



THE 14 DAY

Marriage "Camp"

An inward and outward journey for
husbands and wives

FROM "HOPE OVER COFFEE"

This eBook is designed for any husband that needs a little
boost in loving his wife as Christ loves the church. This is
only a guide to help us think outside ourselves and moves us
to pursue our spouse.



Introduction

THE BEGINNING

My wife, Angi, and I were introduced to the XO Marriage conference in February 2020, and ever since, we have been faithful attendees. This conference is a highlight for us every year, and we plan life around being there. Our scheduled weekend getaway happens to be in an area of Houston we love, there are great speakers that we listen to, and it's just an excellent opportunity to seek God first together.

So, in my journey of faith, one of the things that I have been working on is my issue with sexual sin and porn. And in this journey, my wife and I agreed on an annual fast from physical intimacy and work on spiritual/emotional intimacy with God and each other. Sometimes I would get so wrapped up in focusing on not having physical relations that I would miss out on what the fast is really about, building my relationship with God and my wife. For the past two years, we planned for our fast to end at the XO marriage conference. This year I am planning something a little different.

A 14-DAY MARRIAGE "CAMP"

My focus is on the days leading up to this year's XO Conference in Houston for 2023. I thought it would be a great idea to share this plan to help other men prepare their hearts to hear what God wants to share with them for their marriage. Let me say that these activities are not a guaranteed surefire way to get anything out of anyone or God. Also, they will not fix or cure anything broken in your marriage. They are principles applied to married life through the lens God gave me about my marriage. I have realized that anything I talk about or do a podcast about is usually what I'm dealing with now and how God works through me for his purpose.

I hope you take a look and try the things below. I desire that you draw closer to your spouse but, more importantly, that you find yourself in the presence of God by the end of the 14 days.

PREPARE

It would be interesting to keep a short journal about the camp we are going through. I'm sure you already do H.E.A.R. journals, and I would never want to add any work to an already busy schedule. But how many times have we seen in the bible where God's people build an altar after witnessing His power and Glory? They made the altar so they wouldn't forget what He has done and so they could teach the next generation of His power and might. Write it down, and remember what God is doing in and through you for the next generation.

Where are you?

Day 1

Let's do a heart check before we move anywhere, especially toward our bride. When was the last time you checked your motives in your relationship with your wife? Have you been sacrificing for her the way Jesus did for his bride? Are you making her a priority in your life, or are you only manipulating situations to satisfy your needs for security and significance? Dig in deep into what is going on inside of you first.

- How do you feel toward your wife, God, and others?
- What are your expectations for this camp, your marriage, and you?
- Why do these thoughts come to your mind, and how are they impacting you?

Prayer

Father, open our eyes to the areas we are being selfish toward our spouse. Give us conviction on these things and show us how we can love them better than we are doing. We are setting aside the next 13 days to make an effort to love them how You would want me to love them. Guide and speak to me in a way that leads me to be the Godly man you have called me to be. Amen.

Verses

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jas 1:23–25

Journal

Start your journal today. Write down the things you are feeling, the things you expect, and the thoughts that come to your mind today.

Where is she?

Day 2

Have you been able to talk with your spouse outside your usual means of communication? When was the last time you only talked about each other? No daily grind, no children, no to-dos. Where is she? Spiritually, emotionally, and physically? Be curious about her. What is something that sparked her interest today? What is something she is worried about? Don't assume you know anything. Ask questions, and listen to her responses with undivided attention. Could you let her know she is being heard?

Prayer

Father, help us move toward you by moving toward our spouse. Let us see you in our relationship with them. Please help us be curious and desire to know our wives in a brand new way. A way that can only happen because of You and will bring you glory! Amen.

Verses

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 2:1-4.

Journal

Today could be a great day to take notes in your journal about your wife. Maybe not so much in an integration style, but could you jot down something you learned about her? Was there a new story she never told you? Could there be a new hobby brewing? Did she reveal something that God is working on in and through her? Take note of it. Come back to it later. Does it interest you to see God moving in her life?

Where are you together?

Day 3

Read Genesis 2:18-24 together.

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:18–25.



Where are you together?

Day 3

Things to Think About

The word for rib in verse 21 is translated in other places as *side, side chamber, walls, boards, one...another. What if we take the perspective of God using more than a rib from Adam? What if He took the side of Adam, a side chamber that includes the lungs? A husband and wife are "bone of my bone, and flesh of the flesh." The flesh of my flesh implies that more than a rib was used. So now, when I read that the husband and wife share the same bone, flesh, walls, support, and chamber of breath. They are to be unified entirely as one being. As the sighs and groans of life come out of you, they go out of her—United as one. The happiness and rejoices exclaim from her mouth come out of yours together. We are to leave our support of our youth to our parents and join with the help of our spouses. My wife is my support, my side, and my wall. I will fall without her. I am her support and shield; she is unguarded without me. It takes both of us because God has made it that way.

Prayer

Join hands and offer a prayer of thanksgiving over your wife with the things above in mind.

Journal

Where are your thoughts on the both of you together? What is the Lord bringing to your mind? Be curious about those things. Expand those thoughts and continue to write them out.

Something in the mundane

Day 4

How does your spouse receive love? Do something that is in line with her love language. It is not an over-the-top expression of love, but it is something that appears to be mundane but at the same time fills her tank up. Do you know of anything like this?

Ideas

Physical: A non-sexual hug and holding her hand.

Quality Time: A simple stroll in the park.

Words of affirmation: A reminder of how wonderful she is outside the bedroom.

Acts of service: Cleaning or doing something in the house before being asked

Receiving Gifts: Flowers or small stuff animal

Take note of her reaction and responses to everyday and mundane things. Does she long for consistency from you? Are you being overly passive in mundane areas of your life with her because they aren't exciting? I believe that in our search for significance and security, our wives find some of their security in our ability to be active in our relationship with them. And I am not saying you set the bar low so you can look good in pursuing your wife, but she wants to know you are there every day. At least thinking about your relationship with her regularly.

Verses

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 25:34–36.

Take it up a notch!

Day 5



Date Night

According to my calendar "It's Friday Night!"

DON'T BE PASSIVE, HAVE A PLAN!

When was the last time you requested that she get dressed because you have dinner plans with her? When was the last time you planned to take her out to eat and impress her? How are you pursuing your wife? Did you open the door for her to get in the car, the restaurant, and back into the car? Today you could be extravagant. The big idea is to be intentional. How are you intentionally expressing how much you cherish and appreciate her?

His tag-along day

Day 6

Has she ever joined you in what you like to do? Knowing your wife's heart, you should know the limits of what she would consent to do with you. But have you asked her to tag along, participate, or brought her in to do what you like? Have you ever tried to explain your passions, hobbies, and what you want to do in a conversation with her? There could be something small you could do together. Again, we try to be intentional and understanding but invite her into your heart. Are you being vulnerable with her?

And when she agrees, accept it. Don't doubt her love for you and wanting to be by your side in your endeavors. She said yes to whatever it was. Believe in her, yes. Also, don't find or pick an activity just because you think she will like it. We must work on expressing what is happening inside us to our wives. And that takes being vulnerable.



Take her to church

Day 7

When was the last time you prayed over your wife? Have you ever worshipped and praised God with your hand in hers and lifted high? Do you ever wonder what that would be like? Can we recklessly abandon our preconceived notions of what it means to be a husband and love God and her in a way that makes others say, "Wow!". Not for you, but in a way that brings glory and honor to our Lord! Where do you see your marriage this year? What about the next 3 to 5 years? What has to change? What do you want to change? Get over yourself and take that step. Be consistent!

Verses

24 Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:2

Journal

I bet you have forgotten about your journal. Write down what you're feeling from the week. Highs and lows. Can you express the joys and heartaches that you've experienced so far? There may be something that you want to communicate to your wife, and you need to write it down first. A prayer for your family? A word vomit to let out things you have bottled up for years or decades. Or you may need to tell God how you are feeling. He can handle it. I encourage you to write something, anything, write.

Be there w/o being there

Day 8

When was the last time you were intentionally intimate without being sexual? Can you be touchy without the feely? Our spouses desire and need a connection of the non-sexual side. Honestly, we do too. I think we can mask it with our sexual drive. Have you ever given her a massage with no intention of leading anywhere except giving her attention? Foot massage, back massage, or anything in between? Can you do it with your mind clear and staring deep into who she is as a daughter of the King? Can you lock eyes and see the beauty deep inside of her?

Verses

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 2:3–8.

Being There

Day 9

When was the last time you asked your spouse to wear something sexy? We have been pursuing our wife in a non-sexual way; let's flip the script a little. Does she know her husband desires her? That her beauty to you is incomparable to any other woman in the world? That you find her attractive, and she is your mark of what beauty is. Pursue her romantically! It could also be the opposite of your everyday pursuit. If you are always a lamb in the relationship, very passive, be the lion. You can be a little more aggressive in a respectful way. Or if you have a more controlling aspect as the lion, become the lamb for a moment. Find that place of being there romantically for your wife.

Things to think about

Song of Songs is debated as a story of two lovers or Jesus and His bride. Either way, we love our bride as Christ loves the church. In the story, beauty and intimacy are fundamental. Not just physically but an intimate knowledge of each other and wanting to be near the other. Where are you in loving your bride as Jesus loves us? How are you being intimate with her? What does it mean to be intimate? The closer we draw to the LORD as a couple and want to know Him, the more we can draw closer to each other. The better we can understand our spouse. And a more connected physicality comes with that intimacy.

Verses

You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), So 4:7.

More, you say?

Day 10

What is the one thing you do that leaves her wanting to be around you more? It sounds counterintuitive to think outside of yourself for this but let's try. What have you learned about your wife? What are her likes, her dislikes? What do you say or do that makes her feel more cherished as a woman? As your spouse? What have you done lately that would make her proud to have you as a husband?

Women long to feel safe and secure. How are you doing that in your marriage? If we can accomplish this mindset of lion and lamb, warrior and poet, do you think she would desire to be around you more? How are you fulfilling the role of being the husband Jesus calls us to be? Where are you finding your examples? In culture? How has Jesus given us to be the bridegroom? The head of those He leads. He was both the lion and lamb.

How did Jesus provide an example of a lion and lamb for his bride? As a lion, He could plaid a whip in the house of God and drive out the money changers. As a lamb died on the cross for His bride. What does that look like in your home? How do you lead from both those aspects at the same time? How do we look more like Jesus today than yesterday to our spouse?

More, you say?

Day 10

Verses

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 5:22–33.

Journal

I challenge you today to write down how you lead as a lion and lamb for your spouse. List out the good, the bad, and the ugly things that come to your mind. Find the things to work on. Celebrate the things you are doing right. And don't beat yourself up over what you think are utter failings. You have grace! And I bet your spouse has grace for you too. She may look past your faults, flaws, and shortcomings to see a Man of God breaking free from a lifetime of bondage. A man who has chosen to start leading instead of passively following the wrong leads in his life. Write down your next step and then take it. Draw closer to Jesus today.

Get ready for a...

Day 11

Is your house like mine? Packing for a weekend getaway is stressful. It's an event before the event. You have to make sure all the clothes you're going to take have been cleaned. You have to make sure you have enough toiletries. Get your C-Pap machine ready because you will need to pack it in the morning. Can you find all the shoes that you are taking? Self-imposed pressure of "Did I double-check the reservation?" All these things you have to prepare to walk out the door and get away from it, right?

What about your heart? Did you check on it? Is it in the right place? Or are you frustrated because packing has you in a bad mood? You have a blocked goal in your life for the moment, and you take out your anger on your wife. Did you check her heart? She can't find the one thing she needs to take on the trip, and now she has a blocked goal and takes it out on you. Now your weekend getaway starts on the wrong foot. Before you get the first bag out of the closet, you can check your emotional baggage. Yes, we have been working for ten days to get to this point, but that doesn't mean everything is "perfect." How are you doing spiritually? How have things changed since day 1? Have you fallen back into any old habits in just ten days? How are you "packing" for the trip? What are you leaving behind? What is going to be waiting for you when you get back?

Verses

Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 3:8–9.

Weekend Getaway!

Day 12

For us, we have a standing weekend getaway to the XO Marriage Conference. We put a priority on building our marriage up (at least one time a year...LOL). We hear great speakers, no kids, and be together with one focus. US! We are unified in how we can do this better. We try to identify what is getting in the way of God and each other. We get to have dinner uninterrupted, a date night, and just time to be with each other.

What priorities have you put in your life? Is your spouse one of them? You are still supposed to be you, not an unappreciated slave to her every whim, but you are to be the head servant. And in your serving, put God first, then your spouse. Is there anything getting above her? This weekend you can be honest with yourself and vulnerable with her. Ask her where she feels something is taking priority over her. Again, not saying that you can't have hobbies, activities, and things only you like. But where do they fall in the order of priorities? Do your hobbies get more time, money, and energy than your spouse?



Marry Her!

Day 13

At the end of the XO Marriage Conference, husbands and wives all over the room hold hands, look deeply into each other's eyes, and recommit to each other by renewing their vows. How often do you remember the miracle of marriage? God gave us the ability to leave the covering of a mother and father and to cleave to be a covering for a spouse and family. He has allowed us to be Christlike in the most intimate way possible. In our marriages, we can experience another person and serve them like no other person in the entire world. We get to signify this through our wedding bands. How often do we heed the reminders right in front of us? Do we get complacent even with a reminder on our finger?

Please take a moment and remember the first time you put her ring on her finger. The smile on your face, the joy in your heart was seeing her in her wedding dress. Remember! Now do it again. Tell her how significant she is in your life and how you will be that security for her. Renew your vow to her and choose her all over again.

Verses

23 Then the man said,
 “This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
 she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:23–25.

The Honeymoon

Day 14

When was the last time you just enjoyed each other? Physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Marriage should be fun. Can you laugh with and at each other? Is it possible for the two of you to cut up, have fun, be unclothed, and not be physical? I'm not asking about foreplay. Is there no shame between the both of you? Can you enjoy each other in the most vulnerable since of being together? Or does you mind immediately "go for the jugular?" You want sex, and you want it now. How can we, as men, through our connections to our wives, draw closer to God? How do we give our wives security while we feel significant and not make everything about what we get out of it? What does the freedom to love my wife as Christ loved the church look like from here on out? I'm not sure, but God has called me to be a husband. And husbands are to love their wives, so I will freely love my wife. My greatest need with my wife is to point her to the savior of the world. In that freedom, I have the ability to fail and be ok with my failing. There is the freedom to get back up and try again. How are you living out your freedom?

Verses

18 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 5:18–19.

Journal

Today is the last day of camp! What did you learn about God, yourself, and your spouse? Did you write any of it down? Are you going to learn from the things you found out? Does it change how you look at God? How does it make you feel about your marriage and your spouse?

Conclusion

THE 14 DAY MARRIAGE "CAMP"

My hope and prayer for you over the past 14 days is that this "camp" launches you into a deeper relationship with Christ and your wife. The next challenge is how to keep it going. How do we continue that life in the mundane?

Just like anything else in life. It takes action and intentionality. It takes sacrifice and seeing the value of what you want in your marriage and life. What are you willing to give up having what you want? And by want, I mean what lines up with Christ and scripture. Your will should align with His. So, keep pressing on, running the race, and striving for the prize that is Jesus.

THE 14 DAY MARRIAGE "CAMP"

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