with. But the thing that shocked us the most was when our boys started to graduate from high school, a lot of their friends' parents got divorced. And what we discovered was basically, even though on the outside everything looked great, at home, they weren't working on this.

They're taking it for granted. And it's like, she knows I love her. He knows I love him. And we take these things for granted because it starts out so strong. But if we don't do anything to build that up, it can really cause some damage later on.

So we're going to share five things with you, just not to overwhelm you, but five things that we think are really going to help you in terms of mindset and some practical things that you can do to really help you to stay connected, to communicate well, and also encourage your marriage health. And so the very first thing we want to share with you is discussing and checking expectations.

We've seen over the years, not discussing and checking expectations is the root of so many conflicts in the home. Expectations are these things where maybe we're doing something, maybe I'm at work or Shelly's at home with the kids, and all of a sudden you think of something and then you're like, oh yeah, this is such a great idea. And it becomes this internal conversation that you have with yourself. And then all of sudden you're like, this is so brilliant.

Rich & Shelly (13:50.677)

They're gonna pick up on it immediately. Or it's just obvious. Right. And so then we kind of adopt this attitude that our spouse should be a mind reader. And that's just not the case. And so we got to talk about these things. You know, there's so many examples from our own marriage where we had these expectations and we didn't discuss them. And what happens is then the expectation grows and grows and grows and grows until finally there's a blow up and it's like, I had no idea you were thinking that.

And so that's how, that's how it becomes a really big deal, but they start out so small. And so then the next thing is, well, you know, when are you going to talk about these things? How are you going to talk about your expectations and are those expectations realistic? know oftentimes if we go to a conference or we go, and listen to something, I'm like, this is the greatest thing in the world.

And there's like 10 takeaways. I immediately want to do all 10 takeaways at once. And Shelley, we talk about it and she's like, well, let's just focus on one. And that's always the wise wisdom, right? And so we've learned this idea and probably one of the greatest parenting and marriage tools and communications tools that we've discovered is this idea called couch time.

And couch time is a time of non-conflict where we come together and talk about the business of the family, to talk about our marriage, to talk about our parenting, to talk about our finances, whatever it is. But the key is it's a time of non-conflict. Non-conflict is not necessarily saying that we're arguing or having a fight or anything like that, but you're busy, right?

You know, maybe you're fixing dinner or maybe you're in the middle of emails and maybe you're doing some work or whatever it is and you're trying to talk in that moment and oftentimes what happens we trigger the amygdala and so again one of the things that We're gonna have a follow-up email that's going to go much deeper into some of these concepts and we'll give you a chance at the end there'll be a slide with the QR code where we'll send you some additional information, but

Rich & Shelly (16:17.014)

Amygdala hijacking is basically if you get triggered, it basically exudes cortisol throughout your brain and you're not going to be able to reason, communicate, and emotionally regulate during that time. And so what happens is we need to manufacture a time where we can come together and talk. And this is couch time. so couch time is setting aside anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes three to five times a week where we are gonna talk during a time of non-conflict.

And so interestingly enough, our Sunday night couch time would be talking about when we were gonna have couch time during the week. Every week was different. So, you know, we were making an appointment with ourselves. That's how important this was for us. And the beauty of it is we covered so much ground in that 10 to 20 minutes.

And so it was great. You know, when to have it for us, it was right after dinner, after dishes and food's put away, kiddos are settled, either doing homework or maybe playing with some Legos or whatever the situation is. That's when we came together, we had our couch time and it was only at the most 20 minutes. And we kept it to that because

I remember Shelly would always call me on the way home from work and she'd see, she'd say, okay, tonight I want to talk about this, this, this, this, this, this, this. And I'm like, oh my gosh, this is a two hour conversation and I am not going to do that. But 20 minutes, I can do 20 minutes. And here's the, here's the true beauty of it. How many of us have been in a two hour meeting and thought this could have been over within 15 to 20 minutes?

And that is the beauty of couch time. And so if you think about it, if you can do couch time four times a week, that's an hour a week. That's four hours in a month when you have this time of productive communication. The secondary beauty of this is it's linked with so many corollary benefits. Ideally, you actually want to have your kids nearby watching you have couch time.

Rich & Shelly (18:42.484)

Because then you're modeling your relationship for them and tangibly showing them that mom and dad are okay while you're communicating. And so it gives them this level of security that they don't normally see. And it can be very significant for us. It manifested with our boys sleeping through the night. Prior to us doing couch time, our kids did not sleep through the night. And we had sleepwalkers, night terrors.

If there was any sort of sleep disorder, we had it. were dealing with it. And couch time was just the great thing that helped us. During couch time, we would talk about, again, everything. We could talk about our finances. We'd talk about our marriage. Everything was happening about the business of the family. And the thing I loved about it is it helped us to be concise with our thoughts.

You know, it kept us focused so that we didn't get distracted or sidetracked on other topics. And if we wanted to talk longer than 20 minutes, we'd cut it off. And we'd say, let's just schedule another couch time. One other thing I want to mention about couch time before we move on is a friend of ours, he and his wife had a really great nighttime routine with their daughters.

And he found that they would do couch time right before their nighttime routine, to kick off their nighttime routine. And they found that it really helped to calm the girls right before bed. And in addition, it gave them a great visual right before bed of mom and dad coming together. So when to do couch time? Whenever works for you. I mean, it could be in the morning, it could be in the afternoon if people are working from home.

Whenever, whatever's convenient for you, that's when you fit it in. The key thing is to do it 10 to 20 minutes, three to five times a week. And just try to be as consistent as you can. Every week's gonna be a little bit different. So maybe one week, you're only able to get one in, but then

maybe the next week you get four in. The main thing is to be consistent with it. Yeah, and some of you maybe have read the book by James Clear, Atomic Habits. This is an Atomic Habit.

Rich & Shelly (21:05.558)

Everything that you do will, this is a foundation and everything that you'll do will stack on top. The next thing that we want to bring up is that it really is so important for us to stay connected emotionally. You know, this is part of our marriage that just, if we aren't paying attention to it, it's gonna die.

Right? so, you know, speaking love languages, most of us know what Gary Chapman's five love languages are, but are we doing them? You know, and this is something important for the whole family, actually, but certainly, you know, between spouses. And so, you know, what we have found is that the love languages are kind of like cups. They all need to be filled.

When they are filled, we're operating out of our best, know, fullest selves. We show up better in our marriage. We show up better in our parenting, in our homeschooling, in our jobs, you know, in everything that we do in life. And you can't pour out from an empty cup. And what we have found is that our primary love language tends to be the cup that empties. But we're speaking, you know, our love language to other people, but are we filling their cup?

They're speaking their love language to us, but it's not hitting our target and filling our cup. So that's why this dynamic is so important to intentionally speak the other person's love language. And so we did this as a family, but if you've got really young kids, just at least make sure you and your spouse have done this because it's a thing that just keeps your relationship nourished and growing and thriving and strong.

It's important that each of us feel appreciated. And I think a lot of times husbands and wives can just kind of drift apart without this kind of intentionality. Yeah, I remember I would always put Shelly's love language on my calendar at work because I wanted to be intentional in making her feel loved in her own love language.

Rich & Shelly (23:14.048)

And then as things moved along and our boys got older, we actually did the love language test with our boys and we put it up on our refrigerator over here because as a family, we wanted to be characterized by loving one another intentionally with each other's love languages. And so even at the dinner table, we talk about, I would say to our boys, hey, how did you love mom today in her love language? How did you love your brother today in his love language?

And so it became a part of this dynamic in our family, but it really began, as Shelly mentioned, with us connecting first, that she's loving me in my love language and I'm loving her in her love language. Yeah. And, you know, it's one of those things too that it's another atomic habit, really. It just becomes part of who you are when you start doing it. It can feel a little awkward at first, but it's like working out.

The more you do it, the stronger that muscle gets. Moving on to date night and even a date vacation, maybe once a year if you can. One of the things that we noticed was we needed to have time just alone to enjoy each other as husband and wife. That that was important for our kids to know that we enjoy each other as husband and wife.

And get back to you know, the things that brought us together in the first place, which was having fun together. And so, you know, at least trying to do that once a month. We know people that do it once a week and we realize that's not really possible for a lot of people. But one of the things we're going to send you guys is a 12 month date guide.

These are no or low cost dates that you guys can do just to, you know, maybe have that date night practice in place if you aren't doing it. Kind of prime the pump if you will, and then you'll start getting more and more ideas. But gosh, Valentine's Day is in a couple of days. I mean, hopefully, hopefully we've at least got a date night coming up. So really just so important. And one of the things we learned was you don't want to discuss couch time topics at your date night. It can be a buzzkill to the fun.

Rich & Shelly (25:25.654)

I accidentally ruined our anniversary one year. We learned early on, kind of had some rules around the date night. It's like, oh, we can talk in the car on the way too if there's something that has to be discussed about the family or kids. But this is just about us having fun and staying emotionally connected.

And then we realized that you know, getting some time away together made a huge difference too and going deeper, having a deeper connection and keeping that alive. And I realized it took Rich a couple days to kind of decompress from stress, from work and, you know, home and coaching and just all the things that we were doing, leading these classes at our church.

And then for me, it took me a couple days to decompress as well from all the, you know, not thinking about the kids constantly and just all the things that we've all got a lot of things that we're juggling at all times. And so having that couple of days away just really helped us to go deeper and just have a stronger connection. It was so important to us that we started budgeting for this.

It became part of our annual budget to schedule at least a long weekend away together. And we would drop our kids off with our folks. They live out of state. you know, that airfare became part of the budget, you know, but if we plan for it, we can make it work. Or we could fly one of our parents in to stay with our kids while we got away. Or I would join Rich sometimes on a trip somewhere.

So anyway, you know, it's so important to keep that going and it's simple stuff and really, if it's important to us, time alone with our spouse is going to show up on our calendar, critical. The last thing we want to talk about is this idea of marriage maintenance. And I kind of liken it to car

maintenance in that, you know, what happens if you don't go and get an oil change when it's time to get an oil change?

Rich & Shelly (27:33.801)

And it's like, well, it's fine. We can go another week or we can go another month or we can go several months. If you do not maintain your car, it's going to break down and then you're going to have some real problems. So don't wait for those problems to happen. Do just simple things to maintain your marriage. So some examples that I would give are one.

The main thing to remember is do it together, right? We do parenting classes, we'll do those so couples can join us together. Certainly you can go to the homeschool convention or conference or whatever it is. Doing it together makes all the difference as opposed to mom going and then reporting back to dad or dad going reporting back to mom. It's so much better when you do it together it makes a significant difference.

In fact, I will say we, you know, back in the day, we did not homeschool, we did public school. But I will say, I did, if I had a trip schedule, I would cancel the trip, or I would take time off to go to back-to-school nights to go to parent teacher conferences, so that we could go together. And us doing that together, it kept us on the same page.

And it also gave us great couch time topics. But these are things that you talk about. I mean, if you're talking about homeschooling and you're talking about curriculum together, or you're looking at different curriculum, do it together. Don't do it separately. Do it together. You want to get on the same page so you don't overcompensate for each other. Right. Right. And so this is really the big thing. And so these five things that we had mentioned, again, we're just scratching the surface.

There's a lot more to it, but we do have a QR code if you want to sign up for our follow-up email. We are going to send you a bunch of PDFs, if you're interested, on how to do couch time. There's a really fascinating article on amygdala hijacking, and it kind of talks about how conversations can get out of whack just by triggering words. And then...

Rich & Shelly (30:00.801)

We'll send you the love language test and the kids love language test. These are great things to do for Valentine's Day coming up, by the way. And then we'll, as Shelly mentioned, we'll send a 12 month date guide as well. So if you're interested in receiving that, sign up, use the QR code, and then we'll send you our follow-up email. Certainly it's completely voluntary. And then we want to let you know about a couple of things that we have available to you right now.

We do have a middle years parenting class, which is basically for seven year olds through the teen years. And when we say seven year olds, we're talking mature. Mature seven year seven year olds. So I'm thinking about girls in particular. This class is really about how do we as parents transition from our parental authority to our parental influence.

And that is really the key during these times and the things that you're going to do, you know, in the preteen years and in the teen years, these things are ongoing conversations. They're ongoing things that you're going to do that are going to help you to build a trusting relationship with your kids and really have a wonderful harmony in the home. And we love the teen years. That was our favorite. We loved every stage, but teen years were great. Yeah. And then

Also, we're mentioning that we are going to be at the home school convention in May. So please stop by. We're going to have a booth and then we're also going to be speaking. So we're excited about that. And then the last thing we wanted to mention was we do have this Symbus program and we are going to be actually raising the price \$100 on Saturday.

So if you're interested, this could be an interesting Valentine's gift. But what it is is it's an online assessment and then it takes your information, it combines it and then it kicks out a 17 page report. And then we zoom with you and your spouse and we go over the highlights and maybe some areas to work on, usually over two to three visits. And so we have that available.

Rich & Shelly (32:25.352)

And that parenting class, by the way, we do still have early bird pricing available if you sign up for that as well. So these are just some resources we have available. We are a nonprofit. We do this just because we love to encourage and equip and sustain couples in their marriage and parenting journey.

Susan Macias (32:49.69)

Well, thank you, Rich and Shelly. That was amazing and great. You know, it's those, it's small habits that make a huge difference in the home. And so I loved all of your suggestions. So now it's time for Q and A. And our first question that came in is a tough one, but I'm sure you've had this question before. What can I do if my partner does not want to work as a team? All of our household responsibilities are on me.

Rich & Shelly (33:16.278)

Well, I know in our own relationship way way back Shelly says we need to go to do a parenting class and I'm like we don't need to do a parenting class. Everything's fine, right and Shelly was like well, I think we really need to do this. I need I needed it so much Yeah, and the thing that always stuck with me and what really resonated with me is she said well

Would you do it for me? Is this something that you would do for me? And then of course I'm like, yes, I'll do it. Even though I'm thinking this is the dumbest thing we're doing, but I'm going to go and do it anyway. But you know, that was the catalyst and what we see in a lot of different things, moms tend to be the bringers. Sometimes dads are, but in general, moms tend to be the bringers and what they bring us to, I find is usually brilliant. And so,

That was, that's the thing is really having to come down and, you know, experience these things and it kind of builds momentum. You know, I think of, what is it? Financial Peace University and the concept of the snowball effect. That's how it was with us is once we started doing things

together. So like, if you go to convention together or you go, do one of our online classes at night together, whatever it is doing it together, it begins to snowball and it helps us to really get on the same page.

And it really helps us to partner as a team. Yeah, I found that I was the one spending more time with the kids and that's probably the case for a lot of families. And you know, if mom seems like she's got everything handled and then the husband is kind of like, she's got it all handled.

And I found when I told Rich I needed help, he was willing to respond and that, you know, even though maybe that hadn't been modeled for him, that dad was really engaged in the family. What we found really early on was that what was important to dad was very important to our kids. And they are looking for unity and leadership from mom and dad as a team. And so...

Rich & Shelly (35:40.277)

When we learned that, just sort of changed everything. And I realized, yeah, we had different parenting styles. I was more permissive. tended to be more authoritarian. And really what kids need is authoritative leadership. And so I needed the strength. I needed to lean on the strength that Rich had and he needed to, you know, learn. He needed to soften his approach and learn from me.

And so when we started doing Couch Time and it's like, hey, how can we help each other in this? And it was a game changer.

Susan Macias (36:13.486)

Yeah. So did you find, Shelley, just to help this person for the way back at the first step and, and, when they're thinking, yeah, my husband's not going to do that. You found inviting him in and asking for help was a much better response than it feeling like an accusation of what he's not doing.

Rich & Shelly (36:20.714)

Yeah.

Rich & Shelly (36:29.46)

Yes.

Yeah, no. Exactly, nobody wants to, you know, they're going to go into their defensive mode if we sort of have an accusatory tone or, you know, something like that instead of asking for help. And that's kind of, you know, we may be harboring some things that it can come out in the way we speak.

And so we could have a lot of frustration and it's valid, but you know, our spouse may not really know how to engage. And so I think if we're just really openly sharing, I need being vulnerable. And being vulnerable, like this would really help me because, you know, you're carrying a lot.

Susan Macias (37:01.103)

No.

Rich & Shelly (37:13.288)

And you do need help and you do need to be a teammate and your spouse wants to most of the time know how to be a good teammate and they probably have never seen this modeled like I said. And I certainly that was the case in my own upbringing so I could understand that.

Susan Macias (37:29.85)

Yeah. So this is sort of a, a separate question, but I think probably has some connection to this. What do you do when your spouse doesn't think marriage is a priority?

Rich & Shelly (37:38.857)

Yeah, yeah, well, when you look at the statistics, you've quickly, you know, if you're open to looking at that, it's pretty convicting. And also, you know, I believe if we are Christian, it's pretty convicting. Marriage is an extra layer of love and security that God provides for our kids.

And that, you know, the marriage is very important. Marriage is important to society, not just in our own family, but to outcomes in society. And I think we're seeing that all around us. Taking the emphasis off of marriage has really led to a lot of societal problems. And you know, our families have such an opportunity to be an encouragement and a light to others.

And I don't know about you, but I find that when I, you know, I wanted to be around friends that had great marriages, because it encouraged me in my own marriage. And I, my parents divorced when I was 13. I always, when I was growing up, wanted to be at the home where the mom and dad were there. You know, and my mom did a phenomenal job. And, you know, she really was a great mom.

And I just, but I loved being in those homes where the mom and dad were there. And I think kids just, they don't know how to express that. They're not even cognizant of it, but it's a need. And so marriage is a true need in society and for your kids.

Susan Macias (39:12.826)

So I 100 % agree. I think it's so important. I've even seen with my kids and grandkids that us having a strong marriage creates a place for them to land and for them to be and security for everybody. But so for that person though that's asking this, do you have one or two suggestions of how they can engage their partner? How they can grow the love in the relationship?

Rich & Shelly (39:35.604)

Yeah.

Yeah. Well, definitely couch time and date night. I mean, those are two things. And with couch time, you're connecting relationally and with date night, you're connecting emotionally. And I think those two components together really help to really bring the marriage together and to

really get us on the same page and to, to ignite or maybe reconnect where maybe some things have fallen through the cracks.

And so I would say those two things. I don't know if you... Yeah, I think so. And I just think when our spouse feels appreciated, they are going to want to engage more. You know, it's just simple things like, you know, thank you for working so hard for our family. It really means a lot to me. And thank you, you know, for I heard you speaking to, you know, our son or daughter. Thank you for coming alongside them, you know.

I want to be a good partner. I want to be a good teammate. And, you know, I think we can find some real practical, simple ways that we can do that together. And so that's kind of how we started. This drift was starting to happen and we didn't realize it. We took a parenting class and then we were like, this is helping our marriage. You know, again, like Rich said, hearing it together, it was great for Rich to hear this from other men. Yeah.

Susan Macias (41:05.593)

Mm-hmm.

Rich & Shelly (41:06.006)

And we find this all the time in our classes. The men are the ones asking the questions. They are really engaging. And it's filling a need that they didn't know they had. There's a vacuum there and it needs to be filled. And so, yeah, so my approach would be just invite your husband in. maybe even if you need to seek out you know, a program like we have with Symbus. It's just, it helps you get back on track when you started to drift.

Susan Macias (41:41.314)

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Don't be afraid to be the one to ask the woman to do the date night, to get the babysitter, to invite them out, to pursue them as well. I think that matters.

Rich & Shelly (41:47.466)

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I think we do have to pursue our husbands. Absolutely. And they want to be, they want to feel like men. Yeah. Yeah.

Susan Macias (41:58.353)

Yeah. Okay. So I would appreciate any suggestions on keeping the marriage strong when the husband and wife disagree about key parenting issues like use of screens, which is a huge issue now in our day and age. If you have different thoughts on these things, how do you work that out as parents?

Rich & Shelly (42:07.818)

Yep.

Rich & Shelly (42:20.148)

Yeah, well, you know, again, you have different thoughts on a lot of different things and just talking about, well, you know, I was reading these statistics and, the thing is, is today they can't really be ignored. They are everywhere. There's so much data and we know it's impacting actual physical structure of brains. And I just read something very disturbing a few days ago that this is the first generation of kids

Susan Macias (42:34.34)
Mm-hmm.

Susan Macias (42:42.704)
Mm.

Rich & Shelly (42:49.916)
that is not showing as high an IQ as their parents. And that is directly correlated to screens, we cannot ignore this. so, yes, screens are something that are part of our lives, and screens really aren't the problem. It's our parenting around screens. So again, that's why it's so important to try to get on the same page. So talk about,

Susan Macias (42:59.376)
well.

Rich & Shelly (43:16.214)
What kind of strategy can we put together that's going to help us find some middle ground here? And it's so important for our kids' health and mental health later on. It's just where their kids are not able to be resilient. They are not really able to cope when they don't get those instant dopamine hits.

And frankly, neither are we as moms and dads. And a lot of times the problem is with the parents because the parents have a hard time putting limits around their own screen time. And so, you know, we work with a lot of really young parents and I mentor a lot of really young moms and I would see a mom like breastfeeding her baby, looking at her phone, you know, that's problematic. It starts pretty young and our kids need to see our eyes and not see us buried in our own screens. So it really starts with that.

And again, it points back to having a vehicle in order to talk about these things during a time of non-conflict. Yeah. Right. So we would literally talk about screen boundaries at couch time. That would be one of our conversations that we would have. And if you have older kids, definitely involve them in that conversation as well.

Because we need to each of us, hold ourselves accountable, but help each other in that because it is an addiction. It truly is. And when we know what it's doing to our brains and our relationships, it's just undeniable.

Susan Macias (44:49.872)

Bye.

Yeah. Okay, well, I would love to ask you lots of other questions, but we're going to go down to a last question. This is one that came in on the chat and I think it's an important one for where we are now. Can a marriage work with having different religions?

Rich & Shelly (45:09.834)

Yes, yes. I think what's important is to discuss, know, what are our goals as parents? What are our goals around different things? Morality, education, you know, there's so many things. Yeah, a lot of them, you know, maybe tie back to our core values as a human being, which is very closely tied to our religion a lot of times.

But there are just, you know, societal things that are important for us to talk about and what we believe and what kind of goals we want to set around those things because if you don't have shared goals, you're not ever going to hit the target you're aiming for. So, you again, you want to come together on that. Religion, yes, that is important because religion is important to who you are as a person.

But if I have respect for another person's religion and they have respect for mine, we can move forward in a lot of these other areas that are just so, so important. And then I would say even too, if that is a conflict for you, coming together in some way that's gonna help lead your children in that and just saying, well, we're gonna leave it up to them.

That's really, we have found that it really doesn't work so well because the culture is gonna fill in those gaps that are there. And so again, this is an area where moms and dads have a huge opportunity to pour into their children with wisdom and grace. Yeah, we do a lot of premarital counseling and we've had several couples that were of different religions.

And I would say for the most part, one of the faiths or religions takes precedent and it's based upon shared core family values. And that's what kind of directs it. But we've had situations too where, you know, they couldn't come to terms with it, you know, and it was best that they moved on. And so I would say, yes, you can make it work.

Susan Macias (47:23.162)

Mm-hmm.

Rich & Shelly (47:27.06)

But it all centers around your core family values and what is the source of those values.

Susan Macias (47:33.294)

That's good. Well, this has been absolutely fabulous. You have 30 seconds for a last comment if you want to give something.

Rich & Shelly (47:42.401)

Well, I think we would just say that, first of all, come see us in Houston. Yes. At the end of May, we're going to be there, meet you. Yep. And answer any questions that you have. Hopefully, people will tap into this webinar more than once and get a chance to see it. And there's a lot to digest. Definitely get our follow-up email. Yeah. It'll give you plenty to talk about. And then come and see us at convention.

Susan Macias (48:12.236)

Well, we are so excited that you're joining us in the Woodlands. It's going to be a great convention and we do want to help these families. You know, we want to help everybody succeed in homeschooling, but also to succeed as a family because that's where that is going to thrive. Well, thank you so much for being here. Let me move on to a few more pieces of housekeeping and then we'll get back to where we can give away those tickets that we talked about at the beginning of the webinar. I want to thank Marma Security again.

As we talked about, screens are difficult and we're just grateful that there are people out there helping us with the screens that we have. We have a special deal on our membership. THSC has a yearly membership. Also, there is an opportunity to have a monthly membership. The link will be in the chat for joining.

You have a code here, Webinar 30, takes it down \$30 off, so it takes it down to \$119. Membership is so important. It helps you for if someone comes knocking on the door, we are there for help with your local school districts, with getting into college, with doing all kinds of things. We have coaches that are there to take your calls. And the other thing we have is an entire library of valuable webinars like this that are on, it's like Netflix for homeschoolers. And you can get on and you can watch whatever you need help with. Go back and rewatch or find something that answers the question you have.

We have all kinds of support that we wanna give you and we deliver that best through our membership. So please get on, check it out. If you have any questions, reach out and ask. We'd love to tell you more. You'll get an email link for this special as well when you get the replay of this webinar.

And we want to then go on to our next webinar, which is in a month, March 19th, 1pm, Angela O'Dell. She has a great podcast. I'm going to start listening to it just because they're fun stories. It's called Real Cool History Podcast. And it's history stories of things you don't even know that your kids would listen to and love and find out the joy of history.

Susan Macias (50:26.786)

She is an author, she has written curriculum, she is going to also be at our convention and we are going to talk about raising calm kids in an over stimulating world. As we all know, our poor kids are just bombarded with more information and more input and more of all that we were talking about with screens. So there's gonna be some great content here with Angela O'Dell in a month. So you wanna sign up for that as well. And then,

We have a special webinar on April 16th. Our events team is going to get on and give you a convention preview. Some of the speakers, what to make sure and not miss, how to go into an exhibit hall and not just feel overwhelmed out of your mind. We want to help you be successful at the homeschool convention. And so we're going to give you lots of great information on that. And that will be on April 16th. OK, so leadership.

Summit Ticket Giveaway Time. All right, Amanda, do you have our winner?

Susan Macias (51:39.928)

I see. Okay, I was given the name. That is my fault. Okay, the winner is Haiti de Leon. Haiti de Leon, if you will stick your email address in the chat, we will get that free ticket to you. And then our convention ticket giveaway is Kara Woods. Kara Woods, we are excited. We can't wait to have you join us in the Woodlands. You need to make sure and go by and tell Rich and Shelly you saw them on the webinar.

Please also put your email in the chat and we will get that ticket to you. We are so glad that you all took the time to join us. You know what? Your marriage matters. It matters more to your kids than you even know. So keep investing in that. Keep doing that hard work. Keep forgiving and loving and going back because the dividends are beyond compare and you will be blessing your children in ways you don't even know. So we're glad you're here and you took the time for that.

Please check out Marma Security safe home. We need to keep our kids safe on the internet. We know we're gonna be using it. We need to keep them safe. Once again, this is Texas Homeschool Coalition. We are here for you. We wanna help make your homeschooling successful. Thank you for joining us.