

Three Conversational Dates To Rediscover Intimacy In Your Marriage

INTIMACY

God's Design for Marriage



*Three Conversational Dates
to Rediscover Intimacy
In Your Marriage*

Gary & Sandy Yagel

It is so easy even for Christian couples to drift apart! Whether your marriage is strong or struggling, passionate or passionless, this booklet provides a wonderful way for you to enter more fully into the emotional, spiritual, and sexual intimacy, which God intends for you to experience in your marriage.

- Set aside 3 evenings or 2 evenings and a weekend get-away for 3, fun, romantic dates.
- Take a fresh look on each date, at what Scripture says about God's design for marriage.
- Enjoy discussing the questions we have provided to help you apply these principles in your unique relationship.
- Renew your closeness as best friends, committed to walking hand in hand as true soul mates.
- Rekindle the passion that once made you long to be in each other's arms.

CONTENTS

(Note: Every section is followed by discussion questions for husband and wife)

Letter from Sandy and Gary.....	7
Date One: God’s Design.....	11
Pre-date Preparation for Date One	
Our Personal Experience	
God’s Design for Marriage	
Complimentary Differences	
Real Marriage In a Fallen World	
Rejecting God’s Design of Each Other	
How to Replace Hurtful Rejection With Acceptance	
Close Date One In Prayer	
Date Two: Building Spiritual and Emotional Intimacy.....	33
Pre-date Preparation for Date Two	
Overcoming Two Obstacles to Oneness	
First Value, Then Honor Your Differences	
Love the Way Your Mate Wants to be Loved	
Manage Conflict Wisely	
Devote Yourself To Meeting Each Other’s Emotional Needs	
Close Date Two In Prayer	
Date Three: Sexual Intimacy.....	49
Pre-date Preparation for Date Three	
Steps to More Fulfilling Sexual Intimacy	
Denying Ourselves (Matt 16:24) For Husbands	
Denying Ourselves (Matt 16:24) For Wives	
Helpful Questions to Each Other About Frequency & Sexual Practices	
Working Towards Sexual Agreement	
Concluding Discussion	
Anniversary Check Up	
Appendix One: Tips for Wives With Low Sexual Desire... ..	68
End Notes.....	70
Bibliography.....	73

DATE ONE

Our Personal Experience

Several years into our marriage, we found that our sexual relationship, the very experience that God designed to fill our hearts with acceptance and love, had become the opposite—a source of rejection and pain. Our attempts at spiritual, emotional, and sexual intimacy were not a complete failure; but they were leading to a lot of resentment that was starting to build up.....

As God enabled us to understand and accept each other's intimacy design, and then try, with his help, to meet needs that are different from our own, we have seen harmony, intimacy, and fulfillment return to our marriage. We know the same thing will happen in your marriage. Now it is time to point you to these very truths that have been so helpful to us.

God's Design of Marriage

A fundamental purpose of the male-female love union in marriage is to reflect the image of God. Man cannot fully bear God's image in isolation. God exists as the Trinity, the union of 3 persons who love one another. *Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...'* So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27.

A second purpose of marriage is to give us a foretaste of the joy we will experience when we are forever united in love to Christ our bridegroom. We, the church, are betrothed to Christ as his bride. The final return of Christ to receive us to himself is portrayed as the wedding of the lamb. The richest pleasures of sexual union are a type, a foreshadow of the intense joy that will be ours when we are united to Christ. *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.* Eph. 5:31-32.

A third purpose for marriage is revealed in the creation account, where marriage is designed by God to overcome the aloneness of Adam. Each part of the creation narrative closes with God's statement: "And it was GOOD," until the creation of man. After Adam is created, God says. "It is NOT GOOD that man should be alone. In naming the animals Adam realizes that none can be a true partner to him. They cannot overcome his loneliness. So, God creates woman to be his partner, soul mate, and lover. *The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.* Genesis 2:18.

These three purposes come together in a single, clear, focus: God's goal for marriage is a LOVING INTIMACY between husband and wife! Eve is created with a spirit, heart, and body which correspond to Adam's. She is made from Adam and is bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Marriage is given as the one safe arena where husband and wife are naked, body, soul, and spirit--laid bare and vulnerable to each other. But within the covenant of marriage, God's design is for Christ-like love to cast out fear. Thus, husband and wife can be naked and not feel ashamed or afraid. Adam and Eve's like natures combined with love and the experience of nakedness (baring their hearts and bodies to one another) enable them to experience LOVING INTIMACY, i.e. oneness of spirit, oneness of heart, oneness of body. The goal of marriage is to be able to be naked, body and soul, and be so loved and accepted that you never feel ashamed. *The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Gen. 2:25.* It is to be so fully one with each other that you think of your mate as part of yourself. *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Eph. 5:28.*

An old fashioned way to express God's goal for our marriages is the word "intercourse." Intercourse means, literally, "connection between persons." It is both conversational interaction that connects two souls, and sexual interaction, which connects two bodies. God wants Christian couples to proactively pursue his goal for their marriage—INTIMACY—both the union of soul and union of body.

Loving each other in a God-honoring marriage means pursuing CONVERSATION, which leads to oneness of SOUL. Sharing our experiences, feelings, ideas, plans, hopes and dreams is the path to the oneness of soul God wants married couples to enjoy. This requires taking control of our schedule and making time each day to talk with each other. This also requires active listening, seeking to understand our mate's feelings and ideas.

The word, "intimacy" comes from a Latin word that means "innermost." What this translates into for those of us in the marriage relationship is a vulnerable sharing of our inner thoughts, feelings, spirit, and true self. Both men and women need to feel secure in this sharing and confident of their spouse's support. This support is achieved through listening, empathy, prayer, or reassurance. Barbara Rosberg, The 5 Love Needs of Men and Women

Meeting the need to feel understood requires overlooking our mate's weaknesses and deficiencies so they are not afraid to be known as they really are. It requires making them feel safe, accepted, and valued. It is the joy of feeling understood while sharing the deepest secrets of each other's hearts. It is to never feel alone because you are walking through life hand in hand with your soul mate. Peter knows how difficult this is for husbands and commands them. *Likewise, husbands live with your wives in an understanding way ...so that nothing will hinder your prayers. I. Peter 3:7.*

Loving each other in a God-honoring marriage will also mean pursuing LOVEMAKING, which leads to oneness of BODY.

Lovemaking is the most practical, binding, and enriching experience of all married love. There is one person who knows you and wants to know you more, better than anyone but God. And that's why God gave you sex, to interact at the deepest possible human levels. Your sex life as a married couple will make your self esteem go up or down. Ann Ortland, Sex in a Growing Marriage

Sexual union is the outward, physical expression of the inner emotional and spiritual reality of oneness. Though it is not a sacrament because it is not a means of grace for the Christian, it functions in a very similar way. The wine and bread in communion as well as the water in baptism are OUTWARD PHYSICAL signs and seals, which express an INNER SPIRITUAL reality. Sexual union is an OUTWARD PHYSICAL joining of two bodies, which express the INNER SPIRITUAL union of two hearts. Just as celebrating the sacraments strengthens our love relationship with Christ, so the celebration of sexual union strengthens our love relationship with our spouse. Whenever a husband and wife come together in sexual union, they are both renewing and celebrating their marriage vows. God urges married couples to enjoy frequent, passionate sex.

In the Song of Solomon, God enters the bridal chamber, where the newlyweds lay entwined in each other's arms. He raises his hand over them and blesses them. His benediction urges them to feast on the joy of their sexual union. *'Eat friends: drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers.'* Dennis and Barbara Rainey, Simply Romantic Nights

When a couple STOPS regularly pursuing intimacy of HEART and BODY they expose each other to the temptation to be unfaithful. A woman whose husband is eager to spend time sharing their hearts feels loved. She is unlikely to stray because their emotional oneness is so fulfilling to her. A man whose wife is eager to make love to him feels loved. He is less likely to stray because their sexual oneness is so fulfilling to him. *The wife's body does not belong to her alone, but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent...so that Satan will not tempt you.* 1 Cor. 7:4-5

The Biblical design for loving intimacy in marriage exalts BOTH oneness of soul and oneness of body. Biblically, the human body is not considered inferior to the soul, nor the soul inferior to the body. Joining bodies in sex apart from joining lives in marriage is condemned as wrong (I. Thes. 4:3). Joining lives in marriage without joining bodies in sex is also condemned as wrong (I. Cor. 7:5). Biblically, body and soul belong together. Unlike some pagan philosophies, Christianity has always upheld a high view of the

physical body and therefore of sexual union. God takes great pleasure in a couple's sexual union as well as their spiritual/emotional union.

To be naked with another is a sort of picture or symbolic demonstration of perfect honesty, perfect trust, perfect giving and commitment, and if the heart is not naked along with the body, then the whole action becomes a lie and a mockery. Mike Mason, The Mystery of Marriage

Stop and Discuss

What ideas in this section are new to you?

Do you agree that when a couple stops pursuing intimacy of heart and body, they expose each other to temptation?

Why do you believe couples stop pursuing intimacy of heart?

Why do you believe couples stop pursuing intimacy of body?

Complimentary Differences

God has perfectly designed husband and wife with different but complimentary sexual natures. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, He created him. Male and female he created them.* Genesis 1:27. These are some typical differences.

<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>
crave physical intimacy	crave emotional intimacy
give love to get sex	give sex to get love
body can disconnect from mind, heart, and soul	body, mind, heart, and soul intricately connected
stimulated by what they see	stimulated by what they hear
recurrent physical needs cycle	recurrent emotional needs cycle
vulnerable to unfaithfulness in the absence of physical touch	vulnerable to unfaithfulness in the absence of emotional connection

Shannon Ethridge, Every Woman's Battle

A wife's deepest yearning is usually for intimacy of heart and SOUL. She longs for spiritual oneness and emotional closeness. She yearns to share at the level of the heart. She feels most connected and in love with her husband when she is having long heart-to-heart talks with him, when she feels like she can share anything in her heart and still be cherished by him. For her, spiritual/emotional oneness *precedes* sexual desire. She needs to *feel in love*, in order to want to *make love*. Sex is a celebration of the closeness she already feels, which enables her to open up her body to him. "To a woman, sex is not an event—it's an environment, it's not an act—it's an atmosphere." Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus, "Eight Ways to Be An Exciting Lover to Your Wife."

"Men, your sex drive is connected to your eyes; You become aroused visually. **Your wife's sex drive is connected to her heart; she is aroused only after she feels emotional closeness and harmony**... You feel less masculine if your wife resists your sexual advances. Your wife feels like a machine if she doesn't experience sexual intimacy **flowing from emotional intimacy**." Barbara Rosberg, The 5 Love Needs of Men and Women

God designed men so that a husband's strongest yearning is usually for oneness of BODY—sex. What makes him feel intimately connected to his wife is sex. Her eagerness to make love to him makes him feel loved and wanted. The yearning for oneness that God put into him is felt by him primarily as a yearning for sexual union. For him, sexual union *brings back his feelings of closeness to his wife and feelings of love for her*. He needs to *make love* in order to *feel in love*. Sexual arousal stirs his feelings for his wife. Her receptivity assures him that he is wanted. Sexual release makes him feel one with his wife inclining him to open up to her about other things he is feeling. God built him with hormones that drive most men to desire sexual release every 48-72 hours.

A man has 17 sexual glands. Like millions of Energizer Bunnies these glands work day and night, producing semen, which is stored in an inner sack in the testes. When the sack fills up, his testes tell his brain, "Do something quick before I explode." A man's need for sex is not all in his mind; his sexual command center demands release from the accumulated buildup. Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus, Intimate Issues

God's design for marital intimacy is perfect! Ideally, husband and wife feel in love so they make love. Making love refills the husband's emotional tank. He feels his love for his woman, which helps him think of her, make time to listen to her heart, etc. which makes her feel close to him. Her feelings of oneness with her husband awaken her desire to make love, so she eagerly welcomes his advances, etc. Ideally, this wonderful cycle fills their hearts with love for each other.

It took us many years of hurtful misunderstandings, before we finally began to understand this creation design. Now it is the foundation of our harmony.

Note: Although these generalizations have proven extremely helpful to most couples, the above distinctions between husband and wife won't fit every couple in every detail. Some wives (especially those with no children) have a stronger sex drive than their husbands. Every couple is unique. The point is to understand, TALK ABOUT, and accept your differences—and to work together to insure both sexual and emotional intimacy.

Stop and Discuss

In the preceding question, several male and female tendencies were discussed. How accurately do these descriptions describe yourself?

From your own perspective, how accurately do these descriptions apply to your mate?

Talk about these differences with each other. How can you use this information about each other to draw closer together?

Real Marriage In a Real World

Order the complete booklet at
www.forgingbonds.org/products/