

# More Than Hearts and Roses

For years, my wife used to celebrate Valentine's Day. She'd post hearts and flowers around the house, have the kids write cards to their friends and grandparents, and give them those heart-shaped candies embossed with sayings like "Be Mine" and "Luv You."

All too often I was one of those shame-faced guys standing in a grocery store at the end of a working day, buying her a fistful of roses and a card because I'd forgotten it was Valentine's Day and I knew how important the day was to her.

I cringe at those memories. She's gone now, having died 16 years ago, and I still look back and feel shame at my neglect and indifference on Valentine's Day.

Older now, and a little wiser, I now see Feb. 14 as my wife did, a singular holiday in our calendar. Though some protest that it's a fake holiday, a time for Hallmark to sell cards, florists to push roses, and candy makers to make money hand over fist, it's the one day of the year for celebrating love, particularly romantic love.

When we think of the romantic side of Valentine's Day, we probably imagine a young man and a woman on a date. He arrives at her doorstep, presents her with a kiss and some roses, and they head off to their favorite restaurant. It's snowing just a bit, and there's a spring in their step because though they've never spoken of it, they know they're in love. Perhaps this will be the night they express that love. Maybe the young man will even drop to one knee, produce a ring, and ask for her hand in marriage.

Sounds like the ending to a Hallmark movie, yes? Maybe it is.

But Valentine's Day offers the opportunity for all couples, young and old, to revisit romance. It's a chance to blow on

the embers of the banked fire of love and bring it roaring back to life.

Here are some thoughts on how to make Valentine's Day a special time.

## **1. Remember Your Past**

Turn the lights low, light a candle or two, break open a box of chocolates, sit on the sofa, hold hands, and together go back to the day you two met. Talk about those early days of falling in love, of the missteps and mistakes made, of some of the goofy moments you shared. Talk about the feelings you experienced, even if you've already done so dozens of times.

If you have children, include them in this conversation. Once or twice when teaching middle-school home-educated students, I sent them home to interview their parents, to find out how they had met and to ask about their early days together. Many of these young people had never thought to ask about this part of their parents' lives. Not only did they learn some family history, but that encounter also opened their eyes to the meaning of love.

## **2. Dream**

My days of raising children and fighting a daily battle against debt are now gone, but I remember feeling overwhelmed by work and family obligations. Rarely, if ever, did my wife and I take time from our busy schedules to simply sit and share our hopes and dreams for the long-term future. Where would we live? Would we have grandchildren? Would we travel more in our old age, and if so, where?

Many of my readers, I suspect, are also caught up in the bustle of life, so much so that the moments shared in this way with a beloved are few and far between. Valentine's Day,

dedicated as it is to love, is the perfect opportunity to look past the daily struggles and dream some dreams together.

### **3. Watch a Classic Romance Movie**

There are scores of romantic films, but why not step back fifty years and catch a flick from Hollywood's Golden Age?

At "[The Greatest Classic Romance Movies](#)," we find a list of romance films made before 1970. You can catch the snappy dialogue and humor of Nora and Nick in the "Thin Man" movies; you might need some tissues for that movie seemingly made just for Valentine's Day, "An Affair To Remember," which some consider the most romantic film of all time; and if you're in the mood for some music, you can sing along with Eliza Doolittle and Professor Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady."

### **4. Stop, Look, and Listen**

When we go to an art museum, we sometimes find a visitor standing before a painting as if entranced. While other patrons shuffle along behind her, she stands utterly still, oblivious to the crowd around her, swept up as she is by the oil and canvas which others give only a passing glance. That painting speaks to her with words the rest do not hear, and she has entered into a kingdom of enchantment.

On Valentine's Day we can do the same with those we love. We can pause, and really look at them, and listen to their words, and see them so truly that our hearts are cracked wide open from the love we feel.

Happy Valentine's Day to all of you.

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