

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

FOREWORD BY DENNIS AND BARBARA RAINEY

DAVE & ANN WILSON

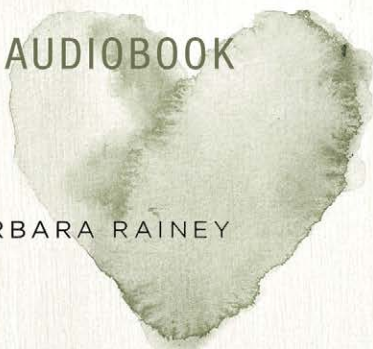
WITH JOHN DRIVER

V E R T I C A L

Marriage

THE ONE SECRET THAT WILL

CHANGE YOUR MARRIAGE



Going Vertical

QUESTIONS FOR COUPLES

Listen to a chapter and then crawl in bed and discuss . . . or maybe sit by the fire or on the deck or in your car in the parking lot. Who knows where this may lead— a prayer on the floorboard maybe?

CHAPTER 1: SIX WORDS THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

1. In your marriage, when have you been hit with a “brick”—a challenge, reaction, or situation you never saw coming?
2. What kind of impact has this “brick” had on your relationship?
3. What were, or are, your expectations about:
 - your marriage?
 - your spouse?
4. Are there things about your marriage you wish you could share with your spouse? What keeps you from doing so? How about trying it right now. (Just listen and affirm. No comebacks. Then take it vertical—either alone or together.)

CHAPTER 2: “I’VE LOST MY FEELINGS FOR YOU”

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your marriage. (Keep in mind that this number will continually be going up or down.)

Vertical Marriage

Why did you rate it there? (You may wanna pray before you explain.)

2. How do you deal with disappointment in your relationship? Talk about that with your spouse, and why you handle it that way.
3. How have the pressures and responsibilities of career, life, or kids affected your marriage?

CHAPTER 3: A SURPRISE IN THE HONEYMOON SUITE

1. How does James 1:1–5 conflict with many of the expectations we tend to have about a life spent following God?
2. How would you feel if you believed that God has been asking you the same question he asked Ann: “Will you die for me and sacrifice your life so that I can make _____ the person I want them to be?” Explain.
3. Discuss or recount some trials you and your spouse have been through together or are going through now. Dave always says, “Trials will make you bitter or better—the choice is up to you.”
4. Sit quietly with God and ask him if there’s anything he wants to say to you.

CHAPTER 4: THE VERTICAL STARTS HERE

1. Everyone says God first, then family, and job last. Ask your spouse or a close friend if you’re living these out in that order.
2. What makes it hard for you to live in that order of priorities?
3. Are there any changes you can make in your life and schedule that will refine your priorities?
4. Pull out your calendar and make these happen:
 - Divert Daily—fifteen minutes with God/taalk time with your spouse

Going Vertical

- Withdraw Weekly—a day of rest/date night each week
- Abandon Annually—spiritual retreat/marriage retreat

CHAPTER 5: “COME BACK HERE AND FIGHT LIKE A MAN!”

1. How did your parents handle conflict? What went well? What went wrong?
2. What is your conflict style—Win, Yield, Withdraw, or Resolve? How has that been helpful or hurtful?
3. Discuss a recent conflict you had. What went well, and what went wrong? What changes can you put into place to help? (This is for you to change *you*—not your spouse!)

CHAPTER 6: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

1. Where does selfishness show up most in your marriage? (If you just thought of how selfish your spouse is, you just proved the point! Haha.)
2. If you were Satan, how would you destroy your marriage?
3. How can you fight Satan instead of your spouse?
4. Discuss some strategies to help you fight the enemy instead of fighting your spouse. Here are some examples:
 - Don’t fight when hungry, tired, or stressed.
 - Avoid making accusatory statements, and don’t use a critical tone.
 - Don’t eye-roll.

CHAPTER 7: THE SHAPES OF WRATH

1. Ask your spouse or a good friend if they think you have an anger problem. What kinds of signs do they see? (Be careful how you phrase this. Don’t use words like “you always” or “you never.” Start with, “I feel like . . .” or “it seems like . . .”)

Vertical Marriage

2. Take a good look at your angry outbursts. What is the first emotion you skipped?
3. What's the best thing your spouse can do when you're angry? (Ask them.)
4. What's the worst thing your spouse can do when you're angry?
5. Is there someone you need to forgive? (Don't forget about forgiving yourself. Start by asking God for help.)

CHAPTER 8: JUST ZIP IT

1. Ask your spouse if there is an area where you're not hearing them. (Don't respond right away. Think about it and ask God how you can change, and then discuss it the next day.)
2. Instead of fixing your spouse's problems, ask them what it would look like for you to just listen. (Don't be surprised if they ask you to put down your phone or turn off the TV.)
3. Are you more of a truth-teller or a lover when it comes to speaking the truth in love? If you are a truth-teller, how can you be more loving? (I had to pray about it and sometimes have friends help me rephrase things before I talked to Dave.) If you are a lover, ask God for the courage to speak the truth in love and find an accountability partner who will hold you to it.

CHAPTER 9: TEAR DOWN THAT WALL

1. Do you feel like you have any unresolved issues, or bricks, in your relationship? What are they, and why do you think they haven't been resolved?
2. Ask your spouse if he or she feels like there are any bricks or walls that are separating you.

Going Vertical

3. What's a first step *you* can take to get rid of bricks? Hint:
 - Pray.
 - Give a soft answer.
 - Apologize if necessary.
 - Seek and grant forgiveness.
4. Ask your spouse what words and actions speak love and respect to them in the midst of conflict? (If you've used your words to belittle, harm, or berate your spouse, apologize and seek forgiveness. Put that pride away. To do this honors God. Make it a practice you do often. It tears down walls.)

CHAPTER 10: "ALL I HEAR IS, 'BOO!' "

1. Women, ask your husband if he feels like you cheer for him. Ask him to explain his answer.
2. Guys, tell your wife what words or actions communicate respect to you.
3. What words or actions communicate disrespect to you? (Women, start taking your thoughts captive and catch yourself when negative thoughts about your husband wreak havoc in your mind. To counter those negative thoughts, start a cheer journal. Start logging what your man does right and what you're grateful for about him. After you fill several pages, go on a date and read it to him. Catch your husband doing something good each day, and cheer him for it.)
4. Guys, share with your wife one area where you can use more cheering.

CHAPTER 11: WHAT EVERY WIFE LONGS FOR

1. Men, ask your wife if she feels like you cherish her. Ask her to explain her answer.
2. Women, tell your husband what words or actions communicate love to you.

Vertical Marriage

3. What words or actions make you feel unloved?
4. What does Ephesians 5:25 teach us about the way Christ loves his bride? How can this apply to your marriage?
(Men, women long to be pursued. Each day, put a reminder on your phone to pursue her. It could be a text, buying her a couple of roses, vacuuming the house, or even giving the kids a bath. This will be the greatest investment for your marriage, and it will reap great dividends. Don't give up if she doesn't respond right away. Sometimes it can take a while.)

CHAPTER 12: SEX IN THE CHAPEL

1. What were your expectations about sex before marriage?
2. How has married sex been different from what you thought it'd be?
3. What is the best part of your sex life—or if you're struggling right now, what was the best part?
4. What's one thing you can do to make your sex life better?

CHAPTER 13: DON'T YOU THINK ABOUT SEX ALL THE TIME?

This can be a difficult subject to discuss, but try to go there.

1. How does stress, a crazy calendar, or kids affect your sexual intimacy?
2. Ask your spouse what you can do to help him or her get "in the mood."
3. If you're arguing about frequency, ask your spouse why they want to have more sex—or perhaps why they want to have less sex.
4. What does nonsexual touch look like to you? Tell your spouse if and why it's necessary.
5. Ask your spouse if there are any heavy "bags" they are carrying and how you can help.

CHAPTER 14: DAVE'S NECK PROBLEM, PART 1

1. Have you had a time in your life or marriage when you felt incredibly insecure? Explain. In what way has that insecurity affected your marriage?
2. Why is knowing your personal identity important in your marriage?
3. What is the hardest thing in your marriage and in your life to trust God with? What keeps you from surrendering that area to him now? God is asking you, "Can you trust me with _____?" What's your answer? (Take our advice. Let him have it . . . now!)

CHAPTER 15: DAVE'S NECK PROBLEM, PART 2

It's time to have "the porn talk."

1. Is there any sexual temptation you're hiding from your spouse? Pray and ask God to prepare your spouse's heart and to guide you through this conversation. (Don't be discouraged if your confession is not met with applause from your spouse for telling them. This conversation did not go well at first for us. Remember that your heavenly Father is cheering you like crazy for bringing this into the light!)
2. If you're struggling in this area as a couple, find a godly couple you can share this with. Ask them for help and accountability.
3. If your spouse is struggling, ask what you can do to help. Begin by praying for him or her.
4. Every husband needs another guy and every wife needs another woman who can help them. Who is that for you? Make the call today.
5. Dave listed four ideas that can offer help to men or women. How can these ideas be applied to your life and marriage today?

CHAPTER 16: ALL IN

1. Have you ever had a time in your marriage when it felt like one or both of you weren't completely "all in"? What led you there? How did it feel?

It's decision time. No matter how hard it has been or how badly you are struggling in your marriage right now, you don't stand a chance unless you are fully committed to going the distance. A new life and marriage starts right now. Don't put it off until tomorrow. Commit, or recommit, this very moment.

Are you willing to go *all in*? Then tell your spouse and tell God. He will meet you right where you are and give you his power to carry out this commitment. But if you're not willing, at least take time to think about this: *What is keeping me from taking the leap?*

CHAPTER 17: VICTORY THROUGH SURRENDER

1. Which marriage phase—Romantic/Excited/Disappointed/"O" (Over or Overcome)—do you find yourself in right now?
2. What step or steps can you take to bring back some romance and excitement into your marriage?
3. What are you waiting for? Let's do this—now!