

## Take Your Marriage Back

### Intentional Marriage

Brigham Young University  
BYU Campus  
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## Marriage is the #1 Cause of Divorce

"The biggest threat to good marriage is everyday living." (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 125).



## You've Got Mail!

A couple from Minneapolis decided to RV to Florida for a long weekend to thaw out during one particularly icy winter. Because both had jobs, they had difficulty coordinating their travel schedules. It was decided that the husband would fly to Florida on a Thursday, and his wife would follow him the next day in the RV. Upon arriving as planned, the husband checked into a hotel. There he decided to open his laptop and send his wife an email back in Minneapolis. However, he accidentally left off one letter in her address, and sent the email without realizing his error.

## You've Got Mail

- In Houston, a widow had just returned from her husband's funeral. He was a minister of many years who had been "called home to glory" following a heart attack. The widow checked her email, expecting messages from relatives and friends. Upon reading the first message, she fainted and fell to the floor. The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen which read:
  - To: My Loving Wife
  - From: Your Departed Husband
  - Subject: I've Arrived!
  - I've just arrived and have been checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then! Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.
  - P.S. Sure is hot down here!

## Couples Don't Fall Out of Love; They Become Disconnected

- They anticipated and prepare for dates; not totally ignored until 5 minutes before
- They dress to impress each other; not depress- now we go to bed with breath right nose bandages and Vicks vapor rub smeared on our nostrils
- They provided surprises for their partner; now only surprise is if the toilet seat will be left up or down.
- They talked and listened for hours together, many times late into the night. Now, sometimes we're lucky if we see each other; much less talk. He passes out while she talks.
- They tried to do things *for* each other; now we're lucky if we can do things *with* each other.
- They treated each other with courtesy, respect, and dignity; now they question "Who tooted?"
- They submitted their will to the will of their partner. What ever you want to do honey? Remember that? Really, a Barry Manilow concert or racquetball? Barry is great, let's go.
- They laughed at their partners stories and jokes, even those that we're not funny. Now, my wife doesn't even get a courtesy laugh.
- They viewed their partner as a whole or total person, basically over looking many of the minor flaws that exist in most of us. Now, we can catalogue each flaw- my wife eats Banana's like corn; I \_\_\_\_\_

## Satan's Tactics

"Lucifer works hard to undermine our innate tendency to nurture and care for others. He wants us to become separated from each other. Voice messaging and pagers are efficient, but they don't replace a listening ear and a caring heart. If the adversary can cause us to focus more on our differences than on our similarities, **if he can keep us so busy running from one commitment to another that we no longer have time for each other, he has made great strides towards neutralizing the strength and influence that we have.** We need each other. We need each other's testimonies and strength, each other's confidence and support, understanding and compassion

## Satan's Tactics

"Lucifer would have us so busy—with the details swirling around family, friends, careers, and every soccer league in town—that there's no time to actually *live* the gospel. No time to fast and pray, to immerse ourselves in the scriptures, to worship in the temple—all the things we need to do to "study for our mortal test. In other words, he wants us to be a little more concerned with the world than with the gospel, a little more interested in life today than in life forever. **Regret is what happens when we figure out too late what was really important**" (Sheri Dew, *No Doubt About It* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001], 97-98, 100).

## Pitfalls of Busyness

**Busyness corrupts your conversations.** "We recently received an email from our friend... who told us that he and his wife, in managing their household of three children, feel more like **air traffic controllers** than husband and wife. He said they barely have time to talk because they spend so much time juggling schedules and taxiing kids to and fro. Their conversations consist primarily of sentences like 'Next Tuesday is an early dismissal day for the kids so one of us needs to be home and then take Dominic to soccer practice'.... Busyness deludes us into thinking that we're conversing when we are actually just trying to make it through the hectic speed of our day" (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 35).

## Pitfalls of Busyness

**Busyness depletes your love life:** 'Devoting a little of yourself to everything,' said Michael LeBoef, 'means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.' It's true. **When you are scattered too thin, when you are trying to stretch time beyond its limits, you end up with a zero balance in your love bank.** The quality of your love life can't help but suffer when you are too busy" (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 36).

## Pitfalls of Busyness

**Busyness steals your fun:** "Busyness is a fun killer. There's no way around it. **If you're exhausted from just trying to keep the hamster wheel of life turning, you're never going to enjoy the ride. Think of some of the crazy things you did when you were a dating couple. You were all about fun in those days. Laughter was your third companion on every date. So what happened? You know. Busyness pushed fun out of the commuter car**" (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 36).

## Pitfalls of Busyness

**Busyness erodes your soul:** Perhaps the most corrosive by-product of busyness for a couple is the inevitable erosion of their inner resources. **If you are busy enough, long enough, you will become spiritually bankrupt. God will feel absent.** Why? Because at the center of every couple's shared lives, underneath the layers of everydayness, an emptiness gradually settles in for even the most committed couples whose spirits have not been nourished. **Busyness slowly and steadily wears away spiritual contentment and depletes our relationship of inspiration**" (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 36-37).

## The Need for Rituals to Reconnect

"Rituals are social interactions that are **repeated, coordinated, and significant.** This is the classical, anthropological definition. Rituals can be everyday interactions, or they could be once a year, but they're **repeated.** They're also **coordinated.** You have to know what is expected of you in a ritual; you can't have a meal ritual together if you don't know when to show up for it, and you can't dance together if you don't know what kind of dance you are going to do.... Rituals are not only repeated and coordinated, they are significant. **A ritual is something that has positive emotional meaning to both parties**" (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 126).

## Rituals vs. Routine

That lack of significance is what distinguishes a **ritual from a routine**. "A marriage routine is something you do over and over in a coordinated way, but that does not have much **emotional meaning**. You can have dinner as a couple every night, while one of you watches television and the other reads the paper. This is probably a routine because it lacks **emotional significance**" (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 126).

## Connection Rituals

Connection rituals are "rituals of everyday life in which the spouses share time and attention with each other. They are often low key as opposed to intense, comforting as opposed to sparkling. **Connection rituals are at the base of the pyramid of marriage, right above commitment**" (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 126).

## Examples of Connection Rituals

1. Checking in on the phone each day as a couple. I know another couple who text message each other daily. Remember, it's only a ritual if both couples know that it's **connection time**.
2. Goodbye's in the morning, greetings in the evening, and going to eat and talk
3. Some couples always express love for each other. One couple says "I love you" every morning before he leaves for work. They never know if they will see each other again.
4. Working together in the yard or on a home improvement project.
5. Watching your favorite TV show together

## Greeting Rituals



## Talk Rituals

"Every marital advice book stresses the importance of taking time to communicate. **But if a married couple with children has fifteen minutes of uninterrupted, nonlogistical, nonproblem-solving talk every day, I would put them in the top five percent of all married couples in the land.** It's an extraordinary achievement. **When I say that to my undergraduate students who are not yet married, they can't believe it.** When we are courting and falling in love we have oodles of time to talk... it's talk that propels most of us to fall in love and want to get married. After we get married... we still have time to talk, but even then our time is starting to erode because of the TV, the Internet, the newspaper, and general household management. If we then have kids, time to talk takes a big dive. You're not going to have time for personal talk, if you have children, unless you ritualize it. **Mumbling at 11 o'clock at night when you are exhausted does not count as a talk ritual**" (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 129-130).

## For Parents Only

"Earlier I mentioned a talk ritual that Leah and I came up with when our youngest child was four. After dinner, we would clean up, give the kids dessert, start the coffee, and then send the children off to play. We taught them to leave us in peace while we had our coffee, so that we could talk. We asked them not to interrupt us unless the house is burning or something equivalent, in which case they can always call 911 and then interrupt us. **This ritual gave us about 15 minutes every day to talk as a couple.** We do it to this day, even though the children are gone (mostly)" (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 130).

## Doherty's Marriage Ritual



## Group Counseling 101

At this time, I would like those of you who are married, or have been married, to reflect for a moment on your own marital rituals of connection, intimacy, and community--big or small, daily or yearly. Here's the plan. I'm going to give you a moment of silence to reflect and come up with a favorite ritual you can share with our group!

## Examples from Smart Marriage Conference

"Well, Annabel just wanted me to share with you that we fell into a beautiful ritual in the last year and a half. We decided to take up **ballroom dancing** every Wednesday night for an hour and a half. And so she just shared with me that when I'm out of town it ain't the same."

## Examples from Smart Marriage Conference

"We were married on the 22nd of August, and we celebrate each month our monthly wedding anniversary on the 22nd. We do something special. It's not necessarily a big thing; this past month or this month, in June, we were **married 430 months**. Always tell that to couples at Pre-Cana or at Engaged Encounter and let them try to figure out what that is in years. It keeps them thinking. But it isn't necessarily a real great thing? I mean it is a great thing between the two of us, but it might be going out to dinner, it might be a phone call during the day to say "I love you," it might mean leaving a note in the morning, it might mean going out to McDonald's, maybe, for dinner, it might mean stopping off at Wal-Mart or Kmart and picking up a new potato peeler or wooden spoon, but the thought is that 'I love you' and it's a special day, and we try to keep it alive, and do so each month."

## Examples from Smart Marriage Conference

"We have for 25 years written a daily love letter to each other. We haven't missed a day, even when Joe had open heart surgery. And we have **18-19,000** of them in a closet and the kids are going to read them when we're gone. We don't do it at XYZ time every day; but we do it. We don't go to bed without having written that love letter and talked about it" (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 134).

## Everyday Ways to Take Back Your Marriage:

- Establish a set time every day to talk— just to check in, with no discussion of money, children, or chores.
- Create a greeting ritual that marks the moment and has meaning for the two of you
- If you've stopped going to bed together regularly, start again
- Leave an affectionate note for your spouse that has no practical purpose
- Start dating again. Go out on a spontaneous date or plan one right now.
- Spend more quiet time together without the television on
- Move the television out of your bedroom
- Notice something you like about your spouse and share it

## Becoming One in Marriage

"We believe that when a man and woman are united as husband and wife, and they love each other, their hearts and feelings are one, that love is as enduring as eternity itself, and that when death overtakes them it will neither extinguish nor cool that love, but that it will brighten and kindle it to a purer flame, and that it will endure through eternity" (George Q. Cannon, *Journal of Discourses*, 14:320).

## Remember—Selflessness!!

"If each spouse is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love . . . will grow" (Spencer W. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, Co., 1976], p. 23).

## A Lesson from A Prophet

Elder Hugh B. Brown served in the First Presidency, as an Apostle, and in many other important church responsibilities during his lifetime. And yet, it was perhaps his service to his wife and hers to him that was most impressive about this man. In his first address after being called to the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Brown said, "I would be ungrateful if I did not acknowledge that Zina Card Brown, my beloved wife, is more responsible for my being here today than I" [*An Abundant Life*. The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown, 1988, p. ix].



## A Lesson from a Prophet



"The Brown's daughter, Mary Firmage, related: "Up until mother's stroke they go through a ritual daily... He'd kiss her goodbye and then they would walk to the front porch together. Daddy would go down three steps, and then turn around and ask, 'Did I kiss you good-bye?' Mother would answer, 'Why, no, you didn't.' Daddy would kiss her again."  
"As he walked to the car, Mother would run into the dining room, where she would blow kisses to him from the window. While daddy was backing the car out of the drive, Mother would run back to the porch where she'd wave a handkerchief until he drove out of sight. Just before the car turned the corner, Daddy would blink the brake lights three times, his code for 'I love you'" (*Church News*, 26 October 1974, 5).

## Standing Side by Side

No wonder Elder Hugh B. Brown has written: "Where there is deep and mature love, which is being nurtured and jealously guarded, *the couple will confide in each other and discuss all matters of joint interest—and in marriage everything should be of interest to both—they will stand together in adversity, will lean on, support, and give strength to each other.* They will find that their combined strength is more than double the strength of either one of them alone." (*You and Your Marriage*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960, p. 30.)

## A Lesson from Sir Thomas Moore



## A Lesson (Cont.)

Soon after he was married, Thomas Moore, the famous 19th Century Irish poet, was called away on a business trip. Upon his return, he was met at the door, not by his beautiful bride, but by the family doctor. "Your wife is upstairs," said the doctor. "But she has asked that you do not come up." And then Moore learned the terrible truth; his wife had contracted small pox. The disease had left her once flawless skin pocked and terribly scarred. She had taken one look at her disfigured reflection in the mirror and commanded that the shutters be drawn and that her husband never see her again. Moore would not listen. He ran upstairs and threw open the door of his wife's room. It was black as night inside. Not a sound came from the darkness. Groping along the wall, Moore felt the gas jet. A startled cry came from a black corner of the room. "No! Don't light the lamps!" Moore hesitated, swayed by the pleading voice. "Go!" she begged. "Please go! Your memory of me is the greatest gift I can give you now."

## A Lesson (Cont.)

Moore did go. He went down to his study, where he sat up the entire night, prayerfully writing. Not a poem this time, but a song. He had never written a song before, but now he found it more natural to his mood than simple poetry. He not only wrote the words, he wrote the music too. And the next morning, as soon as the sun was up, he returned to his wife's room.

He felt his way to a chair and sat down. "Are you awake?" He asked. "I am," came a voice from the far side of the room. "But you must not ask to see me. You must not press me, Thomas." "I will sing to you, then," he answered. And so for the first time, Thomas Moore sang to his wife the song that still lives and is sung today:

## A Lesson (Cont.)

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,  
Which I gaze on so fondly today,  
Were to change by tomorrow and flee in my arms  
Like fairy gifts fading away,

Thou wouldn't still be adored, as this moment thou art—  
Let thy loveliness fade as it will.  
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart  
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

-- Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms, Thomas Moore

- The song ended. As his voice trailed off on the last note, Moore heard his bride rise. She crossed the room to the window, reached up, and slowly drew open the shutters. (From *A Time to Love*, Carol Lynn Pearson).