

Get a New Marriage with the Same Spouse

- We have this week and next week left in the Real Romance series. If you are single, next week is for you. We're gonna deal with single people. So, if you are a single gal that has a guy, bring him and then we'll bring him to real men and we'll extend the right hand of fellowship and help that guy get straightened out. So, next week is for those of you who are single, and this week we're gonna answer this question, how do you get a new marriage with the same spouse? And, we're gonna be working out of Song of Songs and also chapter eight in the Real Romance book. If you didn't get a copy, there's a free copy on the way out or you can order one if you're watching online. And, here's what happens. Every single relationship eventually inevitably hits a bit of a rough patch. For those of you who are married, is this a fact you would testify is in fact true in a relationship? You hit a rough patch. Hey, we need to testify for the single people, 'cause they still have hope, and we need them to see that they're gonna... It's good to have a little bit of hope, but at some point you're gonna get married and you're gonna annoy each other, or you're gonna get stuck and you're gonna get some bad habits. That's just what happens. And, just because you have bad habits doesn't mean you have a bad marriage. And, it doesn't mean you need a new spouse, 'cause you can get new marriage with the same spouse if you just get some new habits. So, what we're gonna talk about is some new healthy habits from God's word for your relationship. And, we're gonna start with kind of going on dates. And, so how many of you, you had some really great dates when you were single and hoping to marry the person you love. Great dates? Hey, and this is where you guys participate. If you're new, this is not a Librarians for Christ Meeting, and I have a low self-esteem and I need a little encouragement, okay? So, for those of you who were married, how many of you before you got married, you went on nice dates? Good dates? You got dressed up, put some tie... Now, how many of you, it kind of went downhill a little bit once you got married a little bit, and then you had kids, you're like we're... That's it. We're just in sweats, home, eating chicken nuggets. That's all we're doing. That's all we got. And, so now the chuckle is, that's an honest witness and testimony. Thank you for that. So, for Grace and I, we met in high school. We started going on dates, spending time together. We loved being together, we were in college, we got engaged. Our pastor's like, you gotta make sure you get a date every single week. Sounds great. And, we were broke and we were in college, but we still had good dates. We'd go to the park, we'd go for walks, we'd watch the sunset, we'd go for drives, we'd play board games, we'd pack a picnic lunch. We just loved being together. Sitting by the fire seemed like a good thing to do. Then, we graduated and we had to get our first kind of career path started. Well, I worked evenings, Grace work days. We had different shifts and different days off. So, we were missing each other. The first, I don't know, six months of our marriage when we graduated and returned home, we couldn't afford an apartment. So, we were working to save up money for the first, and the last, and the down payment. So, we are broke, we are missing each other, we get into some bad habits. We don't have a bad marriage, we got some bad habits, and that's making for some pain in the relationship. And, then we started ministry, started a college ministry to college kids. Now, they're at our house every single night. They're eating all of our food and ruining our life. And, so that's what college kids do. And, so... And, so I was like, man, now we don't get any time together, 'cause we get home from work and it's just ministry. Well, then we ended up getting blessed with a kid and eventually five kids. And, next thing you know, you're like, man, I don't

even know the last time that we really had a lot of fun together, because now we're overwhelmed with work, we're busy with kids, we're buried in ministry, life has taken over. We're so stuck in shoulder to shoulder that we're not getting much time to be face to face. And, where it really got bad, where it really, really, really got bad is during our days off, our vacations, and our holidays. How many of you... Now, don't raise your hand. This is where you don't give me any feedback, but how many of you, your day off, you're fighting, your date night, you're arguing. It's vacation and you're just at a loggerheads and it's like, hey, we have two weeks. I mean, we've... We need to get caught up on our fighting. It feels like we're behind this year. Thankfully now we have two weeks to fight, get all caught up on our misery. And, then the holidays come, and how many of you, you have a little conflict about what to do during the holidays and what to do with the in-laws who act like outlaws. They're always a complicated variable to manage. And, so we're gonna talk about all of that and we're gonna start with this question, what does En Gedi look like for you? And, I'll explain this in a moment, but here it is. We're in an Old Testament book, Song of Songs, chapter one verse 14 through chapter two verse two. She says, my beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi. We're gonna talk about that place En Gedi. This is a husband and wife sharing some hopes, and dreams, and fears. He says, how beautiful you are my darling. Oh, how beautiful, your eyes are doves. She says, how handsome you are, my beloved. How charming. And, our bed is verdant, green. He says, the beams of our house are cedars, our rafters are fur. What he's telling her is, you're welcome for that home improvement project. I've been watching Fixer Upper, I've accepted Joanna Gaines in my heart, and I've put our house together. She says, I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. And, then he says like a lily among thorns is my darling among the young women. So, here, they're flirting a lot. If you didn't know that it's biblical to flirt, now you do. But, you'll notice they're flirting only with their spouse. So, make sure you keep it in its lane, flirt with your spouse. And, what we see here, she's a little bit insecure. She says, I am a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valley. And, those were just common wild flowers. These were not the kind of flowers that you would find at a florist or they would put together in a bouquet. They just sort of grew everywhere. They were very common. And, what she's saying is, I don't feel like there's anything special about me. She has a bit of insecurity. Now, we know she's a wonderful woman, as we've gotten to know her, she's incredible, but she feels very self-conscious, like is there anything unique or special about me? And, so what he does, he compliments her and he encourages her. And, he says, you're like a lily among thorns and your eyes are doves. And, gentlemen, you need to know this. Some people will say that you need food, water, air, and shelter to live. That's true. And, if you're a woman, you also need compliments. All the ladies said? Amen. Okay, so a lot of compliments help. So, he's going to continually reassure her, I love you, I'm attracted to you, I enjoy you. One of the things God convicted me of as we're in this series, and God's convicted me of a lot in this series, Grace and I have worked through some things, and we're 30 years faithfully married, and we're going to do marriage events, and we're still learning and growing. But, one of the things that I have been convicted about is that I need to encourage Grace more, and I need to say thank you and give her specific compliments and things I appreciate, 'cause I think those things, but I don't always say those things. And, so what happens is, we talked about it a lot. A relationship is like an account. Compliments are deposits, criticisms are withdrawals. We're always gonna have some withdrawals, things we

gotta talk about, places that need some adjustment, but if you're not making lots of deposits, eventually you're gonna bankrupt the relationship. He's complimenting her, he's encouraging her. And, what she is saying is that she wants to go to a place called En Gedi. Now, you may not know about this place, but it still exists to this day. This was written 3000 years ago. Grace and I have actually been to En Gedi, it's in Israel. It's the middle of a desert, barren wasteland, hot and dry. I know it's hard to imagine a place like that, but just imagine if you lived in a place like that, wouldn't that be weird? Now, imagine you're in this barren dry desert and then all of a sudden there's one area that there's these springs of fresh water that come up from under the earth and surrounding are lush greenery, plants, trees, fruit trees, birds, animals coming to get water from the pool. It's this beautiful oasis. That was En Gedi. It's still there today. Many years ago, it was on our bucket list. Grace and I went to Israel, took the kids, and we went to En Gedi. It's still there. Imagine if at your house you had a fresh water source that watered your entire yard and, for free, everything around you looked like a perfectly manicured garden. That would be amazing. That was En Gedi. So, what she's saying is, I want to go to En Gedi. What we've seen previously, they had a fight, and so they were back to back and they were fighting. And, now here they're working too much, you'll see it in a moment, and they're shoulder to shoulder. She wants to get face to face. She wants to go on a getaway adventure with her man. And, so let me ask you this, what's En Gedi look like for you, right? Where do you like to go? What do you like to do? When we were first married, we would sometimes borrow somebody's cabin or vacation house, so we could get away, 'cause we were broke. For our date night, we would ask people, hey, can you give us gift cards for dinner or for a movie? And, we'll use those for our date night. There were certain times that we got to go on some nice trips. We were broke when we were first married. And, so we were trying to figure out how do we get some nice adventures in? How do we get some stay-cations, some vacations, build some memories, have some fun together, get out of the normal routine? And, we didn't camp, 'cause Grace does not camp. If you made a camping... If you are married to a gal who likes to camp, have her talk to Grace. Grace does not like... Grace is very indoorsy. And, if you've ever seen Gilligan's Island, I love Grace with all my heart, she'll be up at the end of correct whatever I'm saying, but Ginger, not Maryanne, that's where we landed in our convictions, okay? Bed and breakfast could go either way. That's pretty... I mean, sometime... Anyway, so we didn't camp. And, then as we were married for a while and I started getting to travel for ministry, God has been very gracious to me, and I've had a really blessed, incredible life. And, I would always tell people, hey, if I'm gonna come speak, can I bring Grace and the kids? Because, I don't care about the honorarium, I care about the memory. And, so we were able as a couple and with the kids to go to Australia, to go to Greece, Israel, Turkey, Scotland, all over the world. And, we've taken photos and we've got videos. And, even on those trips, we would find a way for someone to watch the kids, like random strangers on Craigslist or whatever, you know? And, no, we'd... People that we knew. And, we would schedule dates and we would go out to nice dinners, or sunset walks on the beach, and take photos, and just get those sacred memories made. And, then as we've been married now 30 years, we... Sometimes we get to plan bigger trips. So, I asked Grace, I said, what was one of your favorite memory trips? I was shocked. She said, Montana. Montana, okay? So, I was like, oh, okay. 'Cause some years ago, we turned 50. I know. I know I don't look a day over 80, but we turned 50. And, so I was like, where do you want to go? And, I'm thinking,

Prague or Paris? And, she said, Montana. I was like, oh, okay, we can do that. So, we went to Montana, we rented a place at a really nice hotel on a lake. We hiked the Glacier National Forest. We rented a boat. We just spent some days together. We sat by the fire at the beach at night. We drank wine. We... It was great. And, so I don't just teach the Bible, I live it. So, anyways, so we had a great time, and one of my favorite memories was we went to Germany and we went to the Lower Rhine River just a few years ago. And, we got to visit the historical sites of the Protestant reformer Martin Luther and his wife Catherine. And, we also, when we stayed in the Lower Rhine River, we had this really old quaint hotel. And, all of the cities there, the towns are very small villages, cobblestone streets, old churches, buildings, cafes, outdoor seating, just beautiful and historic. And, you could jump on a boat and float down the river, and if you like that town, you get off and visit and explore. When you're done, you get back on the boat, float back down the river, go to the next town. We did it for days. We turned our phones off. We just spent time together, we had no schedule, and we just hung out. And, it was amazing. It was one of the most memorable times of our entire relationship together. What does En Gedi look like for you? Where do you like to go? What do you like to do? And, what she's doing here by telling him, there is... This is where I want to go. She's building anticipation. You gotta build some anticipation in your relationship. Hey, where do you want to go? Let's start planning it. Let's get it in the budget. Let's get it on the calendar. Let's start looking forward to it. Now, let me just for a moment speak to you men who are cheap, okay? Ladies, now are suddenly paying attention. I'm seeing a lot of this. Okay, so you can either spend your money on dates or divorces, you're gonna spend it. All the ladies said? It was a little cautious, but it was still still hopeful. Still honest. I would rather spend the money on the relationship than spending money for the damage done by the failure of the relationship. So, what does En Gedi look like for you? We've still got a bucket list of places we want to go. And, then I would ask as well, what does En Gedi look like for you at home? And, she says here, she says, the beams of our houses are cedars, our rafters are furs, and our bed, it's also the same word in the original language, our couch is verdant, it's green. And, so she's talking as well not only about going to En Gedi, but bringing En Gedi home. Sometimes you wanna spend money to go somewhere, go on vacation, romantic getaway, make a memory or a holiday. Sometimes you wanna spend some money to bring En Gedi home. How can you get a break at your house? How can you rest at home? When our kids were growing up, we said, this is our bedroom, it's off limits. You're not allowed to come in here. The door is locked. And, don't just come in, you'll see how you were made, and then we'll have trauma therapy, and you don't want this, okay? And, so he was saying you can't just hang out in our room. You're not just welcome in our room. You gotta knock on the door and we'll get to you in a few days. Take a number and wait. And, so for us, our bedroom was sacred. And, then all... One of Grace's favorites, we had a little room off of our bedrooms some years ago. It was a little nook that had a fireplace room for a TV, and she bought a really comfy couch, and the kids would go to bed, and every night we could snuggle up there, sit by the fire, watch a show, play a board game, drink wine, whatever the case may be. Or, what does it look like to bring it home? Do you need a tub? Do you need a hot tub? Do you need outdoor seating? Do you need a fire pit? Do you need a fireplace? Do you need a pizza oven? What would be a good investment for you to make memories at home? For Grace, she cares a lot about the indoors, I care a lot about the outdoors. I have seasonal effective disorder.

I love sunshine, fresh air. I eat outside, I study outside, I walk outside, I hike outside. If I had to, I think I'd do pretty good at being homeless. I really like it outside. I really like it outside. Grace, she likes being inside. So, for her, getting the house set up means a lot to her. So, we have to just discuss, okay, honey, how does the home work for you? How does the outdoors work for me? I need a fireplace. I need sunshine. I like trees, and green, and I like to be outdoors. What does En Gedi look like for you? You can get so busy working on your life, you don't have time to enjoy your life. You can get so caught up in your work, in your duties, in your responsibilities that you miss your opportunities to make the memories. So, we're gonna talk about this in specific, it's gonna be a very practical sermon, but here's what we're gonna deal with next. We're gonna deal with Sabbaths, vacations, and holidays. So, here's what she says, come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside. She's inviting him. And, let me say this, ladies, there's a big difference between nagging and inviting. All the men said?

- [Crowd Member] Preach.

- Amen. Preach it. It's a good time to collect the offering, Pastor Mark, you got us all on board. Okay? Nagging is, we never do anything. Inviting is I got something awesome. Would you like to do it? Yes, okay? Let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines abutted, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom. It's springtime, both in life and in their relationship. There, I will give you my love. Woo. That's a promise. The mandrakes send out their fragrance and at our doors every delicacy, both old and new. Honey, I know there's some things that you like and we're gonna do those. And, then there's some things that we've never tried. Let's go on vacation. That I've stored up for you, my beloved. If only you were to me like a brother who was nursed at my mother's breasts, we'll unpack this, then if I found you outside, I would kiss you and no one would despise me. I know this sounds weird, but I'll unpack it. Hang in there. I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house, she who taught me, I'm gonna give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates. And, here's what she's saying. In that culture, you weren't allowed to have public displays of affection. 3000 years ago, conservative, religious, Jewish, eastern culture. He is the king of Israel, she's the queen of Israel, she's the peasant princess we like to call her. And, as a result, they're always in public and it's always very formal, right? Meaning she can't just hold his hand, or kiss him, or flirt with him. And, you know they can't do what normal couples would do, 'cause they don't get that private time. They're always public. It's never informal. It's always formal. Some of you understand this. Some of you are CEOs, CFOs, politicians, public figures, celebrities. You're like, you know what? We're always sort of in the public eye and we never get to just be alone, the two of us. The only exception in that culture was a little brother and sister. So, let's say there's a little brother and he's got a sister, let's say she's just a little bit older, they could hold hands, nobody minds. She could give 'em a kiss, that was cute. They could snuggle up together, nobody stopped 'em. What she's saying is, I wish we could do what kids can do, snuggle up, hold hands, flirt, kiss each other. We're always so busy at work, we don't have any private time, we don't have any us time. And, what she's saying is, I really need that time, we need that time, again rather than nagging him, you never take me anywhere, right? It's, hey, I think we should go to the countryside, let's go to En Gedi, let's do what we want to do, and let's

do some things that we've never done before. How many husbands, you're like, that sounds great, right? A lot of times women are like, well, I don't wanna lead. Lemme say, there is one area in the relationship, if you lead, he's fine. He's fine with that. I've never had a meeting with a husband, I probably shouldn't say this, it's not on my notes, but I will. I've never had a meeting with a husband and he's like, my wife is just so physically, emotionally, intimately aggressive, and always asking to do things that we've never done. I'm very frustrated. Never had that counseling appointment in my whole life. Could you tell her to dial it down? I just... Hey, my face is up here. I have a brain. Like I've never had that conversation with a man. Never. Zero times. Alright, zero times. Okay, anyways. Honey, was that on the line, over the line? Where are we?

- [Grace] It's too late.

- It's too late. Okay, that's what Grace said. Okay. Thank you, honey. I should have checked before. And, so here's what we see. First, I want to talk about how to get a break together. We're gonna talk first about Sabbath, then we're gonna talk about vacations and holidays. So, Sabbath, what she's talking about here is let's get a day off work. Let's go out and have some fun. Let's make a memory. So, I wanna talk about Sabbath and I told the guys this at Real Men, I'll see you guys at Real Men on Wednesday night, and we were talking about Sabbath recently. You have two choices. You take a break or you break. Those are your options. You take a break or you break. Now, taking a break is fun, breaking is not. You're laying in bed sick or you're laying in a hospital bed recovering. In Japan, they actually call this Karoshi, and it is dying on the job, it is literally working until you die on the job. And, so for us as believers, they were fully well aware of Genesis one and two that God created everything in how many days? Six days. And, then on the seventh day he rested. He took a Sabbath. Sabbath means to rest. So, God worked six days, took a day off. God, then put in motion in the 10 Commandments, in Exodus chapter 20, seven day week, what he says is, you do like I do. I'm your father, you're my kids. You do what Dad does. Work hard for six days, take a day off, take a day off. And, so God wants you to take a day off. And, in the original Hebrew, it literally is in six days God breathed out. And, on the seventh day God breathed in. You hear this from people all the time. I just have so much going on. I need to catch my breath. And, they're agreeing with the Bible whether they know God or not. They're saying, I just gotta... I gotta breathe in. That's the Sabbath. So, what do you do on a Sabbath day? Whatever allows you to rest and recover. Whatever allows you to breathe in. There is sometimes a debate as to what day you should have the Sabbath. This couple, Solomon and Abby, they would've taken Saturday as their day off. Christians take Sunday, 'cause that's the day that Jesus rose from the dead. America couldn't agree. Do we take Saturday or Sunday? So, we took both. So, that's how we got a two day weekend. So, we're doing... We're doing good. And, it says this in Colossians 2:16, let no one pass judgment on you with regard to a Sabbath. It says enrollments, just pick whatever day works for you. God doesn't really mind, just pick a day. Some of you, you're like, I dunno if you guys know this, I work on weekends. I dunno if you've noticed that. People are like, how's your Sunday Sabbath? Well, it stinks, 'cause I'm working, I work on Sunday, so I take Friday off. Some of you take Monday, take Tuesday, take Wednesday, take Thursday. Just take something and make it your Sabbath. And, some of you have rotating schedules. So, you gotta look at your calendar every

week or every month and say, well, Tuesday this week, Thursday next week, that's okay too. But, lemme just talk a little bit about Sabbath. Number one, couples often Sabbath differently. Any of you married and you Sabbath differently? Right? This usually happens. For me, I need to change my place if I want to change my pace. So, if it's my day off, I want to go somewhere, I want to get in the Bronco, and I want to go to the mountains. That's what I like to do. Grace can relax being at home. I can't.

- [Crowd Member 2] Amen.

- Amen? Okay, so I mean, me, and him, and Jesus, we can't relax at home. Now, the way it works, so Grace and I have had to discuss in dialogue like, okay, what does a Sabbath look like for you? What does it look like for me? And, we have to just discuss that. And, some days it'll be like, she'll be like, I wanna go to the spa with my girlfriends. I was like, well, I'm not going to the spa with my guy friends, then I wouldn't have any guy friends. And, so instead I'm gonna go to the mountains. So, I'll hang out with the deer, you hang out with the girls, I'll meet you for dinner, and we'll have our date night. That works sometimes. Don't get super religious about your Sabbath. Jesus says in Mark 2:27, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, here's you, here's the Sabbath. The Sabbath doesn't rule over you as a law. You rule over the Sabbath as a grace. So, people get super legalistic. They're like, you can't do that on a Sabbath. You get to do whatever is refreshing, rejuvenating, replenishing for you, which may mean you're in an office all week and you're like, I wanna do some gardening, and I find that relaxing. And, some of you may be a landscaper and you're like, that's the last thing I want to do on my day off. And, so it just depends on the person. Some of you want to cook and that's great. And, some of you are like, I'm a chef, I don't want to cook. And, so the Sabbath is whatever helps you rest and recover. And, don't let people make a lot of rules and impose them on you. In addition, don't just have a Sabbath day, have a Sabbath heart. How many of you have taken the day off, but you're anxious, you're checking your email, you're on your phone, you're taking calls and texts, and you're doing work, and your heart is not Sabbath, or you're thinking about work, and so next thing you know, you're going back to your computer, or you're going back to your phone, or you're going back to your desk? It's not just a day, it's a heart disposition. Jesus says, come to me all you who are labor and heavy laden and I'll give you rest for your souls. The day is to connect with the Lord and people and to rest and recover. In addition to a weekly Sabbath, which is a day off, you need to have a daily mini Sabbath. It says in Genesis, there's evening and morning the first day, evening and morning the second day. And, so for the Hebrew mindset that Solomon and Abby had, the day didn't start in the morning when your alarm goes off, it starts in evening when your day is done at work. So, for them, they didn't have electricity, right? The sun goes down, you're like, I guess we're done working. You go home, you light to candle, start a fire, have dinner, and you start with rest in the evening, and then you go to work in the morning. Our problem is we think our day starts in the morning. So, you kill yourself and then you collapse at night. And, the key is to not just plan your day, but to start by planning your night. We're gonna set out our clothes. Are we gonna go to bed early? Are we gonna get enough sleep? What's our evening routine? How are we gonna wind down? Let's not just be looking at our screen until we try to go to sleep and then we can't. And, it's managing your

evening to set up your morning. In addition, during your weekly Sabbath, you've gotta get a date in. And, I don't... It doesn't matter what you do for your date, it's whatever works for you as a couple. But, you gotta keep dating one another. You dated one another to fall in love, you need to date one another to stay in love, spend some money, invest some time to make some memories and have some fun. And, then let me say this as well. How many of you, the reason you don't get a date is 'cause you have kids? Okay, kids? And, if you're new, good news here tonight is date night. As soon as I'm done, which will happen in a few hours, we're gonna let you go on a date and we're gonna watch your kids, okay? But, when you're little, sometimes what you can do is maybe if you've got good grandparents, they tag in and watch the kids. I would give our parents A+ as grandparents. Every Friday, when the kids were little, they would rotate watching our kids to give us a date night. Amazing. When Grace and I were in college, we met a family in the church, great marriage, great kids. And, so we volunteered, hey, could we watch your kids every Friday night for date night? They couldn't afford babysitting. And, what I thought was, let's practice on their kids before we have our own, you know? And, so we would go, we've watched their kids for free, but for us there's a lot about parenting and marriage that you can't get by reading a book, you need to go to somebody's house. So, for us it was, hey, once in a while could we come over for dinner? Maybe sometimes you guys go out to dinner. We just wanna see a family in their natural habitat and just see how this works, okay? And, I'd watch dad praying over the kids or reading the Bible with the kids, and I'd be like, okay, is that what you want me to do? He's like, yeah, we're gonna go on a date. Gotta read the Bible with the kids, pray over the kids, tuck 'em in bed 72 times, 'cause they always gotta go to the bathroom again. I was like, oh, I didn't know that they had a bladder this big. I didn't know that. Now, I know. It was preparing me to be a dad. And, so if you're single and you're like, we wanna know how to be good parents, two things, volunteer to watch someone else's kids, and, number two, volunteer in kids' ministry. And, if you're a single guy, lemme just say, I said this for years, if you're single guy, you're like, I can't find a good girl. She's in kids' ministry right now. She's single playing with children, waiting for a guy who wants to make babies. Get in there, alright? This is... This is fishing in a trout pond. If you can't close this, this is on you, right? You're like, there's a cute gal playing with kids. You're like, do you like kids? I like kids. We're halfway to the end zone. I mean, I don't... Okay. But, what you're gonna need to do with your Sabbath day, there are times you're gonna need to pivot, 'cause the day changes, or the kids get older, things happen. I'll give you an example. I'm gonna tell you some failures from our life. And, so we usually have done family dinner on Sunday. Now, our kids are getting married, which is awesome, and we're so happy for them and so proud of them. So, they came along and they're like, we don't necessarily wanna do family dinner every Sunday. We now have our own family and sometimes we wanna do... Okay, well, let's do it once a month, okay? And, then sometimes the conversation in our dinners was trending toward work, 'cause we all serve in ministry together, so the kids are like, dad, we don't wanna talk about work when we get together for family dinner. Well, that was my failure is the dad. Okay, I gotta direct the conversation. So, what Sabbath used to look like, we got five kids, they're all at home, we have dinner on Sunday night. Now they get married, we do dinner once a month, and they don't want to talk about work. Just make pivots as you go. Have the open conversation as a family. Don't take it personal, don't make it personal. It just morphs and adjusts as your relationship and family grows. Number two,

let's talk about vacations. How many of you have really royally ruined a vacation? Okay, so none of you? Okay, so one person. So, okay, the rest of you can check your phone now and I'm gonna talk to them, okay? So, I'll tell you our... We've... I've ruined... We've wrecked some vacations. I'll give you one story. So, we had the kids, they were little, we were broke in ministry, I'm working too much, my tendency is to work too much. Finally, somebody came along, and they're like, hey, we have a cabin on the beach at the ocean. Pastor, you can have it for free. Oh, praise the Lord. Came home, told Grace we're going on vacation. So, we loaded up our suburban named Hank the Tank. Our children named this vehicles, I don't know why, and once they named 'em, I couldn't get rid of 'em. So, we had Hank the Tank, we loaded up Hank the Tank, we had the car top carrier, we had all the bikes on the back. Now, we're doing wheelies. I mean it's just all loaded down. There's stuff in the back. The kids are in the car seats. Everything's ready to go. Boom, we go to the coast, we're at the... We pull up. We go in. First thing I notice, they had a cat, okay? This is how you know they're not godly.

- [Crowd Member] Preach.

- So... So, we go up, and I have a daughter, I have a daughter and she's allergic to...

- [Crowd Members] Cats.

- Cats. So, she blows up like a puffer fish, starts having an asthmatic attack, eyes closing, can't breathe. While we're trying to save our daughter's life, the boys decide to go out to the deck, which is very high, missing planks in the floor, and the railing is broke. Our sons are trying to kill themselves. And, then next thing, so I got a daughter dying, I got two sons just gonna kill themselves, and then our youngest daughter notices they've got a stuffed bear on the wall, thinks it's a real bear, has a full blown panic attack, thinks there's a bear in the cabin. Okay? We're there... This is like 30 seconds in. Grace is like, it smells and it's dirty. Okay? So, we were there about 17 minutes and then we went home. That was the end of our vacation. Okay? And, so what I learned was you better plan your vacation. It's not gonna plan itself. So, couple of thoughts. When the... I'll say this as well, when you have kids, if you go on vacation, is it a vacation, yes or no?

- [Crowd Members] No.

- No. So, that was unanimous. Okay? I always think it's really cute when new parents are like, we're going on vacation to Disneyland with the kids. Oh, my gosh. That's hilarious. You're gonna walk a thousand miles, a churros is \$1,500. Your kids... You have a choice between them eating snacks or going to college. You're not going on vacation, you're going to war. You're gonna come home bloody, exhausted, you're gonna have blisters on your feet, scars, and probably not the same number of children you started with. Welcome to Disneyland, right? So, if you go on vacation, it's just not a break with the kids. So, you may need to schedule a vacation after your vacation to recover. But, a couple of thoughts if you have kids and you're going on vacation. First of all, dad should go visit the spot before you go. I should have went and investigated this

Blair Witch cabin that we got gifted to us from Rob Zombie. We should have checked that out. I should have checked it out. In addition, you need to make your plans as a family. And, I would always call a family meeting. Hey, who wants to go where? What do you want to do? Let's plan something every day. Okay, this will be the day that dad takes the boys, and mom takes the girls, and then we swap. This is daddy date. And, you boys go hang out with mom. And, then what I like to do is plan one thing a day. Don't plan too much. Leave margin, 'cause at some point somebody's gonna throw up. I hope it's not you, but somebody's gonna throw up on vacation, and somebody's gonna get sick, or you're gonna find something awesome to do, so you wanna pivot and take that opportunity. And, then what I would do as well, I would write out every day of the vacation and I would put it on the fridge of wherever we were staying, so the kids could see. How many of you have those kid... How many of you have the flexible kid? They're like, I don't care, right? That's the middle child. Now, how many of you, you have a kid, they're like, what are we doing? And, we're 17 minutes late. That's the first born, okay? That's just how this works. So, you gotta let everybody know what you're gonna do every day, so that everybody's on the same page. Let me say this, if you get that blessing of a vacation without children, just ponder that for a moment. Two things I would say, manage your technology. Don't bring your enemies, your critics, your work, or the news, or social media on your vacation. Okay? Turn it off. Connect with each other. Bring a book, something great. Like I know of this real romance book somebody wrote, it's amazing. You could take that. You could do Pastor Jimmy Evans' Vision Retreat from XO Marriage. Just read something, study something that allows the two of you to have really good conversation and to build love and to look forward to the future. Now, we'll talk about holidays. Do you want to? I don't either, but we're going to. So, I'll tell you our horrific Christmas story. How many of you have blown a holiday, okay? If you've not blown a holiday, you're a liar, okay? We've all blown a holiday. So, one of our worst holidays, we were newly married, we graduated, we moved back, we finally got into a place, we were both working long hours, we were doing ministry, we didn't yet have kids. We were used to our parents setting up the holidays like Christmas. And, so it was Christmas Eve, we were working long hours, we got home late, and usually we do Christmas Eve with one side of the family, Christmas day with the other. Well, the side of the family we were supposed to get with for Christmas Eve, they left town early and we were gonna go a day or two later and catch up with them. So, we came home and you could not have convicted us in court that it was Christmas, 'cause there was no evidence at our house. There was nothing Christmas whatsoever. And, I looked at Grace, I was like, I thought you'd planned Christmas. She's like, I thought you were gonna plan Christmas. We blew Christmas. We're home alone, we're married, nothing. So, we had an angel wing begonia that I hated from the heart. It always hung out over the walkway and I would have to walk around it. And, so Grace got some bows and put it on the angel wing begonia trying to improve our situation. And, it didn't work, 'cause I hated the angel wing begonia from my heart. And, so then I told her, I said, well, let's go out to dinner, Christmas dinner. All the restaurants were closed Christmas Eve. It was too late. Come back, I said, well, what have we got to eat? She's like, well, I didn't go to the grocery store. I've... I thought we'd be out out of town. All we had was pancakes. Let me say this. That's a breakfast food. If some of you are like breakfast dinner, that's a breakfast food. How many of you do breakfast dinner? Okay? Repent. That's a breakfast food. That's a breakfast food. So, Grace is like, I'll make

pancakes. I'm like, I don't really like pancakes. And, by the way, pancakes are just cookies for breakfast. It's just total denial. So, we started eating pancakes and we're both very, very sad. So, then finally, Grace... Grace arrived... I don't know which it was, she's like, hey, let's go watch a movie. So, we... There was, oh, there's this romantic movie. That'll salvage Christmas Eve. So, we go to the movie, we get our popcorn, we sit there, we're full of pancakes, we're together, and the movie starts, and it was Bridges of Madison County. About halfway in we're like, it's an adultery film. So, begonia, pancake, adultery, Merry Christmas, right? So, I was like, I'm so sorry, honey. So, we got up and we left, 'cause we're not gonna watch an adultery film for Christmas Eve. And, I was like we gotta plan our holidays better. So, lemme tell you a little bit about holidays. First of all, when you get married, you are not joining a family, you're starting a family. I've said this a million times, and every time I do, the young couples are like, that was great. And, the parents are like, we hate you. So, let me just say it again, okay? So, like I got to officiate the wedding of both of our oldest kids. And, I... Like, let's say at my daughter's wedding, I said, hey, you're not joining our family, she's not joining your family. You are starting your own family, which means vacations, holidays, you get to decide what your family's gonna do. We're gonna decide what our family's gonna do. So, the way I want to have it operate is you're always welcome, but you're not expected. And, I won't take up offense. You want to join us for Thanksgiving? We'd love to see you. You don't? That's up to you. Christmas, you want to come over? I'll have a lot of nice stuff. I'll make it worth your while, yeah? But, if you don't want to come, I'll keep it, you know? So... But, you gotta figure out what do we want to do? And, what you've gotta do for the holidays, as you add kids, you need to reexamine annually. So, like when Grace and I first got married, her parents were good to us and my parents were good to us. So, Thanksgiving, guess how many Thanksgiving dinners we had? Two, which is at least one too many, okay? So, we'd go to one side and go to the other side. We'd do two Thanksgivings. And, then the kids came along. Next thing you know, you got five kids. Five kids, two Thanksgiving dinners? You're not thankful at the end of the day for Thanksgiving. Okay? You're just not thankful. And, so what we did is like, okay, we'll do one side one year, one side the next. Then, we finally decided getting the five kids in the car to go somewhere is a hassle. We'll host it. Everybody can come to our house. You just make pivots with the holidays as the years and the kids roll along. Now, let me say a few things that are controversial, 'cause at some point in the sermon, I need to say controversial things, we've now arrived at that point. Sometimes, the pivot you need to make during the holiday is very practical, alright? Most of you who live in Arizona, you weren't born here. You were born somewhere else. On the holidays, you travel, but all of a sudden you realize it's too expensive. That's our only time off. We're exhausted. Traveling with the kids, and layovers, and canceled flights, it doesn't work. Sometimes, it's very practical. Do you know what? We just wanna have our own family memories. We want to get time together. Sometimes it's just very practical. Sometimes, this is where I'm gonna medal a little bit, it's personal. I know you don't have this, but just hypothetically imagine someone that had a relative that they didn't enjoy. Just hypothetically imagine that possibility, okay? And, the holidays come and you're kind of... You got that like... I love my family, but from a distance, you know? I... When we're together, there's certain family members or they bring friends and extended family in and it doesn't work. Let me say this, sometimes the problem with the holidays is not just practical, it's people, okay? And, I'll say that there are three kinds of people in your life. I call 'em

positives, negatives, and neutrals. Positive are they love us, we love them, we enjoy them, they enjoy us. We look forward to seeing them. We have good memories. It just works. That's great, okay? Neutrals are, well, it's not awesome, it's not awful. We're not super excited about it, but it doesn't feel like a day at the dentist. It's... It's okay, it's fine. And, then negative is like, we're now looking forward to it. When we're there, we're trying to get out of it. And, when we're headed home, we're like, why did we do that again? Did you sense that? That was... There was... The whole room did this, oh. There was this emotional processing. So, if you're dealing with someone who's negative, the person to have the conversation is whatever side of the family it's on. So, if the problem is on her side, she needs to deal with that family member. If the problem is on his side, he needs to deal with that family member. If you cross that line, you will end up with a big fight and your spouse caught in the middle. And, what happens is, sometimes we tolerate things from family that we would never tolerate from anyone else. Why does Uncle Jerry always get to be drunk and annoying on Christmas? He's family. Well, you know what? I... He needs to either change his behavior or he needs to change his plans. Because, what you're allowing then is the least healthy person to decide your most important days, okay? And, if they're going to set the tone and culture, either you've gotta have a conversation like, hey, we love you, we'd like to enjoy you. These are some things that we're asking. If you can't agree to those, you don't need to come. And, if the family doubles down and says, hey, you can't say that, you can't deal with that. We don't... We just sort of overlooked that. And, you're like, you know what? Not my family, not my kids. I don't want my kids in that environment. That's not working. So, you know what? Either things change or we're leaving. We're not gonna be there. We're gonna exit out. Or, you have the holidays at your house and you control the environment. So, you know what? You can come to our house, but these are our rules. And, that being said, this is going to be... This is controversial, but for some of you, it'll be a deliverance. People don't get access to you, your marriage, your kids, your day off, your vacation, or your holiday, because of their blood, but because of their character. Not by blood, but by character. And, especially when your kids are little, it's like, do I want the least healthy people that we would never allow to spend the holidays with our kids, to spend the holidays with our kids? No. Because, they are more important than that. And, our kids are gonna get confused if we say, well, this is how we do life, and how we treat each other, and how we honor each other, and how we celebrate our... The birth of Jesus at Christmas. And, then we allow someone in the family to completely undermine everything we're trying to build in the kids. And, it just causes confusion. And, for some of you, it's why, growing up, the holidays were the most anxious time. Your parents were... Had conflict, and arguments, and there was tears, and there was disagreements, and there was tension. It's like, why do you want to turn a holiday into a negative anniversary and a painful memory? And, so I just want to give you permission, not to be bitter, not to be mean, not to be spiteful, not to be harmful, but to be healthy. And, I'll close with this. And, when I say I'll close with this, it doesn't mean I am, it just means you should still pay attention. So, here we go. You can have a new marriage with the same spouse. She says under the apple tree, I roused you. There, my mother conceived you. There, she who was in labor gave you birth. Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. Your love is as strong as death. It's jealousy unyielding as the grave. We get into all this in detail in the book. I'll just summarize it. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Mighty waters cannot quench

love. Rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned. We looked at previously, as we've been looking at the storyline, they had a fight, and he stormed out of the house, and then they came back together, and they worked some things out, but quickly they got stuck shoulder to shoulder. He's working too much, she's feeling lonely. They're not getting their day off, they're not getting their vacations, they're not getting their holidays. So, they get face to face and they have a conversation. She's not nagging him, she's inviting him. She's like, honey, let's put it on the calendar, let's put it in the budget, let's go have some fun, let's make a memory. Let's go to En Gedi, let's do some home improvement projects, so we can Sabbath at home. Let's go to the countryside. And, here, they're back in love. And, here's the big idea. Oftentimes, people will have a difficult season in their marriage where they're back to back or they're shoulder to shoulder, and they think I need a new marriage. And, I would say, yes, you do, but that doesn't mean you need a new spouse. You can get a new marriage with the same spouse if you and your spouse commit to some new habits. What's the evening look like? What's your day off look like? What's your date day or night look like? What are you gonna do for vacation and memories? What are your holidays gonna look like? My assumption is this, if you'll have some new habits, you can have a new marriage with the same spouse. And, that's what she's talking about when she talks about our time under the apple tree. She's talking about their dating at her parents' house where they would sit or perhaps swing under the apple tree, and they've got time to reminisce about all the good times and the memories. I will close with this. I... I'm really emotional with my wife and kids. I cry a lot. My daughters make me cry all the time. I'm very heartfelt with my wife and kids. I love taking photos and videos of all the fun times that I've had with Grace, we've had on vacations, we've had on holidays with the kids. I have more video and photo than any human being should have. I recently got a big hard drive to collect it all on, 'cause the biggest MacBook can't handle me. And, I just found a stack of eight old video cassettes with old school videos from when the kids were really little. I'm getting 'em digitized. I literally will sit at my computer and I will look at photos and watch videos and I will cry like I won Miss America. I do. Because, I remember, oh, that was so fun. That was so great. They were so little. That was hilarious. Just the memories. And, what she's saying here is let's talk about the memories that started early on and let's continue making memories until the very end. I'll bring Grace up for a question, how was that? Thanks guys for letting me teach. It was fun. I didn't know it was gonna be that much fun. Hey, baby, thanks for coming to work. Thanks, Marty. So, did I cross a line or dance on it vigorously or...

- I don't know.

- You're used to it, okay.

- It's all good. Okay, the question, how do you keep the day-to-day from turning into just business as usual? And, then what are some Christian date ideas for married couples?

- Okay, if you wanna do that, that's great.

- So, you kind of talked about this and I think it's so easy to just do the day-to-day and planning to not do the day-to-day is how you don't do the day to day. So, you wanna be responsible for your day-to-day. We've had to actually physically write out weekly an organized plan. Okay, this day I'm doing this each day of the week. And, then put in that, we plan quarterly as well, like we're gonna take a night away or we're gonna do this trip and we're gonna add a day, because we're speaking for the first day. We're gonna add a day and do a vacation. We literally have to go and plan it beforehand, because it will not happen if you don't plan it.

- And, so for us, we have a shared calendar that's digital. We'd say that's crucial. If you're gonna put your life together and be one, you probably need to have a shared calendar. Weekly, we have a calendar meeting, usually it's on Monday. It's like, okay, what are we doing this week? When are we having our date? What do the kids need? What does life look like? And, like Grace said, then we look down the road. What's summer vacation look like? What's holidays look like? I'm the guy, I have to have fun on the calendar. Like, I really like fun. And, so I like to... I'd like to anticipate it and look forward to it. And, if I don't have fun on the calendar, I'm pretty bummed. How many of you are like that? You're like, I need something to look forward to? And, this can be an overnight, this can be a vacation. Like I've got our summer vacation planned. I'm so excited. We got it all tuned in. And, so for us, just looking down the road, I love that expectation and that sort of buildup toward the fun time together. And, when we didn't do that, what did life look like, when we didn't intentionally put it on the calendar and put it in the budget?

- We burned out and our marriage wasn't as joyful as it could have been. And, I'm not a planner. And, so I've had to intentionally work on this area to plan fun, 'cause I'm not... That's just not my go-to. I'm a doer task girl and I will just do what's in front of me. And, so having our weekly sync meetings where we're looking at our calendar for the week and then quarterly, it really helps me get beyond just my day to day. And, so if you are a task person, you've gotta start incorporating the planning element and not just letting your life take over, because it absolutely will, and the enemy would love you to be... And, we were doing ministry, so ours looked really good. We were staying busy in ministry. But, when you're too busy in ministry to even work on having a fun relationship, it's not good.

- Well, and in that too, I like asking you and the kids, what do you want to do? And, then I like making the dream come true. I really find a lot of... Just little kids are... I mean, some years ago, one of our daughter... Just for verbal processing. I was like, what do you want to do if you could do anything with your dad? She's like, I wanna go to Alaska. I want to get a plane that lands on a glacier and I wanna do a cartwheel. I was like, that is very specific. That is very specific. Never... And, so I was like, hey, guess what we're doing? So, that's exactly what we did. We landed on a glacier and took a photo and I'm gonna carry that memory in my heart for the rest of my life. And, so for me, I will spend money to make a memory. And, if there's a dream in your heart or the kid's heart, if I can find a way to make that happen, I find so much joy watching you guys get something that you were wanting. And, for me then getting the photos and videos, like I will watch it over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and I'm happy every time. And, so...

- We don't have regrets about what we went and did that was fun with the kids.

- Or together. And, maybe even talk about when we would go on vacations with the kids, how we would architect time in just to get some dates, just you and me, so it wasn't only the kids.

- Yeah. I mean, on the international trips, we brought my mom or my sister or somebody to help out, just to keep track of all the kids, so we didn't lose anybody. And, then they could give us a date night as well, so that we could take a special, like one of the trips to Australia, we... It was our anniversary, I don't remember which one, and so we got to go to a really nice restaurant that night, and my mom was back with the kids. And, so we had to intentionally plan that stuff. And, the more you do it, the more you enjoy it and wanna continue to do it, because you see it as an investment in your relationship. And, I'm not a spender in our relationship, so I like to budget, or GroupOn, or find deals. And, so that takes even more planning.

- I spent... I will set it on fire. I could... I believe in Jesus, but not math. I don't care. Like I... Hey, man, we're having fun, you know? Lord provide, amen. We're going, you know?

- So, either way we have fun.

- But, how important do you think it is to put fun on the calendar and be intentional even part of the... To partly disciple the kids? Because, kids are naturally selfish and unless they see you making your marriage a priority, they don't understand how to prepare for marriage.

- Well, it's nice to feel like you're enjoyable too as a spouse and as a child. Like if your parent is always so busy or your spouse is always so busy working that they never even look at you or ask what you wanna do together, you just feel like, why am I here? What is my purpose? And, so it's... Part of it is just even non-verbal communication, when you do that kind of thing, that's what you're saying to your spouse or your kids. And, we don't... We don't wanna do that. And, we worked very hard after some hard lessons of doing holidays and trips wrong or not doing any trips. We learned, okay, this is not how we wanna do life. We wanna plan for the last day to still be amazing in our marriage. And, in order to do that we have to look at what we wanna do now to build that relationship. And, it asked about Christian date ideas. There's so many things. We went from--

- It doesn't... Well, I was gonna say, so a date doesn't need to be Christian, it just needs to be awesome.

- Exactly, exactly.

- It just needs to be awesome. I mean, don't break commandments or laws, you know? There shouldn't be like a bail involved, but have fun, you know? It doesn't have to... It's not like, well, do you guys study Leviticus or Proverbs? Like...

- Yeah. Yes, it doesn't need to be like... I think we just liked hanging out, so it didn't even have to cost money, 'cause we couldn't afford it in the beginning anyway. So, just whatever, ask each other, what do you like to do? I don't like to camp. I love the outdoors. I just don't like sleeping in the outdoors. And, so I like my bed. And, so for us, we give and take. There's certain things you like to do, like go to the gun range and do shooting. I don't mind doing that, but it's not like my go-to. But, I'll do that, because it's fun for you and I love watching you have fun. And, there's times when you do go to the GroupOn Spa with me.

- I go to the spa. Gun range, spa. You gotta... I usually wouldn't.

- You like massages though, so.

- Well, I will fake an injury to get a neck rub. I mean, yeah, but sitting there in a robe all day having water with a cucumber in it, and... I'm out. Like, I'll be honest, but I'll do it. I'll do it for you.

- Thank you.

- Yeah.

- So, it is. It's give and take and then you do stuff together that you both enjoy. It's just asking each other, communicating about it. It's not hard, it's intentional. It's taking time to talk about it. So...

- Okay, we'll end there, and we're gonna sing a few songs, and then we're gonna let 'em go on date night. So, why don't you close in prayer? Thanks, babe.

- Dear, Lord, thank you that you do want us to enjoy life, and you do provide for us, and you are a generous God, giving your son first, but also just generosity in your character as a father. And, so thank you that we can do that with our spouses, with our kids, and our families. Lord, give us wisdom on how to navigate holidays, and sabbaths, and vacations, and just time together every day. Lord, I just pray that we'd be intentional and show one another that we truly care through wanting to spend time together and enjoy one another. In Jesus' name, amen.