

**52 Uncommon Dates** ignites a prayerful and playful connection between couples in a way that feels natural to schedule and relevant to real life. Fun, creative, and spiritually engaging, this powerful resource will spiritually energize your relationship, one date at a time.

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## DESIGN-A-SHIRT DATE



### WORDS TO GROW ON

*The Lord has filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts.*

EXODUS 35:31

*Humans are instinctively creative. . . . We are made in the image of a God who creates, and we who bear His image have tremendous creative potential.*

GARY CHAPMAN

### SET THE SCENE

If you attended camp as a youngster or spent some time in a church youth group, you may have some experience in making T-shirts. But how much creative input did you have—beyond, say, choosing the colors for your tie-dye? How accurately did the finished product reflect your creativity and vision?

Here's a chance to express yourself a little more fully through fashion design—and perhaps to learn something new about your spouse in the process. Let your artistic impulses run wild as you create a shirt to wear on a date with your spouse.

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

The Design-a-Shirt Date is actually a two-stage date. The first stage is the design process. This is where you let your imaginations run wild as you decorate plain shirts according to your individual style. T-shirts are certainly the easiest and cheapest to decorate, but any kind of shirt will work.

The style of decorating you choose, whether it's iron-on, permanent markers, painting, or applique, will determine the supplies you need. Make sure you keep plenty of extras (including T-shirts) on hand, in case of mistakes.

Put some thought and effort into your creation. Make sure the shirt you design says something about you. For example, you might put your favorite nickname on the back, jersey-style. You might paint things (or iron on patches) that represent your favorite hobbies or interests. You might fill the shirt with some of your favorite quotes. Anything that reveals something about you is an option.

Don't work in silence, though. Talk about your ideas. Pay each other compliments. Encourage each other, especially if ideas that seemed doable at first turn out not to be. Keep the stress level low. Make it an enjoyable time together.

The second stage of the date—which probably won't take place on the same day as the first stage because of the time needed for the shirts to dry—is to wear your shirts in public.

Plan a casual outing of bowling, miniature golf, or a picnic—anything in which a homemade T-shirt would be considered appropriate attire. Be prepared to compliment your spouse on his or her design skills—and to field questions from curious passersby.

## FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Design-a-Shirt Date, spend a few minutes talking with your spouse about the experience. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion.

- ▶ How comfortable are you when it comes to expressing your creativity and individuality?
- ▶ What are some of the obstacles that get in the way of healthy expressions of creativity and individuality?
- ▶ What specific steps can you take to celebrate and encourage one another's creativity and uniqueness?



## MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your spouse's primary love language is Physical Touch, make sure you provide plenty of it throughout the date. During the design process, occasionally place your hand on your spouse's hand or rub her back—a little something to let her know how you feel. The trying-on process will give you plenty of opportunities to lovingly smooth the wrinkles in your spouse's shirt with your hands. Take advantage of them.



## TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer with your spouse. Thank God for the fact that you are created in His image—specifically for the fact that you have the ability to create, as He does. Thank Him for the creativity and individuality you see in your spouse. Ask God to

- ▶ bless your time with your spouse during your Design-a-Shirt Date
- ▶ help you maintain a spirit of fun, creativity, and good-naturedness for the duration of your date
- ▶ come away from your date with a renewed thankfulness and appreciation for your spouse's creativity and uniqueness.

## DIG DEEP

The Bible encourages us to express our God-given creativity and unique personality. Here are a few passages that fit the theme of expressing ourselves.

- ▶ Romans 12:6–8
- ▶ Ephesians 2:10
- ▶ Colossians 3:23
- ▶ 1 Timothy 4:14
- ▶ 1 Peter 4:10–11
- ▶ Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 245



## THE ARCADE DATE



### WORDS TO GROW ON

*Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven."*

MATTHEW 18:3

*Enjoy today what you have today.*

GARY CHAPMAN

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### SET THE SCENE

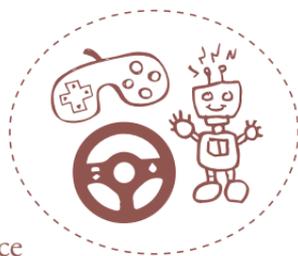
Jesus encourages His followers to bring a childlike perspective to our faith. Children are trusting, humble, dependent, and able to be shaped and molded. Those are the qualities Jesus wants in us. Those are the qualities of difference makers for him.

We can all benefit from being more childlike occasionally—not just for our spiritual health, but for our emotional and relational health as well.

Children have the ability to set aside their cares and worries temporarily in order to pursue fun. That's what you're going to do on this date. The Arcade Date is designed to help you have fun with your inner child.

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

How long has it been since you were in an arcade? You may be in for a bit of future shock, especially if you're not a gamer. With a little reconnaissance work, though, you may be able to find an arcade in your area that features some old-school games.



That would be ideal, because reconnecting with your youth is what this date is all about. If you're able to find some of your favorite games from childhood, test your skills again. Surrender to nostalgia. Help each other understand why those games meant something to you. Share a few of your arcade stories. Talk about the friends you used to play with. If your date has similar stories to tell, be an active listener.

Of course, if you see some cool-looking *new* games, feel free to indulge. Play as a team or against each other. Just make sure both of you get equal screen time. The Arcade Date will get boring very quickly if only one of you is playing.

The one childlike quality you'll want to avoid is hypercompetitiveness. If winning or doing well on a game becomes your focus, it's time for a priority check. Having fun with your date is Job #1.

Bringing along some of each other's favorite candies from childhood would be a nice touch!

## FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Arcade Date, spend a few minutes talking with each other about the experience. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion.

- ▶ What does it mean to have a childlike faith?
- ▶ What are some of the things that happen to people's faith as they get older that Jesus wants us to avoid?
- ▶ How can we encourage each other to maintain a childlike faith?



## MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Receiving Gifts, you'll want to find an arcade with a prize-redemption counter. This is how it works: as you play games, you earn tickets that you can redeem for prizes; the more tickets you earn, the bigger and better prizes you can get.

At the beginning of your Arcade Date, swing by the redemption counter. Look at all the prizes available, and have your sweetheart pick the one she'd like to take home. Your goal, then, is to earn enough tickets to get that prize.



## TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer as a couple. Thank God for the good memories you have of your childhood. Thank Him for the lessons you

learned that helped shape you and for the people who made a difference in your life. Ask Him to help you

- ▶ maintain a childlike enthusiasm for your Arcade Date;
- ▶ open up to each other about your childhood memories and experiences;
- ▶ identify specific ways you can be more childlike in your faith.

## DIG DEEP

Want to check out some more passages that talk about the importance of a childlike perspective? Try these.

- ▶ Psalm 8:2
- ▶ Matthew 19:14
- ▶ Matthew 21:15–16
- ▶ Mark 10:13–16
- ▶ Luke 18:17
- ▶ Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 520



## THE PARK BENCH DATE



### WORDS TO GROW ON

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

*All of us are more likely to communicate our inner thoughts and feelings if we believe that someone genuinely wants to hear what we want to say and will not condemn us.*

GARY CHAPMAN

### SET THE SCENE

The Park Bench Date involves sitting on a park bench with each other, and reading a favorite book, article, letters, Bible passages, or more to each other.

Don't be fooled, though. This idea isn't nearly as sedate as it seems! Granted, it doesn't

involve much movement or action. But it does involve an exchange of ideas—a revealing of self. The idea here is not just to read random books and articles to each other. It's to share passages that have deeply affected you—words that have helped shape you and make you into the person you are today.

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

The Park Bench Date is a date that calls for your *best* preparation.

If you're willing to do the work, this date—this one afternoon spent on a park bench—could be something you remember for the rest of your lives. Here's what you need to do:

1 *Spend some time compiling your sources.*

Think about the books, articles, stories, Bible verses, song lyrics, and other passages that have influenced your life. Start with your favorite authors, and make a list of the titles that you immediately remember that influenced you. Bring a variety of material—especially works that changed how you looked at the world—or even how you looked at God and His Word. Use bookmarks and sticky notes to mark passages you want to share.

2 *Crack open a journal or two.*

Don't limit yourself to the written works of others. Share your own words as well. If you keep a journal, bring one along and find passages that reflect different sides of you.

3 *Find the right setting.*

If finding a park bench is not convenient, try someplace else. You may choose to sit on a blanket on the beach, or find a nice place with a beautiful view. Just make sure the spot you choose is quiet and private.

- 4 *Be the best listener ever.*  
Reward each one's willingness to open up to the other.  
Listen attentively to the passages your date shares, and ask questions that encourage them to tell you more.

## FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Park Bench Date, spend a few minutes talking about the experience. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion.

- ▶ What are the most surprising things we learned about each other today?
- ▶ If someone had overheard us sharing our passages, what conclusions might they have drawn?
- ▶ What Bible passage should we adopt as “ours”—the one that best sums up our relationship or our outlook on life?



## MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your significant other's primary love language is Quality Time, choose one of the books they share with you during your Park Bench Date—preferably something they identify as one of their favorites—and suggest that the two of you read and discuss it together.

Set aside time frequently and regularly to devote to the book. Take notes. When you're finished with a chapter, discuss it together. Let your special someone know that what's important to him or her is important to you.



## TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer with each other. Thank God for the many different ways in which He teaches, inspires, and motivates us. Ask God to

- ▶ bless your time together;
- ▶ help you come up with a variety of fun and interesting sources that will give your date insight into what makes you tick;
- ▶ give you the words to share your own sources and to ask illuminating questions about what your significant other shares.

## DIG DEEP

Not surprisingly, the Bible has a lot to say about the power of the written word. Here are a few passages you may want to consult before (or after) your date.

- ▶ Joshua 1:8
- ▶ Psalm 119:105; also vv. 89–93
- ▶ Matthew 4:4
- ▶ Hebrews 4:12
- ▶ Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 1301



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