

## **“Why Dating Your Spouse is Good for the Whole Family”**

*By Jim Burns, Ph.D.*

Life these days moves at a pretty hectic pace. And, in all honesty, I don't think that's a good thing.

But what concerns me more than just the busyness of life, however, is the fact that so many parents – even Christians – seem to be of the mind that all of this “activity” is somehow actually beneficial.

When Cathy and I were newly married, I was called to serve as Youth Pastor at a church in Southern California. Cathy taught preschool by day and was my primary adult volunteer at night.

The ministry thrived and we considered ourselves truly blessed – or at least *I* did. But after a year or so in that position, she came to me one night with a very serious look on her face and said, “Jim, we need to talk.”

We headed over to a local restaurant and she began to pour out her heart to me about how frustrated she'd become with our ministry. “Jim,” she said, “I feel abandoned by you. I feel resentment every time the phone rings or you are gone one more night.”

Neither of us had very good role models in our lives in the areas of courtship, intimacy and healthy relationships. And now, my zeal for ministry was putting what I thought was a good marriage in danger. So, we spent the next hour trying to figure out what to do. We came up with three action steps that proved to be lifesavers for our marriage and good boundaries when children showed up in our lives.

1. **Non-negotiable date night** once each week.
2. **Only out three nights each week** meaning I would be home more than half the time.
3. **Cathy to have veto power over the schedule.** Enough said on that one. 😊

Since that evening, Cathy and I haven't missed many date nights. We know that, even though life can get overly busy and we often get distracted, at least once a week we are going to stop what we are doing and focus on each other.

Does that sound a bit selfish? Perhaps. But, over the years, I've learned that doing so has its advantages – not just for Cathy and I as a couple but for our whole family:

1. **Dating your spouse keeps you growing romantically.** This might sound a bit obvious to some, but the fact is that there is a significant drop in satisfaction with a couple's romance and sex lives when children arrive on the scene. However, couples with the most positive families make intimacy and romance a priority.
2. **Dating your spouse keeps you growing spiritually as a couple.** Never in all my years of youth and family ministry and counseling couples have I ever encountered a couple who prayed together regularly experiencing serious difficulties. Praying together restores balance and priorities in marriage because it recognizes that God loves both partners equally. Plus, bringing a disagreement before the Ultimate Justice removes it somehow from human bitterness. Try it sometime!
3. **Dating your spouse keeps the lines of communication open.** Some couples have a hard time talking about "sensitive issues" like money, vacations, childrearing and the like. Having a regular date night gives you at least one opportunity each week to begin at least dialoging about these subjects.

A strong marriage definitely takes a great deal of work . . . however, when you look at the vitality it brings to your entire family, the results are well worth it.

Oh . . . and by the way – if your marriage is too "child-focused" to accommodate a regular date night, may I suggest you change your "focus?" Marriages that are totally "child-focused" don't work well . . . and, most of the time, they don't last.

Your children want and need you to invest time and effort into your marriage. Sure – they might complain about "date nights" or those "extended times" when you and your spouse take a weekend away together. But you know what? In their hearts, they know that you two need your time alone. And a good marriage will bring much security to a child!

*(Excerpted from [The 10 Building Blocks for a Happy Family](#) by Jim Burns, Ph.D. [Click here](#) for more information on how your family can benefit from having a copy of this helpful book.)*