

Knowing God in Marriage

Cultivating Connections 2023 Marriage Conference



Knowing Through Difficulty

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How life's difficulties have encouraged us in our marriage and our knowledge of God.



Our Children



The Merging of Two Lives: August 22, 1999



The Bob & Mardel Dotterer Family



The Randy & Carol Feucht Family

Blessed Beyond Measure



Photo credit: Hope Sauder

We have had many positive events and experiences in our marriage in the past 23 years, but we have been asked to speak about our experience with the difficulties.

The First Five Years

- Lived in four homes.
- Worked four jobs.
- Attended three AC churches.
- Joshua Matthew is born 1/29/03.



"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust."
Psalm 18:1-2a

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The Gridley Years

- Charity Ann is born 2/10/05.
- Stretched financially.
- Loss of a close friend and her baby.
- Matt's depression becomes evident.
- Preterm labor at 25 weeks; Javin Robert born on 5/20/08 - is hospitalized twice and blood transfusion at two weeks.
- Storm damage to our farm in 2006.



"From the ends of the earth will I cry unto Thee,
when my heart is overwhelmed: Lead me to the
Rock that is higher than I." Psalm 61:2

The Gridley Years cont.

How were we encouraged in our marriage and our knowledge of God through life in Gridley?



- The church was so good to us while in Gridley. They helped us with meals and childcare when Jennifer was on bedrest and while Javin was in the hospital. Earl Ringer anointed Javin's head with oil. Both the Roanoke and Gridley churches prayed every evening for Javin the week of VBS.
- The church showed up the day after the storm to help clean up.

Back to Roanoke 2009-2018

- Matt offered administrator position at Skylines
- Lived in a rental house until house is built; moved into our home in December of 2009.
- Matt put into the pulpit ministry on Josh's 9th birthday—1/29/12; braces ☺
- Next years are busy with PCS/homeschooling, traveling, children's activities, doing livestock chores, taking foster classes, etc.
- Loss of grandparents



Caleb Asher is born 3/8/14

Back to the Farm

Joy Madelyn born on 7/15/18



Switched houses in the Spring of 2018

2020: A Difficult Year for Everyone

How were we encouraged in our marriage and our knowledge of God through the COVID time?

- Matt was overwhelmed by the regulations and restrictions put on Skylines. He stepped away from preaching in Roanoke so he could focus on ministering to the residents.
- Our family had to be especially careful as we knew our actions could affect the entire nursing home.



- There was so much negativity and conflict everywhere—Jennifer tried to be Matt's encourager. We were both on the same page as far as news sources and medical information and the goal to support the weak.
- Matt leaned on God more now than ever. He spent a lot of time reading the Psalms. God brought him through his anger with the church to a place of peace and love for others.

Josh's Auto Accident

- Life substantially interrupted by COVID.
- Devastation as we realized our son's decisions.
- Trust was shattered and replaced by feelings of disappointment, betrayal, and anger.



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Josh's Auto Accident cont.

- We both had to work through our anger and disappointment with Josh. He had lied, disobeyed, and did what we thought he would never do. We listened to each other and encouraged one another through that disappointment. It was easy to feel like a failure as parents.
- It was an especially discouraging time for Jennifer as she had spent substantial time with Josh over the years and Matt kept encouraging that her labor was not in vain.
- We still loved Josh so much even though he had hurt us so bad. It made us realize how much God loves us even when we disappoint him.
- God was merciful to our son and to our family.

How were we encouraged in our marriage and our knowledge of God after Josh's accident?



Josh's Work Accident

- Circumstances of the accident.
- Josh's injuries.



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Josh's Work Accident cont.



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- We were so very thankful to God for sparing Josh again, yet we felt so bad for the Durand family.
- We were so touched by the outpouring of prayers, love, and gifts for Josh and our family from local believers and the national AC church.
- Matt was touched as he saw Jennifer pouring herself into caring for Josh.
- Our family enjoys spending time together more now than ever before, as we realized these moments could have been taken away. It was touching to see how much Josh's siblings cared.
- God's Word brought comfort and strength in our weakness.
- We saw God working in Josh's life and turning his heart back to the Lord.
- Sometimes we are surprised by what God allows, but eternity is on His mind.

Josh's Work Accident Cont.

How were we encouraged in our marriage and our knowledge of God after Josh's work accident?

Psalm 116:1-8

- I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.*
² *Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.*
³ *The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.*
⁴ *Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"*
⁵ *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.*
⁶ *The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.*
⁷ *Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.*
⁸ *For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling;*

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Clayton's Passing

The shocking news.
Coping with the grief.



A special uncle and amazing mother.

- We cried together at night.
 - Matt—there was so much sadness and heartache, like none I had ever experienced. This was my 3rd cousin that had died.
 - Jennifer— I had never witnessed Matt expressing such deep grief. I knew he cared so much for Tate & Joyce and it was touching for both me and the kids to see.
- We had to trust in our sovereign God that there was a bigger plan...and pray that lives were changed and touched for eternity.



Clayton's Passing cont.

How were we encouraged in our marriage and our knowledge of God after Clayton's death?



"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies..." Psalms 103:1-4

So Very Thankful

