

Marriage as Gift

Date Night Exercise: Cultivating Marriage as Gift

This fun and meaningful date night exercise is designed to help couples reflect on their marriage as a gift, inspired by the themes from the "Marriage as Gift" talk. It encourages intentional connection, small acts of kindness, and celebrating differences to deepen your bond. Think botanically—plant seeds, water them, and tend to the garden of your marriage with a thousand little touches!

Preparation

- * Time Needed: 1-3 hours - Enjoy!
- * Setting: A cozy, distraction-free environment (e.g., at home, a quiet café, or a park). Turn off phones or set them to Do Not Disturb to focus on each other.
- * Materials: A notebook or journal, pens, a candle (optional for ambiance), and a small snack or dessert to share.
- * Mindset: Approach this exercise with openness, humility, and a desire to honor your spouse as a gift. Be ready to listen and share without judgment. Take the pressure off and don't rush through these steps. One date is good...two dates to discuss these steps is even better!

Exercise Steps

1. Create a Sacred Space

- * Set up your space to feel intimate. Light a candle or sit close to signal this is a special moment.
- * Take turns sharing one thing you're grateful for about your spouse today. Optionally, say a brief prayer inspired by Psalm 128:1-2, thanking God for your marriage as a gift.

2. Reflect on Your Marriage Garden

Think of your marriage as a garden. What seeds (acts of kindness, time together) have you planted recently? What weeds (neglect, distractions) might need pulling? Listen without interrupting and respond with empathy, e.g., "That moment meant a lot to me too," or "Let's work on that together." Each spouse takes 3 minutes to write down and then share your answers:

- * One small moment from the past week where you felt connected (a "little touch").
- * One area of your marriage that could use more care.

3. Celebrate Your Differences

Celebrating differences is key to unconditional love. Reflect on how your spouse's unique traits enrich your marriage.

- * Take turns answering: What is one way your spouse's personality or approach differs from yours, and how has it blessed you? (e.g., one's a planner, the other's spontaneous).

- * After sharing, affirm your spouse: "I receive you as a gift because [specific trait]." E.g., "I receive you as a gift because your spontaneity brings joy to my life and encourages me to try new things!"

4. Plan a "Thousand Little Touches" Ritual

Inspired by the talk, create a small, repeatable action to cultivate intimacy and fun. Brainstorm one action to commit to for the next month.

- * Write it down and decide how to remind each other (e.g., a phone reminder).
 - Send a "thinking of you" text during the day.
 - Hug or kiss when leaving or returning home.
 - Ask, "How are you right now?" once a week and listen deeply.

5. Intimacy as a Hobby

The talk encouraged treating intimacy (spiritual, emotional, and physical) like a hobby—something you plan and practice intentionally. Discuss one way you can foster fun, friendship, or intimacy in your marriage.

- * Agree on one specific action to try in the next two weeks. Be realistic but intentional, and discuss how it might deepen your connection.
 - Plan a monthly date night to try something new (e.g., a cooking class, for an example or something you enjoy doing together. *BONUS: Do something that might stretch you to do an activity that your spouse likes!*)
 - Read a meaningful passage of Scripture together and pray over it together.
 - Explore non-sexual touch, like holding hands or cuddling while watching a movie.

6. Close with a Toast to Your Marriage

- * Share a small snack or dessert (e.g., a favorite treat or a glass of wine/juice).
- * Take turns completing this sentence: "I choose you because..." focusing on something specific about your spouse or marriage that feels like a gift.
- * End by toasting to your marriage as a reflection of Christ's love and a garden you'll continue to cultivate together.

Follow-Up

- * Revisit your notebook in a month to reflect on how your new ritual and intimacy action went. Did they help you feel more connected? What might you adjust? Consider repeating this date night exercise quarterly to keep tending your marriage garden.
- * If any challenges (e.g., sexual struggles or unresolved conflicts) surfaced during the exercise, pray about or discuss seeking support from a trusted friend, mentor, or counselor.

Enjoy this time of cultivating your marriage as a gift! May it be a joyful step toward deeper love, fun, and intimacy.