



Season 10: Episode 11 | George & Tondra Gregory | Is the Bible a Playbook for a Happy Marriage?

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode.

Today I have had the privilege of bringing you George and Tondra Gregory. George and Tondra Gregory are the married couple behind *Journey for Life*. It's a national marriage ministry dedicated to equipping couples for strong faith-centered relationships.

Married for 29 years with two adult children, they've spent over 16 years coaching and counseling with a special focus on professional athletes, most recently serving eight seasons as chaplains for the Los Angeles Chargers following six seasons supporting the New York Jets and Giants. They also co-pastored East Coast churches for 20 years, planted a church in Manhattan's Upper East Side and have led marriage ministries at Saddleback Church in California. George holds an MDiv from Duke Divinity School and Tondra earned her master's in counseling from NC State and is a licensed counselor.

Their newest book is, *The Marriage Game Plan: Developing a Winning Strategy for Marriage Success*, and it was released not that long ago, and it offers couples a practical Scripture-based playbook to craft their own approach to marriage. So, their insights have resonated nationally, Canada and the U.S. through platforms like TBN, 700 Club, 100 Huntley Street and now we have the privilege of having them here on Scripture Untangled, so please enjoy this conversation.

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Joanna la Fleur: George and Tondra Gregory, I'm really delighted to have you on the podcast here at Scripture Untangled. Thanks for joining us.

Tondra Gregory: Thank you for having us.

Joanna la Fleur: So, let's start at the very beginning. Give us an intro on yourselves because you have been married 29 years and two adult children. So, you've been around this block a few times when we talk about marriage.

Tondra Gregory: Yes, we have. We have definitely been around the block. Didn't think we were going to get here, but we are here now.

Joanna la Fleur: And okay, with two adult children, where are they at? What I mean is, are they nearby? Are they at home? Have they gone across the continent?

Tondra Gregory: Okay. Yes. Our two adult children. Thank God. I'm so excited. Both of them relocated to Los Angeles just this last October.

So, which is about an hour from us. We're living in Orange County, California. So, it's about an hour from us. So, I get to see them more often. My son works for the city of Los Angeles as a biologist in their environmental area for the city of Los Angeles. And my daughter is a people and cultural project specialist for the Braille Institute of America.

Joanna la Fleur: Wow. Interesting. The Braille Institute.

Tondra Gregory: Yeah.

Joanna la Fleur: Okay. These are interesting kids that come from some interesting parents.

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You know, and maybe just because we're talking about your kids and we're going to dive into conversation about your work and ministry and this book around marriage. You know, what might your kids say about your marriage? Have you ever asked them if they were to look in, you know, as adults now, what do you think they say about how it was to live in your house growing up with this marriage?

George Gregory: Yeah.

Well, I think, you know, our kids are like most kids, right? They probably think that we were a little strict because we had, you know, boundaries and things of that nature. But my daughter, maybe about a year or two ago, she really expressed to both of us, she says, you know, I really want a marriage like your marriage. And it touched me so deep because that's what our mission is as a married couple, right? Our vision from the very beginning was that we would leave a godly legacy.

And when my daughter said that, it just sort, of like tears welled up because what does a mom and dad want besides someone to say, in this economy, right? Like, or this society, that we want to be married, number one. And then number two, is we want to have a marriage like yours because you've modeled and we're not perfect by any means. Like we live in front of our kids, right? We, we hug, we kiss, we get the eww.

But we also, we have had moments where we've had to have, you know, moments of clarity in front of our kids. So, we don't want them to have the wrong impression that in a relationship, there are disagreements there, well, you don't see eye to eye, but yet there's a way that you handle that and you resolve the conflict. And so, I think, you know, both of our kids have expressed that before.

It's our daughter who just said it explicitly and we were both touched.

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Tondra Gregory: Yeah. And they're both proud of us and how we have, how we have worked on our marriage, and we want to help others.

And they're watching this and they both express, oh man, we are so proud of you guys. We didn't think you were all that until other people keep telling us that you helped them with their marriage. So, we're really proud of you guys.

Joanna la Fleur: Wow. Well, and so tell us a little bit about this background. Like, how did you get into marriage ministry? It's sort of an unlikely path that most people would have. Like, did you, did you intentionally do this? Did you fall into it? Cause people were in your living room looking for help. Like, how did you get into marriage ministry?

George Gregory: Yeah. Well, man, that's a great question.

I think, you know, the larger story for us is that we started off so bad that we knew that we didn't want couples to start off like we did. Right. We didn't really have a lot of premarital counseling.

We didn't have; my mom and dad had a very successful marriage. They were married 52 years before my dad passed away. And yet, man, we had a rough start.

And so, we kind of just didn't want the average couple to start off like us. And so, we learned to develop a heart, to not just feed ourselves the right way to be married, but to also help others. As I was a pastor, in a multi-ethnic, multi-generational congregation and Tondra wanted to go back to school for counseling.

One of her first assignments from me, her husband was, create a pre-marriage class that takes the weight off the senior leaders, senior pastors of the church. And you raise up a team of lay leaders, and lay leaders would teach the class. And then when the pastors came in, we didn't have so much heavy lifting to do.

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And so that worked really well. She did a really good job on that.

Tondra Gregory: Yeah.

And so, we did not foresee this coming whatsoever. Uh, and we say God has a sense of humor, because we messed up so much in the beginning. It's like, how could God really be calling us to help couples? I'm surely there's other couples who are way more qualified to do this than us.

And so, it was definitely a birth from our, you know, God gave us a platform for our pain. And, it was always initially, we like to say we're a picture of God's grace. We shouldn't be here, but God has been gracious that we figured out how to make our marriage work.

And we always wanted to be able to help other couples, with their relationships and teach them from what we've done wrong and what we've learned.

Joanna la Fleur: Hmm. Well, and you know, can you be real with us? I mean, as much as you're able, uh, like let's go back to those earlier years.

Cause I think it would encourage other people like, okay, here you are 29 years in these two adult children, your kids saying, I want a marriage like yours. Like, but it didn't, it sounds like it didn't really start that way. And I know in your book, the marriage game plan, you're candid about some of the stuff that you went through.

So, can you kind of paint a picture of maybe some of those like classic things that you were going through? Um, just so it would encourage other people who feel like they're in the middle of it.

George Gregory: Sure. You know, Joanna, she wants to dive deep.

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We love that. Right.

And so, our starting marriage was rough because we, we were responding. We weren't proactive. We were reactive because we had a kid on the way, like our son was on the way.

And so, we decided to get married, and we were really pure in our heart with that, but we had no clue that our backgrounds, our differences, were going to challenge us from the very start. Right. And that, would you say that was...?

Tondra Gregory: Yeah, I definitely feel like we didn't have a game plan.

We were in crisis mode trying to decide abruptly what we were going to do, which we don't advise anybody to just get married on the whim because of, you know, trying to resolve a pregnancy situation. So, we didn't really know what we were diving deep into when we got married. Um, we were good friends.

George grew up in a Christian household. I didn't, I had just become a Christian. So we just really wanted to honor God and find a way to overcome what we had just, created in a way that would honor God.

And I just feel like because we were leaders in our Bible study and how God was really using us, it caused a lot of depression on my end and a lot of, you know, just unforgiveness on my end and everything, but not having that game plan created a lot of obstacles that we were blindsided by when we got together. And plus, we, you know, we have a baby that's growing inside of us that we were going to be responsible for. And we were really young.

Like we were just, 23 years old. So, we weren't even tasting the world.

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George Gregory: Right out of college, not making money. We had to budget. Do we do pampers or hotdogs? Yeah.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah.

Well, and, and in some ways, you're talking about this idea of, Oh wait, this is a different person who thinks differently than me, who comes from a different background than me, who's saw different parenting styles than me, who had a different faith background than me. And now we're like trying to, well, we have a baby coming, so there's, how do we get on the same team here?

George Gregory: Right.

And that's, where our story comes from. Right.

Like the book, the game plan is cause hindsight, if we had a game plan, if we knew what we were sort of committing to, right. And that, that just goes to, there's a lot of couples like us who start off, it might not be pregnancy, just, it could just be the hesitancy of, can we make it or we're so different. And so, the average marriage, uh, we think it starts off probably good, but there's so many couples like us, you're just trying to figure out, can we make it? And we just want to tell your listeners, yes, you can make it right.

And with God on your side, you can do all things. And the reason why we say we're pictures of God's grace is because it wasn't us as much as we were in the marriage. We just had to turn our hearts to God and say; we submit humbly to You.

And without changing us as individuals, help us to be better lovers, help us to be better communicators, help us to be better together as on the same team. And you

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know what little prayers like that over the years just leveled our hearts and God came, and He showed up.

Joanna la Fleur: Wow.

Well, as you just said on the same team, and of course I want to get into this whole thing, but you have this unusual thing, George, which is this NFL chaplain. And that's like a really interesting view into the life of men and the life of their families. You're kind of up close and personal with these guys who have a ton of pressure on them.

But before we jump in there and, or maybe it's the bridge analogy, this idea of being on the same team is what you said, because I do think a lot of people in their marriage, they feel like it's me versus you. And we're fighting for our peace. Who's going to win the argument? Who's going to get their way? Who's even going to get more blanket or decide what's for dinner.

So, can you talk a little bit about that? You know, I think it is, it's a right sports analogy, it feels like so many people in their marriages are on opposite, like they're on opposite teams. They're not teammates.

George Gregory: Absolutely.

Right. And that's what it means to have a game plan, is one of those steps is to know who's on your team, know what your differences are, but how you're alike, how you're wired. And so, the basic premise from that is, is like I'm the chaplain for the LA Chargers.

And by the way, my wife, she does just as much in that building that I do, except for, I won't allow her to go into the locker room, for fear she may see those eight abs that they have compared to my one ab. But when you go into our facility or when you go

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into our games, you're going to realize something that we're the LA Chargers. We're not other sports teams.

We know we're on the same team. And that concept, man, just helped us to realize over the years of us working with the Jets and the Giants, when we were in New York City is when couples know they're on the same team, then when they feel like enemies, right, when we have what we call, we don't say we fight, we have intense fellowship.

That's what we have. And when couples found themselves not in agreement, not on the same page or having intense fellowship, many times you feel like you're not on the same team. You could even feel like enemies, right.

And so, we try to say, you know, instead of fighting to be right, fight for oneness, right. That's sort of the lens of being on the same team is that I want to honor Tondra. I want to hear her heart, but I also want to express that where my expectations weren't met.

And if we do that through the lens of, man, we're on the same team. So, after this tough conversation, I still want to be in love with you. I still want to be married to you.

Yet we have to have these very real and authentic conversations.

Tondra Gregory: Yes. Oneness is definitely the great mystery of marriage that God created because we like to say, you're not wrong for being different.

God values that diversity. He created each of us uniquely for the calling and purpose that He has on our lives. So, you're not wrong for being the person you are.

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It's just the mystery is like, how do you take these two God-designed individuals and bring them together as one? And that's what we talk about in the book, is giving you a game plan for how to get that oneness, which is helping you figure out, well, what did God have in mind? What was He thinking to create us uniquely and different? And then become one when you get married.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. That idea of like, what was he thinking? You really see it that way, like the opposite way of me.

Like there are those moments with when you look at another person and say, oh, wow, we see this quite differently. But then you're talking about running the same place at the same time as this analogy. And I appreciate this, too, because I think sometimes marriage content feels really, I would say, feminine.

And I appreciate that your approach, when you talk about team of oneness, running the same place, it feels like it's more accessible for the guys listening in. It's not all emotion, touchy-feely, although that is a big part of our relationships. So, when you think of that idea of like running the same place, do you have an example you can give? Like what's it like? I'm literally thinking of the white erase marker on the board.

When you think of plays, can you give an example? What is one of these plays, maybe from your own marriage or that you offer to people? How do we come at this thing?

George Gregory: Well, first of all, thank you so much for acknowledging or pointing out that, yeah, men will get a lot out of this book, right? They will get, you know, the sports analogies that talk about the importance of marriage or how to do marriage, but they're going to feel included in the conversation. And so, for instance, like a play would be, well, let me start back over and say, imagine on a sports team, if everybody, the whistle sounded and everybody did their own play, you would never get anything accomplished, right? And so, in marriage, let's say the play is honor,

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right? And so, when I honor my wife, I treat her as my priority. And so, the play is when she feels not the priority from a busy schedule, or maybe I'm talking on the phone too much, or I'm just not paying attention to her needs.

When she tells me that, then because she is talking honor and we run that same play, then what I try to do is try to listen to her heart. And instead of pushing her away, I know that language. Oh, this is the play we're running.

I need to show you that you are a priority, whether that's through time, whether that's through my communication or whether that's just through the intimacy is that she is saying or communicating, hey, I need something. And that's a play that we can run together because that's the vision that we have. And we don't get that vision from ourselves.

We get that vision from the playbook, which is God's manual or the Bible. The Bible talks about how we are to honor one another, love one another, prioritize one another in marriage. And so, our play is not our play that we made up.

We read the play from God's playbook, and we say, thanks coach. We're going to do that.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah.

Well, okay. I love that you're talking about that. This like that the Bible, here we are, it's Scripture Untangled.

After all, we're talking about the Bible on this podcast every week, but this idea of the Bible being viewed as one of these playbooks for marriage, like a way to, you want to have a good marriage. Look at some great and terrible examples in the Bible of how people played that out. But tell us a little bit more.

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I don't know if there's, because it seems like marriage, as you said, right off the top, like not everybody wants to get married anymore. And the Bible feels for some people like an outdated book or hard to get their head around. So, when you say that the Bible might be part of a playbook for marriage, what do you mean by that? Or is there like a place you go or like a story that you look at or a Bible verse or how do you think about that with the Bible?

Tondra Gregory: So, one of the things, so God created marriage, so He knows what we're supposed to get out of marriage. It's just like anything that you purchase, like an iPhone is just about everybody in the world has one. But to get the most optimal experience from that iPhone, you have to go to what that creator, created it for, and then you can get the most optimal use out of your iPhone.

And so, because God created marriage, we go to Him on how we want to have His nature and His character in us so that we can be made more in His image. Because that's one of the reasons God created marriage was to make us more like Him and to, it was the environment that he wanted to pass on His legacy from generation to generation. So, your marriage is not just about your happiness.

Your marriage is about God's legacy of going from generation to generation. So how do we know what His legacy is if we don't understand who He is, His character and His nature? So we, one of the Scriptures that we go to the most is in Galatians when it talks about the fruit of God's Spirit, which is, you know, love, kindness, peace, joy. All of these things are the things that need to be operating in our marriage so that our kids can say, oh, you know, I know who God is.

I know what love is. I know what kindness and forgiveness looks like. And all of those things are the plays that we have to run, that the Bible teaches us to run whenever we're feeling like we want to be resentful and bitter.

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It's like, okay, what am I to do when somebody upsets me? The Bible talks about being slow to speak, you know, and listen, you know, more. And so, it's those things that he's really already laid out for us on how we treat each other. I just think a lot of times people don't think about that in their marital relationship.

They think about that for their coworkers or their boss or their neighbor, but God has laid out certain ways. He wants us to respond to each other as husband and wife. Yeah.

George Gregory: Which is critical, right? We talk about the theme of, you know, one of the purposes is to reflect God's image. Like all of us as kids, we know we kind of look like our parents, or we have the same attributes of our parents.

We might respond like our parent, and the same way us being made and shaped and created in the image of God, we can also look like Him. We can respond like Him and act like Him. So how I treat my wife, how husbands treat their wives is a reflection of who God is in their life, right? You can't say I love my wife, but I don't talk to her the right way.

I don't honor her. I don't respect her. No, we honor, respect, because we are reflecting who God is to our spouses.

And that's one of the things. And so, I mean, you're talking about a playbook, the Bible is full of those plays where he just says to encourage one another, let's look at that theme of when we encourage one another, or we, you know, sort of cheer each other on the good deeds, man. What a wonderful way or display of that in a marriage when we can affirm one another, not tear each other down, but we can affirm one another.

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We've become so much of professionals at pointing out the wrong thing in society, where we can just pinpoint you do this wrong, you do this wrong, but where are we encouraging them when they get it right? These are the type of plays that we see clearly in the Bible, but sometimes we disassociate what we read in the Bible with how to apply that, especially in marriage.

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Joanna la Fleur: Yeah, I love that. I mean, if people are grabbing the book and holding it while they're listening, you know, chapter two, you're talking about these four theological purposes and you're breaking it down in a ton more detail, you know, we don't have time to go into it all here. But yeah, there is like a theological or a Biblical idea of marriage that turns out it works.

Like turns out, you know, nothing new under the sun that like this God's beautiful intention for marriage is as just as you've said, as we reflect the image of God, it turns out like it also works, like makes a marriage work.

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I'd love, you know, whether from, I'm thinking of, you know, George, you're with some of these professional athletes, coaches, team, Tondra, you're in really more of a clinical setting, working with couples or working with individuals and their relationships.

Can you talk about, and maybe this is part of where the book came from, how when marriage relationship is going well, or not well, how that affects other parts of our life, like our ability to perform in our job, our ability to, you know, just do the rest of life.

I'm sure you can't tell personal stories about that. But how do you see, why does marriage matter to an NFL player? Like, can't he just leave that at home and go do his job on the field? But where do you see those like overlapping with each other?

George Gregory: Yeah, well, you know, I think I got the role here. And by the way, Tondra, she's again, she's just as much of a chaplain here with the LA Chargers than I am.

She does the wives and the girlfriends, which is probably the most important. Oh, they know, right? And so, but what I tell these coaches, if you let me do my job, then I can help you to have a better athlete focused on the field because no one wants to come into work when there's so many distractions for these players. You don't want to be thinking about home when you're almost getting your head taken off.

Right. And so when I say let me do my job, it's really, give us the time to have those Bible studies or have one-on-one counseling or coaching them as a couple so that we can handle what's going wrong at home. And we can help them get a plan, right? That's why we called the book, The Marriage Game Plan is when we can help them to get a plan, and they can go back to work and be more focused and be more present on that field because that's how you're going to win.

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So, we equate this to what happens all across America or sorry, in Canada with jobs is like people go to work. They want to be better employees. You know, the bosses want better employees to come focus.

The same thing is true regardless if you're in the NFL or pro athlete. When we have a better home life, we call it winning the home game, by the way, when you can win the home game, you're better prepared to win your road games as well, whether that's career or hobbies or just things you want to do in life. Being more marital, having more marital satisfaction at home will just be having more increase of happiness throughout life, whether regardless of if it's just at home.

Tondra Gregory: Yeah. And I agree with what George is saying because a lot of times people think it's separate, but it's really not because what bleeds in for your home life can bleed into your work life and your work life definitely can bleed into your home life. So, it's not a separate thing.

If I want to be as productive as I can be on my job, on the field, then me having my home life intact enables me and frees me to do that. But if I don't, then I am not as focused. I am not as productive.

And just coming from that clinical point of view, like you could be, it could lead to depression, anxiety, addictions, all those things when you don't have that home life that you need to allow you to go out into the world and thrive. So, I feel like it's definitely all tied together.

George Gregory: Yeah.

So, I'll give you a one story. So, I had a player to come up to me and he was so curious. He says, chap, you're always talking about your wife.

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You're always talking about your family. And he just opened up and said, that's not my home life. Like its, things are not well.

And so, he says, I want to know how do you have a successful marriage after almost 30 years of being married, right? How do you guys do it? And immediately I turned that the question of what happens normally in life, I turn it into a gospel conversation because I said, I'm glad you asked. And I couldn't do this without God in my life, without the Holy Spirit helping me because I'm fragile. I am broken, right? I am marred.

My divinity professor used to say, we're all cricket sticks trying to make straight lines. As much as I want to be a good husband, I can't. And so, I depend upon an all wise, all loving God who gives me the Holy Spirit to give me the power to love.

He says, love my wife. I can't do it in my own strength, even as much as I try. And the light bulb came on with this guy. He realized, so that's what you preach in chapel. So, chapel has everything to do with my home life. So yes, you're finally getting it now.

Joanna la Fleur: Oh, that's so good. It's like the light bulb going off. Yeah.

Because I think it is like marriage has got to be marriage stuff is an inroad to talking about all parts of us, you know, like as in sharing the gospel, sharing who Jesus is, because how can we do this without help if we're just relying on our own strength?

But, you know, I think, I think of this idea when we talk about strengthening the team, not just our own strength, but like God's help. I think trust seems to be like a recurring challenge in marriages. Do you have any, whether that's Biblical wisdom, practical wisdom, like when you're thinking of your book, how do you help couples who are struggling in that area of trust with one another? Yeah.

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Tondra Gregory: Well, trust is a valuable gift. And when somebody gives you their trust, try not to break it, because trust is easy to lose and it's a lot harder to gain. And so building trust is through your behaviors and your actions of being consistent and also how you treat each other builds that trust because trust is basically, I believe this person has my best interest at heart and it requires a level of vulnerability that you could hurt me, but I believe that you won't.

George Gregory: That's good.

Tondra Gregory: And so that's how we're operating. And this is why the marriage relationship is so intense, or the intense emotions come out because it's the most vulnerable place that you can be in with another person, surrendering over that trust to them and opening yourself up in the most vulnerable way.

And that's why trust is crucial because you can't go deeper in intimacy in the depths of what you are supposed to go in, in your relationship. If, you don't feel emotionally safe to do that. And that's why how we honor each other, our behaviors, the way we talk to each other, the way we're consistent and keeping our word and creating a stable life are all the ways that we can create trust.

And I'll just give you an example. So, George and I, we went to, I feel like it was like a barbecue, and it was outdoors, and it was celebrating somebody's birthday. And I'm a counselor.

So, people really just feel compelled to open up to me about the deep things that they're going through. I get that everywhere I'm going.

George Gregory: She knows how to draw it out.

Tondra Gregory: And so George and I are both outgoing. So, he was mingling in a whole other group and I was mingling in another group. And one particular guy was going through some, going through a divorce.

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And so, he really needed some comfort, and he needed to talk. And so, he was just pouring his heart out to me, and we were in the corner, and we were talking for a long time. And George pulls me to the side when I get away from this guy.

And he's like, I was very uncomfortable with seeing you in a deep intimate conversation in the corner with this guy for a long time. I know that he's going through a divorce. And so, a trust building response would be, well, I'm so sorry that you feel that way.

And I will never, you don't ever have to worry about being put in that position. And again, that's a trust building response versus a non-trust building response is, "I wasn't doing anything. What's your problem? Stop. You're being over dramatic or you're being jealous." That last response doesn't make him feel secure. It doesn't make him feel safe. Doesn't make him feel protected. And it doesn't...

Joanna la Fleur: "His opinion was dumb... You're dumb for thinking it."

Tondra Gregory: Right, I dismiss his emotions and his needs.

George Gregory: Nor, nor am I wrong for expressing to my wife, cause I'm not an insecure guy.

I've never had to address my wife in that way ever again, because she realized, oh, I have to watch what I do. So, I won't make you... And so, I love that by the way, I love that example.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. I love that. When we talk about this analogy with athletes, I think it's so true in relationship to this idea of rest, rhythm, but also, I would say recovery from like a hard, like you just push really hard or just recovery, actually from injury.

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Relationships sometimes need those rhythms just like athletes do. So, what have you learned about this area of marriage to do with rest, recovery, soul care? Sometimes we're in like a high-pressure season and we're coming out of it. What do we do about that?

George Gregory: Yeah.

Well, so we expect our guys to, you know, whether whatever sport it is that on that day, you want them to perform at their peak level. The only way they can perform that way is they have to have some rest, some recovery, some recovery system, whether it's sauna or cold bath or whatever. And then they're ready to go and repeat.

Right. And I've watched this so many times over the years that as couples, sometimes we're just, man, we're just going, going, going, especially with kids. And we just don't know how to say no to certain things or whether you're a busy pastor or whether you're a busy corporate leader.

Sometimes we don't know how to say no. Rest sometimes can be just saying no. That's right. For some of your listeners, they're ready to cut this podcast off because they're like, I can't say no. And the reality is if you don't say no sometime and show your family that you're willing to be there present to win your home game, you could be losing the most important part. You could be missing out on the important part.

And so, things like my wife used to tell me when I had kids that were small. And I would have never known this had I had a, you know, a teammate who would really point this out. But she says, can you finish your phone calls before you come through the garage door? And I'm like, what gives? She's like, well, because you come in on the phone.

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Like you're some busy pastor that you're giving your kids the Heisman telling them to wait till dad gets off the phone before they want to say greet you. And they're so excited to see you. They haven't seen you all day.

And so that's just being present. It's me saying no to certain things or me finishing certain things so that I can prioritize me showing my spouse that they mean, or my kids that they mean the world to me. It could mean also an interpretation could be, rest could be, we need a vacation, right? We need to go somewhere together, leave the kids at home with the proper babysitters, but we might need a couple's vacation where we can just go and veg and, you know, work on our intimacy or work on communication, or maybe it's a vision weekend, whatever it is, rest and recovery allows you to repeat and go out and do it over and over again.

Tondra Gregory: Yeah. And I would just add that, is definitely just as important as how you play the game because without it, you don't have the capacity to, do all the things and take care of the people who are counting on you having that capacity to pour into like your kids and your spouse. So, if you want to be successful in anything and give it your all rest and recovery is just as important as anything else that you're doing.

I do think in our society, in the world is condemned, right? Like, people feel bad. They feel lazy. Yeah.

It's this, it's just go, go, go achieve, achieve, accomplish, accomplish. Um, and the mental health, status of our world is revealing that we're not made to do that. You know what I'm saying? That our bodies need rest and recovery.

And so, I do think there's a deception, that you aren't as productive or you're lazy, or you're not accomplishing when you take that time to rest and recover. So, you got to give yourself permission to not feel guilty to do those things.

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Joanna la Fleur: And even seeing it, as you say, that like, if we're not looking for it, we don't really like you just push until you can't go anymore.

And then it's a burnout or a crash out in some way, or it comes out against the other person.

George Gregory: Absolutely. I mean, like in the playbook, again, the Bible talks about Sabbath, right? But, but how many pastors are that you have as listeners, how many struggle with taking a true Sabbath, right? Like that one day a week where you just rest, right? Or do churches allow their pastors to go on a sabbatical, you know, every few years for a month or two and things of that nature.

And so again, we're people of God, but sometimes we don't read the playbook to just run the plays that God's asking us to run.

Joanna la Fleur: Well, I love that, you know, it's 10 commandments is don't murder and don't commit adultery and also take a day off. And we were like, okay, I'm good with the not murdering part, but we are not so good at the rest part because, and it's in this list, I think in for many reasons, but in part because it's that important.

And it's so easy for us to push it aside and get caught up. I mean, when you're talking about this rest or this time away, maybe like, as you said, maybe it's like take time away as a couple away from the kids. And you mentioned this thing, you mentioned this thing real quick, but it was about this idea of vision.

What's your vision together? Like, do you need to go away and create a vision statement for your marriage for your family? Talk to us a little bit about that. Like, why is that important? Why would you? This seems like very luxurious in some ways, you want to take time away from your kids from your life to make a vision statement. What even is that? Because yeah, tell us about it.

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George Gregory: Well, again, we think that the marriage game plan, one of the first things is to define the win. What do you how do you want to win in your marriage after 50 or 40 or 30? Sorry, I'm going down after 30, 40, 50, 60 years of being married together. What do you want your marriage to look like? Right.

And we believe that one of the first steps is to define how you see getting to there. All right.

So, a vision and it doesn't have to be someone that's already married. It could be people who are considering getting married. Right.

And so, but when you have a clear vision, let's talk about the opposite. Let's talk about when life gets really hard and you don't see eye to eye, and you're headed in different directions. A vision statement brings you back and says we're running now in the same direction.

Why? Because we can re-articulate why did we get married in the first place? Where are we going with our marriage? Right. And how do we get there? And so, we believe that a vision statement allows couples to run in the same direction; to be to know they're on the same team and to really keep a vision of where we are going, especially when times get a little tough. And I don't know, man, in our marriage, we've had to re-clarify this countless times.

Here's what we're doing together, especially in tough seasons.

Tondra Gregory: And the opposite, because we don't want people just doing marriage haphazardly and just responding, you know, like George mentioned earlier. But to be proactive is to know where you're going and set that in place because it serves as your compass.

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It governs your behaviors, your decisions, your choices, because you will make those decisions and choices and actions to align with what you're where you're going and what outcome you are trying to achieve for the next generation.

Joanna la Fleur: I love this. I mean, you're talking about next generation.

I think the word is legacy that we're like, what is this about? What will be the echoes of your life, your marriage in the community and whether you have kids or not, there are things that it affects around you. So, what do you hope the marriage game plan will do in terms of shaping families, maybe even churches or whole communities? Like when we think generationally, I feel like you have a big vision about this legacy.

George Gregory: Wow.

Yeah, that's a great question, man. I think the prophet Maximus in the movie Gladiator, I think he really explained it when he talked about that whatever was going to come out of those gates, he says that we have a better chance of survival if we stick together. And we call that better together.

And then there's another part that he says that what we do now will echo in eternity. And I think a lot of times that in marriage, we don't quite get it sometimes. And that is when we find a way to make it work, when we depend upon God and we ask him to help us, especially how to love one another.

It really shows our kids, again, that they can do it and that they like marriage is the foundation of every society, the family is. And when we can raise godly kids, when we can see a society where marriage is a priority, then our kids will say we can do that as well. And so, Tondra and I we had this thing where we talk about so much of that what we want that our kids now want it and they're talking about what they want to see in their kids.

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And so, I think society is better when couples make it. I think kids are better when their parents make it. And that's what we want to see echo in eternity is we want to see a reimagination of what marriage looks like through a Biblical lens, because we believe that you can do it and God can do it if we just allow Him to do it.

Tondra Gregory: Yes. And I'd like to add like marriage is the most important institution that you will ever be a part of. And just like anything you want to be successful at, at your job, or you get educated, you get mentorship, you get coaching, you get support, you get a game plan so that you can be successful.

And marriage requires no less effort. And it's important and it's the most important institution because it is generational, it's spiritual. Like George just said, it's an eternal work.

It's going to live on past you more than any other thing that you will do on a job, on a professional sports team. This work that you do in your home is an eternal impact. And so that's why it's the most important that you will do.

And so, we hope that people read this book and not just read it, because at the end of each chapter, there are questions, there are activities for couples to work on to begin building the skills and the tools that they need to have a successful game plan. And what couples will be surprised by is that by the time they finish working on the activities and answering the questions, they are working on their game plan. And by the time they get to chapter 10, they will have created, chapter 10 is about developing that game plan and taking it with you.

So, when you finish this book, you can refer back to it throughout life as life changes. And you can, you know, as it ebbs and flows, you can make adjustments and continue to work on your game plan, continue to implement your game plan.

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Joanna la Fleur: That's really good.

You know, I think as, as we come to a close here, I would ask like, in a second, I'd love if you would pray for those who are listening, maybe George, if you want to pray for the guys, Tondra, could you pray for the women listening? I'm just thinking, you know, everyone listening, if they're married, they're in a different place. And some people are feeling like it's going all right. Some people are feeling like it's just been a real mess.

And you know, because it's tough. And some people listening maybe aren't married, wish they were married, you know, whatever it may be. But wondering if you could just, you know, as a way to close, I love that this book is practical. It's encouraging because it's like, oh, we can do it. Like it's achievable.

Like here's some steps we can take, we can build this game plan. We can, as you said, if we don't know what winning looks like, how do we know if we're getting there, building this vision together. And also like, not just for women, like men too, I think we'll find this really something they can connect to.

But yeah, just, I think that would be, I wouldn't ask everybody this, but you know, we got, we got some chaplains in the room here. So, could you just pray as a today, would you pray for those who are listening?

George Gregory: Yeah, Lord, thank you. Thank you, God, that just for all of our men, whether they're married or whether they're thinking about being married, Lord, marriage is a team sport.

It's not a spectator sport. So, we travel, and we see 70 or 80,000 people and just 22 men are out there bashing it. So let our men know today that it's a team sport and we got to get our head in the game.

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And so, we pray for the disenfranchised, the one who might be a little hopeless or the one who feels like, you know what, I got a good marriage. I'm just an autopilot. Lord, I pray, touch every man's heart today and inspire us to maybe take a good marriage into a great marriage, or maybe something that's maybe a little shaky right now to understand that marriage is a long season.

It's a journey and it should be for life. And so, we pray God that it might be tough in this quarter or this season or this half. Maybe we've had a bad game recently.

And yet, if we can just turn the page, if we can see the redemptive side of God's grace in our life, I just pray, Father, that these men would say that I can make it through. It might have been tough this season, but I can see as we're winning together that we can accomplish the things that we want to see. And so, Father, we pray God that for these men, that You would begin to do a new thing in their heart, Lord, that they would say, we want to be leaders in our home.

We want to be leaders in communication. We want to be definitely leaders in the intimacy department, but we want to be leaders and win the home game in Jesus' name.

Tondra Gregory: Lord, I just pray for women out there, married women, women who desire to be married.

God, I just pray that You would meet them where they are. Lord, that a woman's heart is a big well that goes deep. And I just pray, God, that You would touch them in the deep places of their hurts and disappointments and let downs and traumas, Lord, that You would heal them, Lord.

Any obstacles that are coming towards them to damage their ability to shine as a spouse or to distort the image of who You've called them to be and the value that You've put in them, Lord, that You would let that shine through, Lord, that You will build their confidence, build their self-esteem, Lord. Lord, that You would show them

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first that You've loved them in such a tangible way that they could also feel significant and valuable in how You created them, Lord. And I just pray, Lord, that You would just help them be the wives that You've created them to be, Lord, and take them on a journey, Lord, of self-discovery, of learning about themselves, Lord.

And I just pray, Lord, for the wives or women out there that might be feeling hopeless or feeling frustrated or disappointed about their relationship as it currently is. And I pray that You would give them hope, Lord, because You are able to do exceedingly and abundantly about all that they ask or think. I pray that You would turn their hearts towards their husbands and towards their families and that they won't feel less than or alone, Lord.

Anybody that's out there feeling alone and not understood, I pray, God, that You would break into their situation, that You would illuminate their path and that You would give them a vision for who they are and what You've created them to be. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

George Gregory: Amen.

Joanna la Fleur: Amen. George, Tondra, thank you so much for joining us on the podcast today.

Tondra Gregory: Thank you.

George Gregory: We had a blast.

Tondra Gregory: We did. We enjoyed it.

George Gregory: Thank you for having us.