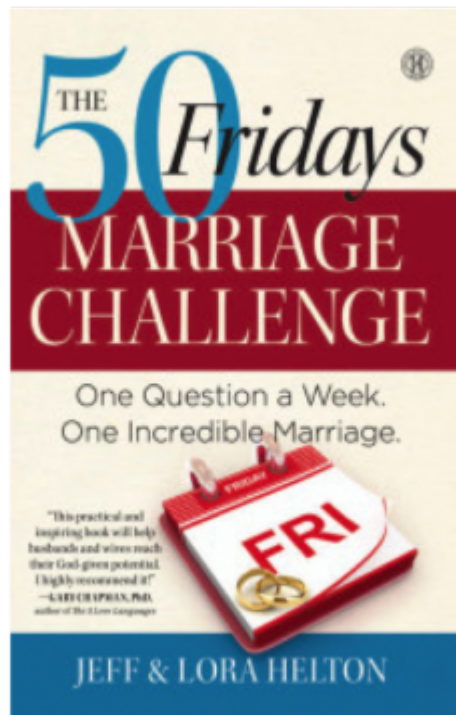


# 'The 50 Fridays Marriage Challenge' Authors Talk About Maintaining Intimacy In Your Marriage



By Gabriela Robles

Jeff and Lora Helton, authors of the marriage-transformation book *The 50 Fridays Marriage Challenge*, are a husband-and-wife duo who coach, counsel, and consult other married couples. Between them, they have an impressive background: Lora earned

her Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology from Wheaton Graduate School and was in private practice for seven years, while Jeff spent nearly three decades as a pastor, offering spiritual guidance to men and families.

Now, they're offering their expert advice to an even broader audience. In their new book, they encourage their readers to ask themselves one question each week. Their hope is to spark conversation and open up the boundaries in a relationship, allowing spouses to better understand each other and thus increase the intimacy that they share. Here, Lora and Jeff give CupidsPulse.com the inside scoop on their game-changing challenge.

**Each chapter in *The 50 Fridays Marriage Challenge* includes a question, a biblical quote, a message and a quote from other literature. Why did you choose this format?**

J: The idea for the book developed about five years ago when our oldest son was entering his senior year of high school. I started writing weekly letters to him, and I found myself thinking, "Oh my gosh, does my son know these things before he leaves home?" So I covered everything from how to change a tire to how to cook a steak. As the letters evolved, I began including a quote that gave more substance to what I was saying. Then, since my family is faith-based, I added in a Bible scripture, just something to encourage him. And it was during this process that I thought, "These are some really good benchmarks for Lora and I to write about marriage."

I think to ask a question about marriage is a helpful tool for people. But I thought it'd be better to also reference experts to add some weight to each chapter. So each of our passages or quotes are connected to the question of the day. We want people to have three different types of content: something from us, something from a passage of Scripture, and something from everyone from celebrities to Mother Theresa.

**Related Link:** [5 Conversations Every Couple Should Have Before Getting Married](#)

**Why did you choose a 50-day timeframe? Is that really enough time to improve a relationship?**

J: In our introduction, we talk about how we live in a culture that wants a 50-minute fix. Marriages are far more like a crockpot than a microwave. They take time, even in crisis. Our process is two weeks short of being an entire year. Instead of couples thinking, "If things don't get better in three weeks, I'm out," we want people to say, "Let's just slow down and take our time. We didn't get into this mess overnight, so it's going to take longer than overnight to get through it." It gives couples a new way of relating to each other.

**Why do you specifically advocate having deep conversations once a week? What if a couple wanted to talk about an important topic every single day?**

J: We definitely encourage that. There's some type-A people who will go through our book in only two months. I don't think couples can have this type of conversations too often. We are writing to a market where a vast majority of people have no intentional conversations for weeks or months at a time. We've asked a group of 600 people if they've had this sort of chat with their partner in the past week – and not a single person raised their hand!

It's so easy to get into the routine of life where you talk about your kids, your family, and your work, but you never really get a chance to ask, "How are we doing? How do we intentionally grow intimacy?" We wanted to develop a tool that would help couples do just that. So if they do it daily, that's awesome. But our hope is that we just help create a rhythm in their marriage.

**It's no secret that men typically have a harder time sharing their feelings than women. How does *The 50 Fridays Marriage***

## **Challenge address this issue specifically?**

L: We tried to do some questions that weren't really emotion-focused. There are questions about dream vacations or how would you like to spend time together on your next date.

J: There are some questions throughout the book that talk about sharing your heart, and we just hope that, over time, men will start to feel safe enough to talk about their fears and hopes. We also tried to have two- or three-page chapters to help engage men. To really engage men, we wrote something that you can get in and out of quickly with questions that are non-threatening and meant to start a deeper conversation.

**Related Link:** [Secrets to Staying Married for 50 Years \(Or More\)](#)

## **And finally, what would you say is your number one tip for maintaining intimacy in a marriage?**

L: Communication is the most important thing – you have to be willing to share your expectations and desires. Many times, we try to guess what our partner wants. Instead, just talk about it. Sex is a topic that some couples find hard to discuss with their significant other. Talk about what you want it to be like and how you want it to be a part of your marriage. Movies and television shows make sex seem so easy, but it's not that way, especially when you have a house full of kids. You have to keep the communication line open.

*You can purchase your copy of The 50 Fridays Marriage Challenge on Amazon. To learn more about Jeff and Lora Helton, visit their website, <http://50fridays.com/>.*