

# SUMMARY

## Keep Showing Up

KAREN EHMAN



# **Summary of “Keep Showing Up” by Karen Ehman**

Written by Lea Schullery

Discover how to stay crazy in love when your love drives you crazy.

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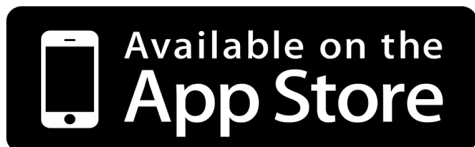


# QuickRead

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# Introduction

“*Why is this so hard? I can’t do this anymore!*” This is a phrase many married couples find themselves saying when they realize the cold, hard truth about marriage. It’s hard. Author Karen Ehman said these exact words just six weeks after becoming a new bride. Fresh off their honeymoon with moving boxes barely unpacked and thank-you notes still unwritten, Karen was already experiencing bridal remorse. The so-called *happily ever after* was not so happy after all and, already, Karen was wanting to resign from her new position of “wife.” Sound familiar? This is a hard pill that many couples must swallow when they realize that marriage is not at all what they expected. Where were the candlelit dinners? The surprise bouquets of wildflowers? The holding hands at the movies? The moonlit strolls? That’s how the movies depicted marital bliss and Karen was hit by the tidal wave of reality just six weeks after saying “I do.” Had she made a horrible mistake? She would then reassure herself that she was simply overreacting, after all, there weren’t any *real* issues, right? No infidelity, financial trouble, career crises, verbal or physical abuse. But why did she still feel pain and sorrow? She wasn’t living the newlywed life she wanted. Marriage was supposed to be magical, fulfilling, and even fairytale-like! Instead, Karen was experiencing stress-inducing, bawl-her-eyes-out disappointment that she felt she was drowning in. Weren’t newlyweds supposed to be crazy in love? What went wrong? After a few decades of marriage, Karen has learned what it takes to work hard for your marriage and make it successful. So if you're looking to strengthen your relationship with your husband and with God, Karen Ehman will teach you the strategies you need to get through the tough times. Through *Keep Showing Up*, Karen will explain what happens in marriage and how to keep the flame going long after it has burnt out.

Keep in mind that this advice was written for the average marriage in mind going through everyday disputes and marital spats. If you are dealing with a more serious issue like porn addiction or adultery, or if the conflicts you

experience over any issue cause arguments that escalate quickly or even frighten you due to verbal abuse or physical harm, get help.

# Realistic Expectations and the Origin of Marriage

People all over the globe dive excitedly into marriage. Moments after taking the matrimonial plunge, however, that excitement turns to resentment. They realize that being husband and wife is not the marital bliss they once imagined. So what is the problem? Why is creating a happy marriage so much harder than falling in love and dating? Maybe it's the sex, the meddling in-laws, the financial pressures, the conflict surrounding the kids, or even just the daily grind of navigating work and home responsibilities while dealing with varying perspectives and personalities. It's all that and more.

Growing up we see marriage play out in the movies and on television. We watched sitcoms where husbands and wives rarely fought, and if they did, the conflict was resolved within thirty minutes. Similarly, we watch love stories play out in the movies as couples find their happily-ever-after with their soulmate. What we never see, however, are the moments afterward. The fights, the tears, the stress. This causes us to set the bar too high. We dive into marriage assuming it will be free of conflict, full of romance, and a breeze. Unfortunately, this thinking just sets us up for disappointment. So let's get real. We won't get through marriage without a few, or even a lot, of troubles. And while we can't change the circumstances, we can change our perspective.

Even worse, our culture doesn't support marriage or even encourage couples to stay married anymore. Back when Karen was just ten-years-old, she could count on one hand the number of classmates whose parents were *not* together. Society as a whole supported and encouraged marriage, they *believed* in it. So what happened? Has losing that outside support made staying married more difficult? Our culture has shifted, we no longer become surprised when marriages end, and sometimes, we even celebrate it. Karen's marriage counselor once shared that roughly 50 percent of people who walk down the aisle believe that when things get tough or when

they get bored, they can just toss in the bouquet and search for another partner who will give them those tingly feelings again. In other words, we've become so emotionally detached from the concept of divorce that it often becomes expected. So when things get too tough, the quickest and easiest solution oftentimes becomes divorce.

Another reason marriage is hard is that we get in our own way. We look at marriage from our own point of view; instead, it's important to remember that marriage is not just about you. Let's take a look at the book of Genesis, for example. After creating Adam, God looked at him and realized he was both lonely and alone. So he created Eve from Adam's rib. Not to be subordinate but because Adam would never survive without her. Eve was created as Adam's equal, to be a helper and partner in life. Today, husbands and wives must stand side-by-side as each other's ally as they travel through life together. Additionally, Genesis states: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." This suggests that the joining of man and wife is both spiritual and physical.

The husband-wife relationship is supposed to illustrate the relationship between Jesus and the church, indicating the selflessness between you and your partner. And once you realize that marriage is a difficult, long-term project that requires two people willing to work together, then you'll begin to change your perspective.



# Remember That You Are Two Unique Individuals

Think back to your wedding day. Think about the excitement you felt at the thought of starting a new life together. You imagine that every day will be just as perfect as that moment. You forget to think about all the hard work that comes with marriage. The conflict and civil disagreements that come along with building a life around two separate people. Many people forget that while you and your partner are a team, one unit, you are two very different people with varying views and perspectives.

One day you might be driving down the road disagreeing about which Pandora station to listen to on a long drive. Or perhaps on that same long drive, you begin chatting away to your husband about your day or even begin sharing a story that you were excited to tell. As you're talking away, you notice that your husband isn't engaged. How does that make you feel? You probably feel like your husband is ignoring you or that he doesn't value the time you're spending together. Inevitably, your feelings become hurt; however, there are many reasons why your husband may not be interested in what you're saying. Perhaps he's just focusing on the road or trying to make sure he doesn't miss the next turn. Maybe he even has something weighing heavily on his mind. When you make assumptions about why your husband isn't listening, you automatically assume the worst and feel resentment. By simply communicating, you can easily find out what's really going on.

Another common conflict in marriage revolves around how to raise children. Perhaps you and your husband can't agree on how to handle an issue with one of your kids. You both feel strongly about your opinions and you begin to accuse the other of being "wrong." This is where a change in perspective is necessary. Remember that marriage is about the uniting of two very different people, and *different* doesn't mean *wrong*. If your husband agrees with you all the time, then what do you really need from him? Instead, marriage is about a strong partnership between two distinct

individuals. Two individuals that are strong individually, but even stronger together.

So when these conflicts arise, don't just attack each other. Instead, think about one of the most commonly used bible verses at weddings. 1 Corinthians states: "Love is patient. Love is kind," and "Love is not easily angered." You may have even used this at your own wedding. So take a page from the bible and listen to your partner, try to see his perspective and where he is coming from. You see, conflict is like sandpaper, it files down your rough edges, eventually allowing the two of you to fit together comfortably. At the end of the day, remember to embrace your differences and try to see where those differences can work for you, not against you.

# The Four Forms of Love

Every relationship goes through its phases. Remember the “honeymoon phase?” You and your then-boyfriend, now-husband, were excited about discovering everything you could about one another. Every day was a new adventure as the two of you explored each other and made new memories. At that time, you were happy just being around one another and you couldn’t imagine that feeling ever fading. Of course, that feeling does fade. The honeymoon never lasts forever and a successful marriage is built on a foundation that evolves over time.

In fact, in the original Greek version, the New Testament describes love in four different ways. The first one is described as erotic love or passion. This is the honeymoon phase described above, that feeling when we first fall in love and everything is new and exciting. The problem is that this love is also described as selfish, it’s about how the other person makes you feel, which will certainly fade over time. The second one is described as friendship, also known as “brotherly love.” This type of love takes time and is one of the most important components of marriage. However, this love is also described as conditional, we love our partner because he loves us.

Next, we have familial love. This is the love that is expected. It’s the love we feel for our parents and our kids. Feeling familial love is important in a marriage, but it can be dangerous if your love does not evolve from here. If you love your husband just because it’s expected of you, then your love and marriage will simply burn out. Instead, your love should evolve from familial love to unconditional love. This is the type of love that originated with God. God loves us no matter what we do. His love is selfless and is the type of love we should aspire to have in our marriages. This means loving your husband despite his downfalls and shortcomings.

Love grows and evolves over time. Love cannot always feel like the honeymoon phase, but when things become tough, remind yourself of that time. Think back to your wedding day. Think about what made you fall in

love with him in the first place. Remind yourself of that feeling and model your actions to reflect those feelings. Think about how you and your husband can love one another unconditionally. What can you do to show that love? What can he do? Looking at the past is important, but so is looking to the future. Think about how the decisions you make now will affect your future. Is the fight worth sacrificing everything you've built together? Are you willing to fight for your love?

# Stop Dwelling on the Bad and Focus on the Good

While moving through our daily lives, we find ourselves taking the small things for granted. We might have had a nice evening with our husband but we still remember the fight that morning about the dishes being left in the sink as we rushed the kids out the door. In other words, we choose to focus on the bad and we allow our negative thoughts to build upon one another and spin out of control. It's easy to let this happen. So it's time for a change in perspective. Instead of dwelling on the bad, we need to focus on the good and become truly thankful for the good times. This change in perspective can help you see differently and see your husband in a fresh light. If you're in the thick of an unhappy marriage, this may seem impossible for you but it's not. And here's why.

Before you can change your perspective, let's begin looking at your prayers. When you talk to God, what are you thanking him for? Are you thanking him at all? Think about the blessings He has given in your life: your home, your health, the health of your children, the food you eat, your friends. These are all small things that we take for granted each day, but we must remind ourselves of these little blessings. Instead, we fall victim to the comparison of others. We look at our friends, or even worse, we look at social media. We see the highlight reel of people's lives and people's marriages. We may even see something that makes us think the worst: "I wish my husband could be more like hers." Instead, remind yourself of the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet." So if you find yourself wishing your life looked like someone else's, wishing you had their house, car, vacations, or even husband, then you're guilty of committing the crime of coveting.

If you're struggling to look at your husband in a new light, think about when you first fell in love. What made you fall in love in the first place? When was he there for you? When did he show up for you, your kids, or even your friends? Think about your answers, sit down, and make a list.

Write down all the things you love most about your husband, perhaps he is a loyal friend or simply helps you put the kids to bed each night. After you make the list, share it with him! Communicate with your husband and let him know how you see him, he might not even know. Telling him the intimate details of how you feel can open the door for stronger communication and intimacy. Focus on the positives when times get tough and you'll find that you have a whole new perspective on your marriage.

# Learn Your Love Language and Discover New Things

One of the most common fears in marriage is the fear of falling out of love. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, we fall victim to comparison. We compare the love we felt in the beginning to the love we feel now. The love we feel now is certainly not as new, exciting, and passionate as the love we previously felt. That's okay! And while you can never go back in time and experience it all again, there are ways that you can bring that excitement and passion back into your marriage.

Let's take a look at the popular book of love by Dr. Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*. In his book, Dr. Chapman identifies five love languages we use to demonstrate and receive love. They are: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. If we don't speak one another's love language or if we can't recognize how our partner demonstrates love, then communicating love and affection can be as hard as speaking another language.

For example, perhaps your love language is receiving gifts. This doesn't mean that you are constantly buying big items to show your love but, instead, picking up small things every now and then to remind your husband that you've been thinking of him. So while you're picking up small presents, you aren't receiving gifts in return. This might be because your husband speaks a different love language. Perhaps your husband's love language is acts of service, so he does small things like chores without being asked, or washes your car and fills it with gas. You and your husband probably notice these small acts but don't recognize them as signs of affection. Therefore, it's important to learn about one another's love language and communicate with one another about how you give and receive love.

Speaking different love languages isn't the only problem that marriages can have, however. Routine can also become a major pitfall in marriage. Life

becomes routine as we move through our daily grind of going to work and taking the kids to school, practices, rehearsals, etc. Life moves quickly and it's easy to fall into a boring routine. Therefore, a break in routine is essential every now and then. This doesn't have to be a huge, expensive vacation or extravagant gesture. After all, marriage isn't about showing off on social media. Instead, break your routine by discovering new things about one another.

Discover one another by coming up with new things to talk to each other about. Typically, daily conversations can surround the happenings of work, kids, family, etc. Try something new and ask questions about topics you have yet to discover. Ask him about his favorite movie or his favorite memories from childhood. And when he answers, listen to him and share your own answers. Knowing everything about your partner is impossible, there's always something new to discover!



# Embrace the Imperfections and Focus on Your Community

Hard times are inevitable. Everyone goes through tough times, and sometimes those times knock us down and we feel as if we will never get up. At times, we may even feel like we are drowning, struggling for air with no way out. We feel shocked and wonder, “How could this happen?” We become overwhelmed. It’s during these times that we continue to dwell on the tough times and forget about the blessings that God has placed in our lives. It’s time to place your trust in God. In fact, Jesus even states in the Book of John that “You will face trouble... but fear not, for I have overcome.”

So instead of asking God, “Why is this happening?” “Why me?” and “What do I do now?” Allow Him to teach you how to communicate, how to listen, and how to forgive. If you’re going through a tough time in your marriage, it’s easy to dwell on the negative aspects of your husband. To dwell on imperfections. But remind yourself that nobody is perfect and focus on your prayer. Turn your prayers and focus inward. Ask God to provide you with the wisdom to recognize the imperfections and embrace them. Think about this: if your husband was perfect in every way and fulfilled your every need, then you would never need to turn to God. It’s our flaws that make us human and make us closer to God.

Once you’ve turned your focus inward and realized that your relationship with God is a lifelong process, it’s time to focus on your community. Take a look at you and your husband’s strengths. Yes, you both have flaws and imperfections, but what makes you a powerful team? Perhaps you both have areas in which you excel and enjoy. Take those strengths and determine how you can use your talents in the community.

For example, perhaps your husband is an incredible cook and you are a voracious reader. Together, you both enjoy spending the weekend hopping in the car and exploring new places and new communities. If this sounds

like you, then take your talents and strengths to a senior outreach center. Your husband can help prepare meals and then both of you can deliver them to homes of people who need them. Additionally, you can sit and read with the seniors and spend time with them each week. At the end of the day, every community has needs that you can help solve. The first step is identifying where people are struggling. Are they struggling physically, emotionally, spiritually, or financially? Is there a situation that you've overcome that you feel you can help others overcome too?

Sit down with your husband and identify your passions and where you think you can use your strengths to help others around the community. As you try to navigate your joint interests, don't forget that you need to support one another's individual interests as well. Just because you are married doesn't mean that you have to sacrifice your identity so encourage one another to pursue individual interests too. Your marriage is a powerful tool aimed to help you and your husband perform God's work, jointly and individually. This can be one of the most fulfilling aspects of your relationship. In the end, not only will you become closer as a couple, but you will also become closer to God and create a lasting impact on the lives of others in your community.

## **Final Summary**

It's no secret that marriage is hard. What once attracted you to your husband might be the same things that are attacking your marriage. Those differences, however, don't need to tear you apart from one another. Instead, you need to learn how to embrace them and determine how you can use your differences to your advantage. Change your perspective and recognize that your husband is imperfect and turn your focus inward. Ask God to give you the wisdom to see your husband in the same light you once saw him before. Ask God to help you recognize the different phases of love that you and your husband are going through and help you attain unconditional love. When you change your perspective and remind yourself of the positives, your relationship with your husband will become stronger and you will learn to support one another. As a result, your relationship with God will deepen and the two of you will become a powerful tool to demonstrate God's work and love.



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