



## Learn Laugh and Grow Together



*Listeners have always been our guidance, support and inspiration.  
INTRODUCING ... Kelsey, our featured friend.*

### **ABOUT Kelsey**

My husband, DeAndre, and I just celebrated our 7-year anniversary. We fell in love at college and married young, serving in churches first in Louisiana and now in Texas. We are the parents of two spunky and beautiful children: Natalie, 3, and Henry, 10 months. I'm thankful to be able to work part-time as communications director at our new church in Houston, Westbury United Methodist, where DeAndre also works as the music and worship pastor. I appreciate the flexibility in splitting my time between office and home, often with the children underfoot. It is a joy and privilege to be their mom, even if it's frequently overwhelming and demanding work! In my free time, I enjoy gardening, experimenting in the kitchen, being outdoors, volunteering and traveling. My newest hobby is learning how to sew--I already have way too many projects lined up!

### **Her FAVES**

I started listening to *What Really Matters* when I was pregnant with Natalie back in 2007. I remember practically waddling along with my iPod! I quickly devoured all the archives and then started listening weekly as new episodes came out. I'm a novice foodie, and I like trying out new recipes, so all of your cooking episodes are inspiring. I guess if I had to choose, my favorite guest was on show #110 [Ask-a-Chef: Sunny Anderson](#). After I listened in, I started DVRing her show on the Food Network and I love her practical tips and personality. Her herbed flatbread recipe has become my signature side dish at family gatherings.

## **IDEAS and Inspiration**

*We often get the best ideas from friends we know ...*

### *1. What is your secret strategy for keeping life simple in your house?*

It can be challenging to run errands with two young children, so I limit my grocery shopping to once a week. That means I have to do a little bit of meal planning in advance, but it's such a relief to not have to figure out what's for dinner 20 minutes before it's time to eat. We also spend less because we're not as tempted to eat out or run to the store during the stressful dinner rush.

### *2. Name one parenting tool you rely on frequently.*

I try not to be as reactive when dealing with my 3-year-old. She picks up on my charged emotions and everything just escalates from there. Calm, direct instructions with logical consequences work best for us. Sometimes she just needs a little more time, but eventually she cooperates. I've learned too that there's room for compromise in parenting, especially in the small stuff. I don't always have to be right or in control. The more I exert power over her, the more she resists. I save the battles for the really essential lessons. Both of us are strong-willed, but if we work together, she and I can more readily respect and learn from each other.

### *3. What is one thing you must do every single day no matter what?*

Love on my husband and kids. When things get crazy, I just get down on the floor with the children and tickle their bellies until we're all laughing and in a better mood. I'm trying to reach out more to my husband too in the affectionate ways we used to B.C. (before children) -- it helps us stay connected when I surprise him with a kiss at unexpected times.

### *4. What book are you reading right now? Or what is the last great movie you saw?*

I picked up a copy of [You Can Still Wear Cute Shoes](#) at a recent church conference. It's a book full of advice written by a pastor's wife, getting to the heart of what's truly important about being in ministry alongside your spouse and doing those important things without caving to social pressure and unrealistic expectations. We don't all fit the same mold, but we're valuable in our own unique ways.

### *5. What is the best piece of parenting advice you ever received?*

Opt for an earlier bedtime. Although putting the kids down by 6:30 or 7:00 pm isn't always possible with evening activities, it sure makes a difference in their quality and quantity of sleep. Then, on nights when my husband isn't working, we get a good block of time for just the two of us to catch up, watch a movie or have a late dinner with wine together. It's like a date night, sans babysitter fees!

### *6. We all have our favorite things ... what is one of yours?*

I thrive on the creative process, whether writing and taking photographs for my job or cooking and decorating at home. In my passion for graphic design as well as the so-called "domestic arts," I find the most fulfillment in sharing these gifts with others and making useful contributions to my family and community.