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The Best Marriage I Know

A four-year-old boy and a four-year-old girl meet on their first day of pre-school. Although this is a common occurrence, what was unknown that day to the two children and their parents, was that along with the usual first-day-of-school nerves and tears, something unusual had also happened—because that day in 1970, when the children and their families first met, it was the very first meeting of the people who would grow up, fall in love, marry, and become my parents...

Mr. and Mrs. William Todd Howell

Maybe it is because they have known each other since the age of four. Maybe it is because they grew up together in the community and in church. Maybe it is because they have an undying love and care for each other. Maybe it is because they enjoy each other's company and would rather be with each other than with anyone else in the world. Maybe it is just destiny... but I think the marriage of my parents is the very best marriage I know.

When I think about the characteristics that make up a strong, happy, and long-lasting marriage, I definitely think of my parents. My parents care about each others' lives. They both have demanding occupations where they are concerned about the welfare of others. Because of that, they often end the day exhausted, but they still find time to discuss the day together, and listen to each others' hopes and dreams.

My parents' marriage helps them be the very best parents. They talked about and planned their family carefully. My parents spend so much time with my brother and me...teaching us important life lessons, coaching our teams, helping us enjoy our lives and have the best childhood, and giving us the very best gift they can give—the knowledge that we are safe and secure and that they love each other and will stay a family and marriage together forever.

Because my parents have a wonderful marriage, our entire home is filled with laughter and happiness. My parents are both hilarious! They love to laugh, and there is always a joke, a wink, and a smile. Sometimes we all laugh so hard we lose our breath. If my dad ever steals a kiss from my mom, my brother and I can be heard screaming... "Oh No! Old People Love!"...but we are actually as happy as we can be. Although we might pretend to frown and roll our eyes at them, seeing their affection for each other gives us a comfort and happiness that I wish all children could know.

Even though my parents met at an early age, their love developed slowly over time. Growing up together at the church where they first met and where they would eventually marry, they had many wonderful examples of marriage around them to emulate. Both of my parents also had their own parents who were deeply in love. Fortunately for me, both sets of my grandparents are still living and happily married, and both sets have been married for over 50 years. I think this proves that the most important characteristic of a happy marriage is that it stands the test of time and serves as a positive example for the young people who learn from its strength and endurance.

My parents began officially dating as seniors in high school. They both attended Samford University and received multiple degrees. Their hard work has given us many advantages, but the most important is that we have a lot of time to spend together as a family. In fact, this year my family is together more than ever, because my mom is my eighth grade English teacher! Many young people would not enjoy so much family togetherness, but our family of four is so close, I don't even mind when my parents chaperone a fieldtrip or a school dance together (as long as I don't look over and find them "cutting a rug," as they say!)

As I have become a teenager, I have started to think about my future. I would love to know what life will hold in my education, in my career, and in my family life. Although many questions remain to be answered, I know that I will settle for no less than perfection in a relationship. Because I have seen a marriage built on loyalty, honesty, humor, happiness, faith, and a lasting love, I will continue to pray that I will find a love that burns as bright as the love shared by my parents---Karen and Todd Howell (Married almost twenty years!).