

With equal parts fear, excitement, and joy, I was a bundle of nerves as I walked down the aisle of the church. Forty-five years ago today, on Saturday, December 16, 1972, I married Doug Davis. When we turned to walk down the aisle as husband and wife, Doug reached for my hand. I whispered to him, “Don’t ever let go.” Hmm...what a moment.

When he was visiting us, our friend from the Ivory Coast, Simon Ojedapo, noticed that whenever Doug and I were walking, we held hands. Walking from the car to church? Holding hands. Walking from parking lot to grocery store? Holding hands. Walking down the street for exercise? Holding hands. Walking into the stadium to take Simon to his first-ever high school football game? Holding hands. Taking Simon to the mall? Holding hands.

Simon thought it was sweet, because in his culture it is unusual for a husband to walk beside his wife, let alone hold her hand. So when he went home, he told his wife, Deborah, about us always holding hands. Simon said that he felt that a show of such love was a God-honoring love, and from that moment on he began to hold Deborah’s hand when they were walking together. Soon, it caught on to the people in their church, and husbands began holding their wives hands.

Five years later, Simon told us that there is now an entire group of Cote d’Ivoire husbands and wives holding hands! He explained that it all started when he observed Doug and me holding hands, he could see our love for Christ and our mutual love for each other. He and Deborah wanted the same. Doug and I were touched by what he said, and humbled that on the other side of the world, husbands and wives are now holding hands with each other because of what someone saw us do. It’s amazing to think how God can use such a simple ordinary gesture as reaching for the hand of the one you love to influence French-speaking Christians in a church on the coast of Africa!

Of course, we would never admit to Simon that sometimes we reach for each other’s hand, not in affection, but to keep each other from falling down! (I’ll hunt you down if you tell Simon our secret!)

Is holding hands one of the reasons we’re still married after forty-five years? I think it just might be.

We hold hands through the bad times in order to support and encourage each other. We’re never alone as long as our hands link us together. We hold hands through the good times, for rejoicing is so much more fun when someone squeezes your hand in shared joy. We hold hands in the dark, to keep connected to each other. We hold hands through it all. As long as we are holding hands, our lives are being held together.

Please, right now, take hold of the hand of the one you love. Lean over and whisper, “Don’t ever let go.”