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HOW TO BUILD A HAPPY FAMILY

7 Steps to Renew, Bless and Heal Your Most Important Relationships!



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BO SANCHEZ

#1 National Bestselling Author of *Choose to Be Wealthy*

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How to Build a Happy Family

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*7 Steps to Renew, Bless and Heal Your Most
Important Relationships!*

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BO SANCHEZ

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Requests for information should be addressed to:
SHEPHERD'S VOICE PUBLICATIONS, INC.
#60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109
P.O. Box 1331 Quezon City Central Post Office
1153 Quezon City
Tel. No. (632) 725-9999, 725-1115, 725-1190, 411-7874
Fax. No. (632) 727-5615, 726-9918
E-mail: sale@shepherdsvoice.com.ph

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Your Happiness and Success Are Based on Your Relationships	9
Key 1: Renewal	13
Chapter 1: Our Deepest Hunger	15
Chapter 2: The Wound in Your Heart	19
Chapter 3: What Kind of Love Can Heal the Wound?	23
Chapter 4: Death Will Tell You What Is Most Important	25
Key 2: Gratitude	29
Chapter 5: You're a Lover, Not a Repairman	31
Chapter 6: The Mystery of Attraction	35
Chapter 7: Stop Trying to Fix People	39
Chapter 8: Love the Perfection of His Imperfections	43
Key 3: Time	47
Chapter 9: Why Our Hearts Move Apart	49
Chapter 10: Time Management vs. <i>Biggies</i> Management	53
Chapter 11: Create a List of Untouchables	55
Chapter 12: How to Bond as a Family	59
Key 4: Service	63
Chapter 13: Love Is About Dirty Hands, Not Just Beating Hearts	65

Chapter 14: From Dubdub to Ngooorrrk	69
Chapter 15: Spot the Difference	73
Chapter 16: Your Physiology Affects Your Psychology	75
Chapter 17: Love Is Service	81
Key 5: Forgiveness	83
Chapter 18: Clean the Wound	85
Chapter 19: Forgive for Selfish Reasons	89
Chapter 20: Stage One: Get Angry	93
Chapter 21: Stage Two: Release Anger	97
Chapter 22: Why You Need to Forgive	101
Key 6: Self-Love	105
Chapter 23: I Didn't Like Myself	107
Chapter 24: Your Heart Filled with Either Self-Love or Neediness	111
Chapter 25: The Need to Be Needed	113
Chapter 26: Five Ways of Filling Your Heart with Self-Love	117
Key 7: Celebration	125
Chapter 27: What We're All Really Looking For	127
Chapter 28: Four Ways to Make Your Homes Happy	129
Chapter 29: Three Ingredients for Throwing Parties	135
Epilogue: Feel at Home	141
About the Author	145

Introduction

Your Happiness and Success Are Based on Your Relationships

The love of a family is life's greatest blessing.

— Author Unknown

Change Your Life by Changing Your Relationships

This book is in your hands not by any accident.

I believe God placed it there.

Because He knows how important relationships are in your life. He knows that if you change your relationships, you change your entire life.

Because if you squeeze out the essence of life, you realize that life is all about relationships. Your happiness, your success, your health and your dreams depend on relationships. Show me a person with very happy relationships and I'll show you a very happy person. Show me a person with miserable, dysfunctional relationships and I'll show you a very miserable person.

That is why I felt so excited writing this book for you.

I knew it would transform your life.

And the life of your family.

Why Only Now

For years, people have been asking me to write a book on family life. “Bo, we need it badly! Our friends need it badly!” they’d say.

But I felt it wasn’t the right time yet.

That is, until now.

Today, I feel I have the credibility.

I’m no longer speaking out of thin air. I’m not speaking from lofty theories but from my firsthand, face-to-face, belly-to-belly, nitty-gritty, daily grind of being married to my beautiful wife of 12 years and raising two of the greatest boys on the planet.

And what have I learned?

That family life is like pushing a luggage cart overflowing with three suitcases and four *balikbayan* boxes, complete with a squeaky left wheel, up a steep ramp in the old Manila International Airport. (Remember that one? I almost killed people there. I was moving down towards the parking lot. Soon, I no longer had control of my cargo. All my bags and boxes went tumbling down like rocks in a landslide. A poor nun in front of me almost went to heaven had she not jumped to the side in time.)

Friend, when it comes to your family, you need to keep pushing upwards. Every day! You need to renew your family life.

Resting is not an option. The weight is too much. Soon, gravity will pull it going down.

The gravity of selfishness. Indifference. Or just the sheer gamut of distractions around you.

Let me show you a better way.

Get a Porter

This book will teach you how to push upwards towards having a fantastic, wonderful, loving family.

Here's the good news: *You don't have to push alone.*

Soon, others in your family will push with you. As you change, in due time, they too will change.

And remember your porter beside you: God is pushing with you. He's committed to your family. He will make you strong. He will guide your way.

Dear friend, I offer you this book with my earnest prayer.

I declare great abundance and love and joy in your relationships.

I declare the very best blessings upon you and your family.

May your dreams come true,



Bo Sanchez

P.S. Bless Your Family! Get my audio and video course, *Relationship Reborn*, which was the basis of this book. This course has blessed thousands of families already. It's your turn. *Relationship Reborn* is now a powerful Seminar-in-

a-Box that will bless your life. Listen to it or watch it in the comforts of your home. I know it'll create miracles for you and your family. For more details, go to **www.RelationshipReborn.com** now.

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Get my FREE Soulfood Letter every week. Get also my FREE E-book, *How to Know If Your Dreams Are God's Dreams*. Log on to **www.BoSanchez.ph** now.

Key 1:

Renewal

***You Must Be Nourished by Love
Every Day***

*A successful marriage requires falling in love
many times, always with the same person.*

— Mignon McLaughlin

A friend is always a friend.

— Proverbs 17:17

Chapter 1

Our Deepest Hunger

The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.

— Mother Teresa

Before the wedding of Felipe and Maria began, the groom spoke to the priest.

Felipe said, “Father, I’d appreciate that during the wedding vows, you’d omit the difficult parts.”

“What difficult parts?” the priest asked.

“You know, Father, the lines that say ‘*for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health.*’ Just leave those lines out.”

Felipe then slipped a crisp P1,000 into the priest’s pocket and walked away, smiling.

During the wedding vows, the priest looked at Felipe and said, “Felipe, do you take Maria as your lawful wedded wife for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, serving her breakfast in bed every day, washing the dishes and doing the laundry every day, cleaning the house every day till death do you part?”

Felipe looked like a train ran over him. With a very weak voice, he croaked, “I do.”

After the wedding, Felipe walked up to the priest and asked, “Father, I thought we had a deal?”

The priest slipped back the P1,000 into Felipe's pocket and said, "Sorry, your new wife gave me P10,000."

I'm going to spill the beans here and tell you the first principle of building a happy family: *Relationships need renewal or they die.*

In fact, not only will the relationship die but a part of us will die, too. Why? *Because you have a heart wound that can only be healed by love — a love that can only be found in relationships.*

Have you ever seen a malnourished child?

I believe you have — you just didn't know he was malnourished.

Here's the problem: When you hear the word "malnourished," you automatically think of the starving kids in Africa you see in pictures. A child living in a famine-stricken desert that has absolutely nothing to eat.

But there's a second type.

The person could be your next-door neighbor. He doesn't look malnourished. He could even be fat. And yet, amazingly, he is malnourished.

Because he's eating the wrong type of food.

Let me stoke your imagination.

Let's say you love cotton candy.

And you decide you eat nothing else but cotton candy.

Cotton candy for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

What would happen to you?

Your hunger will disappear. You'll probably have lots of energy from the sugar. But over time, you'd be killing yourself. Because you'll be terribly malnourished.

Spiritual malnourishment is very similar.

If our bodies hunger for food, our hearts hunger for love.

Food is the fuel of the body. And love is the fuel of the soul.

Without food, our bodies die. And without love, our hearts die.

There are people today who feed “cotton candy” to their souls.

I want you to look at this list below.

What is common among these people?

Judy Garland (47)

Jimi Hendrix (27)

Janis Joplin (27)

Marilyn Monroe (36)

Elvis Presley (42)

River Phoenix (23)

John Belushi (33)

Heath Ledger (28)

Michael Jackson (50)

Two things are common among them.

First is that they’re all dead.

Second is that they all died of drug overdose.

Most of them were taking either illegal or prescription drugs for years.

Most of them had the world in the palm of their hands. They had everything — money, pleasure, fame, cars, homes and excitement. They had fans who would worship the dirt on their shoes. I remember four years ago, someone bought the used chewing gum of Britney Spears on eBay for \$514. (That’s P25,000 for someone’s spit.)

But that's not the love that will fill a human heart.
Again, that's like eating cotton candy the whole day.
Your heart won't get nourished.
Let me tell you why.

Chapter 2

The Wound in Your Heart

A baby is born with a need to be loved
— and never outgrows it.
— Frank A. Clark

Every human being has a heart wound.

We're all wounded people.

We may look strong on the outside. But deep inside, we have a heart wound that must be healed.

Note that some people have a deeper heart wound than others.

Perhaps they had an alcoholic father or a very selfish mother.

Perhaps they came from a broken family.

Perhaps they were abused as kids.

Don't be shocked but filling up your heart wound is the most basic motivation of all that you do. It's also the reason why people are addicted to drugs and alcohol and money and sex and power and food and fame and romance.

Let me tell you three tragic stories.

The Crazy Things We Do Because We Want to Fill Our Heart Wound

Zeny (not her real name) is a 27-year-old beautiful and intelligent woman. She's a brilliant marketing manager in her company. But her superior IQ and brilliant logic flies out of the window when it comes to love.

She jumps from one romantic relationship after another. The moment her boyfriend breaks up with her, she gets into another relationship. Zeny will grab the next guy available, like a woman drowning and gasping for air. Even if that guy was a serial killer.

If there's no guy available, she'll get a girl and get into a lesbian relationship. Because Zeny just can't stand being alone. But despite having all those guys and girls chasing after her, she's terribly unhappy.

Why? Because all that is cotton candy.

I also remember Jake, a 48-year-old multi-millionaire. Jake has many companies under his name, many beautiful cars, many beautiful homes and many beautiful girls.

But Jake is terribly unhappy.

Why? Because all that is cotton candy.

My third example is more confusing.

Not All Religious Activity Can Nourish the Heart

When you mention the words "spiritual malnourishment," people instantly think about people who don't receive God's Word — because they don't attend religious activities.

Well, what about Yolly?

Yolly is a 44-year-old woman who is immersed in religious activities. She goes to Mass in the morning, reads her Bible during lunch, and attends her prayer meetings, doctrinal classes and novenas in the evening. In between, she prays the rosary.

But unfortunately, Yolly is one of unhappiest people I know.

One day, I realized why. Because every time Yolly prayed, she always heard God saying, “You’re a sinner. You’re wicked. You’re dirty. You’re not worthy of my love...” Yolly was projecting her own self-hatred onto God. Consequently, her God was judgmental and always angry. All her spiritual activities were her way of appeasing this God.

Friend, your heart wound won’t be healed by religious activities. Your heart wound can only be healed by an experience of God’s love *found* in these religious activities.

In other words, it’s love found in a relationship.

What Your Heart Wound Is Longing For

When we fill up our heart wound with sex, money, drugs or romantic relationships, they don’t work. Because there’s only one thing that can heal your heart wound.

As corny as this may sound, that thing that we long for is *love*.

That’s why another term for heart wound is “love tank.”

If you want to function well in life, your love tank must be filled.

When I meet someone who has problems handling life, it's usually because the person has an empty love tank.

It could be the jobless person who doesn't have self-worth.

It could be a millionaire who doesn't have friends.

It could be a people pleaser who has no backbone.

It could be a guy controlled by his fears.

It could be a person who is having marital affairs.

It could be a drug addict.

It could be a girl who jumps from one jerk to another.

It could be a greedy politician who has come to believe in his own lies.

I've realized that all these people have empty love tanks.

They're desperately finding a way to fill up their wound and are doing it in the wrong way.

Let me tell you now how to heal your heart wound.

Chapter 3

What Kind of Love Can Heal the Wound?

Above all, love each other deeply,
because love covers over a multitude of sins.

— 1 Peter 4:8

At the end of the day, the love that can heal your heart wound is love that is found in *relationships*.

Your relationship with God.

Your relationship with yourself.

Your relationship with others.

Friend, your relationships will determine your happiness and success in every area of your life.

So let me ask you a big question: *How are your relationships today?*

How is your marriage?

How are your relationships with your parents?

How are your relationships with your kids?

How are your relationships with your siblings?

How are your relationships with your friends?

How is your relationship with God?

How is your relationship with yourself?

If you tell me that your relationships are happy and deep and blessed, then in my book you have everything.

No doubt about it. You're one very successful person.

Why You Need This Book

Some of you may be saying, “Hey Bo, I’ve got lots of relationships! But why is my heart wound not being healed? Why is my love tank not being filled?”

Here’s the big problem with relationships: They’re organic. They’re not inanimate objects. They’re living, breathing things.

Let me give you an analogy.

There are two types of automatic toys: battery-operated and wind-up.

Some people make the mistake of thinking that relationships are like battery-operated toys. They think they could just slip a double AA battery in their relationship and voila, off it goes, humming its tune forever.

But that’s not how relationships work. They don’t go on autopilot.

Relationships are like wind-up toys.

If you don’t wind it up, the ballerina stops dancing and playing music.

When your relationships aren’t working, it’s because you’ve not been winding them up.

What am I saying?

Relationships need renewal or they die.

And dead things can’t give you love and heal heart wounds.

Let me end with one last personal story.

Chapter 4

Death Will Tell You What Is Most Important

Life is relationships; the rest is just details.
— Gary Smalley

Last year, I flew to New York.

The reason? I was invited to the 64th General Assembly of the United Nations.

I know it sounds like a joke. But it isn't.

I'm in the harvest season of my life. For 30 years I was planting and I'm now receiving a deluge of blessings. This was one of them.

Being inside the United Nations, seeing the presidents, emirs, sheiks and prime ministers of 192 countries blew my mind.

Not only that. I stayed at the *Waldorf Astoria*, one of the most luxurious hotels in the world. And guess who was staying in the same hotel with me? President Barack Obama and a few other heads of state.

Of course, they stayed in humongous suites found on the upper floors. Mortals like myself stayed in regular rooms.

For breakfast, I ordered one soft-boiled egg that cost an astounding eight dollars. My gosh.

The experience was surreal. I was in the cusp of luxury, staying in the center of the world, seeing presidents of the world and eating eight-dollar eggs!

No doubt about it, that trip was definitely a high point of my year.

And yet, here's my reflection: I'm totally sure that on my deathbed, I won't remember this experience — at all.

I'll remember instead the hug that my son gave me, his little fingers at the back of my neck.

I'll remember the times I dated my mother in her old age, the drive going to the restaurant, the two-hour conversations we always have.

I'll remember how, early on in our marriage, my wife and I had our romantic dates in cheap fast food joints — and still had to choose with care what we ordered because we couldn't afford all the items there.

I'll remember how I took care of orphaned children for a year, living with them in a bamboo hut.

In other words, I'll remember those moments in my life when I gave love and received love.

Because at the end of the day, that's what life is all about.

I've realized that if you fail in your relationships, you fail in life.

That's why I'm inviting you to work on your relationships...

**Assignment: Pick One Relationship in Your Life
that You Want to Renew and Refresh**

Reading this book will do nothing for your life.

But if you apply what you read, it'll create miracles.

Therefore, I'm giving you an assignment.

I want you to choose one relationship in your life that you want to deepen and strengthen. Perhaps it's your relationship with your mother, or your sibling, or your husband, or your child, or a friend.

Here's what you do: Go right up to that person and tell that person, "I want to strengthen my relationship with you."

Attached to this book are special Relationships Reborn cards — which you'll be using along the way.

The first is a "Gift of Renewal" card.

The card states, "I want to deepen, strengthen and renew my relationship with you." It's a simple tool to give you courage to approach that person in your life you want to deepen your relationship with. So you won't go empty-handed.

When you do this, you might get shocked looks, questions, laughter or even ridicule from the other person.

Or you might get a hug or some tears.

It doesn't matter.

Just go out there and tell someone your prayer for a relationship reborn.

Key 2:
Gratitude

Stop Trying to Fix People

*Families are like fudge —
mostly sweet with a few nuts.*
— Author Unknown

Honor one another above yourselves.
— Romans 12:10

Key 2: Gratitude

Chapter 5

You're a Lover, Not a Repairman

*Young women begin by believing they can change
and reform the men they marry. They can't.*

— George Bernard Shaw

You know what our monstrous mistake is?

We try to fix the people in our life.

Oh, I see it everywhere.

Everywhere I go, I see people complain about the people in their life.

Wives complain about their husbands.

“Bo, please talk to my husband. He eats too much.”

“Bo, can you help me? My husband watches too much TV.”

One frustrated wife told me, “Bo, please advise my husband. He doesn't have a one romantic bone in his body. Last year, he gave me a bar of soap for Valentine's Day. The brand? *Mr. Clean.*”

But husbands complain about their wives, too.

“Bo, please talk to my wife. She's *gastadora* (*spendthrift*).”

“Bo, help me with my wife. She is always hysterical and historical. She remembers all my past mistakes, including date, time and place.”

One husband told me, "My wife is so talkative. If the universe paid one centavo for every word she said, I'd be the richest man in the world today."

Another man said, "My wife is always angry. When she's angry, she causes global warming and the melting of the ice caps at the North Pole."

Parents complain about their kids, too.

"My kids are too messy."

"My kids can't focus on their studies."

One mother said, "My kids are so lazy. If given a chance, they'll ask someone to breathe for them."

And everywhere I go, I also hear many kids ask me to fix their parents.

"My parents are too strict."

"My parents are too corny."

"My parents are too *kuripot* (*stingy*)."

One girl told me, "They allow me to swim only if I wear a long gown."

All over the world, people want to fix people.

Let me tell you why...

Are You Sick of Comparisonitis?

First of all, you want to fix people because you love them.

But sometimes, our motives aren't pure. Sometimes, we want to fix our loved ones because of shame. We're ashamed of what other people will say about our kids, our siblings, our spouses and our parents.

Another reason of our "fixing other people" tendencies is we're afflicted with the disease called

comparisonitis.

Humans like to look to the other side of the fence to see if it's greener.

Someone told me that marriage is like going to a restaurant. After you ordered your dish, you learn what the other table ordered, and suddenly regret what you ordered.

Believe me, this urge to compare causes so much misery in marriages.

If you always compare your wife's body with Beyonce's or Angel Locsin's, she can't compete. Or if you compare your husband's salary with Manny Pacquiao's earnings, he won't come close.

Many times, we compare our spouse to someone who doesn't exist. For example, we fantasize about Hollywood stars that aren't real. Because all their blemishes were removed by *Photoshop* and a huge PR company.

Even the pretty officemate that seems so gorgeous on the outside may actually be your worst nightmare the moment you live with her. You really don't fall in love with her. You fall in love with a projection of how you imagine her to be.

Even parents are guilty of this.

Motivate Your Kids in Other Ways

We have a tendency to compare our kids with other kids.

We even verbally share our comparisons in the hopes of motivating him.

I overheard one mother tell her little boy, "Junior,

why can't you get good grades like your sister? She gets straight As in all subjects. But your highest grades are in Recess and Lunch."

Parents compare their kids to their classmates, their cousins and even to themselves when they were young. Their sermons begin with this famous line: "When I was young, I wasn't like you..."

Kids cannot flourish in an environment where they are being judged. Kids flourish in an environment of appreciation. They need to know that their parents accept them for their uniqueness.

Parents, *stop comparing!*

And there's also another disease that causes us to fix people.

The Virus of *Criticalitis*

I've met people who have a strong critical spirit in them.

I pity them so much. Once afflicted, they become very miserable people.

These people think God created them to criticize others. All day long, they look for the faults of the people around them.

But behind this critical spirit towards others is really a critical spirit toward oneself. In fact, the critic pulls down others so that he can hide his own failures.

Let me now tell you what you should do.

Chapter 6

The Mystery of Attraction

*The deepest craving of human nature
is the need to be appreciated.*

— William James

Do you want less stress in your relationships?

Do you want less fights?

Do you want less wrinkles?

Do you want more joy?

My solution is really simple: *Stop trying to fix others.*

Big clarification: I'm not talking about the big sins.

Like marital abuse, alcoholism, adultery and all the other major violations. I'm also not talking about tolerating the sins of your kids. I'm not teaching you to say, "Wow, son, you're very good in stealing. Perhaps you can be a congressman one day." (I'll talk on "tough love" in Key 6 later.)

Today, I'm talking about idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, personalities and persuasions that make your loved one very unique.

If you're not going to fix people, what should you do?

Appreciate them.

Let me now explain a mystery.

What You Like and What You Don't Like May Be One and the Same Thing

My relationship with my cell phone is ambivalent.
I like it and I don't like it.

There are days when I think it's the greatest invention since peanut butter. And there are days when I want to fling it into the mouth of a volcano.

Here's what I noticed: The very features that I like are the very same features that I don't like. Absurd but true.

Why do I like my phone? I like the fact that I can call up the 954 people in my phone directory anytime. It's useful when I have a flat tire, when I need a prayer or when I'm on the rooftop because of Typhoon Ondoy.

Why do I *not* like my phone? I don't like the fact that these 954 people can call me up at anytime — even when I'm lying on a hammock in a tiny island far out in the Pacific Ocean.

Why do I like my phone? Because I can bring it everywhere I go.

Why do I *not* like my phone? Because I can bring it everywhere I go!

Question: Have you ever had the absurd experience of leaving your cell phone at home and having to make a U-turn to come back for it? Nuts, right? Cell phones are now like one of our kidneys. You can still survive if it gets lost but it'll be risky.

I repeat: The very things that I like are the very same things that I don't like.

Funny, but this is also true with our relationships.

Why Did You Fall in Love?

Don't be shocked, but the very thing that made you crazy for a person will be the very same thing that will *drive* you crazy in the years to come.

I'm not kidding.

If you fell in love with your wife because she was bubbly and the life of the party, today, you want to zip her mouth for the sake of world peace.

If you fell in love with your husband because he was quiet, strong and steady as a rock, today, you want to curse him for being cold and unresponsive — like you're talking to a rock.

If you fell in love with your wife because of her stunning beauty, today, you find yourself pulling your hair in the car, waiting for her because she takes three hours just to dress up and put on her makeup.

Remember: Every strength has a weakness.

My friend Jon Escoto says that "a weakness is really a strength applied inappropriately." (As another friend loves to say, "You're right in a wrong way!") You can't have only one side of the coin. You have to have both.

Why My Wife Married Me

One day, I had a very serious talk with my wife.

"Sweetheart, I want you to be completely honest with me," I said to her. "Aside from the fact that I look like John Lloyd and Piolo Pascual put together, what else made you marry me?"

After laughing out loud and rolling on the floor, she finally said, “Sorry, Bo, your looks weren’t the reason why I married you. I married you because you have such a big heart for God.”

But I bet if you ask her today, “Marowe, what are the difficulties of being married to Bo?” she’ll tell you, “Because Bo has such a big heart for God!”

She’ll explain to you, “Our schedule isn’t normal. Our entire married life isn’t normal. Bo runs nine non-profit organizations. He’s constantly stretched. He travels a lot.” She’s accepted that as her lot in life.

Here’s something she’s also accepted: When we have our weekly romantic dates, she already expects it to be interrupted. Many times, a total stranger would approach me, cry on my shoulder and ask for prayer. In the middle of a busy mall, I hold an instant mini-healing rally — because the moment people see me praying for one person, people fall in line.

She’s come to accept this reality as part of the set package called Bo Sanchez.

She’s accepted the fact that when she married me, she also married the people I love — the flock I care for.

Why am I telling you all these?

Chapter 7

Stop Trying to Fix People

*Gratitude is riches.
Complaint is poverty.*
— Doris Day

To repeat my million-dollar point: If you want to have happy relationships, you'll have to *stop trying to fix people and start appreciating them*.

Jesus said, "Love your neighbor." He didn't say, "Fix your neighbor."

Two reasons why you need to stop fixing people.

First, you can't.

Second, I've realized that people are like old houses.

If one thing gets fixed, another thing gets broken.

Let me tell you what I mean by *appreciate*.

Two Levels of Acceptance

The first level of acceptance is tolerance.

The second level is appreciation.

Let me tell you a story.

Jean came up to me one day and said, "Bo, can I share something with you? My story might help the women you talk to."

Jean said that her husband is addicted to watching basketball. She told me that it drove her insane. “Bo, there was a time when his passion for watching basketball made me so angry. I would nag him, I would throw pots and pans in his direction, I would hide the TV remote control — just so he couldn’t watch.”

She told him, “I think basketball has become your god. And the churches you attend are NBA, PBA, PBL, NCAA and UAAP. All you talk about is basketball.” And her husband would answer back, “Foul ‘yan.”

“But after a couple of years,” Jean said, “I just gave up. I realized that nothing was going to happen. That he will never change.”

That was the day when Jean began to *tolerate* her husband’s passion for basketball. Whenever she saw him sitting in front of the TV watching a game, she felt less irritation in her heart.

But one day, Jean had a bigger epiphany.

That fateful morning, Jean’s best friend called her up crying hysterically on the phone. Through many tears, she said she discovered that her husband was having an affair. After an hour of trying to comfort her, Jean’s friend said, “I wish my husband was like your husband, Jean — so faithful to you.”

That one sentence was like a slap on her face.

She woke up.

Jean realized she was blind to the great blessing that her husband was to her.

Because she was so focused on his basketball addiction, she never appreciated how faithful her husband was to her.

She also began to count the many ways he was a

wonderful husband: He was hard-working, he loved the kids, he went with her to her prayer meetings and he was sweet in his own manly, clumsy way.

Today, she sometimes joins him watching basketball.

She still doesn't appreciate the game. She told her husband once, "Why don't they just give one ball to each team?" But she enjoys being with her wonderful husband now.

That day, Jean moved from tolerance to *appreciation*.

And that was the day her marriage became very happy.

Are You a Judge or a Painter?

What I'm sharing with you is so earth-shaking, I should be charging you a million bucks for divulging this secret.

Believe me, if you apply this secret into your life, you will change your entire life — radically. You'll have less stress. You'll have less fights. You'll have more peace. You'll be more joyful. You'll feel and look younger by 10 years.

It was Dr. James Dobson who advised to keep both your eyes open before you get married and half-closed thereafter.

What does he mean? Before you get married, you should be very careful in evaluating your future spouse. Check everything. Values. Background. Preferences. Reactions. Beliefs. Examine everything!

But when you get married, stop evaluating. Stop critiquing.

It's now time to stop fixing the other person and start appreciating him in his totality.

Remove the robes of the courtroom judge. Instead, put on the robes of a painter capturing the beauty of a scene. An artist simply accepts what is and nurtures a gratitude for what is there.

When you accept the other person and become grateful for him, a great miracle happens: The person learns to accept himself too and thus bring about the healing of his heart wound. *Changes begin to take place spontaneously.*

You can never fix anyone.

Because fixing is an inside job. You can never force it from the outside.

Yes, you should inspire. You should guide. You should teach. But you cannot force.

At the end of the day, *the only thing you can do is to love the person by creating space for him to fix himself.*

Let me now share with you one of my favorite stories...

Chapter 8

Love the Perfection of His Imperfections

*What you focus on expands,
and when you focus on the goodness in your life,
you create more of it.*
— Oprah Winfrey

One day, a wife came to her husband with a magazine in her hand, “Darling, this article is wonderful. It describes a little activity that we can both do to improve our marriage. Can we do it together?”

“Sure,” her husband said.

“It says here that for one day, each of us will separately write a list of what areas we want each other to change in. Little annoyances, little irritations, etc. And then tomorrow, we share this list to each other. Deal?”

“Deal!” the husband smiled.

That day, the man sat in the living room with paper and hand. The wife went to the bedroom and did the same thing.

The next day, over breakfast, the wife said, “Game? Can I start first?”

“Yes,” the husband said.

The wife pulled out three pages. Single spaced. Font size 8. It was a long list. She began to read her list. “Darling, I don’t like it when you do this...” On and on, she read the little ways her husbands annoyed her.

The man felt a sting in his heart. The wife noticed this and asked, “Do you want me to continue?”

“I can handle it. Go on,” the man said.

So the wife continued to read.

Finally, the woman said, “OK, it’s your turn.”

The husband pulled out his piece of paper and said, “Yesterday, I asked the question what are the changes I want in you. But hard as I tried to think, I couldn’t think of one thing.” He then showed her the empty piece of paper in his hand. “Because to me, *you’re perfect in your imperfections*. I’ve accepted who you are — strengths and weaknesses. And I love the whole package. I love the mix. You are a wonderful person and I love you so much.”

The wife began to sob, rolled up the three pages in her hand, and beat her husband on the head, “*Bwiset ka!*” And hugged him tight for a very long time.

Your Assignment: Express Your Appreciation

One of the ways to show gratitude is to simply say it. Use the second card on your stack of special *Relationship Reborn* cards. Give it to one person in your life and thank her for the blessing that she is to you. I suggest you make your own cards so you can give them to more people.

Be specific. Write them a note of gratitude.

Thank your wife for the small things she does for you.

Thank your husband for going to work every day.

Thank your mother for the way she serves you.

Thank your child for being a wonderful child.

The next time a loved one presses your clothes, or takes out the trash, or fixes the car, or takes care of the baby, appreciate them in your heart and in your words.

I promise: Gratitude will be like oil in the engine of your relationship.

Your relationship will function in a whole new level.

Key 3:

Time

Fight the Relationship Drift

*There is never enough time to do everything,
but there is always enough time to do the most
important thing.*

— Brian Tracy

Let us not give up meeting together.

— Hebrews 10:25

Chapter 9

Why Our Hearts Move Apart

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they (apostles) did not even have a chance to eat, Jesus said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

— Mark 6:31

Warning: There's a cruel epidemic afflicting our families, our marriages and our friendships. It's called the *Relationship Drift*.

It's a very devious disease. It's like some cancers. You really don't know you have it until it's fatal. And then it's too late.

And then Relationship Drift becomes Relationship Dead.

The only solution is to diagnose it early.

But the symptoms of Relationship Drift are almost invisible to the naked eye.

Because you're not really fighting each other.

There are no screaming matches. In fact, your home is quiet. Like a convent.

And there are no pots and pans flying in the air.

And there are no bloody court cases.

But little by little, your hearts move apart.

Intimacy is gone.

Joy is missing.

In marriage, sex only happens every time Halley's comet passes planet Earth.

You take each other for granted.

You know the disease has run its full course because you wake up one morning not caring for the other person anymore.

Let me give you examples of the Relationship Drift:

The father who doesn't have heart-to-heart conversations with his kids anymore. Or the wife who no longer enjoys her husband's company. Or a couple that talk to each other functionally, not deeply. Or siblings who no longer laugh together, play together and eat together.

Here's why: We live in a busy world.

Bills need to be paid.

Cars need to be repaired.

And kids need to be fed, vaccinated and neutered, er, I mean nurtured. (I know of parents who want to administer this little medical procedure to their kids when puberty comes along.)

My point? *It's natural that you drift apart.*

You don't have to be a bad person. You don't have to be Adolf Hitler or The Joker. You don't have to be obnoxious, selfish or evil to cause the disease called Relationship Drift.

Let me give you an analogy.

Two people in a relationship are like two little boats floating on the sea.

Problem: There's a current that will slowly pull the two boats apart. Before they know it, the two boats are miles away from each other.

Friend, there's really only one way to fight the drift:
Paddle!

If you don't want to drift, you'll have to go against the flow and paddle your way to each other. You'll have to work hard, muscle your way, sweat like crazy and fight to be together.

I believe that the only antidote to Relationship Drift is to *bond constantly*.

If you don't, the effects can be disastrous...

When We Don't Fight the Relationship Drift

David Perdue wrote this about "fatherless kids" in America. According to statistics, children from a fatherless home are:

Five times more likely to commit suicide;

Thirty-two times more likely to run away;

Twenty times more likely to have behavioral disorders;

Fourteen times more likely to commit rape (this applies to boys);

Nine times more likely to drop out of high school;

Ten times more likely to abuse chemical substances;

Nine times more likely to end up in a charitable institution; and

Twenty times more likely to end up in prison for a long period of time.

David Perdeu says we either pay now or pay later.

And when you pay later, it always costs more.

My suggestion is to pay now.

Fighting the Relationship Drift is very difficult. But it's easier paying now than paying later.

Here's how to do it.

Chapter 10

Time Management vs. *Biggies* Management

*Treasure your relationships,
not your possessions.*
— Anthony J. D'Angelo

Do you want to spend more time with your family?
Time management is *not* the solution.

I know a company who charges \$759 per person for their Time Management Seminar. Let me save you \$759 right now and tell you it doesn't work.

These guys will teach you how to become experts in multi-tasking.

While you shave, mentally plan for your day.

While you drive, record your things-to-do in an MP3 recorder.

While sitting on the throne of life, make your phone calls.

While talking with your boss, floss your teeth.

I don't believe in any of that.

Though I must admit, I'm guilty of trying all of them.

Except for the flossing. (I don't have a boss.)

And believe me, these things don't give you more time.

Worse, they take away your peace.

Here's a principle you can take to the bank: Anything that takes away your peace won't work in the long run.

Instead of time management, I teach people *Biggies* Management.

What Are Your Biggies?

If you really think about it, you can put everything happening in your life into two categories: *biggies* and *smallies*.

If you manage your biggies, you manage your life. It's the secret to great success.

What are your biggies?

People who don't know their biggies will be ruled by their smallies. They'll be lost boats in the sea, being pushed and pulled in various directions.

Your biggies consist of the four most important parts of your life:

- Your family
- Your health
- Your mission
- Your spirit

Everything else are smallies.

If you want to be successful, focus on your biggies.

When you make your weekly schedule, write down the biggies first.

Each of these biggies can be broken down. But today, I'd like to share with you the Family Biggies that you need to do. These are the powerful ways to paddle against Relationship Drift.

Are you ready?

Chapter 11

Create a List of Untouchables

My romantic date with my wife is an untouchable. I told her that we'd have a romantic date every Tuesday night except when one of these three things happen:

1. President Obama calls up to consult me on high-level issues such as terrorism, global warming and nuclear disarmament;
2. The Pope calls me to discuss some murky theological question that only I can answer (like "Did Adam have a belly button?");
3. If a comet rams into Earth, burning the entire planet's atmosphere and human life, as we know it, ceases to exist.

Aside from those three scenarios, nothing can touch my date with her.

Seriously, there are weeks when I'm traveling and we can't date. But I see to it that when I fly back home, the first thing I do is spend a day with my wife and two boys.

Frankly, I love my romantic dates with my wife. She's my emotional home. She relaxes me. (OK, I confess that one time, I was so relaxed I dozed off when she was still talking.)

My weekly date with my two boys is untouchable, too.

So is my twice-a-month lunch with my mother.
And twice-a-month dinners with my extended families.

I also have regular dates with my friends. (We call them Caring Groups in my spiritual family, *Light of Jesus*.)

Friend, the only way to paddle against Relationship Drift is to create your list of untouchables.

But before you invite your kids to a date, let me tell you how *not* to do it.

How to Have Dates with Your Kids

One day, a teenage boy approached me and said, "Brother Bo, can you please tell my father to stop having dates with me? I think he got the idea from you."

I later learned what his father did last week.

First, he invited his son to have a burger. But the moment they sat down at the restaurant, the father said, "Son, I want to talk to you about your poor grades."

After a mini-sermon on "study well because I work so hard to pay for your studies," the father jumps to another sensitive topic. "Your music tastes are terrible," he said to the lad. "It's loud, noisy and disgusting. I think you should listen to classical music more."

The father goes on to other topics, such as the length of his hair, the late night phone calls and the obscene amount of time he spends playing computer games.

Poor kid. He didn't know what was coming that day. He didn't realize he was attending a multi-track conference.

After their meal, the father told him, "Son, I enjoyed

our date. Let's do this weekly!"

His son must have had an epileptic seizure right there. Can you imagine going through this torture for the rest of his teenage life? That's when the boy asked me to rescue him from a life of purgatory.

So I called the father and said, "Parental sermons, homilies, lectures and full-scale multi-track conferences are banned from your dates."

"Why?" the father asked.

"Because the date isn't for you," I said. "It's for your son. You don't have to enjoy it as long as he does." I told him, "Play billiards. Play bowling. Go fishing. Ride bikes together. Anything your boy wants to do."

Let me explain why this is essential.

When the relationship is close, kids listen. Their hearts are supple and open.

But when there's already a Relationship Drift between the parents and the kids, their hearts are far apart. So no matter how much the parents shout, their kids don't hear the message.

So the first goal is to bring your hearts close to each other.

Create a List of Untouchables

Chapter 12

How to Bond as a Family

*When I was a kid I said to my father one afternoon,
"Daddy, will you take me to the zoo?"
He answered, "If the zoo wants you, let them come
and get you."
— Jerry Lewis*

Another untouchable you need to create is a weekly family night.

The goal is to do something fun together.

Rent a movie and cook popcorn for a family movie night at home.

Or take a family walk around the village.

Or play a game together. *Monopoly*. *Pictionary*. *Patintero* (a Filipino street game).

Or read a book out loud.

Or just order pizza and ask everyone to share what's happening with them around the table.

When you do this each week, you're creating memories that will last a lifetime. Life is about moments. And believe me, your grown-up kids will never forget these special bonding moments as a family. It will be their anchor. It will be their source of emotional stability. That amidst the sea of change around them, they know that there are just some things in life that don't change.

Like the memories of being together as family.

Here's one more tip before I end.

Invite Your Kids' Friends to Hang Out at Home

You've got to be the cool Mom and Dad — even if you're not.

How? Make your home the preferred hangout place for your kids' friends.

I know it'll cause a little dent on your budget.

OK, I lied. *It will make your life savings disappear.*

A group of teens are like a pack of piranha. They will eat anything that looks like food in your kitchen cabinets. And if your kids come home all tired and sweaty from a basketball game, be forewarned. That is a perfect storm. You will become poor overnight. You can buy all the food in your city and it won't be enough. They'll just burp and ask for more.

But the rewards are incredible.

First, you're with your kids more.

Second, you know where your kids are.

Third, you get to know their friends — and counsel the troubled ones. If they lack parenting, you can re-parent them. (I'm sharing with you a powerful secret: One of the best ways of influencing your kids is to influence their friends.)

Fourth, because of all the racket your guests make, you and your neighbors will not be on speaking terms. So that's one or two people dropped from your Christmas shopping list. Savings!

Two Choices: Drift or Paddle

I can hear you now.

“Bo, this is a lot of hard work! Weekly dates with my wife and kids? Feeding a pack of piranhas? And re-parenting the friends of my kids? My gosh!”

I warned you. It’s going to be tough.

But let me repeat what I said at the start: You really only have two choices in life. You either drift or you paddle. You either pay now or pay later.

I’ve decided to paddle. I’ve decided to pay now.

Believe me, I’m enjoying the benefits.

My relationships are deeply satisfying.

Friend, it’s your turn.

Start paddling.

Your Assignment: Give Your Time

Choose a family member you want to spend more time with.

Give the *Relationship Reborn* card #3 to that person.

If necessary, make copies of this card and give it to the other special people in your life.

You’ll never regret it.

Key 4:

Service

Make Your Love Genuine

*Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others
without getting a few drops on yourself.*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Use your gift to serve one another.

— 1 Peter 4:10

Key 4: Service

Chapter 13

Love Is About Dirty Hands, Not Just Beating Hearts

*Marriage is not a noun; it's a verb.
It's something you do.
It's the way you love your partner every day.*
— Barbara De Angelis

“Buy Rolex. Twenty dollars only.”

A mustached guy offered it to me while walking in a busy street.

Wow. Didn't *Rolex* watches sell at \$5,000 each?

Because he thought I was interested, the man opened his jacket and displayed other designer watches — such as *Patek Philippe*, *Cartier* and *Omega*. “Choose what you want. Each twenty dollars only.”

That was shocking. I knew some high-end *Patek* watches cost \$200,000. So how in the world could this man be selling them for \$20?

Too bad for the watch guy, I don't use watches. Stopped using them 25 years ago. To know the time, I look at the sun. On a cloudy day, I look at someone else's watch.

But my buddy bought a \$20 *Rolex*. It was a steal, he said.

Hey, it looked like a *Rolex*. It worked like a *Rolex*. It felt like a *Rolex*. But it wasn't a *Rolex*.

Five months later, my friend was sad because his watch stopped working. I told him, "What did you expect?"

Let me use this to explain why we have problems in our relationships.

Get the Genuine Article

Why do so many marriages have problems today?

Because many couples built their marriage on a pirated version of love.

The pirated version of love is infatuation.

There was a time when I thought infatuation was only for pimple-faced teenyboppers. Not true. Old fogies like myself aren't exempted.

Not that infatuation is a bad thing. It's totally normal. Infatuation only becomes a bad thing if a person thinks it's love.

I repeat: Infatuation is like a pirated copy of love.

Foolish people think the pirated copy is real. When it breaks down, they panic or get depressed. They realize it's fake. And their whole world crumbles.

Wise people know infatuation is a pirated copy. They enjoy it while it lasts but they know it's brittle and doesn't last. So secretly, *they also buy the genuine article.* (Note: Pirated versions are given; real versions are bought. I'll explain later.) So when the pirated version breaks down, the wise person does the great switcheroo. He pulls out the real thing.

Today, I'll tell you how to spot the genuine from the fake.

I'll describe the real deal — and how it's the only thing that can save your marriage. But not only your marriage, but every other relationship you have.

Oh yes, so many people have relationship problems with their parents, or children, or siblings, or friends — because they don't know what real love is.

I'm going to explain to you that *real love is about dirty hands, not beating hearts.*

Let me explain how this great switcheroo works...

Love Is About Dirty Hands, Not Just Beating Hearts

Learn to live a fantastic life. Log on to www.bosanchez.ph

Chapter 14

From Dubdub to Ngooorrrk

*Do I love you because you're beautiful,
or are you beautiful because I love you?*
— Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II,
Cinderella

"Father, we want to get married."

When the engaged couple went to the priest to schedule their wedding, their hearts were beating for each other. It was so loud, the priest could actually hear it. "Dubdub. Dubdub. Dubdub."

But he'd seen this before. How sweet lovebirds end up almost killing each other a year after the wedding. So he warned them, "As you know, feelings of love won't last."

And the couple said, "We know, Father."

But at the back of their minds, they were saying, "We know, Father, that feelings of love won't last for everyone else. But not for us. How can this feeling be fake when it's as strong as a roaring volcano? It's as clear as the noonday sun, as eternal as the waves of the sea, as beautiful as the stars in the night sky."

After the wedding ceremony, they had their honeymoon.

On their first night, the new husband watched his sleeping bride, the moonlight streaming from the

bedroom window onto her lovely face. He gazed at her long eyelashes, her pinkish cheeks, her parted lips. All of a sudden, she snored.

“Ngooorrrk.”

What did he say?

“How cute.”

Six months later, it’s the same scene.

They’re at home. The guy sees his wife asleep, with the moonlight streaming from the window onto her face. All of a sudden, she snores.

“Ngooorrrk.”

What does he say?

“How gross.”

What happened? Infatuation, the pirated version of love, disappeared. Real love must now kick in.

But only if he has it.

Let me give you another example.

From Gazing to Gossiping

How do you know if a couple in the restaurant are not married?

Easy.

If they’re physically close, touching each other, hand to hand, eye to eye, nose to nose, bad breath to bad breath — they’re not married.

Look underneath their table, and if their legs are intertwined and they’re playing footsies, they’re not married.

If they don’t look at anything else but each other,

they're not married.

If nuclear bombs fall right beside them and they don't even notice, they're not married.

If a flash flood engulfs the entire restaurant and all the guy could say is, "Sweetheart, I love the color of your eyes as it reflects the brownish floodwater around us," you can bet your life, they're not married.

And how do you know if a couple in a restaurant are married?

Easy.

If they're seated far apart, so far that a six-by-six truck can pass between them, they're married.

If they look bored, they're married.

If the whole night, all they do is talk about other people, they're married. The wife whispers, "Don't look at her, but the woman behind you is wearing fake eyelashes, fake jewelry, a fake *Coach* bag, fake anatomical parts and a fake husband." Being dense, the man turns around and asks, "Where? Where?"

Once upon a time, they had eyes only for one another.

Now, they barely look at each other.

What has happened? Infatuation, the pirated version of love, disappeared. Real love must now kick in.

But only if they have it.

Chapter 15

Spot the Difference

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

— John 13:1, 4-5

Let me now share five clear-as-daylight differences between infatuation and real love:

1. *Infatuation doesn't require a decision. It just happens. You see a girl and boom — your hormones kick in and you want her. You don't know why. It's her dress. It's the way her hair falls on her shoulder. It's her smile. It's the way she bites her fingernail. That's why I said that pirated versions are free. But real love doesn't just happen; real love requires a decision. That's why psychology author Scott Peck says real love can only start after one has "fallen out of love."*
2. *Infatuation, no matter what you do, lasts only for a season. You have these feelings of love swirling within you until something happens that breaks the spell. Maybe she'll open her mouth. Maybe*

- she'll reveal her fangs. Maybe she'll pick her nose. Maybe she'll spend your money. Maybe she'll introduce you to her mother. Maybe she gains 30 pounds. It could be anything. Infatuation can last for a few days or for a couple of years. *But real love can last forever precisely because it's a decision.*
3. *Infatuation is directed towards a figment of your imagination. You're not attracted to a real person. You're attracted to a projection of that person from your own imagination. Like infatuation itself, you're in love with a fake. But real love is directed towards a real person. You now know her strengths and weaknesses, and have accepted it all.*
 4. *Infatuation is a spontaneous collapse of your boundaries. You get lost and you merge with the other. You're enmeshed. You can't survive without each other. But real love requires the strengthening of both your boundaries; you actually don't need each other, but you choose each other because you want to serve.*
 5. *Infatuation is all about feelings. Dubdub. Dubdub. Dubdub. Cold palms, giddy spells, dazed looks and feet on the clouds. But real love is about dirty hands. You don't have to feel anything to love. Love is a verb, not just a feeling. Love is an action, not just a state. Let me repeat my message: *I believe love is about dirty hands, not beating hearts. The essence of love isn't feelings but service. Scott Peck says it so well — the opposite of love isn't hatred; the opposite of love is laziness.**

Chapter 16

Your Physiology Affects Your Psychology

Here's the thing.

I've found out that only mature people can love.

Only mature people can do the great switcheroo when the pirated copy fails. They just pull out the genuine article.

Why? Only mature people have love within them.

Real love has very little to do with the other person.

A loving person can love because he *is* a loving person, not because the other person is lovable.

You may be asking me, "But Bo, is love dry? Isn't there room for feelings?"

Of course, there is.

Here's a secret mature people know in their hearts even if they don't know it cognitively: *Your physiology affects your psychology. Your feeling follows your action.*

If we keep on doing acts of love, we increase our feelings of love. The more we "dirty our hands," the more we find our "hearts beating" for the other.

To make this practical, let me share seven simple ways of dirtying your hands. They are (1) Help, (2) Prayer, (3) Presence, (4) Touch, (5) Words, (6) Gifts and (7) Boundaries.

1. Help

Love means giving practical help.

If you're a mother, I'm sure there are days when you wake up feeling blue and you don't want to enter the kitchen. But 15 minutes later, where are you? Cooking in the kitchen, because some little people will get hungry. You don't feel like doing it. But you do it anyway. That's love.

If you're a husband, I'm sure there are days when you go home tired from work. But you see your kids. And even if all you want to do is lie down on the couch, you decide to play with them. You don't feel like doing it. But you do it anyway. That's love.

If you're a child whose parents are older, they need your help. Sure, you've got your own problems now, but that doesn't stop you from serving them. You don't feel like doing it. But you do it anyway. That's love.

2. Prayer

Love means praying for your loved ones.

Perhaps your father was a horrible man. And you hate him. But you decide to pray for him.

Sooner or later, God will answer your prayer. God will change him, but He'll change you first. Your father gets blessed, but you get blessed too. Ultimately, you become a more loving person.

You pray whether you feel like it or not.

That's love.

3. Presence

Love means spending time together.

Not just being physically together, but also being emotionally together.

That could mean a father playing with his kids. Or a daughter visiting her aging parents. Or siblings going shopping together. Or friends laughing over pizza. Or a couple taking a walk.

There'll be times when you won't feel like bonding together.

But you do it anyway. That's love.

4. Touch

Love means physical affection.

One day, a couple walking to work noticed a man passionately kissing a woman. "Why don't you do that?" said the wife.

"Honey," replied her husband, "I don't even know that woman!"

People aren't machines. They need to be touched. Holding hands, pats on the back, shoulder rubs, hugs and kisses nourish and heal people more than you can possibly imagine.

Again, there'll be days when you don't want to kiss or hold hands or hug. But you do it anyway. That's love.

5. Words

Love means verbal or written expressions.

When was the last time you told your husband, “Thank you for working so hard for our family”? When was the last time you told your wife, “Thank you for being a great mother to our kids”? When was the last time you told your mother, “Thanks for serving me all these years”? And when was the last time you actually said, “I love you”?

You might argue with me and say, “Bo, I don’t want to be a hypocrite. When I say it, I must feel it.”

Here’s my question: Are you just your emotions?

Or are you much more than your emotions? Are you also your spirit, your soul, your mind, your imagination, your will?

6. Gifts

Love means giving tokens — or symbols of love.

To you, your gift may mean nothing. But to another person, a small, inexpensive gift from you could mean the world.

7. Boundaries

Love means respecting the boundaries of the other.

Love means giving space to the other and letting the other person grow on her own. Love also means letting the other face her own responsibilities.

I like it when my wife goes out with her girlfriends each week. I like it when she takes up other interests. I like it when she grows and flourishes as an individual. I like it when she tells me, “Bo, I need some alone time. I’ll just go window shopping for a while.” So I pray over her, “Lord, I claim in faith that she’ll be faithful to those words, that she will indeed go ‘window’ shopping only. Thank You, Lord, for this miracle!”

Chapter 17

Love Is Service

*The irony of commitment is that it is deeply liberating,
in work, in play, in love.*

— Anne Morriss

I dedicate my last story to all those living away from their loved ones today — overseas Filipino workers, migrants, etc.

Many years ago, I met Alice, a Filipina teacher in Brunei.

She was my host and took care of me while I was there. When I woke up early one morning, I noticed that she was on the phone. But she wasn't speaking.

She explained that it was her beautiful ritual of love to her husband. Years ago, her husband suffered a stroke and he became paralyzed. So she went to Brunei to work for the family.

And what was this ritual of love? Alice would wake up at four in the morning to call her husband. (This was before the days of cell phones and text messages.) But because they could not afford overseas calls, they agreed that the husband would not answer the phone.

Instead, the husband would allow the phone to ring.
And ring.

And ring.

He would allow the love of Alice, symbolized by the ringing, to fill their house and to fill his heart.

For eight years straight, Alice did this beautiful ritual without fail.

Until he finally passed away.

That's what love is.

Not feelings that come and go.

Not moods that are here today and gone tomorrow.

Love is simply done, day in and day out.

Because it's eternal.

Constant.

Faithful.

It was Mother Teresa who said, "Service is a fruit of love."

If you love, you will serve.

Go now and, like Mother Teresa, dirty your hands.

Your Assignment: Give Your Service

You don't have to do anything big or heroic.

The simplest expressions of service can speak the loudest.

Choose a family member you want to give small acts of service. Give the *Relationship Reborn* card #4 to that person.

If necessary, make copies of this card and give it to the other special people in your life.

Key 5:

Forgiveness

The Only Thing That Can Heal Your Emotional Wounds

*The weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.*
— Mohandas K. Gandhi

Love covers over all wrongs.
— Proverbs 10:12

Key 5: Forgiveness

Chapter 18

Clean the Wound

*Do not judge, and you will not be judged.
Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.
Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
— Luke 6:37*

Have you been hurt before?

Have you ever been rejected by others? Ridiculed?
Maligned? Gossiped about?

Have you been cheated? Betrayed? Lied to? Stolen
from?

If your answer is yes, then I'm writing to the right
person.

That means you have emotional wounds, and my big
message for you is that there's *only one thing that can heal
your wounds.*

Let me start by talking about something of great
cosmological and eternal significance: my bloody ingrown
toenail.

Also called a hangnail.

Let me translate that in Filipino: hangnail is *kukong
nagbigti.*

Anyway, would you believe my ingrown toenail
lasted for two years? Because the nail kept re-growing, it
would puncture my wound again and again. The wound
got infected and my entire toe was filled with foul-smelling

yellow pus. (I apologize for grossing you out. I'm actually doing it on purpose and having fun.)

This is my claim to sainthood. If St. Francis of Assisi had his stigmata, I had my two-year-old bloody ingrown toenail.

After two years, my mother scared me to death and said that if the wound doesn't get well, they might have to cut off my toe.

I loved my toe.

So I visited a doctor. And he said he had to pull out half of my toenail. I fainted.

I still remember that fateful day. The anesthesia didn't work because of the pus. So I felt like San Lorenzo Ruiz who was tortured in the same way. (Please mention this tiny detail in my sainthood application.)

Here's how the doc did it.

Step 1: He pushed his scissors in between my nail and my toe, all the way to the very end. The pain was so horrific, I was ready to recant anything he told me to. Even my love for peanut butter.

Step 2: He cut my entire toenail into two. "Snap!"

Step 3: He got his metal pliers and yanked out half of my toenail. Blood and pus spurt like a little fountain.

But it worked.

My wound was now free to heal itself. What lasted for two years took only a few days to heal.

Why am I telling you this gory story?

To tell you that your emotional wounds are just like physical wounds. Bitterness is like an ingrown toenail — it keeps the original wound alive by puncturing it again and again. So your emotional wound doesn't heal.

And your soul gets infected.

If you're not careful, the emotional wound can grow until it amputates parts of you, slowly killing you.

I've met people like these.

I pity them so much. They're like the living dead.

They are alive but they're dead inside.

Like Minette, for instance.

Pressing the Rewind Button Again

Minette's husband left her three years ago.

But when you talk to her, it was like it happened yesterday.

Adultery is one of the deepest wounds a human heart can have. After entrusting your entire life to one person, that one person betrays that trust.

But I believe even the emotional wound of adultery can be healed. I've met many wives whose husbands became unfaithful—and they were able to move on by the power of forgiveness.

But Minette couldn't forgive.

Because every day she pressed the rewind button of the most hurtful scenes.

Today, Minette has cancer. It doesn't take a psychologist to connect the dots. Her bitterness ate up her body as well.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

I should know...

Chapter 19

Forgive for Selfish Reasons

*For if you forgive men when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
But if you do not forgive men their sins,
your Father will not forgive your sins.*
— Matthew 6:14-16

I was sexually molested twice, not by strangers on the street, but by an older cousin and by my own youth group leader. William Blake said, “It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend.” That’s so true.

Those traumatic events warped my thinking, opened my life to addictions and gave me self-contempt that would affect my entire life. I hated myself. I was ashamed of myself. Oh yes, my wounds were deep.

Yet in my heart, I had forgiven them. Totally.

I’ve released the bitterness in my soul.

Why?

Because of a very selfish reason.

Remember: Forgiveness is, first of all, a gift you give yourself.

I forgave because I wanted peace.

I wanted to move on with my life.

I wanted to get rid of the emotional baggage.

I wanted to be free.

And today, I am!

Let me share with you one more personal experience...

When You Forgive, You Bless Your Future

Many years ago, I started a tiny business with a friend. I was the investor and he was the guy who ran the show.

One day, I saw him with a new cell phone. A really cool, top-of-the-line thing that had everything you could think of — camera, video cam, GPRS, missile guidance system and an umbrella.

“Wow, that’s a great cell phone,” I said.

“This is a gift. Someone gave it to me,” he said.

The next time we met, he brought a new laptop.

“That’s really nice,” I said.

“Oh, this is also a gift,” he said.

A few months later, the business collapsed.

After looking at the records, I realized I was the one who was giving the gifts to him!

He was stealing from the business.

A year later, he came to me and asked for forgiveness. I forgave him even before he asked for forgiveness.

Here’s the reason why I forgave him.

Again, I did it for selfish reasons. I didn’t want to waste any of my time and energy trying to get the money back. Instead, I wanted to use all my time and energy *to earn 10 times what I lost*. I used my frustration to create more wealth. I wanted to focus on the future, not the past. I wanted to focus on my dreams, not my wounds.

Imagine if you lost P1,000. You have two options: spend one hour looking for that P1,000 or spend that same hour earning P1 million somewhere else.

A bitter person will choose the first option. Crazy but true.

Today, let me report to you: I've earned back many, many times more than what I lost from that tiny business. This is the power of forgiveness. It heals your wound and blesses your future. That's why I believe forgiveness is one of God's greatest inventions!

Let me tell you how to forgive...

Chapter 20

Stage One: Get Angry

*My husband and I have never considered divorce...
murder sometimes, but never divorce.*

— Anonymous

Forgiveness is not a one-stage process.

It's a two-stage process.

Here they are...

Stage one: *Get angry.*

Stage two: *Release the anger.*

That's it.

Don't be shocked, but anger is the first stage of forgiveness.

You have to admit the hurt.

You have to acknowledge the pain.

You have to say, "What he did to me was wrong."

Some people think forgiveness is pretending nothing bad happened. That's not true. If you're angry, feel the anger.

But you must express your anger in a non-hurtful way, without screaming or attacking. Bring your anger before God. Share your pain to a few trusted friends. Ask for prayer. Go ahead, cry. Offer your tears to God.

Anger heals because it's about loving yourself — and love always heals. Anger means you're standing up for

you. As an abuse victim, I had to do this. Anger is needed to rebuild my broken personal boundaries.

How long should you stay in stage one?

Not too long.

Because anger has an expiry date.

How Long Have You Been Angry?

Here's the truth: Bitterness and anger are one and the same thing. *But bitterness is anger past its expiry date.*

Let me illustrate.

I love spaghetti.

Served hot, it's wonderful.

But left on the kitchen counter for a whole day, it may still be good but you have to be careful.

After two days, you may get an upset stomach.

After one week, there'll be more germs than spaghetti. At that point, the plate of spaghetti has become poison.

Just like anger.

If anger stays too long in your heart, your anger no longer heals but kills. When anger turns into bitterness, it's poison.

The Bible says, "The sun must not go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26).

I believe it. Except perhaps for severe wounds (like abuse, adultery, betrayal, etc.), I feel stage one should not last for more than a day. I'm talking about the regular hurts we encounter every day. Before nightfall, move on to stage two.

But deeper wounds may need weeks or even months of anger and grief. For deeper wounds, I believe there's no clear divide between stage one and two. There'll be an overlap. But your movement must be towards stage two.

Because that's where the real magic happens.

Stage One: Get Angry

Chapter 21

Stage Two: Release Anger

*Marriage is not just spiritual communion,
it is also remembering to take out the trash.*
— Joyce Brothers

In stage two, you decide to forgive.

Key word: Decide.

It's not about *feeling* but about *willing*. The feelings of anger can linger (that's normal) but the decision has already been made in your heart.

Remember, love is a decision, not just a feeling. If forgiveness is love, then forgiveness is a decision, too.

But here's a very important footnote: **Forgiveness isn't necessarily bringing back the relationship to where it was before.** If you catch your boyfriend cheating on you, what should you do? Forgive him! But that doesn't mean you have to get back with him again. That's all up to you.

Let's say you caught your boyfriend cheating on you twice. What should you do? Again, you have to forgive him. Now, do you run back into his arms? If you're a psychotic with sadomasochistic tendencies, go ahead. Your desires will be granted.

Forgiveness is also not opening up yourself to more hurt. For example, if your alcoholic husband beats you up, you still need to forgive him. But will you let him get back

into the house? No way. You run away and never see him until he gets counseling and stops drinking for six months.

Forgiveness Heals the “Enemy”

The cousin who molested me has long been dead. So forgiving him in my heart was enough.

The youth group leader who sexually abused me is still alive. After 30 years, I have yet to face him. You see, my friends and I (others who were molested by him) reported his name to a bishop, asking that he be barred from doing any religious work until he gets help for his perversion. I had to protect other young boys who may be working with him. He has yet to come to me to ask for forgiveness. But even if he does not, I’ve forgiven him — and sent that “spiritually” to him.

The guy who stole money? As I said, he asked for forgiveness and I was able to say to him, “I forgive you.”

When you forgive someone, you also offer healing to that person. Whether he accepts it or not is not your concern.

And by some magic, you don’t only heal yourself and the other person. You also heal all your loved ones.

Forgiveness Heals Everyone in Your Life

Imagine a room of 10 people.

And one person there stepped on poop. (Sorry, my article is really gross — about ingrowns and poop. But bitterness *is* gross.) Slowly, everyone in the room smells the

awful stench. Only one person has the poop but everyone is affected by it.

Bitterness is like that.

It wounds everyone. Your family. Your friends.

Bitterness is an evil spirit and people feel it. They smell the poison. They sense it. They want to run away.

Sometimes, when I enter a home filled with conflicts, I feel the collective wound of the family. You cannot breathe.

But when a person forgives, it's like opening a window in a smelly room where one person stepped on poop. Fresh air comes in. If bitterness wounds everyone, forgiveness heals everyone, too.

My last story is a story that I created, adapted from other sources. Be blessed as you read it.

Chapter 22

Why You Need to Forgive

He who angers you conquers you.

— Elizabeth Kenny

“Hi, John,” the priest greeted his favorite nephew.

“Fr. Chris,” the young man said, his voice betraying his troubled soul.

The cleric felt so much pity for the teen. “I heard you’re having problems with your father.”

A frown formed on John’s face. “You know him. He’s your brother. You know he’s impossible to deal with. He’s so selfish. He’s so cruel...” The young man fought back his tears.

“Tell you what, son,” the priest tried to sound encouraging, “let’s pray for him.” He stood up and pinned the photo of the boy’s father on the wall.

“What’s that?” John asked. The sight of his father’s face stung him. He clenched his fists.

The priest said, “It’s just a way to help us pray for him. It’ll be our visual connection to your father.”

“But I don’t want to pray for him!” the young man shouted.

At that moment, the phone rang. “Excuse me, son,” Fr. Chris said, “let me answer this call and I’ll get back to you right away.” He left the room.

John found himself alone, staring at the photo of a man he despised with his entire being. Seething with rage, he saw a knife on the kitchen counter. On impulse, he grabbed it and ran back to the photo of his father. "I hate you!" he screamed, and stabbed the photo many, many times.

That was when Fr. Chris ran back. "Oh, my God," the priest said, as he looked in horror.

His energy spent, John thrust the knife into the photo one last time.

He took one step backward, panting.

"John, I have other photos there," Fr. Chris said.

"What?" The young man looked at the priest.

Fr. Chris walked to the wall and removed the damaged photo.

John couldn't believe his eyes.

Because underneath it was John's photo. Also punctured.

The priest explained. "After praying for your father, I wanted to pray for you, John."

The young man looked at his damaged photo. His face was torn, punctured by the same stabbing he himself made.

Tears rolled down his cheeks.

But even as his vision blurred, John noticed that there was something else behind his torn photo.

He pulled it off the wall.

Underneath his photo was the picture of Jesus, His face, also torn, also wounded.

John collapsed on his knees and wept for a long time.

This is the ultimate reason why we forgive: Because even if we sin against God, He still forgives us. We don't deserve His love, but He loves us anyway.

Heal yourself, my friend.

Forgive anyone who has wronged you.

Assignment: Ask God for the Power to Forgive

Use *Relationship Reborn* card #5.

Write down the people who have hurt you, pray the prayers on the card and burn the card. As you see the flames consume the card, imagine God's love consuming your hurt and anger.

By doing this, you're making a decision to move on. You're making a decision to focus on the future, not on the past.

Key 6:

Self-Love

Do You Want Happy Relationships? Love Yourself

*Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single
candle, and the life of the candle will not be
shortened.*

Happiness never decreases by being shared.
— Buddha

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”
— Matthew 22:39

Chapter 23

I Didn't Like Myself

It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend.
— William Blake

Here's my big message: *You can only have happy relationships if you have happy self-love.*

Nope, I'm not talking about narcissism — or extreme selfishness. Here's why: I believe selfish people don't really love themselves.

Let me tell you my story.

Two years ago, I attended my highschool's 25th alumni homecoming.

It was great catching up with old friends. We were all bigger, balder and bumpier in various parts of our body.

But what gave me the heebie-jeebies was walking through my old school building. I was overwhelmed with a flood of not-so-happy memories. I realized how much I didn't like school.

You see, I was a very insecure kid.

I was shy. I was introverted. I had pimples. I was so thin, they called me *tipaklong* (grasshopper). For Filipinos, my nose was large, so they called it a grand piano hanging on my face.

And some classmates bullied me. They pushed me around. They forced me to do errands. And they made me their lifetime supply of paper.

In youth lingo, I was a loser with a capital L.

But I felt all my classmates were so confident, so large, so outgoing and so happy. They loved school.

So I asked myself this disturbing question: *What is wrong with me?* Hundreds of times a day, I would ask myself this question. And for years, this question was my constant refrain.

What Is Wrong with Me?

Twenty-five years later, I know God has healed me because I don't ask that cynical question as often anymore.

I now love myself.

I've grown in confidence.

And I've become successful!

I have a wonderful family and fantastic friends.

I've written bestselling books.

And my pimples are gone.

I've grown to my ideal weight.

My face is larger, so my nose isn't a grand piano anymore. (Now it looks more like a church organ.)

And thanks to my friend and *couturier*, Adrian Panganiban, I dress well. Suits, ties, the works. He makes clothes for showbiz stars and has made it his personal mission to make me look *guwapo* (handsome). I think he has succeeded. (Ahem).

But may I be honest with you?

At rare times, I still find myself asking that judgmental question: *What is wrong with me?*

It's amazing how, after 25 years, a tiny part of me is still that insecure schoolboy that wanted people to like me.

My problem through all those years?

I didn't love myself.

For decades, my heart was empty of self-love.

But was my heart really empty?

Chapter 24

Your Heart Filled with Either Self-Love or Neediness

*If we could learn to like ourselves, even a little,
maybe our cruelties and angers might melt away.*
— John Steinbeck

Imagine your heart to be an empty bottle.

But it's not really empty. It's actually filled with air.

In the same way, when a human heart doesn't have self-love, it isn't empty. It's filled with neediness.

The air in the bottle is a symbol of neediness.

But if you pour water in it, it pushes air out of the bottle. The more water it has, the less air it has.

That water is self-love.

I believe the only solution to neediness is self-love.

If you learn to love yourself, you'll push out neediness from your heart. The more you love yourself, the less neediness you have. The less you love yourself, the more neediness you have.

Would you know neediness if you saw it?

Do You Have Neediness?

Neediness, or a lack of self-love, is expressed in so many ways. Here are a few of them...

Some, like me, become people-pleasers. They'll be kind, gentle and smile at everybody so they'll be liked. Because their substitute for self-love is to be liked.

Some achieve a lot, get good grades and do great things. Because their substitute for self-love is to be admired.

Some rebel, get angry, disobey and reject everyone. Because their substitute to be loved is to receive attention.

Some become victims of abuse. (Read my example later.)

As I said, I expressed my neediness in the first way — by becoming a good guy. All these years, people thought I was such a loving person. (I fooled you, didn't I?)

But in reality, I wasn't giving love; I was *buying* love.

I wasn't giving love; I was giving neediness. *Because you can only give what is in your heart.*

Boy, was I miserable!

Because I lacked self-love, it was impossible to have a healthy, happy, relationship with others.

Let me give you an extreme example...

Chapter 25

The Need to Be Needed

*Wounds from a friend are better
than many kisses from an enemy.*

— Proverbs 27:6

Angela is married to her college sweetheart Marty.
But Marty is an alcoholic.

A few times a month, he comes home very drunk and beats Angela. He gives her a black eye. Slaps on the face. Bruises on the arm.

When he wakes up, he doesn't even remember what he did.

Marty kneels down before a battered Angela and asks for forgiveness. He's totally repentant and sobs like a baby.

But one or two weeks after, he gets drunk and beats her up again. This insanity has been going on for seven years.

Many friends have told Angela to leave Marty. And she has. But Marty would find her and beg her to return. And out of love, she would return home — only to be beaten again.

But is it really out of love?

No. It's neediness.

Specifically, the need to be needed.

Like me, Angela's heart is filled with neediness, begging for love. Because she can't find love, she mistakes

being needed as love. And she finds it in her sick husband.

Angela's neediness attracted Marty's neediness. Two needy people needing each other. It was the perfect recipe for an unhappy marriage. (I'll talk more about this later.)

I talked to Angela.

I told her the harsh truth, "You don't really love your husband."

"How could you say that?" she said, "That's why I've stuck with him..."

"If you really loved him, and not needed him, you would have run away from him a long time ago and never gone near him *until* he stopped drinking for at least 6 to 12 months. He doesn't need gentle love. He needs tough love. Are you willing to give that?"

She closed her eyes and wept.

The Problem of the Needy Heart

I'm going to expose my age again.

Remember this song by Basil Valdez? *"It's your smile, your face, your lips that I miss; your sweet little eyes that stare at me and make me say, I'm with you through all the way, 'Cause it's you, who fills the emptiness in me."*

Lovely song. But here's what I learned about relationships: An empty heart can only give emptiness. And emptiness is another word for neediness.

Have you heard this song by Barry Manilow? *"You know I can't smile without you, I can't smile without You, I can't laugh and I can't sing, I'm findin' it hard to do anything..."*

I'd be scared if I have a friend who can't smile without me.

I'd be scared if I have kids who can't smile without me.

I'd be scared if I have a wife who can't smile without me.

Or have you heard this one by Mariah Carey? "*I can't live if living is without you, I can't live, I can't live anymore.*"

Beautiful song. But if you're looking for a spouse, I strongly urge you to look for someone who can actually live without you — but who will *choose* to live with you — not because he needs you, but because he loves you.

But this isn't that easy. Again, I must warn you: *Neediness attracts neediness*. A needy heart is naturally attracted to another needy heart. The reason is obvious. If you can't get love, might as well get its counterfeit: neediness.

That's why some women are jerk magnets. They're attracted to bad guys because they need to be needed.

The only solution? Replace neediness with self-love.

Because you can only have healthy relationships if you have healthy self-love.

Chapter 26

Five Ways of Filling Your Heart with Self-Love

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
— Psalms 139:14*

Let me share with you five powerful ways of how to fill your heart with self-love. I've tried them. They work marvelously.

Many relationships are suffering right now because of neediness. When you learn to love yourself, your relationships will be freed from neediness. And your relationships with them become so much happier.

But I must warn you: Five is a big number. You won't remember them all. What I want you to do is choose one thing that you believe God wants you to do today. Just one!

Here they are:

1. Believe in your own worthiness.
2. Fulfill your dreams.
3. Care for your needs.
4. Relate with the right God.
5. Relate with the right people.

Step 1: Believe in Your Worthiness

Do this for me.

Place your hands over your chest and say this out loud, "I'm a wonderful human being. I'm a beautiful person. I'm blessed. I'm equipped. I'm anointed. I'm talented. I'm loved. I'm prosperous. I'm generous. I'm wealthy in every way."

Do you feel better?

Then say these statements twice a day, once in the morning and once before you sleep at night.

Personally, I had to change my constant question in my mind. Instead of asking, "What's wrong with me?" I had to start asking, "What's right about me?"

Get a piece of paper and answer that question. Write whatever comes to mind. The longer the list, the better!

Second, go to a loved one — and ask her, "What's right about me? What's great about me? What's wonderful about me?"

Write down her answers.

And echo the Psalms when it says, "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*"

When you appreciate your worth, it'll be much easier to appreciate the worth of others. And you'll find your relationships growing in love.

Step 2: Fulfill Your Dreams

This actually saved me.

I wasn't very good with Step 1, "Believe in Your Worthiness."

But by God's grace, I discovered my mission early in life. I gave my first talk as a 13-year-old boy and it changed my life. I suddenly knew my sacred mission.

I learned to dream about my ministry a long time ago.

But I had a hard time dreaming about my dreams — like what house I wanted to live in and how much money I wanted to earn or what car I wanted to drive. Because I felt this would be selfish. Shouldn't my whole life be for God alone?

But years later, I learned that to honor those dreams in my heart was to honor God who gave me those dreams.

I began to love myself by working on fulfilling my dreams.

Do yourself a big favor. First, know your dreams. Second, go and reach for your dreams.

Why will this bless your relationships? Because once you honor your dreams, you'll be able to honor the dreams of others, too. You'll encourage people in your life to grow.

Step 3: Care for Your Needs

My wife calls me a low-maintenance husband.

I don't need much to be happy.

A part of that is good. But a part of that comes from my past. For years, I felt guilty if I wanted something. Like it was a bad thing. I had to wrestle with that, too.

Later on, I learned to be aware of my needs and meet them generously.

One of my strongest needs is to be quiet, to be alone, to read a book, to reflect. So I give that to myself as often as I can.

My other need is to exercise regularly.

And when I'm exhausted, I get a massage. My wife knows that if I want to feel loved, she'll give me a foot massage. It beats a delicious casserole anytime.

And about money. There was a time when I didn't like spending for myself. I could spend money as long as it's for God or for others. But I've always had a hard time spending for my own needs.

Again, I felt selfish if I did.

Hey, perhaps this isn't your problem. I know others who come from the opposite direction. All they do is spend for themselves and don't give to God or others. Well, I believe God will pull you towards my direction. And we'll meet somewhere in the middle!

But slowly, I'm learning. Last month, I bought a nice pair of headphones for myself. It was the noise-canceling kind, great when you want to sleep in airplanes. I still couldn't buy the expensive brand that costs P5,000. So I just bought the cheap brand worth P800. But still, I felt wonderful.

Being a simple person, I still have very few needs. But those needs, I try to honor whenever I can.

Go ahead. Write your own needs on a piece of paper. And see how you can honor them, too.

Again, this simple act will bless your relationships because you can now serve people's needs with a heart full of love, not neediness.

Step 4: Relate to the Right Image of God

I've met people whose God is always angry and condemning. If you're one of them, I'm sorry but prayer won't help. Because you're praying to the wrong God.

Fix your picture of God.

Read books on God's love. Talk to spiritual people who have the right image of God. Capture this vision.

And allow that God to love you.

Let Him whisper to your heart that you're more wonderful than you can ever imagine.

This is one of the goals of the *GodWhispersClub*. If you're not yet subscribed, log on to **www.GodWhispersClub.com**. You'll get a *GodWhispers* email twice a week. It's free.

When you change your image of God, your relationships with others will change by leaps and bounds because you become like the God that you worship. If you worship a judgmental God, you'll be judgmental, too. But if you start worshiping a God of great compassion and love, you'll (slowly) be like Him, too.

Step 5: Relate to the Right People

Remember: *Needy people attract needy people.*

So be careful with the people who enter into your life.

If you're not careful, you may end up with an inappropriate number of what many authors call "emotional vampires." These are people who suck out your love and joy. There are many kinds of emotional vampires: The demanding. The arrogant and the self-righteous. The bitter. The unfaithful. The manipulative. Addicts. Parasites. Complainers. Critics.

Imagine your life as a three-seater couch.

Because you only have 24 hours a day, there's a limit to the people who you can hang out with — in the same way that there are a limited number of people who can sit on that couch.

If the spaces are filled, no one else can sit. Your life isn't like Facebook where you can accommodate 5,000 friends.

Here's my point: If you're always hanging out with emotional vampires who suck out your love, you won't have time to hang out with great, nourishing and inspiring people who can give you love.

Look, I'm not saying you should get rid of your toxic spouse or toxic mother. I'm not saying you shouldn't spend time with needy people. Love them! Remember that Jesus spent time with tax collectors, prostitutes and drunkards, reaching out to them in love. That was His main ministry. But He balanced this by spending time with His disciples and with His Father, too.

So increase your time with people whose hearts aren't filled with neediness but love. When you surround yourself with the right people, you fill your heart with love, too. So look for mentors, teachers and coaches who can bless you.

It could even be a virtual mentor.

For example, by reading my *Soulfood Letter* each week, you're "spending time" with me. You've made me a virtual mentor. (I'm happy to be of service to you.)

Proverbs 13:20 says, "*Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm.*"

Choose One Action from God

Now that you've read all five actions, pick one.

Not two, or three, or four, or five.

Just one assignment from God for today.

1. Believe in your own worthiness.
2. Fulfill your dreams.
3. Care for your needs.
4. Relate with the right God.
5. Relate with the right people.

Done?

Great.

But hey, whatever you chose is still pretty broad.

Write down what *one specific action* you can do today.

Love yourself, my friend.

Assignment: Thank God for Who You Are

Use the *Relationship Reborn* card #6.

Be grateful for how God made you. Write down your core gifts. Write down what's great about you.

Insert it in your Bible or on your desk or board.

Read it often. Celebrate who you are!

Key 7: Celebration

Happy Relationships Throw More Parties

Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.
— Victor Borge

*Stop worrying about the potholes in the road
and celebrate the journey!*
— Barbara Hoffman

“Love each other as I have loved you.”
— John 5:12

Chapter 27

What We're All Really Looking For

What everyone wants from life is continuous and genuine happiness.

— Baruch Spinoza

Guy 1: Cecilia is so beautiful.

Guy 2: Oh yes. She looks like Demi Moore in *Ghost*.

(Note: This conversation happened centuries ago.)

Guy 1: If given a chance, would you want to marry her?

Guy 2: Uh... no, not really.

Guy 1: Why not?

Guy 2: How do I put it? Cecilia's uh... not a happy person.

Guy 1: You noticed that, too?

Guy 2: She's gloomy. She's a negative person. She may be beautiful but I don't want to live with a negative person for the rest of my life.

Guy 1: So unlike Stella.

Guy 2: Now there's a cheerful girl. I really like her. So kind. So friendly. Always has a lovely smile.

Guy 1: She's not as beautiful as Demi Moore.

Guy 2: But she's the kind of woman I'll marry.

Guy 1: What? You have a crush on her, too?

Guy 2: Hey, fall in line, bro.

This conversation actually happened some 20 years ago between two of my single friends. In fact, we were all single. And believe me, Stella was like a guy magnet. Five of my friends had a crush on her.

Except for me, of course. I was immune to crushes. Because I looked at all females the way I looked at common furniture. Because my heart was focused on God alone. (And my nose is getting longer right this minute.)

Here's a lesson for single people: I've learned that guys may lust after physical beauty, but when it comes to marriage, they'll look deeper. One of the most important things they'll look for is a happy woman.

Why? Because a guy knows that one of his roles is to make his wife happy. If he marries a happy woman, his job will be so much easier.

Because at the end of the day, we all want happiness.

Chapter 28

Four Ways to Make Your Homes Happy

*The trick is in what one emphasizes.
We either make ourselves miserable,
or we make ourselves happy.
The amount of work is the same.*
— Carlos Castañeda

After one of my talks, a very anxious mother approached me and asked, “Bo, can you help me? I have a problem with my 18-year-old daughter. She’s like a bed spacer in our house. She goes home only to sleep. She’s always with her friends...”

I had very little time to talk to her so I took my best shot. I asked her, “Is there happiness at home?”

Here’s my belief. I believe kids will love to go home if there’s love in the home.

Have you heard that great old song from 1964? (For your information, I didn’t hear the original version. I heard this song in a revival in *American Idol*.)

A chair is still a chair even when there’s no one sitting there. But a chair is not a house, and a house is not a home, when there’s no one there, to hold you tight, and no one there, that you can kiss good night.

Friend, is there happiness in your home?

I've noticed that the happiest relationships have a *rhythm of celebration*. In other words, they throw parties.

I don't mean a party with balloons and clowns (though that would be great too), but putting a "party spirit" in your relationship.

I've got four fantastic suggestions.

1. Make the Family Meal a Party

I know of a man who has 11 children.

When he goes home from work, he does a very important ritual before entering his front door. He mentally unloads all his problems at the front porch. Because his kids need a happy dad.

When he enters the door, he shouts, "Hi, kids!" And 11 kids rush to him to give him a hug. He then wrestles them on the floor and they play together.

And when mealtime comes, he makes everyone laugh. He inspires everyone with his stories.

Alas, the typical family meal isn't like this.

Jack and Jill Went Up the Hill

The typical family meal is where parents hold court and pass judgments and vent anger.

Let me give you an example.

The father turns to his eldest son, Jack, and asks, "Pass the rice. By the way, how was your exam this

morning?" He doesn't allow him to answer. He answers for him, "I won't be surprised if you got a zero. Because I don't see you studying. The good news is that we can save money because we can sell your schoolbooks next year as brand new!"

He then turns to his daughter, Jill, "Pass the gravy. By the way, where were you last night? With your ugly boyfriend again? Can you tell me what planet he comes from? I can accept earrings in the ear. But why does he have earrings on his nose? Is he a cow?"

He then turns to his youngest daughter, Hill. (You know, *Jack and Jill went up the hill!*) "Pass the salt. And you, were you born with a telephone in your hand? You were already with your obnoxious friends in school, why do you have to spend three more hours talking to them on the phone?"

And finally, it's the youngest son's turn, Pail. (OK, they really like this nursery rhyme.) "Pass the cake. And you, what did you do today aside from wasting your time playing those crappy video games? And are you deaf? Your music is either very loud or extremely loud. Go to the doctor and have your ears checked!"

No wonder the family meal is an endangered species. Parents, please. Make your meals happy!

Here's a rule you should write on stone: *Ban all sermons when you're around the table.* Instead, feed your children with dishes of laughter, platefuls of inspiration and trays of encouragement. Make every family meal a joyful occasion.

2. Hold a Family Night Each Week

My kids love family nights.

If they had it their way, we'll do it every night.

Sometimes, we watch a movie at home with a barrel of popcorn. (According to my son Benedict, a movie without popcorn is a horrific crime.)

Sometimes, we play games together. *Monopoly*, *Charades*, *Pictionary* and *Trivia*.

Sometimes, we all play video games together. Obviously, the kids always win and the parents lose. But that's OK. Instead of banning video games from our kids, we enter into their digital worlds. Doing so enables us to guide them against violent games.

Sometimes, we go to a bookstore and eat ice cream.

I believe the weekly family night is a mini-party that you should never miss. Believe me, when you're old and grey (or old and bald), you'll look back at these times and thank God you had them!

3. Weekly Dates with Each Family Member

I date my wife each week.

I consider that a mini-party, too.

Years ago, we had very little money.

So we had dates in our garage.

Sometimes, we took a quiet walk in our neighborhood.

One day, I thought of something crazy. We ate at home, dressed up really well then went to a five-star hotel. We entered the hotel like we were millionaires. No

one knew we had very little money in our pockets. And confidently, I ordered a glass of Coke. And for two solid hours, we enjoyed the violin music and beautiful ambiance — all the while sipping our Coke very slowly.

I date my kids each week, too. Those are mini-parties. Sometimes, it's just donuts. Other times, we walk around a mall. Other times, we play a game together. The key is to make it fun.

I also date my mother every other week. This is such a simple thing but it means the world to her.

I have regular dates with my friends, too. Our spiritual community, *Light of Jesus*, is organized around small groups called *Caring Groups* that meet weekly. Amazingly, I have six Caring Groups, so my weeks are pretty busy having fun times with my many friends.

One last suggestion...

4. Annual Family Celebrations

Create your own family's "liturgical calendar."

Sit down and block off the most important dates of the year.

For example, plan everyone's birthdays.

Many times, it's very spontaneous. "Oh, it's your birthday today? Let's have dinner." So why not plan a bit more? Go camping in the backyard, or visit an orphanage, or invite your child's friends for a sleepover, or go out and have a mini-vacation together.

Mark off also your wedding anniversary, Valentine's, Mother's Day, Father's Day and Grandparents' Day.

One Valentine's day, I did something I cherish to this

day. I set up two chairs and a little wooden table in our backyard. I scattered candles all over the grass, dressed in a coat and tie and brought out my CD player to play Kenny G romantic music. I then ordered pizza. Finally, I got my guitar and sang an original song I wrote for my wife that day...

Ikaw ang awit ng buhay, Ang tinig ng langit (You are the song of life, heaven's tune)

Ikaw ang himig at kulay, Ng pusong nagmamahal sa iyo (You are melody and color to the heart that loves you)

Refrain:

Biyayang galing sa taas, Anghel sa lupa'y naglalakad (Heaven's blessing, angel who walks the earth)

Ikaw ang awit ng puso ko! (You are the song of my heart)

That happened a long time ago, but I still remember my wife's tears that special night.

Look at the big Feasts of your faith — Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc. Example: During the entire Advent season, we light the Advent wreath as a family for four weeks straight before Christmas.

Other important days: First day in school. Last day in school. Graduation. First job of the new graduate. It could be Jimbo, the pet dog, giving birth to four puppies.

Hey, if there's a reason to celebrate, throw a party!

Chapter 29

Three Ingredients for Throwing Parties

*Most people are about as happy
as they make up their minds to be.*

— Abraham Lincoln

Let me share three things to make these parties work.

Ingredient #1: Be Thankful

Someone might say, “But Bo, I’m a melancholic person. I’m not like you. I’m the loner and shy type. I really don’t like this party spirit thing.”

Excuse me, but I’m melancholic, too.

Every psychological test I’ve taken confirms without a shadow of a doubt that I’m melancholic. Remember that there are four personality types: melancholic (that’s me), sanguine (bubbly, cheerful types), choleric (those with cholera) and phlegmatic (those with lots of phlegm).

Just kidding.

I love being alone. I’d rather be quiet than talk. (Honest!) But I had to adjust. I had to do things that weren’t natural to my personality.

Here's the truth: Celebrating your relationships doesn't depend on having a bubbly or cheerful personality. *It depends on your depth of gratitude.* How thankful are you?

You throw a party because you're grateful to the person for being there in your life.

If you believe that the people in your life are your greatest gifts from God, then you throw parties often to thank them.

Even if we know it's a lot of hard work.

Ingredient #2: Hard Work

Have you ever prepared for a birthday party before? It's always hard work.

But who said love isn't hard work? As I said before, love is about dirty hands, not just beating hearts.

Finally, the third ingredient is important, too.

Ingredient #3: Creativity

Throwing parties requires some creativity.

Do you want to be more creative?

Copy. Get inspiration from others. It's the secret of the greatest artists in the world: Leonardo de Vinci, Michelangelo, Picasso, Rembrandt, Bo Sanchez, etc.

You don't know how to express your love in a playful way?

Ask others what they do. Do some research.

Through the years, I've given many cards to my wife. Let me share with you two of them today. You'll notice that I'm not very original. I stole all these from various sources...

Card #1

I framed this card. I basically got the text from an email I received. Probably spam. Not much originality. But she loved it so much, it's still on her bedside table after all these years.

My Dearest Valentine,
You are the... apple of my eye, **mango of my pie**, *palaman of my tinapay*, **keso of my monay**, teeth of my *suklay*, **fingers on my kamay**, blood in my *atay*, **sala of my bahay**, foundation of my *tulay*, **seeds of my palay**, best clothes in my *ukay-ukay*, **calcium in my kalansay**, *calamansi* on my siomai, **knot on my tie**, *toyo* on my kuchay, **vitamins in my gulay**, stars of my sky, **sand of my Boracay**, beauty of my Brunei, **highlands of my Tagaytay**, mole on my *Ate Guy*, **baba of my Ai-Ai**, spinach of my Popeye, **sizzle when I fry**, wind when I *paypay*, **tungkod when I'm pilay**, feeling when I'm high, **shoulder when I cry**, wings when I fly, **prize when I vie**, cure to my "ARAY!", **my honey even after I die...**

From your one and only,
HAPPYVALENTAY!

Card #2

Here's my final example.

Again, I stole the photos from the Internet but I edited the text to fit my purpose.

A PSYCHOLOGY TEST TO MEASURE LOVE

It has already been proven that someone in love has a keener sense of observation. His mind is more alert, his perception more accurate. Doctors suggest that this is so because heightened emotions of love cause blood circulation to flow more freely in the right hemisphere of the brain. Today, you will be shown a photo of two almost identical dolphins. Here's the test: *You can now measure whether a person is in love by the number of slight differences he sees between the two dolphins.* The more differences you see, the more in love you are. Turn this paper now and count the many differences you can see between the two dolphins — and find out how in love you really are...



(By the way, I took the test and realized how insanely I'm in love with you. Love, your husband.)

Let me end with the story of the Prodigal Son.

When the “bad” son came home, his father threw a party. The son wanted to beg for forgiveness but the father wasn’t even listening. Instead, he said, *“Hurry! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast!”*

God loves parties.

And God loves to throw a party to people who don’t deserve a party. If you’re reading this thinking of your sins, wondering if God still loves you, let me tell you: God is throwing a party of love for you right now. He loves you more than you can imagine.

Receive His love today.

And learn to throw more parties in your life.

Your relationships need them badly.

Assignment: Celebrate with God

Live a life of celebration.

Especially in your relationship with God.

God invented joy. God invented celebrations. God invented parties. So learn from Him.

Use *Relationship Reborn* card #7 and pray the prayer on it.

Pray it as often as you want to.

Epilogue:

Feel at Home

*I love you not only for what you are,
but for what I am when I am with you.
I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,
but for what you are making of me.
I love you for the part of me that you bring out.*
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning

One day, while preaching in Los Angeles, a Filipino-American came up to me and asked, “Bo, were you raised in the US? You speak English without a Filipino accent.”

I said, “I lived in Chicago for the last 15 years.”

He was surprised. “Really? I’ve been reading your books for years now. You never mentioned that.”

“And from my home in Chicago, I would go to New York very often.”

“Is that right?”

I smiled, “And from New York, I’d walk just five minutes to Edsa and 10 minutes to Aurora Boulevard...”

He started laughing.

“*Lumaki po ako sa Cubao*” (*I grew up in Cubao*), I said. “I lived in Chicago Street for 15 years, which is right beside New York Street.” (Explanation to my foreign readers: The streets in our area are named after American cities.)

That was my home for many years.

But the older I get, the more I realize that “home”

isn't really tied down to a geographical place. Home isn't defined by a particular spot on planet Earth.

Over the years, I've been to more than 30 countries. I've realized that I can feel at home in any country in the world. Because home is first of all a feeling of belonging.

Because home is defined by my relationships.

Home is defined by love!

In fact, you won't like the place you were born in if you don't have loving relationships there.

Wherever you are, create your home now.

Work on yourself.

Work on your family.

Work on your relationships.

Feel at home.

May your dreams come true,



Bo Sanchez

P.S. Bless Your Family! Get my audio and video course, *Relationship Reborn*, which was the basis of this book. This course has blessed thousands of families already. It's your turn. *Relationship Reborn* is now a powerful Seminar-in-a-Box that will bless your life. Listen to it or watch it in the comforts of your home. I know it'll create miracles for you and your family. For more details, go to **www.RelationshipReborn.com** now.

P.S.2 Find an Ongoing Source for Your Spiritual Needs.

Get my FREE *Soulfood Letter* every week. Get also my FREE E-book, *How to Know If Your Dreams Are God's Dreams*. Log on to **www.BoSanchez.ph** now.



By Joining the Kerygma Family, You Will Receive a Mountain of Blessings for Your Spiritual Life

Here's what will happen to you when you join the Kerygma Family:

1. You'll receive daily Bible reflections for your spiritual growth.
2. Each month, you'll get to read an online copy of Kerygma, the #1 Catholic inspirational magazine in the Philippines.
3. You'll belong to a borderless, global, non-physical community spread all over the world connected through prayer and the desire for personal growth.
4. You shall have the special privilege of supporting this expansive work of the Lord (totally optional!), which includes Anawim, a ministry for the poorest of the poor, the abandoned elderly; Shepherd's Voice, a media ministry that uses TV, radio, print and the Internet to broadcast God's love to spiritually hungry people worldwide.
5. You and your intentions shall be included in our intercession team's prayer.



The
KERYGMA
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To join the KerygmaFamily,
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Don't delay!

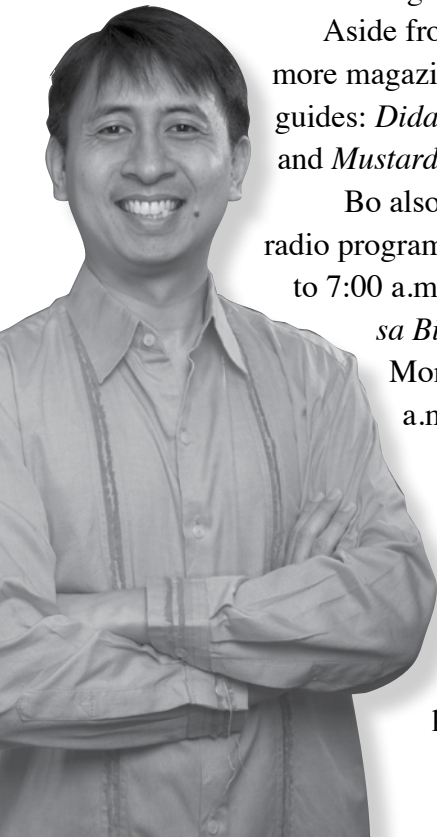
About the Author

Bo Sanchez started preaching at the age of 13 and wrote his first book at the age of 20. He is the publisher and main writer of *Kerygma*, the number one inspirational magazine in the Philippines. Today, he continues to preach to millions worldwide. And for years now, his inspirational books have not left the top 10 list of bestselling books in the country. His powerful books include, among others, *You Can Make Your Life Beautiful*, *How to Be Really, Really, Really Happy*, *You Have the Power to Create Love*, *Fill Your Life with Miracles*, *Simplify and Live the Good Life*, *Simplify and Create Abundance*, and *Your Past Does Not Define Your Future*. (They're also available through our online store. Log on to **www.shepherdsvoice.com.ph**.)

Aside from *Kerygma* magazine, he publishes six more magazines, devotionals and Bible reflection guides: *Didache*, *Gabay*, *Companion*, *Sabbath*, *FiSH* and *Mustard*. All of them are top selling periodicals.

Bo also has a weekly TV show and a daily radio program. *Kerygma TV* airs every Sunday, 6:00 to 7:00 a.m., on TV 5. His radio program, *Gabay sa Biblia sa Radyo*, is on Radyo Veritas, Monday through Saturday at 5:00 to 5:30 a.m. and on Sundays at 8:00 to 9:00 a.m.

He founded many organizations, such as Anawim, a special home for the abandoned elderly (for more information, log on to **www.anawim.com.ph**), and Shepherd's Voice Publications, a media ministry that publishes the most widely read Catholic



literature in the country. He also founded the Light of Jesus Family and the Light of Jesus Counseling Center. A firm believer in working with others, he has partnered with Gawad Kalinga and other groups that work for the poorest of the poor. He has also formed the KerygmaFamily, a borderless, international, non-physical community. All over the world, people are signing up as members of this virtual community — where they receive a mountain of great stuff for their spiritual and personal growth. (Log on to **www.kerygmfamily.com**.)

Privately, Bo is a micro-entrepreneur. He engages in small businesses not only for his family's needs and for his various projects, but also from his firm belief that one of the most important solutions to his country's economic problems is to raise more micro-entrepreneurs among his countrymen. He frequently teaches and writes about financial literacy, believing that our poverty is hugely a product of people's very low financial I.Q. on subjects such as debt management, saving, investing and business.

In another endeavor he's very passionate about, Bo started the Catholic Filipino Academy to help parents who wish to teach their children at home. (Log on to **www.bosanchez.ph**.)

But above all these, Bo believes that his first call from God is to be a loving husband to his wife, Marowe, and a devoted father to his sons Benedict and Francis. They live in Manila, Philippines.

Each month, Bo writes *The Bo Sanchez Soulfood Letter* and emails it to tens of thousands of people, inspiring them to live fantastic lives and connecting them to Bo's ministry. It is absolutely FREE. To subscribe, log on to **www.bosanchez.ph** or call up (+632) 725-9999 or 411-7874.

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Your Family Needs Renewal — or It Dies. Here’s the Solution.

For years, Bo’s readers (and fans) have been asking him to write a book on family life.

“Please, Bo, we need it badly!” they’d say.

But somehow, after 18 bestselling books, he never felt it was the right time to write a book on family life.

Until now.

Explaining the long delay, he writes, “Today, I feel I have the credibility. I’m no longer speaking out of thin air. I’m not speaking from lofty theories but from my firsthand, face-to-face, belly-to-belly, nitty-gritty, daily grind of being married to my beautiful wife of 12 years and raising two of the greatest boys on the planet. And what have I learned? That family life is like pushing a luggage cart overflowing with three suitcases and four balikbayan boxes, complete with a squeaky left wheel, up a steep ramp in the old Manila International Airport.”

With incredible depth, humor and simplicity, you’ll be swept away by Bo’s powerful message in this book.

Get ready to be very blessed!



Bo and Marowe renewing their marriage vows with their happy family.

