

FOCUS  
ON THE FAMILY

happily ever   
laughter

*discovering the lighter  
side of marriage*



**KEN DAVIS**  
GENERAL EDITOR



happily ever  
laughter



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# Welcome to Happily Ever Laughter

Ken Davis

A husband who didn't know how to do housework decided to wash his sweatshirt. Seconds after he stepped into the laundry room, he shouted to his wife, "Hey, what setting do I use on the washing machine?"

She answered, "Well, it depends. What does it say on your shirt?"

He yelled back, "Denver Broncos!"

You know, my wife and I consistently experience this kind of miscommunication. For example, recently Diane has been asking me to share my feelings. While waiting at a stoplight the other day, I spotted one of my favorite donut shops across the street. Because I'm trying to lose weight, I shouldn't go there anymore. Suddenly it hit me—that's a feeling, and I decided to share it. So wistfully I sighed, "Dunkin' Donuts."

Diane said, a little indignantly, "What?"

I repeated, a bit louder and a bit irritated myself, "Dunkin' Donuts."

This time she said it louder, "What?"

I have to admit, at that point I lost it. "What part of 'Dunkin' "

Donuts’ don’t you understand!” I shouted. To which she responded, with the same volume, “Don’t condone what?”

I guess she expected me to actually pull up to the shop and mime eating a donut before she would understand what I was talking about.

Today she came in the door from a trip to the grocery store and a few other places. We had talked about her picking up a DVD to watch, so I asked, “Did you get *Bourne Ultimatum*?”

“What?” she said. Evidently she saw me roll my eyes, because she responded defensively, “I don’t know what ‘porno tomato’ is.” Then we both started laughing. I caught my breath just in time to tell her, “I’m not going to try to explain it to you.”

You know, Diane says that I expect her to read my mind. Well, hello! Wasn’t that part of the marriage ceremony? Nope. But laughter certainly was part of the deal. It’s often the glue that helps us keep things in perspective—laughter and a healthy awareness that neither of us is entirely OK.

The contributions that fill this book are intended to shine the spotlight of laughter on marriage, in hopes of helping us remember the fine line between deep satisfaction coupled with joy on the one hand and dissatisfaction coupled with joylessness on the other. Marriages need the kind of laughter that comes out of joy. And joy always involves choices we make. We have good reasons, even in marriage, to choose joy! What you will read in these pages are some examples of married people who are choosing joy—and laughing as they do. They are deciding to see what is funny in life even during uncomfortable and difficult times.

Deciding to choose joy doesn’t mean we pretend that life isn’t hard. Joy never says, “I just love beating myself on the thumb with a hammer because it feels so good when I stop!” Joy says, “Yeah, that hurt. It hurt

something fierce! It broke a good streak of perfect behavior I had going that day.” As the thumb throbbed and began to take on gigantic proportions, a bad word formed back in the dark regions of my brain. You know the feeling. You might already be laughing, bracing yourself for a bad word, or trying to guess which bad word was lurking in my mind. The word you’re thinking of will do fine.

The point I’m trying to make is not that we should come up with more colorful bad words but that we have a lot of traits in common. We *do* demonstrate bad aim with hammers. And we curiously connect our throbbing thumb with a bad word, as if one is going to fix the other. These odd tendencies provoke laughter, and we all have a deep need for laughter—for joy. We need to see that just because life is difficult doesn’t mean there are no more reasons to laugh. You won’t find any bad words in this book, but you will find some valuable lessons in joy.

Marriage is an important and serious commitment, and laughter is a crucial part of keeping marriage alive. *Happily Ever Laughter* is the right kind of title for this book. It says a lot more than you think when you first read it. When I first heard it, the phrase hit me like those punch lines that work because they slightly alter reality, like asking someone, “Would you rather die or just lose your life?” I was thinking *after*, but my ears were registering *laughter*. It took me a second to make the connection. It made me smile. This book challenges the widely accepted idea that marriage should be about living *happily ever after* and replaces it with the much better and more achievable idea of living *happily ever laughter*.

So enjoy these stories. If you and your spouse read them together, you will find different parts funny. When I’m telling stories about our marriage, Diane laughs at the oddest parts . . .

Make sure you welcome laughter in your marriage. It will go a long way toward helping you live happily.





# What I Want in a Man As the Years Go By

Ken Davis

*Sometimes it's good to have realistic expectations. For example, here's something my wife, Diane, wrote . . .*

Here's the list of things I wanted in a man before I got married:

- Handsome, charming, stylish dresser, thoughtful, in great physical condition, and romantic

Here's how I revised the list at age thirty:

- Nice looking; opens car doors; is a good listener; works out some and is in decent shape; remembers anniversaries, birthdays, and other important events in our lives; and is romantic at least once a week

Here's what I wanted in a man at forty-one:

- Not too ugly, waits until I'm in the car before driving away, acts as if he's listening, holds stomach in, remembers to put the toilet seat down, and often shaves on the weekends

And the revised list at fifty-two:

- Usually combs hair that's left, asks if I'd like a ride, stays awake when I'm talking, wears a shirt that covers his stomach, rarely forgets my name, and sometimes shaves on the weekends

The new list for sixty-three:

- Keeps nose- and ear-hair trimmed, can still drive, doesn't make bodily noises or scratch in public, usually wears fresh underwear and matching socks, remembers why he went into a room, and usually shaves

Here's what I will want at seventy-four:

- Looks don't scare small children, can still find the bathroom, usually wears some clothes, likes soft foods, knows where he left his teeth, and can remember that it *is* the weekend

Finally, what I will want at age eighty-five:

- Is breathing and can hit the toilet

The older you are, the easier to meet the expectations!

## LAUGH LESSON

Aging may not seem like a laughing matter, but you'll be much better off if you *do* learn to laugh with the changes that age brings. Then you're not so apt to be disappointed with each other. And besides, nose hair really *is* kind of funny . . .