



2024 | Week 32

# Date for 3, Instead of 2?!

**Blog Contributors:**

**Rey & Annie Abarca**

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*In the hustle and bustle of daily life, it's easy to forget the importance of intentional time spent with your spouse. This week, we're diving into the significance of Date Nights and how they can strengthen your relationship, rekindle your connection, and create lasting memories. Join us as we relearn the many benefits of setting aside dedicated time for each other through a series of five engaging blog posts. From inspiring stories to practical tips and connections to Biblical truths, we'll embark on a journey of restoration and connection. Get ready to reignite the spark in your marriage—let's make Date Nights a priority together!*

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## DAY 1

“Date Night” is the most common way married couples demonstrate their intentionality in spending time with their spouse. It has become more popular lately due to the exposure of this concept on social media. Even without knowing its valuable essence and significance in marriage, the popularity brought by social media has turned this wonderful experience into a “cultural phenomenon.”

As we take time to reassess the current state of date nights and their significance in marriages, may this also be an opportunity to reflect on how this activity can truly

foster a Biblical perspective on time management and strengthen the foundation of marriage. By God's grace, we will conclude this week's topic with a better understanding that drives us toward a more intentional approach to spending time with our spouses.

In a joint effort between Wheatley Institute and The National Marriage Project, researchers Brad Wilcox and Jeffrey Dew released the second edition of “The Date Night Opportunity Report.” [1] This report highlights the importance of regular date nights and their effects on marriage. About half (48%) of the couples surveyed went on date nights once or twice a month. The report concluded the benefits of a twice-monthly date night as follows:

- **Happier Marital Relationships:** 83% of wives and 84% of husbands who had regular date nights reported being very happy in their marriages, compared to 68% of wives and 70% of husbands who did not have regular date nights.
- **More Stable Marriages:** Wives and husbands in the frequent date night group were about 14% more likely to report that divorce “was not at all likely” in the future.
- **Better Communication:** 71% of wives and 77% of husbands who had regular date nights were very happy with their communication, compared to 51% of wives and 59% of husbands who did not have regular date nights.
- **More Sexual Satisfaction:** 68% of wives and 67% of husbands who had regular date nights were very happy with their sexual relationship, compared to 47% of wives and 47% of husbands who did not have regular date nights.
- **Greater Commitment to Marriage:** 75% of wives and 73% of husbands who had regular date nights reported being very committed to their marriage, compared to 53% of wives and 57% of husbands who did not have regular date nights.

The survey results presented promising findings that shed light on couples' desires for a strong marriage. The report specified how date nights are likely to strengthen marriage in several ways. The social science literature identifies five ways in which date nights may foster a stronger marriage:



- Communication: The couple's commitment to date nights provides opportunities for improved communication, deepening their understanding of one another and their marriage.
- Novelty: Couples who engage in novel activities that are fun and engaging can enjoy a higher quality of relationship.
- Eros: Establishing focus during date nights can lead to sharing feelings and engaging in romantic activities that spark the element of eros—romantic love.
- Commitment: Date nights can solidify the commitment between couples, fostering togetherness as they intentionally spend time together, communicate, and enjoy each other's presence.
- De-Stress: Date nights have been found helpful in relieving stress, allowing couples to enjoy time together away from the pressures of their everyday schedules.

Indeed, we can find great encouragement from this recent Date Night Report. When compared to current divorce statistics, it offers a promising perspective on how marriages in the U.S. can be strengthened rather than continually decline. However, it is disheartening to note that a significant number of divorces occur within the Protestant community [2]. This reality should not be taken lightly. For those of us in the ministry focused on fostering marriages anchored in Christ, these divorce statistics signal a serious call for reassessment and reevaluation of our approaches. Ultimately, the question remains: How can we, as married believers, be the salt and light of this world rather than the other way around?

We express our deep concern regarding this matter, embracing God's call to remind and reengage married individuals—both believers and those who have yet to believe—in how we have a living God who is transforming lives and marriages. Our focus has broadened from solely reaching those who haven't accepted Jesus Christ to including those who are sincerely walking in faith but aren't living out God's design and truth. May any discouragement or challenges we face become a wake-up call for greater intentionality and commitment in our relationships.

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

***Rey & Annie***

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## DAY 2

In yesterday's blog post, we had a good and encouraging glimpse of the second edition of "The Date Night Opportunity Report." [3] We saw the strong connection between date nights and the fostering of a growing, stronger marriage.

Although this report suggests a possible positive link to avoiding the decline in U.S. marriage rates, we cannot overlook the serious attention required regarding the alarming divorce rate among Protestants, which is the highest among religious groups in the USA. [4] Experts note that while the recent U.S. divorce rate may have stabilized, it remains high compared to other countries. This situation highlights the reality that marriage continues to face serious battles. Our cry for help from CJ2 is not only to raise awareness but also to translate that awareness into a movement, collaborating with fellow missionaries to unite and point every marriage toward Jesus Christ.

By continuing marital discussions here on the CJ2 blog platform, we can engage many married individuals, leading them to commit to anchoring their marriages in Jesus. This is especially important regarding the significance of Date Nights and what we can learn to build genuinely stronger marital relationships. There's no doubt we've been creative with the "Date Night" concept; a simple search for "Couple Date Night Ideas" on Amazon yields over 1,000 results [5]. Social media has transformed these ideas into a "cultural phenomenon."

**The question is: Are we genuinely embracing the true essence of this couples' activity, or are we simply riding the wave of popularity?**

In reality, whether date nights are trending on social media or not, their true essence and significance will not



impact marriage until we understand why we doing it. Why is it important for us to be intentional about spending time with our spouses? How does this relate to our faith journey as a couple and our commitment to anchoring our marriage in Jesus Christ?

During our discussion on this week's topic, we concluded two important points: (1) the importance of stewarding our time, and (2) the intentionality of putting God at the center of our marriage. We will not be intentional in spending quality time together as a couple if we are not equally committed to anchoring our marriage in God. Conversely, we will not be committed to anchoring our marriage in God if we are not equally devoted to continuously experiencing His presence in our lives. This underscores that impactful date nights should be times spent relearning and rejoicing in God's grace, mercy, and love. It's not about how date nights are executed based on countless ideas; it's about a couple's ongoing commitment to understanding and growing their marriage.

Sadly, not many are aware of God's blueprint for marriage, let alone the true essence of impactful date nights. Our disconnection from God has led us to live lives apart from His authority, which extends to living marriages that are not aligned with His design, will, and purpose. Often, we only reassess our marriages when facing challenges or experiencing great emptiness.

For us married couples to truly have impactful date nights that will lead to a growing marriage, we need to include God in the equation! Let's not engage in this practice simply for the sake of cultural trends or because other couples are doing it; otherwise, such a perspective will lead us to relationships built on "vanity." As Solomon said:

***"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3)***

***"I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind." (Ecclesiastes 1:14)***

We don't want our date nights or our marriages to be associated with the term "vanity," which signifies the quality of being worthless or futile.

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

***Rey & Annie***

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## DAY 3 | For Husbands

Before, my idea of a date night with my wife was simply to have a nice dinner and enjoy the evening wherever it led us. I'm sure many fellow husbands can relate to my straightforward concept of date nights. However, I'm also aware that these evenings can sometimes lead to heated conversations. When dinner talk accidentally veers into financial matters, work, household responsibilities, or parenting concerns, what was supposed to be a pleasant conversation can quickly devolve into a blaming game.

The way we view "Date Nights" reflects how we plan for them, enjoy every moment, and the intentionality we bring to the experience. Indeed, date nights provide an opportunity to strengthen marital communication and other important aspects of our relationship. However, if we approach them as just another item to check off our list, we miss the growth opportunities that come with them.

It wasn't until I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior that I had the chance to learn about God's blueprint for marriage. This was a significant shift from how I had previously perceived it. I realized that my understanding of the time spent with my wife, such as during date nights, has also transformed. Marriage is one of God's many wonderful creations and blessings. We can experience growth in this relationship that we cannot find in other earthly relationships. We can lead impactful and purposeful lives with our spouses if we give serious attention to anchoring our marriage in God.

Recently, my wife, Annie, and I celebrated our 17th wedding anniversary. Although we've had many date nights even before we said "I do," every year, as we grow



closer to God, we experience His blessings in our relationship. Over dinner, we had the chance to discuss many topics that are typically required between husband and wife. We also had the opportunity to talk about our current responses to God's call to share the Gospel and engage in discipleship. I learned to appreciate our similarities in various matters as well as our differences. We still face temptations that can trigger conflicts, even in simple moments like dinner, but we're thankful to God for His continuous reminders. We ended our night by lifting our relationship and every matter He has entrusted to us.

Relationships indeed require a significant amount of intentionality, particularly when it comes to spending time together. Our commitment is not measured by how fancy our date nights are. It boils down to the substance that strengthens and grows our marriage. Similarly, in our relationship with Christ, if we genuinely declare our acceptance of Him as our personal Lord and Savior, it initiates a journey of commitment to honoring His authority in our lives. This is reminded in the words of Apostle Paul in the book of Galatians:

***"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." — Galatians 6:7***

The enemy and the brokenness of this world will continue to deceive us, which can affect our relationship with Christ. Yet, in moments of temptation, we can view them as opportunities to rely more on Him and experience the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is not natural for us to have a relationship with God—the One we cannot see. Our distance from Him has not only fostered many wrong perspectives about life but also great ignorance in the spiritual realm. Therefore, our intentionality in growing our relationship with Him is a continuous journey of understanding and development.

Fellow husbands, elevate your date nights by anchoring your life and marriage in Jesus Christ. Don't let the enemy deceive you or shift your focus toward other matters as you navigate the cultural waves. Again, Apostle Paul offers us a powerful reminder in Romans:

***"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" — Romans 8:31***

Keep journeying with Christ Jesus.

Your Fellow Husband,  
**Rey**

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## DAY 4 | For Wives

As my husband, Rey, mentioned in yesterday's blog post, we recently celebrated our 17th wedding anniversary. It wasn't a very fancy celebration. Honestly, it didn't involve days of planning like we used to do, such as getting on the reservation list for well-known date-night restaurants here in Vegas. This year, we opted for a nearby restaurant with a good selection of food we were craving that night.

Discovering that this week's topic is closely related to our recent celebration was exciting. We felt that the celebration was extended by sharing how we've encountered God in the context of this year's anniversary. Despite our active engagement on social media and our intentional efforts to share the Gospel and discipleship in the framework of marriage, it seems we have more stories to tell and need to hold back for the right timing and relevance.

We all know that today's culture is highly influenced by various social media platforms, and relevance plays an important role. I still remember when I was figuring out how to maximize my use of Friendster, which eventually led me to be captivated by the user-friendly Facebook. Social media can be just a simple engagement platform for many. For me—having moved to a new life in the USA and left relatives in the Philippines—Facebook has become my main medium of connection. The quick updates and photo sharing are indeed very handy, especially considering that what used to be expensive international calls have now been replaced by the convenience of Facebook Messenger's voice and video calls. To this day, Messenger remains one of my top communication tools, and posting updates about family celebrations on social media has become part of my routine.

Sadly, the once-positive aspects of social media have turned into an overpowering influence on many today. The simple and sincere intent of connection can



transform into obsession due to time spent browsing and the excitement of “reactions,” making it colorful and addictive. I remember one apologist mentioning in a podcast that our problem today is humanizing technology, forgetting that it is merely a medium with its limitations as part of God’s creation—us. While it can help engage, we should not rely on it as the primary factor in human relationships. It offers an opportunity to share good narratives, but it should not create a false concept of true life. For those of us actively using it, we must remember the responsibility that comes with every message we choose to post.

As Rey and I reflect on the pros and cons of this platform, there are undeniably wonderful opportunities to share narratives about God. However, there are also risks of being misunderstood or criticized. Regardless, our sincere intent to share these narratives about God is just a small contribution compared to the powerful impact on someone’s heart, which is ultimately in God’s hands. In navigating the cultural landscape of social media, we can remain firm and grounded in the message of the Gospel by seeking God’s guidance and wisdom. In a world that promotes vanity and perfection, we can stay authentic by sharing what it’s really like to journey with Jesus Christ.

As we take time to express our gratitude to God for reaching 17 years of marriage, I initially considered posting just a single picture of Rey and me. However, God encouraged me not to shy away from creativity or the opportunity to reach out to other married couples. I felt led to create a 25-second video. Although Rey approved the initial edit without any words, I raised my concern to God that our intent to encourage others should be clear. The next day, God impressed me with some words. As I added those words to the video, the message became clear, and my burden was lifted. It was no longer about merely posting creative content but about sharing substantial content that brings glory and praise to God. It’s only by God’s grace that we can recognize the temptations of culture that permeate social media platforms. It’s only by His grace that we remain bold and honest in a medium that often denies the reality of weakness and the truth that we need a Savior. Let’s reshape our date night posts by not hiding our weaknesses and challenges, but by pointing out the power of Christ that can transform every marital relationship.

***"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)***

Keep journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Wife,

**Annie**

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## DAY 5

What this week’s topic aims to highlight is reshaping today’s couples’ date nights by including God’s presence in them. This isn’t about performing “religious” acts, but rather about celebrating the relationship through the lens of His grace, mercy, and love.

It’s not natural for us to view spending time with our spouse in this manner. We could easily raise concerns to support such a statement, but we find that the ultimate reason lies in our once-separated life from God—a disconnection caused by sin and continuously dwelling in it. (We saw how this began with the first couple, Adam and Eve.) This disconnection leads to a misunderstanding of marriage. If we consider God’s blueprint for marriage, we will view every facet of it anchored in Him, just as we view the time we spend on date nights. Yet, we can’t have this perspective until we reconnect with Him through Jesus Christ. Another challenge arises when this genuine realization doesn’t equally resonate with both husband and wife. Often, only one partner recognizes the need to surrender and anchor the marital relationship in Christ. In situations like this, there is an honest acknowledgment that navigating marriage under God’s blueprint is not easy.

This has happened to us! Although we committed ourselves to Christ, there has still been a significant difference in timing. Such differences are evident in our conflicts and abrupt progressions. Our date nights may be very different now compared to before, but it wasn’t an easy transition. It took time to translate that realization into intentional actions, and it was only by God’s grace



that our hearts were changed. Even today, we can honestly say that there are still instances when our conversations and time spent together do not feel like a blessing for either of us. Satan's temptation to divert our attention is ever-present like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Therefore, the attitude of being vigilant and sober-minded against the enemy's attempts to create conflict in marriages is not something we can achieve on our own. Instead, it requires living a new life anchored in the spiritual disciplines founded on God's Word and attributes, the modeling of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

If there's one key takeaway we'd like to share with fellow couples regarding faith and date nights, it is to embrace the journey—"Embrace the journey with strong reliance on God's grace." Whether you and your spouse are newly navigating marriage with Christ or waiting for your spouse to respond to God's call, intentionality in date nights can still flourish. Remember that our faith journey, which involves placing God at the center of our marriage, is not a ladder toward perfection; rather, it's an authentic journey of redemption.

- Celebrate togetherness by acknowledging weaknesses and challenges, while viewing them through the lens of God's grace and mercy.
- Date nights with Christ are not just about superficial celebration but are meant to deepen every moment of laughter with gratitude for God's continuous work.
- The intentionality of spending time on date nights reflects the couple's ongoing commitment to accountability in God's blessings of marriage.
- Regardless of how you choose to spend your date nights, the ultimate goal is for the couple to share the same mindset, maintain the same love, and unite in God's spirit with the intent of one purpose (Philippians 2:2).

Marriage doesn't endure because of perfection; it stands firm because God sustains it. We're not here to undermine the true essence of God's design for marriage, just as we strive for a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. By God's grace, we profess these commitments in our relationships and faithfully reap His blessings.

***'Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a***

***man sows, this he will also reap. ' (Galatians 6:7)***

Your Fellow Couple,

***Rey & Annie***

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## NOTES

[1][3] Wilcox, B. & Dew, J. Wheatley Institute and The National Marriage Project at that University of Virginia. "The Date Night Opportunity: What Does Couple Time Tell Us About The Potential Value of Date Nights?". Second Edition. 2023. [Retrieved From Online](#).

[2][4] "Why CJ<sup>2</sup>?" [Couples Journey with Christ Jesus](#)

[5] Amazon.com



Let's embark on a comprehensive learning experience with this week's topic by following the **D.R.A.S.H. - 5 Steps of Learning Method!**

### ***Step 1 | Discover the Truth***

- Read carefully Galatians 6:7. In your own words and understanding, what are you learning about God and Apostel Paul's instructions? From other Bible verses and comments mentioned in this week's topic, what other truths and Biblical perspectives strongly impacted you?



### **Step 2 | Reflect and Meditate on the Truth**

- How are (a) mocking God and (b) man sows reap, related to your faith journey and in your marriage today (and even your relationship to others)? Take a moment to meditate on these connections.

### **Step 3 | Apply the Truth**

- Based on this week's topic and the truths that resonated with you, what actions do you plan to take in the coming days? Set a meaningful goal that supports your spouse and strengthens your marital relationship.
- What old habits or practices do you need to change as a result of your discoveries and understanding of this week's topic? How do you plan to implement these changes?

### **Step 4 | Share**

- How and when do you plan to share your insights about this week's topic, "Date for 3, Instead of 2?!" with your spouse or your CJ<sup>2</sup> Fellows? Sharing can deepen understanding and foster accountability.

### **Step 5 | Help in Navigating the Truth**

- Identify specific learning points from this week's topic, that encourage you to transform conviction into action. In what ways do you need assistance in navigating the journey to apply these learnings?

We pray that you encounter God through this week's topic. May His grace turn your learning experience into a transformative journey, leading to testimonies of breakthroughs that further strengthen your walk with Christ Jesus!

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## **Let us know how this guide has helped you!**

May this study tool be effective and helpful for every fellow seeker and believer who is intentionally journeying with Jesus Christ. We would be grateful to hear how this tool has significantly impacted your journey and your relationships with your spouse and others. Please share your feedback or experiences through this [link](#) (or scan QR Code)



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