

Bishop Jakes: Most generally, you model the home you came from...

Serita Jakes: Or not.

Bishop Jakes: Well no, like for instance, you. I mean the way you function is a lot like your aunt who raised you, you know?

Serita Jakes: That's me.

Bishop Jakes: Yeah, it's you, so your idea of a good wife or your idea of what a husband should be, a lot of times is affected by where you came from, it models your idea; either you emulate it or you're trying not to be where you came from, sometimes it's that too. But one way or the other it affects the model, and then the real art of marriage is to take the model she had in mind and the model that I had in mind and merge it together into what God had in mind for us and for our destiny, would you all agree with that?

Dexter Jakes: Absolutely.

Bishop Jakes: So we're gonna talk a little bit about that, you all can just jump in and feel free.

Serita Jakes: Like you do anyway.

Bishop Jakes: Like you doing anyway, don't act like you're on TV, they're acting all bougie today but this is really how they are, give them about three minutes for them to figure out how to... When you start talking about marriage, let me start with Cora, how long do you think it took you and Brandon to get into a groove of what works for you?

Cora Coleman: Well we've been together for nine years in June, well married for nine years in June but we've been together for 11 years, and I think that in our marriage, I'd say maybe year six was kind of when we started kinda getting into not really arguing any more, having a groove and an understanding for one another, and really being able to understand each other's languages. Not just our love language but we come from way different model

homes, like our homes are completely different, there's no similarities whatsoever outside of the fact that we both have our mothers. And so it was very, very difficult for us to try to figure out what our culture was gonna be without me saying, well, mom and dad did it this way, or well, mom and dad said, well, this is what mama would say, and having to get out of that and say okay, well, yeah, that's what your mom and dad did, and that works really great for them and that can be wonderful, but what will our culture be? And kind of designing that for ourselves so that our children can look and see our marriage as opposed to oh, they're just doing the same exact thing that their parents did. So it took us about, I'd say five or six years, and we're still you know learning but we haven't had an argument or a fight in several years, yeah.

Bishop Jakes: Now, Toure and Sarah, you all had a very unique experience 'cause you're a blended family so you can speak from a perspective that's very unique, talk about how that blending worked and how you all connected and how do you find time for you in the midst

of the Roberts bunch? In lieu of The Brady Bunch, I call it the Roberts bunch.

Sarah Roberts: Yeah, I think blending a family was something that I wanted to be really intentional about. I'd been married before and so I knew that the dynamic between whoever's coming into the lives of my children was really, really important to me, but I also knew that we couldn't just decide like, hey, we're getting married, and then overnight expect for them to kind of gel. So once we really felt that God had brought us together and that this was something that he was gonna do and you are gonna walk out marriage and life together, I knew pretty early on that I wanted the kids to get to know one another. And because I was living in Dallas at the time, he was in Los Angeles, I flew out with my children and we all went out on dates to you know Disneyland, went to Dave & Busters, we had dinner, we all went to his apartment and like made cookies and had dinner. But I wanted them to have an opportunity to get a feel for me, I wanted to get a feel for them, right? Because I wanted to make sure that we had the same perspective on parenting, I think when you're blending of

family and you're looking for someone who's gonna come into this preexisting dynamic, the married couple is really going to be the foundation of the family even if the children were there before the spouse. And so, we have to share a lot of things in common, how do you feel about X, Y, and Z? What are your thoughts on when they should date? What are your thoughts on can she wear a two-piece? I mean every little thing we kinda had to come to an agreement with before presenting it to the children, we didn't hash it out in front of the kids but we took a minute. Even if it's something going on now and maybe we share a different perspective, we kind of put a pin in it with the children, we come to our room, we got to the car, whatever, we huddle, right? And then we figure out the game plan is gonna be and who's gonna present it.

Bishop Jakes: What I really like about what you said, there were many great things but one of the things is, in essence, I'll say that you didn't say it this way but this is what it meant, you dated the kids along with dating him and I think that's very important. 'Cause a lot of people, they get married, they're into each

other but they're not into the kids, you have it's a package deal and the kids need some time to adjust to who is this new person in my life? And feel respected and feel included and feel a part of all of that, and that's an amazing part of it. How was it for you, Toure?

Toure Roberts: It was the same: we were very intentional about wrapping our arms around the kids and really watching them. I think for me, because I didn't raise Malachi, Mackenzie, you know in those early years, I wanted to get to know them and to understand their ways but I was also very intentional about letting them know that you're not my step-son, you're not my step-daughter, I'm in it, I'm in it for real and I'll do whatever it takes to learn. So I was intentional about doing one-on-ones with them and really trying to understand them and learn them. And you know for us, it was just being intentional, like Sarah said.

Bishop Jakes: Now, between Dexter and Lari, you ought to have a whole lot of stories because you've been married how long?

Dexter Jakes: About seven weeks.

Bishop Jakes: Seven weeks, what have you learned in the seven weeks?

Dexter Jakes: So with us being in quarantine it's pretty much presented a pretty unique challenge for the two of us, I think our foundation will always reflect these times. So when you're around someone 24 hours and then it's a new period of time, you can either go crazy or it can really bring you all together, and a lot of ways it's really brought us together. It's kinda extended the honeymoon in some ways but it allows you to really get close and just build a foundation, especially for our communication, all of those things have increased as a byproduct of this time where we can really hone in, focus on what our real vision for our relationship is. So we may not have gotten into that rhythm but we definitely gotten to the point where we can say this is a part of our foundation and whatever we have going forward this has to be baked into the plan. So it's been very good, I don't think we've ever been better.

Bishop Jakes: Look at the grin on his face.

Cora Coleman: I can definitely agree with the statement of quarantine strengthening your communication because like you're forced to have conversations, like you're forced to find entertainment within each other that you wouldn't have normally been able to pay attention to. And I'm seeing that not just with Brandon but with my children, like I have learned a lot more about my children in this time that I did not know about; just being with them 24/7, both from a spiritual and educational place but also a behavioral place, you know? There are some things that they've needed some help on and I just have to apologize to teachers, I'm realizing, because they were not inaccurate in their sentiments towards my children, sounds like they were very accurate, as it were.

Dexter Jakes: They weren't wrong at all.

Sarah Roberts: I think, P.T. you have to speak to this I'll speak for myself though, I don't

know that I feel like our communication has strengthened just because P.T. constantly makes me communicate in general, like P.T. makes people communicate, like how are you feeling like 24/7. So I think my major adjustment when we first got married was learning to communicate my feelings because he's constantly asking about how I'm feeling, what my pulse is, or what's your thoughts on this, what's your vision on that? So I don't think my communication has really strengthened but what I do think has strengthened between us during quarantine is our need to really tap into ourselves and to understand what we need as individuals and not necessarily what we need and a couple or a family. So much of our life is poured out to other people, whether it's the kids or the church or touring or the businesses, and we can kind of get distracted by that and not have to check in with ourselves. But what this is showing us, because you can't just get in the car and go on a drive without some thought and you can't just go out to dinner and go to the spa or whatever, it's really forcing us to address our own feelings, like what do you need? What are you feeling? And saying things like you know, this is really getting to me, like I thought I was doing okay

but I'm actually having a little bit of anxiety today, yesterday I felt good, today I feel anxiety. Because there is no outlet right now, some of the outlets that we're used to using we just don't have. I think even for me like with the house, you know I'm cooking every single day and there's something to being able to be like, "Oh, I'm ordering food tonight", you know? We don't really order food in because, one, there's 18.000 of us and we don't know what's happening with the food, you know what I mean? You don't order food the way you used to order food. We put so much pressure on ourselves to like you know, I need to cook, I need to do that and if I don't I'm not gonna be a good wife, and like, Toure could care less, as long as there's something to eat.

Toure Roberts: Just feed me.

Larissa Jakes: He'll be okay.

Sarah Roberts: He's like, "We can order in, I'll eat hotdogs, whatever", but I'm like there needs to be this grand restaurant style meal.

Bishop Jakes: You know what's really important, is being honest about each other's expectations, because a lot of times when you start out you start out polite and you don't really say what you really expect, but that's gonna wear out. Honesty up front is really, really a good thing, about how you feel, expressing what your expectations are, what the boundaries are on both sides, so that you can enter into some common ground, some good understanding. Because a lot of times you can acquiesce to the other person and just say what you think they want you to hear and that's okay if you were gonna only be married for six months or a year, but we've been married 38 years, 38 years is a long time to play act. You know, you can't play act for 38 years, you know 38 years, you're going to be real at some point. And it's very important to let the other person know who you really are at your core, what's important to you, because if you're not careful you'll be busy giving somebody something that's not important to them at the expense of something else that really is important.

Bishop Jakes: Your kids are generally grown before you really have real conversations, real conversations; real conversations where you feel empowered enough to have conversations. There are things that Dexter and I talked about as adults, I mean we talk about everything.

Serita Jakes: Dexter's an adult?

Sarah Roberts: No way, absolutely not.

Bishop Jakes: Yeah, he's married now, he's a big boy now.

Dexter Jakes: Oh yeah, I'm an adult now, glory to God.

Cora Coleman: Yeah, whatever, whatever.

Dexter Jakes: This ain't a sleep over buddy.

Bishop Jakes: No, but he and I, we've had a lot of deep conversations, he says, "Why didn't you

say certain things to me when I was younger"? I said, "It wasn't time yet". So at different ages and different stages, and then the other thing that I learned and this may help somebody, and I did not know this in real time speed. I did not understand the power of a father's voice. When you are a father or a mother and you say something, maybe trying to snatch the kid out of something that you know is dangerous, that intention is good but what you say has more... I underestimated the impact of the force of the words, because I'm a bottom-line person, I want you out of it. I want you out, I'm gonna fix it, move this over here, move it over there. But you have to understand, just because of the role you're in those words have a lot of power and they leave a lot of scars or they hurt very deeply in a way that you weren't even after hurting the child, you're after fixing the problem. But it's just like reaching after a goblet and breaking the china cabinet, okay? So this is where mamas become amazing because they balance out that proclivity in a way that's important. I'm not sure that if the man is neutralized to communicate, like and I shouldn't say all mothers are like your mother, but I think if a man is neutralized to the point that he

communicates like a mother does, the child doesn't get to see both sides. So when you end up married to a man, if he doesn't communicate like a woman, you don't recognize male communication. You don't fully know until later, that's why I'm telling you right now, I may not be here to see it but I'm telling you right now, your report cards coming 10 years down the road, 15 years down the road, and what you begin to find out is that none of us did it perfect, but we did it, and you're not gonna do it perfect either. And so part of the compassion that comes, I understand my father so much better now than I did when he was here because I didn't really get who he was til I tried to do it. I understand things that went on between he and my mother that I could never understand until I had reached their point in life, in age, in stress. And I began to understand, wow, it's easy to be, what do they call it, a Monday morning quarterback is much easier than it is to play that role for 38 years. You do that 38 years and call me back, or 48 years and call me back, to survive, to survive is not easy, there has to be... the reason your mother and I are still together, I believe, one, we have a chemistry, secondly, we have common goals between us. When I say

chemistry I'm not talking about chemicals, we found a rhythm that works for us, we found a rhythm that works for us; she knows me, she doesn't push my buttons, I don't push her buttons. It's a mutual respect, you just don't push each other's buttons. If she's running something, I don't put my mouth in it, if I'm running something, she don't put her mouth in it. This is the message: you do not have to be good at everything, you do not have to be the perfect father, you do not have to be the perfect mother, you have to be there. I don't think that you're gonna get your report cards, too, and they're gonna come back in with minuses and checks and pluses and twos as life goes on, and then their kids'll get them and my parents got them, and so forth and so on. But amidst all of the minuses and the critiques, talk to the kids who didn't have no father and didn't have no mother or their mother left them in the trashcan and you begin to realize, as intimidating as parenting is and being married is, you don't have to be the perfect wife or the perfect mother or the perfect father, but you do have to be there and you do have to contribute and you do have to bring something to the table. And if the goal is to be perfect, then who gets the prize?

Brandon Coleman: Right, yeah. I think I agree with that too, as a young husband, as a young father who didn't have a father, I think that's something that I had to really put on and to learn, that it's not about perfection. And perfection is something that I kinda grew up with, knowing how we grew up you know, it was always a struggle, it was a fight, so I always put on my best hat you know to bring some relief, always trying to be perfect, always trying to do things right. And as a father, I recognize you know my kids ain't perfect, so then it's like I find myself tense or find myself wrong, and then having to come back and to you know apologize or find myself in those spaces where I show my imperfectness. I find the most vulnerable places to have to come back to my 12 year old and say you know what, I'm sorry, baby, you know? When all I've ever known was right, but I also see it spill over to the kids, and I recognize a lot of anxieties if you will, of having to put on that face of perfectness or perfection, and I see my kids pick it up here and there. And I think as I continue to grow and we have these conversations, some of the things I recognize is it is about showing up, it's not necessarily

about being perfect or making it you know it's finest per se, but it is about you know spend that quality time in those moments to really understand each other and understand what it is that our goal is as a family, as a unit, as a husband and wife, as parents, that really makes those moments that much more special rather than just trying to hustle and bustle and be perfect for everybody to see. So that's something else I'm learning that I'm taking in as well from watching you guys, especially Toure and pops, that's something I get a chance to witness and to consider. 'Cause it's not about the perfection and I think it brings a lot more scars and problems trying to do that and recognize that you don't add up to perfection. So that's something else, too, that I think we are being more intentional about, or at least me especially, I can can speak for me, but being more intentional about the idea that it's not about being perfect, but it's about doing your best and it's about being present, bringing your best effort forward.

Bishop Jakes: That's all you can do.

Cora Coleman: I think it also helps those who are out there who feel like if I had had this kind of family, things would have gone different, if I had this kind of mama or if I had this kind of daddy, there is struggles no matter what daddy, no matter what mama, you grow up in a castle you're still gonna have chaos, you know? That it doesn't matter, there's always gonna be those plus signs and minuses no matter what teacher you get, no matter what life you are, you know fortunate enough to live. And I think that it's important for us to be able, as a community, to give each other permission to not be perfect, to give each other permission to feel, to give each other permission to have a bad day. To let our men, I think that Kobe Bryant's passing away and the men being able to emotionally show their hurt and their pain really was a monumental experience for us as a community because we have lived so long telling black men they can't cry, they shouldn't show their emotions, that that's a weakness, that we were able to really give you men permission to be emotionally distraught about the situation. And I think that when we give each other permission to feel, to really be engaged with one another and the fullness there, that things and homes

can really change. I don't think that we do a service, a proper effective service, if we show that everything is perfect and everything is going great and we never had a bad day ever in our lives, and no one ever hurt us, and we never had any problems. I think it's important for them to be able to see, yeah, I have some scars, yeah, that hurt me too, yeah, I'm still carrying some of the pain of what happened to me as a child, and it brings us together even the more.

Toure Roberts: I think speaking of bringing together, when I think about this quarantine and I don't want to be insensitive to the pandemic because we know a lot of people are in pain, but the quarantine, part of it, I believe is where a lot of healing is going to take place. Because I know for me, my eyes are better now, I'm seeing things better now, even having to be, getting to be, I should say, at home with the family 24/7, I'm seeing myself, I'm seeing my marriage, I'm seeing my relationship with my kids, I'm thinking differently, I'm even looking at the house and things that the house needs and various things. And so, I really think that there's a healing

for families right now during this time to not be afraid to take a look, to not be afraid to see and to remodel our homes perhaps, maybe all of our homes need to be remodeled in some areas. Maybe the home is good, the foundation is great, you know the... now I'm not no construction guy, but all the walls are up, but maybe we need some paint over there, maybe there was a crack that I'd never even noticed was there, and now I'm gonna be getting the stucco for that. And I think this quarantine has created an opportunity for that.

Larissa Jakes: I think it's very important for us to remember how to see each other through a filter of love, especially being home in quarantine. You're 24 hours with that person, something that she or he might say at the moment that you are feeling a certain way, you're going to hear it different than what their intention was in first place. So I learned from Sarah that you don't hear it just because your feelings are good that day, you hear through a filter of love. So I might not be feeling well today but I'm listening to him through the filter of love, I'm gonna put this filter and I'm going to understand his

intentions and not his words. And that's important for the communication to flow better so we can see those cracks and the wall that has to be painted together as a unit. We're gonna see it clearer for our family and repurpose our goal and repurpose our plan, but we are going to get there.