

• COUPLE'S CONNECTION PLAN •

LOVE BEYOND *words*

National Marriage Week USA

MARRIAGE IS WORTH IT! • EVERY FEB 7-14

"No great success is achieved in one moment, but rather in deposits and investments of time, commitment, dedication, intentionality, and action. The same goes with marriage. Living faithfully to the vows made on our wedding day is a Love Beyond Words.

We make our commitment at the beginning, and then life teaches us what we've committed ourselves to.

We believe that there are three healthy rhythms that couples can practice to live out their love beyond words: connect daily, date weekly, and get away regularly."

A Message from Carl Caton



In this Couples Connection Plan, we focus a lot on the element of connecting. That connecting can happen daily through intentional, undistracted times at home together, or it can happen via a dinner date out, or a larger getaway.

Wherever you choose to go through the contents of this Connection Plan together, we encourage you to enjoy the moments of bonding, learning, and listening that it provides for you and your spouse.

Love IS more than words.

It's in the act of praying for your spouse. It's in the effort of compromise and "meeting in the middle" so your marriage can move forward, and it's in learning to love our spouse using love languages that may not be ours.
But through each of these, we find that love flourishes as a result of our intention, our generosity, and our sacrifice.

Words do matter and they do need to be said. But may we all focus a little bit more on putting action behind those words we utter. May we be more courageous, forgiving, and hopeful for the future of our marriage and our family... because of the love and the action we put into it.



"In marriage, it is sometimes easier to notice things that bother us, than it is to see things we should be thankful for. What a chain reaction we can start in our home, by simply showing thankfulness to and for our spouse!"

Top 10 Reasons I'm Thankful for My Wife

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Top 10 Reasons I'm Thankful for My Husband

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Have differences in your marriage?

What are some ways you can "meet in the middle?"

For example, you are a 'homebody' but your spouse likes to go out and be social. Could you "meet in the middle" and agree to fellowship with friends, go to church, or eat out 1 or 2 x a week if they agree to let you stay home and/or stay home with you the same amount each week?

Are you frugal and your spouse is a spender? Where can you "meet in the middle?" Perhaps you can each agree to set aside a certain amount each month to either save or spend at your discretion? But that "set aside" fund isn't to be borrowed - it's for you to do with as you see fit - spend OR save.

Do you like to eat healthy but your spouse doesn't? Can you "meet in the middle?" or agree to each make your own meal as long as you enjoy it together?

Some other topics or differences might be:

- Hot and cold temps
- Morning person versus a night owl
- Organized person and a messy one
- Low energy vs high energy person



If we each bend a little, but also make room for the other person's natural bents in life - we often find the ground we stand on isn't so hard after all.

Name 3-5 expectations you have of your spouse.

Are they fair or unfair expectations? Discuss together.

his

hers



One of the most beautiful and powerful gifts you can give your spouse and your marriage, is the gift of prayer.

Whether there are times of stressors from work, illness, or emotional and physical hurdles - it can be easy to feel helpless in trying to help encourage, empower, and strengthen our spouse. Likewise, at times, our own attitude and outlook needs some reminders and boosts as we keep our focus on what is GOOD about our marriage, spouse, and home.

Here are some sample prayers to help you as you take your marriage to the Lord in prayer:



Prayers

Lord, please help me in my tone and attitude when I speak with my spouse. I never want to hurt them or say something I regret.

Amen.

Father, I pray that you show me how to be appreciative of the efforts of my spouse. Whether their efforts are within the home, at their office, with the kids, or with each other; let me show gratitude to my spouse.

Amen.

Lord Jesus, please forgive me when I come across as a complainer to my spouse and my family. Transform my heart into a heart of gratefulness, thankfulness, and joy.

Amen.

Dear God, may our marriage set an example to our children of what a devoted, faithful love looks like.

Amen.

Prayers Continued

Lord, help my spouse and I to see the good in one another.

Amen.

Lord, please help us during those times when our spouse seeks our advice and wisdom. Help give us discernment, love, and clarity without selfishness as we advise them.

Amen.

Father, we pray that you give us the words to speak to each other. Use every word from our mouths to speak love and encouragement and give us the awareness in every situation to only speak that which builds each other up.

Amen.

Father, we pray that you remove our prideful ways and give us a humble heart. A humbleness that seeks only the betterment of our marriage rather than pride that is self-serving.

Amen.

Heavenly Father, help me to live my life with honor. May the way I conduct myself bring my spouse joy and not shame.

Amen.

Dear Jesus, May my spouse and I be united in heart, purpose, and vision

Amen.

Lord, help me think of some way to minister to my spouse's love language today - even if it's an area that is uncomfortable and does not come easy for me. Let them feel my love.

Amen.

Father God, help my spouse and I improve in our communication skills. May we speak with grace, listen with compassion, and grow in understanding of one another.

Amen.

Prayers Continued

Dear God, teach us to forgive one another as You have forgiven us. Let us bear no resentment to one another. May we strengthen one another in love and forgiveness. Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

Lord, whatever is happening in the world, at my job, with relatives or friends...let me not forget to invest daily in my marriage.

Amen.

Dear Jesus, I pray that my spouse's heart will be full of hope and joy today. That no matter what the day holds for them, you'll give them the endurance and strength to get through.

Amen.

Heavenly Father, Please show me how to honor my spouse in our home, in front of others, at work and with family.

Amen.

Did you know?

Less than 1 percent of couples who pray together daily, end their marriages.*

**Study done in 2010 by Christopher Ellison at the University of Texas San Antonio called "The Couple That Prays Together: Race and Ethnicity, Religion, and Relationship Quality Among Working-Age Adults,"*

As we reflect back on the past year, it is a great time to see how we can improve the state of our marriage as well as look at the encouraging moments that happened. With these things in mind, look at what you'd like to adjust, and celebrate together over the positives!

> Put your listening, understanding, and empathy skills to work and talk about how you can better show up for one another in the life you've built together."
>
> *Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott*

Examples:

Went Well: We had regular date nights where we connected.
Needs Improvement: We need to do a better job of listening to each other.

Things We Did Right This Year	Areas To Improve On...



DREAMS AND GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR

Dream big together and use this as a guide to write it down.
Then, don't stop there! Put this somewhere where you both can see it and work to support one another throughout the year. Maybe take it along on monthly date nights or find a time to check in with each other about your goals throughout the year!

Personal

his

hers

Spiritual

his

hers

Professional

his

hers

Health & Fitness

his

hers

Marriage

his

hers

The 5 Love Languages ® by Gary Chapman is one of the bestselling books for marriages. In his book, Dr. Chapman defines those Love Languages as Words of Affirmation, Physical Touch, Gifts, Quality Time, and Acts of Service. Here are some ideas written by our team that might jumpstart you on the path toward speaking into your spouse's Love Language.
5lovelanguages.com/learn

Words of Affirmation

Choose one:

- Write a love letter
- Make a "10 Things I Appreciate About You" list
- Tell them something you love about them

Physical Touch

Choose one:

- Give them a hug
- Hold their hand
- Give them a back massage

Gifts

Choose one:

- Bring them their favorite coffee
- Surprise them with something just because
- Surprise them with lunch at work

Quality Time

Choose one:

- Date Night
- Movie Night
- Go for a Walk

Acts of Service

Choose one:

- Mow the yard
- Empty the trash
- Go pick up groceries

"The Strength of a Nation is Built Upon the Character of Its People."
- Carl Caton

Winston Churchill, a great observer of America's progress noted that "There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of humans, are created, strengthened and maintained."

Let US build a marriage that is full of virtues.

Courage

Courage

Definition: Strength to face danger without fear; courageous

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage, be strong."
1 Corinthians 16:13

Share with your spouse about a time when you had to use courage in a "peer pressure" type of situation. Did you say what you felt even though all of your friends felt differently? Did you have to opt out of a movie, club, or some other circumstance because it went against your values? Did you speak up about something you'd gone through that was very personal?

Buy a special bracelet or plaque that has the word "courage". Make a commitment to give it to your spouse the next time you see them demonstrating courage.

Integrity

Integrity

Definition: Uprightness of character; honesty, the condition, quality or state of being complete or undivided.

"The just man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him."
Proverbs 20:7

As you watch a movie together, discuss how the characters do or don't have integrity. Talk about having integrity when you file your taxes, get undercharged at the store, or when checking out of a motel room. Together, sign a document and hang it up on the fridge of your commitment to have integrity when no one else is watching.

“The Strength of a Nation is Built Upon the Character of Its People.”
- Carl Caton

Hope

Hope

Definition: Trust, reliance, desire accompanied by expectation of fulfillment; one that gives promise for the future.

"But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."
Romans 8:25

Encourage your spouse to hope for something. Set a goal for a future vacation, mark down a fun get together at your house on the calendar, or count down the days to a special celebration of an anniversary, first date, or paying off a loan together. Then make plans to celebrate!

Compile a "hope" list together and cross each item off as you reach your goals.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness

Definition: Pardon: to cease to feel resentment against

"Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you."
Proverbs 20:22

Talk with your spouse about a time in the past where they offered you forgiveness. Maybe you broke something of theirs or forgot to do something that meant a lot to them. Ask each other for forgiveness readily and easily when you mess up.

Use a jar, or bowl and write down on slips of paper, instances when you recognize your spouse forgiving you over the next few weeks. Then go over them together during some quiet time alone.



A strong healthy marriage begins with YOU.

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