

# *Celebrate Your Marriage!*

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## **Introduction**

Most of us love celebrations! We celebrate birthdays; we celebrate anniversaries. We celebrate religious holidays and special political days. We celebrate all kinds of accomplishments – like getting a new job or a promotion, or being accepted into or graduating from a college or university. We also celebrate extraordinary events like a wedding, a child’s birth, someone’s baptism or ordination, and many other special times.

This is a seminar on celebrating *marriage*. We invite you to think with us about how you can celebrate *your* marriage—not only on your wedding anniversary, but at many other times, for many other reasons, and in many different ways.

**Couple activity.** *Invite couples to reflect on the following questions:*

- Where did you learn about marriage? Which of the following influences has had the greatest impact on your understanding of marriage and relationships?
  - TV sitcoms
  - TV reality shows
  - Courses
  - Locker room discussions
  - Parents
  - Scripture
  - Something/someone else \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What advice have your parents given you on marriage? What advice did you once reject but later realized it was sound? What happened? What differences will that make in your future decisions?
  
- Have you ever said, “If only I knew then what I know now.” What is it that you have learned and how has that changed life in marriage for you?

## **Calls to Celebration**

In the Bible, celebrating was something God’s people did on special occasions and at special events.

- **The Sabbath.** The Sabbath was a day to celebrate: “From evening to evening, you shall *celebrate* your Sabbath” (Lev. 23:32 NKJV, italics supplied).
- **Festivals and holy days.** See the use of “celebrate” in Leviticus 23:41; Esther 9:21, 27.
- **Special occasions.** The Jews celebrated the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. “Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to *celebrate the dedication* with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps” (Neh. 12:27 NKJV, italics supplied).
- **Weddings.** Weddings were occasions for celebration, such as the wedding festival which Jesus and his disciples attended (John 2:1-11).

So we find good scriptural support for having times of celebration in our lives. We believe marriage deserves to be celebrated often, in special ways. Though Ellen White doesn’t use the word “celebrate,” she was emphatic that there should be repeated affirmation of their marriage by the marital partners:

Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. (White, 1952, p. 106)

## Celebrate Your Marriage Daily

♥ **Kiss each other every day.** “As Time Goes By” is a 1931 song composed by Herman Hupfeld. It became famous in 1942 when it was sung by Sam (Dooley Wilson) in the movie *Casablanca*. Memorable lines in the lyrics are:

You must remember this  
A kiss is just a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh.  
The fundamental things apply  
As time goes by.

Kissing daily is one of those fundamental things that apply to every healthy marriage relationship as time goes by.

**Couple activity.** *Provide couples with a blank sheet of paper on which they can write their answers to the following: When do couples typically kiss? List as many occasions as you can think of, i.e., to greet each other after being apart, etc. Then, list the times when you kiss each other.*

As time passes, a lot of the kissing that takes place between husbands and wives is no more than a quick peck on the cheek or lips. However, Ellen Kreidman, author of *The 10 Second Kiss*, suggests that in order to maintain a healthy, vibrant, passionate marriage, couples should kiss for ten seconds. She writes,

When a couple stands at the altar and vows to love each other “till death do us part,” they take for granted that they will stay intimately connected forever. The kiss at the end of the ceremony is symbolic of that connection, and throughout the relationship the kiss remains at the core. The kiss is the most intimate connection possible between two people—even more intimate than sexual intercourse . . . (Kreidman, 1998, p. 19)

The kiss is deeply expressive of the relationship. It is a barometer of how things are going. A couple can be having sex but not kissing. If they are not kissing passionately the relationship may very well be in trouble. Almost without noticing it, they may become simply roommates and no longer lovers. Kreidman contends that the ten-second kiss can be a remedy to retrieve romance:

Engaging in a ten-second kiss every day declares that you are lovers—not just roommates. It helps you stay connected. Even though you may tell your mate you love them every day, giving them a ten-second kiss tells them, “I’m still in love with you.”

The ten-second kiss has a more immediate and dramatic effect on a relationship than any other homework I’ve ever assigned. Given in the morning, it sets the tone for the rest of the day. Given early in the evening, it sets the mood for the rest of the night. No matter what time of day you kiss, you’ll feel warm, close, and connected. (p. 23)

We want you to reach for your mate tonight and give them a passionate 10-second kiss. When they say, “What’s gotten into you?” you can tell them, “We are not going to be roommates anymore. From now on we are lovers again.”

Before you kiss, you may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, tense, annoyed, and even distant. But when you do it anyway, the result is almost always the same—you feel closer, warmer, more connected. When we kiss, we are exchanging our breath with one another. “When we exchange breath, we are breathing in our mate’s life force, his energy and he is breathing in ours. In this way, we actually become one” (Kreidman, 1998, p. 41).

**Couple activity.** *Let’s stop right now and begin to practice this simple remedy to a sluggish relationship. Please stand, face each other, put your arms around each other, and I will count to ten so you know when to stop. Ready, set, kiss!*

♥ **Give 30 minutes of undivided attention to each other every evening.** For years we have suggested a simple formula to improve any marriage:

Spend undivided attention with your spouse, a minimum of

- 30 minutes every day
- 1 whole evening each week
- 1 whole day each month
- 1 whole weekend each quarter

Through the rest of this seminar we will refer to each of these time periods as crucial to the celebration of your marriage. First, let’s talk about the daily minimum: 30 minutes of undivided attention each day. In an Internet article entitled “Spend 30 Minutes a Day Talking,” Kreidman cites startling data on the communication patterns of American couples:

The average American couple spends 20 minutes a week talking. That averages out to 3 minutes a day. That includes Good Morning. What's for dinner? Any mail? How are the kids? How was work?

What do you know of, that can survive on 3 minutes? Could you study for 3 minutes a day and hope to pass a course? Could you raise kids on 3 minutes a day? Could you have fallen in love if you spent 3 minutes a day together?

So how can we spend 3 minutes a day and think we'll have a meaningful relationship? WE CAN'T! (Kreidman, 2010b)

Against this backdrop, Kreidman makes her recommendation to spend 30 minutes each day talking. We echo her sentiments. We find evening to be a good time. You should be alone as a couple. Your time should be uninterrupted. And each partner's attention to the other should be *undivided*. By undivided attention we mean no TV, radio, computers, cell phones, magazines, books, household chores, children, friends, family, etc. should intrude.

**Couple activity.** *Provide couples with a blank sheet of paper. Invite them to list times when they have spent time like this with each other. What new ideas do you have about how you could spend those thirty minutes each day to celebrate each other and your relationship? After a few minutes, invite couples to volunteer to share from their lists. Share your own ideas as a leader or leader couple. Kreidman lists the following which may be helpful to stimulate additional ideas:*

- Go for a nice long walk, holding hands, of course.
- Go for a ride in the car and stop at a secluded spot.
- Go to an informal restaurant to talk over a hot drink.
- Sit down in your favorite room; put on some soft music and just talk. (Kreidman, 2010b)

♥ **“Remember when . . . .”** A fun way to celebrate your marriage is by recalling happy memories, remembering where you have been and how you got where you are. Ellen G. White wrote of the church, “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (White, 1893). The same can be said of our marriages: We have nothing to fear for the future except as we forget all that God has done for us as a couple in the past.

You could make a marriage celebration game out of “Remember when . . . ?” Select one special event that happened in your life, gather up any pictures you have of it, and talk about the people, the place(s), the fun memories (or even the sad ones) that brought you together at the time.

Some additional ideas:

- Plan a Saturday night to watch “old” family movies.
- Look through family photo albums together.
- Make a scrap book together.
- Write your favorite memories down on small pieces of paper.
- Designate a special vase in which to drop these memories. Watch as the recorded memories fill the container over the years.

## Celebrate Your Marriage Weekly

♥ **Give each other one whole evening each week.** Set aside one evening every week to spend together. Be faithful to this commitment with your spouse. Honor the date in your calendar as you would other fixed appointments. Arrange for childcare for your children. Model to your children that time with each other is a priority!

It was American singer and songwriter Harry Chapin who composed the words, “I let time go lightly when I’m here with you . . .” Let that be true of your evenings spent together as a couple. Enjoy the time. Put the watch away. Let your time together go lightly!

♥ **Go on a marriage date.** Date again! Woo your mate. Surprise her with flowers. Surprise him with tickets to a ball game. Get all dressed up and eat dinner by candlelight. For more ideas you can refer to the Resource list attached at the end or log on to <http://www.bride.net/2009/inexpensive-date-ideas/>

**Couple activity.** *Provide couples with a blank sheet of paper. Invite them to list some of the things they did on dates together before they were married. Then give time for each to plan one date night for a time in the near future. After five minutes, let spouses share with their mates their date night plan.*

♥ **Put sex on your calendar.** Says Ellen Kreidman, “This week I want you to put sex on the calendar. You heard me right! Yes, I want you to plan for it. . . . So take out your calendars and schedule in a night of lovemaking. Making the decision in advance to have sex creates anticipation and can make sex just as exciting as when you were dating” (Kreidman, 2010a).

Prepare for your special romantic time together. Have on hand his favorite cologne or her favorite perfume. Promise a massage with special body oil or lotion. Send a love letter or text message about how you can’t wait! Play romantic music while in your bedroom.

## Celebrate Your Marriage Monthly

♥ **Spend a day together.** Spend an entire day together every month. Plan something—but not household chores or home projects—that will build your friendship in marriage. Take a day away from the routine, perhaps enjoying a new hobby together, or actually getting away from home to enjoy the scenery or explore the region where you live. Budget-friendly activities abound that will spare the family budget additional strain. However, we can promise that the reward for your investment of time and money in this monthly marriage celebration day will be well worth whatever you spend.

**Couple activity.** *Give each couple a sheet of paper which they divide into four sections by creasing it. Put the following category headings in the four sections: (1) Sports/Exercise; (2) Local culture/History/Seasonal events; (3) Shopping; (4) Hobbies. The object is to list as many different activities that couples can enjoy in each category as possible. For example: Under Sports/Exercise you might list biking, hiking, roller/ice skating, spelunking; Local culture/History/Seasonal events—visiting museums, zoos, fairs, garage sales, antique auctions, antique auto shows, picking fruit, attending plays or musicals; Shopping—bookstores, cooking/hobby/art/gardening stores; Hobbies—*

*painting, flower arranging, gardening, bird watching. After ten minutes, invite couples to read their lists aloud to the other couples, adding additional activities to their lists as they hear them mentioned by others.*

♥ **Participate in a marriage-strengthening event.** Often we must learn new ways to manage or improve our relationships. Attending a marriage program or marriage conference provides a couple with a great “booster shot.” Such events are times when structured programs afford opportunity to address in a guided way issues that we may otherwise avoid. They are times of intentional growth.

When marriage programs are not available, choose a book on a topic of marital growth and read it together, pausing to discuss new concepts and to think about how they could be worked into your relationship. Looking for ways to keep growing together as a couple is a sign of strength, not weakness.

### **Celebrate Your Marriage Quarterly**

♥ **Get away for a weekend.** One weekend per quarter for each other is a definite part of our marriage success formula. Why not get away for that weekend? Leave work and worries behind. A weekend gives you the opportunity to be with each other in a variety of contexts, sleeping, eating, relaxing, worshipping and playing together. It’s an extended time to re-connect with one another and to focus on the gift in each other that God has given you. An entire weekend affords more time to enjoy some of the activities that could not be fitted into the one day per month.

♥ **Honor a marriage that has made a difference for you.** No doubt you can think of some couples in your family or in your community whose marriage has been exemplary to you and made a significant positive impact on your own lives personally or as a couple. Why not plan a time to honor them and tell them what they mean to you? Invite relatives and neighbors to participate.

♥ **Give marriage celebration coupons.** Create a coupon book for your spouse, offering them coupons such as one night out, back rub or massage, car wash, special date night, etc.

**Couple activity.** *Provide a copy of the handout Marriage Celebration Coupons to each spouse. Allow a few minutes for them to prepare and give one or more of these to their partner.*

### **Celebrate Your Marriage Annually**

♥ **Make the most of your anniversary.** Your wedding anniversary is the major event of the year to celebrate your marriage. Plan for this day well in advance so that it becomes a very memorable day.

Ideas abound for celebrating your anniversary. The Internet has several sites to jumpstart your creative juices such as <http://ezinearticles.com/?7-Ways-To-Celebrate-Your-Wedding-Anniversary&id=231765>. Remember that gifts to your beloved that reflect your own intimate thoughts about him or her and your marriage are most appreciated. Here are some additional ideas:

- Write your beloved a poem, love song, or love letter.

- Propose to your spouse all over again, but in a different way. Your spouse will be pleased to know that you would do it all AGAIN!
- Create an anniversary photo collection. Put together a slide show of photos from previous anniversaries and add the current collection to it.
- Start a wedding anniversary journal or memory book. Search for “wedding anniversary journal” or “wedding anniversary memory book” on the Internet for samples.

## **Celebrate Your Spouse**

♥ **Celebrate the person.** The wise man has written, “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth” (Prov. 5:18 NKJV). Let your marriage partner know regularly that he or she is a person whom you respect, appreciate, and cherish.

♥ **Celebrate the accomplishments.** Acknowledge pay raises, educational pursuits, a new job, an idea, etc. Let them know that you are proud of what they have accomplished and ways that God has led them.

Make a list of all you like and appreciate about your spouse. Every time they do or say something, normal or special, add it to the list (mowing the lawn, cooking a meal, putting up a picture frame on the wall, changing a diaper, etc.). Share that list with your spouse and keep adding to it.

♥ **Celebrate his or her birthday.** Praise God for another year of life that God has given your spouse—another year to be with you!

♥ **Celebrate your differences.** Some people believe that opposites attract, while others believe that opposites attack. God created us as males and females to be different, but complementary. When Adam was created, he “gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper *comparable* to him” (Genesis 2:20 NJKV, italics supplied). While they were different, they were *comparable*. The Hebrew terms used signify one who in position is “corresponding to him,” “his counterpart,” and “his complement.” One way to celebrate your marriage is to praise God for the way He has made you as male and female, and brought you together as husband and wife.

It becomes easier to celebrate our differences when we learn to view them, not as liabilities, but as assets. These assets God has given to us to enable us as a couple to accomplish something significant for Him, something which neither of us would have been unable to do alone, but which we can do together thanks to the combination of who we are together.

**Couple activity.** *Distribute the handout Reframing Our Differences. Invite couples to consider the list of characteristics typical of women and men. Put a check-mark by each of the statements that apply to you. As you look at these lists, talk about how those differences can be or have been beneficial to your relationship. How might you more fully accept, respect and even treasure the differences?*

## Closing Thoughts

Do you remember the day of your wedding? Think of it: the preparation, the ceremony, and then the celebration at the reception? Ask yourself: Why should the celebration stop after the cake has been cut and the guests have departed? We believe the celebrating should go on, every day, for always!! With thoughtful, intentional planning you can make it happen!

## References and Resources

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## *Celebrate Your Marriage* **Resources**

- Dena. (2009, September 30). Inexpensive date ideas. Retrieved August 4, 2010, from <http://www.bride.net/2009/inexpensive-date-ideas/>  
You can be married and go on dates. Spending quality time together is important to maintain a healthy marriage relationship.
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Creative, outrageous, affordable, quick and classic ways to add romance to your relationship.
- Marriage Proposal Ideas – Classic, Romantic and Fun. Retrieved August 4, 2010, from <http://www.danforthdiamond.com/marriage-proposal-ideas/>  
A dozen or more of the most romantic ways to propose marriage.
- Sibal, Anna Lynn. Celebrating a wedding anniversary. *Wedding Anniversary*. Retrieved August 4, 2010, from <http://www.allweddingideas.com/wedding-anniversary.shtml>  
Couples celebrating a wedding anniversary are customarily given specific gifts corresponding to the number of years they have been married. A listing of traditional and modern anniversary gifts as compiled and popularized by the Chicago Public Library.

*Marriage Celebration Coupons*

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This Marriage Celebration Coupon is good for:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Love, \_\_\_\_\_

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This Marriage Celebration Coupon is good for:

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Love, \_\_\_\_\_

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This Marriage Celebration Coupon is good for:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Love, \_\_\_\_\_

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### *Reframing Our Differences*

#### **While Women tend to...**

Be other-focused  
 Be more cooperative  
 Over-identify with people  
 Need more closeness  
 Fear abandonment  
 Talk mostly about people  
 Be more indirect in speaking  
 Search more for hidden meanings  
 Like to talk a problem out and take time with decisions  
 Be better listeners  
  
 Avoid intimidation  
 Avoid conflict and confrontations  
  
 Admit wrongs and blame themselves  
  
 Be comfortable expressing emotions  
 Repress their anger  
 Be less afraid of commitment  
 Want more love in relationships  
 Be more giving  
  
 Seek the approval of others  
 Be emotionally jealous and fear loss of emotional commitment

#### **Men tend to...**

Be self-focused  
 Be more competitive  
 Over-identify with work  
 Need more distance  
 Fear engulfment  
 Talk mostly about things  
 Be more direct in speaking  
 Take words at face value  
 Be more decisive and solve problems immediately  
 Struggle for dominance and control of conversation  
 Attempt to intimidate  
 Like conflict, power struggles, and confronting others  
 Apologize only when it's expected and unavoidable  
 Be taught not to show emotion  
 Express their anger  
 Fear or avoid commitment  
 Want more sex in relationships  
 Be more cautious and conscious of what they'll get  
 Do what pleases them  
 Be more sexually jealous and fear loss of control

From Craig, B. (2004). *Searching for intimacy in marriage*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, p. 92. Used by permission.