

Bulletin

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Love as God Does

WHAT'S A PROMISE WORTH?

BY JIM DALY

WHAT'S A PROMISE WORTH? FOR YOUR CHILDREN—EVERYTHING!

My mom and dad were divorced by the time I was 7, but Dad promised me a new baseball mitt for my birthday that year. Sadly, he had a bad habit of breaking his promises. When the big day came, I ran out to the curb every 15 minutes to look for him. He never showed. I was crushed. I wasn't even worth remembering on my birthday.

A few years later, my dad promised to take me to a Dodgers baseball game. When we missed the bus to the stadium, I figured Dad would do what he usually did in those circumstances: offer a weak apology and take us home. Instead, he got a cab and spent more than he could probably afford to take us to the game. That afternoon, I got autographs from Hall of Fame players like Pete Rose, Steve Garvey, and others.

Both memories have stuck with me for decades, and I'm a better father for what they've taught me about the value of promises. Now I do everything I can to keep my promises to my two boys.

Proverbs 20:7 says that we heap blessings on our children when we say what we mean and mean what we say. Children remember the promises we break, and they remember the promises we keep . . . forever.

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**Tough
Questions
from Kids**

**Does God
have a
sense of
humor?**

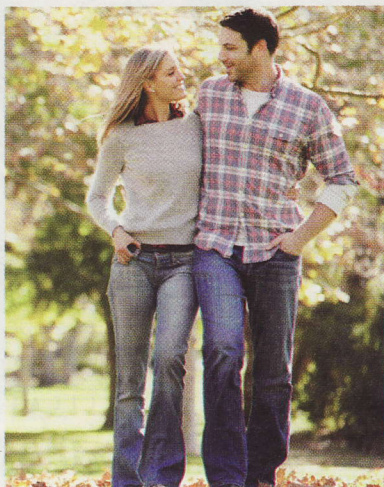


ROMANCE IS NOT JUST FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Passion and intimacy in a relationship are like oxygen and water to the body. If the body doesn't get the right amount of oxygen, it shows signs of stress: deep breathing, nausea, headaches and such. If it doesn't get enough water, it dehydrates and slowly dies.

The same is true of a marriage. If it doesn't get a regular dose of passion and intimacy, it will show signs of stress: lack of closeness, frustration, resentment, regular arguments and withdrawal. In many ways, the relationship feels as if it were dying.

Valentine's Day is a wonderful time to rekindle passion. But what about the other 364 days of the year? Here are a few things I have learned, both personally and professionally, that help spark romance all year round:



- **Play offense.** Don't wait until your spouse loses his or her cool because you're not thoughtful or romantic enough. Think ahead. What type of things does your mate spend the most time looking at in stores or online? Take note and show you care.

- **Listen.** Does your spouse ever say, "I wish I could . . ." or "It sure would be nice if . . ."? Listening for these casual statements can give clues about the things that push his or her "romance button."

- **Think outside the box of chocolates.** It's easy to do the same things, but doing something unexpected, such as treating your spouse to a formal dinner or cleaning his or her car, can express love like few store-bought gifts can.

- **Consider an occasional note.** At least once a month let your spouse know about the things you appreciate, respect and have noticed. Be specific and keep it positive. This reinforces how special your spouse is to you.

- **Walk.** Walking together not only makes you both feel better physically and emotionally, but it can also present tremendous opportunities to communicate and reconnect. Early in our marriage, my wife and I started walking together, and it became an important part of forging friendship and intimacy. We discussed and solved many life, marriage and parenting problems in our walking shoes, and sometimes still do.

Consider these ideas, and think up a few of your own. They will help keep the spark of romance alive, especially when "life" begins to happen in your marriage.

—Mitch Temple

KEEPING VALENTINE'S DAY POSITIVE FOR KIDS

Valentine's Day can provide kids with a healthy way to express affection for others. Like every other holiday, it's been exploited in the interests of commercial gain, but there's no reason we can't help children see beyond the glitter of cards, flowers and boxes of candy to the real meaning of love and the true significance of healthy human sexuality.

All things considered, this holiday can be a great time to help kids—teens in particular—consider the larger issues of love and the importance of choosing a life-partner wisely. Emotions and chemistry aren't inherently wrong—after all, who wants a passionless marriage without any spark? But if romance is only an emotional “buzz,” it's not love at all. Flowers, cards and chocolates can be wonderful expressions of affection, but it's important that kids learn to keep these things in their proper place. After all, true love was created and defined by God—*not* Cupid.

—*Focus on the Family Staff*



REFLECT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

“But you promised!”

How many times, as parents, have we heard those words? Our memory of our promises often isn't as acute as our kids' memories, and they can be deeply disappointed when we forget. All children crave promise-keeping from the significant adults in their lives. They want to trust that we will do what we say. I'm glad God doesn't forget His promises. He keeps His Word. When He makes a promise, He will deliver.

The faithfulness of God is foundational to our faith: If we can't trust what He says in the Bible, we have no reason to believe. If He doesn't keep His Word, then our salvation is shaky and our hope is empty. But if God does fulfill His promises, then our faith is meaningful and our eternal destiny is secure.

Faithfulness is foundational to a happy, God-honoring home as well. Children who have to deal with continual broken promises may find it difficult to trust the significant people in their lives—including God.

Practice faithfulness, though, and you will provide stability, security and confidence for your children. You will reflect God to them. You will instill in them the importance of being true to their word.

Remember: Faithfulness is an attribute of the fruit of the Spirit, empowered by God. So pray for it. Model it. Teach it. Celebrate it.

—*Kurt Bruner*

FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions...

The pandemic has been hard on everyone—but it seems as though it has affected my spouse more than most. What can I do to offer support?

ANSWER:

Any low point in life has a way of creating intense vulnerability. It can leave a person feeling alone and totally helpless. A spouse who seems to be losing his or her faith may feel that God is far away, uninvolved, uncaring or even nonexistent. Assure your loved one that even though things sometimes look bleak and it may be hard to sense God's presence, He is there and He is working. Here are some examples how you can support your spouse:

- Write your mate a daily note of encouragement. Each day focus on a different aspect of hope. This might be an email, postcard or sticky note. It doesn't have to be long or preachy.
- Remind your spouse that he or she is not alone. Affirm that you will always take those wedding vows seriously: "For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health."
- Let your mate know that you're praying that God will protect and restore his or her joy and hope.
- Gently remind your spouse of times when it seemed God was absent, but later it was clear He'd been present.
- Be honest about your concerns. You might say something like, "I love you so much and know you're going through a tough time. I'm really concerned about your faith right now. Would you mind talking about it? How can I help you?"
- If your spouse exhibits signs of depression, such as lethargy, insomnia, sleeping too much, loss of appetite or a strong sense of hopelessness, encourage him or her to see a doctor or a counselor. Depression can stand in the way of responding to encouragement, teaching and direction.

(Adapted from the *Complete Guide to the First Five Years of Marriage*, general editors Phillip J. Swihart and Wilford Wooten)

TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

ANSWER:

Yes. Genesis 1:26-27 says God created humans in His image. That means in many ways we are like God—and He is like us. If we have a sense of humor, God probably does too. But God doesn't enjoy cruel humor, as some people do. That's wrong. Tell good jokes, laugh, enjoy life. God wants you to be filled with joy.

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