

# COUPLES RETREAT

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## CALIFORNIA

### REAL LIFE LOVE

by Amy Arabian

Brace yourselves, it's coming! The holiday that we all seem to have a love/hate relationship with. We panic in the card aisle and spend obscene amounts of money on overpriced stuffed teddy bears. And who can forget the giant box of chocolate? You guessed it, Valentine's Day! This holiday has its pros and cons. The pro is that it gives us an opportunity to show focused love, affection and appreciation. The con is that we may feel pressured to perform in some way; this goes for both men and women.

My hubby and I have celebrated 24 Valentine Holidays together (21 married, 3 dating), so I thought I would share a few practical, everyday ideas with you about expressing love. Now don't get me wrong, I like Valentine's Day but honestly, I love it more when I don't expect special attention. We like to keep it spicy! When you and your spouse connect often it becomes a natural habit. It does not need to be a grand gesture every day.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Greet each other in the morning. Maybe it's with a hot cup of coffee. (my favorite 'good morning'). It is so easy to get into the habit of running out the door but taking a few minutes to connect can make your day starts out on a great note.
- Have devotional time together, this is so important. Yes, personal time is as well but some of our best conversations have come out of reading the Word together. This may be something you do together in the morning or before bed, either way, it is vital.
- Ask your spouse 'How can I help you today?' This may seem small but to those whose love language is acts of service (The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman); this is a huge love booster.



- Hold hands often. I know some couples are not comfortable with public affection, but this is a small gesture that can mean so much. Just about every car ride my husband and I take; we are holding hands. After 24 years of doing this (yes, even when we dated) it is a habit that we both enjoy.
- Going to bed at the same time. Not only does this give us an opportunity to connect in conversation but also intimately. Intimacy doesn't just happen; we have to be purposeful.

Perhaps you will spend loads of money on a giant teddy bear, splurge on a couple's massage. Or maybe ordering pizza and watching your favorite movie together is what you have planned. Each of us will find different ways to say "I love you" but the point is to say it in a way that fits your spouse. Love is an everyday adventure. Song of Solomon 2:16 sums it up for us, "I am my beloved and my beloved is mine." Some days are a little more of a wild ride than others but don't forget that you're riding in the same car, might as well hold hands!

Amy has been married 21 years to her high school sweetheart, Bryan, who farms a family vineyard. Together they pastor a local church in Kerman. They have one very spunky teenage daughter. Amy has a passion for encouraging others in everyday life through her blog ([FreeBirdWords.wordpress.com](http://FreeBirdWords.wordpress.com)) and her pod cast (ChirpCast).