

Strengthening the Marriages of Family & Friends

by Karen Holford
Family Ministries Director
Southern England Conference
Trans-European Division

- Write letters of appreciation to couples who have inspired and strengthened your marriage, or design a card for this purpose on your computer. Encourage other couples to do the same.
- Celebrate the anniversaries of your family and friends in a special way. Hold a surprise party, send cards, and give marriage-building books. Show them that their marriage is important to you, too.
- Sign up for an e-mail service that offers weekly marriage strengthening tips and forward these ideas to family and friends at www.2-in-2-1.co.uk.
- Pass around an attractive blank book at a wedding reception and invite people to write their favourite marriage “date” ideas, and any tips they would like to share to strengthen the couple’s marriage.
- During wedding services, have a special moment of recommitment for the married couples who are attending.
- Invite other couples to come together for fun, either for a meal at your home, or a picnic, or to go bowling, etc. Many couples don’t take the time to have fun in their relationship, so this may encourage them to relax together.
- Invite couples around to watch a marriage strengthening video such as *The Story of Us*; *A Beautiful Mind*; *Family Man* and *Town and Country*. Create some discussion questions for the couples to take home and discuss together. Visit www.smartmarriages.com for an excellent discussion guide for *The Story of Us*. Give marriage strengthening books, videos and tapes as engagement, wedding, birth, anniversary and birthday gifts.
- Encourage married couples who are experiencing a long-distance relationship to visit www.longdistancecouples.com for creative ideas about strengthening a relationship where the husband and wife have to live apart because of work commitments, etc.
- Offer to provide babysitting, or have your friends’ children sleep at your home for the night, so that couples can go out together and have some time alone.

Reprinted from Holford, K. (2004). *The Family Book*. (p. 97). Alma Park, Grantham, England: The Stanborough Press Limited. Used by permission.