# Tending the Bond for Life

LOVE AS A LIVING THING

> *You don't finish a marriage like a house.*
> *You keep it alive like a fire.*

A secure bond is not a certificate you earn once. It is a living thing with a metabolism. It needs regular feeding (reaches made and caught, rituals kept, the story retold, bodies drawn close), and when it is fed it can stand up to remarkable storms. Neglected, even a strong bond thins out. That is not a threat. It is just how love works, and the good news is that living things respond to care.

Life will keep redealing the cards. Children arriving and leaving, careers rising and crashing, bodies changing, parents aging, losses you can't picture yet. Each new season presses on the bond in a new place and asks the old question in a new voice: are you there for me, here too, in this? Couples who last don't answer once. They keep answering.

The whole thing fits in a few lines. Know the dance and stop the music together. Find the soft feeling under the loud one and say it. Reach instead of protest. Catch instead of fix. Witness the big hurts. Keep the rituals. Tell the story with the rescue in it. And when the old song plays, and it will, reach for each other sooner than last time. Then keep doing that for the rest of your lives.

### THE SEASONAL CHECK-IN

1. Set a recurring date, each season or each anniversary, for a State of the Bond hour.
2. Ask each other: “How reachable have I felt lately? What have you needed more of?”
3. Revisit one handout from this series that fits the current season, together.
4. Name what this season is pressing on, and what the bond needs because of it.
5. End every check-in the same way: gratitude, one specific memory, and the long hug.

### WHEN IT’S HARD

If life gets loud and the tending lapses for months, skip the guilt spiral. It only delays the return. Living things don't need perfect care. They need care that comes back. A bond that gets fed again grows again. Come back to the fire. It remembers you.

### TO SIT WITH

*What season is your bond in right now? What does this season need from each of you?*

*Fifty years from now, what do you hope it will have felt like to be loved by you?*

### OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

Dr. Mark Gregory Karris