

## “True or False?” Don’t Turn Love Into a Test **PART 1**

By Authentic Intimacy - Thriving Marriages Email September 20, 2021

This morning, I met with a group of friends to encourage each other in our marriages. As we talked, one of the women described her discouragement when her husband failed to text her during the day about something that was important to her. There was a test, and he’d failed it.

*“He knew my sister was having surgery. I told him a few days ago that I was really worried about it. It hurts me that he didn’t think to text me or ask me how it went.”*

One of the greatest needs we have as wives is to know that we are genuinely loved. Thoughtfulness, like what my friend desired, is a basic way that a woman is reminded that her guy is thinking about her and cares about her.

These “pop quizzes” are never verbalized but contribute to or erode our sense of connectedness and intimacy in marriage. What we are really asking through these trial balloons is, “Do you still love me? Can I trust you with my heart?”

While the underlying meaning of the test is critical to an intimate marriage, the **method** of assessing his love might be flawed. In fact, you might be picking a fight.

Think back to a class you took in high school or college. You learned the material and studied for the test, but the true/false or multiple-choice questions on the exam were confusing. Your grade was a poor reflection of what you actually learned.

That might be how your husband feels—like your relationship is becoming a landmine of hidden challenges to prove his love. Let’s face it. Life is busy. Even devoted husbands can be forgetful and self-absorbed.

Here are four things to remember when you’re tempted to test your husband’s love.

### **If you have a question or concern, voice it.**

There are seasons of marriage when your husband’s love and commitment genuinely may be in question. Perhaps you are recovering from an affair, or you are battling insecurity from past wounds. Maybe your relationship has seemed distant. Instead of setting up a series of unspoken tests, address your fear directly.

Your husband may have no idea that you feel unattractive and need his reassurance. He may be totally unaware that you feel neglected when he games with friends for hours. Usually, our “tests” of love stem from fears and insecurities that need to be brought into the light.

### **Don’t test him: give him the benefit of the doubt.**

One time, Mike and I were in the middle of a tense phone conversation. I was out of town, and we hadn’t seen each other in a few days. I shared with Mike something I was concerned about, and he went mute. During those fifteen seconds of silence, I got angry and hurt. I began telling Mike how much he hurt me when I noticed that the call had dropped. My husband wasn’t stonewalling me; *he hadn’t heard me.*

As we processed this situation later, Mike reminded me, “Whenever something like that happens, your mind is going to jump to the worst possible scenario. Instead, let’s give each other the benefit of the doubt.” That’s a principle that we’ve stayed committed to ever since. Daily life affords regular opportunities for missteps that we will interpret as either neutral mistakes or mean-spirited rejections. Make the choice to assume the best.

Marriage is a marathon, not a sprint. At any given moment, there are many ways your husband will “fail” tests of love. In reality, you fail him in similar ways as well. These failures don’t mean you have “fallen out of love.” They are just part of the ebb and flow of being husband and wife.

## “True or False?” Don’t Turn Love Into a Test **PART 2**

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Last week we saw the first two things to remember when we’re tempted to “test” our spouse’s love for us.

They were:

### **If you have a question or concern, voice it.**

Instead of “pop quizzes” just tell them what they need to know.

### **Don’t test him: give him the benefit of the doubt.**

Our tendency is to “fill in the blanks” in the worst possible ways when we don’t get adequate information. It’s better to **attribute positive intent** to what was said/done or not said/done.

Here are the other two things to remember when you’re tempted to test your husband’s love.

### **Your husband needs help learning to love you.**

Nothing says “I love you” like your husband reading your mind—intuitively knowing exactly what you want when you want it. Wouldn’t that be nice! Despite what romance novels portray, real marriage doesn’t involve psychic “soul-mate” powers. Your husband won’t know your love language unless you teach him, repeatedly.

If I need encouragement through a difficult day, instead of expecting Mike to intuitively know that, I’ll ask him, “Can we check in around lunch today? I just want to hear your voice and pray with you.” (*And his concern doesn’t count less because I prompted him!*)

### **Look for and encourage the ways he IS “passing the test” and showing you love.**

Human nature naturally searches for what’s wrong in marriage. You can easily come up with a list of things you wish your husband would do better. In this “marriage improvement” mindset, you probably tend to look right past the many ways your husband loves you well. I know I fall into this pattern.

Another thing we know about human nature is that we are more apt to respond to encouragement than criticism. Instead of nailing your husband for what he forgot, try thanking him for what he remembered.

Marriage is a marathon, not a sprint. At any given moment, there are many ways your husband will “fail” tests of love. In reality, you fail him in similar ways through busyness, forgetfulness, and missing the cues for how to encourage him. These failures don’t mean you have “fallen out of love.” They are just part of the ebb and flow of being husband and wife. So instead of getting stuck in frustration, try to look at the big picture and ask the more important question, “How do we take one more step toward true intimacy?”