

This little book gives you imaginative date ideas so you can skip the brainstorming and focus on making it happen. It even helps you keep the conversation going and speak each other's love languages. Deepen your relational connection—one uncommon date at a time.

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PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999 . . .



... or 1989 or 2009 or any other year that means something to your spouse. Maybe it's the year he or she graduated from high school. Maybe it's the year the two of you first met. Whatever the case, make that year the theme of a date night. Everything you do and everything you talk about on your date should have a connection to that year.

1

### GOING THE EXTRA MILE

How far you take this idea will depend on the personalities of you and your spouse and the amount of time you have to prepare. At the quick and easy end of the spectrum, you could make a playlist of songs that bring back fun memories of your chosen year. You could dig out yearbooks, photo albums, and other personal memorabilia from that time. You could style your hair and/or makeup as you did then. At the more difficult end of the spectrum, you could try to find vintage clothes and perhaps even a car that fits the bill.

## MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU

Embrace your nostalgic side as you celebrate life in 1999—or whatever year you choose. (We'll use “1999” in this chapter for the sake of convenience.) If you still live in the area where you grew up, plan your date around establishments that bring back memories of 1999. Eat at a favorite restaurant from your younger years. Play miniature golf, drive go-karts, or go to a drive-in movie at the same place you used to go in 1999. Cruise around the places you used to hang out. Take a walk in your old neighborhood. Hang out at your old playground. Immerse yourself in memories of 1999.

Another option is to make a group event of it. Invite friends from that era who are still local to join you in your celebration. Give them the parameters of the date and make a party of it. Encourage everyone to show up with fitting decorations, mementos, clothes, hairstyles, and accessories.

Even if your present location has no connection to your younger years, you can still throw a 1999-themed party with your current friends—or you can simply plan a date with your spouse at local establishments that were around in 1999.

Throughout your date, focus your conversation on events and memories from 1999. Talk about what your hopes, dreams, and expectations were. Talk about the things that seemed stressful back then and how they compare to the things that cause you stress today.



### SPEAKING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

If Physical Touch is your spouse's primary love language, choose the year you started dating as

the theme of your date. If possible, go back to the place where you first held hands or where you shared your first kiss. Re-create the situations as closely as you can. See if you can recapture those old feelings of nervousness and excitement as you hold hands and kiss again.



## WEAVING THE THIRD STRAND

Read together the apostle Paul's words in  
1 Corinthians 13:11:

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.”

Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion of the passage. (Please note that the responses in parentheses are merely suggestions, ideas to stimulate your brainstorming and give you something to react to. They should not be viewed as the “correct” answers to the questions.)

- ▶ What are some of the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes you left behind when you became an adult? (Perhaps you came to recognize that your heroes were real people with real issues like you.)
- ▶ Which parts of your childhood and teen years were hardest for you to put away? (Perhaps there were habits you had to do away with. Or maybe there were friendships that didn't make it through the transition.)
- ▶ If you could go back and talk to your younger self in (the year you chose for your date), what would you say?

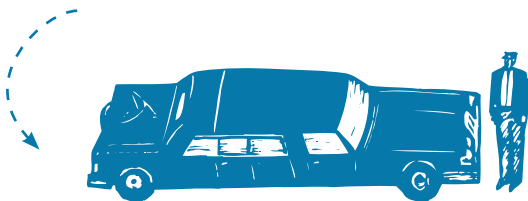
What advice would you offer? (Do you remember what you were going through at that time in your life? Is there something you think your younger self needed to hear that was never said? If you had been there to allay your younger self, what truth do you know now that you would have shared?)

- ▶ If your younger self could talk to you today, what do you think he or she would say? What advice might he or she give about dealing with the stress in your life? (Perhaps you take yourself too seriously, or maybe your priorities aren't what they ought to be.)
- ▶ How does God equip us to deal with the increased stress and responsibilities of adulthood? (God is with us at every moment, giving us exactly what we need for every situation as long as we are looking to Him as our source of life. He also brings people into our lives to remind us of the truth of who He is and who He says we are.)

Pray together, praising God for His patience and work in your life—for the ways in which He's equipped you to deal with the stress of adulthood and for the people He's surrounded you with who make life better. Ask Him for His continued guidance and peace as you face new challenges and stressors.

Suggested devotion from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 102  
(Reclaiming Lost Relationships)

## A CHAUFFEURED COMMUTE



For many people, the commutes to and from work are among the most stressful parts of the day. If this is true of your spouse, you can offer temporary relief from traffic stress by taking the wheel for a day and letting your spouse ride in comfort to and from work.

2

### GOING THE EXTRA MILE

If your work schedule is similar to your spouse's, you'll need to adjust it in order to make this plan work. You may also choose to spend time getting the car ready, cleaning it inside and out, as an actual chauffeur would.

Keep in mind, too, that this is a two-part activity. Your spouse will need a chauffeured ride *home* as well. If you'd care to make a full day of it, you could also make yourself available to drive your spouse back and forth to lunch.

If necessary, you may also want to familiarize yourself with the route and traffic patterns of your spouse's



commute. The more comfortable you are behind the wheel, the less stress your spouse will feel as a passenger.

## MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU

You don't necessarily have to dress the part (although a chauffeur's hat might be a nice touch), but you should *think* like a chauffeur in making your "client's" comfort and convenience your top priority.

Prepare your spouse's traveling space—whether it's in the back seat or the passenger seat—for the commute. Have a variety of pillows (for the head, neck, and lumbar region) on hand for maximum comfort. Set the thermostat at just the right temperature. Have your spouse's favorite coffee—and perhaps a tasty Danish or some other breakfast treat—within arm's reach.

Set the car stereo to your spouse's favorite station—or create a special playlist for the occasion, loaded with upbeat or mellow tunes, depending on your spouse's preference. Set a mood in the car that's conducive to your spouse's peace of mind. If your spouse prefers to talk in the morning, be prepared with some conversation starters. If your spouse prefers silence, honor his or her wishes.



## SPEAKING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

If your spouse's primary love language is Receiving Gifts, wrap a few small presents for him or her to open on the way to work. Think in terms of things your spouse can use in his or her work space: a framed picture of the two of you, a new coffee mug, a magnet of his or her favorite team's logo, a stress-relief ball, a fidget

spinner, or some other novelty item. Look for things that might provide small measures of stress relief during the workday.



## WEAVING THE THIRD STRAND

That evening, after your spouse has had time to decompress, spend some time talking about whether it was difficult for your spouse to “give up control” of the morning commute and let someone else take the wheel.

Read together Jeremiah 29:11:

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

Though these words were directed originally to the Jewish exiles who had been taken from Jerusalem, they resonate with everyone who places their faith in the Lord.

Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion of the passage. (Please note that the responses in parentheses are merely suggestions, ideas to stimulate your brainstorming and give you something to react to. They should not be viewed as the “correct” answers to the questions.)

- ▶ How has God prospered our family and given us hope? (God has brought you and your family through struggles. You’ve experienced His faithfulness in the past, and that gives you hope for the present and the future.)
- ▶ Why is it (sometimes) still so difficult to give up control to Him? (We often feel terrified of giving God complete control when we face tenuous circumstances. It’s easy

to give Him control of something like finances when we feel financially secure. But the moment our security weakens, we pull back finances from God and try to take control ourselves.)

- ▶ How can we help each other loosen the grip on our lives and trust God to take the wheel? (Trust each other to lovingly hold each other accountable in those areas of your lives where you hold back from entrusting things to God.)

For a deeper dive into the topic, look at the stories of the Old Testament prophets Balaam (Num. 22) and Jonah (Jonah 1–4). Both men tried to take the reins of their lives from God’s hands. Balaam steered his donkey straight into the path of an angel with a drawn sword. He escaped being killed only because the animal he was riding had clearer spiritual vision than he did. Jonah chose a route that landed him in the digestive system of a large fish.

Swap stories about times when each of you tried to do what Balaam and Jonah did: take the wheel of your life from God’s hands. Talk about the less-than-ideal results you experienced and the hard-earned lessons you learned.

Pray together, thanking God for His patience with your efforts to take control from Him and for His wisdom and loving guidance in helping you prosper and giving you hope.

Suggested devotion from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 769  
(Our Guide)

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS



**What might have happened if you and your spouse had met at a different time in your lives? Would sparks have flown? Would your chemistry have been apparent right away? Would you have experienced love at first sight?**

**These are the questions you'll answer with this quick and creative adventure.**

3

### GOING THE EXTRA MILE

You can add an extra dimension to this activity by involving some of your friends—ideally, people who didn't know you when you were young. You'll need to create and print out two full dating profiles, the kind you would find on a legitimate dating site. Make sure, however, that the profiles are anonymous—with no photos, names, or clues that would identify you or your spouse.

Ask your friends to read the profiles—but don't tell them who they belong to—and determine whether the two people seem compatible. Encourage them to

go into detail in their analysis and talk about which qualities and characteristics seem to match, and which don't. (Obviously, you'll need to keep a good sense of humor through it all, even if they can find no shred of compatibility.)

## MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU

The older you were when you met your spouse, the more effective this activity will be. Try to picture yourselves as you were years before you met each other. What did you look like? What were your hobbies and passions? What were you looking for in someone of the opposite sex?

Once you have a pretty good handle on what you were like, create dating profiles that would have suited you back in the day. You can be as creative or as straightforward as you like. Just make sure that your profiles not only reflect who you were and what you were looking for but also are eye-catching. For example:

*Looking for someone with natural rhythm, an adventurous spirit, and a killer body? I play percussion in marching band, love to go rock climbing on weekends, and swim competitively. I also love trying new foods and watching old movies.*

*Han Solo looking for Princess Leia. Seeking someone with a spirit of adventure and a love of geek culture. Gold bikini optional.*

Once you've completed your dating profiles, share them with each other and look for common ground. Would you

likely have been interested in each other back then? If so, why? If not, why? (And, if not, make sure you maintain a loving, good-natured, self-deprecating, honest tone as you discuss why not.)



## SPEAKING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

This exercise presents a golden opportunity to do something meaningful for someone whose primary love language is Words of Affirmation.

Create a second profile for your spouse—this one, a marriage profile. List and describe the positive qualities you see in your spouse—the characteristics that still attract you and make you feel blessed to be married to him or her.



## WEAVING THE THIRD STRAND

Read Lamentations 3:25–26 together:

“The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”

Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion of the passage. (Please note that the responses in parentheses are merely suggestions, ideas to stimulate your brainstorming and give you something to react to. They should not be viewed as the “correct” answers to the questions.)

- ▶ What happens when you try to rush the Lord’s timing? (You discover that your reckoning of the “right time” is faulty. You miss out on His immediate blessings when your focus is on what you don’t have yet.)

- ▶ Why is it sometimes difficult to wait quietly for the Lord? (When we see Him working in the lives of others, it's tempting to be envious. We may wonder whether we're being "punished" or taught a lesson.)
- ▶ How do you see God's timing at work in your relationship? (The sharp edges of your personalities that may have kept you from connecting earlier in your lives got smoothed down by your life experiences, which may have made you more attractive to each other when you finally did connect. You also had a chance to mature and discover what you wanted in a spouse.)

Pray together, thanking God for the perfect timing you see in the timeline of your relationship. Ask Him to give you the wisdom to recognize His timing in other areas of your life and the patience to wait for Him.

Suggested devotion from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 617  
(God Speaks. Listen.)

## DANCE WITH ME



It takes two to tango. It also takes two to merengue, fox-trot, and waltz. If you've never learned how to do one of these dances—or if you've ever thought about doing any kind of dance routine—here's your opportunity. Set aside a block of time to learn a dance with your spouse.

4

### GOING THE EXTRA MILE

It would be a shame to pour your time and effort into mastering a dance only to have no place to showcase your moves. For that reason, you may want to coordinate this challenge with the wedding of a friend or family member. Give yourself plenty of time before the event to learn the dance and get good at it. And when the day of the wedding reception arrives, you can unleash your routine for all to see, cheer, and marvel at. (Just be careful not to upstage the bride and groom.)



## MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU

The first thing you need to do is decide on the kind of dance you want to do. Do you want something fast or slow, something formal or informal? Once you've decided what you're going to do, you can decide *how* you're going to do it. There are many different ways to learn a dance. You can enroll in a dance class for formal instruction. You can ask a friend or family member with dance experience to coach you. You can also find any number of tutorials online.

You'll also need to decide how much time you want to put into the process. There are plenty of short routines you could learn in one session. Others, however, may involve a daily or weekly investment of time.

Maintaining the proper attitude will go a long way toward ensuring success. You want to have fun along the way, of course. But you also want to keep a level of commitment and determination to get better each time you practice. You want to maintain a patient and encouraging spirit toward your spouse. Remember, your ultimate success depends on your ability to move as one.



### SPEAKING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

This adventure will likely be right up the alley of someone whose primary love language is Physical Touch. Make sure that the dance you choose offers plenty of opportunities for cheek-to-cheek closeness. While you're practicing, make sure that you occasionally—and purposefully, though not too obviously—“flub” the portions of the dance that require the most physical contact

with your spouse, ensuring that you'll have to keep practicing them over and over and over again.



## WEAVING THE THIRD STRAND

Read together the following passages:

- ▶ 2 Samuel 6:14: “Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might.” The context of the verse is the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, which was one of the highlights of David’s reign.
- ▶ Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: . . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion of the passages. (Please note that the responses in parentheses are merely suggestions, ideas to stimulate your brainstorming and give you something to react to. They should not be viewed as the “correct” answers to the questions.)

- ▶ Why do you think King David danced? (Dancing was one way he knew to express his joy and gratitude.)
- ▶ Later in 2 Samuel 6, David’s wife criticized him for dancing, because it wasn’t a dignified thing for a king to do. Why do the opinions of others tend to inhibit us? (When other people aren’t experiencing “a time to dance,” they may be envious of people who are. So they

target our self-consciousness in order to mute our “dancing.”)

- ▶ How do you know when it’s time to dance? (Any time you recognize God’s extraordinary blessings in your life is an opportunity to dance. “Telling the time” is often just a matter of being in the moment and being willing to react to it.)

Pray together, thanking God for His presence in your life throughout the seasons of life. Ask Him to give you the courage and unselfconsciousness to dance as joyously as David did—when it’s time.

Suggested devotion from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 942  
(The Barren Seasons)

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