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THE FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING DATE



WORDS TO GROW ON

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

You don't have to have money to keep romance alive in a marriage. But you do have to be thoughtful.

GARY CHAPMAN

1

SET THE SCENE

God created us with a capacity to enjoy a wide variety of experiences. Too often, though, we limit ourselves by “sticking to what we know.” We hang out in the places where we feel most comfortable—with the people who make us feel comfortable. We talk about the things we know. We wear a groove in our comfort zone that over time becomes a rut.

If that sounds familiar to you, then this is where you reverse the trend and pull out of that rut. On this date, nothing will feel familiar or comfortable because everything you do will be a first for you.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

The best way to approach this date is to consider your natural instincts—and then do the opposite. Here are some things you'll need to think about.

1 *Change your venue.*

Find a nearby town or an area of the city that neither of you has ever stepped foot in. Start your date there.

2 *Expand your palate.*

What's the most eclectic (yet affordable) restaurant in the area? What's the strangest thing on its menu? Start your ordering there. From appetizers to desserts, the only rule is this: don't eat anything that's crossed your palate before.

3 *Explore a new form of entertainment.*

Ever been to a jazz club? A Roller Derby match? Open mic night at a comedy club? A high school play? A patch of ground just beyond the airport runway where you can sit and watch planes take off and land?

4 *Keep the conversation fresh.*

If most of your date-night conversations involve your jobs or the kids, this is the night to declare those topics off-limits. Anything you've never discussed before is fair game.

5 *Add a new spice to your lovemaking.*
Married couples can continue the first-time-for-everything theme in your physical intimacy. Is there a room in your house you haven't "initiated"? Is there a sexual position you haven't tried? If you're both comfortable with an idea and have never tried it before, this is the time.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your First Time for Everything Date, spend a few minutes talking about the experience and what you'll take away from it. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion:

- ▶ What was the best part of the date?
- ▶ Was your conversation better, or just different, because you avoided your regular conversation topics?
- ▶ Would you want to do a First Time for Everything Date again sometime, or was this one time enough?



MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Receiving Gifts, this would be a great date to surprise the person you love the most with something truly unique. It doesn't have to be expensive or even necessarily useful. Just make sure it's something different from any other gift they have ever received.



TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for the variety of people and situations He's put in your path. Thank Him for His blessings and mercies, which are *new* every morning. In the spirit of this date theme, ask Him to

- ▶ show you areas of your life in which you're in danger of falling into a rut;
- ▶ give you the creativity and courage to try new things to escape or avoid a rut;
- ▶ help you keep your relationship fresh and exciting;
- ▶ help you maintain an adventurous spirit in your Christian walk.

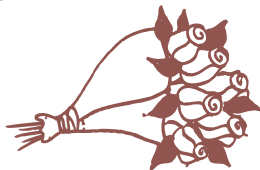
DIG DEEP

The Christian life is all about newness and freshness. The Bible tells us “that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The last thing a new person needs is to get stuck in an old rut. If you want to be inspired to live more adventurously, check out the following passages:

- ▶ Psalm 92:12–14
- ▶ Lamentations 3:22–23
- ▶ Luke 5:36–39
- ▶ Colossians 3:10
- ▶ Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 334



THE CEMETERY DATE



WORDS TO GROW ON

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.

And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

HEBREWS 12:1

On George Washington Carver's tombstone are carved the following words: "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world." People of all races still honor George Washington Carver. Why? Because he lived a self-sacrificing life for the benefit of others.

True honor is always earned.

GARY CHAPMAN

2

SET THE SCENE

At first glance, this may seem like a morbid, even unsettling, idea for a date. That's why it's important to set the right tone. Reading Hebrews 12:1 together to start your date would be an ideal tone-setter.

Visiting burial sites together can serve as a reminder of those who have run God's course and lived victorious Christian lives before us. Your purpose is to honor them and to remind each other that other people—the living and the dead—can positively influence us in our spiritual success.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Here are some tips for planning a memorable and meaningful cemetery date.

1 *Choose a place that has a personal connection to you.*
If you have family members buried in a local cemetery, start there. Visit their graves. (If you're so inclined, bring flowers.) Share a few memories. After you've paid your respects, you can widen your circle of exploration.

2 *Look for eye-catching grave markers.*
Which ones really stand out from the rest? What can you conclude about those people based on the way they're memorialized? Do you think they had any input in choosing their gravestones, or do you think their gravestones were chosen by relatives after their deaths?

Talk about the kind of grave marker you would prefer. What would the design be? What would you want it to say? Why?

3 *Let the dates on the gravestones tell you stories.*

If you can do the math to figure out how old people were when they died, you can make educated guesses as to what their lives may have been like. Think about the person who outlived a spouse by thirty years. Think about the mother who lost a child in infancy. Think about the person who's buried alone.

4 *Talk about your personal crowd of witnesses.*

Think about the Christians in your life who have died. How did their faithfulness to God influence you in your Christian walk? Are you encouraged in your faith by the testimony they left behind? Or does remembering them make you feel guilty when you make a mess of things?

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Cemetery Date, spend a few minutes talking together about the experience and what you'll take away from it. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion:

- ▶ Was the date eerie or comforting?
- ▶ Did seeing the gravestones make you want to prioritize anything differently in life? Explain.
- ▶ What gravestone affected you the most, and why?



MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Words of Affirmation, share a list of epitaphs that could be used on their gravestone. (Again, do your best to skirt the morbid aspects of the exercise and focus on making your date feel loved, appreciated, and affirmed.)

Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

- ▶ She made her husband the luckiest man in the world.
- ▶ He brought color to the world.
- ▶ She changed lives.
- ▶ Everyone who knew him was better for it.



TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for the life He gives—in this world and throughout eternity. Thank Him for the people who made a difference in your life before they died. Ask God to

- ▶ help you maintain a proper perspective during your date;
- ▶ remind you when you're feeling discouraged that a crowd of witnesses have run the course before you;
- ▶ give you the endurance and strength to finish the race set before you.

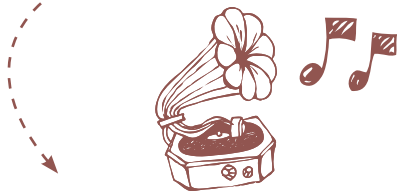
DIG DEEP

Looking for more passages that talk about staying strong in the Christian faith and completing the course that is laid out before you? Try these:

- ▶ Joshua 1:9
- ▶ 1 Chronicles 16:11
- ▶ Isaiah 40:31
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 10:13
- ▶ Philippians 4:13
- ▶ Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 353



THE MUSIC DATE



WORDS TO GROW ON

*Come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us
shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.*

PSALM 95:1

*Music expresses the rhythm and
rhyme of [our] hearts.*

GARY CHAPMAN

3

SET THE SCENE

Whether you're a hard-core geek with thousands of albums, CDs, and downloads in your collection (ahem) or someone who just enjoys singing along to the radio, you've been affected by music to some degree. Music is one of God's greatest gifts.

Music is the soundtrack of life. It defines eras and marks significant events—both cultural and personal.

It's only natural, then, that music should play a role in your relationship. Do you remember the song that was playing the first time you saw each other? Do you remember the first time your significant other turned up the radio and said, "I love this song"? Are there certain song lyrics that remind you of the other person and bring a smile to your face every time you hear them? If so, why not spend an evening celebrating your favorite music with your favorite person?



MAKE IT HAPPEN

As is the case with most of the ideas in this book, the more preparation you put into your date, the bigger the payoff will likely be. There are a few different ways you can approach your date.

1 *Create separate playlists in advance and play them for each other during your date.*

The bigger your music library is, the better your playlist will be. If you don't have the tunes you want on your device, raid the collection of a music-geek friend. Ask for input and find out about some songs or artists you may not be aware of.

2 *Take turns playing songs from your music library that mean something to you.*

Scroll through the list and look for songs that tug at your heart, spark a memory, or take you back to certain times or events in your life.

3 *Go to a used record store, find some romantic CDs, take them home, and dance to the songs.*
Talk about money well spent. If you've never slow danced together, this is the time.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Music Date, spend a few minutes talking together about the experience and what you'll take away from it. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion:

- ▶ What song brought the most interesting conversation to the date?
- ▶ Did including music in the date affect your emotions at all during the date? How?
- ▶ If we didn't have a "song" as a couple, do we now, after this date?



MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Quality Time (and if this Music Date is a success), try it again in a different venue. Go for a drive together—the longer, the better. If you don't have a destination in mind, go for a nice jaunt in the country, like your grandparents might have done.

Leave your distractions at home. All you'll need is each other and a playlist of favorite songs. Spend a few hours singing and listening together. Talk about your reactions to certain tunes. Reminisce about the first time you heard them. Fill your car with music and your date's love tank with Quality Time.



TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for His gift of music and the influence it's had on your lives. While you're at it, why not have a quick worship time by singing your favorite praise song together? Seems appropriate, doesn't it? Ask God to

- ▶ bless your time with each other;
- ▶ free your minds from distractions so you can focus completely on your date;
- ▶ help you shed your inhibitions and self-consciousness so you can fully enjoy God's gift of music together.

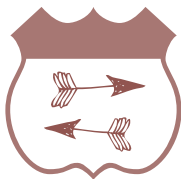
DIG DEEP

Throughout its pages, the Bible encourages God's people to enjoy music and use it in our worship. See for yourself in these passages:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| ▶ Psalm 71:23 | ▶ James 5:13 |
| ▶ Psalm 105:2 | ▶ Devotional reading from
<i>The Love Languages</i>
<i>Devotional Bible</i> , page 584 |
| ▶ Ephesians 5:19 | |
| ▶ Colossians 3:16 | |



THE GET LOST DATE



WORDS TO GROW ON

*I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!*

PSALM 139:7

*At the end of time, when all history culminates
in the final pages of the Bible, what will we
find God doing? Spending time with His children.
Making His home with them. Being together.*

GARY CHAPMAN

4

SET THE SCENE

Celebrate God's constant presence with an unusual day out. We call it the "Get Lost Date," but it's really more of a "Random Destination Date."

Rather than heading for a familiar restaurant, coffee shop, or park, take a road less traveled toward a destination you know nothing about. Select a route on a whim, and make an adventure of getting

“lost” together. As you make your way toward an unfamiliar destination, celebrate God’s nearness.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Giving someone instructions on how to get lost seems like an oxymoron. Yet the more creativity you put into the date, the more you’ll both enjoy it. One option is to print out a map of your state (or of your county, if you’d prefer to stay closer to home). Close your eyes and mark a point on the map with a pencil. Make that your destination.

Another option is to make up a set of random directions. When you hit the road, try to follow the directions as closely as you can. See where you end up.

Once you reach your destination, explore the surroundings. Walk around. Take in the sights. If you’re in a populated area, interact with the locals. See if you can learn something new.

Obviously we can’t recommend something as radical as getting lost without following up with some obligatory safety precautions.

- ▶ Follow the *spirit*—but not necessarily the *letter*—of the rules. If your first coordinates lead you to some risky terrain or a dangerous area, alter them. Trust your instincts. If a place doesn’t feel right, go somewhere else.
- ▶ Make sure your car is up to the task. Check your gas, tires, and fluids before you get lost. If weather conditions are bad, save this idea for another day.
- ▶ Pack a first-aid kit along with an ample supply of food, water, and blankets.

- ▶ Make sure your phones are charged in case of emergency. (Avoid *really* getting lost—use a GPS or map out your return trip home.)
- ▶ Once you've sketched out your itinerary, share it with a friend or family member. Make sure someone knows where you're heading and how you're getting there.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Get Lost Date, spend a few minutes talking together about the experience and what you'll take away from it. Use the following questions as needed to guide your discussion:

- ▶ Were you fearful or apprehensive at all during this date? If so, how did it feel knowing we were together? How does it feel knowing God is always with us?
- ▶ Was there anything that surprised you during this date?
- ▶ Was there an interesting person we met today who you'll always remember?



MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Quality Time, make sure your excursion is filled with it. Share with each other times when you felt lost—physically, spiritually, or emotionally. What were the triggers? How did you deal with your feelings? How did the people around you react? How did God make His presence felt during that time? What did you take away from the experience?



TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, read David's words in Psalm 139:7 aloud together: "I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!" Spend some time in prayer, thanking God that what was true for David is true for you, too. Ask God to

- ▶ give you safe travels to and from your destination;
- ▶ bless your efforts to bond with each other;
- ▶ help you develop a deeper appreciation for His continuous presence.

DIG DEEP

Want to check out some more passages that talk about God's continuous presence in the lives of those who serve Him? Try these:

- ▶ Exodus 33:14
- ▶ Joshua 1:9
- ▶ Psalm 16:11
- ▶ Psalm 51:11
- ▶ Psalm 140:13
- ▶ Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 1346

