

Married With Benefits

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Episode 5: Why Does She Ask the Deep Questions at 11 p.m. at Night?

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Brian: From the Podcast Network at FamilyLife® this is Married With Benefits where we are on a relentless quest to love the one you're with and discover all the real benefits that came with saying, "I Do."

I'm your host Brian Goins and I'm joined by Harvard-trained researcher and best-selling author Shaunti Feldhahn.

I want to be a Harvard-trained researcher. I just think I'm too lazy.

Shaunti: It was expensive.

Brian: It was expensive. [Laughter] Was it worth it though?

Shaunti: It was *totally* worth it—it was just very expensive.

Brian: That's a great thing to have before your name. Well, I've loved this season so far on Married With Benefits. It has been fun. We've taken on this *huge* challenge where we're trying to demystify one of the biggest riddles in the entire Bible for so many husbands and that's 1 Peter 3:7.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: "Husbands live with your wives in an understanding way." How do I understand my wife? We are answering the questions that every husband is asking.

Shaunti: Yes, this is the application—

Brian: It is.

Shaunti: —of that Bible verse.

Brian: We are unpacking that verse with every episode—so that's been a lot of fun. We've been answering questions from husbands like this one, "Hey, I'm Ron Deal. I've been married for 34 years, in that time I've talked to a lot of guys and one question I've

heard many times is, ‘Why in the world does my wife want to talk about the deep issues of our life and marriage and family at 11 o’clock at night?’”

Shaunti: [Laughing] I feel your pain, guys. I’m so sorry.

Brian: This—and you’ve gotten this question a lot right?

Shaunti: We do. We get it a ton. I mean I know this isn’t really your issue with Jen.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: I mean she doesn’t necessarily do this.

Brian: No, she’s—if the lights are on at 10:30—it’s late. She doesn’t even hit 11 most of the time. That’s Ron Deal.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: Ron, of course, is our resident blended family guru here at *FamilyLife*. You’ve spoken with Ron at Blended and Blessed® events.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: Ron is a dear friend of mine—a great author—seems like he releases a book every year.

Shaunti: Six months—I know. He’s amazing.

Brian: Once or twice a year—he’s got one new one out with Gary Chapman that’s on the *Five Love Languages for Blended Families*, which I think is *great*. I’m so excited about that. You can find out more about him and about how he speaks and helps a very felt need in our society right now which there’s some complexities to blended families. You can find out more of that help at FamilyLife.com/blended.

What was cool was this question was not only asked by Ron but this is the one of the most popular questions that we got from FamilyLife Local—

Shaunti: Oh, that’s great!

Brian: —which is a Facebook community. *FamilyLife* really is all about helping to change the world one home at a time and we’re doing that by unleashing and helping to train families that want to impact other families that are in their community. So if you’re interested in that you can go to FamilyLife Local and sign up and it gets you into a Facebook group. This is the question most of them were asking.

I guess there's a lot of guys out there that are feeling this pain of getting—right before they're about to hit REM sleep—their wife's going, "Hey I want to talk about the deep insecurities of your heart that I've been noticing."

Shaunti: [Laughing] I just feel the pain of all the husbands out there.

Brian: What do you think has been the one of the like questions that you've asked Jeff?

Shaunti: Oh dear.

Brian: At 11 o'clock at night. Do you have an example of one of those that he might've gone, "Yes this is what Shaunti's asked me at 11 o'clock at night."

Shaunti: Like, "Oh gosh, is our son ever going to get beyond his epilepsy and is he going to be able to go to college and yes, I mean is he ever going to get married?" Poor Jeff.

Brian: And Jeff is sitting there going, "I—". I mean for me as a guy if I get asked that—if Jen asked me at 10:30—maybe for her it's going to be the 10:30. If she were to roll over and ask about like, "Is Palmer going to follow Jesus and stop being a knucklehead?" I'd go, "Honey, we can deal with that in the morning; can't we?" That question will still be there in the morning. Why do we have to deal with it right now?

Shaunti: Here's what's going on, guys, that—this by the way, this simple little truth, understanding this *little* important truth is one of those things that, "Wow this explains so much" about your wife—because it turns out that men and women, sort of, process emotions and thoughts and feelings in a *very* different way. Now this is not necessarily what we were talking about the last episode—which is—you process verbally versus internally as a guy—she processes verbally.

Yes, that's a piece of what's happening, but the bigger picture is actually—really it's a brain structure thing. Here's the simple way of explaining it: Imagine that you—your brain, your thoughts, your feelings—are kind of like a computer desktop with one window open at a time and you've got—you're thinking about one thing or worrying about one thing and you work on that one thing and then it's like you click the "x"—

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: —and that window closes and you open up the next window. It's very sequential and then you click the "x" and go to sleep. [Laughs]

Brian: Totally get that.

Shaunti: It's now time for me to stop thinking about this. Click the "x" so I can go to sleep. Well, your wife's brain is not wired that way. This is not 100 percent, probably this is—I think this was about 87 percent of women.

Brian: Okay, so pretty high though.

Shaunti: It was a *very* high number—where your wife's brain is probably like a computer with 10 windows—or 20.

Brian: All the time?

Shaunti: All at the same time—and all the time.

Brian: Isn't that exhausting, Shaunti?

Shaunti: It is exhausting.

Brian: Why don't you think more like us—

Shaunti: I know.

Brian: —because our life is so much easier with just one window open.

Shaunti: This is one of those great mysteries—deep mysteries of life—that once we learned this—once we were doing all the research for *For Women Only* and *For Men Only*, I'm like, "Okay, God, when I get to heaven, I'm going to have a conversation about why you wired me this way—

Brian: Sure.

Shaunti: —because it is incredibly frustrating. The other piece of this is not only do I have 10 windows open at once—all these thoughts, all these feeling, different worries—and this is where Jeff gets in trouble because he says, "It's almost like your system is infected with a virus," because I have another window that pops up on the screen of my mind and I don't want it there.

It's a worry about—how is our son doing at school today. He had a big test. I don't want to be thinking about that right now, so I click the "x" to make it go away—and it comes right back.

Brian: Wow.

Shaunti: It won't go away. We can't click the "x" to make those windows—those thoughts, those worries—just disappear like you guys can.

Brian: You know what we can do? That was really neat. We can—if a window keeps doing that all we have to do is turn on the window of the T.V.

Shaunti: [Laughing] That's amazing.

Brian: Because once I open that T.V., it takes away all the other windows that I'm worried about. That's a great trick that guys have.

Shaunti: Can I just tell you how jealous—

Brian: Sorry.

Shaunti: —every spy—in other words woman listening to this right now—is just incredibly jealous, because we can't. So, here's what's happening often guys, when you want to go to bed your wife has had 10, 12—whatever number windows open all day and has been thinking about all of these things. The windows are, you know, "Are the kids okay," whatever. Now she's finally laying down in bed and, "Oh, I can close the windows because the kids are in bed." Check.

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: Click that one. The kitchen has been clean. The dishes got put away. Check. Click that one. I finished all the emails to my boss because those were some big open windows. Okay, click that "x".

Now she only has this one window open left which is, "Oh man, my son,"—I'm thinking about me and Jeff. "I'm so worried, the epilepsy kind of messes with some of his brain wiring and he's not able to follow group conversations and—gosh—he just doesn't have a lot of friends at school as a result. Is he ever going to be able to get beyond this and develop friendships?"

Nudge, nudge. "Hey Jeff, you know I just—I was wondering, do you think that he's—what's going to happen when he's in college? Do you think that this is going to be something that he outgrows?" [Snoring] "Huh?"

Brian: Right.

Shaunti: But it's bugging me. I need to be able to process this with Jeff because this was the one remaining window that kept getting pushed aside by all of the to-dos of the day.

Brian: And it's keeping you from going to sleep.

Shaunti: And it's keeping me from going to sleep. So this is something that—for a lot of guys—it comes out of nowhere. Trust me—it's not coming out of nowhere—it's been

there all day. It's just now that she's closed the other 10 windows and this is the remaining item that's kind of—it's pulsing, it's problematic—it's swirling in her brain.

Brian: It's happening at the same time that my computer processor is shutting down.

Shaunti: [Laughing] You've already started the shutdown sequence and now you're wanting me to re-engage.

Shaunti: Yes. Reboot.

Brian: Reboot the whole thing. I'm running on a Commodore 128 which for those that are listening have no idea what that is. It goes way back.

Shaunti: I think anyone under 35 has no idea what you're talking about.

Brian: They don't.

Shaunti: Or even 45.

Brian: That's the way my brain is. It's going back and back. To try and start that up again; boy that's difficult.

Shaunti: Yes. So—

Brian: Doesn't Jeff just want to say, "You know in the Bible, God does speak through dreams. You should—He's got a lot more wisdom on this issue than I do. I would just trust that He's going to speak through your dreams."

Shaunti: He's going to speak to you in your sleep.

Brian: Right. It's a great question.

Shaunti: Absolutely.

Brian: That's what I would say, "That's a great question, Shaunti. I want to defer to God on that one. Good night."

Shaunti: That's a good answer but it's not going to help your wife.

Brian: Can we use that? No?

Shaunti: No. That's a good line.

Brian: That's not going to help.

Shaunti: No.

Brian: Okay.

Shaunti: Yes. Here's the thing for the [Laughter] for the guys listening into this are like, "Please, what do I do?"

Brian: Right. What do I do?

Shaunti: There are two things that are sort of important here. The first is to recognize what's going on; right? She's not trying to torture you. When you recognize this also recognize that it's not like it just came up out of nowhere. This is something that's been in there that she's worried about.

There's a—sort of a step one and a step two—I would think—that come through this. One of them is to sort of go—try to engage as much as you can—which is maybe not going to be very much. Just recognize—like in the last episode we were talking about listening to our feelings. Really realize it's really more—that there's a worry underneath there.

Brian: Got you.

Shaunti: The worry is the important thing, the feelings about it, you know, "I know what must be scary—"

Brian: Which is really—

Shaunti: "—to worry about that."

Brian: I just want to emphasize that, underline that that the issue is more of a feeling that it is a fixing.

Shaunti: Yes; correct.

Brian: I think that's where guys get messed up is that, "Oh, she's wanting me to engage and fix the problem—fix the worry—versus just acknowledge the worry."

Shaunti: Correct.

Brian: Would that be fair?

Shaunti: That is very fair—and it leads then to what is easier about this—which is the step two, which is to essentially—at some point—say, "You know, I keep dropping off because I'm so tired. I can see that this is an issue. I didn't realize that that was that big

of a worry for you. You know what, tomorrow morning after we get the kids off to school let's dig into that a little bit—let's talk about it. What would make you feel better?"

Here's the answer guys, for anything that's an open window—and this is whether it's 11 o'clock at night or two in the afternoon—

Brian: —or right before a basketball game.

Shaunti: Yes. [Laughter]

Brian: Because that's when Jen usually asks my questions. It's not 11 o'clock at night. It's before the Tar Heels are about to play and I've been looking forward to this all day. I've got my nachos going and then, "Honey, these kids. What are we going to do about this issue or this issue?" I'm like, "The game's about to start." So she's got an open window. I've closed all of mine and I've opened up my stomach window and I'm ready to go.

Shaunti: You're ready. Yes. Every guy listening knows exactly what you're talking about. All the women are like, "What?" Because that is so not the way our brains are wired. The bottom line—guys—is if you're seeing a sign that there's an open window that's popping up on the screen of her mind and is bugging her, *the key* really is to be able to recognize that she's going to need to take some action to resolve it.

Sometimes it's talking it through, sometimes it's, "You know, gosh, I am just—I'm really nervous about whether or not this—the brain wiring is going to get worse or get better." Rather than making her feel kind of silly for needing to address this—needing to work it through, give her permission—I know that sounds funny, but encourage her.

Give her permission. "Is there something that would help you close that window? It sounds like you have an open window. Is there something that would help you close the window? I mean would it help—for example—to actually call the neurologist at some point and say, 'In your experience, does this get better after a certain age?' Would that make you feel better?" Her hearing from you that you'd be okay with that and encouraging that is actually really helpful.

Brian: That's good—so it's helping to process by asking a question—by saying, "Hey how can we—do we want to solve this now? Or is this something you want to deal with now?"—maybe offering an opportunity.

I think the other thing I hear is, find the place to deal with the open window—whether that's in the morning, at a lunch, or, "Hey, this is really important." Acknowledge. That's really a big thing—just validate those feelings. Validate those worries and then go, "I would love to be able to engage fully with this. Could we do it—" and then fill in a blank.

Shauti: Right. Just essentially recognize this is a signal of something that you did not realize was a big worry in her heart—that there is an issue here.

Brian: Right.

Shauti: This is—again—it’s what we were saying last time. It’s a way that you can really actually be a hero and be your wife’s protector and provider by—I know it sounds funny—but *literally* by helping her think through—talk through the feelings. Recognizing that there’s an issue there that you didn’t realize was one and you’re attending to it and you’re showing her great care by attending to it.

Then the other piece of it is not just pulling out the feelings but also going, “Okay, would it make you feel better to do something about this?”

Brian: Yes, and, “I can tell this means a lot to you.” That’s a big “Aha!” for me—just even saying that statement is a big one.

Shauti: That’s a really good line.

Brian: I think this is another reason why it’s important for—and this is something Jen and I have really tried to practice—is eliminating as many screens as possible before you go to bed. Because I can think of windows popping up unexpectedly at the last minute when a guy or a gal is looking at their screens and boom that pops up. That creates—triggers some worry—triggers some other thing to think about.

So that’s one of those issues where it’s like hey—be preemptive, prepare for that. If you really want good sleep [Laughter] eliminate some of the screens.

Shauti: Actual screens as opposed to the mental ones.

Brian: Right.

Shauti: That we were talking about.

Brian: Right—because they trigger other things in our heart. Then the other thing is, okay guys, if you know that pillow talk is probably something that’s going to happen, Jim and Ryan were talking about, “Hey, be preemptive about that”—ask her some questions.

Shauti: Ooooooh.

Brian: Do a little preemptive.

Shauti: Very good.

Brian: It's almost like a, "Hey I'm going to lead the conversation because it might open a different screen and the other screen goes away;" right?

Shauti: Or it could open a whole 'nother set of screens.

Brian: It could. So here were some of mine, I thought they were kind of good. What is your dream vacation for us someday? Get her thinking about something different.

Shauti: I like this.

Brian: You know? That's one of them.

Shauti: This is just you being a good husband and wanting to hear your wife's heart.

Brian: Well, Jim and Ryan are good husbands.

Shauti: Yes.

Brian: So, "What do you remember about our first date?" When was the last time you asked that question? That's kind of interesting. Then, "What's the best thing about being married to me?" [Both laughing]

Shauti: I love that one. Now, the only thing is—on behalf of all the guys—is I'm thinking, don't ask those questions right as you're going to bed—

Brian: Yes.

Shauti: —because then that opens up a whole 'nother set of screens, and now you'll have two or three things to talk about.

Brian: So guys you have a choice between being a great husband—or getting sleep. So—

Shauti: No! No, no, nooo! I know all the guys are going, "Yes, that's what it sounds like." No, no, no—just those two simple things that we were talking about earlier.

Brian: Say them again—two simple things.

Shauti: You are recognizing that there's a worry—there's a feeling there. You're pulling it out and that includes going, "Man, this sounds like it's really important to you, let's talk about it tomorrow morning once the kids go off to school,"—or whatever. You know, "Let's talk about it tomorrow night at dinner. I want to hear more about this. It's hard for me to listen right now because I'm falling asleep, but I'm recognizing that it's important to you."

Sort of recognize the importance, pulling out the feelings including saying, “Can we do it later?”

The second thing is, “I can tell this is bugging you. Is there something that would help you? Something you need to do that would make you feel better?”

Brian: Yes. That’s good.

Shauti: That’s not you offering a solution.

Brian: Right.

Shauti: Because she’s not asking for that. That’s basically saying, “Is there something that would make you feel better?” Like, for example, “Maybe tomorrow you can call the neurologist and ask that question.”

Brian: Yes.

Shauti: Yes.

Brian: Ryan also—I thought this was a great idea. Sometimes simply praying is a great way to find quick closure. Like is it good just to have a moment where you go, “Hey, Honey, I know we’re not going to solve this issue tonight. Can we just pray about it real quick?”

Shauti: I love that.

Brian: That’s good.

Shauti: I absolutely love that.

Brian: Yes.

Shauti: As long as the woman doesn’t feel like he’s doing it to escape—

Brian: Right.

Shauti: —and that it’s a real prayer.

Brian: “Let’s take this to the Lord. You pray for a while and if you don’t hear me just know that I’m deep in meditation about this issue. And just take it to the Lord;” right? Yes, exactly.

Shauti: Absolutely.

Brian: You don't want to do that—but I think it is going, “Hey—” pray and then say, “Hey, let's find a time where we can really delve into this.”

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: Guys our hope and our desire is that you get sleep—that's really what I want you hearing—is that we're for you—we want you to do that—but we also want you to do it in a way that you feel like you honor your wife—you live with your wife in an understanding way. That's what Paul talks about in Philipians—that I'm going to try to not just seek out my own needs but I'm going to seek out the needs of the one that I'm with—the one that I want to be with the most.

Thank you again, Shaunti—this is great. I'm enjoying doing this with you—in this series especially. I feel like we're tackling some great questions.

Our mission here at FamilyLife is to help develop godly families who change the world one home at a time. It's going to start with a couple. It's going to see more and more husbands and wives being one with each other so that they can take that oneness around the world. We don't just say that lightly—around the world is right across the street—it's in your neighborhood. How can you—as a couple—impact the people that are around you?

Earlier in this episode I mentioned a group of people that have that exact passion. It's called FamilyLife Local. FamilyLife Local is a growing online community. It's free to join—and by joining you'll receive a monthly e-newsletter called, “The Local”—full of tips and tools for influencing your corner of the world—membership to a private Facebook group. Think of it as sort of a think tank where you can ask and answer questions a lot like this.

Shaunti: That's awesome.

Brian: Yes, you can find out, “Hey I'm dealing with this. Are you dealing with this? Are you talking to others that are dealing with this question?” I'm finding more and more, in fact, Shaunti—I had a guy in our FamilyLife Local community where he's a counselor and he works at a church and he helps other marriages—and he sends our podcast out.

Shaunti: Oh that's awesome. I love it.

Brian: —and you guys are more than welcome to do that.

Shaunti: I hope everybody *does* send our podcast out to other husbands that need it.

Brian: Pass it around. You're going to also get video training as well as a chance to help shape future *FamilyLife* content like this one where we got a question and we wanted to answer it. So, if you have a heart for families in your community, you want to

see your marriage make a difference in the world, and you want more information on how to join this remarkable group, go to FamilyLife.com/local. That's FamilyLife.com/local.

Thanks to all of those that have been subscribing to the podcast—

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: —Married With Benefits. We love our people.

Shaunti: Yes.

Brian: And everyone who has clicked “Donate” at FamilyLife.com—we appreciate your support. This is a listener-supported podcast, so we appreciate that.

Want to say thank you to our audio producer, CJ3, the entire Married With Benefits team—thank you so much for helping us pull this off every time we do an episode.

Next time on Married With Benefits we're going to bring on FamilyLife Today host Ann Wilson.

Shaunti: She's amazing.

Brian: We needed the big guns for this one because this question is a pretty significant one—one that we've heard a lot of guys struggle with. I know I've dealt with this. It's, “What do I do when trust has been broken?”

Shaunti: When you feel like your wife is distant. What does that mean? What's going on? Yes, that's a—this is a *big* one that I think a lot of the guys—and maybe some of the “spies”—the wives that are listening in—will want to hear.

Brian: Yes, so you're going to want to join Ann and Shaunti and myself. We look forward to answering that question.

Until then, I'm your host, Brian Goins. Thanks for listening.

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