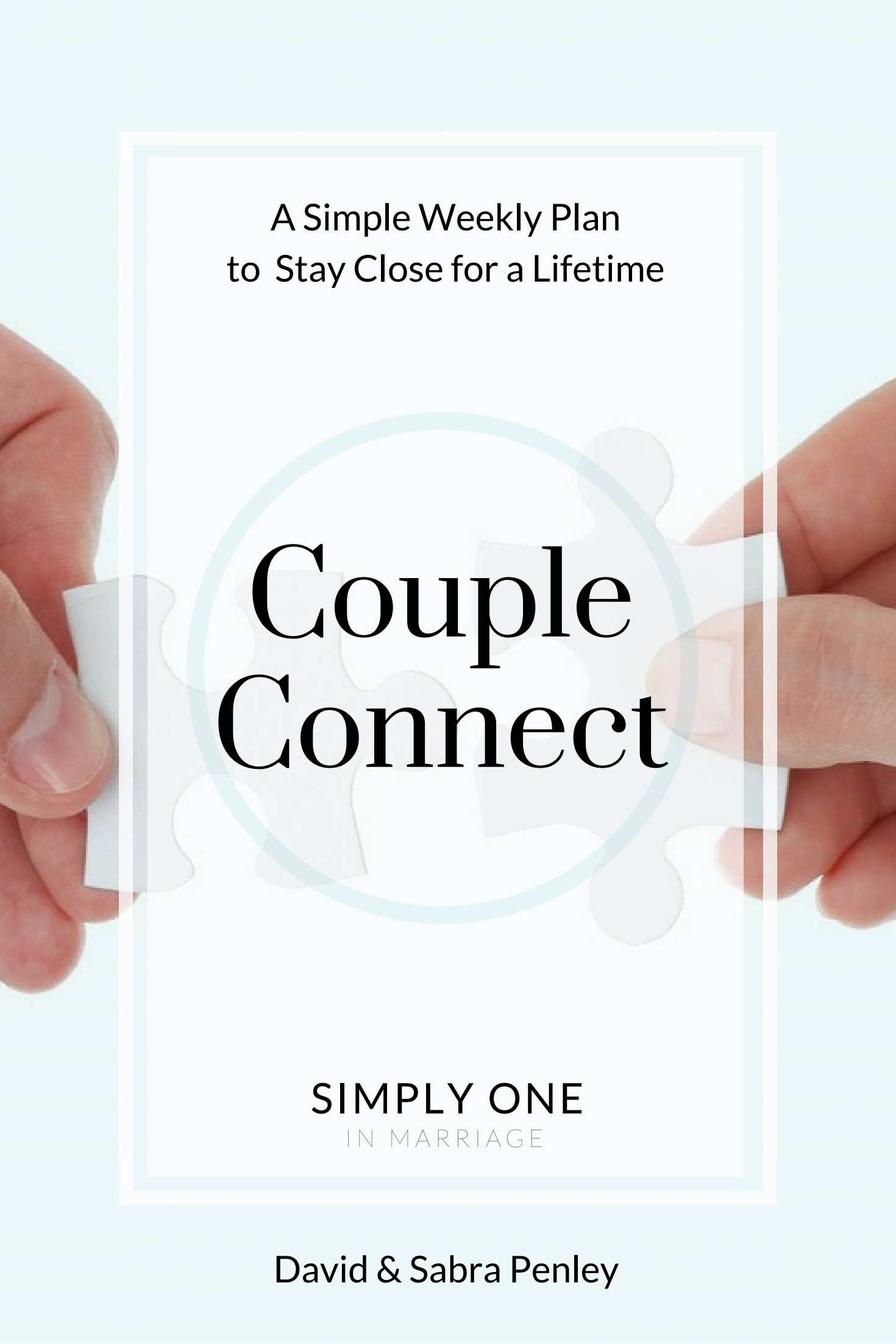


A Simple Weekly Plan
to Stay Close for a Lifetime



Couple Connect

SIMPLY ONE
IN MARRIAGE

David & Sabra Penley

COUPLE CONNECT

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"And let us consider how to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..."

Hebrews 10:14-25

Couple Connect

What Is It?

Couple Connect is a time to come together each week, just the two of you, to share your hearts and thoughts and feelings. A time to plan your week, to talk about issues you're dealing with, decisions that need to be made, and to seek God as one.

This time spent together just might be the most powerful you can spend as a couple each week.

SIMPLY ONE.



*"So they are no longer two, but one.
Therefore what God has joined together,
let not man separate."*

Matthew 19:6

Why Do It?

Remember when you were dating? You spent lots of time together talking, desiring to learn more about each other. Your schedules were probably busy, but you always rearranged things to get together. And though you might have a disagreement now and then, you worked through it with the desire to grow closer.

Can you say things are still the same today? Or do you miss those days

Life Gets in the Way

Once married, it's easy to get comfortable and lazy in our relationship with each other. Comfortable can be a beautiful thing. But it can also lull us into thinking we don't need to work to stay close and grow closer. And that thinking will get us into trouble.

It happens before we realize it. Life gets busy. With all our responsibilities, activities, and the unexpected situations that arise, somehow we forget about *us*. And our relationship gets lost in the shuffle.

It's not that we don't care. We do. We want to remain close—to grow closer. But it's so easy to just take care of the urgent things. And there's little time left at the end of the day...which turns into a week...a month...years.

Pretty soon we start to notice we've drifted apart. We're not as close as we once were. And we wonder what happened.

A Good Marriage Must Be Nurtured

Much like a garden, a marriage has to be nurtured.

What is beautiful and lush today can quickly become a withered mess tomorrow if we're not paying careful attention.

Just as a garden thrives and grows when tenderly cared for each day, our marriage will blossom and remain fresh and vibrant when we give it the time and care it requires.

But time for each other will never happen if we don't make it a priority and schedule it. We did it when we were dating. And we need to do the same now that we're married.

Many couples have a regular "date night." Going out together like you did when you were dating is a wonderful

way to keep the romance fresh and alive.

But to build a strong marriage that's able to weather the storms that come your way, you also need time alone together each week to connect on a deeper level.

A Simple Tool for Better Communication

Good communication is essential to a good marriage.

And Couple Connect is one simple tool to help you cultivate better communication in your marriage.

It's spending time working on the garden of your relationship—watering and feeding, trimming and weeding—to keep it healthy and beautiful.

Of course, not all marriages are lush and beautiful right now. Some may be neglected and quite a mess. But even the most problematic marriage can be transformed into something wonderful when extra time and care is given to it.

In the beginning, Couple Connect might seem a little uncomfortable or awkward. Especially if you have neglected your relationship for a while.

But if you make the effort and seek to grow closer (to each other and to the Lord), your marriage will grow stronger and healthier. And this special time together will be something you look forward to and enjoy.

A Simple Way to Stay Christ-focused

As a Christian husband and wife, it is so important to stay focused on the Lord in every area of our lives.

Couple Connect can help you do this as you seek Him together in prayer and the study of His Word.

In fact, prayer and Bible study are two components every couple should include in their weekly time together.

While you may see benefits without including these, they cannot compare with the blessings you will receive when you invite the Lord to lead and guide you.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, He will help us to share what needs to be shared, speak the truth in love, and give us wisdom on how best to use our time on that particular day.

If your spouse is not a believer, ask if they would be open to include prayer and Bible study in your time together.

If they say no, you can still keep your time Christ-centered in your heart. Pray yourself before your time together and ask the Lord to guide you and to soften your spouse's heart toward Him.

We never know how God will use our weekly together time to bless us, our marriage, and our home.

SIMPLY ONE.



*"For where two or three
come together in my name,
there am I with them."*

Matthew 18:20

What's the Goal?

The simplicity of Couple Connect is in its purpose.

The goal is to bring you closer together as a couple and keep you close for a lifetime—to each other and to the Lord.

SIMPLY ONE.



*"So they are no longer two, but one.
Therefore what God has joined together,
let not man separate."*

Matthew 19:6

Where to Start?

Do you want to start using Couple Connect in your own marriage?

The first place to begin is to talk with your spouse about it. Share why you believe it would be a great tool to help the two of you stay connected and grow closer together.

When and where you meet together each week and what you include in this time is entirely up to you. There is no required step-by-step process. You design it together as a couple, based on your needs and desires, keeping the goal always in mind.

So, a good place to begin is to have a "planning date."

Go on a Planning Date

As we mentioned before, date nights are always a good idea. So why not plan to go out together, just the two of you, and design your own Couple Connect time?

Dine in a restaurant or have a picnic in the park. Or if you enjoy cooking, plan a special night at home. Whatever you choose, be sure to keep it light and fun.

To help you along in your planning, the next section includes our *Couple Connect Designing Tool*. Print it out and take it with you. It will walk you through all the things you need to think about when choosing what works best for your specific situation.

Hopefully by the end of your date you will have your personalized Couple Connect plan designed and ready to go.

SIMPLY ONE.



*"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,
and come away with me."*

Song of Songs 2:10

Design Your Own Couple Connect Time

One of the strengths of Couple Connect is customization.

No two couples are the same. We all have different schedules, responsibilities, and preferences. Therefore, one specific plan will not fit all couples.

As you begin this venture of spending time together each week, it is important to fit it to your particular life situation and needs.

The following *Couple Connect Designing Tool* will guide you as you work together to design your own Couple Connect time.

What you design today may not fit your life situation tomorrow. But remember, Couple Connect is completely flexible. Just keep tweaking it as life changes come along, and it will continue to be a great blessing throughout your marriage.

- Couple Connect Designing Tool -

As a couple, use this tool as a worksheet to design your own customized Couple Connect time. Working through this guide will give you a great weekly plan to follow to make the most of your time together.

Make a Commitment

For Couple Connect to work well, you both must make it a priority and be committed.

Here are some tips:

- Commit to meet each and every week.
- If a conflict arises with the schedule, move things around and set a new time to meet that week.
- Don't skip a week, even if you can only meet 15-20 minutes, Consistency is important. A little time is better than no time.

In the space below, write out your own declaration of committing to meet together each week and sign your names below it. This will be a reminder of the commitment you've made.

Our Commitment

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p 2

Pick a Time and Place

Choose where and when you'll meet each week..

The ideal is to have a set time and place week-in and week-out. But conflicts will undoubtedly arise in your schedules and adjustments will need to be made. In these situations, it's important to find another time that week to meet. Remember, your commitment. Consistency in meeting every week is key.

Things to Consider:

- Choose a time and place with as few distractions as possible.
- Set aside 30-60 minutes.
- Find a comfortable environment where you can talk privately, preferably without interruptions.

Discuss:

- What are possible days and times that might work for both of you?

- Is there one specific time that might work best week after week?

- What are some good possibilities for a place to meet?

- Which location would be the most convenient, pleasant environment with the fewest distractions?

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p 3

Decide:

Choose the time and place that will be best for you most weeks. This will be your regular schedule. **Write it in the box below.**

Our Regular Time and Place to Meet

Day of the Week: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

NOTE: A good practice is to calendar your next Couple Connect time as you meet each week. This will help you see any potential conflicts ahead and change your time and location, if necessary. **Write the time and place of your first meeting below.**

Our First Couple Connect Time

Day of the Week: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p. 4

Choose What to Include

Choose what you want to include in your time together. Keep your goal in mind...

The goal of Couple Connect is to bring you closer together as a couple and keep you close for a lifetime--to each other and to the Lord.

The following checklist gives suggestions of what you might include as you meet. **Put a check mark next to the items you think are most important to meet your goal.** These may change from week to week, but we suggest you always include prayer and God's Word in every session. (The blank spaces are to add any other items you would like.)

_____ Prayer

- Open in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to be in control of your time and lead you

_____ God's Word

- Read the Bible together OR
- Do a Bible study lesson and discuss

_____ Confession

- When we see our sin, we need to confess it to each other and ask forgiveness. This brings healing and oneness, which is always our goal.

_____ Problems/Issues

- Discuss any problems, issues, or difficulties you are having.
- Seek possible solutions.
- Write down specific prayer requests.

_____ Decisions

- Talk about upcoming decisions that need to be made.
- Make the decision or put it on the list to discuss next week.

_____ Calendar

- Go over both of your schedules for the upcoming week (month).
- Notice any conflicts and decide on needed changes.
- Make plans for the week.

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p. 5

_____ Accountability

- Share areas of weakness you would like to strengthen in yourself and any plans you have to make improvements.
- Hold each other accountable by checking your progress each week.
- Encourage each other as you work on these areas.

_____ Thanksgiving and Appreciation

- Share things you are thankful for...
 - ...in life.
 - ...in each other.

_____ Close in Prayer

- Lift up specific requests for solutions, decisions, changes.
- Give thanks to the Lord.
- Ask God to draw you ever closer to each other and to Him.

Use this list as a guide to lead you in your time together each week.

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p. 6

Decide How You'll Prepare

Before meeting together each week, it is best to prepare yourselves individually. This will allow you to be ready to come together in the right frame of mind and with the right heart.

Below are some suggestions. Of course, you can choose these and/or add other whatever else you think will help you be prepared.

Place a check mark next to the steps you want to make to prepare your heart and mind. Add others you would like in the space provided.

_____ Pray

- Ask God to reveal anything you need to confess.
- Ask Him to control your tongue and spirit.
- Ask Him to lead you in what to discuss.

_____ Read God's Word

Review Scripture verses to remind you how to treat each other.
(Suggestions: Ephesians 4:25-5:2; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; 1 Peter 3:8-9)

_____ Make notes

Jot down anything you want to talk about during your time together.

_____ Unplug

Turn off your cell phone, TV, internet--anything that might be a distraction.

_____ Children?

If you have children, take care of their needs and plan what they'll do and where they'll be when you meet together.

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p. 7

Use this list to guide you as you prepare your own heart and mind before you meet together.

Couple Connect Designing Tool - p. 8

Pray for God's Blessing

Now that you've designed your own Couple Connect time, it's a good idea to cover it in prayer.

As our enemy--the devil--doesn't want to see you grow closer to each other and to the Lord, he will most likely do all he can to keep you from meeting and attempt to thwart your efforts. And your own sinful nature will tempt you away from meeting together.

You need God's blessing and His help to keep you committed and faithful to spend this much-needed time together each week.

In the box below, write out a prayer asking the Lord for His blessing on your commitment and seeking His help to remain faithful to meet together each week.

Our Prayer

A Prayer for You as You Begin

If you have made the commitment to start your own Couple Connect each week and have your customized plan ready to go, CONGRATULATIONS!

We have experienced the great blessings that come from setting aside this time with each other and hope you, too, will come to enjoy this sweet time together. We believe God has great things in store for your marriage and your relationship with Him.

So as you begin, we lift up this prayer for you...

Heavenly Father,

We thank You, Lord, for uniting this sweet couple to be one in marriage. Thank You for the love they share and their desire to grow closer to each other. Bless them as they begin this new venture together. Give them wisdom and direction as they meet each week. Help them to keep this time as a priority and be faithful to their commitment. Protect them from the enemy as they seek to do Your will. May they enjoy this time together and look forward to it each week. And may their relationship grow ever stronger--with each other and with You.

In Jesus' name, AMEN.

A Few Recommendations

As we highly recommend you make God's Word a part of your Couple Connect time, you may be wondering where to start.

Suggested Scripture

Going straight to the Bible is the best place to begin. We suggest using the following Scripture passages:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8
Galatians 5:13-26
Ephesians 4:17-5:2; 5:13-33
Philippians 2:1-8; 4:4-9
The Book of James

Couple's Bible Study

Another easy way to incorporate God's Word into your time together is to use our *Couple's Bible Study* posts on our website -- simplyoneinmarriage.com. Included are discussion questions. And a new post is added each week.

[Click here to go to our *Couple's Bible Study* page, with links to all our Bible studies.](#)

Suggested Books

Bible study books about marriage or living life according to God's ways are another great option to us in Couple Connect.

Below are some recommendations of books we have gone through and found very helpful. One criteria for all books we use in Couple Connect is that they are full of Scripture, as God's Word is our foundation. These books meet that requirement. And all are excellent.

Gospel-centered Marriage: Becoming the Couple God Wants You to Be by Tim Chester

Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy? by Gary L. Thomas

Sweethearts for a Lifetime: Making the Most of Your Marriage by Wayne A. Mack and Carol Mack

Our Hope for You

Couple Connect has had a powerful impact on our marriage. It has helped us make our relationship a priority. And because of this time spent together each week, we have grown closer as a couple.

Through the study of God's Word and discussions we've shared, we have developed a greater understanding of each other and what God expects of us. We are better able to treat each other with love and patience and the grace God has shown us.

As a result, our home has become a place of peace and love and joy. It is our safe haven. Our refuge from this crazy world. It's where we want to be.

And this is our hope for you. May you grow in your love for each other and for the Lord. May your home be filled with love and peace and joy. And may you stay close for a lifetime!

David & Sabra Penley
simplyoneinmarriage.com