

DR. GREG & ERIN SMALLEY

A needle and thread are shown sewing through the word 'RECONNECTED'. The needle is positioned at the top left, and the thread forms a loop around the word. The word 'RECONNECTED' is written in large, bold, green and blue letters, with the 'RE' and 'ED' in blue and 'CONNECT' in green. The background is a light, textured surface.

RECONNECTED

**MOVING FROM
ROOMMATES TO SOULMATES
IN YOUR MARRIAGE**

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®

RECONNECTED

*Moving from Roommates to Soulmates
in Your Marriage*

DR. GREG AND ERIN SMALLEY



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Reconnected: Moving from Roommates to Soulmates in Your Marriage
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CHAPTER 1

In Love with a Stranger

*I don't know where we went wrong. But,
the feeling's gone and I just can't get it back.*

GORDON LIGHTFOOT

"If You Could Read My Mind"

"I FEEL COMPLETELY disconnected and alone. It's like we're living separate lives under the same roof. We're in a rut as a couple. I love you and I'm committed to our marriage, but I feel like we're nothing more than married roommates."

These were the words I (Erin) spoke during a very frustrating season of our marriage. Brutal, right? Especially since we were supposed to be the marriage *experts*. I had a master's degree in counseling, and Greg had a doctorate in marriage and family. We were both marriage counselors. We'd written five books (at the time) on how to have a thriving marriage—one was even titled *The Marriage You've Always Dreamed Of*. We taught marriage seminars around the world. We counseled couples on the brink of divorce. And yet I was telling Greg that our relationship had faded into the friend zone. Talk about irony.

Erin's words cut deep into my (Greg) heart. It was like she'd taken

her diamond wedding ring and used it to carve the words *failure* and *fraud* on my forehead as I stood there staring blankly at her revelation.

But our marriage wasn't always this way. Like you, we started off madly in love. We had big dreams and were ready to take on the world 'til death do us part. In the beginning, our relationship felt more like a fairy tale than a nightmare.



Several months before Erin and I got married, I invited her to help me move from Phoenix to Denver. I wanted her to see where she would be living the following year. Since we hoped to cover those 850 miles in a single day, we planned to meet at my parents' house at about five a.m. and drive until we reached Denver.

By the time Erin arrived, I had loaded a U-Haul truck (equipped with a stick shift, which I'd never driven) and hitched my car to the towing bar behind the trailer. Erin and I said goodbye to my parents and excitedly set off on our adventure.

As I pulled out of the driveway, I accidentally popped the clutch and caused the rental truck to lurch forward. Erin nervously looked at me, smiling. "That's normal," I reassured her. "Stick shift trucks tend to drive rough at the start." As if I knew!

Rumbling down the street, I glanced in the side mirror . . . and saw my dad frantically chasing us, waving his arms.

"What do I do?" I asked Erin, rolling my eyes. "He's running after me! And he's a marathon runner. He can chase us for at least 26.2 miles!"

"Pull over," Erin said compassionately. "I'm sure he just wants to give you one final hug goodbye."

"This is so embarrassing," I complained. "It's time to let me go! Cut the cord, already! I'm twenty-three years old, for crying out loud!"

Nevertheless, I stopped and rolled down my window, expecting an emotional plea to be careful or for him to reminisce about how he

fainted in the hospital delivery room upon learning that he was having a boy. That's not what I got.

"Greg, you knucklehead!" he yelled. "Don't you see what's still parked in front of the house?"

I looked carefully in the mirror, and sure enough, there sat my car. Somehow, the car must have fallen off the hitch when I popped the clutch. It turned out that I'd forgotten to insert the safety pin on the trailer ball.

"So, that's what that's for!" I jokingly exclaimed after realizing my mistake.

Erin thought it was "adorable" that I didn't think to check the safety pin, and she laughed hysterically.

I backed up the truck, reattached my car, and fastened the safety pin. Unfortunately, my mistake had cost us about forty-five minutes. I figured we could still make Denver by late night—but by four o'clock that afternoon, I was bone tired.

"Honey, you have to drive," I said to Erin. "I'm exhausted."

"You have to be kidding," she replied. "There's no *way* I'm driving this . . . semi-truck!"

I'd hoped for a different response, but her fear of driving the "tiny" U-Haul truck cracked me up. *She's afraid to drive . . . how cute*, I thought.

Besides, I just wanted to be together on our first grand adventure as an engaged couple.

So with no other options open to me, I explained my need for something to keep me awake. I figured that since Erin was a nurse, I was speaking to the right person.

"That's simple," she declared. "Pull in to that truck stop."

When I did, she climbed out of the truck, and a few minutes later she returned with a bag full of energy products like vitamin B-12, caffeine powder, NoDoz pills, Jolt Cola—anything with high levels of caffeine.

"Are you sure I can take all of this stuff together?" I asked, a little concerned.

“Sure,” she replied. “Trust me.” Then I heard her mumble under her breath, “At least, I think it’s all right.”

I quickly doused my system with torrents of caffeine, and the moment it hit, I felt as if I could drive 8,500 miles rather than a mere 850. I gave Erin a big toothy grin, leaned over, and shouted, “How far is Canada?”

We drove on, laughing, talking, and watching the scenery fly by. We talked about goals and aspirations that we wanted to accomplish together that would take us the next fifty years to achieve. Our fairy tale was starting off with a bang!

But by one o’clock in the morning, the caffeine had worn off and the sugar high was long gone, and I couldn’t drive another mile.

“If we don’t find a place to stop immediately,” I whined, “I’m going to literally crash and burn—I’m going to kill us.”

We had nearly reached Colorado Springs, and it seemed as good a place as any to stop. But we immediately ran into a big problem. Parents’ Weekend at the Air Force Academy had arrived, and every room in every hotel and motel in the city had been taken. This must have been how Mary and Joseph felt stumbling into Bethlehem.

We searched for a frustrating hour before someone suggested a motel downtown. *Horse stable or not*, I thought, *here we come!*

When we arrived at the U-shaped, rundown motel (and calling it a *motel* is generous) with an office shack in the middle, I wheeled our truck around the whole complex. By then my exhaustion had nearly given way to delirium.

“I need two rooms,” I sleepily told the office manager.

“Sorry, I have only one,” he answered.

Of course! I thought.

“Does it have two beds?” I asked.

“No, just one,” he quickly answered while looking confused. “All we got are the queen beds with the coin-operated massage feature.”

Oh, all right, I thought. *I guess I’ll sleep on the floor. No big deal. At least we’ll have two pillows.*

"I'll take it," I replied wearily.

"How many hours would you like the room for?" he asked.

What a bizarre question. I consulted my watch. It was 2:35 a.m. If we could sleep for five hours, we would still make Denver by nine o'clock in the morning.

"I need the room for five hours," I said.

"Way to *go*, buddy!" he snorted.

Completely oblivious to his meaning, I replied innocently, "Most of the time," I shrugged my shoulders, "I rent a room *all* night."

The man doubled over with laughter and gave me a high five as he handed me a sheet set and towels.

Odd, I thought, as I turned away from the counter.

"This is a really strange place," I told Erin, "but it's our only option. I'll sleep on the floor. Let's call our parents to let them know."

But the phones wouldn't work. The last straw! *Forget it*, I thought, and took my place on the cold, gross red shag carpet.

The next morning, I woke up stiff from a terrible night's sleep. I hobbled over to the office and handed the keys, sheets, and towels to the same man who had checked us in the night before. He seemed terribly upset.

"Everything okay?" I asked.

"None of the phones work," he moaned. "I can't figure out why. This is going to cost me *money*!"

"Tell me about it," I replied. "My fiancée and I tried to call our parents last night to let them know what happened. We didn't want anyone to wonder why we stayed in the same room, so we . . ."

My voice trailed off when it became clear he had zero interest in my story.

I left to buy Erin a Diet Coke and myself a Mountain Dew out of the vending machine. Thanks to Erin I was in the midst of a wicked caffeine withdrawal! However, trying to feed a wrinkled dollar bill into

the payment slot, I noticed a severed cable lying on the ground. *That's weird*, I thought.

As I walked around the complex, every few feet I noticed another severed cable lying on the pavement—until I reached my U-Haul truck. There, six inches from the front of my vehicle, hung one last cable still in place. And then it hit me: I had clipped all the phone lines when I drove around the facility the night before!

I ran into our room, yelling, “Erin! Get into the truck *now!* We have to get out of here!”

Erin, of course, wondered if I had just robbed the manager. When she heard the real story, she rightly insisted that we pay for the damage. After shelling out cash for the damaged phone lines and the hourly rate, I realized that disgusting little room with red shag carpet and the massage bed ended up costing me more than the presidential suite in a pricey hotel!

Still, we laughed all the way from Colorado Springs to Denver and dreamed about our future together. Why? Because when you are at the front end of your relationship and wildly in love, major blunders like knocking your car off the trailer, over-dosing your fiancé on caffeine, and destroying a seedy motel's phone system are hilarious.

In the beginning of a marriage, the whole world seems enchanting. Life is viewed through rose-colored glasses. Personality quirks seem adorable. Time together is at the top of the to-do list. You talk—at a deep emotional level. You listen. You pay attention. You date. You woo. You connect. You laugh and have fun. You agree on what to watch. You have shared interests. Sex is passionate. You kiss before parting ways and welcome each other home with excitement. Conflicts are resolved quickly. Mistakes get U-Haul-sized truckloads of grace and forgiveness. You pray together. You dream about the future. You see the very best in each other. You're best friends—soulmates. It's why you got married.

That's almost always how it is at the beginning of marriage. But, then, something goes wrong—subtly, almost imperceptibly wrong. And one day you wake up and realize that you're in love with a stranger.

The Little Foxes

Thousands of years ago, King Solomon's bride-to-be (the Shulammitte maiden) warned of little foxes that can destroy the vineyards of love. "Catch all the foxes, those little foxes, before they ruin the vineyard of love, for the grapevines are blossoming!" (Song of Solomon 2:15, NLT). In Solomon's day, a fox was a troublesome little creature that would sneak into the vineyards, gnaw on leaves, break branches, eat the grapes, and dig deep holes to nibble at the roots—ultimately spoiling the vines.

But notice the Shulammitte maiden uses the phrase "little foxes." She is distinguishing between the big threats of her time—wild beasts like boars and lions—and the small, mischievous creatures that could slyly damage their budding relationship. She's wisely encouraging her husband-to-be to take preventive action to protect their love from little threats that could wreak havoc on their future relationship. In essence she's saying, "Protect us by removing whatever might harm our marriage—especially the small things that will spoil our growing roots!"

I (Greg) wish I'd heeded the Shulammitte maiden's warning. Erin was right that day when she broke down crying about the state of our marriage. Little foxes had invaded our relationship. We had subtly drifted apart over the years—I just wasn't paying attention. My obliviousness resulted from being focused on guarding our marriage from the big issues—infidelity, pornography, abuse, addictions, etc. I was determined that these "wild beasts" would never destroy our vineyard. I was absorbed with the big threats—like a sentry standing at the gate with a huge pair of binoculars scanning the horizon looking for the obvious dangers. And while I stood safeguarding, I missed the little foxes that had dug under the gate and snuck into our vineyard—robbing our relationship of its delicious fruit and gnawing at our roots. But in our case, the mischievous little creatures didn't destroy our love; they morphed us from soulmates into roommates.

What are these little foxes that can destroy a marriage or create married roommates?

Researchers have been curious about this question as well. Every day millions of internet users ask Google life's most difficult questions. One of the most common Google queries is "Why do relationships end?"¹ Author Nell Frizzell wrote the following:

A wise man once told me that nobody breaks up over adultery, but over the way you talk at dinner . . . the small daily incivilities, the apologies unspoken, the kisses that go unknissed, the meals that pass in silence, the money that is wasted—these lay the groundwork for the big things to erupt. Infidelity happens, perhaps, when one partner or the other is looking to plug a hole—not just a physical one but an emotional one, a personal one, a psychological one laid bare by months and years of ugly lampshades, boring weekends, and lukewarm pasta bakes. Separation is perhaps the inevitable endpoint of eating at different times, sleeping on the sofa because you got home late, choosing to go on holiday with someone else, watching different things on your phones instead of going to the cinema and making plans in which the other is not included.²

Social scientists have diligently searched for answers to this same question and have made some astonishing discoveries. In the United States, researchers estimate that 40 to 50 percent of all first marriages and 60 percent of second marriages will end in divorce.³ Why? Several major research projects have focused on the specific reasons people give for their divorces:

- A 2003 study found that "growing apart" was fifth behind infidelity, incompatibility, drinking or drug use, and physical or mental abuse for why people divorced.⁴

- In 2004, AARP surveyed older adults (aged 40 and up) and reported abuse, differing values and lifestyles, cheating, and “simply falling out of love/no obvious problems” as the top four reasons for divorce.⁵
- In 2006, a study out of the Netherlands found that the third main reason that females gave for divorce was “growing apart” (behind not enough attention and not able to talk). The men listed “growing apart” as the top reason for divorce.⁶
- In a study published in 2012, researchers found the two most common reasons for divorcing were “growing apart” and “not being able to talk together.”⁷
- According to the more than 800,000 individuals who have completed the *Focus on Marriage* assessment, the top five marriage struggles are: (1) sex, (2) conflict, (3) communication, (4) shared responsibility, and (5) time together. Interestingly enough, these struggles are how roommate marriages are described: sexless marriage, not working through conflicts, no meaningful communication, household chores that aren’t divided equally, and busyness and routine replacing quality time together (visit www.FocusontheFamily.com/marriageassessment to take our free marriage assessment).

Growing apart, not being able to talk together, not enough attention, falling out of love, no obvious problems—these are all different ways to say these couples ended up as married roommates. As a younger husband, I was living out these research findings and our marriage was at a point of crisis. I didn’t want to exist like roommates with Erin, or worse yet, end up as another divorce statistic.

The start of our marriage revitalization began by understanding what had gone wrong in our relationship—how our deep love (like we had

on that crazy drive to Denver) had morphed into gentle neglect, silent routines, and polite indifference. How did we go from soulmates to roommates?

From Lovers to Roomies

Certainly big issues such as abuse, infidelity, pornography, and addictions wreak havoc in a marriage. We're not trying to minimize their destructive impact. If your marriage has been affected by one of these "wild beasts," you need to get professional help immediately. Focus on the Family has an amazing intensive counseling program called *Hope Restored* for couples in crisis. It has an 80 percent success rate for couples on the brink of divorce (visit www.HopeRestored.com for more information). However, we can't overlook that "growing apart" consistently shows up as a main reason cited for divorce.

For couples who feel like married roommates, it's a slow fade. People don't fall in love, get married, and then intentionally disconnect. It usually takes years for the passion, intimacy, and connection within a marriage to deteriorate. Left unnoticed, soulmates slowly morph into roommates. Passion turns into mundane routine. Intimacy turns into disinterest. Connection changes to icy distance. Sex is traded for sleep. Enjoyment and fun mutate into boredom. Meaningful conversation is replaced by business meetings. Peace becomes tension. Shared dreams vanish.

While roommates do all the hard work associated with being married, very few experience the amazing benefits of being married. Compared to singles, married couples live longer, are wealthier, enjoy certain tax deductions, and have better health insurance coverage and retirement benefits.

As romantic as a good tax break sounds, these advantages would never inspire someone to get down on bended knee and beseech their beloved to spend a lifetime together. I didn't ask Erin to marry me for

better insurance coverage and tax advantages (although the wealthier part sounds intriguing). I wanted to spend life with my best friend and experience passion, romance, sex, meaningful conversation, deep connection, encouragement, shared dreams, laughter, praying together, flirting, peace, pursuing Christ together, and oneness. The anticipation of sharing these wonderful experiences is what compelled us into marriage. Sadly, roommate marriages miss out on these thrilling benefits.

The phrase “married roommates” can look different depending on the couple. We have done extensive research to understand the subtle differences to help you pinpoint what is really going on in your relationship and to identify roommate-like behaviors—the little foxes—that find their way into the vineyard of love. We have isolated eleven behaviors that slowly morph couples from soulmates to roommates. For you, there might be one glaring reason or it may be a combination of multiple behaviors that have ensnared your marriage. Feeling like roommates is on a continuum; it’s not a yes or no question. And growing apart is life-stage dependent. A couple with young children will experience this differently than a couple with no children. You might go through a season of disconnection. Or you may feel that things are going pretty well now, but there might be some behaviors that could create problems down the road. Wherever you are today, understanding the little foxes is critical to having the marriage you long for.

As you read through the following descriptions, use the following scale to establish the extent that you relate to each of the eleven issues and how it currently impacts your marriage.

- 1—I don’t relate *at all*
- 2—I relate *slightly*
- 3—I relate *moderately*
- 4—I relate *very much*
- 5—I relate *completely*

Eleven characteristics of married roommates:

1. **Exhausted:** You are sleep-deprived, tired, or burned-out. The cause of your fatigue is often beyond your control and based on your circumstances or season of life. Realities such as raising kids, starting a new job or business, caring for an aging parent, a medical illness, or dealing with a special needs child leave you feeling exhausted. As a result, you are more sensitive, more easily offended, more confrontational, and more likely to say things you regret. You are less likely to have the energy to invest in your spouse or marriage.

Circle the number that best describes the extent to which this issue is true in your marriage right now.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

2. **Busy:** You feel like two ships passing in the night. It's easy to feel disconnected when priorities get misaligned and schedules are out-of-sync because the focus is on work, kids, housework, yard work, friends, hobbies, bills, church, and so on. Your hectic schedules and demanding responsibilities leave little time for each other. Spending quality time together has fallen to the bottom of your to-do list.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

3. **Pragmatic:** You have a business-like relationship as you do life together. Most of your communication is around “administrating” your marriage—talking about to-do lists, schedules, kids, finances, and so on. Your communication seems to have been relegated to short directives and curt responses. This leaves hardly

any time for meaningful conversation where you talk about your inner life—emotions, needs, hopes, fears, and dreams.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

4. **Gentle Neglect:** You or your marriage is constantly taking a back burner to jobs, kids, friends, housework, and hobbies. You feel ignored. You don't feel like a priority. Television, social media, kids, work, sports, and hobbies monopolize your evenings or weekend time. When you are together, your spouse is constantly checking his or her phone for texts, news, social media, or games. You feel invisible.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

5. **Complacent:** Many people work hard to “win” their spouse and then over time they become comfortable. The initial excitement associated with getting to know a person, growing in intimacy, and trying new things as a couple can disappear as the two people settle into a routine. It's not that we lose interest in our spouse. We become comfortable. We don't feel like we need to make much of an effort. The romantic spark fades or is replaced by the mundane. The marriage feels predictable—boring even.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

6. **Spiritually Distant:** You rarely pray together, seldom talk about spiritual matters, hardly ever attend church together, and don't have Christian friends that you hang out with together at church or in a small fellowship group. You don't feel “equally yoked.” The lack of spiritual intimacy has created distance in

your marriage and you don't feel like you connect at a deep spiritual level—soul to soul.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

7. **Conflict Avoidance:** You or your spouse evade difficult conversations, sweep negative issues under the rug, or rarely bring an argument to resolution in a way that both people feel good about. When we avoid conflict, problems don't get resolved and these small frustrations grow into big issues down the road. Avoidance decreases intimacy and creates distance because problems aren't being addressed and resolved. Over time, spouses stop trying to work things out and deal with the relationship problems individually. Ultimately, the strategy of avoiding problems blows up and spouses feel resentful and alone.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

8. **Sexless:** Sex is an important part of a marriage. And yet, researchers estimate that 15 to 20 percent of US couples haven't had sex in the past 12 months.⁸ In a sexless marriage, sex becomes routine, dutiful, infrequent, or nonexistent. Sex only happens if it's on the calendar. Romance has faded, affection is absent, and foreplay is a distant memory. Certainly there is a natural ebb and flow of a sexual relationship in marriage depending on what season of life you're in or the circumstances you're facing. However, when we deprioritize sex, passion is replaced by boring routine, duty, or avoidance. Ultimately, spouses feel rejected, lonely, and resentful—susceptible to finding emotional and physical connection outside the marriage.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

9. **Disengaged:** Your marriage feels like each individual is going in separate directions. It seems like the kids are about the only thing you have in common. Certainly couples shouldn't be together 24-7—it's healthy to have alone time away from each other. We're not talking about good self-care here. Instead, in this roommate state, most of your activities are done separately and you hardly see each other when at home. You have separate bedtimes, maintain separate checking accounts, sleep in separate rooms, take separate vacations, and have separate hobbies—you feel like you're leading parallel lives. Over time, disengaged couples have nothing in common and simply exist in proximity to each other.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

10. **Unsafe:** We live in a harsh world. Satan—our sworn enemy—is like a lion, constantly on the prowl, ready to strike. Work is stressful. Children are a handful. Friends disappoint. News is depressing. Social media makes us feel jealous and like we don't measure up. Road rage is widespread. Sexual harassment is our country's dirty little secret. Racial tensions still exist. Political fighting is despicable. Terrorism is here to stay. Internet trolls are constantly spewing hatred. At the same time, our homes should be sanctuaries from this disheartening chaos. However, for many couples, their relationship is not a refuge. The marriage feels tense or strained. Instead of feeling relaxed, you feel like you're walking on eggshells and feel apprehensive around your spouse. Instead of peace, anger is constantly rearing its ugly head. Instead of acceptance, you feel relentlessly nit-picked and you don't feel free to be yourself. When you don't feel safe, over time individuals will disconnect and hearts will eventually harden—the deathblow for a marriage.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

11. **Visionless:** Most dating and engaged couples dream wildly of what their life will look like together. But then life gets busy. Juggling a marriage, running a household, balancing careers, raising children, and a thousand other challenges, cause big dreams to be set aside. Thus, you don't share a clear dream for the life you're building together. You don't have a vision of how you will use your "oneness" to serve God and bless others.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

How did you rate each issue? Was there one main struggle or have several issues combined to leave you feeling like roommates? Perhaps there are a few behaviors that are taking place that you want to guard against. Awareness and insight are important first steps to reconnecting. This information is vital to reverse a trend or to prevent these issues from taking root in your marriage.

Looking back, we would have strongly connected with several of these roommate behaviors. We were exhausted from finishing graduate school, parenting three young children, and starting careers as marriage counselors (we know . . . the irony). We were empty and constantly served each other relational leftovers. Our demanding responsibilities left little time for each other, and spending quality time stopped being a priority. What little time we spent in actual conversation defaulted to figuring out how to manage our hectic schedules or dealing with mounting problems. The final straw, however, was gentle neglect.

I (Greg) remember avoiding alone time with Erin because I was certain we'd talk about either our boring schedules and to-do lists or we'd argue about something trivial. Also, I poorly handled my own stress by checking out emotionally and escaping into my "man cave" to watch television. Poorly managing my stress and exhaustion left Erin feeling abandoned in our marriage. As a result of these roommate-like behaviors, we both began to question our love for each other. We

put more emphasis on raising our children and less priority on our marriage. It was a vicious cycle. I didn't realize it at the time, but we were experiencing the exact reasons people gave for getting a divorce: growing apart, not being able to talk together, not enough attention, falling out of love with no obvious problems. These little foxes had ravaged our vineyard of love, and our marriage was slowly fading into extinction. When you behave like roommates, the real dangers are these little foxes.

For so many couples, their marriages started out great and remained that way for several years. And then the slow fade was set in motion by the little foxes of exhaustion, busyness, complacency, ignored problems, boredom, routine, fading passion, nonexistent sex, different interests, and different priorities. Over time, neglect weakened their relationship.

But here is the silent killer of the marriage. When spouses feel ignored or disconnected, over time they start to deal with their problems apart from each another. Emotional closeness fades into indifference or resentment. As they get good at working out their issues alone, they start leading parallel lives. They coexist, but they begin to separate emotionally, spiritually, and physically. And when the couple starts to lead fully parallel lives, isolation and loneliness follow close behind. Couples slowly lose interest in each other and grow apart with no obvious problems until they wake up one day feeling emotionally dead, wondering, "Where did our love go?"

Roommate marriages rarely survive long-term. Beyond the misery of a slow fade, the final deathblow is loneliness.

Loneliness is in stark contrast to God's design for marriage. It was a powerful moment in the creation story when God declared that it wasn't good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18) and then promptly created a lifelong soulmate for Adam—not a playmate or companion. We love how Eugene H. Peterson captures the first wedding in Genesis 2:23-25:

The Man said, “Finally! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh! Name her Woman for she was made from Man.” Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh. The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame (MSG).

God created us as relational beings. We long for connection and intimacy—to know and be known by another at the deepest level. Feeling isolated and alone goes against our heart’s desire. It’s like sucking the air out from around us. Such a relationship will not last. As loneliness spreads, divorce enters the picture.

Maybe you haven’t reached a crisis point in your marriage but you sense the disconnection, tension, and loneliness that comes from living with roommate-like behaviors. Wherever you find yourself today, you can rediscover your soulmate and revive your marriage! And you’ll find the roadmap within the pages of this book.

Before we jump into the reconnect plan, we want to say a word about the concept of soulmates. When we use the word *soulmate*, we’re not talking about the magical concept that implies God created one special person just for you—one true love. Who can forget the famous line from the movie *Jerry Maguire*, “You complete me.” Our culture describes a soulmate as your heart’s other half—the person to whom you’re bound by destiny to share your life with. That one person who completes you and “makes you feel entirely whole, healed and intact—like no piece is missing from the puzzle.”⁹ We do not believe that there is one true love and you won’t be complete until you find that person. God completes you. Christ is your true source of fulfillment. Our idea of a soulmate is a spouse with whom you enter into a covenant relationship with God for a lifetime and regularly experience the deepest levels of connection and intimacy. This is our idea of being married to your best friend—your soulmate (or *sole* mate).

So let’s get started catching those little foxes before they ruin the vineyard of your love!