

Who doesn't love a good love song? It doesn't matter if it's schmaltzy, cheesy, or sweet, or if it just perfectly reflects something you're feeling; love songs keep the romantic world spinning on its axis. They provide the sound track for your love life, from your first crush all the way to your fiftieth-anniversary waltz.

So our question to you is this: What song is playing between you and your lover?

Or maybe an easier question to answer is this: If you had to choose a ringtone for each other, what would it be?

- “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”
- “Strangers in the Night”
- “Theme from *Mission: Impossible*”
- “Let’s Get It On”

A few years back, Patti Austin and James Ingram recorded the song “How Do You Keep the Music Playing?” for the movie *Best Friends*, and these are a few of the questions they asked:

How do you keep the music playing?

How do you make it last?

How do you keep the song from fading too fast?

How, indeed?

It's tough to keep the music playing in our marriage with all the other sounds vying for our attention and drowning out the rhythms that first drew us together. And it may have been so long since we heard the faint strains of love that they're now

a misty memory or difficult to remember at all. If you're newly married, the music may seem like it's not quite coming together as smoothly as you had envisioned, or if you're a little further along in your marital journey, you may have quit listening to the music altogether.

Most married couples are connected more by mailing address and parental roles than by true intimacy. We're all dying to get back to the point of connection—the point of origin: a man and a woman, intimate before God. In a word, Eden. When you boil it all down (“it” being “everything”) to the essentials, in the beginning there was God, a man, a woman, and nakedness. And it was really, really good. This nakedness was God's doing ... at least until we messed the whole thing up. But in the pages of this book, we hope to draw you a little closer to Eden.

Some of you may be thinking, *How is the experience presented in this book going to be any different from the past five attempts we've made at trying to have some sort of devotional moments together?* You need to know that we totally get it. We understand why couples do exactly two of the devotionals in *any* book and then promptly decide to “lose” the book: mainly because the wife is the one driving the train, asking (OK, let's be honest ... *nagging*) her husband to do the devo with her (“Please, please, please? Try it just this one week?”), trying to carve out the time, and trying to keep him interested. It usually ends up being one more thing she feels she has to spiritually shame him into

“You know, the Bible says you’re *supposed* to be the spiritual leader ...”) and one more reason he winds up feeling like a spiritual loser. Let’s tally that up: One feels like a nag, one feels like a loser. Not such a great outcome, right?

We know this because we’re two committed believers who haven’t found any guide or devotional for couples that lights our fire enough for us to stick with it. In fact, one of us is an ordained pastor, and the other is a Christian comedian, and we *still* can’t get the devotional thing nailed down. We’ve often wondered why eternal truths that will bring us closer together, strengthen our marriage, and create something that will outlive us tend to make us hit the mental snooze button.

Wouldn’t it be great if we found something that would wake us up to the privilege of being in God’s Word together? Maybe another kind of devotional tool for couples that resulted in different feelings entirely. One in which the guy gets totally jazzed by the idea that he’s going to have some “spiritual” fun with his woman. One in which the woman gets pretty enthused by the prospect that she’s going to open another window into the soul of her man and find a place to connect with him on a spiritual and emotional level. We think you’re holding that kind of devo in your hands. And if the first instruction in this book reads, “Run a nice bubble bath and wash a colander of grapes; then both of you climb in and read the next sentence,” wouldn’t you be eager to get started?

But before you start running the water, let us give you a

little heads-up on the format. We've created sixty encounters for you to enjoy with each other, including suggested settings—or “rhythms”—for every devo to mix it up a little. You know how it is when you do the same thing over and over and over and over again? It loses its freshness. Sometimes just getting into a different setting opens up your mind to other possibilities. But we don't intend for this to be a legalistic thing. If the suggestion is to lie in a sleeping bag in the backyard on a certain day, and it's raining cats and dogs outside, pick another devo or another location. Or use your own imagination to do something better than we thought up. We don't care *where* you do it, as long as you “Just Do It” (insert Nike commercial here).

Then we offer a passage of Scripture to reflect on (nothing too lengthy because we think you can do inductive, cross-referenced, highlighter-driven Bible studies individually). We've called this section “Listen to the Music.” Next we talk a little about “What We Hear” when we listen to the music. After that we ask you, “What Do You Hear?” and give you a few conversation starters so that you'll have a chance to talk about what you heard in the Scripture reading. We also offer an “Extended Play” suggestion that may add another level of fun or challenge to your encounter. We have great expectations of taking the biblical principle of “naked and ... not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25 NASB) to the next level.

We believe another way to pronounce the word *intimacy*

is “into me see” because we all desire to be fully known and loved by the person we’ve committed ourselves to in marriage. In years past Christendom had an unwritten rule that there was to be spiritual intimacy between a person and God, emotional intimacy with (an understanding of) another person, and physical intimacy between a man and woman, and that these tributaries would only occasionally, perhaps accidentally, converge. But these man-made constructs prevent us from seeing all these areas of intimacy as potential spiritual connections that bring us closer to each other and, thereby, closer to God. Both marriage partners want spiritual intimacy with each other and with God (together), a wife wants emotional intimacy (in order to feel ready for physical intimacy), and a husband wants physical intimacy (in order to feel open to emotional vulnerability). What enhances one enhances all. That’s why we want to break down the barriers to intimacy and make the art of devotions a win-win-win on all fronts.

There’s a great love song right smack-dab in the middle of your Bible. It’s a pretty racy love song, and the lyrics are both poetic and potent. It’s the beautiful love song of King Solomon. (It’s not called the Song of Songs for nothing, you know! The best—and sexiest—song ever!) It’s a breathtaking reminder of the joys of intimacy.

It’s a beautiful thing, this married love. That’s why we’ve written the following devotions in the spirit of the Song of Solomon, with an eye toward creating legendary, spiritual love.

We can pretty much guarantee that you've never done a couple's devotion like this before, and *you're gonna like it*. Remember, you don't have to do these devotionals in any particular order. If you want to jump around and be random, go ahead. The only rules are that you do the devos as often as you can and that you keep an open heart with the love of your life.

It's fitting that these are the last words of the song "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?":

If we can be the best of lovers, yet be the best of friends
If we can try with every day to make it better as it grows
With any luck then I suppose, the music never ends.



Naked and Unashamed

rhythm

Wash some plump, juicy grapes in a colander and bring them bathtub-side. Run a nice bubble bath, light some candles, and set them around the edge of the tub. After you've climbed in together, read on.

listen to the music

The man said,

*“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;*

*she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”*

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Gen. 2:23–25 NIV)

what we hear

What would it be like to be the only man and woman alive on the

earth? With no one else to compare ourselves to? No rock-hard, airbrushed bodies staring back at us from the magazines. No expectations, no guilt, no shame. What would it feel like to have our lover touch us and not be self-conscious about our pudge or cellulite? What would it be like to be naked and unashamed?

According to a 2006 Body Image Poll conducted by *Fitness* magazine, nearly 20 percent of the women respondents admitted that they have avoided sex at one time or another because they felt uncomfortable with how their bodies looked.¹ (The other 80 percent probably weren't being honest!) The way life is now is most definitely not the way God designed it to be. He was the originator of the First Nudist Colony, and it was a good thing. In Eden we're given a glimpse of a man and woman with not a molecule of shame between them. Unfortunately we humans have a big problem with being attracted to the one thing we're told to avoid, and one bite into forbidden fruit commenced our dance with shame.

But shame is more than skin deep. It can be the result of a lifetime of encounters that have made us feel "less than," inferior, and dirty. These feelings can have absolutely nothing to do with our mate, but our mate picks up the tab for our shame and lack of freedom. Sometimes our nakedness has nothing to do with our state of undress; it may be purely emotional. But often it's when we're most vulnerable that shame can melt away in the embrace of the one whom we feel is most trustworthy. Older couples tell us that failing eyesight and falling body parts coincide, so that should make us all a little more comfortable in our own skin.

what do you hear?

What do the words “one flesh” mean to you?

In the three areas of intimacy (physical, emotional, spiritual), which has you wearing the bigger fig leaf (what you’re trying to cover up)? Why?

Fill in the blank: “This year I want to become more free about _____.”

extended play

While you’re on the journey to becoming naked and unashamed, it might help to consider candles. (Everybody looks better in candlelight, right?) Face your lover with a confident smile (preferably wearing only a smile) and offer lots of reassuring words. (That goes for both of you!) Vow to do everything you can to make your relationship your own personal Eden—a No Shame Zone.

1. <http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/fitness/story.jhtml?storyid=/templatedata/fitness/story/data/1146252364875.xml>. (Accessed May 4, 2007.)