

NURTURING AN INTENTIONAL MARRIAGE

Part 3

In parts 1 and 2, we examined how we lose the intentionality of marriage. We are very intentional about most of what we do in life. We are intentional about our personal hygiene, about our work, about our education, about our recreation, and many other areas of life. Why do we think our marriage can thrive or even survive without an intentional effort to enrich and grow it? Couples who are in a marital crisis have consistently neglected this area of connection in their marriage. Let's review how we define an intentional couple.

The Intentional Couple is being conscious, deliberate, and planful about maintaining and building the sense of connection over the years, especially through *couple rituals*. We are most intentional during courtship. We are highly intentional about the wedding, what about the marriage? It is one of the biggest challenges for having a lifelong, fulfilling marriage, but it is also one of the best ways to build intimacy in the marriage.

When we work with couples who are in a crisis, we consistently see patterns of not connecting either daily or weekly. We highly encourage couples to find a way to connect daily, even for short periods of time. Then, find a way to have a date weekly or bi-weekly to build intimacy. The following are some ideas and guidelines for talk times and dates:

Talk Times as a Connection Ritual

- ❖ Create a conducive environment (turn off TV, etc.)
- ❖ Goal: a sense of connection, emotional temperature taking
- ❖ No problem talk or decision making talk
- ❖ Ideal: 15 minutes daily
- ❖ Easiest when tied to some other activity, e.g.- coffee after dinner, a walk, lunch, dinner, other predictable times
- ❖ Both partners must take responsibility for initiating and maintaining
- ❖ Sometimes hard to implement, be willing to restart and modify if it has been abandoned or isn't working well

Dates as an Intimacy Ritual

- ❖ Ingredients: privacy, enjoyment, conversation, focus on each other
- ❖ No struggle about where to go.
- ❖ Shared logistics: babysitters, reservations, etc.
- ❖ Expense can be variable, no cost to expensive, depending on budget
- ❖ Regularly scheduled, bi-weekly at least, if possible
- ❖ FUN!!!!
- ❖ Do not bring up topics of conflict or use it as a time to berate or nag

If one spouse travels apart from the other, whether it is a regular or unusual occurrence, find ways to connect with each other. Some ideas we gathered from our own experience and from others include:

- ❖ Leaving a note or card to be found by your spouse, could be done by the one leaving or the one staying at home
- ❖ Talking on the phone each night, praying together before hanging up
- ❖ Looking at the same star in the sky at the same pre-designated time, no matter where you are
- ❖ Bringing something small back to your spouse to let them know you were thinking of them
- ❖ Sending emails before going to bed or when getting up in the morning

Be Proud of Your Marriage! Celebrate It Together!!