



When is the last time you dated your spouse? My husband and I decided early on in our marriage that we would have a date night once a week. Well, that once a week turned into once a month, and once a month slipped into every other month. Something always seemed to take priority and we could not seem to fit our date time in. We began to get on each other's nerves more, the littlest things became annoying, and the big things were blown out of proportion. Our once close connection was slowly disconnecting. We decided that we needed a game plan! We loved each other, but we needed to fall in love again.

In the book *By Love Refined*, a series of letters written to a new bride, Alice Von Hildebrand talks about the importance of having what's called a Tabor vision of your spouse. She recalls the Gospel story of the Transfiguration: "The apostles went with Jesus to the top of Mount Tabor, and suddenly Jesus became radiant and his garments a dazzling white. For the first time, the apostles were allowed to see Jesus directly, clothed in his glory as God. He was transfigured before them." Von Hildebrand continues, "Similarly, when you fell in love with Michael, you saw his true face, his unique beauty: with the eyes of love, you were granted a 'Tabor vision' of Michael" (p. 12, Sophia Institute Press).

I remember reading this many years ago, before I was married. The idea of having a Tabor vision of my spouse took hold of my heart from the moment I read it. It made so much sense. When you fall in love, you are given a great gift: you are granted a perception of your beloved's true self, who they are meant to be genuinely at the deepest level. You see their potential and love them for it. You are able to look past their faults because the vision you see is simply astounding and takes root in your heart. You fall in love! You are given the honor of seeing with incredible intensity the beauty of the one you love, while others see primarily your spouse's exterior acts, and in particular their failings. It is at this moment, when you fall in love and are given a Tabor vision, that you see your spouse more visibly than does any other human being.

What happened after the apostles saw Jesus on that mountain, in all his glory? They came down from the mountain and had to walk with him through the Crucifixion. The vision that they had been blessed to witness sustained them

through the challenging moments when their faith was shaken. In marriage, too, we need to remember and trust the Tabor vision we have been given of our spouse in order to sustain us through the moments of adversity in our marriage. Daily we are called to rekindle in our hearts the flame of love that once overwhelmed us; let it nurture our marital love and form the cornerstone of our faithfulness to our spouse. Date nights give us an opportunity to remember our Tabor vision and enjoy it!

It may not always be possible to go out somewhere on a date, but moments spent together, alone, even just at home, perhaps after children are asleep, are essential to a thriving and successful marriage. The important thing is to schedule time to spend together. We put everything else of importance on the calendar; why not schedule time with our spouse? My husband and I quickly realized that “any time,” became “no time.” We had to schedule purposefully our time together or it would not happen. Over the years, Troy and I have had numerous date nights. We have gone bike riding, kayaking, horseback riding, watched the sun set, taken long walks, evening cruises on Lake Michigan, movies by the fireplace, late night swims in our pool, etc.! What do you and your spouse like to do? Is there something new you have been talking about doing? Do it! Schedule it! Your marriage is worth it, your spouse needs it, and your Tabor vision will be renewed.

Dating your spouse is more than just going out on dates, it is a mindset. When you and your spouse first began dating, presumably you wanted to impress each other. You worked hard at your faults and you showcased your strengths. You desired to win this individual over, so you wooed them. All too often this kind of behavior sadly stops after the deal is sealed. Dating our spouse requires that we work hard at our marriage to keep our love alive and vibrant. When you take time to invest in your love, roots form and grow deep. Married couples are called by God to keep the Tabor vision of their spouse at the forefront of their mind and in the deepest part of their heart, in order to develop a mindset of continually dating their beloved.