

SoulMates

Reaching Out to Married Couples

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*SoulMates*¹ events are for any married couple who enjoy going out together and want to deepen the friendship aspect of their relationship. *SoulMates* events enrich marriages through relaxed, non-threatening, fun-filled experiences.

Events typically occur on a Saturday evening after Sabbath or on Sunday and include a special dinner, presentations, games, discussion and fun. A private dining room of a local hotel with sufficient space for couples to be able to move freely about the room is preferred, though the program could also take place in a church hall or other meeting room where the environment can be made attractive and relaxing, and where there are sufficient catering facilities. *SoulMates* events have good outreach potential—they provide an opportunity for Adventist husbands and wives to invite their non-Adventist spouse or other non-Adventist couple friends to a time of social fellowship.

Overview of the *SoulMates* Programme

The following program outline is provided for leaders. It could also be used as a basis for the printed evening programmes given to the guests.

- 7:00 p.m. Arrival; guests are welcomed as they arrive
Couples enjoy quizzes and an ice-breaker question at their dinner tables
- 7:20 p.m. Welcome and introduction to the evening - Host Couple
- 7:30 p.m. Blessing offered on the meal – Host Couple
Dinner
- 8:15 p.m. Two mini-presentations by two different couples
- 8:40 p.m. Dessert
Prizes for quiz winners
Balloon game
- 9:00 p.m. Discussion and questions
- 9:20 p.m. Couples plan future friendship times
- 9:50 p.m. Closing remarks; blessing – Host Couple
- 10:00 p.m. Departure

¹ *SoulMates* was developed as a joint project of the Family Ministries and Women's Ministries Departments of the South England Conference.

***SoulMates* Event Planning Calendar**

• *Six months ahead*

- Establish a committee to plan and manage the event. This may be the Family Ministries committee, a sub-group of the FM committee, or a special committee selected by the church board.
- Create a budget. Costs may be borne by a special appropriation from the church (as an outreach event, evangelism funds may be available) or as part of the Family Ministries' regular budget. Income options might include: (1) charging participating couples an admission charge or a charge only for the meal or (2) finding sponsors in the church or among local businesses who will underwrite the event in whole or in part in exchange for advertising.
- Select a facility. If using a hotel, you may wish to obtain several price quotations so as to negotiate the best price for the event.
- Present the *SoulMates* event budget to the church board for approval. (Note: In churches using an annual budget plan, the event budget may need to be submitted earlier.)

• *Four months ahead*

- Select a host couple responsible to emcee the event.
- Select two couples who can each give a brief ten-minute presentation about fun and friendship in their own relationship. Encourage them to develop lively, humorous and brief presentations with visual aids if possible.
- Select additional people responsible for the following tasks:
 - Advertising the event through posters, mailings, e-mails, church website, etc. You may wish to offer a special premium to couples who register early (gift book or other gift). You may wish to publish the dinner menu and invite applicants to respond if they have special dietary needs.
 - Purchasing the items needed for props and as gifts to the couples.
 - Processing applications. Applications should be processed and receipted as they come in and tickets sent to participants with information letters and receipts. Persons responsible for advertising should receive weekly updates on registrations so that the need for additional advertising can be assessed.
 - Assisting with the public address system and the recorded music at the event.
- Recruit volunteers for child care who will offer their services so that couples with young children can attend. Child-care volunteers should be child-safety checked, i.e., carefully screened and background-checked.

• *Two weeks ahead*

- Programmes to be printed.
- Place cards to be created for each person.
- Ice-breaker questions to be printed ready for each place-setting. Use questions like:
 - *What are some of the funniest things that have happened to you as a couple?*
 - *Tell each other one of your funny couple memories, then choose a funny memory from your couple life to share with the others at your table if you wish.*

- Table seating plans to be arranged and printed.
 - Quiz sheets (Handout #1 *How Do I Love Thee?*; Handout #2 *How Do I Love Thee Answer Sheet*) to be copied and prepared—one per couple.
 - Date planning sheets (Handout # 3A, 3B *Date Planner*) copied—one per person.
 - Special prizes to be purchased and wrapped. (Special prizes are for quiz winners, longest married couple and the most recently married couple.)
 - Purchase 6 balloons (heart-shaped are preferred if available, or use good quality round balloons that do not burst easily).
 - Purchase 6 different gifts that would encourage a couple to have fun together, such as a book of marriage cartoons or fun dates for couples, a game, vouchers for restaurants or attractions, etc. Purchase 6 gift bags for these prizes.
 - Take-home bags filled and ready to give to participant couples (see below for suggested gift bag contents).
 - Choose appropriate gift bags decorated with hearts and/or love messages suitable for the occasion. (These, together with decorations on the theme of friendship, love and romance, are often available around Valentine’s Day.)
 - Include a variety of items in the gift bags, then top the filled bags with shredded or lightly crumpled tissue:
 - “Putting the Tingle Back into Togetherness.” The text is included with these program helps. Adapt as necessary for your setting, then format and print as an attractive leaflet.
 - Tea-lights or candles (heart-shaped tea-lights are preferred if available).
 - Heart-shaped chocolates and/or love heart sweets (message candies).
 - Bible verse cards (find pre-printed cards with verses about love on them, or create your own).
 - Love coupons. Provide some samples such as: “*This coupon good for a night of intimate pillow talk;*” “*Redeemable for a relaxing afternoon in a quiet park (by the water, etc.). Picnic and romantic companionship provided;*” “*This coupon entitles the holder to one candlelight dinner (with the issuer of the coupon) at the most romantic restaurant in town.*” Include appropriately decorated blank cards so couples can prepare and issue their own coupons.
 - Pots of bubbles (small containers of soap-bubble blowing liquid) to blow.
 - Fun things suitable for men. You might purchase a few sets of men’s cologne samplers and put one of the small sample bottles in each of the bags. Other ideas: A special mug for his hot-drink, a key-chain with space for his wife’s photo, etc.)
 - Advertising for any future or local marriage enriching event or retreat.
 - Discount vouchers and any flyers/leaflets advertising fun activities for couples in your area.
- *One week ahead*
 - Make sure the individual responsible for the public address system and background music has made appropriate arrangements:

- For public address/amplification system.
 - For CD player and suitable soft music selections.
 - Make sure any supplies, handouts, etc. needed for the evening are available and ready to use.
- *Event night – before couples arrive*
- Arrive with set-up team well before published start time.
 - Check table-seating arrangements.
 - Lay place cards and ice-breaker questions on the tables.
 - Put one programme per couple on the table.
 - Put take-home bags in a secure place until you are ready to hand them out.
 - Prepare the balloon game using 6 heart-shaped balloons. Before inflating the balloons, write each of the numbers 1- 6 on 6 separate pieces of paper. Insert one number into each balloon. Then inflate the balloons and tie them closed. Place the 6 different prizes in 6 different gift bags with different numbered gift tags, corresponding to the numbers inside the balloons.
 - Display prizes for quizzes on a table, together with the prepared balloons.
 - Check that public address/amplification system and background music are in order.
 - Do last-minute briefing of host couples and presenters making sure they have all the facilities information available to pass on to participants.

Detailed Evening Programme for Hosts and Presenters

- 7:00 p.m. Welcome guests individually as they arrive. Provide them with necessary information about the facility (coat room, toilets/restrooms, water fountain, etc.). Inform them of your plan for the quizzes and icebreakers at their tables. Give each couple a set of quizzes and a pen, so they can begin whenever they wish.
- 7:20 p.m. Host couple formally opens the *SoulMates* event, acquaints couples with the goals and expectations of the evening, and introduces speakers.
- 7:30 p.m. Host couple offers a blessing on the meal.
Dinner is served.
After dinner, the host couple announces a special prize for the couple who has been married the longest. A little later, a prize for the most recently wed couple is announced.
- 8:10 p.m. Score the quizzes. Quizzes may be collected and scored by the host couple during the presentations, or answer sheets could be distributed for couples to score their own. For additional fun, have each couple mark another couple's quiz papers.
- 8:15 p.m. First presenter couple makes their 10-minute presentation.
- 8:30 p.m. Second presenter couple presents for ten minutes.
- 8:40 p.m. Dessert is served.
Announce quiz prize winners.
- 8:50 p.m. Play the balloon game.*
- 9:00 p.m. Allow time for general discussion, feedback and questions.

- 9:20 p.m. Introduce the date-planning sheets. Explain how to complete the sheet and allow time for couples to plan future dates together.
- 9:50 p.m. Host couple closes the evening with a concluding thought and a blessing.

* *Balloon game.* Invite couples to leave their tables and go to an open area of the room. Toss the six balloons into the air. The object of the game at this stage is to playfully bat the balloons about among the couples, doing so gently, but without letting any of them touch the ground for at least 1 minute. (Note: If batting isn't safe because there are unprotected candles on the tables, couples could toss the balloons back and forth across the room to each other.)

After a successful minute (or a few tries to reach the one-minute mark), tell couples to catch the balloons. Individual couples with balloons then have to place the balloons between their two bodies. The object is for a couple to hug each other tightly and squeeze their balloon until the balloon pops. (Note: The stronger the balloons, the more challenging this will be!) Once the balloon has popped, the couple retrieve the numbered paper originally inside the balloon and claim their prize.

Sample Text for *SoulMates* Advertising Flyer

We are planning a special event for married couples on (date) at (place/venue). You are invited! Come and enjoy a special time with your mate! Bring your couple friends with you and enjoy the evening together!

The evening will include dinner, some mini-presentations on fun in marriage and several fun activities. Pre-selected married couples will be sharing different ways that they have developed their friendship over the years and how they have tried to cope with the challenge of spending quality time together. Practical suggestions will be blended with laughter, games, and time for couples to plan some fun times of their own.

There will be plenty of surprises and even a bag of treats to take away!

We believe it is God's plan for married couples to be best friends. Such friendship helps couples through the challenges of life and safeguards marriage.

Come and join us for this special evening to enrich your marriage. Please return your application form to (name and address) by (date) with your cheque for the full amount payable to (name of account). Check the designated boxes if you wish to take advantage of our volunteer baby-sitter service, our financial assistance for this program for those with special circumstances, or have specific dietary needs.

Sample
Application Form for *SoulMates*
Dinner and Discussion
Hotel Name and Address
Date: 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Please give the names you wish to have on your place cards:

Surname/last name.....

Man's first name.....

Woman's first name.....

Home address.....

.....Postal code

Home telephone Mobile.....

E-mail address

Church attending (if applicable).....

Date of your wedding Years married

Check boxes below if you would like more information on:

- Volunteer baby-sitter service.
- Financial assistance for this program.
- Special dietary needs.

Admission by ticket only - Ticket price: *XX* per couple
Payment by cheque made payable to: '*XXX*'
Return forms and payment to:
Named Person
Address: Telephone: E-mail:

Please apply by *date*.

Putting the Tingle Back into Togetherness! Fun and Friendship for Over-Worked Couples

When both of you live busy lives, it's sometimes hard to find the time to do special things together as a couple. Time together though is one of the best ways to safeguard your marriage. With just a little effort, you can begin to make time to rediscover each other as friends and playmates!

Decide to forego a TV program and to talk together instead. Share your dreams and hopes, and then talk about what would be necessary to make those dreams come true. Laugh together about the funny things that happen each day, share a joke, read funny stories from the Internet together, or watch a good sitcom. Laughter is healing and refreshing and helps to carry us through the irritations and hurts of life.

With a little time and thought you can begin to put some of the fun of dating back into your marriage:

- Think about the things you did together for fun before you were married.
- Think about the things that you always wanted to do, but never had the time or the opportunity to try.
- Write a list of ten places you'd like to go, or things you'd like to do on a date together. Swap lists with each other and see what you've each written. Take turns choosing a date idea from your spouse's list. Keep adding new ideas to the lists.
- Do all you can to make the dating occasion enjoyable, even if it's not the sort of thing you'd normally do. Focus on your spouse's enjoyment and find little ways to add delight and surprises to the experience, such as secretly buying him or her a special souvenir that they said they liked, or finding a new place to eat lunch, or meeting them with a bunch of flowers.
- At the end of each date, make sure you know when and where the next date will be. Looking forward to something is half the fun!
- Have a list of fun things to do at home too, for those times when you don't feel like going out, or when you can't get a babysitter.

Ideas for creative dates (and some good laughs)

- Pick up a book of local walks. Choose a walk where you've never been before.
- Take a day course together and learn how to make stained glass, watercolour paintings, willow baskets, fix car engines, or whatever.
- Allow each person the same budget to find a wearable outfit from charity/goodwill shops. Wear your newly-purchased outfits when you go out to lunch together, choosing a restaurant appropriate to your clothes.
- Eat each course of a meal in a different café or restaurant.
- Meet in a park with a packed lunch to share and pretend you've never met before. Feed the ducks together and sit on the swings.
- Go to a place where there are street entertainers and enjoy watching their antics.

- Try a new kind of restaurant that you've never tried before such as Thai, Cantonese, Tuscany, Vegetarian, etc.
- Go to a spa and enjoy having a sauna and Jacuzzi together.
- Visit a card shop and read the funny cards together, then each choose a card you'd like to give the other person. You can either read them in the shop and leave them there or buy them and take them home.
- Find a boat to hire for an hour or two. Take a picnic with you and a book of love poetry, or a humorous book about marriage.
- Take a blanket to the top of a hill one evening; lie on your backs looking at the stars. Take a book of constellations with you so you can try to find them in the sky. Take a flask of hot chocolate or soup to share together. You might even see some shooting stars!
- Learn to ice-skate together, try go-karting, or buy a simple kite and try flying it together.
- Find a free concert to attend or special evenings at museums.
- Visit a cathedral together and ask for the children's guide to the building. These often give lots of unusual facts about the building and interesting details to look for. Stay for evensong, for a peaceful and ethereal experience. Enjoy a meal in the cathedral café, or in a near-by restaurant.

Ideas for evenings in:

- Choose a menu together and cook a meal for two at home. Try cooking an Indian meal and serve it wearing an improvised sari, or a Japanese meal, to eat sitting on floor cushions around a low table. Find some music to suit the culture and enjoy the evening. If cooking's too much for you, order a takeaway.
- Compile a list of videos you'd both like to see together, so you know which ones to hire when you have the opportunity. Don't forget the popcorn!
- Play your favourite childhood board-games.
- Surf the Internet together for ideas for your next outing or holiday.
- Find or buy some crayons and drawing paper and have a go at drawing each other's portrait.
- Buy some child's modelling clay and try to sculpt a model of each other's head.
- Find an old piece of furniture that needs a face-lift and remodel it together, or buy some unfinished wood furniture and give it a personalised touch together. Sign and date your creation.
- Share five special memories you each have about your relationship and five special hopes or plans for the future.
- Borrow a book about massage from the library and learn how to give each other a massage with some of the fragrant aromatherapy oils you can buy.
- Find a modern Bible and read the Song of Solomon to each other. You may be surprised at what you find!
- Make a scrapbook of memorabilia of your fun times together. Jot notes of ideas for more fun times together in a note-book so that you're never short of new ways to have fun!

How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways . . .

Match the different ways to say “I love you” to the language to which they belong by putting the letter from the second column after the language in the first column. Try saying some of these to each other! Can you say “I love you” in another language besides these?

1. Danish	A. S’ agapo
2. Esperanto	B. Ik hou van jou
3. Gaelic	C. Nakupenda
4. Greek	D. Ja cie Kocham
5. Italian	E. Mai taunu pyar karda
6. Kiswahili	F. Te iu besc
7. Mohawk	G. Ch’an Rak Khun
8. Ndebele	H. Jeg elsker dig
9. Dutch	I. ’Rwy’n dy garu di
10. Polish	J. Ta gra agam ort
11. Punjabi	K. Ich lebe dich
12. Romanian	L. Ti amo
13. Slovak	M. Tora dost daram
14. Sri Lankan	N. Mama Oyata Arderyi
15. Thai	O. Niyakutanda
16. Welsh	P. Mi amass vin
17. Yiddish	Q. Techihhila
18. Vietnamese	R. Lubim ta
19. Sioux	S. Konoronhkwa
20. Persian	T. Toi yeu em

How Do I Love Thee? Answer Sheet

Danish	H. Jeg elsker dig
Esperanto	P. Mi amass vin
Gaelic	J. Ta gra agam ort
Greek	A. S' agapo
Italian	L. Ti amo
Kiswahili	C. Nakupenda
Mohawk	S. Konoronhkwa
Ndebele	O. Niyakutanda
Dutch	B. Ik hou van jou
Polish	D. Ja cie Kocham
Punjabi	E. Mai taunu pyar karda
Romanian	F. Te iu besc
Slovak	R. Lubim ta
Sri Lankan	N. Mama Oyata Arderyi
Thai	G. Ch'an Rak Khun
Welsh	I. 'Rwy'n dy garu di
Yiddish	K. Ich lebe dich
Vietnamese	T. Toi yeu em
Sioux	Q. Techihhila
Persian	M. Tora Dost dalam

Date Planner

List things that make a date fun, romantic and exciting for you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

List types of dates that would be fun to do with your spouse. Write down as many ideas as you can, then swap lists with your partner.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Plan several special dates together. Take turns, each of you using ideas from the other's list. The activities on the list of your partner may not always seem to be your idea of fun, but given that your partner chose them, they might be more fun than you think! Remember, your spouse will be choosing something from your list also!

Husband's choices from wife's list (1) _____; (2) _____

Wife's choices from husband's list (1) _____; (2) _____

Continue planning by narrowing the list to two of these. Assign one to each partner for planning.

Husband's date to plan _____

Wife's date to plan _____

Now, turn the page over and begin planning your fun . . . !!

Date Planner (Continued)

Take a few moments to plan the date you have been given to co-ordinate.

- When will it be?
- Where will you go?
- What will you do?
- Will it be a surprise, or will you tell your partner in advance which activity you have chosen?
- What will you do for meals, etc.?
- What transportation will you need?
- What arrangements need to be made ahead of time?
 - Tickets booked
 - Directions needed
 - Tables reserved
 - Other advance arrangements _____
- What will the dress code be?
- What information does your spouse need to know in advance?
- What else might make the date extra special, fun or amazing?
- What little gift could you give your partner as a treat on the date?
- What will you do if your plans don't quite work out?
- What else might you need to think about?

Now go and have some fun!!