

# Back *Together*

A 10-Day Devotional for Your Marriage





## INTRO

There's a lot in life constantly tugging to pull you and your spouse apart ... work, kids and family, a schedule too full to pencil in a cup of coffee together let alone a weekend away.

Through this 10-day devotional, we want to help you come back together. To redirect your marriage trajectory from moving apart to back where you belong—pursuing each other's hearts. Again and again.

# Marriage Is Falling on Your Face Together



## GO DEEPER

The words you say to your spouse matter. Need a little help in the communication department? [Grab our free download, “The Power of Words.”](#)



## ACTION POINTS

You read today’s verse. Is your unity an actual unity of mind? Because all of us can get good at faking it. Is it hard to put yourself in your spouse’s shoes (i.e., empathy)? To respond with tenderness and humility from the inside out? Choose one way you’ll focus on being “we.”

*“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” 1 Peter 3:8*

Ever run a three-legged race? It’s unbelievably easy to fall on your face. Doing it well is a learned skill—getting a couple of “I’s” to function as a “we.” (See where we’re going with this?)

Marriage requires nothing short of teamwork—which eventually matures into a fluid oneness that wins. And not to oversimplify it, but maybe that starts with acknowledging you are on the same team. That your spouse isn’t your enemy.

Teamwork requires both trusting and being trustworthy. It means that when your mate looks over at you, your loyal, tangible support isn’t a question, but a statement.

It’s the ability to appreciate what your spouse brings to the race—that his or her different desires, views, and strengths are part of what makes you a killer “we” for every obstacle.

# Waking Up Next to a Stranger



## GO DEEPER

Want more great content that helps you and your spouse pursue what matters most? [Sign up](#) for our daily email series, “I Do Every Day.”



## ACTION POINTS

Get to know the person you married, even if it's been 50 years since your vows. Plan a second “first date.” Over dinner or coffee, ask questions to get to know them all over again.

*“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth ... be intoxicated always in her love.” Proverbs 5:18-19*

Rolling over in bed one morning, I was shocked to realize there was a strange man in my bed.

He looked similar to someone I once knew: red hair (although I didn't recall the white hairs sprinkled in), freckles, broad shoulders, large feet dangling carelessly off the edge.

Once upon a time, I married him.

The thing is, if we aren't intentional students of our spouses, we may one day find ourselves waking up to a stranger in the bed.

How often have you felt, no one really knows me? Chances are, your spouse has felt the same way.

Proverbs tells us to “rejoice in the wife of your youth” (5:18). When was the last time you got excited over your spouse?

Sure, they've changed. My redhead now has less red hair, but he's still the man I rejoiced in saying “I do” with. I just need to intentionally learn about the man God is growing him to be—and there is a lot to celebrate about that.

Come to think of it, I've changed, too. My waistline isn't what it was on our wedding day, but we have two beautiful children who grew within it. My husband might not stay up all night talking with me like he used to, but those slightly-more-wrinkled hands work more hours than he did in his 20s to provide for our family.

Your spouse should change. I'm thankful we aren't the same kids as when we met 20 years ago. We've matured (mostly), grown (through good and bad), and life has weathered the two of us.

But there's no one I'd rather wake up next to.

# When a Season Becomes the Standard



## GO DEEPER

Feel like your current marital season is more of a drought?

Read, "[10 Ideas To Give Your Marriage a Fresh Start.](#)"



## ACTION POINTS

What's one thing for which you need the wisdom and courage to say "no," in order for your marriage to get the right "yeses"?

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1*

I grew up on a farm in the midwest, fields of soybeans and corn stretching out flat as a felted pool table. My father worked long hours on our farm, but as the sun finally gave up and sank into night, my dad was there at dinner, wrestling with us after.

The only exceptions were harvest and planting time. We all knew that with the capricious nature of rain and frost, good weather could not be wasted. During harvest, Dad might not get in until I was sleeping. During planting season, he might not make it to my spring choir concert.

But those seasons wouldn't have been a sustainable pace for my dad or my parents' marriage or for our family all the time. Even if harvest had brought in twice the cash, the cost wouldn't have justified the ongoing exhaustion, the price we would have paid in everything that wasn't money.

Unfortunately, the norm for a lot of families now is that of max capacity—where harvest season, so to speak, has become the norm. One of the greatest obstacles to any marriage isn't just the usual suspects, but the actual lack of white space for us to breathe, rest, savor, and simply be, both as individuals and as a couple.

We work just a little longer, have the kids in a couple more activities, volunteer for one more project at church ... and fall into bed only to do it all over again. We have become experts at hustling and frantic accomplishment. But our relationships and our hearts bear the results of malnutrition.

What if the goal of life and love wasn't to do as much as we can?

Delighting in one another, nurturing one another, knowledge of one another—these take luxurious amounts of time. How could our marriages fill out if they weren't always living on scraps?

There are seasons when all of us have to pull out the stops to make life happen. But frenetic must be the exception—the unique season—rather than the rule.



## GO DEEPER

Is there a secret to a lasting marriage? Hint: Go Vertical. [Learn more in our small-group study.](#)



## ACTION POINTS

Decide today, afresh, that it's official ... this relationship is here to stay, a place where you'll put down roots and build a shared history, an "ancient path," with a lifetime of non-transferable memories.

*"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'"*  
Jeremiah 6:16

My wife and I are home improvement show junkies. Give us a relaxed Saturday afternoon and we'll binge watch like nobody's business.

We've house-hunted vicariously all the way from Austin to Australia. We've spiced up kitchens, crashed bathrooms, and traded spaces. We've flipped 'em, flopped 'em, fixed 'em up, and designed 'em on a dime. It's one of our few shared TV obsessions.

A show we especially like is the HGTV hit *Love It or List It*. If you're not familiar, each episode features a couple choosing either to renovate their existing home or find a new one that better fits their needs.

Not only do the spouses typically fall on opposing sides of this decision, but so do the program's dual hosts. One oversees an arduous, budget-starved renovation process, while the other scours the market for instant-gratification, turnkey alternatives. Love it or list it?

As a viewer, I admit I almost always favor listing it. The newer houses just look nicer, with no mess and no hassle.

So which option do you think most couples on the show choose? The arduous, budget-starved renovation, of course. And it's maddening to watch! Why in the world would anyone in their right mind choose the imperfect over the dream?

It's simple: story.

The imperfect has a story. Memories from years gone by, hard to release and non-transferable.

A child's growth markings on a door jamb. A family dog's favorite napping spot. A rickety porch swing where boo-boos were bandaged and tears kissed away. Mature trees planted as saplings, with a well-worn path underneath.

These perfectly imperfect sights and smells and sounds are part of a routine, full of charm and nostalgia, with a rich relational patina no amount of money can buy.

Some things are worth hanging on to, not in spite of imperfections, but because of them. And a marriage is one of those.

So, make your marriage a "love it" episode. Don't list it, flip it, trade it, or crash it. Accentuate the positives. Enjoy the imperfections. You're building something lasting and non-transferable.

## Come Here... I Want to See You



## GO DEEPER

Ready to discover God's happily ever after for your marriage? Check out [\*The Story of Us: A Couples Devotional.\*](#)



## ACTION POINTS

Try implementing a consistent technology Sabbath, whether for certain hours of the day or days of the week. Notice how your attention redirects itself on your spouse.

*"I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy ... therefore I will call on him as long as I live." Psalm 116:1-2*

When Alexander Graham Bell uttered the first words over a phone, "Mr. Watson, come here ... I want to see you," I doubt he ever imagined that we would carry his creation around in our pockets. Ironically, the invention he designed to increase communication and decrease space between humans has now turned into one of the greatest sources of isolation.

When I got married, I envisioned a relationship that looked like the first four minutes of the Pixar movie *Up*.

Unfortunately, rather than loving my wife well, I'm far more like the dog from the same movie who constantly interrupts the conversation when he sees a squirrel. How many conversations with my wife do I have where I'm looking intently in her eyes, feel my phone vibrate in my pocket, and think, "Squirrel!!"

Someone once defined love as focus. It's not enough just to hear words coming out of someone's mouth—real connection is truly seeing someone and understanding their heart. The psalmist says we have a God who has "searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar" (Psalm 139:1-2).

God knows us because He pays attention to us. When we call, He listens. God never interrupts our prayers to like an Instagram post.

One of the greatest compliments you can give one another is your undivided attention. James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote, "Let every person be quick to hear" (James 1:19). The more we wire our brain to be attuned to our spouse than to our attention-deficit-inducing devices, the stronger our connection is.

Do you ask our spouse on a regular basis, "Are you feeling noticed?" We focus on what we truly care about. If our spouse doesn't feel like we are paying attention to them, marriage will drift toward isolation.

It may be time to put down the device and say to our spouse, "Honey, come here, I want to see you."

Adapted from *The Story of Us*. Copyright ©2019 by FamilyLife Publishing. All rights reserved.



## GO DEEPER

Take your road trip to open waters with [FamilyLife's Love Like You Mean It® marriage cruise](#). It sells out fast, so book today!



## ACTION POINTS

The best place for us to practice humility—being “servants of all”—is in the little stuff. Find at least one way to make Philippians 2:3-4 a reality by choosing your spouse instead of yourself. And remember the ancient proverb: “The foolish man ignores his wife for the sake of adventure, but the wise man makes hotel reservations far in advance.”

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Philippians 2:3-4*

When I was young and single and stupid, I didn’t like making reservations when I was planning for a road trip. Why reserve a specific hotel in a specific city when I didn’t know how far I would drive that day?

Driving to visit my family took about 18 hours, and I tried to knock off as many as I could the first day. When my eyes began drooping late at night, I would look for a motel.

Then along came my wife. Preparing for our first visit to my parents’, she suggested we make reservations. I didn’t take her suggestion. Hey, it was part of the adventure!

Late that night, we began looking for a room. And when I say “looking for,” I mean literally driving up and down the freeway searching for a place with the “vacancy” sign lit up. This was before the advent of smartphones that show you nearby options and allow you to book a reservation online from the convenience of your vehicle.

We finally found a room at 3 a.m.

I didn’t fully realize then that my lack of planning was plain stupidity—the privilege of a single man. But I did recognize I should start thinking of my wife’s interests more than my own.

She needed the safety and security of knowing how far we would drive each day, that we would stay in a hotel (with an “h”) with clean sheets and no six-legged guests. As her husband, I needed to make that my priority.

Any marriage is a union of two selfish people who both want to “do it my way.” When we try to make choices together—on issues ranging from how to spend the paycheck to how to fold towels—we continually battle our wants. Yet Philippians 2:3 challenges us to “count others more significant than yourselves.”

Keep this verse in mind as you consider the choices that affect your marriage. As for me? I’ll gladly sacrifice those extra late-night miles to experience the trip with her.





## GO DEEPER

Can you change a marriage in 30 days? Start here, with [“The Love You Better Plan: 30 Days to a More Connected Relationship.”](#)



## ACTION POINTS

Ask your spouse how you can better be their “person.” What encourages them? What is something you can do daily or weekly to help bear their burdens?

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*  
Galatians 6:2

Since I was a kid, I’ve loved the *Rocky* movies. Recently, my husband and I watched the original, for probably the first time in 10 years. (Can you hear the theme song?) But this time, I noticed something I didn’t as a kid.

*Rocky* is a great love story.

*Rocky* pursues and then coaxes the shy Adrian out of her shell.

She believes in him like no one else, and even buys him a dog to run with him while training.

And then, coming off the biggest fight of his life, bloodied and bruised, who does he call for? Adrian! And she pushes through the crowd to get to him.

She’s his person. And he’s hers.

While I’m not condoning sending your love into a boxing ring to pursue a similar love story, it made me think ... Am I my husband’s person?

Am I actively seeking to support his endeavors, lighten his load, be his No. 1 fan? If I can’t think of any specific actions to back this up, then probably not.

In Genesis 2, God declared it was not good for man to be alone. He needed a helper. When God created Eve and brought her to Adam, he responded, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh ...” (verse 23).

And when she’d messed up tragically, the gravity of her failure dawning on her, death now entering the planet? Adam gives her a name of hope: Eve, the mother of all living. In essence, Eve was created to be Adam’s person, and vice versa.

So how can I be my husband’s person? I cheer him on in big things and small. *Way to go on landing that big job at work!* I use my own gifts to help him. *Need someone to proof that email or jazz up the resume? I’m your girl.*

And I work to listen to him without judgment or impatience and believe in him like no one else. When life (or work, or parenting) has him feeling beaten and bruised, I come running through the crowd to his side.

I want him to know, win or lose, I’m always in his corner.

# Keeping Your Marriage a Priority (Part 1)



## GO DEEPER

How do you say “I still do...” to your spouse?



## ACTION POINTS

What would you guess is the main priority stealing attention from your marriage? What are some things you can do differently in your daily life and routine to keep the priority of your marriage from getting lost? Or to regain it as your top priority, and communicate to your spouse that he or she is your number one?

*“Let marriage be held in honor among all.” Hebrews 13:4*

“It feels like he’s cheating on me, right in front of my face,” said a young wife who had become frustrated with her husband’s gaming habit. “He seems to enjoy playing video games with his friends more than spending time with me.”

She believed his hobby was taking her place as his top priority and felt they were drifting apart.

I remember when my husband felt this way. I was working full time, serving in the church every time the doors opened, attending to the needs of our four little girls, and writing late into the night. It seemed I barely had time for him, for our marriage.

I didn’t realize my marriage was suffering or that my husband felt neglected until he shared his feelings and asked, “When are you going to make time for me ... for us?”

Like that wife, my husband had become jealous. He felt like I had allowed other things in my life to take his place.

I discovered this kind of jealousy isn’t negative, it’s natural. The Bible says God is jealous when we allow something in our lives to take priority over Him in Exodus 34:14: “... for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Our spouse can experience that same type of jealousy at times.

Sure, life can get a bit hectic with many things, even good things vying for our attention. But we can still make sure that the priority of our marriage doesn’t get lost.

We can find ways—like spending time with her before gaming with friends, or cutting back on time spent serving others to lavish attention on him—that communicate, “You are my number one. Nothing is more important than our marriage.”

# Keeping Your Marriage a Priority (Part 2)



## GO DEEPER

Need a date night that takes closeness to the next level? Enter Dates to Remember—three you've-got-this moments that get you really talking.



## ACTION POINTS

Talk about the seven ideas listed here. Which ideas can you put into action this week? What are some of your own ideas that you can come up with together to add to the list? For this kind of list, there's no such thing as too many ideas!

*“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:17*

“When are you going to make time for me ... for us?”

In yesterday's devotion, I talked about how my husband felt other things in my life took his place, our place.

As you work together to keep your marriage a priority, here are seven ideas to help.

- 1. Pray together daily.** It was awkward at first, but we stuck with it and found praying together helps our relationship with God and each other grow deeper and stronger.
- 2. Grow together spiritually.** Reading the Bible together before bed continues to produce fruit in our relationship—like patience, kindness, and faithfulness. Other fun ways? Join a couples Bible study or read a couples devotional.
- 3. Have meaningful conversations.** We've watched our friendship strengthen and grow over the years simply by talking. Set aside a few minutes each evening to connect through conversation.
- 4. Serve each other.** Thoughtful gestures like waking me with breakfast in bed, or surprising me with a soothing bath on days I need to unwind, speak value to me as Aubrey's wife. Remember, it's the little things that often mean the most.
- 5. Develop common interests.** My husband and I love road-tripping, trying new restaurants, and binge-watching Netflix. We also enjoy mentoring younger couples. What are one or two things you could enjoy together?
- 6. Fan the flames of romance.** Maybe your marriage could use a little help keeping the fire burning. Here are [\*10 surprising ways to increase romance\*](#) and keep your relationship exciting!
- 7. Have sex regularly.** Your relationship will be stronger, healthier, and more closely connected if you do!

Find creative ways to make your marriage your number one priority. One, two, three ... Go!



## GO DEEPER

Great marriages don't just happen. Grab biblical principles and timely tools for taking your marriage to the next level at one of our [Weekend to Remember® marriage getaways](#).



## ACTION POINTS

Be intentional about small acts of romance and kindness. Looking over this list, choose one (or two) you can implement today. Then pick something for tomorrow, too.

*"If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:2*

Ever feel like you have no time left for romance? I feel ya.

But perhaps we're defining romantic and sexy encounters all wrong. Maybe cooking dinner together naked in a candlelit kitchen isn't on the menu this week. But it's likely you still have a lot of regular romance going on.

Besides, if romance is all roses and bubble baths, it starts feeling like something you'll never achieve. But romance is doing something special or unexpected for someone you love, even though you don't have to.

Sometimes just looking for ways to help or be kind to each other is far more romantic and sexy than you realize. And simple, every day romantic gestures are the kind that keep moving you back to each other.

Here are some ideas:

- Set her coffee cup next to the coffee maker in the morning before she's out of bed.
- Kiss each other goodbye every morning.
- Buy his or her favorite snacks when grocery shopping.
- Give him a night off from helping the kids with homework.
- Put your arm around her in church. Don't let the kids sit between you.
- Cook your spouse's favorite dinner.
- When you come home from work, embrace each other for longer than a quick second.
- Text that you're thinking of her.
- Reach over and hold his hand.
- Compliment your favorite physical feature of your spouse. Then compliment her heart.
- Split your dessert.

Romance doesn't have to be hard or even well planned. All it takes is a thoughtful, intentional moment in your regular day.