Keeping the Balance
By Sarah and Marcus Hong (Marcus is a M.Div./MA Senior)

What is the quick fix to balancing seminary studies and married life?

There is no quick fix.

Keeping a marriage healthy takes more than band-aid measures or top-ten lists. Seminary life is little different from life anywhere else. People become busy. People become stressed. Tragedies and joys come in equal measure. You will find each other’s quirks either endearing or annoying, depending on your mood. Healthy marriages grow from joyful, patient, intentional effort to love, honor and respect your spouse. Here are some things we do consistently:

We set aside time at least once a week to focus on each other. We play a game, eat dinner, take a walk, or cuddle on the couch. We also go out to dinner once a month. During the meal, we ask each other: “how do you feel about the direction our life is going?” Life is not about only one of us. It is about both of us—our dreams, our desires, our happiness together.

We show genuine interest in what our spouse is doing. We ask about each other’s projects. We offer encouragement and support. We pray for each other and pray together.

We address issues immediately, rather than letting them fester. This often involves confronting uncomfortable things and being humbled. We try to consider the other perspective and, above all, forgive both the other person and ourselves.

We make time for others. During our first year of marriage, we realized that our spouse could not be the only person to share our joys and sorrows. We have both intentionally fostered close friendships with fellow seminarians and spouses.

We do not treat our seminary career as “temporary” time. This is real life. Every day is a day for ministry. Every day is a day to enjoy. Despite knowing that our time here is limited, we have realized that we have to risk investing ourselves in this moment, in the people around us, and in our marriage.

And finally, we laugh with each other. Life is too short to make things too serious.