



UNCOMMON HOLIDAY DATES

BASED ON THE BOOK SERIES
BY RANDY SOUTHERN

THE THANKSGIVING HOT POTATO DATE

SET THE SCENE

If you need a break from your holiday cooking, cleaning, and preparation, here's a quick date idea that embraces the spirit of Thanksgiving. It even gives you an opportunity to use materials you may have on hand—namely, an actual potato (albeit preferably one that's not actually hot) and a kitchen timer.

Here's the way it works. You and your date will sit facing each other. One of you will set the timer to a random time (preferably less than a minute, to allow for several rounds). You will then toss the potato back and forth. Each time one of you catches it, you must immediately name one thing that you're thankful for before tossing it back. When the timer goes off, the person holding the potato has to explain why he or she is thankful for that particular thing.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

The Thanksgiving Hot Potato Date will work any time. After all, there's really no bad time to count your blessings. But the ideal time for the date is Thanksgiving morning, before the busyness of the day kicks into high gear. Naming your blessings out loud will set the perfect tone for the day. Here are a few ideas for making the date extra memorable.

1. CHOOSE YOUR BLESSINGS WISELY.

Don't settle for "low-hanging fruit"—that is, the first things that pop into your mind as you're tossing the potato. Dig deep. Come up with some unexpected things that you're thankful for—things that mean a lot to you that you don't usually give much thought to.

2. SET SOME FUN PENALTIES.

What happens if one of you catches the potato but can't think immediately of a blessing to name? What happens if one of you names a blessing that the other already named? In the answers to the questions lies the potential for fun—not just during your date, but throughout your Thanksgiving celebration. For instance, for a first offense, the person might be required to sing "Auld Lang Syne," with no explanation whatsoever, during Thanksgiving dinner. For a second offense, the person might have to eat a heaping portion of your aunt's dreaded brussels sprout casserole.

5 UNCOMMON HOLIDAY DATES



WORDS TO GROW ON

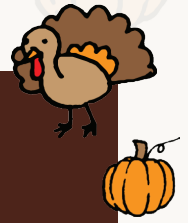
Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

Verbal compliments, or words of appreciation, are powerful communicators of love.

GARY CHAPMAN





3. USE “POTATO” AS A CODE WORD WITH YOUR DATE FOR THE REST OF THE HOLIDAY.

Sometimes personality differences, past grievances, petty annoyances, and controversial political topics can stir up dissent and hard feelings among family members. Suddenly a holiday that’s meant to be celebrated and enjoyed becomes something to be endured.

If you or your date see the other struggling with family-induced stress, whisper the word *potato* as a reminder to be thankful for your blessings, including the people who are driving you crazy.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Thanksgiving Hot Potato 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:

- Why is it important not to lose sight of the purpose of Thanksgiving?
- What keeps us from being thankful on other days?
- How can we maintain a spirit of gratitude beyond Thanksgiving?

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

You can make this adventure especially meaningful if your date’s primary love language is Words of Affirmation. All you need to do is come armed with a mental list of specific things about your date that you’re thankful for. For example, you might say, “I’m thankful that the person I love more than anyone else in this world is also the person who makes me laugh harder than anyone else in this world” or “I’m thankful that the love of my life cares enough about me to bring me a picnic lunch when I’m stuck at work on a Saturday.”

TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for all the blessings that you’re going to name during your date. Ask Him to...

- bless your time with each other;
- remind you that all good things in your life, including your date partner, come from Him;
- help you maintain a spirit of humility and gratitude throughout the holiday.

DIG DEEP

If, for some reason, you find yourself having trouble embracing a spirit of thankfulness and joy during the holiday season, turn to God’s Word for inspiration and motivation. Here are a few places to start:

- Psalm 7:17
- Psalm 100:1-5
- Matthew 6:25-34
- Philippians 4:6-7
- James 1:17
- Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 653

THE LIVING NATIVITY DATE

5 UNCOMMON Holiday DATES

SET THE SCENE

When it's time to put out your Christmas decorations, you can set up your nativity in the same old expected way—or you can bring the nativity story to life. Better yet, you can bring the nativity story to life as part of an unforgettable date.

In order to make this work, you'll need a nativity set with individual pieces that you can move around. Ideally, your set will include a manger, the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, an angel, and shepherds. (It's okay if the set includes the wise men as well, even though their inclusion complicates the story a little.) You'll also need to prepare a simple script of the Christmas story, as told in Luke 2 (and a few other passages), that you can use to narrate this adventure.

NOTE: This date also will work well as an unconventional double date. After all, four people can move around nativity figures a lot more easily than two can.

WORDS TO GROW ON

The Savior yes, the
Messiah, the Lord
has been born today
in Bethlehem, the city
of David!

LUKE 2:11

The one who chooses to love
will find appropriate ways
to express that decision
everyday.

GARY CHAPMAN

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Prepare your hearts for the Christmas season by focusing your attention on the Reason for the season. Here are a few tips for making this date something special.

1. START OUT WITH AN UNCONVENTIONAL ARRANGEMENT FOR YOUR NATIVITY FIGURES.

Set up the manger in its traditional spot in your home. That spot will represent Bethlehem. Set up the shepherds and their animals on a nearby table or shelf, which will represent the pastures outside Bethlehem. Set up Mary and Joseph across the room, in a spot that represents Nazareth. Place the angel on a high shelf that represents heaven. Set up the wise men in another room, in a spot that represents the Far East. Keep Jesus out of sight, until the proper time in the story.

Assign half the nativity figures to your date to move around, according to the script. Start by standing next to the empty manger. Talk about how, centuries before Jesus' birth, God's prophets announced the coming of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Yet when the time came, God sent an angel to a young woman in Nazareth. Walk across the room to indicate the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Signal for the angel figure to be moved to "Nazareth." Talk about the angel's appearance to Mary and, later, Joseph.

From there, move the figures accordingly while you talk about Caesar Augustus's decree for everyone to return to the city of their ancestors in order to be taxed; the journey of Joseph and a pregnant Mary to Bethlehem; the birth of Jesus and His placement in the manger, the only place available for Mary and Joseph to lay their baby in the overcrowded city; the visit of the angel to the shepherds; and the journey of the shepherds to Bethlehem to see the newborn Christ.

In order to incorporate the wise men, you'll need to explain that some time had passed since the birth of Jesus, so Jesus was no longer a newborn when the wise men visited Him.

2. PUT YOURSELVES IN THE CHARACTERS' PLACES

As you move the nativity figures from place to place, talk about what it must have been like for them as the events were unfolding. How did Mary feel the first time she held the Son of God in her hands? How did the shepherds feel as they approached the manger? What did they expect to see?

3. FIND A REAL ONE.

You can extend your date, while continuing the theme, by visiting a living nativity display in your community.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Living Nativity 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 parts of the Christmas story, if any, were confusing to you as a kid?
- What questions do you have about Jesus' birth, or the events surrounding it, that the Bible doesn't answer?
- What can we do this Christmas season to stay focused on the purpose of our celebration?

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If Quality Time is the primary love language of your date, you can make this date even more memorable with just a few simple gestures. Turn off your phones and devices, and ask your date to do the same. Explain that, for this date, you'll be giving each other an early Christmas present—that is, the gift of your time and undivided attention.

TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for sending His Son into the world to save us. Ask Him to...

- bless your time with each other;
- guide your thoughts this Christmas season so that you can stay focused on what Jesus' birth means for us;
- help you recognize opportunities to share your faith this Christmas season.

DIG DEEP

It would be quite an understatement to suggest that God's Word has a lot to say about Jesus first coming. That is, in fact, a central theme of the Bible. Here are some of the best-known passages on that theme:

- Isaiah 7:14
- Micah 5:2
- Matthew 2:1-6
- 1 John 1:1-3
- Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 598

THE NOT-SO-SECRET SANTA DATE

5 UNCOMMON Holiday DATES

SET THE SCENE

Spread the joy of the season by preparing and delivering some well-chosen gifts.

This adventure will differ from traditional “Secret Santa” exchanges in a couple of ways. First, there’s no “secret.” You want to make your identity known to the recipient. In fact, the whole point of the gift is to say, “I know you. I know what you like. And it brings me joy to give you something you like.” Second, there’s no dollar limit. You can spend as much as your budget will allow. Or, you don’t have to spend anything at all. You can pass along a book from your library by the person’s favorite author. You can prepare the person’s favorite meal. You can knit or crochet a scarf in the person’s favorite color. The point is giving in a meaningful way.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Your date will involve making some special people in your lives feel loved and appreciated. In the process, you and your date will have the opportunity to embrace the joy of giving that lies at the heart of the Christmas season. Here are some tips for making your date as successful as possible.

1. USE A CHEAT SHEET.

You can prepare for this adventure long in advance simply by keeping a list of your friends’ and loved ones’ favorite things. When someone mentions in passing that they *really* like something, whether it’s coffee from a certain café or a particular brand of hand lotion, make a note of it. You may find that the gifts you deliver pale in comparison to the fact that you actually *remember* people’s comments.

WORDS TO GROW ON

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6–8

Gifts need not be expensive; after all, “it’s the thought that counts.” But I remind you, it is not the thought left in your head that counts; it is the gift that came out of the thought that communicates emotional love.

GARY CHAPMAN



2. CREATE A SOUNDTRACK FOR YOUR DATE THAT SERVES AS A CONVERSATION STARTER.

Fill your playlist with some of your favorite Christmas songs. Talk about which songs hold special memories for you and for your date. Let that lead into a discussion of your favorite Christmas gifts and memories.

3. ANTICIPATE MIXED REACTIONS.

Some people may feel uncomfortable receiving a gift if they don't have anything to give you in exchange. You can head off potential awkwardness by attaching a note to each gift, thanking the recipient for being a part of your holiday date.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Not-So-Secret Santa 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:

- How does it feel to see people's reactions when you give them a gift?
- How do you think God feels when He gives us gifts?
- How can we make generosity a part of our daily lives, instead of waiting for the Christmas season?

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Receiving Gifts, you can make this date extra special. At the end of your gift-giving adventure, have a well-chosen gift waiting for him or her—something that says, "I know you. I know what you like. And it brings me joy to give you this."

TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for the many gifts He has given you—and for the opportunity to model His generosity in the lives of others. Ask Him to...

- bless your time with each other;
- learn to recognize people's needs more readily;
- give you more opportunities to share what you have with others.

DIG DEEP

You probably won't be surprised to learn that the Bible has a lot to say about generosity and giving. Its Author, after all, is the Giver of all good things in our lives.

- Proverbs 3:27
- Luke 12:33-34
- Acts 20:35
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- Hebrews 13:16
- Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 1154

THE INSTANT RESOLUTIONS DATE



SET THE SCENE

Most New Year's Eve dates involve parties, occasions for wearing funny hats, singing a Scottish song, and counting backward as midnight approaches. Lost in the celebration are the New Year's resolutions from the previous December 31st that went unresolved.

Here's a date idea that doesn't overlook those resolutions, one that will allow you to end the year with a sense of accomplishment, a sense of resolve, and a sense of humor.

The goal is simple: to make and fulfill as many New Year's resolutions as possible in a single day. What those resolutions are and what it means to "fulfill" them are strictly up to you and your date.

WORDS TO GROW ON

My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

JOHN 10:10

Lack of courage often hinders us from accomplishing the positive things that we would like to do.

GARY CHAPMAN



MAKE IT HAPPEN

How many New Year's resolutions can you fulfill before the clock strikes midnight? You may be surprised. Here's how you can maximize your accomplishments during your Instant Resolutions Date.

1. SET YOUR GOALS.

Brainstorm a list of resolutions, things you'd like to be able to say you accomplished before the end of the year. Don't worry about whether a resolution seems impossible to fulfill in one day. You'll figure that out later.

2. DECIDE WHAT IT MEANS TO "FULFILL" A RESOLUTION.

Once you've put together a respectable list of resolutions, start brainstorming some minimum requirements for accomplishing each one. Have fun and be creative with your resolutions, as well as with your requirements for fulfilling them. For example, if one of you resolves to learn the piano, you might determine that the resolution can be fulfilled by playing "Chopsticks" once, all the way through, without making a mistake. When that's done, you check it off your list.

3. BE CLEVER.

Find unorthodox ways to do things quickly. For example, let's say you resolve to lose weight. Put on multiple layers of clothes, stuff your pockets with bulky items, put on some heavy boots, and step on the scale. Then do it again, wearing just a light T-shirt and shorts. Did the weight go down? If so, then resolution accomplished.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your Instant Resolutions 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:

- How do you feel about New Year's resolutions left unresolved?
- Of all the New Year's resolutions you've ever made—and kept—which one gives you the biggest sense of accomplishment? Why?
- Why do you make—or, as the case may be, refuse to make—New Year's resolutions?

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If your date's primary love language is Acts of Service, you can make this date especially meaningful by announcing that one of your instant resolutions is to clean their car—or to do something else that would make life better for them.

TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for the many blessings you and your date have enjoyed throughout the year. Ask Him to...

- bless your time with each other;
- watch over you and guide you;
- fill you with His wisdom as you finish up one year and begin another.

DIG DEEP

Maybe you weren't able to fulfill all of your New Year's resolutions this year. That shouldn't stop you from trying again. The Lord blesses our efforts to become everything He intends us to be. If you're serious about your New Year's resolutions this year, here are a few passages from Scripture that may inspire you:

- Lamentations 3:40
- Psalm 121:2
- Proverbs 16:9
- Philippians 3:12-15
- 1 Timothy 6:11
- Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 693

THE NEW YEAR, BLANK SLATE DATE

5 UNCOMMON *Holiday* DATES

SET THE SCENE

Seize the opportunity that a new year offers by imagining what 2020 may hold for you and your date. All you need for your date is a large poster board and a marker. Together, you and your date are going to brainstorm potential happenings in the year to come—things to look forward to, things that might reasonably be expected to occur, and things that might come out of the blue.

Depending on where you are in your relationship, your brainstorming may proceed in any number of directions. If you're dating seriously, an engagement or perhaps even a wedding may be a potential occurrence in 2020. If you're newlyweds, you may include things such as travel plans or shopping for baby clothes, morning sickness, and choosing a name for your new-born. If you're married with children, you may include events from your kids' lives that will involve you, such as varsity soccer games and driving lessons.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

You may be surprised by how much fun you can have with just a poster board, a marker, and your imaginations. Here are a few ideas for making your New Year, Blank Slate Date especially memorable.

1. START BY LOOKING BACKWARD.

To illustrate the difference that a year can make, think of the many things, good and bad, that happened in the previous calendar year that you could not have anticipated twelve months ago. Your list might include anything from suffering a sports injury to getting a new pet.

2. THINK IN TERMS OF VARIETY.

The more varied your predictions are, the more fun you'll have. Toward that end, you can mix in the screamingly obvious ("I will get frustrated with a fellow commuter on my way to work one morning") with something way less obvious ("I will run into a local celebrity while running errands one day"). You can mix in the serious ("I will cut red

WORDS TO GROW ON

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

JEREMIAH 29:11

The purpose of life is not to accomplish our own objectives. The purpose of life is to know God and to bring glory and honor to his name. For most people, marriage enhances the possibility of achieving this objective.

GARY CHAPMAN



meat from my diet entirely”) with the fanciful (“I will develop a sudden interest in puppetry”). You can mix in a little bravado (“I will continue to dominate all trivia games and contests”) with humility (“I will learn to become as good a listener as you are”).

3. DO A CALLBACK.

After you’ve filled your poster with ideas, pack it away, along with your holiday decorations. That way, you can rediscover it in eleven months, when you bring your decorations out again, and see how many of your predictions actually came to pass.

FINISH STRONG

Before you end your New Year, Blank Slate 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:

- How much can we actually control about what the next year brings?
- How does that make you feel?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to trust our future to God or to wait on Him?

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

If Physical Touch is the primary love language of your date, you can make this date especially meaningful. Announce that whatever else the coming year brings, it will be the year of the hug. Demonstrate by wrapping your date in a bear hug and whispering what you hope the next year will bring for him or her.

TAKE IT TO GOD

Before your date, spend some time in prayer together. Thank God for the blank slate He gives us every day—the fact that when we confess our sins, He no longer holds them against us. Ask Him to...

- bless your time with each other;
- give you a genuine sense of appreciation for and eagerness to see what the new year holds;
- help you make the most of the opportunities that the coming year offers.

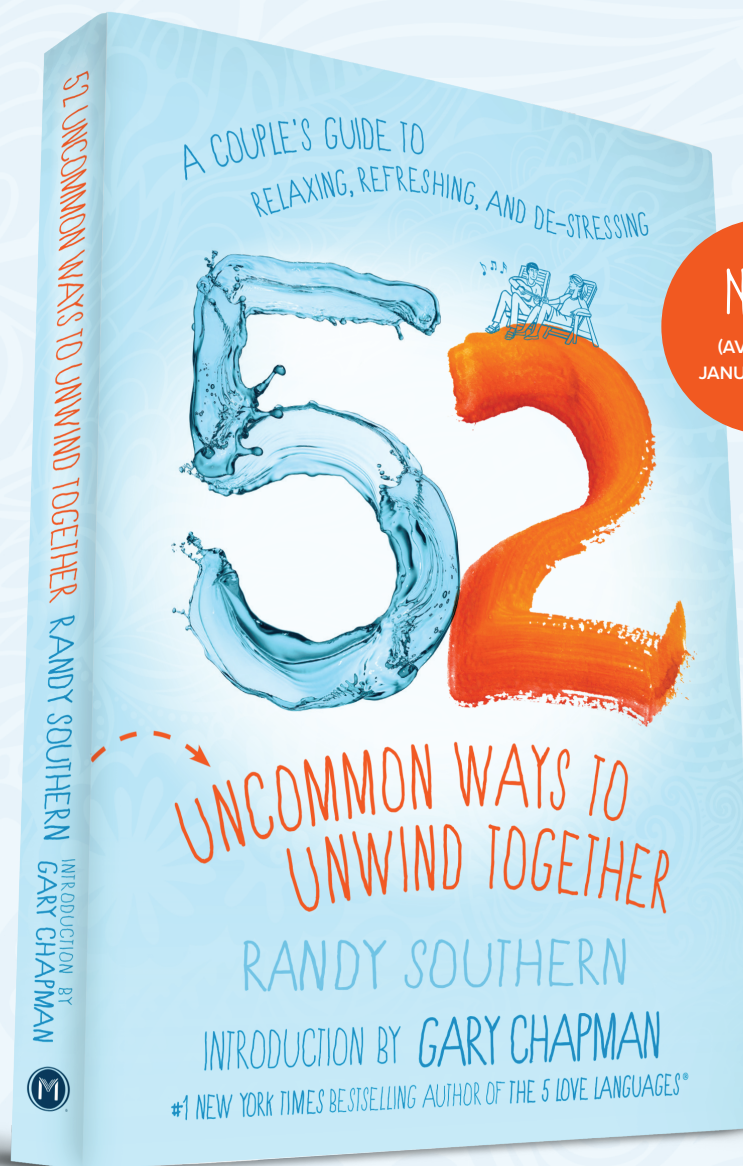
DIG DEEP

Anticipating what the new year may hold requires us to walk a fine line between making plans ourselves and submitting to God’s will and being open to His leading. Here are a few passages that offer wisdom on how to walk that fine line:

- Proverbs 15:22
- Proverbs 16:3
- Ephesians 2:10
- Philippians 1:6
- James 4:13–17
- Devotional reading from *The Love Languages Devotional Bible*, page 457

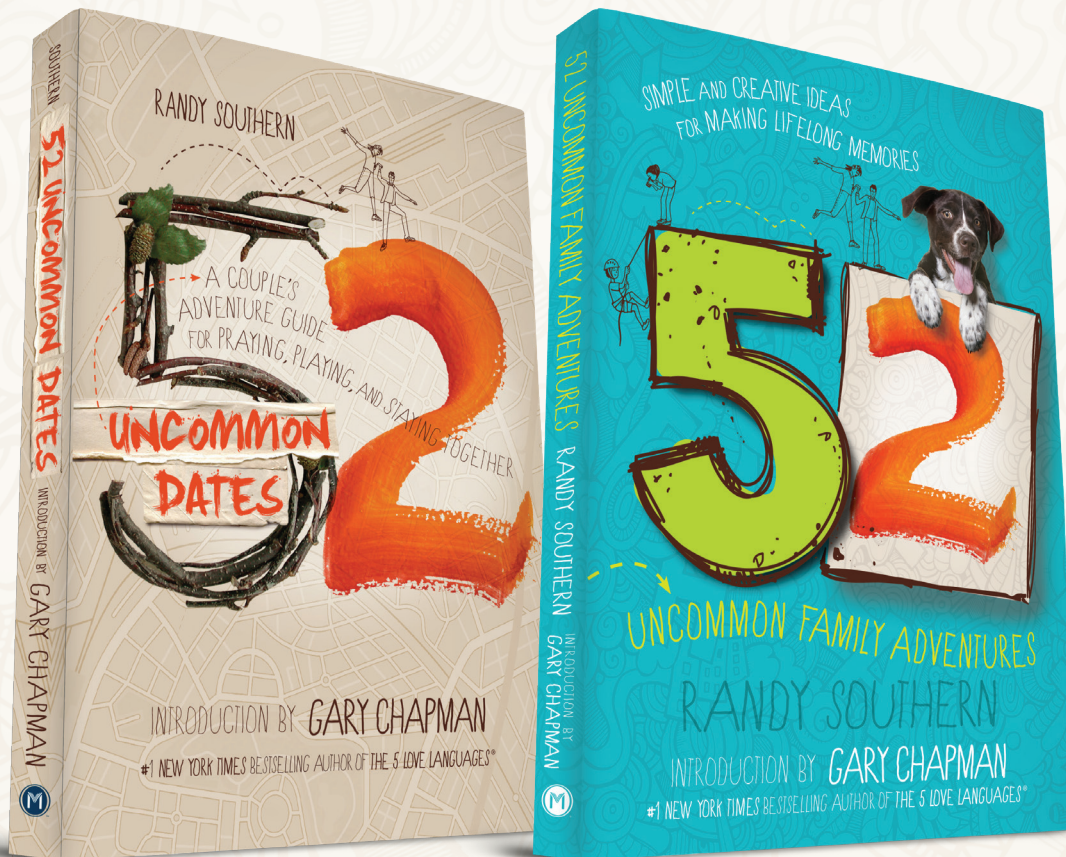
BREAK OUT OF THE ORDINARY, HAVE FUN, AND RELAX TOGETHER.

Whether you're going through a difficult season, your relationship has shifted into autopilot, or the everyday stresses of life are wearing you out, it's time to de-stress together. Boost your relational connection and make fun memories with these strategically designed activities that provide opportunities to enjoy yourselves and unwind.



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OTHER FUN BOOKS IN THE SERIES



FUN, CREATIVE, AND SPIRITUALLY ENGAGING—THESE ARE NO ORDINARY DATES!

52 Uncommon Dates is more than a book . . . it's an experience! Each date will set the scene for you and walk you through making it happen. Learn how to practically speak each other's love language, incorporate prayer in ways that are natural and relevant to real life, and finish strong with questions that help keep the conversation alive. You can even dig deeper to discover Bible passages that fit the theme of each date.

CONNECT WITH YOUR FAMILY WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK.

When you dreamed of having a family you pictured outings, adventures, laughing around the kitchen table. But then the kids actually came and most of the time you're too busy trying to keep up to figure out how to create a magical, screen-free environment where everyone feels loved, is having fun and can connect. That's why *52 Uncommon Family Adventures* was written, it helps you do just that, without all the hassle and stress.

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