

5 Ways to Dramatically Heal Your Marriage

In this article, I want to take you down memory lane to when you were first courting your spouse.

Do you remember how you could intentionally set it up to see your love at work, a certain place or a campus? Do you remember how you familiarized yourself with their schedule so you could optimize moments with them?

Do you remember making it a priority for yourself to remember things that were important to them such as specific dates, people, and events? Do you remember planning a date for your spouse with such detail that you knew they'd have a good time? Do you remember buying a favorite coffee, tea, chocolate or flower that you knew they would love?

If you're nodding your head yes, yes, yes as I am asking you these questions, you were a lover. You were intentionally loving another with them in mind.

The key word here and a fundamental characteristic is intentionality. A healthy and fit lover-spouse stays intentional over the decades of marriage. A less than fit lover-spouse gives themselves permission to forget what their spouse enjoys, what events or places are important to their lover and, honestly, it's more about themselves than being a lover to their spouse.

If you're strong in intentionality, you'll find being a lover-spouse very easy. In most cases, you're already being a pretty good lover-spouse. Intentionality is the spine of being a lover. When we commit to being intentional, we commit to a new path and a new future.

As a Christian, you've heard the prodigal son story (Luke

15:11-32) preached time and time again. However, I've never heard anyone really experience the power of intentionality in this story.

The story is straightforward. A boy takes his inheritance, moves to a far-off land and intentionally self-destructs through alcohol and sex. He goes broke.

Then he comes up with a plan of telling his dad he sinned, asking for forgiveness and hoping his dad will hire him on the ranch. However, when he hatched this plan he was in a far-off country. He had to intentionally and consistently walk daily for weeks or months to get back in his father's house.

Intentionality only works if you actually do it. Reading about it isn't doing it. Even planning to do it isn't doing it. Doing it is doing it. Now, if for whatever reason you are in the habit of not being an intentional lover toward your spouse, I'd follow the principles of the prodigal.

The first part of his plan was to go to his dad and take responsibility. I find as a couple if one or both of you have been irresponsible with being a lover, verbally repenting is very helpful. Unlike the prodigal son I wouldn't try to overcome years or decades of self-absorption, immaturity, inattentiveness, taking the other person for granted and not being there for them in one conversation.

You could begin to undo some of the damage by writing out the mistakes (sins you made in your relationship with your spouse) and go through this list with them. As you present your list, you could state, "I need you to forgive me for..." This list could comprise actual things you did, things you didn't do, didn't follow up on, needed to be reminded about repeatedly, attitudes or even just bad ideas.

Taking responsibility also gives you some ideas about creating a plan. You can see where things have to change, and things you need to do differently than before.

A couple suggestions I have from my couples work are:

–Write the plan up for yourself.

–Review the plan with your spouse to make sure it achieves what you hope it will.

–Make the goals achievable and measurable.

–You don't have to do it all in a week, but make goals you can do and sustain.

–Review your goals with someone of the same gender—a mentor, pastor or cell group leader. This kind of accountability always accelerates your success with such goals.

Taking these steps toward being an intentional lover to your spouse will dramatically increase the health of your marriage. This can be a very helpful exercise in recovering the intentionality in your marriage. {eoa}

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