

3 Practical Ways to Rekindle an Unromantic Marriage

The “bait and switch” is a sneaky technique employed by salespeople of questionable character. After you agree to a deal, they make an excuse to change the terms. They promise one thing and then deliver something else.

I pulled a bait and switch on my wife, Jenifer. If you are a woman who is married, it is very likely that your husband did the same thing to you. It doesn't make me (or him) a bad guy. Your husband probably doesn't even know he did it. But the bait and switch that husbands pull can leave many wives feeling disappointed in their marriages.

How the Typical Husband (Inadvertently) Pulls a Bait and Switch

Most men are wired to be goal-oriented. A man will have an objective, take steps to reach it and then celebrate once he accomplishes it. Soon after, he will move on to another objective.

This is how a man approaches everything from sports to education to work. Unfortunately, it is likely how he approaches his relationship with his wife. It goes something like this:

He notices a beautiful woman and eventually falls in love with her. His goal-oriented self establishes an objective: “She will be mine.” He then begins to take steps to achieve his goal. He romances her. He pursues her. He makes time for her. He does all those sweet things that make her fall in love with him.

Eventually, she says yes to his proposal of marriage and they

celebrate with a wedding. The way the husband sees it, his goal was accomplished and he can move on to the next objective: career, financial security, whatever it may be.

But His Wife Sees It Differently

The wife fell in love with a man who was attentive, romantic and tender. She assumes that these things are at the core of who he is. Why wouldn't she? It is reasonable for her to assume that she gets to enjoy a lifetime of all those things he did to "woo" her. Think again. He has moved on to other things.

In essence, he promised her (indirectly) a marriage filled with a laser-like focus on the relationship. But once the honeymoon was over, his laser-like focus turned to the next objective. He promised one thing and delivered another. Thus, the bait and switch.

My friend Jackie Bledsoe puts it this way: "Before the wedding, you're in a relationship with a person's representatives. Once you're married, you get to meet the real person." Sad, but true.

What Can a Wife Do?

Ladies, if you feel like you got the old "bait and switch," know that you're not alone. It happens at some level in most every marriage. But here are some things to remember:

1. Unfortunately, some of this is rooted in the fall found in Genesis 3:16. Part of the curse was that wives would "long for their husbands." In other words, every wife will experience some form of dissatisfaction with her husband. You may be tempted to trade him in on a better model, but the longing for more will likely still be there.

2. Realize that he's not a bad guy. A man's tendency to focus on goals (and thus to move some of his attention away from you

after the honeymoon) is probably hard-wired into him. He can't help it. It's one of the things that makes him a good man, so don't assume the worst about him. Give him the benefit of the doubt that he is a well-intentioned man. He may be clueless about meeting your needs, but he's probably well-intentioned, nonetheless.

3. Finally, try to help him out without putting him down. Explain to him (again and again, if necessary) that you need to be desired. Because one of his greatest needs is to feel capable, be sure to affirm him in his accomplishments, especially on those rare moments that you do feel loved by him. A man will always gravitate toward affirmation and move away from criticism.

What Can a Husband Do?

1. You need to start by admitting to yourself and your wife that you did, in fact, pull a "bait and switch" on her. You are likely not giving her the attention and affection these days that you used to. Maybe it's time to repent of that and start moving in another direction. Memorize Ephesians 5:25. Make it one of your "life verses." Tattoo it on your arm if you have to.

2. Realize her need to be pursued is not going away. Ever. The level of attention and romance you employed to woo her is what she expects until the day you die. Telling her, "I told you I loved you once. If anything changes, I will let you know" is just wrong. The best advice I have ever heard about this is to imagine that you are in sales and that your wife is your biggest account. (Salesmen totally get this.) They spend lots of time nurturing a key customer, knowing that it is critical to their business. See your wife in the same way. You should do whatever it takes to make sure she sticks around. After all, she has a choice.

3. Grasp the fact that loving and pursuing your wife doesn't

have to be complicated or expensive. Little things matter. She wants to know that you are thinking of her, that she still captures your heart and rocks your world. Send a text, leave a note, call in the middle of the day to say, “I’m thinking about you.” Take her on a regular date. Even better, ask your wife what would make her feel loved by you. Then do those things! But remember, if she tells you and you don’t do it, you have successfully moved your marriage in the wrong direction. And that’s bad for everyone.

The Power to Make Things Better

Jesus promises us a rich and abundant life when we follow Him. Sadly, too many couples can’t honestly claim that they have a rich and abundant marriage. God wants to help us, and I think He does that mainly by transforming husbands.

John Gottman says, *“What men do in a relationship is the crucial factor that separates a great relationship from a failed one.”* I think he’s exactly right. Husbands, you have the opportunity to correct the “bait and switch” you pulled on your wife. God wants to help you. Your wife wants to help you too.

Here’s a Practical ACTION STEP:

Have a (positive and realistic) conversation with your spouse about what it looks like to communicate love in your relationship. Then figure out a few baby steps you might take to start moving toward a rich and abundant marriage. That’s what God offers you. When we look to Him and treat one another with grace, love and respect, we all have a shot of experiencing it.

*Adapted from , a ministry founded by **Barrett and Jenifer Johnson**. After serving in the local church for 25 years, Barrett and Jenifer launched INFO for Families as a ministry designed to encourage people through speaking, personal*

coaching and resource development. Barrett served for 15 years in youth ministry before serving for eight years as the Family Minister at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Atlanta, one of the largest churches in the South. He has degrees from Texas A&M University and Southwestern Seminary, but he and Jenifer have received their best education through the no-holds-barred nature of everyday family life.