No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.

Love cares more for others than for self.

Love doesn’t want what it doesn’t have.

Love doesn’t strut.

Doesn’t have a swelled head.

Doesn’t force itself on others.

Isn’t always “me first.”

Doesn’t fly off the handle.

Doesn’t keep score of the sins of others.

Doesn’t revel when others grovel.

Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth.

Puts up with anything.

Trusts God always.

Always looks for the best.

Never looks back.

But keeps going to the end.

Love never dies…

Trust steadfastly, in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly.†

Signed, God

The Author of Love

† 1 Corinthians 13:3-8, 13 The Message
I DO
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
This test is to assist you in locating your emotional level in whatever state you are in. It will give you the ability to assess your feelings, in hopes to determine how you arrived at that state, so that you can learn how to maintain stability and balance in your emotions. Check all of the adjectives that describe how you feel now. You can retake the test as you or your relationships progress or change. Results on page 1.

1. a.) Angry
2. a.) Thankful
3. a.) Appreciated
4. a.) Unhappy
5. a.) Free
6. a.) Rejected
7. a.) Confident
8. a.) Unattractive
9. a.) Inadequate
10. a.) Under-achieved
11. a.) Helpless
12. a.) Overwhelmed
13. a.) Inspired
14. a.) defensive
15. a.) Trusting
16. a.) Terrible
17. a.) Happy
18. a.) Unappreciated
19. a.) Assured
20. a.) Discouraged
21. a.) Certain
22. a.) Irritated
23. a.) Uncomfortable
24. a.) Calm
25. a.) Defeated
26. a.) Bored
27. a.) Unsettled
28. a.) Aggravated
29. a.) Uncertain
30. a.) Unappreciated
31. a.) Assured
32. a.) Discouraged
33. a.) Certain
34. a.) Irritated
35. a.) Uncomfortable
36. a.) Calm
37. a.) Defeated
38. a.) Bored
39. a.) Unsettled
40. a.) Aggravated
41. a.) Uncertain
42. a.) Unappreciated
43. a.) Assured
44. a.) Discouraged
45. a.) Certain
46. a.) Irritated

b.) At peace
b.) Neglected
b.) Satisfied
b.) Regretful
b.) Normal
b.) Impressionable
b.) Average
b.) Talented
b.) Routine
b.) Preoccupied
b.) Agitated
b.) At peace
b.) Neglected
b.) Satisfied
b.) Regretful
b.) Normal
b.) Impressionable
b.) Average
b.) Talented
b.) Routine
b.) Preoccupied
b.) Agitated
In the boxes at the top, list your relationships in chronological order, beginning with the earliest in the first box. List the current or most recent relationship in the last box. After listing each partner, answer the questions and record your answers under the columns beneath that partner’s name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of relationship</th>
<th>Was commitment ever established and at what point in the relationship?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of Commitment (sexual partner, dating, committed relationship, engaged, married)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of security in the relationship?</td>
<td>Level of intimacy in the relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was your friends before the romance or intimacy? How long?</td>
<td>Frequency of conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there abuse in the relationship?</td>
<td>What attracted you to the person? Similarities, differences, traits, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What needs did the partner meet?</td>
<td>Did not meet?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was the relationship ended?</td>
<td>What kept you in the relationship?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What was your role/how did you contribute to the break-up?</td>
<td>Is the partner similar to your father or mother?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Were your relationships similar or different from your parent’s relationships?</td>
<td>How much did you know about the person before becoming intimate with them?</td>
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<tr>
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Pastoring in Iraq

One word: awesome! You know, America portrays soldiers as heroes and that’s OK, but what the media doesn’t realize is that heroes have problems too. We are people just like everyone else and we have hurts, disappointments and baggage. There are people who have been sexually, mentally, physically, emotionally and verbally abused—everything under the sun here in our military and yet these people are called upon to fight our wars in the midst of all of that. So we have issues and need deliverance, too, and that is why God has me here. We have baptisms over here in the middle of the desert; we are having church in the middle of a Muslim country! Pastoring is different here though. It was really weird the first time I went to church here in Iraq when I had my M16 rifle in one hand and my Bible in the other, but it’s all good. I remember one time we got attacked right in the middle of Bible study. The Lord was using me to teach at the time and we were getting bombed by mortars right outside the chapel, but we were in a covered building and covered in His canopy of protection. After the sirens went out we just continued the Bible study like nothing happened, Praise God! Just keep on keepin’ on, but that has a different meaning over here.

Life as a Single Man

I’m 30 now and still a virgin, no wife yet but I know she is coming, Praise God! I’m asked quite often if I’m going to be married. You know, it’s funny. I’m half way across the world, fighting the war on terror, co-pastoring here, and when I get e-mails or calls from my closest friends, you would think they would ask me what is “God doing in your life? How’s your prayer life? What’s the vision God has given you? Are you walking in it? But almost every time the first question they ask is: ‘Have you found Mrs. Bachota yet?’” People are very surprised when they find out how much I love the Lord and that I’m living holy. Last year, while pastoring the Gospel service, one of the Elders complimented me by saying “Brother, you encourage me because it’s good to see a brother in Christ NOT chasing a skirt.” Now, don’t get me wrong, it was a good compliment, but if it’s good to see, then why aren’t more brothers doing it? Are all the brothers in the church chasing skirts? And if so, what are we really saying? Why are we surprised in the body of Christ when people are living holy? When has holiness become the exception in church and sin the norm? Shouldn’t holiness be the norm and sin the exception? Through Jesus we have been made dead to sin, so if we are dead to it, then ultimately through Jesus Christ we can master it. Is that to much to ask? Well Sis, let me tell you, it’s not; it is our reasonable service. It’s good to know there’s a remnant out there that feels like I do. I can honestly say I really love the Lord, Praise God! But it wasn’t always that way because this is a far cry from how I grew up. My church upbringing was pretty much non-existent. I lived in a little town called Equinunk, Pennsylvania. Never heard of it? It’s in the middle of nowhere! Growing up we had free reign to do whatever: sex, drugs, alcohol, whatever. My house became the local motel for the high school kids. There’s nothing worse than coming home from school and seeing another teenager’s semen all over your bed. The rumor in our school was if you want a wild party, sex, drugs, and alcohol, the Bachota house was for you. I can’t even tell you how many teenage boys and girls had sex in our house! But I didn’t plan on being a virgin, heck NO! I wanted to have sex so bad it was stupid. I wanted to prove, especially to my dad, that I was NOT GAY. Not only that, but being from a small town, everybody and their brother knows...
The Back of a Cab

An amazing thing happened to me on November 7th, 1996 in the cab of a military vehicle in Fort Erwin, California. Jesus came into my heart and I have never been the same since. Nobody told me about God in my teenage years from the age of 5 until 19. I never saw a church, but thank God even when I didn’t see God, He saw me! Before I got saved, I had not low self-esteem, but NO self-esteem. I hated my life and even more devastating, I hated myself. I never had a girlfriend or even dated in high school. I was like, ‘Why would you want to date me?’ I’m such a loser, I’m not worthy. There’s an old saying, “If you don’t love you, nobody else will.” But oh, praise God! I got saved and old things are passed away! I mean, God showed me who else will. “But oh, praise God! I got saved and old things are passed away! I mean, God showed me who else will.” When Potiphar’s wife threw herself at him, he said I can’t do this because I cannot sin against my God. His love for God kept him. You notice he didn’t say that she wasn’t fine or that he didn’t want to. He couldn’t do it because of his love for God. His love for God was more important than five minutes of pleasure from her. And just like that Joseph, God’s love causes me to wait. I long for God, I have to have Him. His relationship is the most important relationship in my life!

What color is black?

People think I’m black, sis, it’s too funny. I’m told all the time, ‘Elder you are white on the outside but black on the inside!’ That is a testimony in itself because I never saw a black woman until I was in college; talk about isolated! The only black woman I saw was on TV, like Phylicia Rashad on The Cosby Show. Because of all this, my home town was extremely racist. Some of the things I heard growing up were sick. My momma is the bomb though; I attribute her to why I’m not a racist. Even though I was raised around racism, she taught me how to love all people. Remember the character Big Momma from the movie Soul Food?

I never had a problem with women until after I got saved. That’s when I really had to seek God because sisters were trying to get with me when they weren’t before. But one of the reasons I don’t fall prey to it is because there is power in purity, there is power in holiness. When we sleep with somebody we are not married to we not only give our bodies away but our power, dominion, and the authority Christ gave us on the Cross, as well. Since my virginity is intact, so is the power, dominion and authority. Holiness is what I do and the reason I do it is because I love the Lord. My love for Him effects every decision. That’s why I love the story of Joseph (nice first name I might add.) When Potiphar’s wife threw herself at him, he said I can’t do this because I cannot sin against my God. His love for God kept him. You notice he didn’t say that she wasn’t fine or that he didn’t want to. He couldn’t do it because of his love for God. His love for God was more important than five minutes of pleasure from her. And just like that Joseph, God’s love causes me to wait. I long for God, I have to have Him. His relationship is the most important relationship in my life!

V stands for Power!

I know I’m called to pastor a mega church with all people represented in it. God has already given me the vision and He has great things in store for me, the best is yet to come!

Well, my mom is the white version of Big Momma. She is the kindest, sweetest, most caring woman that I know. Oh, yeah, if you haven’t figured it out yet, I’m a momma’s boy! Could you tell? Smile!

On dating African-American women

Man, how much time do you have? Baby girl, did you say DRAMA? Sweet Jesus, help a white boy! No, I’ve had some ups and downs but they say whatever doesn’t kill you will make you stronger. Well, I found out that is true only if you learn from the experience. Otherwise, we are destined to repeat the same mistakes. With that being said, I wouldn’t trade it for the world. Dating black women, in spite of the drama from time to time, has been wonderful. Some of the drama I faced though was making me pay for another man’s mistakes. I’m like, “I didn’t do it; don’t make me pay for it!” But once I got a picture of real beauty of a black woman, I was like man, look at what I’ve been missing; God you got to catch me up! I told you I’d share my struggles, my own war as a single man, a virgin, man of God, well, we’re talking about it! I really have to go pray, and worship God right now! On a serious note, this is one of the reasons I love praise and worship so much; it keeps me straight and living right…there is nothing like it. If you know you have a weakness in an area, then do something else with your time where you will not be tempted. So for me, going behind the veil and getting into the presence of God, is my something else.

The future

Mrs. Bachota?

A classy, elegant, educated, saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost, beautiful Black woman! One who is mature in the things of God, knows how to get behind the veil, loves my Daddy as much as I do and knows how to minister to me and loves me because she knows what love really is…she has spent time with love Himself, our Daddy! She is a true worshipper, not just a church-goer, but walking as a daughter of God, not just a child of God and boy, there is a difference! Women today know how to do you in every way in the bedroom, but what about all the other things? Sex is good (so I’ve heard), but it won’t keep you. It’s great you know how to do me in all the right sexual positions and rock my world but can you make me feel glad God allowed me to come home after a year in a war zone in Iraq? See, I don’t want just her body, I want her. After the great sex clears, her love for me is the greatest gift she can give me.

The future

Mr. Bachota

I know I’m called to pastor a mega church with all people represented in it. God has already given me the vision and He has great things in store for me, the best is yet to come! The army prepares and finances me for future ministry. God has given me favor with all people of all colors to all cultures and all denominations. Paul says, ‘I become all things to all men so that I may save some.’ I’m going all the way with the Lord; there is no substitute! I learned that it doesn’t matter where we come from, but all that matters is where God is taking us. Where I am is good, but where I’m going is better! We may be products of our past, but we should never be prisoners of it. God is a good God, oh yes, He is indeed!

Elder Joseph T. Bachota Jr. is Staff Sergeant for the U.S. Army and currently is in Iraq fighting the war on terror.

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Ty: Many women around your age are single, lonely and just ready to get married. What has the process been like for you being 30, single AND a virgin?

LM: I would have to say that my desire is the same thing but my focus has been a little different. I have been pretty tied into everything from my purpose to ministry, serving my pastors and church involvement since I was 18 years old. All of those things up until now have really become a lifestyle. Of course the desire is there and the desire will be fulfilled but in the meantime, there is so much going on.

Ty: So, what are some things that a single woman can avoid during this waiting process?

LM: Settling and compromising, getting deterred from that vision, God’s destiny and what He has told you. I would say avoiding the distractions that come along the way. Focus on that vision: if it is a professional goal—that book, that ministry gift, whatever it is, focus on that.

Ty: I think that’s the reason why the waiting season gets scattered, is because of broken focus. You are young, attractive, and a doctor, so you don’t really look like the “virgin type.” Virgins are considered scary; we’ve made virgins look scary and horrific like the lifestyle of holiness is boring.

LM: I can’t stand that whole stigma that if you’re a virgin you’re ugly and you never could get any. Even with my clothing line, we are representing sexual purity with contemporary style and urban class. I’m all about being in Christ and keeping your flavor, keeping your finess – do you and be excited about being you. I’ve just always been the one that whatever I am doing, I just max it out. And even with being 30 years old and a virgin, I said, “Aight, Lord, I want to show people that you can still be fly, love God, be pure and holy and not ugly!” Sexual purity is attractive!

Ty: Can you clarify what a virgin is? Not so much as ‘you gotta do this, you gotta do that’, but I’m talking about those virgins who still allow the touching and heavy petting and the “outercourse.”

LM: I was around 17, 18 years old and I was the virgin who was humpin’ and bumpin’ and grindin’ and getting my freak on at leisure and got skillful at it. Growing up in church and without the Word, it was like we did what we wanted to do. I coined the phrase, “Satisfaction Without Penetration,” because that’s what I was doing. I was getting good and satisfied without penetration. After really developing a relationship with God and getting the Word, I was like, ‘I am way out of bounds, way out of the Will of God.’ God gave me a revelation about my body; that it was His and I wanted to please Him more than getting pleasure. So, for the virgins who say they can’t do “all of that,” which is prevalent in the Body of Christ, I would say it’s going to have to take somebody who has decided that they really want to please God with their life and not live by a bunch of rules and regulations. We are beyond the don’t do this, don’t kill, don’t steal; now we have a relationship with God.

LM: Can’t stand that whole stigma about if you’re a virgin you’re ugly and you never could get any. Virgins are considered lame; you don’t really look like the “virgin type.” Virgins are considered lame; you don’t really look like the “virgin type.” Virgin is a label, but when you talk about sexual purity, that’s a lifestyle, that’s holiness, that’s integrity, that’s who you are no matter where you are and who is around - and that is a whole nutha’ level beyond. “I’m not having sex.” People are having oral sex and saying they are virgins! There are layers and layers there. I encountered a guy who was not at that same level. I allowed myself to slip back even though I had been taught at this point, but I was back in that cycle and I had to break it off. ‘I’m not going to get caught up in this soul tie, I’m not going to get caught up in this bumpin’ and grindin’’, oh, I just had an orgasm, but I’m still a virgin’ routine. That was a cycle I had to break by the power of God and the Holy Spirit and by the Word. Even for me and the kissing thing, kissing is an intimate thing; people make covenant with their mouth and that’s a special thing. Sleepovers are so prominent and they happen big time on college campuses and then they kind of evolve into adulthood; it graduates. God wants us to be led of the Holy Spirit and make up in our minds that we’re going to wait on God’s best.

Dr. Lindsay Marsh is the author of “The Best Sex Of My Life” www.iamworththewait.com
The one thing I know for certain about love is that it is never unsure. When you love someone, there’s no doubt and no wavering. It’s as solid, true and enduring as agape. Real love is bold, and cannot be contained, masked or denied. Anything short of pure commitment, and pursuit of covenant, is simply a counterfeit. The biggest mistakes I’ve made is pursuing relationships with the wrong men, and thinking that I can earn the love of a man. I used to believe that if I worked hard to fit certain criteria, then I could some how ‘create’ true love. I’ve learned that true love is not something that you labor to obtain. In fact, love is born of respect and honor. And the steps to marriage are ordered by God. Only as you fully pursue Him, and walk in His wisdom, can you receive God’s best in a mate as you gracefully learn to wait on His ordering of it.

The waiting experience has been exactly what the word “wait” means: as turbulent and textured as the ocean waves. Over the past 15 years I have endured extreme highs mixed with my share of heart broken lows. With the onset of age I can say I’m a survivor. At 34 years old, the pleasant surprise I’m experiencing is increased confidence in Christ, and far greater acceptance of the woman God has made me to be. I’m now at peace with myself, at peace with my purpose, at peace with my current single status. I’m no longer tossed to and fro by the winds of doctrine or circumstance. It’s been a long journey, but I’m thankful that I’ve lived to see the day of contentment in knowing that the joy of the Lord is my strength. My life and my love life... is truly in His hands.

Charis Hunt (not shown) is a free lance writer from Southfield, Michigan with a background in public relations and media ministry consulting.
When I decide she’s the one, I’ll know deep down in my spirit that is who God wants me to be with. I’m not in a rush; the promise is out there and with patience and time, it will happen. I’m whole and she’ll be whole. But now, I’m just focusing on the Father.

The crazy thing about it is when you’ve saved yourself for so long now, even when you see someone with the sexy Coca-Cola bottle shape, you don’t give in; you still keep saving yourself. ‘Cuz when you walk away from it, it’s deep. Now I’m not even going to act like I’ve been always this great guy, like I’ve done it right, because I haven’t. You end up meeting some woman and it’s like, whoa! I found myself at 10 o’clock at a shorty’s house, talking about the Word and then you find yourself going there.

But I thank God for the mistakes. It’s one thing to sit back and say I was out there, but to be honest and even step up and admit and call it what it really was…I was strung out. But you are no longer that and God gets the Glory for it all. And people get to see the transformation. That’s why I love your book, Ty, because Single, Saved, and Having Sex, man…It’s so NOT cool! But Thank God for the Blood of the Lamb! We make mistakes; clean yourself up, get up! Yes, you made the mistakes, but you can clean yourself up and get back going. It’s nothing like being young in Christ after making the decision of living sexually pure.

When you get 4 years in the game, haven’t fornicated, living a holy righteous life…’I’m just talking sex right now…ain’t nothing that can take me backwards. There’s no way I can go back; I’m too far out here in God. The whole movement of sexual sin is so far away from me. I understand who I am, what I am, where God is taking me and the woman that God has for me.

There’s nobody who I hang out with that I call my friends that fornicate. I don’t hang around with people like that; with those who even “converse” about doing it. I don’t have those temptations like that anymore. That ain’t how we roll. But now it feels great as a man of God and dude, do you know how great it is to say I haven’t fornicated in 4 years? It feels great! Man, that feels great, to know that on that day when I get married, it’s going to be that first pure seed. Meaning: if you haven’t done it right, you’ve masturbated, had an orgasm or sex outside of marriage…whatever, man, you haven’t had a pure seed come out of you yet. “Are you trying to tell me my seed isn’t pure?” That’s exactly what I’m saying. You haven’t had a pure seed! So, now I save myself knowing that night, when I make that covenant with my wife, my rib, it’s going to be a beautiful night. And that seed that is going to come out that night…is going to be so pure…and I’m waiting for that…
Ty: What do you think has been the common thread holding women in their pain even though they have “God”?  

VJ: I think the main issue is because outside of Vikki Johnson, Ty Adams and a select few others, we as a Body, don’t have enough courage to keep it honest and transparent. Church today is not, what I believe, the church that God intended it to be. And so, there is a paradigm in place that quietly puts the expectation on us or we put it on us comfortable to be transparent. From the pulpit to the door, and more so in the pulpit, put in a place of idol worship. We’ve gotten away from our adoration being toward the Lord and it’s in the people who are before us. so then there is the pressure to keep that lack of honesty is what produces pain. Any lack in our lives is an indication that we need to fill it with worship.

Ty: But worship is often absent in broken places. Our pain paralyzes us.

We have to first come to God with our “stuff.” We have to come to God and say, ‘You know what God? I love you, but I am struggling with this and I really need you to help me.’ Unless we take that step—and I’m not even talking about the sinners prayer and salvation. I’m talking about after you except Him, after you do that then…what’s next? And the “what’s next” piece is missing in a lot of ministries. Once they come and give their life to the Lord, and join a church, most of the time people are put to work, but there is nobody working on us. We’re not still long enough. We get right busy doing church work.

Ty: Essentially what we have is wounded soldiers working in the church, and then letting the blood from their wounds spill off on other people. The cycle is repetitive. Under all of the make-up and the facades, how do we really undo the scarring? Often, people come into the church with issues where they have had abortions, rapes, messed up boyfriends, husb...and we cover it up in the church. We put on a suit, we put on the make-up and we do a shout. And we really go home with this pain. Nobody sees you crying at 2 o’clock in the morning and dealing with issues of loneliness. What we do is jump right into another relationship in order to meet or fill that void.

VJ: I think we miss the practical side to it. And this is why new age and metaphysics, Dr. Phil and Oprah—they have such an impact because the church is lacking the bridge between revelation to application. We give the revelation, we shout, we get excited, but lacking the bridge between revelation to application. The pattern of life; fail forward as John Maxwell walk through it. If you fall, get up, let’s try it again. The pain is real, work just looking pitiful and crazy. Then one day the Lord said, “Stop crying. I want you to want me like that.” And that was the beginning of the perfecting of this oil. My Bishop walked me through it like a father and still let me pastor his women because he understood it was wrong from the beginning, I’ll just tell you straight up. He wasn’t even a Christian and this was about six years ago. Now, I have been out of the relationship for several years, but it took me a long time to recover from this relationship. I found out a couple of days ago that he was married the whole time and I didn’t know it! Now, what I said to the Lord for the last 48 hours is, “I’m in the place of processing because I understand the anointing comes from my experiences. That’s how the oil is crushed out of me, is through my experiences. What I’m trying to do now, God… I’m no longer connected to the relationship, but if I was, you know how devastated I would be? Wouldn’t it have just been easier to give me the truth years ago when you broke off the relationship?” Part of my struggle with letting the relationship go is that I couldn’t understand why. This was the relationship that I wanted. I wanted to marry this man. But the Lord hid the wife from me and in that period of three or four years, he perfected an anointing in me that, now, is a safe place for other women. And it is years later that stuff has been starting to make sense. Girl, he’s married!

Ty: We are good for trying to “make” an unavailable man become our husband. We allow our emotions to rule and govern us, where we are adamant, “This is my husband…” But when God breaks that thing off, somebody better start shouting, even in the pain, when it hurts! It’s often difficult to break away though, when you are “in love” with someone that’s killing you!

VJ: I struggled with taking the way of escape. I was so broken that he broke off the relationship with me. I couldn’t stop crying. Ty. For weeks, everyday, going to church, working just looking pitiful and crazy. Then one day the Lord said, “Stop crying. I want you to want me like that.”
part of my attraction to this person. He was the one I just called for street, real gangsta, rough sex, okay? But when he found out I was a preacher he said, “Oh my God! I’m not messin’ with you anymore, Vikki!” He basically cut me off and I felt like I was going to die. I begged him, “Please don’t do this, we can work this out, we’re so good together.” But he wouldn’t do it. Now I’m thinking, at that moment, he couldn’t do it because he discovered I was a preacher—which was part of it. But two days ago, I also found out it was because he is married! And that escaped me because we met in the context of my job at BET. And I remember when I was in my darkest place, I was at work, in deep pain and my bishop called me. He said, “Baby girl, what’s going on with you? You were just on me so heavy. I had to pick up the phone and call you.”

That’s when I told him everything I was dealing with. He empathized with my pain and said, “I understand.” The Lord allowed him to walk away from you. The Lord did that. This is just one of those places where you just have to trust God’s grace for your life.” Now, two hours later, his wife called me, and they hadn’t talked to each other. She said, “Vikki, what is going on with you? You were on my mind so heavy.” I was crying when she called me; just weeping. Have you ever been just really weeping? I was just weeping. She said, “Don’t let them see you crying at work, Vikki. Go to the bathroom!” And I started laughing, right in the middle of crying! She said, “Don’t let them see you crying at work, Vikki. Go to the bathroom!” Put some water on your face and write it down. Write it down how you are feeling because this is for ministry. We have to come to the full understanding of that because every life is so full of God and full of purpose, full of destiny, full of His intentions for my life that whoever is going to be in my life—and I’m not just talking about romantically, even on the friendship level—they have to fit the pattern that He laid out for me.

Ty: My Lord, thank God for your Pastors. For some odd reason, we think that we aren’t supposed to go through, that we don’t get duped in relationships. Like, ‘You’re supposed to be anointed; how did you end up going through that?’ We have to have a safe haven, some place where we can hide when we fall short of God’s plan for our lives. Tell me about one of those deep dark moments when you were going through, when you thought you were never going to get past this pain.

VJ: Well, I have to just back up a bit. Mind you, this relationship came into my life within 12 months of me coming out of a very difficult marriage. I was very vulnerable and I had been married for 14 years. I was married to a preacher. So I had perfected the “game face.” I was in a place where I really wanted to reclaim my femininity, my desirability and all of those kinds of things, and so I latched on. I was very needy. I latched on very hard to this man’s personal power and his strength. Let’s keep it all the way real: some men in the Body are more feminine than me and you, so that was my mind with the Mind of Christ. All that time God was getting Himself, His love inside of me. You have to have self-giving love, which means selfishness in reverse—meaning you dispense and disperse so much love, it can’t help but come back to you. So now the law of attraction is working in your life. Girl, once you get your thoughts together, you begin to attract what you think. And I’m not talking about the power of positive thinking, I’m talking about that it’s so apart of you that you begin to attract it because now you see yourself the way God sees you. And He sees me perfect. He sees me with purpose. He sees me powerful. As you are busy walking out purpose, you will eventually attract the perfect match for your purpose. See, we hook up with the wrong people because they catch us before the film is fully developed. We hook up with someone who sees us at 3. Then we find that we are not compatible and the relationship doesn’t work so now we get a divorce. Don’t short circuit the process. Stay in the dark room until the picture is perfect. If you don’t, you are going to attract where you are and where you are now is not where you are going. ♥

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Ty: That right there is to be treasured! The fact that she just didn’t crush you in that moment, letting you know that it’s okay to cry, yes, it’s going to hurt, but don’t let the enemy see you sweat! So, what have you discovered through this painful experience?

VJ: That my mistakes and my mess-ups are a part of God’s process for my life.

Ty: This is why a lot of women, whom God has an unbelievable destiny for, are still held back because of some things that happened in past relationships— that they are just holding onto and it’s just hindering them from fulfilling what He has purposed for them to do.

VJ: We have to utilize God’s new mercies everyday and you can never take for granted yesterday’s grace and mercies. You never know what you are going to face tomorrow. Liberty in Christ is a daily walk, it’s a daily decision: it’s a daily management of your relationship with Him. That’s what keeps me plugged into Him, because on my own, I can’t do it. It goes back to the first question you asked me, because once you get to this platform if you will, we go from glory to glory, the way to manage this place is to now tap into God intentions for your life. I’m talking now about my progression. Now I won’t fall for those same things because my life is so full of God and full of purpose, full of destiny, full of His intentions for my life that whoever is going to be in my life—and I’m not just talking about romantically, even on the friendship level—they have to fit the pattern that He laid out for me.

Ty: You have to come to the place where you understand your value and that people have to now qualify for your time. They just can’t have the access they were so easily accustomed to. There are thousands of women reading this now that want to come to the full understanding of that because often while we are in the waiting stage while God is perfecting us, a wind of loneliness comes through, and we settle for less than God’s best for us and we prematurely give people access before it’s time. ♥

VJ: Exactly. You have to understand that you’re growing, now you are expanding. Be of good courage and He will strengthen your heart—that moment of loneliness is temporary, it will pass. He has a purpose in all of this. See, God needed to regeneraten your thinking to tell you...
I think that we, as a species, are creatures of habit. It's like when you first learn how to drive a car, you are driving, concentrating on nothing else. I remember when I first started to drive I had to make sure the radio was off. I had both hands on the steering wheel; I had to remember what I needed to do and I was very focused on the road. We have to teach people how to perceive that they are living their lives conditioned and then enlighten them in a shift of perception so then they can begin to live their lives from the inside out. And that is a scarier proposition for most people because most are not in touch with themselves enough to know who is at home.

WHY YOU MARRIED MR. WRONG

We are creatures of habit. It's like when you first learn to drive a car, you are driving, concentrating on nothing else. I remember when I first started to drive I had to make sure the radio was off. I had both hands on the steering wheel; I had to remember what I needed to do and I was very focused on the road. We have to teach people how to perceive that they are living their lives conditioned and then enlighten them in a shift of perception so then they can begin to live their lives from the inside out. And that is a scarier proposition for most people because most are not in touch with themselves enough to know who is at home.

I do around you. Well, now that I have been driving for a long time, I have learned something new, your attention and focus is needed to do and I was very focused on the road. When I first started to drive I had to make sure the radio was off. I had to remember what I needed to do and I was very focused on the road. We have to teach people how to perceive that they are living their lives conditioned and then enlighten them in a shift of perception so then they can begin to live their lives from the inside out. And that is a scarier proposition for most people because most are not in touch with themselves enough to know who is at home.

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produce what you already have. No matter how much we spiritualize our condition, it’s not going to change.

TRUSTING GOD. AGAIN

Truth uncovers, truth hurts, but eventually, truth will liberate you. It is a hurting process. First of all, we don’t want it to be uncovered and we don’t want to go through the pain. Most people will choose to live in denial because if they really looked at the situation for what it really is, you would go into a state of despair. So, in order to save ourselves from going into despair we deny what’s in front of us. But, we can go through that process, truth will eventually liberate us and set us free. It is a work that we have to be willing to do within ourselves. The work is not about trying to learn if this is the right person for me or if I can trust this person, but trusting the God in us. Life has a way of causing us to not trust the God within us. There are so many people that come into our lives that cause us to second guess ourselves and the voice of God within us and lose our sense of self-trust. If you don’t regain a sense of self-trust, you will always be looking for an authority outside of your own conviction. And when our marriage doesn’t work, we think, “Why didn’t someone warn me about this person?” The blame game goes around and around because we have looked for authority outside of our own conviction and because we really do live separate from ourselves. So, I really think it is living in a place of integrity towards self, connecting with the spirit of God that is within me and being true to your own convictions. You can’t even consider remarriage without first reconnecting yourself to that same internal work internally to bring about a sense of cohesiveness between all parts of you—the emotional side, the mental side, the spiritual side, the physical side. We have to be willing to do the work on us; no one can lay hands on you to put you back together.

DIVORCED KIDS

The greatest thing that kept me in the marriage was my daughter (even though there was gross infidelity within the context of marriage and during most of the marriage). When I experienced not having my own father in my life, I said I don’t care what I have to do or what I have to suffer through, but my daughter will not have that experience. That was my issue and I was projecting onto her life. So, the last few years were really deteriorating and I just said, “Lord, what is going to happen with my daughter? She is going to be so hurt because I did such a professional job of covering up for her.” I did an efficient job of trying to create this façade that we were a happy, healthy home and working overtime with covering things up. So in my mind I’m thinking she sees this wonderful, perfect home and marriage. She is going to be incredibly hurt—and she was. Any child who sees their parents go through a divorce is going to be and you need to get your child in counseling so that child can receive proper healing as well. Sometimes they don’t want to talk to you because they are afraid that they will hurt your feelings. Especially if the parents are at odds with each other, or if the parents create a negative space and are talking negatively about their dad or mom because that child is a part of both of you. So when you talk about the other parent to that child, to that child, you’re denouncing and criticizing that part of them. You think you are only talking about the dad or the mother, but the children are internalizing that in themselves so parents have to be very careful. That is why the healing for the parent is very important as well. Kids are so insightful but always keep them informed; get them age appropriate information. Remind them that there is nothing they could have done to prevent this and you have to reassure them that it has nothing to do with them. It took my daughter at least a year before she stopped making any reference to her ‘not preventing what happened between Daddy and Mommy.’

FIXING WHAT’S BROKEN

I learned that I am a very committed individual. I have a naturally strong, independent-type personality—which is good on a lot of levels, but can actually work against some women in major ways. We think we can actually solve a person’s problem. We think that if we just do the right thing enough, if we walk in faith enough then our lives will somehow bring about this miraculous change in our marriage and in the life of our spouse. The thing that I learned about me is that I had taken things into my own hands—even though I had said out loud that it “was in God hands and I’m just being faithful to God and I just believe that God is committed to us, and God loves us and God, God, God, God.” So I pressed on and in pressuring I allowed dysfunctional behavior to continue in the marriage. I continued to perpetrate something that wasn’t real even though at the time you couldn’t tell me I wasn’t. Again, I was so programmed in the way I functioned that I felt very comfortable in the way I operated because that relationship, I had invested my time. All these reasons and all these issues that I had from a child and how all my relationships affected me as a person and shaped the person that I became. Those things allowed me to block what I was seeing. We over spiritualize and we try to control the outcome. We really do think we can play God in the lives of people. I grew up without my dad and one of the things that I realized was that there were two things that were important to me; one was the approval of my father and therefore, I symbolically looked to my husband in many ways to give that to me. My husband’s approval was extremely important to me. Just being the best wife, holding things together when things were falling apart. It gave me a sense of, “I’m an extraordinary woman! What other woman would go through this kind of stuff?” And what I want to express to you, Ty, is when you are going through that, it is something that you cannot articulate. I would never say that was what I was thinking. You can actually come on the same plane, while you’re still married, and be able to bring a sense of healing and restoration to the marriage. Going through counseling truly caused me to realize and confront this issue of me and my father and this need for approval. The second thing was the sense of rejection about my father. So, not wanting to be rejected by my husband and him being my biggest fan and accepting me was so important to me because again, he took the place of my father in my life. My work with the therapist after my divorce for two years helped me understand how I developed from childhood to adulthood, the kind of person that I was and how that person attracted this man into my life. And also how I ended up in that marriage for 12 years and how I contributed to that. Where I was, how I processed things, why I needed a man’s approval like I did; all those questions I began to deal with and answered.

You know, I still believe in marriage. I believe in the union of people, I believe in the partnership, I believe in two people being connected in the spirit. One person asked me, “What if you get married again and it turns out to be just like your first marriage and you get a divorce?” I then said, “That is not even a possibility because the person that I am now can only bring good into her life. The person who I am now can only bring exactly what I want into my life and it can’t work out any other way.” I would not be that person without going through this intense process of self discovery, which is what I call it. The spirit of God is so committed with helping us to see ourselves. In fact, it is our own denial that puts us in these predicaments. ♥

Reverend Miriam Wright is the Senior Pastor of Real Life Today Church in Washington, D.C.—the proud mother of eight-year old Mirielle Elizabeth—whom she loves “the mostest and the bestest.” www.reallifetoday.org
You could have never told me that one day I would
be a divorced mother of two. I mean come on, what
about the fairy tale romance and the Cinderella
wedding that I had? Surely that should ensure happily
ever after, right? Wrong! I’ve been divorced now
for six years, and although it’s still strange to me how my
life has turned out up until this time, I’m happier, more
fulfilled, and glad to be “me” again!

For the sake of this writing though, I want to look
at divorce for what it was to me. I would
like divorce to the grieving process.
It’s like a death. It is a total major
disruption of life. I couldn’t
go into any room and get
anything done. I would just
cry uncontrollably for hours.
I remember one time trying
to call my sisters. I called
them both, but I couldn’t
get anyone. I tried to call
my mother and couldn’t
get her. Finally, I got my brother-
in-law—poor thing! He was
like, ‘Why did she get me?’ But
then I told him to leave the house. He said, “Go over
to our house and just relax, don’t try to
get through.” And that’s when I realized,
that it’s like a death. There’s death of a relationship.
Obviously there’s death of communication, death of
intimacy, death of a lot of stuff.

You are left so emotionally scarred from what
happened. One day, I looked up and discovered I
still had issues with anger, bitterness, resentment,
unforgiveness and guilt. Being the daughter of such
prominent people, I also experienced shame and
humiliation. I remember saying to my mom, “I’m
sorry I messed up the perfect Price family image.”

But I needed to get out of a painful and abusive
relationship—not physically abusive, but mentally—a
stifling of who I was. The years of trying to be what
somebody else thinks you should be and having to
behave like someone else says you should behave
made me feel as if I would suffocate if I didn’t get
out.

The emotional issues must be addressed
for healing to take place. I’ve had
to work through several layers
of issues, including forgiving
myself for staying so long
in a bad situation and not
watching out for my spiritual
well-being as far as the
relationship was concerned.
I stayed too long, especially
knowing something was
wrong so early on. Now if
you don’t take the time to
really investigate what’s going
on inside yourself and what
happened in the relationship, you
will inevitably repeat it. The lesson
unlearned will repeat itself. Ignoring it
and acting like, “I’m okay” because he is out of
my life, doesn’t mean healing work has been done.”

I now know, in my situation, there
was lack of a personal
relationship with God; because of that, the
negatives were able to
get through.

During this time, I’ve learned a lot of things about
myself through reading books, talking with friends
and further developing a closeness with God. It takes
time to recognize what you’ve been through and how
to heal from it.

It also takes time for the children to heal. Since the
divorce, I’ve had to work really hard to try to keep things
as normal as possible for my children. I talk to them
and try to look for signs like frustration, withdrawal or
acting up in school. Your children may still long for
everything to be the same—for the whole family to be
together—but over time, if you concentrate on making
sure they remain in a loving and attentive environment,
they will be okay.

Through the healing process, I discovered that
making a healthy decision for me was meaningful for
my children, particularly my daughter. I didn’t want to
teach her to live through misery and maybe it will turn
out alright later on. I want to teach her to recognize
joy, fulfillment, peace—the things you are supposed to
have in a relationship. If those things are not present,
maybe God isn’t in it. I think God has said to many
people, ‘Don’t do it’ and they did it anyway. So when
we really start looking at it, we know divorce is not of
God, but guess what? Maybe the marriage wasn’t of
God, either.

If you have gone through a divorce, the most
important thing is that you allow yourself to heal. You
may not think anything is wrong with you but trust me
if you really take the time to examine the situation, you
will find that there are some open wounds still there
that you’ve just covered over with a band-aid. You
have to give yourself time to discover what happened,
what could have happened differently and what you
plan to do differently the next time! You owe it to
yourself and to your children (if you have any). And
believe it or not, you also owe it the next person you
plan to do with. You owe it to
yourself and to your children (if you have any). And
believe it or not, you also owe it the next person you
decide to get into a relationship with. If you don’t deal
with you now, you and he will surely have to deal with
you later.

Pray and let God reveal to you what happened. Be
truthful with yourself and make a plan for the future.
Not a plan for marriage but a better plan for your life
maintenance. Think about this…no half a woman can
attract a whole man! Remember God loves you and so
should you!

Cheryl Price works along side her parents, Dr. Frederick
and Betty Price at Crenshaw Christian Center www.
cherylprice.net.
I had only married my husband because I had gotten pregnant; we didn’t even love each other, so when we divorced it was not a shock, though I was completely angry with God that He would allow it to happen. I screamed at God, “Lord, you have forgotten me! I’ve had enough; I’m doing things my way!” So after I divorced, I hit the party scene. I was with influential millionaires on a yacht, partying every weekend. I got caught up in a web of worldly sexual confusion and I adopted it into my way of thinking. The destruction of that lifestyle began to take its toll on me and I wanted to die because it became too painful to live. How did I get here? I was Ms. Missouri, I was a Preacher’s Kid, filled with the Holy Ghost, as well as the praise and worship team leader! How does a Pentecostal girl fall so far away from grace? Because I was saved, but I was shallow. Sure, I went to Bible College but I didn’t know who I was.

But it was in the middle of despair and plagued with thoughts of death, I felt as if death was the only answer. I couldn’t utter a word or even pray for myself, but a strong urgency came over me and the only thing I could say was the name of Jesus. I drove all the way home, just saying, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus…” I couldn’t even sleep. At 3 o’clock in the morning I just started praying; I hadn’t prayed in so long…After years of being without God, I was able to pray and for three days I couldn’t stop praying and the Holy Spirit began to fill me. It was the Lord’s kindness that brought me to repentance and I have never been the same since.

It’s almost common for people to find someone new and to jump right back in to “love.” Even people in Church were pressuring me to hook up with another man. I tried the dating thing, even Christian online dating, but God’s love raised the bar for me and it became difficult for the average man to measure up. Dating wasn’t even an option at that point because God began dealing with me about my sons and what they had gone through this entire divorce. God’s restoration of my children and my relationship with them became my ministry. I took an entire year away from everything and my focus was God and my boys. And one year became two and two became three. Is remarriage in the picture for me? Yes, I entered into a covenant with God, made my marriage vows to Him that I would be faithful to Him for better or worse. With another man? I don’t know. Right now, it’s my least concern; I’m having fun dating my teenage sons and I’ve finally experienced what it really means to be “in love.” I’m so wrapped up in love with God right now; He’s all I want. My name is Stacy and here’s my secret to healing after a painful divorce…I traded my ex-husband in for God.

Stacy Hord is the proud mother of three teenage boys and the co-founder of Lift My Eyes, a divorce recovery program. Visit her online at www.liftmyeyes.com or www.myspace.com/xghord
“Many are called…but few are chosen.” God will not choose your mate for you; He will present you a choice but it’s up to you to choose. Understanding that, then you must know: Who am I called to? Only then can you make the right choice.

Before you attempt to build a relationship you must first have a blueprint. (Luke 14:28) My dad, Dr. Myles Munroe, says, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you.” There should be some guidance and structure, a road map, if you will, that will steer you in the right direction and keep you on the path intended. “Who am I and what I’m looking for?” Make sure those match and you’re not asking for something that you are not. If you are called to be a helpmeet, then know who you are called to help and what kind of help you are bringing to the relationship.

Look inside 1 Samuel 16:7

Looks will never sustain a relationship but character will. Define who you are in a few sentences. What is most important in your life? Describe your relationship with God; what do you want to improve in your relationship with Him? What are your dreams, goals, and plans in life? How high or low is your self-esteem? Are you emotionally healthy and have dealt with and overcome past issues? How do you resolve conflict? What are your three strongest traits? What do you need to improve or change about you? What can you bring to a relationship that would make it successful? What can you bring to the relationship.

Now spell that list out. Many times women will just say that they want a saved man, but you have to be specific. What does each of your itemized list mean to you?

1. Salvation is standard equipment, but I want upgrades: heated seats, sunroof, keyless entry, remote control starter, heated windshield wipers, anti-theft device, and DVD screens on the panel that connects to an outside camera on my vehicle so that it will give me the ability to parallel park without having to turn my neck or look in the rear view mirror; you know what I’m saying? He has to be more than just saved. He is not religious, doesn’t have a form of godliness but has a relationship with God and is God-governed in every area of his life. He understands that prayer and that the Word of God is fundamental to his life and simply not an option. If he is called a friend of God, then I know that I can make him my best friend and confidant.

2. Does he act upon what he believes? Is he emotionally handicapped or impaired? He must be emotionally stable, patient, kind, and understanding. He has to be able to handle life’s challenges without backsliding. He is forgiving, humble, and can admit his failures and shortcomings. He prefers others over himself. He doesn’t feel that he has to win every argument. He is submissive, responsible, and sexually pure. And most of all, God can trust him.

3. A good listener. Problem solver. Educated. Has discernment. Can stimulate me intellectually. He communicates with money well. He has the ability to communicate well with people; he has to be willing to help and change their lives. He understands the value of words; so he uses wisdom when he speaks because his communication was birthed out of his communion with God.

4. He is faithful, trustworthy and honorable. He is committed to God and family.

5. His life is engulfed with purpose. He is consumed with doing God’s will.

6. Isn’t afraid to take risks, but takes educated, calculated ones. Life is an adventure to be explored, so he is not a television junkie. Pursues love and life with all of his heart. He is a high achiever, artistic, has a passion for music, the arts, drama and literature. When he is passionate about life and God, then romanticism will not be a problem in our relationship. A man of passion is not cheap but liberal with what God has given him.

7. He is supportive, affectionate, compassionate, and intimate, daily.

8. He is committed to God, me and his assignment.

9. He understands who he is and self-preservation is evident in his life by living and loving hard.

10. He is a worshipper, well-groomed with high standards of personal hygiene, physically healthy, and has a sense of humor. (You have to know what ‘attractive’ means to you).

The important thing about your list is not simply having one, but knowing what you want and what’s important. It’s not being meticulous with a list of 101 things that he must have, but ensuring that you have a focused outlook and a foundation for a potential mate. It protects you from settling but keeps you from spreading yourself thin by wasting time with someone who is not conducive to your life and where you are going. Alright, now that you have your blueprint, stay prayerful and get prepared to build! ♥

MUST HAVES:

1. Fine
2. 6’ 4”
3. Rich
4. Muscles
5. Romantic

ACE ALEXANDER

“An irresistible woman is someone who has class, intellect, and physically fit.”

ROBERT JOHNSON
Model, Actor, Barber Stylist

“There are three irresistible women in my life. My wife Louise and my two daughters, Candace and Destiny, and they all three possess one thing, Class!”
Meet Robert, Tony, Jason, and Chris. These are her ex-boyfriends. And oh, the other guy, his name is unknown because he’s the husband that she desires but will probably never meet. Yeah, she took the Ex Files Evaluation and its findings revealed to us how she greatly reduced her chances at finding a man that meets her expectations for marriage.

She started dating when she was 16 years old; she lost her virginity shortly after entering into college and like many women in America, by the time she marries at 30 years old, she has kissed several men and has had multiple sexual partners. Let’s say that your husband is on Marry Me Drive. As you are traveling on the road of life going northbound towards your could-be-husband, you stop on Robert Lane and begin dating. Going to the movies, holding hands, walking in the park, hugging and kissing, and of course, you have sex with him. Arguments begin, conflicts in the relationship arise and you end your love affair with him and move on up the road to Tony Avenue. He’s fine, he’s romantic, and so not like Robert! Well at least Robert didn’t dump you immediately after you had sex with him. Tony ended up being just a Casanova, wooing you and taking you on a roller coaster love ride and leaving you dizzy and nauseous in heartbreak.

You’re distraught and angry that he could even do something like this to you; after all the nights he led you to believe that you were going to have some future together, creep! “How am I going to get over this?” Can you say, “Jason ‘Rebound’”? Jason’s shoulder conveniently shows up so that you can avoid confronting the pain and he becomes your denial blanket so that you will not have to feel the blunt of the pain. Saturday nights out for dinner and late Tuesday night phone calls with Jason give you something else to do besides having to reminisce the painful memories of Tony. But after the pain subsides, so does Jason. He was never even your type; he was just love on the rebound and his “services” are no longer needed. It’s only so much relationship drama a girl can take! So you take a hiatus from men; especially since there are no good ones out there anyway.

After a long man drought, and fatigued by the single-girl-wait-syndrome, you are now thirsty for companionship. Apprehensive, you make a choice to narrow your options and only make yourself available to a man who has predominant Christian values; you deserve nothing but the best. And the best: Chris ‘Best.’ Now, Chris is any girl’s dream! Well dressed, attractive - has not a job, but a career - and sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost! Sunday brunch after every Church service and tea and prayer on Mondays with Chris, who could ask for more? In fact, you can park right here and make him your future; and so she did. Chris became apart of her everyday routine so much that the two of them became inseparable. The relationship

Meet Jasmine. Jasmine is a 27-year-old marketing executive. She loves Chinese food, a confident Christian man, and spending her time mentoring teenage girls at the local youth center. She is single and looking for love that will ultimately evolve into marriage.
was going so well, what could go wrong? Well, after a year-and-a-half of ups and downs, they both realized that they were no more compatible than Whitney and Bobby. They broke up so many times and then got back together and then broke up again, ’til they finally both realized that they needed to call it quits before they lost their religion.

Jasmine thought for sure that this was it; she couldn’t figure out what went wrong. Well, she didn’t realize that she was dating the same scenario, just played out differently. Yeah, even Chris. He was only Robert but with Christian values. She was dating the same type of man but a different face every time she entered into a relationship. Chris ‘Best’ was the best that she could do because her relationship encoding attracted her to the same man. She had other relationships but there were not enough spaces on the Ex Files Evaluation to list them. Even the insignificant relationships are just as significant because they are imprints of relationship behavior. And that’s what serial dating does. It indoctrinates or programs you to love through a conditioned pattern. See, serial dating, hopping from one man to the next, is nothing more than multiple mini-marriages with multiple divorces and every time a relationship is terminated, a chunk of you is taken away until there is nothing left of you to give. So essentially, by the time you get to Marry Me Drive, you have multiple men attached to you and therefore can’t even receive the husband you desire.

That’s why taking the Ex Files Evaluation is so very important because you need to be able to not only track how you love but also be able to find the core development of how your relationships were shaped and formed. If you don’t, you greatly increase your chances of finding the same person you just left. Why do you choose these types of men? What makes you stay? What attracts you to them in the first place? Finding the love you desire begins with recognizing how and why you approach love a certain way and how you developed the concept of what love is. When the foundation of love was established with false, inappropriate, defective patterns you must tear down the groundwork in your mind, body, and spirit. You must then renovate, rebuild and assemble love all over again. Because great relationships are birthed out of the one you find with yourself. So stick a sign on your heart that says, “We’re remodeling.”

Are you a serial dater? To stop the cycle, visit Dr. Ty online www.tyadams.org.
“You can do bad all by yourself! Don’t subject yourself to dead end relationships that stunt your growth.”

— B. Rachel Adams

“Come into the relationship and asset, not a deficit. If you want a great man, become the best woman.”

— Ruth Munroe

“Holiness and prayer, it’s the foundation of any viable relationship. Without either, your relationships are lifeless.”

— Dr. Juanita Bynum
4. Know what’s behind your date’s belief system.

"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" is not only limited to people who are saved, but also Christians; you can be unequally yoked with a believer. You will find that many Christians do not believe the same things that you believe and they may not engage in the same intensity of their relationship with God as you do. And as the Amplified version says, “they are inconsistent with your faith.” (2 Corinthians 6:14) Association is everything; even a Christian can corrupt your good manners! Ensure that you are speaking the same language. 1 Corinthians 15:33

5. A prayer-less man is dangerous!

I ask many couples who are dating if they’ve ever seen or listened to him as he prayed…I get the dumbfounded look again. It amazes me how people shun God out of their relationships, but expect Him to bless it. A lifestyle of prayer is fundamental to the success of any Christian’s life. Examine his prayer life. Ask him to pray; you’ll see where his relationship is with God. If the only prayer he knows is, “Now I lay me down to sleep”, RUN! If he doesn’t have an active, daily face to face conversation with God, then he shouldn’t be in your face.

6. Don’t date a cute devil!

You may want him to be drop-dead gorgeous but don’t get so caught up with his looks that you overlook his heart and what’s on the inside. Date inward because what’s on the inside of him will determine if the relationship will drop dead or not. 1 Samuel 16:7

7. “The Lord told me that you’re my husband.”

I could scream right now! This is one of my biggest pet peeves. The Bible says that it is the man’s responsibility to find his wife; your job: to be found. (Proverbs 18:22) It’s innate for a man to be the hunter. Be busy doing you. He should see that you have a life and that he needs to catch up to you to get in it. Be available, but not desperate! Never wear desperation; it doesn’t look good on you. A prostitute pursues but an uncommon woman is pursued. She doesn’t chase a man, attempting to get his attention or calling him constantly. A woman of worth knows her value and that she is to be pursued; not chasing a man. Humiliation is the outcome of a woman who attempts to put herself in a position that she was not summoned or called to. “Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among great men; it is better for him to say to you, ‘Come up here’, than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman.” Proverbs 25:6, 7 NIV

8. Friendship, friendship, friendship!!!

In traditional dating, many couples skip this most important phase of a relationship. Friendship should be the foundation of any relationship because it will outlast any couple that skipped to lover’s lane. When you do not develop a relationship out of friendship, you forfeit the chance of having a long, lasting relationship. The success of every marriage is a product of its friendship because you can lean on it even when intimacy, personality, and chemistry fail you. That’s why successful dating requires that you have the
mind of courtship because true love births out of the pure motives of friendship. So focus on developing a strong, solid friendship instead of racing to girlfriend or lover status; a slow and steady pace... easy does it! Studies show that the risk of divorce diminishes significantly with longer dating periods. Time is your best friend when developing a relationship because it has the ability to reveal things that your feelings and emotions can’t see.

“Patience is the weapon that forces deceit to reveal itself.”–Bunny Wilson

That’s why during the waiting season it’s important to allow the Holy Spirit to develop the divine character of patience and self-control in you. (Galatians 5:22, 23 AMP) Pace yourself through every phase of the relationship, evaluating, analyzing, and enjoying the development of each stage. The progression should look like this: strangers, acquaintances, associates, casual friendship, close friendship, exclusive dating, pre-engagement, engagement, marriage. The sequential levels of intimacy are set in place to protect you. It would prove to be insanity for acquaintances to skip friendship and move right into engagement! Your mental state would probably be diagnosed as psychotic if you open up yourself to deep levels of emotions to someone who has not even committed themselves to you. The vulnerability should match the commitment level; the risk levels should match the same. If you allow the relationship to take its rightful course by starting and developing in friendship lane, then the drive to love will be a breathtaking journey.

“The way people behave while dating usually reveals how they will behave when married.”–Dr. Myles Munroe

9. Tricks are for kids and so is serial dating.

Serial dating can be dangerous because it’s practice for divorce; if the relationship doesn’t work, on to the next. Are you available for short term relationships? Then why get involved with short term people? Don’t damage yourself with reckless, risky, casual dating. Is your aim and purpose to be a girlfriend or a wife? While all your dates won’t end in marriage, your goal is to operate in fruitful dating. Enter into prospective relationships that support your goal. Date with a purpose but at the same time, don’t play wife during the dating stages: paying his bills, ironing his clothes, and spending the night over his house! No, don’t give wife privileges during girlfriend status. Functionality and performance should match the level of rank and position. Never give full benefits to someone who hasn’t been on the “job” long enough to prove they are worthy of hire.

10. Dating is for spiritually mature adults ONLY!

With dating you have to be mature enough to leave a good man, that’s no good for you. You have to understand that good is not always good enough. There have been thousands of times that I’ve had women tell me that God told them to leave a relationship, but all too often, women allow their emotions to govern their decisions and they remain in a relationship that is no good for them or is not going in the same direction of their destiny. They’ve allowed soil ties to develop because they didn’t allow God to govern the relationship. Yet, they remain in them because they don’t want to be without the comfort of the relationship now. That’s how heartbreak occurs. When you see the relationship is going no where, cut your gain. Notice I said gain, and not losses. It only becomes a loss when you remain in a place beyond the expiration date.

11. Celibacy means nothing if you are emotionally promiscuous.

Emotional promiscuity is just as damaging to your spirit as sexual promiscuity. Throwing your heart and emotions loosely in every relationship you enter will traumatize your spirit and will open the door for a cycle of toxic relationships and unnecessary heartache. Unchaste emotions will leave scars on your heart and as Proverbs 4:23 indicates, it will interrupt God’s natural flow of your life. You must place a guard, the Holy Spirit, over your heart in relationships; IT will aid as a spiritual contraceptive... protecting your spirit from impregnation of pain. Emotional purity or emotional celibacy will allow you to freely love the man that God calls you into a relationship with, free of hindrance or fear.

12. FORNICATORS NOT ALLOWED!

Dating a man that struggles sexually is spiritual suicide; it will kill your potential, your purpose and your relationship with God. I’ve seen it happen thousands of times. Undoubtedly you will start sleeping with him and you will forget that you were even saved. Fornicators are destiny killers; the specimen inside of them is equipped to kill everything in sight that it comes in contact with. He’ll manipulate you into thinking that sexual intimacy is an expression of his love for you, but if you have to exchange sexual favors in order to keep him, is he really worth it? Is he worth trading in your relationship with God? Besides, what reason does he have to stay with you after that? A satisfied need is no longer a motivator; he has lost his incentive for even staying... benefits without sacrifice is a dangerous thing! It is believed that the number one reason why men don’t commit is because it’s easier than ever to get sex without marriage or commitment. Why buy the cow when you can get the milk, beef, and cheese for free?! Why would you allow someone to test drive you without paying the price? High mileage on luxury cheapens its value; but a real man understands that, so he will “pay the price” before he “chanteurs” you around. When a man with exquisite taste finally comes into your “show room”, he will pass you up because you’ve been used. A real man will respect you more when you respect and uphold your convictions and your love for God more than your desire to please him. Until he’s willing to pay the high price to get you, called marriage, then no free rides!

13. Date with your clothes on and stay OUT of his bed!

Many times it becomes difficult to maintain sexual integrity even when the both of you have made a commitment to God and sexual purity. I have seen many Christians put themselves in positions or put their guards down simply because they are Christians that carry a Bible. You need to ensure all the more that you set clear boundaries that will protect you from you! The boundaries are there to safeguard you from falling prey to sexual temptation. And once you have set them, don’t move the margin the closer the two of you become. As the relationship advances, you will be tempted to repossession the boundary by allowing heavy petting. Don’t be fooled! Heavy petting will escalate to full blown foreplay and foreplay will spiral you into shameful, uncontrolled, forbidden, illegal sex; shattering a relationship that had potential to thrive. I strongly advise that you be all the more solicitous in maintaining purity during every stage of your relationship.
15. Sure, dating can be fun and exciting but don’t get so caught up in the “fun”...

...that you fail to gain true insight of the person sitting across the table from you. The purpose of dating is to gather data. Ask the right questions; his interest, personal habits, goals, spiritual harmony, his relationship with God...Data is not simply gathering information by what he tells you but it’s having discernment, sound judgment, good analytical skills, and common sense. Understand that 7 percent of communication is verbal and the other 93 percent is nonverbal; use your spiritual ears to pick up what he is not saying. After you have collected the data, don’t ignore the information; it is the means by which you determine or make a decision if this person qualifies to receive what you have to give.

16. Did he borrow Christianity to impress you?

Don’t date a part-time or closet Christian; they are nothing more than church-goers who fraudulently camouflage themselves as worshippers. The Bible speaks of these types of men that worm their way into the homes of Christian women who are either spiritually malnourished or swayed by their emotions and desires. (2 Timothy 3:1-8) That is why you must strengthen and maintain your fervor in God because this kind of man uses spiritual manipulation. They come across as spiritually sound but it is actually over-spiritualization and erroneously twisting scriptures. It’s deception in the highest, because they are spiritually charming but their conscience is seared so they don’t exercise or maintain their fervor in God. (1 Corinthians 13:11) Until then, even the new baby to mature and develop his spirit in God. Therefore, you will time and time again, lose. Allow the new baby to mature and develop his spirit in God and find his rightful place back in worship. Then, and only then, is he ready to love.

17. NEVER date an unbeliever.

How is it even possible for someone whose heart is not joined to God’s, join with yours? God gives a specific commandment to not get involved with someone who does not serve your God because they will turn your heart away from Him. I like how William Risk puts it: “How can someone who speaks the name of Jesus with love and reverence be bound for a lifetime to someone who uses His name only as a curse?” If God isn’t first in his life, then you won’t be first in his life. If God can’t save Him, what makes you think you can? No matter how you put it, evangelistic dating ends up converting you to his life of hell; as you attempt to salvage him, he pulls you back to where he is. He doesn’t want to live holy, so all while you’re dating him he is attempting to get under your dress; he doesn’t want to hear about your Jesus as he “foreplay~ing” you out of your clothes. I can’t stress this enough: don’t enter into a relationship with someone who is faith deficient and allergic to God; it’s contagious and infectious and you don’t want to catch what they have because it will spiritually kill you. (1 Kings 11, Proverbs 18:1 AMP, 1 Corinthians 6:18)

18. Never date a new convert.

Many times I have seen women flock to a new believer the moment he comes to Church and gets saved in hopes of making him her man; they want to hurry up and close the deal on him before another woman gets to him. This is why many men in Church are not equipped or adequately prepared for a relationship or marriage because his worship is out of order. Here you have a man who has been worshipping women his entire life instead of God; he finally comes to God in attempts to reestablish and put worship back in its rightful place but it’s interrupted by a woman who God now has to compete with for His son’s worship. Now we have a Church house full of men who are spiritually bankrupt even though they are Christians. That is the most prominent issue that women have with men in the Church: they are penniless in the spirit and they don’t have the ability to cultivate or nurture a woman spiritually. That’s because he’s a child. Right in the middle of defining what love is, God stops, and tells a man that he really is not a man until he puts away his childish ways, and will continue as such, until he adopts, personifies, and incarnates the true essence of God’s love. (1 Corinthians 13:11) Until then, even his language and way of thinking will remain in a juvenile, infant like state. Dating a new convert is like a 34-year-old entertaining a relationship with a 16-year-old; he may be a grown man but his spirit is in its infancy stage. If you attempt to compete with God for his worship, you will time and time again, lose. Allow the new baby to mature and develop his spirit in God and find his rightful place back in worship. Then, and only then, is he ready to love.

19. Don’t date a dog!

“Don’t give that which is holy (the sacred thing) to the dogs, and do not throw your pearls before hogs, lest they trample upon them with their feet and turn and tear you in pieces.” (Matthew 7:6 AMP) I don’t care how you attempt to dress it up or cover up for his “dogism”, you will be the one who will end up crushed and trampled over when you date a man who is not faithful. If he has a problem with fidelity, he is not worthy of your time; you can’t entrust him with your life.

20. Never date a man that doesn’t love or respect his mother.

Not only will he loose his home (land), but his life will be cut short. (Deuteronomy 5:16) Never date a man that does not tithe. If he will steal from God, he
is a threat to the Kingdom of God and the Church at large, and he is a thief that can’t be trusted. (Malachi 3:8-10) Never date a man that does not wear a watch or doesn’t tip the waiter. If he doesn’t respect the value of time, then he is wasting my time. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) First of all, I am intolerable of a cheap man. God paid a high price to get me and it would be ridiculous for me to be with a man who doesn’t perceive things that are valuable and is not willing to pay the cost for those who serve him. If he can’t tip those who serve him, he will not celebrate and prize the servitude that I would give to him. (John 13:1-17, 15:13)

21. Are you with someone else’s man?

Then you are responsible for all the earthquakes all around the world! The Bible says that the earth trembles and can not bear when a mistress or a girlfriend replaces a wife. (Proverbs 30:21, 23b) Adultery causes earthquakes; do not date a married man. Date available men only! That even means emotionally; if his “luggage” (his heart) is not unpacked, you will end up carrying it. Baggage is too heavy to carry, so ensure that he is not emotionally wounded and that his emotional health is in shape. If he is carrying the emotional damage from a previous relationship or marriage, you will be the one to suffer because you are the one that he will vomit his pain on.

22. Don’t stay in a dead-end relationship...

...or in one that appears to be pieces of a puzzle, not knowing where the dots are connecting. A real man will make his intentions known and will not avoid commitment. (Ruth 3:11-18) Don’t ever be fooled into thinking that a man doesn’t know what he wants. When he wants a woman, he pursues and goes after her with unswerving attention and will make it known to her. You never have to guess if he wants you or not or if he wants to pursue a committed relationship with you. If he never says it, then his actions have spoken for him. Make a decision, a promise to yourself and God that you will not remain in relationships that do not contribute, promote, or further your well being, spiritually, emotionally, physically, or psychologically.

23. Dating Etiquette 101

• Sure, some men like make-up, but they don’t like mask. Honesty is a beautiful characteristic.
• Being a lady is the “in thing” and will never go out of style.
• Let him be a gentleman, pay the tab and open the door for you.
• Get rid of the women’s lib attitude without getting rid of your confidence.
• Let him call you.
• Maintain “me” time.
• A man loves a woman who smiles.

24. Love is expensive!

Can he afford it?! Does he have a job and can he keep one? The Bible says that if a man doesn’t work, he shouldn’t eat. So why let him dine at your table for free? Why would a man even want to pursue a woman if he doesn’t have a job? They have an innate responsibility and a desire to provide for a woman. If he doesn’t have a job and he is trying to get with you, let me tell you upfront: he is using you! 2 Thessalonians 3:10

25. Directions to the right man are found in Psalms 119:105.

The Bible says that God’s Word is a lamp that will guide your feet. If you end up with the wrong man then that means that you abandoned your relationship with the Word. Make a firm, unwavering decision to maintain a relationship with God and His word and your relationships will prove to be fruitful and a blessing. Proverbs 3:5-6

To get the complete 2 hour DVD or CD of “The Do’s & Don’ts of Dating”, visit us online www.tyadams.org.
1. DOES HE EVEN LIKE KIDS? Don’t just go by what he says, investigate. If he has children, find out how he’s been a father to them. If he has kids, is he the favorite uncle of his nieces and nephews? How was he raised and disciplined? Will he be able to play with them, do homework, not respond in anger, and discipline them appropriately? Can you envision this man fathering your children? As you know, parenting is a great responsibility and requires mature adults. Hence, it makes no sense to introduce your children to a “child.” If he is not grown up and matured for parenting, then you should not introduce your children to him. In fact, you should UN-introduce yourself to him.

It’s irrational, meaningless, and absolutely absurd to introduce your children or remain in a relationship with someone that’s not going to be apart of your future.

2. IS IT TIME? How committed is this relationship? If you’ve only gone out on two dates, there’s no time to introduce them to John John and L'il Nay Nay; you need time to observe your partner before you do that. Introducing them before you’ve even determined for yourself that this will be a long-term relationship is, quite frankly, unfair to your children. Your children do not need to meet every man you date. Only consider introducing your children when you are in a serious, committed relationship. Not only should you shield yourself from serial dating, but also your children; you need to protect them from becoming emotionally attached to “temporary daddies.” They need to know that your door is not a revolving one. They also need to understand and establish a healthy mindset concerning the importance of relationships even in their early stages of development.

Break-ups are not even easy for adults, how much more so for children? You want to be especially careful if your children have already experienced divorce because you don’t want to induce anymore pain upon them with your constant termination of relationships. Remember, they will be someone else’s wife or husband one day and you don’t want to distort or ruin someone else’s future spouse. Lay a strong foundation for your children about relationships and avoid sending messages that people and relationships are erratic and interchangeable. You want to ensure you are laying a healthy foundation about relationships.

Your very own relationship is ultimately a foretelling of your child’s future relationships; it’s a template of what their future relationships will look like, so date smart.

3. ARE YOUR CHILDREN READY? Dating is not just about you. Your children need to add understand that you are not splitting your affections but adding to the betterment, the growth of your family. Reaffirm your commitment to your children so that they feel secure and that your relationships will not cause them to feel abandoned. Your top priority is the stability of your children’s emotions and ensuring them of your unconditional love. If it’s any thing that children need, it’s security, a stable environment and unconditional love.

4. HANKY PANKY! Your children should not see intimacy between you and your potential partner in the early stages of your relationship. They should see that you are “friends”, establishing a relationship to determine if you two are a fit. I shouldn’t have to say this to grown folk, but I do: don’t entertain Mr. Tony in your bedroom. Your children should understand that sex and intimacy of this kind are exclusive for the institution of marriage only. Safeguard your child’s mindset of sexual purity.

5. DO YOUR CHILDREN LIKE HIM? If you have already introduced this person to your children, getting their thoughts on how they feel about your current relationship is important. Children have a good feel for people, and if he says, ‘I don’t like Mr. Johnny, you might want to look into it and not shrug it off. Determine if it’s not the source of rebellion but your child’s new security system to protect you from what you don’t see.

6. CAN YOU DIVIDE YOUR TIME? Though having a significant other is your desire, it does not necessarily warrant that you should have one. Relationships require your time. It’s not as if you get any extra hours in a day when you get into a relationship. You get the same 24 hours but now it has to be divided; you have to let something go or alter your schedule. Where will this time come from and what will I have to cut? Do you have time to balance parenting, career and entertain a relationship now?

Time has to be factored into whether or not you should entertain a relationship or not; because something is going to have to be divided. Ask yourself, what will it be? Your children should not feel the blast of that division or feel neglected now that you have a new beau in your life.

7. THE PLAYGROUND IS FOR KIDS! Introducing your children to someone is not a light matter and should be taken seriously. Discuss what you mean with your significant other. Clarify that both of you are on the same page and in the same paragraph. Ensuring that you both feel that this is the right time and that your relationship has matured and warrants an introduction to your most precious commodity. What does this mean for us? How will this affect, alter, or improve our relationship? Your significant other should know that your children are most important to you and that meeting your children is not trivial or any light matter for you. And the purpose for even introducing your children is because you plan on having a future together and understanding that meeting the children is apart of accomplishing that goal.

8. THE INTRODUCTION Your initial introduction and the next few dates will be the key to establishing a healthy foundation for merging your intimate life with your parenting life. Both facets of your life are equally important but require wisdom and skill in intermingling them. The first few dates should be low key and without any pressure. Attempting to railroad your children into liking your date can backfire on you. Start with simple, fun dates. They should not feel like they are being introduced to their “new daddy” but “Mr. Johnson” who has an interest and care for Mommy. Share your genuine enthusiasm for your date but don’t be over zealous in having an immediate bond. A gradual process will allow your children and your mate time to develop a positive relationship. If you establish a proper foundation in the beginning you will eliminate unnecessary hardships later on.

9. HAVE FUN! Your children should view relationships and love as fun and healthy. They should see that this relationship has improved your love and your smile, and that God approves of it.

For more advice on single parenting and dating, visit Dr. Ty online at www.tyadams.org
I have been clean for a month now. I really know what a relationship with God is about. It’s wonderful. One thing though: I’ve been knowing this young man for about nine years now. He goes to my church and he truly loves the Lord. I’ve never looked at him as nothing but a brother until now. Should I not ignore these feelings or is this another one of Satan’s schemes to get me to slip and fall? ~Lauren

Dr. Ty Adams

Q: Recently I gave my life back to the Lord and I gave up fornication with men. I have been clean for a month now. I really know what a relationship with God is about. It’s wonderful. One thing though: I’ve been knowing this young man for about nine years now. He goes to my church and he truly loves the Lord. I’ve never looked at him as nothing but a brother until now. Should I not ignore these feelings or is this another one of Satan’s schemes to get me to slip and fall? ~Lauren

A: Lauren, I celebrate you for making a commitment to purity and to God! You are certainly right; it’s a wonderful thing! It can’t be compared to anything! Because you are 30 days from your last sexual experience, I would recommend strongly that you do not date or consider any relationships at this time. It would be insanity for a former alcoholic to go into a bar after just making a commitment 30 days ago. Lauren, you are fresh out of the sheets! Your flesh is just waiting for you to have a moment where you set yourself up for a withdrawal moment. To protect you from bingeing, relapsing, or falling prey to sexual temptation, it is only wise that you take this time to rediscover you and concentrate on allowing the Lord to finish what He began 30 days ago. If you begin dating now you will only repeat your past.

Protecting you from you is one of the best security systems you can have. You are not fully equipped to fight off temptations and sexual desires and dating would not be an environment conducive to maintaining sexual integrity and purity for you right now. Trust me, been there, done that, and will never go back again! I know the traps and the set ups. Your spirit is in love with God but your flesh hasn’t forgotten.

Though you want to live pure for God, your flesh doesn’t. You just recommitted your relationship with God. Falling in love, making a full 100% commitment and an unwavering relationship with Him should be your only focus right now. Make a date with Him, and don’t stand Him up. This relationship is the ONLY failure proof from sexual sin and the basis of having any other successful relationship. Learn to “master” or become fully committed with this relationship for the next several months before you consider developing any relationship with anyone else. Single, Saved, and Having Sex will assist you in developing your relationship with God, equip you in maintaining sexual purity, and overcome sexual temptation. I started out several years ago with just 30 days, and before you know it, living sexually pure will become your way of life! Stay with your commitment and watch it come to pass! It’s the best decision you’ve ever made, Lauren! I look to hear testimonies from you.

Q: I think I’ve found my Boaz! I want to tell him but I don’t know how. Any suggestions?~Carolyn from Tampa, Florida

A: NEVER, EVER, I mean NEVER EVER, EVER, EVER tell him that you believe he is the one! NEVER! OK, let me make myself clear. N-E-V-E-R! If God can speak to you, He can speak to him! God will never reveal something to you of this importance, of this magnitude, of you sharing your life with someone, and then He not reveal it to the person. This potential Boaz, if he is a Boaz and not a BoBo, then that means that he is a God-fearing man, that has a relationship with the Lord and with a relationship comes a bended ear to God’s lips! So that means that he hears from God!!!!!!! And if that’s the case, he’ll hear from God and then it’s his responsibility to not only obey the Word, but as the man, the God-fearing man that he is, approach you with it. Not you approach him. Don’t get antsy because you got a ‘word’ from the Lord; wait patiently, allow him to chase and pursue you. BE A LADY and let him come after you. Have balance, it’s OK to show a little interest in return. Stay busy, focused on your destiny and your purpose and then LET HIM CHASE YOU! As you are going in the direction of God, he’s following you, in that direction. Embedded in a man is the pursuit. Don’t ever take that away from him, by being the pursuer and telling him that he’s your husband. Then when he finally approaches you with it, you then say, “I knew a long time ago, what took you so long, I was just waiting on you……” If he never approaches you, then it either means that he didn’t hear and obey God’s voice or you heard wrong and your flesh just wanted him to be Boaz.

Q: I’ve been clean for a month now. I really know what a relationship with God is about. It’s wonderful. One thing though: I’ve been knowing this young man for about nine years now. He goes to my church and he truly loves the Lord. I’ve never looked at him as nothing but a brother until now. Should I not ignore these feelings or is this another one of Satan’s schemes to get me to slip and fall? ~Lauren

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Q: What are you supposed to do when you are in a relationship and the guy is saved and nice, but he’s been hurt by his marriage more than 13 years ago? He would love to get married, but he has some hang-ups from his previous marriage and he is still not moving forward. We have been dating for eight years and I have been praying for God to bless me with a husband. I am 35 years old and he is 42. I have read your book Single, Saved, & Having Sex. I have also purchased Your Do’s & Don’ts of Dating and Single & Waiting For The One. Even after reading your book and listening to your heart piercing CDs, I still do not have the formula! Do I remain in the relationship or do I need to leave and allow God to work on my behalf? I can truly say that this man respects me on every level.

Please give me the formula as to what I am supposed to do in order for God to bless me with my husband. It was prophesied to me in January that God is going to bless me with a husband. ~T.J.

A: Oh, T.J., where do I begin with you? Since you overlooked everything in the book and the CD’s, I’ll make it plain right here. You are a Christian, it’s safe to say that you go to church, you have the Dr. Ty collection and you even believe in prophecy. Yet, like thousands of other intelligent women in Church, you find yourself foolishly stuck with a man who refuses to commit to you. I’ll tell you why that happens. You purchase a wealth of information from my online store and don’t use it. Second Timothy 3 speaks of many women in Church who are forever learning: going to all the women’s conferences, knowing all the scriptures but still spiritually weak and led away by evil desires and seductive impulses. That chapter says that they end up with men who have a form of religion, mere counterfeiters. Because you carry a Bible, you know what 1 Corinthians 6 says, but you don’t apply it. Though it says, ‘do not fornicate,’ you still disobey God and sleep with this man; and I know that you are. You have the formula, sitting right on your nightstand but you refuse to live it. You have been sleeping with this man for eight years and expect God to bless you with a husband?! Why and how could He when
you’ve been living in sin for the last eight years? Praying is no good when the very God that you pray to, you won’t obey. Don’t over spiritualize things and speak of the prophetic, celestial realms, talk the Christian “language” but don’t even do the basics. In God: LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, ALL YOUR MIND, AND ALL YOUR SPIRIT.

And furthermore, you want God to bless you with a husband but your boyfriend is in the way, in your husband’s spot. And saved? And respects you on every level? Let’s see if he’ll still respect you if you tell him that you are going to do what’s right and you will not have sex with him anymore outside of marriage. Respect? He doesn’t even respect God and won’t even man up and either commit to you or kindly send you on your way to live your life in full. And you are crazy enough to believe because he was so hurt by his previous marriage. Darling, if you haven’t proved it to him in eight years that you’re not his ex-wife, then another eight won’t convince him. You’ll be his age by then! Don’t you think you’ve wasted enough of your life and time? TJ, sweetie, I don’t like to be the bearer of bad news, so let me give you the good news: get your life out of stuck; take your life off the hold button and leave. Since you are not going to use your intelligence, common sense or your Holy Ghost, I will: THIS MAN IS NOT GOING TO MARRY YOU. And since you are not going to use your intelligence, common sense or your Holy Ghost, I will: THIS MAN IS NOT GOING TO MARRY YOU. And that’s a good thing for you because saved and nice ain’t good enough. For some crazy reason, you’ve allowed niceness to substitute for integrity, honor, character, commitment, and holiness. You have settled because he’s nice? No, no, no, honey, you deserve more than a saved, nice man; you want a just and upright man. And since you don’t realize that, you need to take this Exodus out of this relationship and take the time and get to know that. The fact that you have allowed this for eight years is a reflection upon where you are at spiritually and also the depleted state of your self-esteem. You’ve allowed the desire for a husband to take precedence over maintaining the health of your spirit and your relationship with God. Get out while you still have time to allow God to renovate your life.

Q: I am a 38-year-old virgin who is still yet holding on, but within the last year I have really found myself struggling to maintain. I’ve asked God for more grace, fasted and prayed, but it is still a struggle. I’ve even asked God to send me the mate He has for me, but this hasn’t happened. People often feel that you can’t miss what you’ve never had but I’m missing it! What can I do? I want to keep my testimony but I’m tired of the struggle. Please keep me in prayer. ~Phyllis in Minnesota

A: My thoughts are: it’s a thin line! Online dating has become increasingly an option for meeting that special someone. Seventeen percent of the population, which, according to a survey by research organization Zogby International, is the number of women who truly believe they can find relationships and sexual fulfillment on the Internet. I’m sorry, but it’s already difficult and has its own share of challenges to even date someone that you can physically see; how much greater through a 17-inch monitor? I’m afraid that you may be resorting to this as escapism from either loneliness or lack of suitable mates. Many women opt for online dating because of the hardships of maintaining relationships in the physical so they take on relationships that have them fantasizing with romantic words. Don’t allow your frustration or desperation run you to an empty e-mail love affair.

OK, let’s just give you the benefit of doubt and say that you are not one of those desperate women. Well, if your online connection becomes serious, then he won’t mind sending a copy of his current credit report, a background check for any criminal history, HIV test results, his mother’s info., his job history, an authentic photo of himself, and verifiable marital status. Total honesty and openness is the only way that it can work, but make sure that you are not divulging personal information too early to a stranger. I had a young lady come to me for advice about her online relationship to a Christian man. As their relationship progressed from passive e-mails to a serious long distance relationship, I recommended that she not only get proof of his personal information, but a recommendation from his pastor and his other close confidants. He flew in to her city to meet her family and he also had a private meeting with her pastor. Their online meeting culminated into a successful marriage, but before you get your hopes up too high, not all online romances end up that way. I also have far more horror stories from Christian women who dated Christian men and even pastors online that ended up being their worst nightmare! Don’t download a virus into your heart. Be cautious, selective, wise and led by God and allow Him to be your ‘firewall’ of protection.

Q: I want to be like you when I grow up, Phyllis! A 38-year-old virgin?! I mean, well, not really, because I want a husband, some midnight sex and to lay in bed naked with him without having to cry in shame. The only tears I want to have is tears of joy because I just had an orgasm! Did you hear what I just said, Phyllis? I want to have some sex! I don’t want to go without sex for much longer! But what if we have to, Phyllis? What if the husband that you’re believing God for never comes? What if the Rapture comes before you could ever even get the chance to experience the sex “you’ve never had”? I’ve had to ask myself that same question and as the gulp was lodged in my throat, I couldn’t respond for weeks…The thought of not having sex, not having a husband…heart-wrenching! My desire is to get married, share my life with a man that truly loves me, experience and give in return deep intense love, have babies and experience ardor, riveting, cementing, penetrative, bottomless lovemaking! But that may never happen. As much as I desire it, as much as I pray for it, it may never happen. OK, I’ll let me check your pulse to see if you’re still living after realizing that you may never get married and have sex, ever again, or for some women like you, Phyllis…ever, at all.

And that’s what our relationship with God is: with Him for Who He is and not for what He does. So if the husband never comes, will you still live for Him or are we in just for the benefits? Are you a virgin because you believe God’s going to send you a husband or because God is your Husband? Are you with God for as long as you come through and as long as He gives us the desires of our hearts, or will God’s desire for us be good enough? The great task for the believer is to believe like those in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 who believed, held on to the promise of God, never received it, but still believed God. You don’t have to even receiving the tangible fulfillment of God’s promise. The Bible says they only saw it from a distance but never touched it. It’s living for God all the way, not because He’s going to do it, but if He never does it, not only do I still believe in God, but I live for Him. I live believing Him, I’ll die believing Him. Because if God doesn’t bring the husband, He’s still God. And He’s still worth me living my life for, even without Him giving me everything I want and desire. Not I will but what You Will, Lord…It’s having desire but not allowing your desire to replace God’s.

There’s nothing wrong with having the desire, but don’t let your desire for it, dethrone your desire to live in God’s will and His sovereignty. Hence, this is the life of the believer. You see the husband from a distance, long and desire for him but if you never get to touch him…it’s coming to a place of contentment in God’s will for your life while still desiring and believing. But understand, what you are believing for will be challenged. All while they were waiting in faith in Hebrews 11, they had to close the mouths of lions, escape fire and sword, chains, imprisonment, affliction and temptation (Hebrews 11:13-39). And that’s what you’re going through, the cycles of temptation, the cycle of life, is confronting what you believe. You’re quite OK, Phyllis. I get seasons of sexual longing and companionship but...
I don’t start pulling out my hair. It’s no longer a struggle but it’s the cycle of life and when it comes, I glide through it. It’s a natural healthy desire that’s maintained and governed. But when you don’t come to a healthy understanding about your desire, and you go through these longing stages with shame and guilt, when you finally get married, you don’t enjoy sex, because you didn’t develop a healthy desire for it in your singleness. You struggled the entire time with shame, guilt, and regret. It’s normal to go through these bouts where you long sex. They’ll be times of rest, but then they’ll be seasons where you never experience loneliness, don’t even think about a husband and then they’ll be seasons where you just want to outright give up, have some sex, and marry the next man with toes and fingers! What do you do then?

“Therefore then, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses…let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) And that sin which so readily clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us, Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith… and is also its Finisher…”

Hebrews 12:1, 2 AMP

Understanding the place that you are in, you can successfully get past that season and enter a state of rest. When you understand the course that God has set for you, you can endure with patience. You don’t want to end up like Esau who later in that chapter forfeited the promise God had for him for something cheap and worthless. You’ve come too far; don’t get to a place where you’re weary and tired and you forsake what’s ahead. Discern the season you’re in. When you’re tired, get rest, strength, and rejuvenated; get in a safe environment of protection. Keep fasting, keep praying; that is our life, that’s what we do. Keep desiring the husband and believing God for him, but whatever you do, don’t forfeit the birthright for a substitute meal; for a cheap Happy Meal Man that’s not even spiritually nutritious for you. I don’t know about you, but my husband and lovemaking is just around the corner and I’m not giving that up for something cheap and temporal. Take it from someone who’s had it: Keep your testimony. ♥

Need advice on dating? Ask Dr. Ty www.tyadams.org
TY: Tell me what dating has been like in the last three-and-a-half years.

Gayle: For me it’s been an experience of learning to deny myself, to be a better man of God, accountable and to wait on what God wants. It’s just taught me to stand on His word and what He says and not allow my desires to overrule His sovereignty.

TY: Many people have that scheduling off. Even though it’s a desire, it’s really balancing both timing and incorporating God’s Will. How do you do that with really loving someone but having to wait? It’s like having it right there and saying, “Don’t touch!”

Shaunee: For me it’s been seeing examples of people that have not waited. And really praying, asking God continually; you have to continually hear his voice. It would be so dangerous not to hear from God. King David was anointed 20 years before he stepped into it. “Here you go, here he is. Ok, now you’re going to wait.” A lot of people date, and when they feel like they’ve found the one they get married within a year, two years. And that’s fine for some people, but as for us, God has us on this path of almost dating four years. And it’s just like, well God…it’s whatever you want. We both really believe in order. And if God doesn’t say it, it can’t be. So for me, maintaining my emotions has been key and also still allowing God to be my companion, and to be my guidance. You know if I hadn’t been hearing from Him in this area, I probably would be married now without God’s permission.

TY: Continuing to hear is paramount because what I’ve seen with many people, with this mistake is, ok, it’s him so therefore doing something else to hear from God about it. I mean, what else do I need to pray about? This is my husband, let’s go ahead and get married.

G: Faith doesn’t come by what you’ve heard, it comes by what you’re hearing. It’s the progressive revelation that flows continually. So when you’re walking with God, it’s not what God has said that you’re standing on, it’s what God is saying. And if there is anything I can say NOW that I love about our relationship, is that I value the process. The process helped to free me from my past. Sometimes a lot of Christian marriages really don’t have an agape love. They still have that Eros love - still to benefit self. If I love her for what she can do for me or if I have the mindset that she’s been called to be my helpmate, that doesn’t give me permission to love her from that perspective. She is my helpmate, but she is also the other side of me that God says, “When I put this thing together, this is going to be the completed work.” I’ll say it like this: barrenness is only recognized thru intimacy. There’s some weaknesses that you’re only going to see when your intimate with someone. Because Sarah would have never known she was barren unless she tried to have kids. That intimacy is the thing that proved to her, “I have a weakness.” You’ve just got to get intimate to realize you are barren. And when I met her (Shaunee), there were sides of my life where I didn’t see that I was barren. I needed her intimacy to see where I was weak.

S: I have always been extremely independent. When I got with Gayle, he was somebody that had it together in almost every area. But even with all his wisdom and his knowledge and as much as I respected him, I backed up against him every time with anything he was trying to tell me. In the course of three-and-a-half years, God has slowly had to break me down. I thought I was submissive, thought I was humble, but it wasn’t until I started dating him that I saw another side of myself.

G: The most valuable thing I’ve seen in her is that she truly loves God, more than she loves me. The closer I get to God, the closer I get to her.

TY: How have you been able to do to develop the intimacy without being physical?

G: Yeah….God’s good! Single, Saved, and NOT having Sex!

TY: At least somebody is living the book! Hahahaha!

S: I can say for my part, we have established such a good friendship. To be able to talk and laugh at each other’s jokes like, holler laughing! Just to be able to go shopping together. Or in the summer, make some dollar ham sandwiches and just go have a picnic! We both love music and the Word. Some people will think you are too deep and spiritual but I can share God with Him. That, to me, is the highest level of intimacy, without physical sex.

G: The biggest thing that brings you closer to God and in a relationship is nothing physical anyway. Anyone who has every revolutionized

BLACK & WHITE

TRUTH ABOUT BEING EQUALLY YOKED
the world has always been through the principle of denying yourself and what your flesh wants. But here’s the thing: you really can’t make love to somebody unless you first know them apart from that physical nature – you’re just having sex. It’s nothing to do with truly making love to a person if you don’t really have that/intimacy formed with them before you had down with them. So, my thing is: we have the opportunity and privilege right now as the Body of Christ to give God something we’ll never be able to give Him in heaven ever again. Truly to say, every trial, every test, everything I’m going through right now - I have a privilege to lift up my hands and deny myself and give Him the glory NOW. I’ll never be able to do that ever. So. I have a privilege to show Him my dedication by denying myself and proving to Him that I want Him more than my flesh wants all that other stuff. That’s it’s all spirit. Here, it’s flesh and spirit. So by me denying my flesh, I’m showing that my spirit man is hungrier than my flesh man. The same thing with her. I get that opportunity right now before that covenant is established to say, I love you more than that. Here’s, my spirit man. I love you more than my flesh wants you.

TY: In terms of being equally yoked, because what I call a mis-matched or mis-mated couple is not so much people of two different races but two people who are not equally yoked in the spirit realm. What is equally yoked to you? And have you had issues as a biracial couple?

G: The thing I love about her is that when God sent her into my life, it’s the same genetic make-up, the same God DNA, so there are certain things that I can do or that I’ll say and she’ll pick it up. I don’t even have to say it. God don’t care one bit about biracial coupling. In the Bible when Miriam got upset because Moses was in a biracial relationship, God put her out of the camp for seven days. He said until you get healed, you’re not coming back. The vision can’t go any further with racism.

S: People say, “They’ll see us in the mall and I’ll be walking, coming from my store and he’s coming from his store and they don’t know that we’re together, but when they realize that we are, they are looking like, “What’s that?”

TY: Like he’s the butler, carrying your bags?! That is just stupid! How can you be a racist Christian?

S: I know black males to say to me, “I can’t believe you! Why are you going to sell us out?” It is just really sad, not that you don’t approve of who I am dating but that you’ve been saved all these years and you are still carrying racism in your heart. They didn’t ask, how does he treat you? Does he love God? They just looked at him and assessed, “you don’t need to be with him because he is white.” Here’s, I’ve never dated or talked to anybody other than black men, but it’s just so funny that the one person that God sent me, I don’t see color. I just see everything that I’ve asked God for: spiritually, mentally, all of those things matter to me more than anything else. It’s just like once you go through bad relationships, then you go to God, you really open yourself up to what God wants.

TY: When did you know it?

G: I knew I liked her when I hugged her, when she came to my church. On the way out, I gave her a hug and I felt it. It was…what in the world? Then I started calling her.

S: Yeah he was calling me too much!

G: She is so fake!

S: When I first felt myself start to like him, I told him one weekend, I don’t want to speak to you; I’m seeking God to see what God says. And I remember consecrating that Friday and Saturday, the Lord spoke to me that Sunday and the Lord told me it was His Will. That was the go ahead for me. It wasn’t like we were talking for a couple months and then I was like, “Lord, what do you want?” It was maybe a week. I was not even playing no games!

TY: What gives you peace? What does it feel like when you know that God is saying yes?

S: It’s a major weight lifted off. Because to be with somebody you shouldn’t be with and God says walk away, that is major, that’s too much to risk. You’ve lost not only your investment, but also your time.

TY: That’s why the hearing from God continually is very important. I don’t know that a lot of women have that type of peace.

S: Being in God’s perfect will is so comforting. That’s why I stopped saying let’s just hurry up and get married. For everything else in my life that I’ve waited on God for, in the end, the reward of waiting was so much greater. It’s going to come, it’s going to happen. But in the meantime, I’m still good with the process. I’m still good with Him working on me. A lot of women get so worried that this person is never going to come. While their mind is on that...worrying, they aren’t thinking about God. Gayle came and I wasn’t looking for him. I was out at an event, enjoying myself and BAM! There he was, standing in my face, eating a hotdog. I was like, “Who are you and what do you want?”

G: We look for what God wants for us out of lack and that’s not the position that you’re supposed to receive. Your position will always determine everything else. I feel like, so many people that say, “I need this, I need that, I need a man, I need a woman.” God can be all that you need in the moment that you are in. He has enough in Him to sustain you for the rest of your life. If God brings that person into your life, it’s for more than what you are lacking. If I’m lacking and say I need you in my life, then I’m just going to use her in the place that I am lacking. That’s still Eros love. Agape love is when I say she is here for more than just for me to fill my lacks wants and desires. There’s so much more to her than my weaknesses. She’s not just here to make up my weaknesses. When you get that kingdom concept, you really stay in God’s rest and you can receive what God has for you. ♥

Gayle and Shanice Brennan-to be wed in 2008. Gayle is a fluent teacher and minister and Shanice is a powerful singer, touring with the likes of Martha Minnis and Dr. Ty. www.myspace.com/verticallyoriented
Ty: How did you and Lady Gizelle meet?

JB: Before I was a pastor, I was the national youth director for the NAACP and Gizelle at the time was in charge of corporate fundraising so I actually met her in a work environment, not while I was in ministry. I was intentional in not dating or marrying someone from my church because I am from a legacy of preachers and so I wanted someone who would fall in love with me and not with what I do. My wife at the time was Roman Catholic and never heard of me and was completely unimpressed. I think that the first thing is that if you are interfacing with somebody that has power and prestige and is forward-thinking, is to never become a fan but to become a friend. Establish a friendship and become one another’s fan and that will catapult you to another level.

Ty: Many people in church don’t know how to become friends because we did a different kind of dating out in the world. So it is different trying to reestablish what the fine lines of dating are once you get inside the church. Many men don’t even know how to approach a woman in church.

JB: Right, but we are at a place where the average man in church does not have to approach a woman. The women in church are so overtly aggressive, more so than in the club, because the church has taught our young women to get saved, become a tither and the next step is: you are going to get married. And here is the bad news that they are not talking about in singles conferences and in ministerial preachments, is that the percentage is that more often than not, you are not going to get married. What if it doesn’t happen?

Ty: A lot of people are actually serving God based upon the benefits. When ministering, I often ask, “What if Boaz never shows up? Am I serving God just so that I can get a man?”

JB: And he is saying you are serving Him to get a man, you are serving Him to get Jesus. He has never promised that He will give you a physical fixture. I will be with you always, but won’t send someone to be with you always. So we need to preach a different kind of Gospel: How am I happy single? We use clichés like “Single and Satisfied,” but what happens when I am dissatisfied and that dissatisfaction is my thorn. You have to have a Damascus Road experience. You are going to get a lot of letters from this, but, most young men don’t get married, even if they know she’s the one, until there is a trauma. My mama died, I got court, I was in a car accident and you were the only one there; you bailed me out of jail. Something then happens dramatic for a man to say this is it.

You have a lot of girlfriends who are educated, who are corporately progressive and don’t have anybody. So what if singleness is my cross? You have everything else, but what God has designed and purposed for you is that He wants you to Himself. And no one is giving high fives over that.

Ty: I don’t think so because there are many people who have crossed over into the church who have not necessarily arrived to the place in their life where they have been healed from other issues prior to salvation. Is the church receiving their healing or do we just have the game face on?

JB: The church has implanted a false sense of co-dependency. If you go to my church and I preach to you every week that in 30 days your man is coming, by the end of the year you’re going to have a husband, it then subconsciously shifts my spirit of expectation. So at the end of those 30 days, or at the end of that year, I begin to question God and myself. And as a result of that, in the church, lesbianism becomes available, because it has been impressed upon me in church not to be alone. So, single, saved, gifted and intelligent women will be satisfied dating a married man or even a woman because they want company. I don’t want to be by myself because nothing has ever told me how to be self-sufficient. It has taught me that if you keep yourself up good, wear a St. Johns suit, get a Chanel bag, don’t do earrings that dangle, don’t wear red lipstick, don’t get any tattoos, don’t be overly friendly, don’t initiate a friendship because they are going to think that you are loose. So then what are my options? What then happens to me when the Man that God has for me, Ty, doesn’t live in Detroit? What happens when...
Ty: And a lot of people in church are carrying their sex partners that they slept with still inside of them. What is the process and why is it difficult for people to get to that place of purging?

JB: It is difficult because we don’t take breathing time. You and I break up, so the next person that invites me to the movies, I’m going with them because I am trying to get past you. It was a challenge for me being married because I was never successfully single. So, my first time being in a monogamous relationship was being married. I had to then recalibrate, what then happens for me as a man when my phone no longer rings. That’s a different kind of challenge.

Ty: And that’s a hard thing for a man’s ego. The world has a man thinking that he has to have a woman in order for him to be a man.

JB: No. The world tells him that he has to have more than one. So then, the issue is not the average man isn’t battle loneliness. The average man is battling completion. So, I have this woman, I am in love with her, she is meeting all of my needs, but because of how I have been groomed as a man, this can’t be enough. I have learned how to professionally play.

Ty: Ok. So how does a play a play out the game?

JB: You have to have a Damascus Road experience. You are going to get a lot of letters from this, but, most young men don’t get married, even if they know she’s the one, until there is a trauma. My mama died, I got court, I was in a car accident and you were the only one there; you bailed me out of jail. Something then happens dramatic for a man to say this is it. Even if I have been dating you for three years, I am going to put you on cruise control until it looks like I am getting ready to lose you. And then when I’m going to lose you, then I am going to start up to the plate. So, the average man is not buying flowers until you are ready to leave.

Ty: She’ll end up being just somebody’s girlfriend her whole life. How does she allow that shifting to take place where is broken from his lack of commitment or avoidance of it?

JB: Allow her self to be pursued; she has to be non-pressured.

Ty: I think women have lost the art of that. It is innate, it is his nature for a man to chase; he wants to pursue something that’s hard to get. So, once a woman has laid everything on the table, I mean, what is there to pursue? He has been in the candy shop; he has already had sex with her.

JB: Here is the issue: we are in this restaurant, Ty, and the table is set, but this is not dinner; we haven’t ordered yet. It’s up to the woman to say, “This is what I have to offer. You have to order it, but before you order it, know in advance how much this cost. Look over this menu; you can get just the appetizer, or if you are on a limited budget, get soup. But in order for you to get to the entrée page, it is a higher cost. And I don’t do sharing plates at this 5-star restaurant. Only order what you can afford.” And at an expensive restaurant, you can’t split the bill. They are only bringing one bill to this table!

Ty: Oh, no, I don’t do dutch! Don’t even step if you can’t afford me! But a lot of times we settle for less. We bend because we don’t want to be lonely at home on a Friday night by ourselves.

JB: Or, they have never been to a 5-star restaurant and are used to take-out. And so, if you are used to take out you will eat in the car.

Ty: Or drive-thru mentality.

JB: Right. or you will take it home and won’t even get a plate. You will eat out of the bag, and you’re home! That’s where we ended up. So I will get with a man and I will let him drop me off at work and let him take my car because he doesn’t have one—because I am used to take-out. You don’t have to take me anywhere; we can watch what’s free on my cable—because I am used to take out. But when I re-order my thinking to say in this menu—and the average young woman over 30 has a kid, so when you are ordering from this menu, you are not just taking me. You are taking me and my kid.

Or I am going to love you and your child and it has to be all of us. So, if you are dating me, you are dating me and my son. You are dating me and my daughter. It’s not, “I am not going to let you around my child until we are engaged,” because children have a greater gift of discernment and they will tell you from the door, ‘I don’t like Mr. Tony.’ They don’t know why, but they don’t want to be around him because they can sense it and they can sense the stuff the mother can’t.

Ty: When then, should a woman bring her child around a man.

JB: When the woman has decided, I want to be with him. If you are still in the appetizer stages, he doesn’t need to know your children. He doesn’t need to be there until he is ‘ordering’ higher.

Ty: I know you are teaching from experience. Lady Gizelle was probably like….whatever!

JB: Yeah, I was hazed. I’m a Kappa and I kept trying to tell her that hazing was illegal—in EVERY state! But I think that it was necessary because if you want it, you will fight for it. And if it comes easy then you won’t appreciate it. When you realize that a woman is a blessing, and every blessing that you have ever received, you had to fight for. Favor came as a gift but the blessing came through a struggle. You don’t know where you are. Ty, in any relationship you have had since you were 16, you didn’t really know that you loved him until you all broke up once and then you took him back. He gets on my nerves, he does stuff that makes me sick but I love him. And you have to get to that place, where you know the good, the bad and the ugly, and I will take all 3 of them.

Ty: How does a woman or a man coming out of an ugly past where I was just too’ up from the flo’ up, thugged out in the streets, sleeping with a number of people, and now I am here in church. How do transition from how I operated in relationships prior to being saved?

JB: We teach women to get a king because you are a queen. It is not hard to get a king. It is hard to be a queen. The wisest man that ever lived was Solomon and Solomon had 500 wives and 300 concubines. In Old Testament tradition, you could marry as many women as you could afford. The question then that we have to ask is, if Solomon was the richest man that ever lived, why did the concubines stay concubines and never graduate to wives? The difference is that the wives had covenant whereas the concubines had covering.

Dr. Jamal and Gizelle Bryant are the Pastors of Empowerment Temple in Baltimore, MD. www.empowermenttemple.org
11. What is their mission in life?
12. Career/Job: How long have they been working? How many jobs in the last 5 years?
13. Have they ever been fired? What is the longest held job/career?
14. How many hours do they work currently? Does their work require travel? Will this affect the relationship after you marry?
15. Income
16. Spending habits and monthly obligations
17. Child Support or Alimony?
18. Criminal Background Check
19. Credit Report
20. Banks Statements
21. Investments, Savings, Retirement plans?
22. Loans, debts, bankruptcy? If so, how do they plan to eliminate those debts?
23. Any history of gambling?
24. Wills? What will be the distribution of their wealth before and after death?
25. Health Insurance? Health history? Mental, physical, emotional problems?
26. How is the health of their emotional state or self-esteem?
27. Are they on any medications currently?
28. History of any drug use, alcohol, or cigarettes
29. Educational History
30. Any loans or debts from education? Do they plan to further their education?
31. What are their hobbies and how much time and money do they spend on them?
32. What hobbies will they be interested in sharing with or without their spouse?
33. How much time do they watch TV/movies during any given week? What is the type or ratings of these shows?
34. Internet browsing for personal use? How many hours a week?
35. Who do they look to for advice and counsel?
36. What is their social life like and who are their closest friends?
37. How much do they share with their friends about their relationships?
38. How much time do they spend with their friends on any given week?
39. Is there social drinking involved?
40. Do they invest in their outer appearance? Is there upkeep in their clothing, hair, cleanliness of their teeth, weight management?
41. What genre of music do they listen to and how often?
42. Who were they raised by?
43. Who had the most impact on their upbringing? List significant experiences, both positive and negative.
44. Were they abused in any way as a child? (Sexually, physically, emotionally?) If so, have they been healed from those experiences?
45. History of their parents (marital status, occupations, parenting methods, health)?
46. What is their current relationship like with their parents and family?
47. Define Love/Their concept love
48. What is their distribution of intimacy? How will they express it in the marriage?
49. What is their definition of romance? How will they express it in the marriage?
50. List their last 3 to 5 intimate relationships, how they began and ended
51. Have they ever been married before or engaged? How many times?
52. If so, how long were those relationships and how did they end?
53. How did they personally contribute to the failure of those relationships?
54. Any children from those relationships?
55. If so, how do they contribute to those children? Emotionally? Psychologically? Financially?
56. What is the relationship like currently with their former spouse(s)?
57. Have they ever been abusive or violent in any relationships?
58. Current living conditions. Own or rent? Cleanliness? Maintenance and Upkeep?
59. Whose name is on the mortgage, if owned?
60. Where will you live when you are married?
61. How much money will you spend on a house? Will you use both incomes?
62. Will both spouses have to work? How much money will you need to live your lives together? Monthly budget and expenses?
63. What bank accounts will be shared or separate?
64. What percentage of your income will be saved?
65. Who will handle the payment of bills?
66. List what you consider to be major purchases and define how you will pay for them
67. Will you loan money to relatives? How much?
68. Are the roles for housekeeping and chores defined?
70. What are their views on politics?
71. What are their views on abortion?
72. Do you have open, candid conversations about sex?
73. What are their religious beliefs about pre-marital sex?
74. Are they sexually active?
75. When was their last sexual activity?
76. Have they ever engaged in any homosexual relationships?
77. Have they ever engaged in pedophilic activity (sexual activity with children)?
78. Have they ever engaged in any incestuous activity (sexual activity with family members)?
79. A copy of their HIV/AIDS test or testing for other sexually transmitted diseases
80. Past struggles in sexual history, abuse, pornography and adultery/infidelity? How have they overcome them?
81. Any current struggles with sexual activity?
82. What are their overall beliefs about sex?
83. Any sexual taboos or dislikes?
84. How often would they like to have sex when married?
85. What are their expectations or what sexual acts do they expect to engage in when married?
86. What are their views on birth control?
87. Would they like to have children? If so, how many? Will the children be planned? Pregnancy prevention?
88. If children from previous relationships, how have the children adjusted? Do the children oppose the relationship?
89. How will the children be disciplined?
90. If both spouses are working, who will take off if there are children emergencies?
91. How do they handle stress or anger?
92. How effectively do they communicate or listen? Do disagreements handled immediately or prolonged?
93. How do you both plan to solve conflicts or disagreements? Will marital counseling be used as intervention and under what circumstances?
94. What role will in-laws play in your marriage? What limitations and boundaries have been set?
95. Will parents be allowed to borrow money or move in? What exceptions if any have been set, i.e., illness?
96. What plans have been made in the event of severe illness, paralysis, or death of your spouse?
97. Which holidays are observed or the most important?
98. How and where will the holidays be spent or celebrated?
99. How many vacations will be taken a year? How will they be planned and saved for?
100. Has pre-marital counseling been sought and integrated in your decision to be married?
101. Can you happily marry your partner with an unswervingly, uninterrupted commitment to marriage if any of the above does not change to your satisfaction?
I do the ultimate guide to love and relationships
I didn’t do the men
Church, at the Black
you know,
strong, Black
handle a
brothers can’t
People say
they are use to
being in control;
divorced and widowed. Women are used
women and a great deal of them are single,
making money but he’s a Christian. some women will
about the Bible but he comes to church. Let’s say he’s
man, Reverend Wonder bread. He don’t know nothing

about them, completely. But let’s look at a saved
man, Reverend Wonder bread. He don’t know nothing
about the Bible but he comes to church. Let’s say he’s
a healthy man, has no education, no job and no way of
making money but he’s a Christian. Some women will
settle for that.

Now the Black church is about seventy percent
women and a great deal of them are single, divorced
and widowed. Women are used to being in control;
they are use to being the boss. People say brothers can’t
handle a
Black woman. But, you
know, at the Black
Church, looking at the men
were
have left...the Bible says do not be unequally yoked
with unbelievers. Now you have a problem on your
hands when you have an unsaved Black man. You
have the unsaved men, who-you’re not supposed to
date, but our sisters do date them, try to convert them
then marry them, and change them. That’s what comes
from women being leaders and heads of the household.
Women innately think that they can change somebody.
They marry somebody and say, “Oh! He would be
perfect if I could get him to get rid of the Jheri Curl,
get him to shave the hair on his chest and get him to
get rid of that gold tooth-woo! He’d be fine! He will be
like Denzel!!” But he’s not thinking about changing.

When you start narrowing it down to, saved, really
in love with Jesus, godly, living his life by the scriptures,
his has the Word as his final authority, he’s a faithful man
of God in a church, full of the Holy Ghost, sensitive
and understanding as well as interesting and fun to be
around, lovable, energetic, dynamic, well-educated,
has a good-paying job AND he’s healthy? Ok, now the
percentage has gone down; from 40%, to 30%,
10%, 5%. Oh, man! He’s a rare breed walking
around here. He is not a
w h o r e m o r n e r , doesn’t
have eyes for all the
ladies, he’s not
dating 25 women
in the church, and
all the women
can’t tell you what
he’s like in bed;
that guy is rare. A
man who
will marry you
and s t a y
committed to the marriage and the vow he made
before God, and love you like Christ loves the church
and provide or have the potential to provide and go
somewhere in life? Man, you are talking about 1% of
the Black men in church. It is going to come down to
this: MAY THE BEST WOMAN WIN!

2. He won’t commit? Any woman that will date a
guy for more than three years - he is wasting your time.
I don’t need five weeks to find out if I want to be with
Halle Berry. Come on someone! It doesn’t take years to
figure it out; that is a lie that men will tell women.
He will stay there and ride it out. You date someone
at 18, for 4 or 5 years, and it doesn’t work out; now
you’re 23 and you’ve spent all this time with one guy.
So now you meet another guy and you date him for
four years and now you’re 27. You meet another guy
and he stalls you out for another 3 years. Now you are
30 and you are still single and you have dated 3 guys
and they’ve had the best of you! Six months to one
year, you ought to already know if you want to marry
somebody. Don’t tell me ya’ll are dating several years and
he’s like in bed; that guy is rare. A man who
is with you and even if he can’t marry you within
six months to a year, he needs to be bringing up the
subject. If he hasn’t brought it up, you need to step!
Breaking is good. Women act as if it’s the worst thing
in the world to go with someone then breakup. That
means you can cross him off the list officially, and
don’t have to look back. That’s a great thing, to realize
you have nothing in common and the relationship is
not good for you. You need to tell him, “If you are not
ready to make a commitment to the next level,
that’s fine. I’m just letting you know that MY agenda
is going to the next level. You don’t have to go with me,
it is okay, but I’m leaving and going to the next
level.”

3. Turned out by a down low brother. He’s un-
Christian, he’s not a godly man, bottom line. The
average gay male has between 50 to 70 partners
a year; a homosexual is a man whose sexuality is
completely out of control and completely lost driven.
A man can compartmentalize sex; he can have his
feelings and emotions and love over here but sex is
just sex. A man can have sex with a woman and not
love her at all. He can care about her, but not really
be deeply, romantically in love with her. That’s not
a woman’s nature to just not want to have sex without
any emotional involvement. Women already have this

want to bond with somebody. Men are visual. We get
turned on by what we see and women are turned on
by what they feel. In the church it is no different. The
bottom line: that is flesh. A homosexual is man that is
completely and totally lust- driven. He’s an idolater
and he’s out of control. The power of that lifestyle is
secrecy. The down-low brother is killing the church
because the church is the only sector that this lifestyle
is still openly condemned in. You cannot function and
openly be gay in a Christian church. You can go to
one of these false churches, living in the land of make-
believe, but not a Bible believing church. It’s going to
be subjugated and put down.

That’s why we have a bunch of men in church who
are gay and they go ahead and marry some woman.
They are battling and they know that this lifestyle is
not right; they want to be validated by God. And most
of them have daddy issues. They want to be validated
by a father and what would be the greatest validation
than to be validated by the heavenly Father by using
their gifts? But they have not conquered this sex drive
that is out of control, this inordinate affection that they
have. So they marry. So when they’ve had the best of
underneath the covers and that is why “down-low” is
so big in the church. If it’s not taught how to master
the flesh in church, women will continue to fall prey
to the down-low brother and become the victims of
HIV/AIDS. They are going to have to learn how to
look past his shout and look for the traits of a man who
is lustful and then run.

4. It takes two to tango. Many women in the church
are having just as much sex as the men in church. It isn’t
just men laying traps and trying to catch something.
Many women are lonely and they want somebody;
they want sex just as much as the men do. That’s
why men keep doing what they are doing because the
women keep giving it up. I know women right now
who say they would rather be a half Christian and have
a man than to be completely saved and have no man.
There is no camaraderie among women. Women are
each others’ worst rivals. And what one woman won’t
do, another woman will. A man knows if he can’t get
it from you, some woman is going to give it to him. Some
weak needy woman is going to give it to him. So if women
can say no pants for nobody and go on a National Pantes Strike and have no sex with no men,
nowhere, I’ll bet you men would start straightening up.
But women need to rally and start the strike!
Visit Marlin Reid at www.newwineglory.org.
Marrying Out of Turn

Ty: How did you marry the wrong man?

Sarah: Well, I was a very young Christian at the time that I met him. He was walking in the vision, his purpose that the Lord had placed on him. I was drawn to him because I saw his total vision for his ministry, for his halfway house—things he wanted to do for the men of God and he started acting on that and we became very close, through that ministry. As we became very good friends upon completion of one of those projects, the Lord had revealed to me—well, I thought the Lord had revealed to me—that he had qualities that were suitable for a mate and his ambition was very similar to mine. So, our marriage was based on a vision, on a dream.

Sarah: I think the biggest problem that we have as Christians is that we fail to wait on God’s timing. He and I had great purpose together in ministry but that didn’t necessarily mean that we were supposed to be married. The Lord sends us a lot of people to help us on our journey but that doesn’t mean that they are suitable as our help meet. They weren’t ordained by God to be our husbands or our wives. We have to look to see if that person measures up to the Word of God. Is this person suitable to be our husband or our wife? If the gifts are without repentance, they can be used with somebody who is a hot mess! So, this is how the enemy tricks the women who are in church. He would prophecy to me and speak out of his giftings, but he didn’t have the ability to move my spirit.

Ty: Marrying solely on a person’s vision or their assignment is not the basis for any decision to marry that person. Oftentimes we get caught up in that. Just because a person can prophecy does not mean that we are called into covenant with that person.

Sarah: Before we got married…I have to be honest…

Sarah: We were married for 10 months before he left the home.

Ty: And when did you see the signs that you made a bad decision?

Sarah: We believed that we had heard from the Lord concerning our marriage, but at the same time the Lord didn’t say to us to live under my parent’s roof during our marriage. The Bible says you have to cleave and leave! So I didn’t have a high enough standard for myself but at the same time, remember I was a baby Christian. So I believed that what he was telling me was total truth. I believed the Lord had delivered him. I believed the Lord was going to raise him up. I believed that if we made the covenant of marriage together that the Lord would provide like my ex-husband said He would. But what effort was the man of God putting forth? None! And faith without works is dead!

Ty: And not only that, is he led of the Holy Spirit? Yes, he is operating in his giftings, but is he led? We have to be able to separate the gift from the person. If the gifts are without repentance, they can be used with somebody who is a hot mess! So, this is how the enemy tricks the women who are in church because this guy is saved and he isn’t out in the streets, thuggin’ or nothing…and he can prophecy! So you are thinking you got a good man. But if you look with a sharpened, skilled eye, and through the eyes of discernment and wisdom, you can see so many things when you come out of the flesh and your emotions.

Sarah: Every person was given a gift from God. Does that mean that they are walking in their destiny under the anointing and the covering of the Holy Spirit? No, it does not! Because my spirit never leaped; my spirit never moved when he would talk to me. There were too many things interfering with what wasn’t right. He had too much garbage in the midst of his gifts. He had too much that was unresolved. He would prophecy to me and speak out of his giftings, but he didn’t have the ability to move my spirit.

Ty: How long were you married?

Sarah: We were married for 10 months before he left the home.

Ty: And how did you marry the wrong man?

Sarah: You want a wife but no job?!! It’s going to cost to love—love costs; it has a price tag!

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Sarah: We were married for 10 months before he left the home.

Ty: And when did you see the signs that you made a bad decision?

Sarah: We believed that we had heard from the Lord concerning our marriage, but at the same time the Lord didn’t say to us to live under my parent’s roof during our marriage. The Bible says you have to cleave and leave! So I didn’t have a high enough standard for myself but at the same time, remember I was a baby Christian. So I believed that what he was telling me was total truth. I believed the Lord had delivered him. I believed the Lord was going to raise him up. I believed that if we made the covenant of marriage together that the Lord would provide like my ex-husband said He would. But what effort was the man of God putting forth? None! And faith without works is dead!

Ty: And not only that, is he led of the Holy Spirit? Yes, he is operating in his giftings, but is he led? We have to be able to separate the gift from the person. If the gifts are without repentance, they can be used with somebody who is a hot mess! So, this is how the enemy tricks the women who are in church because this guy is saved and he isn’t out in the streets, thuggin’ or nothing…and he can prophecy! So you are thinking you got a good man. But if you look with a sharpened, skilled eye, and through the
“Yes, it is. The Lord told us both on the same day, at the same time that we were to be married. And the Bible says what God has put together let no man put asunder. So are you saying that the Bible is wrong?” I kept arguing that point but it comes down to the fact that it wasn’t God’s timing. God may have said those things, but that certainly wasn’t the time or place for that because things were not in order. But prior to the marriage, I knew I was in trouble. There were too many things that were not right. I believe I was a victim of entrapment. Everyone surrounding my ex-husband took advantage of a young Christian because I was the great white light of hope in his life. If he married me, everything would go back to normal, he wouldn’t be hiding from homosexuality anymore; he wouldn’t be burdened with the demons of deception anymore because his wife could make it right. The only one who can make it right is God, not I.

Ty: Often women are guilty of trying to fix a man.

Sarah: We are the great repairers! But I truly believed that my ex-husband had been delivered from his homosexuality. I really believed it with everything in me. I never once for a moment entertained the thought that he would go back into that lifestyle. He had such animosity toward it.

Ty: Sometimes we think we have been delivered from some things but they have only been buried. So why do you think he went back?

Sarah: Both of us were terrified on our wedding night. We would hold hands every once in a while but we were not intimate at all prior to marriage. This was the first time (so he told me) that he had had sex in three years. So when our marriage was consummated, those spirits awakened in him and he now had a three-year itch. So when our marriage was consummated, he was not satisfied. He always said he needed more. I would come home and he had already had his pleasure. I don’t know how many times he had woken up at night and had to do it. We would hold hands every once in a while, but the passion was not there. Months later the Lord showed me that that spirit had been awakened in him. The signs were all there. Here we are, newlyweds, and in the 10 months that we were married we had intercourse maybe 6 times. Months would go by without any intimacy. You know something is not right.

Ty: What was the space like? Was there talking?

Sarah: If you equate it to having a one-night stand without alcohol….

Ty: You made that vividly plain!

Sarah: We didn’t know anything about one another or each other’s bodies. And I am not even talking about sex. I’m talking about intimacy—there’s a huge difference. We need to teach on intimacy because we are missing the boat. We don’t even have intimacy with Christ; we are afraid of it. If you are intimate with God the truth comes out. If you are intimate with God you have to get delivered from some things.

Ty: What did you learn most about marrying out of turn? And what would you say to a woman who is waiting and is like, “OK, I am tired of waiting and I am just going to do this!”

Sarah: Being single, alone and waiting is hard, but the pain of a miserable marriage is worse. If you don’t wait, this will be the biggest mistake of your life. What I think I learned most is that when things are not in order, oh, you suffer. You suffer endlessly. We have to decide on the things of God. I pray that I will never make that decision again if it is not of God.

Pain is at so many levels. I could write a book about it; you have left me with heartache and pain… the kind that only God can come in and repair.

Ty: This healing process is not an easy thing and it’s not overnight.

Sarah: Because you have to deal with soul ties; they don’t just go away. We have broken the covenant, but my heart is still connected to him. It’s like experiencing a death and there are different sides of that death. You go through anger, you go through sorrow; you go through all of that. I did have some praying women around me that really got me through and really helped save my life so that I didn’t do anything stupid. I really wasn’t going to make it. I barley could go to work; I would lock myself in my bedroom. Everyone had disappointed me. My friends knew I was going through a divorce and not one of them called me during that time. Nobody called me, nobody reached out to me. I had two friends that prayed me through that time and I will always be grateful to God for them. Everyone else in my life was a lie. But I stayed faithful though. I was never angry with God but I sought Him for answers. And He did just that, but He never gave me more than I could handle.

We have broken the covenant, but my heart is still connected to him. It’s like experiencing a death…

Ty: What did you learn about you?

Sarah: That I wasn’t healed from old things. That was one of the biggest messages. I learned that I am a woman of great strength and no matter what, I will still come out victorious on the other side. I believe the sole purpose of God was to bring me to my place in ministry; to bring me to my place of destiny and purpose. You have a calling on your life and the devil fights you every step of the way. And the only thing you can do for yourself and your salvation and your own soul purposes is to reflect and see from where God has brought you. I’ve never stopped praising God. During that time, I shouted and rejoiced ever so much. And I will never forget, Evangelist Mary Montgomery. She came up to me in church and said, “I just want to know, what has the Lord done for you? You are a praising woman?” And I looked at her and said, “It’s not what he has done, but what He is about to do!” I praised Him all the way through! And I cried—don’t think I didn’t. I cry for the man of God now, I cry for his soul. I do look back sometimes and I laugh, though, because when we were friends, we were the best of friends before we got married. We were great as friends; we were horrible as husband and wife. I know that healing is a process. We live in a microwave society, we want everything done right now. Put it in the microwave for 30 seconds, the heat is on and I am good. But I lay on the altar for weeks just sobbing and coughing and purging because it wasn’t out of me yet. It is still not out of me. Just the other night I was listening to some worship music on the way home from school and I pulled up in the driveway and I was just crying and sobbing, saying, “Lord, just take this all out of me so that I don’t have to live with this anymore. I don’t want any more bitterness rooted deep down. Heal me from the inside out.” It’s like a surgery, He opens you up, He works on the organs, He closes you back up and you have to heal. I’m in recovery. Hallelujah! ♥
Statistics show that approximately 1300 new stepfamilies are formed every day in the US, and it’s predicted that by 2010 there will be more stepfamilies in the U.S. than any other type of family. At the same time, though stepfamilies are becoming the most common family unit, research indicates that 60 to 73 percent of these marriages will end in divorce. Nonetheless, stepfamilies are not impossible. Despite the odds, you serve a God that has never failed in building failure proof families! But for most step or blended families looking to experience stepfamily life is not impossible. Give yourself time to develop a workable relationship, and add liberal ounces of keen understanding as to how stepfamilies work best. When you plug in to wisdom and power up your faith, an inseparable, smoothly blended family awaits your enjoyment!

- **Eliminate ex-spousal drama.** The biological parent should develop a working relationship with the ex-spouse. Determine the role that the former spouse plays in the family, establishing boundaries and implementing scheduled visitations.

- **Don’t force love.** Allow children to love both biological parents and don’t force a relationship with the stepparent. Give yourself time to develop a workable relationship. Some research suggests that children under the age of 5 will bond with a stepparent within one to two years. With older children, teenagers in particular, it may take as many years as their age. So give them space and time to work through their emotions. Let children set the pace for their new step-relationships and don’t worry if they aren’t bonding as quickly as you’d like. Understand that relationship building takes years, not months.

- **Protect your family from stepfamily incest.** Even Christian families overlook the potential for sexual pressures within the home. The incidence of stepfamily incest is eight times greater than in biological families. Stepsiblings in particular are often confronted with sexual thoughts that lead to shame or inappropriate behavior. Sexual indiscretions in stepfamilies are real and must be guarded against.

- **Don’t force titles.** Being called “Mom” or “Dad” by a stepchild may not happen right away. Don’t force it personally. Allow those titles to come gradually.

- **Quality Time.** Ensure spending time alone with your spouse and making marital intimacy a priority. Give your stepchildren time away from you, preferably with their biological parent. If you both have brought children to the marriage, be sure to spend plenty of time with your own children so they don’t feel abandoned in your attempt to bond with your new stepchildren.

- **Discipline as a team.** Most stepfamilies struggle with the most effective way to administer discipline to their children and stepchildren, and the division this can create wreaks havoc on the stepfamily unit. Present a united front by creating a discipline action plan before problems arise. Discuss specifics: what forms of discipline your parents used, the discipline methods you have been using, and what punishments you feel are most effective. Work toward unity before the need to discipline arises. Keep in perspective the age differences, personality differences, and types of offenses each of your children or stepchildren are most likely to commit (deceit, talking back, defiance, etc.). Consider creating a list of offenses and your agreed-upon consequences, and share it with your children what the rules are and the consequences for breaking them. When either adult acts outside these negotiated rules (or fails to uphold them), children can divide and conquer the couple. With specific consequences spelled out, and responded to in accordance, you can eliminate conflict and resentment.

- **Back each other up.** If a parent or stepparent issues a command or administers a punishment, the other adult must stand in agreement in front of the children. Even if a parent feels that a stepparent is being too harsh (or vice versa), the couple must be united in front of the children. If the couple is not, the children quickly “divide and conquer,” creating chaos and fractured relationships in the stepfamily. Agree to agree in front of the kids, and enforce the command or punishment. Then talk about it later behind closed doors and decide together if changes need to be made.

- **Let the biological parent take the heat.** To create the least amount of long-term resentment in the children, early in the blending process, the biological parent needs to be the one to administer discipline, not the stepparent. This is absolutely crucial, no matter how difficult this is for the parent to be the “bad guy” and how hard it is for the stepparent to step back when faced with a defiant child or teen. When the parent handles the discipline, it bypasses conflict with former spouses, bitterness taking root in children’s hearts, and obstacles in relationship-building between stepchildren and stepparents. It’s generally best for the biological parent to remain the main source of nurturance, affection and discipline.

- **Foster peace and nurture healing.** Children that have been through divorce or the death of a parent, now must adjust to new stepparents and other new family members. So they will need positive reinforcement, encouragement, and love more than they need a heavy hand. Yes, every child needs structure, consistent boundaries, and effective discipline. However, adults need to
recognize when a child is acting out of the pain and grief associated with the loss of the first marriage. The inner pain that the child is dealing with will test the limits of this new family unit to see if it can hold up under pressure. It is important for their own spiritual and emotional healing to now see peaceful conflict resolution.

- **Parenting School.** Consider taking a parenting course together to improve your parenting skills. Read parenting books together, and create fun memories with your children and stepchildren. Note: engaged couples should seek professional counseling on blended families well in advance of the wedding.

- **Allegiance to the parents.** Children’s loyalty to their biological parents may interfere with their acceptance of you. Children are often emotionally torn when they enjoy a stepparent. The fear that liking you somehow hurts their non-custodial, biological parent is common. Allow children to keep their loyalties and encourage contact with biological parents. The “new” parent should never criticize the absent parent, as it will sabotage the children’s opinion of you.

- **Get involved.** Share your talents, skills and interests with the child and become curious about theirs. Get involved in their activities and their hobbies. Know what they are doing at school, church and in extracurricular activities, and make it your aim to be a part. These shared interests become points of connection that strengthen trust between stepparent and stepchild but balance interest in the child without coming on too strong.

And finally, don’t give up! The first two years or more may pose some challenges but this can be expected when you are pouring several personalities and characteristics, and even new changes to adjust to, into one blender. Challenges are to be expected when you are mixing several components in attempts to blend a united family. Chopping, pressing, grinding, crushing, shredding, comes with blending; in order to mix smoothly where the mixture does not become separated, each ingredient has to lose its form in order to become one. Hence, an uncomfortable state when the form is being reshaped.

This is the period when blended families need to be very flexible, compromising, pragmatic, persevering, and willing to abandon preconceptions. If you reach an impasse as a couple or family, find a solid Christian counselor with knowledge of stepfamilies. Couples who attempt to “go at it alone” may be setting themselves up for frustration and failure. Many couples grossly underestimated the transition that marriage or remarriage has on the single-parent home. Blended families present a whole set of parenting challenges that must be navigated with extreme care and an unswerving, fearless dedication against opposition. The mixing of your new family will become inseparable when all those that are in the blended family remain plugged into God. Pour and enjoy! ♥
DM: In the church we’ve allowed the enemy to trick us into believing that adversity won’t draw you closer together but instead we’ve allowed adversity to draw a wedge between us. Rather than going into prayer, we go into an argument or we go into rage and it spews over. I’ve seen in this last year a lot of major pastors get caught up…It’s taking control of the church and it seems like there is no end. There has to be someone who stands up.

TM: And to work at whatever it is, to even show the life to our children; what it’s supposed to be. I mean, the first thing is always, “I quit – I don’t have to deal with this anymore…”

DM: There has to be an attitude with both people that I’m gonna do whatever it takes to make this thing work. That’s what I’m gonna do.

TM: Yu know, it’s a wonderful thing even with the humps and the bumps. Not to say that we don’t have disagreements. And we have learned through the years that it’s ok to agree to disagree. Not that he would always be right and not that I would always be right, but we both want this thing to work.

DM: And for the brothers, if we could stop yielding to the temptation. It’s not saying that were not gonna be tempted…

TM: and some days the sisters are just as bad!

DM: But we gotta stop just yielding to it cuz He’s gonna make a way for our escape, you just gotta take the way. There has to be something that’s gonna show people, this is how you can make it.

Ty: The process of temptation and the purpose of it comes to draw the character of God out of us, to develop and strengthen love. Why do think that the divorce rate is so high?

TM: I had a talk with my oldest daughter, she’s 21, and I told her, “I’m not saying that you can’t date.” And I’ve read your book, Ty. I said that when you do go out, go to a social place and don’t be in those secret places, you’ll keep yaself cuz you’ll get to kissin’ and you’ll get to rubbin’ – I said you gone get moist and everything (DM laughin’ hysterically)……

Ty: WAIT, Tamela, you sound like one of them old mothers…you gone get MOIST!

TM: I’m tryin’ to not get so graphic cuz I wanna use a deeper word, but it’s just the point, you know? If we could just be real with the kids, we need to tell them.

DM: But now we’re seein’ a generation of kids who don’t believe in the covenant of marriage. They think, well, let’s live together. We have middle school kids……one girl just turning people out! In MIDDLE SCHOOL!!!!!!! Are you CRAZY???????? WHAT!!!!!!! Oh my God!

Ty: Literally outta control and that’s because the
church has sat down and we’re not saying anything. We just lettin’ everything just go wild!

DM: Right there….

DM: And I can speak for the brothers, as the head, we’ve got to step up. A lot of it falls back on us. The women that are following us…we’re taking them straight to hell. And it starts back at the head. See, we want the glory but we don’t want the responsibility of being in glory. I could preach that….

Ty: You just took the words outta my mouth, David, that will preach right there……

TM: And see that 18 years we’ve had is without separation.

DM: Right, we’ve learned how to address each other, even when we argue. We know how to argue. We don’t argue to beat each other up and tear each other down. If we have a disagreement, this is the tone right hear (in a normal speaking voice). This is the loud tone right there…and let’s get an understanding…

TM: And sometimes I have to catch myself cuz I be wantin’ to go into soprano (LAUGHTER)...GO HIGHER!!!!!!

Ty: With women, our mouth can get us in trouble! Well all you gotta do is put it on one of those yellow suits cuz that will stop allllll arguments right THERE…

TM: Yeah! It’s hard to be mad with David cuz he clowned so much. Cuz he’ll make you laugh and he’s so crazy! He’s stupid! I mean, I love my family. I love my husband dearly. He’s a wonderful father.

DM: (in a sexy voice) Keep going, girl! (LAUGHTER and SCREAMING)

Ty: I LOVE IT!!!!

TM: Hahahahahaha, he’s really my helpmeet. We enjoy each other’s company.

DM: Awww, this girl right here! She gone make me have to get off this phone, Ty! Hahahahaha!

DM: We’re asked all the time, ‘How do we work together?’ We work together, live together, sleep together. We just love each other’s company. There’s no way we could do all of that and not enjoy each other’s company. I would rather hang out with her than anybody else. She’ll actually tell me, look, you’ve gotta get you something to do. (LAUGHTER) I just enjoy her company. Sometimes we just sitting there talking about nothing. I just love her being there with me.

Ty: People think that after 18 years there’s no magic there, there’s no passion, there’s no love, and it’s beautiful to hear you say that.

DM: I tell Tamela, you know, the only regret about marriage is that I didn’t do it sooner. We got married fairly young, at 21. And if I would’ve done it sooner, I wouldn’t have…. (singing) OH LORRRRRRD!!!

TM: And you we don’t say it a lot but we have a blended family.

DM: I have two from a previous ‘argument’ I had… hahahahahaha…

TM: But I love all my children. We’re gonna go into a marriage ministry where we break it down and give what God has given us to share with other people that it can be done.

DM: One thing with step families is that Tam is the best kind of step parent that you’d ever wanna run into. She can teach a class on just how to be a step mom and deal with baby mama drama. I tell her that she’s a better woman than I am a man cuz she’s done something for my baby mama that I wouldn’t have, grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr...
DM: See what they mean is not til death do us part, but ‘til you make me mad do us part, or til we outa money do us part’, that’s what they really mean. I made a vow til death do us part. Unh uhuh! No! We justa living. We forty and living it up. Me and my Honey!

TM: And I ain’t planning on going no where! If husbands would involve their wives and make them feel a part it would keep all of this stuff and junk down...if you would have your wife here then you wouldn’t have to creep. What are you doing that you can’t keep her with you?

DM: I saw a brother 10 times and only seen his wife twice out of that 10. That burns me! Nine times out of ten if you see, David, you will see Tamela. She will be somewhere, CLOSE!

Ty: I feel like doing a tap dance. What is married sex like?

DM: WHOA, LORD!

TM: Ok, I’mma go back to my very beginning. Alright, we had been staying together for like a couple of months and then we had gotten our marriage license. We were at church and we had both went to the altar and had came back to our seats and I said, “we need to get married. Ain’t no sense in us……

DM: Wait a minute, hold on, lemme put some back story in this…mind you, this wedding that we’re about to do is after church, not a planned wedding. So push play, Baby. Go ahead…

TM: So I say while we’re at church, while we’re standing there we’ll ask pastor if he can marry us. I said you wanna do it, and he said yeah we sure can. So we decided to get married and we got married after church service. So when we went home that night…..

DM: Ummmmm, Baby! You just had to roll over and repent. I only thought sin felt good! Like you just wanted to roll over and get a spiritual cigarette. Hahahahahaha!

TM: It just didn’t make no sense! You feel so free! It makes it wonderful because you have no guilt cuz it’s ordained by God.

Ty: My God, that’s a wonderful thing! See that makes me hold on til my change come.

TM: Ya change is coming, Ty! As long as you wait til ya married, you’ll be alright.

DM: Yeah, put a chain on it!

Ty: Hahahaha! I’ve got a lock and key on it! I’m too busy to sin. I’m too busy to be layin up. I ain’t got time to be in no cheap sex……

DM: If you stay busy, it’ll keep you focused…

TM: Keep dodging and moving…..

Ty: Hahahaha! That just gave me a visual; I was just dodging some fine man… Visit the Mann’s online www.davidandtamelahamann.com

what will make a man propose?

“When a man realizes that no matter how good looking, financially stable or intellectually smart another woman is, she still does not compare to the one his heart is set on.” JOSHUA, 24

“What makes a man propose is that he has heard the voice of God say that this is your wife. Is she saved and filled with the Holy Spirit? Is there grace and virtue? Is she moving in purpose or passion; passion makes you feel good for a moment but God gives purpose. We know that people don’t usually marry for long term vision because they can’t even see pass the looks and pocketbooks. So the question is, what does she ‘see’ and how far?” LARRY, 33

“Just like on a sports team, you want people who strengthen your weaknesses so that you become strong. When you find a woman who does that for you, you protect that investment and build your game plan around her. That’s why I proposed.” DARRELL, 27

“Men have different, various motivations. You have to ask, what is he motivated by? She doesn’t even have to be what some would call ‘attractive.’ For me, we have to be compatible. She has to believe in what I’m doing and support my vision that God has given me and meets my needs, now that’s attractive.” JEFF, 41

“When I feel like I’d rather spend my days more WITH her than without her. She adds to my daily life and she senses my essence without me having to explain.” MARK, 55

“Conviction. You gotta feel like no matter what else exists out there, no one will motivate or compliment you better by her being herself. It doesn’t mean you’re right but true love is willing to persevere through it because loving her eternally is my goal, not just making it one more day with her. At least that’s how it should be. But it’s hard to tell a man’s intention nowadays.” JAMES, 22

“I’m happy when I’m with her. She’s the kind that you just can’t find anywhere. She’s appreciative, thankful, and has a desire to help people. She has to have a sense of humor, must love God, needs to love me, respect me and wants the best for me. I have to be able to get along with her and we must be humble enough to admit when we’re wrong. Beauty is important, but without these, it’s nothing.” H.B. SANDERS, 35

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ENGAGEMENT:

A declaration that one will or will not do a certain thing: espousal, assurance, covenant, guarantee, pledge, promise, vow, word of honor, obligation.

AFFIANCED:

Where the word fiancé comes from. Meaning done or said on purpose: deliberate, intentional, purposeful, willful.

He proposed! You’re excited, you say, “Yes, I Do!” And now it’s time to take the next several months and use it as a trial period to see if marriage will work with him...that’s the scenario of most engagements. My friends, Michelle and Robert, had been dating for a little over five years and after several years of a serious relationship they came to a fork in the road, like many couples, to make a decision about the future of that union: either marry or end the relationship. So he proposed, placed a ring on her finger and made the big announcement to their family and friends. As devout Christians, they knew that it was customary to do pre-marital counseling, so they called up their church and began their series of sessions in hopes of gaining some insight about what was up ahead on the road of marriage. To their shock, they received more than a few pointers on how to navigate through married life; counseling became a light, an eye opener that revealed to them that they were making the biggest mistake of their lives! Unbeknownst to them, they were no more than a Bonnie and Clyde team that were held together by their illegal, felonious, criminal acts: fornication. Couples who engage in premarital sex have a great chance of landing in accidental marriages because sexual intimacy can fabricate itself as love and cause couples to feel closer than they really are. And such was the case with Michelle and Robert; they thought they had enough love to produce a marriage, but they were only in the relationship because the sex chained them and it became comfortable to stay, since it was a part of their yesterday. They only existed because they became a habit for one another and co-dependency tricked them into believing that they were fit for marriage. Michelle not only had to go box up her things that were prematurely placed in Robert’s apartment, but she also had to face the embarrassment of the tan line that was left on her finger after Robert had to confiscate his ring. All which could have been avoided if many couples knew the significance of engagement.

One thing that made total sense to me was that the minister who counseled them said, “You should have gotten pre-marital counseling before you proposed to her.” We have become accustomed in the western culture to date, get engaged, then have pre-marital counseling. And that’s why we have a lot of broken engagements: because we accept proposals to marriage before we’ve had time to fully make a qualified, unwavering decision to spend our lives with this person. We treat the engagement stage as another level of dating: the time to get to know the person more and to see if we can marry them. No, engagement means that I’ve already determined that.

“Engagement is not the time for testing the waters. That’s what the dating period is for. The engagement is not a trial period, but a public testimony, ‘We’ve chosen to join together in marriage for life.’” Dr. Myles Munroe

THE RULES OF engagement:

en·gaged ADJECTIVE:

1. Committed, as to a cause.
2. Pledged to marry; betrothed: an engaged couple.
3. Partly embedded in, built into, or attached to another part, as columns on a wall.
In traditional Hebrew practices, after a couple became betrothed (engaged) they were considered legally bound to each other. Engagement is covenant. It is a declaration of your irrevocable promise that you will obligate, surrender, and sacrifice your life to your beloved, in the sight of God.

“When you vow a vow or make a pledge to God, do not put off paying it...pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Do not allow your mouth to cause your body to sin, and do not say before the messenger [the priest] that it was an error or mistake. Why should God be [made] angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?” Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 AMP

We live in a society that treats commitment flippantly, so we make promises and then break them without any conscience whatsoever. Engagement is binding; you are giving your word of honor and that should never be retracted, except under dire circumstances, i.e., adultery, abuse. When “yes” follows “will you marry me,” you enter into something beyond a trial period. This is not an experiment, but a covenant and the wedding is the observance of the sanctification of your vows and commitment to one another. In the engagement period, Joseph was called the husband of Mary even though they had not yet “come together” or consummated the marriage, (Matthew 1:18, 19) And the only reason why he had even considered “putting her away” (divorce) was because she became pregnant. Even when it appeared as if Mary had violated their covenant, Joseph upheld his commitment and highly honored his vow to Mary; so much so, that he was even going to protect her from public shame and disgrace by divorcing her in private and in secret. The engagement is just as significant as marriage because he would have had to divorce her even though she was his fiancée, but not yet his wife. I love the way engagement is defined: partly embedded or built into and attached to another...the wedding is simply the full manifestation of that embedding. When a fiancé looks in the mirror, a wife should look back at her.

TEST DRIVING MARRIAGE

But wait! Before you start giving wife privileges and “embedding” yourself, you should know that this does not mean that you are permitted to have sex with him. I receive this question quite often...“Now that we’re engaged, what can we ‘do’?” You know what that ‘do’ is? They’re asking how far they can go sexually and what’s acceptable. What’s acceptable??? As if engagement is an entitlement to a taste test. You do not have access to sexual intimacies until you are declared husband and wife. I guess we’ve gotten so used to going to weddings and celebrating by doing the Electric Slide that we don’t realize the significance of them. In a ceremony, the bride and the groom openly stated their vows to one another and then a celebration would take place where the bride and groom would go inside a tent, consummate the wedding, and then come out and show their family and witnesses the blood that remained on the sheets. It was a representation of the life of that marriage and the blood was evidence that they officially entered into that covenant. Note that Joseph didn’t have sex with Mary until he became her husband. (1:24, 25 AMP)

Many couples are consumed with shame and guilt because they sexually desire their fiancé, but it is natural to desire each other physically. It is a natural progression and you’ll see that the closer you get spiritually and mentally, the more you will desire to be closer physically and there is no sin in that. It is a sin to act on that desire before your marry. You must set clear boundaries and protect the sanctity of your marriage and honor your vows now...not the wedding day, because engaged sex will mar the beauty and purity of marital sex. Engaged couples begin to make allowances for heavy petting, foreplay, and before you know it, 10 o’clock prayer meetings turn into sleepovers because they have let down their guard, they’ve moved the boundaries, and have altered their beliefs about absolute sexual purity.

“When you are alone together and the moonlight is glistening upon your sweet love’s face, it is quite unlikely that a prayer meeting will be taking place.” Sex 101 Dr. Myles Munroe and David Burrows

You can’t operate outside of the Will of God but then expect for His blessings to be upon your union. You need to make a decision now that your relationship with God and your belief system is not negotiable. Don’t allow the deception of “almost there” to cause you to fraudulently obtain what is not rightfully yours yet. Don’t allow Lisa’s story to become yours. “When my husband and I first met, things were really rocky. I was saved and he was not, so of course it was hard for me. He would want to go out to bars and hang out all night long, but that really wasn’t my thing. When I did go out and drink, I would end up doing things that I normally would not have done. I did sleep with him before we were married. Prior to meeting him, I had practiced abstinence and had been abstinent for three years. After I had my son, I vowed that I would never, ever have pre-marital sex again, but unfortunately, I broke my vow to God and I suffered heavy consequences. My relationship with Christ changed drastically. I would tell my husband before we got married, time and time again, that I did not want to.

We got engaged shortly after we started dating and we continued to have sex. Many people, even Christians, counseled me by saying it was okay since we were engaged, but I knew in my heart that it was not. We tried to abstain and we would go many months without it, but it was very difficult. I wish I could take it back. I disappointed Jesus and myself and there is nothing that I can do about it now. Jason is saved now and we are building our relationship based on the love, but there has been a lot of healing involved. He has always been a wonderful man and a great father to my son, but sexual sin had a hold of our lives for a very long time. Even though I knew it was wrong, we still did it. I hated it. We just wish we could go back, but now there is nothing that we can do.” Lisa~ Houston, TX

We do not have access to sexual intimacies until you are married. As you make a decision to not engage in pre-marital sex, you protect the “shell life” of your marriage and also your sexual union. When you resist the urge to violate your covenant, you open up an entry into the wisdom of intimacy. During your engagement stage you will teach you the secret to intimacy. You learn to touch without hands and how to make love without ever violating your fiancé. Many married couples are having sex but it is not pleasurable because they are intimacy deficient. Sex is nothing without intimacy. Acquiring intimacy is one of the greatest challenges in many marriages because they never learned the art of it while they were engaged. Waiting invokes that blessing upon your marriage...you’ll be glad that you waited.

RUNAWAY BRIDE

Don’t run or cancel the wedding yet! Cold feet or doubts before the wedding are not unusual; it warrants your attention but not your fears (Philippians 4:6, 7). Conflict does not necessarily mean that you should leave the relationship. In the beginning of relationships we tend to focus on the commonality and similarities but as the relationship progresses, differences that were already silently there begin to come to the forefront and conflict is more evident than it was in the beginning of the relationship. Many couples begin to fear that maybe they weren’t as compatible as they thought because of the conflict. Don’t confuse conflict with incompatibility. This is where you learn how to manage your differences and build effective communication skills and conflict resolution. You need to identify the source of your doubts and concerns and share them with your fiancé. I know, in the world do you share with someone that you are scheduled to marry that you are having some second thoughts or doubts?

“Acquiring the physical promise without developing spiritual substance is a set up.” John Gray

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ALTERATIONS

Not all anxiety or doubts prior to marriage prove that you are headed for a troubled marriage, but there may be simply some alterations that you and your fiancé need to consider before going to the altar. Try measuring your relationship through God’s eyes and see if it makes the cut.

ALTERATIONS

Before you close this book and run under your bed, hear me out a bit. My spiritual dad, Dr. Myles Munroe, always says that we should get rid of the word ‘crisis’ and replace it with ‘opportunity.’ Let’s look at the opportunities here. Communication is key to the success of any marriage. If you can’t communicate or share your doubts and fears to your fiancé now, then you should be concerned about how effective communication will be in your marriage. Don’t look at this as a disaster but an opportunity to give you and your fiancé the ability to confront and solve conflict and your differences by effectively navigating through diversity. He may even have his own to share. Often, people are surprised to find that the other person also has some reservations. Some soul-searching conversations may actually bring couples closer together than they had been before.

ASK YOURSELF:

• Is God in the center of your relationship? Acts 17:28
• Have you developed a life of prayer together?
• Why are you getting married?
• Do you love him? Does he love you? I Corinthians 13
• Has love been proven? Ephesians 5:22-33
• Do you have peace? Philippians 4:7
• Marital Counseling? Many Christian couples skip pre-marital counseling because they believe that they don’t need it since they are Christians and they “love” one another. Proverbs 11:14, Psalm 1:1 Do not skip pre-marital counseling under any circumstances!
• When comparing yourself to other people in relationships, do you feel that you have been cheated?
• Have you done your math homework? Have you weighed the cost of this relationship and can you “afford” it? Don’t start a marriage that you are not willing to finish, complete, and fulfill. Luke 14:28
• Do you support and further one another’s vision, careers, ministries?
• Is he financially healthy? A fiancé without finances is a bankrupt relationship.
• Do you effectively solve conflict?
• Has your life improved in this relationship? Proverbs 27:17
• Are you equally yoked? 2 Corinthians 6:14-17
• Is he God governed? (Gal 5:16) OR controlled by his flesh? (19)
• Has your fiancé’s behavior or character changed?
• Can you trust him with your life? The tradition of an engagement ring as a sign of betrothal dates back to a time when gold rings were used as currency. A man gave a woman a ring to signal that she could be trusted with his property but the question I want to raise is, “Can you trust him with your life?” Your life is like currency and once it’s spent, you can’t get it back.
• Have you identified and communicated your needs and expectations and confident that your fiancé can meet them?
• If you could break off your relationship with your fiancé right now, without any inconvenience, financial restraints, legal cost, or embarrassment, without any undue hardship on your children or family, would you do it?
• Is sexual integrity maintained in the relationship? Psalms 119:9-11
• Is he attempting to pressure or coerce you into sexual activity? 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6
• Are you prepared to be a wife or just a bride?

My advice to you is the same thing Naomi told Ruth while she was awaiting confirmation if she would marry Boaz, “Sit still, my daughter, until you learn how the matter will turn out.” (Ruth 3:18) Pray, investigate, and seek counseling to find the source of your doubts, but whatever you do, don’t make a decision without God. You want to ensure that you have your Father’s blessings and that He is the voice behind your, “Yes, I Do.”

♥

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
BR: I’m about to tell on myself. One reason why I’m not married or in a serious relationship is because I lack money.

Ty: And guess what a woman would say? “We can grow together without money. That’s why I’m here—to be your help meet.” See, we have been waiting for so long and are so desperate that some of us will take you broke!

BR: Right, but I can’t take me broke. I can’t stand myself struggling financially! I said to myself, ‘What if Halle Berry got saved; speaking in other tongues and unknown tongues? And then got faithful in someone’s ministry and two years from now, she and I met and she said ‘I love you, Broderick’…ok…then maybe we could talk. But the thing is, it would be selfish and foolish of me, knowing what my standard is, to get involved with someone at this point at a serious level. Why? Because I am unhappy with myself! Not that I am not happy, but I am not where I am supposed to be. This is not in stone, but I have discovered many people tried to escape from their purposeless singleness into marriage only to find out that it’s just a trap.

Ty: It’s nothing worse than to leave an unfulfilled single life and go to unfulfilled married life.

BR: Many people are so unhappy with themselves as a single person that they intended to escape into marriage but then find out it’s actually a trap! Not a trap because marriage is bad, but a trap because of the way you came into it. Why? Because I am unhappy with myself! Not that I am not happy, but I am not where I am supposed to be. This is not in stone, but I have discovered many people tried to escape from their purposeless singleness into marriage only to find out that it’s just a trap.

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Ty: If we would ask that question more often, the divorce rate in the Church would drop. It is evident that we are not even asking the Lord His opinion. Confusion, double ignorance…God’s not going to bless no mess. He is not going to give you what you are not. We are always praying that I want this and that, but you ain’t nothing on your list. We need to open back up the classes for marriage and open the “Handbook”!

BR: Being a divorcee myself, one of the things that really helped me mend was discovering why I made the decision to get married. I got married because I was living at home with my Momma and my Daddy when I was 27 years old. Strict ruling, you know, my mother was really on me. We were up sheltered and I wanted to go out on my own but I didn’t know how to just go and get my own apartment. I know that sounds very crazy or irresponsible, but I didn’t know how to do it. They taught us to pray, they taught us scripture, they taught us church, but how to move out in life, that wasn’t clear. So, at 27 I got married because this girl had her own car, she had her own place, she was beautiful, she was from the same church receiving the same teaching; we didn’t have sex before we got married, so we understood the mechanics of Christianity. It’s imperative to understand God’s purpose for marriage: to reproduce in the earth the order of God. It’s like a university. As important as education is, you must meet the requirements for admission and graduation. If I don’t know that, I’m just hanging out on campus all the time. I can even sit in on the classes but when it’s time to get the credit, I won’t get it, because I have not met the proper prerequisite for admission. God has a purpose, but nobody told me that or I didn’t hear it right. It’s an institution; marriage is a privilege not a right and that privilege is reserved for purpose. If you don’t understand purpose, you won’t respect it in any aspect. It’s privileges with prerequisites. If I don’t know that, I will illegally commit myself in an institution, attempt to get all the benefits but not subscribe to the governing laws and rules.

Ty: Then divorce will be the degree you earn.

Broderick Rice is a comedian and profound scholar and preacher of the Gospel. www.wittyworld.info or ricebe@msn.com.
If you are living with a man...
I don’t

When you should not accept his proposal or end dating relationship

The Ultimate Guide to Love and Relationships

• Your significant other does not have a consistent prayer life or not God-governed with his decisions.
• Your religious belief systems are not in agreement.
• Your significant other is missing any of your top 5 must-haves.
• What he does is not consistent with what he says OR his actions are different from his belief system.
• You or your significant other have been recently divorced or ended a relationship.
• Your significant other is persistent in his attempts to get you to move in before the marriage.
• Your significant other puts their happiness before yours.
• Your significant other is your lover but not your friend.
• Your significant other is engagingly jealous and or attempts to isolate you from family and friends.
• Your significant other has anger issues or hits, beats, slaps, or verbally abuses you.
• Your significant other has consistent issues with dishonesty and infidelity.
• Every one opposes your relationship but you.
• Your significant other can not keep a job.
• Your children absolutely hate him!
• Your significant other has criminal, gambling, or drug problems/issues.
• Your significant other encourages you to do things contrary to your beliefs.
• Most of your conversations end in an argument.
• Your significant other has any of the ongoing sexual issues: fornication, pornography, pedophilia, or homosexuality.
• Your significant other has overwhelming debt and does not have a good relationship with money.
• Your significant other only wants to spend time with you when he wants to be intimate.
• Your significant other manipulates scriptures to control you, change your belief system, or in attempts to excuse himself from his irresponsibility or wronged behavior.
• Your significant other is self-centered, selfish, does not respond to your needs, criticizes you, and does not keep his promises.
• You are not attracted to your significant other.
Don’t allow the stress of planning a wedding embezzle you out of your joy!

“What about the cake? Who forgot to schedule the bride’s maid’s fittings? Oh, No! You forgot to book the photographer?! Hire someone to do the job of planning the big day. Ensure that they can put out small fires for you and that they understand that their responsibility is to protect you from undue stress. This person that you put in charge should safeguard your ears from every little detail or plans that goes in disarray or from the annoyance of those impossible relatives that attempt to stir up a ruckus; while at the same time making sure you arrive beautifully down the aisle in time to say, “I Do”!

Don’t attempt to have a Princess Diana wedding on a shoe-string budget.

Accruing debt at the genesis of your marriage because of a lavish one-day wedding that you can not really afford is an expression of recklessness and a lack of wisdom. A less expensive dress, smaller carat or even cubic zirconia ring, and reception-less wedding does not minimize the sacredness of your vows or union. Cutting back on the expenses could be the difference in starting off in a one bedroom apartment or money for the down payment of your new home. Many couples can achieve far more by making a wise decision to stay within their means while at the same time creating a more intimate, God inspired ceremony.

You wouldn’t wear a stained dress to your wedding, would you?! Neither should you show up wearing stains on your spirit. One of the greatest challenges for couples is maintaining sexual purity and making it to the church altar on their wedding night without tarnishing the sanctity of their union. Engagement (almost married) is not marriage and does not grant the full benefits of such. Sexual temptation during the engagement stage becomes a greater risk because couples let their guard down and allow themselves to be placed in vulnerable positions in highly volatile, sexually hazardous environments suited for married couples only! Couples need to understand that the desire for physical intimacy is a natural component of the relationship and should not warrant any guilt or condemnation and more importantly your compliance to it but you and your future spouse must commit yourselves to a standard of absolute purity and unwavering commitment to God! Most couples want God’s approval and blessings upon their marriage but you can’t expect to do it satan’s way and get God’s blessings. If you want God’s blessings upon your marriage, do it God’s way. Protect and safeguard your marriage from the enemy. Premarital sex is the gateway to planting seeds of adultery and every form of sexual confusion and ruin of your union. You cut off and annihilate the enemy’s plans to destroy your marriage by not operating in his methods of pre-marital sex. Stay pure until your wedding night and reap all that God has for you and your beloved. See the “Burning With Passion” article for tips to assist you in achieving this rewarding goal. ♥

Don’t put so much focus on the wedding that you neglect to build and prepare for the marriage.

All too often couples spend countless hours in preparing for a one day event that they abandon their first responsibility in ensuring that they effortlessly plan a lifetime of success in blissful years of marriage. Instead, keep a checklist of your commitments to protect the sanctity of your vows. Don’t overlook hidden obstacles that are silently fermenting in attempts to often overwhelm and undertaken an anxious and excited couple who is singly focused on the big day. But these obstacles can simply be conquered by focusing and putting the cultivation of your marriage the center of attention. During this important season of preparation, mature your prayer life together, tend to the nurturing of your beloved, foster the emotional and spiritual needs of the relationship, reaffirm your commitments, effectively build communication skills, focus on the needs of your spouse-to-be and make an intentional decision to meet them.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
COVENANT
MONIQUE: I consider Marvin to be my best friend, period. Even if there are times when we get upset with each other, we can always lean back on the friendship that we have. Marvin and I agreed that we would forgive like the Bible tells us. When we say we forgive then it’s in the Sea of Forgetfulness. We never mention it again or use it against the other person. A lot of times, people hold onto things from the past and that just causes a build up of animosity and anger. By letting that go and moving on, it allows you to enjoy one another all the time and go back to that friendship and enjoy that love and experience a good relationship again. I would say to any single person have a close enough relationship with God enough to be answered for you, your life and your family? I think that’s an important question for all women to ask themselves. As you are seeking God for your mate, not just does this person love you enough or like you enough, but does this person have a close enough relationship with God, that if you could never speak

MARVIN: We are young and we are very happy but at the end of the day we have to make sure we do all the little things all the time to make sure we can keep it like this. I can look at us being married forever. I see that. But I play a huge part in making forever happen. Every day I have to get up and continue to make sure that I’m doing the right thing by her. And it’s not a burden. I’m doing this so that we both can be happy. So it’s little things everyday, everyday you have to store up the love bank! You have to make deposits in there. No living paycheck to paycheck! Don’t let your Trust Bank get low— you can get laid off! Some people say, “It’s not all about her”, but to me, it is. I think I’m doing it all for her. See, love is doing. You can’t just tell someone you love them, you have to do for them. I think it shows up in her smile when I come home and she is happy to see me. I think love is shown in being obedient to God’s Word. He said love your wife like I loved the Church, so I have to find out how He loved me…He gave up everything. I would give up everything for Monique because that is what I have decided to do. If I couldn’t do another song and had to put it all to the side—burn it up, blow it up, shoot a missile at it, no studio, no music, no businesses, nothing—to make sure we kept our relationship, that’s what I would do. How can I run this church, run this community, be a leader, if I can’t even feed my wife? That’s important to me and that’s important to God. That’s a representation of how He loves me. He gave up everything and I’ll give up everything for her. That’s my wife. That’s what love looks like. It looks like sacrifice. Love looks like action and love looks like sacrifice and I’ll sacrifice everything just to make Monique happy.

SEXUAL UNION
MONIQUE: We were both virgins when we got married so the night of our first sexual encounter was the night of our wedding. For me personally, sex is amazing! I love making love to him! I can’t imagine having had sex before I got married or outside marriage because for me it’s an intimate thing, and it’s lovely and wonderful and it’s a connector and I love it with him.

MARVIN: It gets better and better all the time. Every time I think we have reached a plateau, we break through. It all gets back to practically. She has to make me want it and I think she cares about that. She cares about making me desire her. As a man I am visually stimulated. But at the same time, I have to be caring and loving to get her to that place. It’s a give and take, you figure out what each other want and you go for it. One of the things that I learned, and this is crazy, but sex is for the other person; it’s not for you. It’s not just so you can get excited or get yourself stimulated, it’s about pleasing someone else. It’s still sacrifice. It’s really love at that point. If we are both doing it for each other then…

MONIQUE: We are both happy!

www.myspace.com/dec28th
I met my wife while we were in college. At that time, nobody was “The One” to me and so I dated a lot of people. With Ramona, she didn’t date a lot of people. When we started dating, I had a lust spirit. But after we started dating, she didn’t want me to wash dishes. I hated washing dishes! I would rather eat out of the pot than to wash a bowl. So for two weeks I just grit my teeth and washed dishes for her. Now how babyish does that seem? But that was a stronghold she never knew about. I finally told her why: “Man, my mama used to come home late at night and she would make me wash dishes. And I told myself that when I got off to college, I was never gonna wash dishes; I’m going to get paper plates and if I don’t get paper plates, I won’t eat.”

One of the things on her list was she wanted me to wash dishes. I hated washing dishes! I would rather eat out of the pot than to wash a bowl. So for two weeks I just grit my teeth and washed dishes for her. Now how babyish does that seem? But that was a stronghold she never knew about. I finally told her why: “Man, my mama used to come home late at night and she would make me wash dishes. And I told myself that when I got off to college, I was never gonna wash dishes; I’m going to get paper plates and if I don’t get paper plates, I won’t eat.”

I had this childhood experience that I brought into my marriage and it would cause arguments, then the argument would go into something else, “then your mama… then YOUR mama!” I decided you know what, this is my wife, I would do anything for her; I’ll wash these dishes. From washing dishes to how we talk to each other to; there was just a lot of stuff I had to fix. And I said the best thing that I can do for my marriage is to fix me and stop focusing on her. I told my wife, “Baby, I want to make it so you never have to work a DAY IN YOUR LIFE! I want you to be able to wake up and do what you want to do.” So it had to become about her. I thought I was a loving, mack daddy. I thought I was the lover boy, but when I got married I realized how selfish I really was. I had to learn to be loving and it had to become about her in order for our marriage to really work.

We had to deal with a lot of things that we never knew about each other. We both were like “Man, I didn’t know you were like this.” I didn’t trust any woman at one time and she didn’t trust any men; we had been hurt before and we brought all of that hurt into the relationship. We started dating again after we got married, asking a lot of questions about each other. What do you like here and what do you like there? We wrote down everything we wanted from one another and our job was to fulfill that list, no matter how ridiculous that thing was.

One of the things on her list was she wanted me to wash dishes. I hated washing dishes! I would rather eat out of the pot than to wash a bowl. So for two weeks I just grit my teeth and washed dishes for her. Now how babyish does that seem? But that was a stronghold she never knew about. I finally told her why: “Man, my mama used to come home late at night and she would make me wash dishes. And I told myself that when I got off to college, I was never gonna wash dishes; I’m going to get paper plates and if I don’t get paper plates, I won’t eat.”

We had to deal with a lot of things that we never knew about each other. We both were like “Man, I didn’t know you were like this.” I didn’t trust any woman at one time and she didn’t trust any men; we had been hurt before and we brought all of that hurt into the relationship. We started dating again after we got married, asking a lot of questions about each other. What do you like here and what do you like there? We wrote down everything we wanted from one another and our job was to fulfill that list, no matter how ridiculous that thing was.

I told my wife everything about my past. Can you forgive me? Can I forgive myself? God do you still love me? As I began to see the root and I started saying, “My wife is the bomb to me. She’s the best thing that ever happened to me besides Jesus Christ.” I understood early on that my happiness depends on me and not necessarily on someone else. I had to become content with serving somebody. I’m in a ministry—marriage is a ministry, you’re serving somebody for the rest of your life. It’s not about what you can get, how you can make me feel. You’re not marrying a slave, you’re actually becoming a slave, but not in a bad way. You’re offering to serve somebody with your whole life. And that’s what I call marriage: a service. Whatever you want from getting your feet rubbed… girl if you want me to kiss them things I’ll do that…

I’m Puzzled

Sex... For one, it’s a covenant. It’s a covenant that you have with a person for life. It’s a symbol of two people
I love God so much and He loves me so much that, you know, I just don’t want to disappoint Him; He’s done so much for me. That’s why I believe I come back and work for Pastor Taffi and Pastor Dollar when I don’t have to, just to have that covenant and to be accountable to somebody, because it protects my covenant with Ramona. As the body of Christ we got to stay accountable. Even in dating, it’s dangerous for two horny people to go on a date by themselves when there is so much opportunity. So everyone has to be accountable: “Girl, if I don’t call you by 10:30, call me!” I don’t care how prayed up you are, how powerful you are, ask Samson, ask David. If the right person comes to you at the right time, I don’t care how much time you spent with God, I don’t care if you walk with and seen His face personally, once you see that naked body, you’re stuck!

The devil is very patient. And he will wait 10, 20, 30 years to get you slipping for 20 minutes and take everything that you have built in one moment. I’m going to keep it real: “Lord help me. I don’t care who I am, I don’t care how big my name is becoming, I need You. I can’t do this without you. Help me. Put me with someone who’s going to keep me accountable.” So that’s why the Word is most important. At one time I didn’t think like that. I was like, “Is it that deep”? I believe in the Word. That’s it. That’s how I live my life now. And when you get down to the Word, you’re going to be able to date properly, be married properly. You’ll come to know that it’s not about you; it’s about serving somebody else. It’s the same thing with Jesus: He’s the groom with a bride. He served us with His life, now we’re serving Him with ours.

Canton Jones is married to his Holy Ghost Girl, Ramona, and they have one child. Log on www.cajointernational.com.
Ty: Give some advice to our readers as it relates to the waiting stage or the preparation for being married.

Tye Tribett: That’s a subject that nobody getting ready to marry really likes… that thing called waiting. They don’t understand, that’s working patience but you know, I think that it is important that we understand because personally, in dating, many of us are just trying to play the field.

Ty: Please be real!

Tye: Yeah, I’m being real, Ty. I was trying to be the player. You know, I had a couple of other females… girlfriends. So when she came along I just wanted to kind of add her to the list. But instead she swept me off my feet.

Ty: My girl!

Tye: She swept me off my feet like, ‘Boy stop playing games!’ You understand what I’m saying? Then we became an item and we did not have sex before we got married. That was big for the both of us because we really wanted to be an example. Our parents, you know, divorced. We didn’t really know the Word like that; we just knew we wanted to try to do something right. We wanted to try to do something God’s way and when you make an attempt to do something God’s way, He will not let you down. I think people don’t like to wait because they don’t trust. We get anxious and the Bible says be anxious for nothing. I think it’s important to wait for the voice of God because it’s nothing like doing the right thing at the wrong time; you mess up your season.

Shante Tribett: Marriage is a great responsibility; a wife cares for the things of this world and God may be calling you to do something greater as a single woman for Him in this season.

Ty: There are a lot of people who are burning who are using marriage as an escape.

Tye: Jesus!

Ty: And the Body of Christ has used marriage as a healing ministry; in attempt to get a man to heal their wounds, I wish I could preach right in here!

Tye: Were you ever married before?

Ty: No, I’m single and I’ve been burning, too! I wanna get married! Hahahahaha!

Tye: I love this, I love this!

Ty: Why do you think people believe that if you’re burning then marriage is the first escapism, to stop the burning?

Tye: Well, I think it’s because of the state of society. Everything is perverted and sex driven. Just about everything we’re exposed to now leads to sexual gratification, so that burning is fed by that. We begin to desire what we are exposed to. Somebody once told me, ‘you can prophesy your future by who or what your surroundings are.’ A lot of us are around the wrong people. Jesus understood the importance of right surroundings. As soon as He was about to start His ministry, He said, ‘hold on, I’m picking who’s hanging with me.’ I’m choosing my surroundings.” I think we need to take that seriously. ‘Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.’ So, because I’m in the right company, I’m protected; because I am in the right company, I am shielded. So, company is paramount because company determines what you are exposed to which determines whether it’s going to be burn or holiness. I often teach that Christ is just not the right thing to do, He is better! You have to choose the better thing.

Ty: Submission is like a cussing word in the church. Many women don’t understand the power of it. Can you share that with a woman who is fighting or warring with the submission aspect of marriage?

ST: Well, a woman can’t submit to a man if he does not have a mission to submit to. So, if your husband or the man that you want to marry doesn’t have a mission, it’s going to be terribly hard to submit to something that’s not there. A man needs to get a mission and a vision. We naturally submit but if he does not have much to submit to…well, if you are already married, you’ve done it now. You just keep praying for the man and submit to the God that is in him or the little bit that is in him because the Word says that that will get him to line up. That’s easier said than done, but it’s easy for me because my husband has a mission. So, start if off right from the beginning… get a man with a mission; that’s really the only way.

Tye: A woman was created to help me, not be a sex partner. Many women are not ready to help because a lot of times the woman has so much inside them they are dealing with and then a man with no vision?! It’s kind of tough. But understand, submission is God’s form of protection and accountability.

Ty: Why do you think so many Christians are getting divorced?

Tye: There’s a spirit of divorce. If something has the same language you can automatically identify
I think the purpose of covenant is wholeness. There’s an area that I’m lacking (and we don’t like to use that word). But the law first mentions that we will come together as families so that there will be no lack. And I think that that’s the purpose – God wants wholeness.

Ty: What do you believe are the fundamentals of covenant?

Tye: I think the purpose of covenant is wholeness. There’s an area that I’m lacking (and we don’t like to use that word). But the law first mentions that we will come together as families so that there will be no lack. And I think that that’s the purpose – God wants wholeness. The woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus and He said, “Who touched me?” Not that He was offended, but she was just healed and not made whole. He wanted to make sure that she was not just touched, but made whole. So God doesn’t want the marriage to heal that burn from some touch, he wants to make you whole rather than just putting you with somebody else.

Ty: Ok, see, you preachin’ now! I’m holding on for a good reason, but please tell me…what is married sex like? Please just fill me in!

Tye: WITH NO GUILT! LET ME TELL YOU, IT’S FREE INDEED! Lord, the bed is undefiled, Jesus! It’s lovely man. When it happens, you realize that it’s not just about that. There’s so much that happens – the spiritual transfer that happens; what we give each other; it’s not just physical…that’s the part that I love so much. Like “let’s give each other a spiritual transfer” real quick! Do you know what I mean? And it’s lovely man. God is just faithful and I love my baby. He’s everything to me and she’s everything to me. We’re nine years strong and we’re not going anywhere.♥

Visit the Tribbett’s online www.tyetribbettandga.com.
The spirit of Girlfriend is in the air, but the spirit of Girlfriend is not compatible with the position of wife.

Ty: Why do you believe that you’re not married yet?

JG: Because my life is on loan, I don’t believe I have the absolute right to decide when I want to cut a covenant. In the book of Genesis, when God created Adam, Adam didn’t even think of anything, he wasn’t asking God for anything, he was focused on the garden. After that, God said, “It’s not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” So, having understood that scripture, what I gather from that is Adam didn’t even know how or when to ask for a help meet. God determined at some point in Adam’s development that He was going to make someone for him and present her to him. I still believe God wants to do that, so I have kind of extricated myself in the process of trying to figure it out and do it on my own and allow the Lord’s timing… it’s His timing to prepare somebody for me and to bring them before my view so I can then choose who he has already chosen. I believe I’m still single because I’m still in the garden, I’m still working, I’m still tilling ground, I’m still doing some things that are of preparation [and] necessary before He feels that I’m ready for marriage and I’m cool with that. I just really believe that God has his hand on my life…I believe those days are coming to a close and the wait will be over.

Ty: How did you get to this place where you are 33 and unlike a lot of people still a virgin?

JG: I think, at first it was a promise that became a commitment. I made promises before that I’ve broken. I promised my mother I’d be a virgin when I got married—what I’ve understood a virgin to be.* You know, you can put an asterisk by that. I told my mother I would be a virgin when I got married because she was one. Her mother was one. I guess around 16 I realized that that commitment was not going to be enough to maintain just making a promise to her. I promised God at that point that I would be a virgin when I got married. And you know, I’ve come close or whatever but I really haven’t come close, because there’s no enemy that I would consider giving my seed to, someone that’s not my wife. For me, it’s just not even an issue, it’s not like… I mean yeah, I’m human, I’m a man, I have desires and all of that and women don’t make it any easier—particularly church women…..

Ty: Ok, wait… wait a minute-stop! You cannot make statements like, “Especially church women don’t make it easy for you.” Explain that to me.

JG: Because church women have become desperate because they don’t believe God. They try to create things on their own and they try to become Eve. There are not a lot of single, available, straight, black men unfortunately, in the church—especially in the African-American community. So there are not a lot of single, available, straight, black men. So when [women] see one, they lose their dying minds! Start cooking for dudes; just go above and beyond. And they’re thinking, if I give him sex, he’ll want to be my husband. If I give him this or that. You know, females are very forward and I think its just the fact that there aren’t a lot of men that they see that are available, because most are in jail, they are already in a system of brokeness, already having kids, and in a prior marriage or relationship. You don’t have to be a faithful man to get a woman, so, men-they have a 1:10 ratio on women. So I think that a lot of females get desperate. And when they get desperate, they play themselves. They end up doing things they should have never done.

Ty: So, what is your advice to a woman because of this ratio? What is she to do? Any hope?

JG: My honest advice to women of God, is to maintain your commitment to the Father, period! If He promised you a thing, He’s going to do it. But…shucks. Honestly, you need to prepare yourself to be a wife as opposed to being a girlfriend. The spirit of Girlfriend is in the air, but the spirit of Girlfriend is not compatible with the position of wife. The Bible

WITH JOHN GRAY
I don’t know. But here’s the thing. That’s why it’s important that you find the one God has purposed because where there is unity (oneness), He commands the blessings. You must discover what God’s original intent is. Adam and Eve were the original intent and design of God. I could marry a Muslim woman and that would be free choice, but that doesn’t mean that she was God’s original intent for my life. So what I’m saying is God’s choice is that she is like the inside of me, outside. She finishes me off, she compliments every aspect. She’s that final piece in the jigsaw puzzle. Hold on, I’m trying to see if this is right. I’m over here trying to defrost some lamb chops, I’m cooking...see how I’m getting ready to be a husband?! I need to cook.

Ty: Exactly! Cook dem chops, man of God! You know I was with my spiritual parents about a month ago in the Bahamas. Sitting in their living room, he said to me: “Daughter, don’t ever marry a man that can not cook. Because cooking requires that you are attentive and respond out of a lot of love. Cooking is thought-provoking. Cooking is a passionate activity and if a man doesn’t know how to do that, he doesn’t really know how to be a good husband to a wife. He’s not going to be passionate with her.” So, John, guess what? I’m just going to be going around... ‘Do you know how to cook?!’ So, what do you think about soul mates, this destiny thing...? JG: A wife looks like the inside of me completed externally.

Ty: That was so deep. That was the depth of depth there.

JG: I had to go sit down because I feel God doing something real, real crazy on this phone. But what she looks like is the inside of me, outside; because she came from inside of me. If you believe the Bible, my wife always existed as soon as he thought of me. He didn’t think of me and her separate. The two became one flesh because we were already one before I got in my momma’s womb.

Ty: You don’t know what you’re over there saying, do you? You don’t know, it was spirit, covenant, or purposed. Do I believe in it from the Christian sense? I believe that there is one that God has purposed for my life, yes. I do not believe that there is a haphazard, I can pick and choose who I want and God will get His Will done. There is a pleasing and there’s a Perfect Will. There’s a good choice, then there’s a choice that would even be pleasing to God, then there’s a Perfect choice that would complete me. And I believe that’s “Eve.” I believe that there’s an Eve for every Adam. I believe that. There are people that say, ‘Out of 6 million people there’s no way you can get connected.’ Well, then that’s saying that everything that God does it haphazard. He’s just shoots and crashes-and He’s not. He’s just not. I believe there is one person that God has specifically designed for my life and through me, staying in his Will and focusing on the Kingdom, I will intersect with that person that was purposed for my life and the covenant will be cut because it makes God look good to bring it to pass. Adam didn’t have 4 women to choose from. He didn’t have to pray about it; there was one. It was her and that was it and that’s all.

Ty: OK, so... Ty: Stay on the phone with me for a second. Don’t laugh at me when you hear what I’m doing...just stay with me... Ty: What is the difference then, with dating and courtship? JG: Well, the difference between dating and courtship is accountability. The first thing in dating and courtship is being held accountable. I had a call from my Pastor the other day and he says, “Are you dating?” I said: “No. I’m getting ready for marriage now.” That’s so funny, but he’s never asked me that. Then he called me again today and said, ‘Yeah man, I was really concerned about you.’ Because there was somebody that I really loved and I still love, but they’re not compatible to where I’m going. No matter how bad I want that, it just ain’t right for me. And it’s not because they’re a bad person or not compatible. Sometimes it’s just no. I need to hear that again for myself. ‘John Gray, sometimes it’s just no!’ Courtship presents evidence for covenant. Dating just shows you why you should be with me. Courtship says, ‘I’m going to show you why you may want to go the other way.’ Dating is, ‘look how great I am.’

Ty: Wow. Glad to know that you are accountable to your pastor; you’ve married the wrong person!

JG: There are some people in your life that should know that you are courting. That shows that you are serious because it’s too important to be walking in and...
out of people's lives. You can't be messing around with people's heart, for real! Many people can't recover from that. Up to a certain point, there is a fact-finding season to determine if you should be with that person. When it gets to a point where you are determining whether you have what it takes to continue in this relationship you need accountability to step in. You have to be careful; you have to be right when it comes to that. You can’t mess around, for real. You know, that thing is no joke. That thing is real and it's hard to get over it. You got to have people that are holding you accountable, and people that are willing to say, “I think you're making a bad choice.” And then you have to be willing to trust them and let it go because we don’t have time to waste! God made covenant to establish the Kingdom agenda and I don’t have time to waste in a dead end relationship. Like my mother, I looked to her about one particular female and she was like, ‘No!’ And I was like, ‘you’re wrong’. I stayed in that thing way too long; got caught up. I was determined, ‘I’m going to make Christ be in this. She’s going to be what I want.’ I was trying to create somebody. I wanted to be the Father, create my own Eve and still be miserable. And loneliness will do that to you. But pride will do that to you, too.

Ty: Do you think you are ready now?
JG: There was a time when I wasn’t ready but that was based out of fear. I was afraid that if I married someone that had been in a relationship prior to me and they had sex with them, that they would attempt to compare him to me. Until the Lord said, ‘the covenant of flesh doesn’t even compete. When she’s the one, you’ll have exactly everything she could have ever wanted or needed.’ I am greater than flesh. Therefore, my marriage will be more than flesh. That’s why if anything that ever took place in the flesh before me…bottom line, she will become what I am. The two shall become one flesh. So, whatever virtue I bring to the relationship is immediately passed to her. She becomes what I am. If she’s had sexual relationships prior to me, well, she’s a virgin the moment I go in.

Ty: That just made me sit up! Man of God, sauté them lamb chops, boy! The lamb chop anointing! That’s good right there, John. So what do you think married sex will be like?

JG: Umm...(whistles). It’s going to be like rain…it’s going to be like rain…on a hot day. It’s going to be like the first snow in winter. It going to be like… you know…I can’t even describe it with words. It’s going to be the power of 33 years, waiting. It’s going to be the thrust of the end of a generational curse. Did I just say the thrust of the end of a generational curse? The moment that I enter is the moment that the curse of my father is broken. The curse from broken
I thought that I needed someone in ministry doing what I did. I didn’t know! And God totally shifted me and did a work in my heart. I know that I shouldn’t do it and maybe it’s not good, but I still wanna meet somebody. And yes, I started seeing someone and found that it wasn’t good for me. I mean we both were saved and we both loved God but we ended up getting hurt in the situation because anytime you rush and go ahead of God and you don’t follow His purpose, it sets you up for heartbreak. I went ahead of God and I decided to define my own purpose. And when I did that, ya’ know my heart and my feelings were, put on the line and they were hurt and it pushed me into the face of God for real. I was praying and I was on my face ‘cuz I was so crushed; my hopes and dreams of the relationship didn’t come to pass. And not only was I praying to get over the hurt but at that time I would be up there in worship and ministering with a broken heart and I was like praying like, ‘Lord, please deliver me from this.’ Even though I didn’t want to let the relationship go but it wasn’t good for me. And it wasn’t until I prayed that prayer, “Not my will but Your will be done”, that my situation changed. I just let go and a few months later the Lord allowed me to meet the man that I was to marry.

Ty: See, now you bout ‘tah make me leap through this phone because this is the thing: we pray out of our own desires and tryna’ make something happen that is contrary to God’s ultimate will for our life. And so you’re praying ‘cuz you’re heart is hurting, ‘Lord, fix him, fix him…make this whole thing right,’ when God is saying, “NO, I’m the One killing this relationship.” And many times He has to kill what’s in you in that process. You know, rebounds may be good on the basketball court but not when you’re courting! That’s a no no! God has to get that junk out of you before He can give you the man He really wants you to have.

Ty: You used the word ‘courting’; tell me what your perspective is on courting.

AR: Michael and I don’t believe in dating, as Christians, but courtship. We don’t believe in just going around and dating a whole bunch of people, ya’ know, because we look at that as a waste of time. But actually courting with intentions, getting to know that person as a friend — seeing if you can actually connect, getting to know the family; it’s really just more serious than going out and dating. My dad once told me that dating is nothing more than going out and getting data, but when we got together, that wasn’t our intention at all (just to gather data on each other). Our intentions were to get to know each other more deeply than that.

Ty: You two were both 23 when you met. I get tons of emails from women 23, 25 years old in the dating season and many of them try to find a husband through trial and error…what I call dating. What was the development process that took place that prepared you for a marriage without dating?

AR: Evangelist Ty, I will tell you. I went through a process of a period of dating where I actually decided to stop; it was taking a lot of my time. A few months before I met Michael, I was still saying ‘ok, maybe I shouldn’t date, but I’m going to just do it anyway. I

Honesty, the most memorable time was when we were driving in the car, and we had on some worship music. And while we were driving, the presence of the Lord came into our car and we were crying, going after God like we had lost our minds…and I think it just changed something in the relationship…It gave it more purpose. (Michael says hello through the phone and I get put on hold for a kiss!) Tick, tock, tick, tock…

I’m sorry about that. So that was one of the things we did, because we didn’t want to ruin our testimony. And we knew that the further that we got in the relationship, God started revealing His purpose for us as a couple. So we felt that one of the things that God wanted us to do as a couple was to go and influence young kids and young teenagers so that they would hold on……even younger couples that may be dating in college, that you can hold on, you can abstain and it’s not difficult. I think that helps when you have two people that are on the same page that’s committed to the same purpose because then you are not fighting each other because you’ve got to fight the devil anyway! You need someone on the same team!

Ty: That’s how you’ll win in relationships, when everyone on the team plays by the same “rules” and not compromising the game. What was one of your more memorable moments in your courtship stage?

AR: Wow… Honestly, the most memorable time was when we were driving in the car, and we had on some worship music. And while we were driving, the presence of the Lord came into our car and we were crying, going after God like we had lost our minds…and I think it just changed something in the relationship…

It gave it more purpose. It’s hard for me to explain because a lot of people that date somebody that is “esteemed,” they go around bragging about material things that they get but I was going to my friends bragging about just how much I would experience God. When Michael and I would be together in our times of worship, I would go to my friends and say, “You would not believe the night we had!” And they would be like, “OH MY GOD GIRL, WHAT HAPPENED?” Did y’all kiss for the first time?” And I’m like, “No, you don’t even understand. It had nothing to do with that. It had everything to do with the fact that the Holy Spirit fell on our date.”
Ty: WOW, Achea! People are always looking at how the person looks or he makes me laugh, when the most attractive man is one who can worship. Nothing looks better on a man than his worship!

AR: Oh absolutely, yes! You know, Michael didn’t want a ‘church girl’; he didn’t want a woman that was just ‘religious.’ He wanted somebody that had a relationship with the Lord. But with me, I didn’t think that I would have anything in common with an athlete…he’s more than just an athlete, that’s where the Lord has him right now. I think that if Michael wouldn’t have been the type that really loves God…I said, ‘Lord, if he ain’t lovin’ You, like I love you then I can’t be bothered, I can’t do it, I can’t go back to what I was delivered from.’ And sure enough, even in our courtship, when I would be sick, he would pray for me. One time we were ministering at a conference where we were being used to bring many people to Christ and Michael led them in prayer…the devil was not happy. After the conference, he begin to attack my husband’s body. My husband had gotten really bad food poisoning and he was so sick that he was choking; the devil was literally trying to take his life. And on the plane, I had to lay my hands on him and command the devil to move! See our relationship was birthed in prayer; if the foundation is not God, then it’s not gonna work. You’re not gonna be able to make it, and that’s the thing that young couples don’t understand the importance of; prayer! It’s way more important than the looks, money or any thing else in the relationship.

Ty: It’s only been a few months, but what has marriage been like for you? Seeing that Michael is a basketball player, what do you do as his wife, how do you become his “cheerleader”?

AR: Basically, I’ve had a lot of practice these last couple of years; whatever he needs to talk about…sometimes if he’s had a bad game and wants to talk about it, I can usually tell or discern what is up; I’m always that support or that ear. With my husband, to have a successful season, it would be nice to have a championship, but his definition of success is if someone comes to Christ; that’s just how he is. I do a Bible study with the women on the team and even on the road, he’ll do a Bible study with the guys and we’ll come together and talk about what went on in Bible study. Basically, just being there for my husband in whatever capacity he needs for me to be. I absolutely love being married. One of the best things that could have happened to us was marriage counseling. It prepared us for Achea 101 and Michael 101. We realized that the greatest thing in marriage is learning that you don’t have to worry about it pleasing you, ‘cuz the other person is making sure of that. And that’s what we’ve been focusing on the last few months, and we absolutely love it! It’s a great GREAT GREAT…I can’t even explain it! The anointing…Oh My God! The Bible says one can put a thousand and two can put ten thousand to flight, let me tell you, your anointing quadruples! Just think about it, when you connect with someone who is anointed, you spiritually connect and there is nothing that y’all can’t do with Jesus Christ. I mean, you can already do all things through Christ Jesus, but just imagine when you have the one who God has ordained for you to be with and as your partner in Jesus. It’s been wonderful, we’ve committed this season to getting some people saved on this team, in this league; just doing a work for the Lord together. And I don’t know if they told you, but we have a little bundle of joy in the oven. It didn’t take us long…

Ty: WONDERFUL!!!! When is the due date?

AR: I’m probably about eight weeks along, so our baby is due in June.

Ty: That is wonderful! Ok, so that means that if the baby is already due, then that means somebody’s been busy. WooHoo!!! Married Sex, I LOVE IT!!!

AR: Sex becomes holy when you marry in the Lord. And when you wait, it’s not even a cliché; it is SO worth the wait! It’s like totally different experience. Knowing that there is somebody that God has put in your life…it’s all holy…It’s all good! It’s not a sin. God is ok because every time you do it, you renew the covenant. And it makes it so much better because you have a clearer conscience while it’s going on and you get your reward for waiting.

Michael Redd is the Forward Guard for the Milwaukee Bucks and Achea cheers alongside him. www.nba.com. Log on to www.tyadams.org to see how Michael proposed to Achea.
TACKLING LOVE

One of the biggest problems with men is that they are consumed with thoughts about making mistakes. But God has not given us a spirit of fear.

When Michael met Oneika, he was captivated by her beauty but drawn and compelled by her drive and passion for God. Oneika, was a virgin, Holy Ghost filled, no clubbin’ never drank, and as Michael puts it, “as pure as it gets.” Something he never thought he’d do, Michael entered into a long distance relationship with Oneika and after three years of wooing her, got down on one knee in the grassy field of her parent’s back yard in the middle of a family cookout and serenaded Oneika with the melody that many women long to hear, “Will you marry me?”

Michael, a professional football player for the NFL’s North Carolina Panthers, is no stranger at winning. He and Oneika shared with me how they tackle love straight on and score a touchdown every time!

Like football, marriage is more than a sport, it’s a business. It requires skill, both physically and spiritually, and a competitive nature. Yes, you have to strive and compete against anything that tries to come against your marriage. And with any successful business, you have to have great management skills and a business plan. You also have to invest in it in order for it to work. People tell you that going into the “business” of marriage is wonderful, but they don’t give you any insight. When I came into the marriage, I struggled with my independence. So when Oneika asked me where I was going, whew! I was like, “Aw, Man! I’m a grown man!” But I was quickly reminded that I entered into a partnership when my “partner,” my wife, pulled out the plan again, The Word of God. When you enter into a partnership, there’s no such thing as independence.

One of the biggest problems with men is that they are consumed with thoughts about making mistakes. But God has not given us a spirit of fear. Our steps are ordered by Him and you don’t have to worry about fumbling in your marriage when you submit yourself to a life of prayer. If you stay on your knees, you’ll never fumble.

In order to win on this field, you have to keep the grass green by fertilizing it. The Bible says that a man finds a wife; the key word is find. The responsibility of the husband is to keep finding, even after marriage. Finding ways to keep her happy and smiling and not just keeping her nails and hair done, but allowing God to teach you how to take of your wife in others ways. Like having an open ear to her needs and not being “spiritual” all the time but simply just holding her. I remember being in college and Oneika would be in the stands just cheering me on. She was there before the NFL; she didn’t even know what drafting was…she was there before it all. And one day she was at work and the lord spoke to me and told me to go and get her off of her job. It was one of the most memorable moments of my life, as I walked in on her in the middle of her work day and said, “You will never have to work again…I will take care of you for the rest of your life.” It is my pleasure to spend the rest of my days finding her.

Off the field, Michael and Oneika work along side each other in ministry. To see Michael Gaines in action visit www.zip.com

Michael & Oneika Gaines
365 DAYS TO “I DO!”

12 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Announce your engagement.
- Arrange for your two sets of parents to get together if they haven’t already.
- Decide on a date.
- Choose the kind of wedding you want (evening wedding with sit down dinner, afternoon wedding with buffet, garden wedding, etc.)
- Go over your budget
- Pick the ceremony site and visit the officiant.
- Work on guest list to get a rough head count.
- Visit reception sites and reserve one.
- Commit the next 12 months in consecration, purification, and wife preparation.

6-9 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Interview wedding planners if you’ll be using one.
- Prayerfully choose your wedding party.
- Choose a caterer and a florist.
- Enroll in bridal-gift registry.
- Shop for gown.
- Shop for made of honor and bride’s maids dresses.
- Choose a photographer and a videographer.
- Purchase a new family Bible and collectively outline foundational Scriptures that you will live by for the first year of marriage.
- Reinforce what you’ve learned in pre-marital counseling.

4-6 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Order wedding invitations and other stationery.
- Order wedding gown.
- Order tuxedos for groom and groomsmen.
- Shop for the wedding cake.
- Shop lodging for out-of-towners so you can send a list of nearby hotels.
- Meet with caterer or banquet manager to discuss menus, service style, etc.
- Arrange rehearsal dinner.
- Book musician.
- Assign someone who will be committed to praying consistently for your union for the next six months.

4-8 WEEKS BEFORE:

- Call county clerk’s office to find out about requirements for marriage license.
- Make honeymoon reservations, plan complete itinerary. Compile all the necessary travel documents.
- Pick ceremony and reception music/band.
- Buy thank-you gifts for attendants.
- Have a fun party with your closest in-laws-to-be and creatively discuss how they can help grow your marriage.

2-4 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Mail invitations eight weeks ahead of the date.
- Do a hair and makeup run-through.
- Have final dress fitting.
- Look over insurance papers with your fiancé (car, life, medical, home). You may need to make changes in the policy when you go from single to married.
- Schedule a special evening out with your husband-to-be and express what you both imagine the first year of marriage will be like.

2-3 WEEKS BEFORE:

- Do seating for the reception.
- Confirm details with photographer, florist, etc., and give caterer final head count.
- Plan an afternoon for you and your husband-to-be to pray over and bless your new home.

1 WEEK BEFORE:

- Host bridesmaids’ party; verbalize to both your single and married bridesmaids what marriage/covenant is.
- Get a manicure, pedicure, facial, massage or other beauty treatments.
- Pack for the honeymoon.
- Write a heartfelt letter to your husband-to-be and mail it to him.

THE DAY BEFORE:

- Spend the morning in prayer for your union.
- Greet out-of-town-guests.
- Schedule time for beauty touch-ups or hairstyling appointment before the rehearsal dinner.
- Close the last day of being a single woman in worship.
Answer the following questions, with either YES or NO.

1. Hmmm... I can’t remember when the last time I’ve bought a special outfit or nightie that I know he would enjoy.
2. You feel like your sexual relationship is in trouble.
3. You’ve gone to bed mad quite a few nights.
4. When we argue, we often bring up past altercations.
5. You can’t remember when you had a quiet evening alone.
6. You can’t remember the last time you’ve initiated lovemaking or awakened him in the middle of the night to make love.
7. It’s been a while since you’ve reminisced about a special moment in your marriage.
8. When you are making love, you often feel dissatisfied but why mention it? You feel things won’t change.
9. He hasn’t bought you a non-kitchen related gift in months.
10. You can’t remember when the last time he’s called you just to tell you he has been thinking of you.
11. Your husband has been so caught up into work that you don’t even bother to dress up for him or look your best when he gets home.
12. Lately, many of your conversations have ended in arguments, so much so that you avoid conversations in attempts to avoid arguments.
13. You feel neglected and upset that all he wants to do is have sex, and on top of that, he just jumps on top of you without any caressing, foreplay or a compliment throughout the day!
14. You feel stressed and feel like you have no help from him with the kids.
15. You are so overwhelmed financially that it has been affecting your lovemaking and it constantly ensues arguments.
16. Vacation? Who has time for one?
17. When we are having sex, there is rarely verbal communication.

If you’ve answered yes to these questions, then stop hitting the snooze button and wake up! Take an active involvement in responding to the warning signs before your marriage suffers from your snoozing. You can have a vibrant, healthy marriage; the time is now!♥
Kenny: So many people are getting married for so many different reasons and I was listening to this very controversial radio show the other day and people were talking about folks getting married for the outside image or to make fornication legal— that’s what they actually said. And that’s only one aspect of it, but I think people get married for the wrong reasons and people need to be empowered to know that marriage and the commitment of it is sacred; it’s a covenant and it’s bigger than just some piece of paper. We need to change our attitude about what marriage is, first of all. And second, we have to approach marriage with reverence. We have to being to think about what our role is in this marriage. Our whole attitude - that’s where we get off track from the very beginning.

Chante: I think it’s also intentions. A lot of people aren’t prepared to get married. They want somebody who makes them happy and I think if you are looking for somebody to make you happy, nobody can make you happy but Jesus. And if people know who they are before you get there, it makes for a better relationship because you can communicate who you are and what it is that you are looking for before you get married. So that there’s no strange ideas that aren’t realistic to the other person and they are saying, “If I knew that was what you wanted...I wouldn’t have married you!” People understand what the other person is looking for before they get married. You say, “I thought I was going to want this or I thought this was how it was going to be.” I think every married person that I have spoken to says it was all a little different—some better but others...it wasn’t as good. But I think when people are willing to work for each other and for the marriage and be honest where they are, it can work and it’s really exciting.

Ty: So what would your advice be for couples in terms of how to “divorce-proof” their marriage?

Chante: Prayer. And even with that, two people have to be willing to put in all they have, all the time. And it’s not just until the first five years go by. From the time you say “I Do” on, the enemy is upset that you are married in the first place and he is going to try and destroy your marriage by whatever means because he knows it was ordained by God. Second, I think it’s making up your mind: we are going to fight no matter what, together - not each other, and we are going to fight for the marriage.

Ty: In terms of marriage maintenance if you will, is there some advice that you can give us in terms of keeping passion in the marriage? Because after a while, I think we get so caught up in the mundane assignments and being who we are with work and careers, we lose the passion in the marriage.

Kenny: You’ve just got to work at it. You have to communicate and commit to the fact that, “Ok, maybe we need this time out.” We need a vacation sometimes, and it doesn’t have to be with the children just because we have children. Or I’ve heard women say, particularly in the beginning, that guys don’t continue on the path of doing things that it took to

Ty: It’s interesting that you just said that, Chante, because for some reason we think that marriage is just some kind of fantasy and everything is going to be perfect, but when your marriage shows its imperfect side, the first thing that we do is get a divorce.

Chante: Nobody wants to be sad for a moment. As soon as they are unhappy, they are like, wrong choice!

Ty: What would your advice be for couples in terms of how to “divorce-proof” their marriage?
Chante: And I think women have to remember, men usually want someone who is going to be sexy. When we get into a situation where we are married, we get comfortable, we get relaxed. We don’t get up and comb our hair or put on that pretty outfit because we are thinking, “I’m just going to be at home” or “I’m just going to be with him.” And I think women outside aren’t thinking like that—especially single women. They are like, “Let me push this up and stick this out.”

We already know who we are in Christ and we know that he loves us and we have to talk about it. You have to talk about it. You have to do some research, some soul searching and people are afraid to say what they like. You’re going to be one. And you can’t have fear. I think a lot of hahahahaha…but it is what you make it. You can’t put it onto dear life, give us some hope as to what married life is. It’s not healthy. It’s not wise.

Chante: The first thing is it’s a double album and it is addressing both sides of love. It addresses natural love between a man and a woman, and the heavenly love between God and man. I think that’s a beautiful thing to address because in the church we talk about our spiritual growth, our spiritual understanding, and our relationship back and forth between us and the Lord but we don’t always have those deep conversations where we learn about what to take home to my mate. In this album you can celebrate your love with your loved one and you can celebrate your love with Christ in the same album. So, there are love songs so that you don’t have to do Kumbaya with your husband—there are songs that make sense for the moment. And in the right spirit of the right moment.

Kenny: I think one of the new things in the body of Christ right now is using words that invoke more intimacy even with regard to Christ. Now people are talking about falling in love with Jesus and what that really means—singing love songs to Him. It’s relationship more than this religious thing where God is way out in the sky somewhere. Now we are talking about relationship, being more intimate with the Lord. So, I love how both of the CD’s work together to really promote intimacy on both ends.

Chante: I think we really learn how to love Christ first in order to be able to give the right kind of love to others down here. But we don’t even know how to even communicate that kind of love. There is a hole in your heart, in your spirit that only God can fill. And I think that as women, we definitely want a man to fill that but it’s not even a possibility. There is a place that only God can fill.

Chante: Not for us. We already know who we are in Christ and we know that He loves us and we have a love relationship. We know that we are saved and it’s not about proving anything to anyone else. If it were, then it would have to be something that we put on and took off. Kenny and I always say, ‘I think a lot of people know that when we are onstage and then when we come off, we are the same people. We don’t have this image where we say, this will be split into there and this over there and bump on this and hump on that and then…praise Jesus to who all blessings flow. That’s not who we are. And because that’s not who we are, we understand how other people may have judgment of that but we know exactly who we are. There is no little transition except singing in front of church people.

Kenny: We have always done gospel music and some people may look at it as a trend, if you put one gospel song on an album. But even when you look at our mainstream music, there is a standard that we have always kept and I know that when I went in, I wanted my grandmother to be able to listen to my record and I want a legacy that makes them proud and has class. And no, I don’t talk about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, all day long and no one does. Basically, what we try to do in the record is not say anything that we wouldn’t say out of our mouths to Him.

Chante: I think that’s what your CD has done. It’s really breaking tradition and religion in the church, if you will, bringing a spiritual balance to the church. So your CD is really refreshing and we thank God for that. You know, I always say, “Kenny and Chante are one of my favorite couples!”

Chante: That’s a hard one. Kenny: It would be something like, well, we are going into our fifth year, so it would be something about learning to love a woman. Because, I haven’t arrived! In Hollywood, that’s a long time! In the scheme of marriage nowadays, five years is a long time and I am definitely having the time of my life but there are plenty of times when I feel inadequate still. And we are constantly evolving so just when you think you can just settle in this routine, I come to realize that she is not the same woman that she was five years ago. She’s not the same woman she was fifteen years ago, so it will be a constant learning of how to love a woman and that’s where I totally am now. And probably where I will always be, “Learning to Love Chante”.

Chante: That was a good one! (Laughter)

Kenny: Wow…oh wow. Like if I were writing a song, what would the title be?

Chante: Awww, That was a good one! (Laughter)
Love

I was born again at the age of 25 when my wife’s brother led me to the Lord. I went to church on Saturday night and made Jesus my Lord and Savior. Having the Holy Spirit is the most important decision I’ve ever made in my life. It’s what will make you effective in every area of your life. I fell in love with the Lord and it gave me the ability to fall in love with my wife.

Marriage

My wife and I have been married for 24 wonderful years. We were born in South Africa and in our country you marry the entire family. You respect the parents of your wife; for them to give me their daughter…you don’t take that lightly. Not only do we respect that, but we revere God’s word concerning marriage and we will never violate that. Marriage is a form of worship and worship starts at home, so we worship God with our home and not just at church. We ensure that we make quality time for family because family and friends are most important for us. We love to entertain in our home. My wife loves to cook so it gives us time to have kitchen talk; a lot can happen at the table. You have to make sure you take time out of your busy schedule: turn off the cell phone, TV, and spend time with her. I am playful with my wife and I love to make my wife laugh.

Music

Show me a man’s gift and I will show you God. But if you want to change lives, it has to be more than just a gift or entertainment. An anointing on a person’s life is not only what changes the atmosphere, but also people’s lives. I pray every time before I go on stage and I sing by the Holy Spirit; I bring Him on stage everywhere I sing. There’s righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and I bring that to my music. So rather it be a love song that ministers to couples, or worship music for individuals and families as a whole, it’s God’s presence that changes the atmosphere. I take my music very seriously. I’m conscious about what I sing; I don’t ever want to offend God with my music. It is perfectly OK for couples to listen to love songs; love comes from Him. I write and sing from that. Why would God give you roses and you can’t smell them? Enjoy God’s gift. You can enjoy the gift of music as long as it doesn’t grieve God’s Spirit. One of my favorite love songs is from Stevie Wonder, “Love Can Conquer the World.”

Jonathan Butler, a highly acclaimed jazz artist, is happily married to Barenese, and they have two children, Randy and Jodie. Pick up Butler’s latest CD entitled, “Brand New Day.” www.jonathanbutler.com

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
Ty: What does it take to be a good wife?

Medina: In order to be a good wife, it takes an anointing. And I’m not saying that to be super deep and I don’t mean that there is not a natural side to it. But if you are going to do marriage and ministry, it requires more than what a natural person can do. You need to operate in the realm of the supernatural. Now, when you say ‘a good wife,’ you have to get to it. But if you are going to do marriage and ministry, and I don’t mean that there is not a natural side to anointing. And I’m not saying that to be super deep...

Ty: All I see is slow motion…he’s coming after you. Ty: Sometimes with being in full time ministry it can be a challenge with maintaining balance and we become so consumed with ministry that the passion dies in the marriage. How do you keep your man as the number one ministry?

Medina: Marriage and ministry balance – it’s definitely a challenge, especially when you are in the same field. But there are pivotal moments that let you know that the passion is still there; moments that refresh the love…those wow moments. One time I was scheduled to go out to preach at our New York church. It was 4 o’clock in the morning when I got up to leave for the airport. I turned to look at him, he was still asleep and I felt like, ‘Wow, it’s going to be hard to leave him this morning.’ So when I got out of the bed I wrote him a letter that said, ‘I haven’t left yet but I miss you already.’ As I was down stairs leaving out the door, he had gotten up to go to the powder room to use the bathroom, he sees the note on the mirror and hears me leaving out the door and realizes that I’m still there. He said that before he had gotten out of the bed, when he had awakened, he said, ‘Medina’s gone and I miss her.’ So it was then when he had gotten up to go to the bathroom and sees the note and discovers that we both feel the same way. It was like a soap opera moment! He runnnnnnns down the stairs and says, “Wait!” I turn and look and say, “Oh, you’re awake.” He then grabs me and says, “You can’t go.” It was drama! Call it “All My Children” moment! It was like one of those soap opera dramatic moments like, “Don’t go!” New York was not an option in that moment. Many times we think that the church is our bride, the church is not our bride; the church is Christ’s bride. We get it mixed up.

Ty: What have you learned as a wife? I mean for God’s sake, you were young when you two got married. At 20 years old, what do you even know about loving a man??!!

Medina: Hahahahahaha, basically we were...
just two kids. What I’ve learned over time was to communicate and that it was OK to be me. I was sooooo shy in the beginning of our marriage, I was worried about what he wanted, I was getting dressed in the next room. You have to get rid of that thinking that whatever you are doing is wrong. When you go from being single to having legs next to you, it’s like almost spooky! You’re like, “What in the world?” it’s a dramatic change, an awkwardness.

Ty: You know what I love about you, Dina, I’ve seen you be this power house, preach like a mad woman, but you are such a lady with him. When we are out to eat or something together, I just watch you, and I’m like, “I wanna be like my lil’ sister when I grow up! You are such a lady around him the executive, with major class. You’ve been married 11 years, yet you’ve maintained the passion, and you’re like his girlfriend.

Medina: I don’t see myself as his equal, I see him as my leader. I don’t care how the Lord uses me, doesn’t matter where God takes me, he is still the man that God gave me as my covering. When I get around him, I don’t have to have this fight on. So when I’m around him why should I act like a man? OK, I finished college, ministering and the Lord has blessed, but when I come down out of that pulpit, he’s my man, my covering. And I NEED him to be that. I don’t see it as a weakness, as me submitting to him, I see it as a strength; I would be foolish not to embrace what the Lord gave me. It would dishonor him to be in his role; it would be offensive to the Lord. The Lord is like, ‘You prayed for a husband, I gave him to you and now you want to be him.’ I’m not the husband, I’m his wife. Some people say women act like they are helpless, but I’m not acting helpless… I really need him. Automatically when I’m around him, I slip into another role. When I finish ministering, I need his aspiration and to know he is pleased.

Nobody’s going to tell my husband what he needs to hear. If he’s looking good, I’m going to tell him. I will be the first one to tell him, so if some other woman even tries, he’s already heard it from me. He don’t have to be no body else’s hero, because he’s my hero; he don’t have to be no body else’s favorite preacher. He’s my favorite preacher. I am number one cheerleader and his number one fan. If you don’t build him up, and praise him, somebody else will. Men need praise and attention just like women do. You have to communicate to him that he is somebody or Sister Susie is sitting right there waiting. Especially when you are in ministry together. Some women looking from the outside will look at you all and say, “Oh, that’s not a marriage, they are only ministry partners, but I can be the other part.’ No! You make sure you are the other part and everything else! You can’t be so super-spiritual that you are of no earthly good. Be spontaneous and don’t let ‘em know your next move. You have to unpredictable sometimes. Keep him interested. Sometimes it’s just the simplest things. But you can’t be going to bed with them ole frumpy pajamas on, looking crazy! You gotta keep him surprised. Pray to the Holy Spirit and He’ll give you guidance and balance with it.

In the beginning it was awkward, when you’re learning balance being wife and mother, but after while it will become automatic. You’ll learn the shift. Or otherwise you’ll become a nuisance to your children and your husband. Especially for those of us who really really love the Lord because we can just go into a shut in for seven days but when you’re married you can’t go in no shut in for days like that unless the Lord and your husband truly gives you permission. The scripture tells us that when you fasting and praying you better come together unless somebody be tempted! The Bible says if you don’t take care of your NATURAL business somebody’s gonna get in sin!

Ty: Whoa! And that’s the word!

Medina: So with me actually taking care of the natural needs of my husband helps to keep him holy! It’s my job to help keep him sanctified. You’d be surprised how many women torment their husbands in the name of the Lord! There’s no attraction or chemistry there anymore. Do you know what that does to a man? That’s rejection. Where there is no response from you, where he feels you don’t want him, or you don’t want to spend time with him, then if you are doing that, you are rejecting him. You want the message going to your spouse to be clear.

Ty: These are a lot of women who are not having sex with their husbands, That’s a sin! I can’t even fathom.

Medina: You open him up to pornography, other women, or other things that are ungodly; you open the door up for that, and not to come together! What my spouse is ungodly,

The scripture clearly states that you cause somebody else to fall to get in sin. It says after you fast, come together!

Ty: Talking about you coming to pray for him. You be different hands on that man! We’re so deep!

Medina: Too deep! So deep that you are missing God. In the name of I love Jesus! No, you need to go and take care of the natural. You wanna be deep? Well, sex is a holy sacred thing! I love being married, our kids, being a mother, and being home with my husband…and the unity. It just flows. 99.9% of the time we are thinking the same thing. I still get nervous when he comes around, I hear him pull up and I run and go and fresh, just so I can look nice for him. It sends a message that you care about what they think. It means so much more, when you have sooo many things going on, ministry, business, mothering. It’s a gift to him, if it’s the shoes he likes, the hairstyle he likes, you just wear it and make a statement for him. I had a lot of meetings today, I had to go to the kids’ school, but I made sure that I had on them sparkling, glittered, pink boots on that he asked me to wear. It meant the world to him; the simplest thing. And every time he saw me today, he saw them pink sparkling boots were for him. He knows that I wore ‘em just for him…. 
Prayer is the foundational key of life. It must be established individually and in unity. When you know what God’s heart is and the purpose of His union for the two of you, you will move in sync and keep your stride together.

Intimacy is a key that can’t be left out. As we grow together we begin to share sentences and thoughts...Our souls become tied and the more we share in intimacy...the closer our spiritual bond, causing a generational blessing to come upon our entire family.

www.micahstampley.org
Ty: Sometimes couples think they are communicating but really words are just bouncing off of one another and really, they are not effectively communicating what they need to to their spouse. What are some of the things you think we do in error in regards to communication?

LP: Conversation is absolutely the lifeblood of a marriage. In one of our books, there is a chapter called “Say What You Need and Understand What You Hear,” and those things cannot be taken for granted, like gender differences and how we are hardwired. There is a culture of conversation. With men, it’s about rapport, building a relationship and bonding. Women like to process things; they hang out in a conversation and look at every facet of something and take a running trail because that makes them feel more socially connected at the end of the conversation, and that was their goal anyway. So, the purpose is accomplished. Men are about exchanging information and it’s to the point; it’s brief and can be a little bit abrupt and is often done in bullet points. So, for them it’s about the content and for that, you don’t even need eye contact necessarily. A lot of the things you need to build rapport are not really goals for men in conversation. So, with that you can see how conversations can break down, especially in marriage.

Ty: If a couple is communication starved, what are some of the things they can do to ‘feed’ the marriage?

LP: The breakthrough for couples when it comes to communication is in a book we wrote called, “Love Talk.” With understanding that conversations completely break down when we don’t feel safe, we believe that we came across something that is absolutely transforming with couples. Sometimes when we are working with a couple, we say that everyone has their own personal fear factor, something that makes him or her feel extremely relaxed in a conversation or something that makes them feel extremely uptight. And those fear factors can be formed in an acronym, TALQ and there are four of them that hit hard that cause problems for relationships and conversations.

T-Time Some people feel extremely urgent with their time and they need to keep control over it. It makes them aggressive in a conversation because they are aggressive problem solvers. They want to take care of things now and that urgency is present in their conversations.

A-Approval This comes when you have the approval and blessing of the person you are talking to. You feel safe and relaxed and comfortable, as long as you know that that approval is falling your way but the second you begin to pick up on rational, intuitive or even sometimes irrational signs that you are not approved of, you start to shut down.

L-Loyalty This is all about how you react to change. You have a need for the loyal, the highly predictable, sameness of life and the minute someone starts messing with that, you start to feel unsafe in a conversation.

Q-Quality This is about processing decisions in a quality way. Making sure you are thorough, doing not just the right thing, but in the right way and conversations that center around decision-making between couples can breakdown if one person has a high need for this and the other person doesn’t.

It’s very difficult to comprehend those abstract concepts in such a brief amount of time but when you are in a conversation and somebody touches on what we might call your ‘fear factor’ or you ‘safety zone,’ it’s nearly impossible not to react or shutting down or whatever it is you do to protect yourself. But once you know what makes you feel safe or unsafe in a conversation, then that creates empathy. And what we have discovered through research is that about 90 percent of the communication issues that happen, the way these problems can be solved is by empathy, which is being able to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. That’s really the entire solution; just that sense of understanding the other persons perspective. So, once you know how you are hardwired, it really doesn’t go a long way in creating empathy.

Ty: Sometimes when you’re an expert you’re like, “I know that! But why am I not doing what I know?”

LP: That is absolutely right! We are aware of all the right things to do, but whether we do them or not is always the choice and we laugh about that. I’ll give you an example of that. We know the basics, we know to clarify things, we know all of that but Les and I have had communication breakdowns. Like, I’ll come in from an event and stand in front of my husband’s desk and ask him, “How do I look?” and he’ll say, “Fine with me.” And I’ll go up and change clothes because what I hear is “Hey, whatever, if you want to ruin your reputation and go out in public looking like that, but I wouldn’t do it.” But he is just saying it’s fine with him! One of my most frequent mistakes is that I will project my emotions off of him. Like women, I have a lot of descriptors for emotions in my world and when he shares something that happened to him that day at work and I was there, I immediately think that he is feeling the same way I would feel if it would of happened to me and I’ll start projecting that onto him and he is like, “Listen, I don’t feel that way!” I’m assuming he feels just like me, which isn’t the case.

Ty: My sister is married and one of the things that I have been able to learn, even as a single woman is being able to have so many other arenas that I can bounce back on in terms of communication. Especially with women, we want the details! My sister used to call me frustrated that he [her husband] wouldn’t listen to her and I’m saying, “Well, that’s what I’m for! You call me with the details!” We have so many different relationships and my conversation with my mother is different than one with my sister. Your husband should be your best friend but there’s also balance.

LP: I think you are more than right! I have a small group of friends I call my band of sisters and we love to talk. The funniest thing is my husband joined us because we were going to sing happy birthday to a dear friend of mine and he had written her a funny card. And he was just sitting in the room for twenty minutes and in our conversations, there
is no sequential pattern in our conversations, it’s just lively; we change topics left and right and he couldn’t follow the conversation. After 20 minutes he was just so frustrated and we were laughing so hard! And we were saying this is why we need this group. We are all different types of listeners. Some of us are action-oriented listeners and we absolutely cannot burden one person with the task of revealing ourselves to them and expecting to be fully understood and heard at all times. That’s pretty unrealistic. I think the more support you can get in your life, the healthier that kind of synergy is for every type of relationship.

Ty: You know, oftentimes, the reason why the divorce statistics is so high is that we don’t understand the seasons of marriage and how we shift in terms of how we communicate with our love. How has your relationship changed over the years?

LP: First of all, let me just say we never had any premartial counseling, and then our book, “Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts,” admits that straight off the top. And then we spent the first year of our marriage in therapy, so we hit it hard right away. It took a lot of work and adjustments but that work has really paid off. Another part of that story is that we didn’t have kids until we had been married for 14 years, so we are at an entirely different place in our married life. Right now after 23 years we have a 4 year old and a 9 year old, which is why I’m in the Doctor’s office at 10 AM on a weekday. My life is very different now than it has been. We have had to work hard at structuring ways to stay connected, with traveling every week with two children who need our full attention and being in our mid 40’s. You know, our energy is not like it was when we were 20, so we have to really go in and build a date night and work hard at staying connected which is why our book, “Your Time To Start Your Marriage,” we actually wrote that for ourselves! I am so honored to be featured in “I Do” and I can tell that you share this same passion that we have. And that makes it really fun to know that we are working together for this great God we serve! ❤

Dr. Leslie Parrott is passionately in love with her husband, Les, of 23 years! As relationship and marriage experts, they are the co-founders of eHarmony Marriage and have been seen on Oprah, CNN and Good Morning America. www.realrelationships.com.

“Is Your Faucet Leaking?”

“Nagging is such a destructive demolition of a home that it appears in the same book four times! You have the responsibility to maintain the climate of peace in your home. Your home should be the haven your husband finds rest and security in. There is a better way to get your point across or to get your needs met than to persistently demand or complain. The opposite of criticism is praise. In order to turn your nagging into praise, you have to first fix the leak. In the natural if a faucet is leaking, you would simply install a washer and the leak would stop. And so it is in the spiritual. In addition to developing your communication skills, you must install a washer! Get in the Word of God only a daily basis; it will stop the nagging leak!

“That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word.”

*Proverbs 27:15 MSG

“It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop [on the flat oriental roof, exposed to all kinds of weather] than in a house shared with a nagging, quarrelsome, and faultfinding woman.”

Proverbs 21:9 AMP
Dessert, comes from the Old French ‘desservir’, meaning “to clear the table.” It’s the sixth and final course of a meal, usually consisting of something sweet and it is often skipped or passed up by many because they are too full to enjoy it.

It’s just like the course of your day; the “breakfast” of your life consists of you preparing for a full day of work. An early morning rise to pack school lunches and combing the kids’ hair, making sure homework was packed in their book bags and teeth are brushed, and then you fly out the door to ensure that they make it before the bell rings. Oh, jeez! The cleaners! You zoom around the corner, drop off your husband’s shirts and speed down the highway into rush hour traffic in an attempt to make it into the office before your boss does!

Lunch is gulped down because just as fast as it came, it went. Only time enough to bite a sandwich, make the kids’ dentist appointment and pay your credit card bill online and then it’s back off to work again!

When “dinner” gets here, your day has really just begun and now you need your second wind! Three loads of laundry, changing the linen on the beds, pay the utility bills, and sauté the chicken, all while helping the kids with their homework. By the time “Dessert” gets in, you’re too tired to enjoy him.

All too often the dessert of your day is not enjoyed because by the time your husband comes home, you’re too full from the consumption of your day. Completely devoured by life’s tasks, now you’re too worn out to be a sweet wife. Nuh uhh! Enough is Enough! Your table is too full and there’s no room for dessert; the devil is a liar! I think you should become ‘French’ tonight, clear the table, and make room for dessert! That’s right; remove some of those things that’s filling you up and causing you to gain weight! Stressed spelled backwards is Desserts; get rid of the stress so you can have dessert! Life is too short not to enjoy the sweet things in life. Now, look at that tall, dark, moist piece of chocolate cake ... I think you should have a slice of it tonight. Bon Appetit!
One night I fell asleep on the couch over my sister’s house. Too sleepy to drive home, I grabbed a blanket, curled up and went into a deep dimension of sleep. After a rough night of sleep on a couch made twin bed, I was awakened at 6:07 a.m. by a loud alarm clock. Uhhhhhh uhhnnn uhhnnnnnn!!!!!! Turning over attempting to make my peace with sleep, the uhnnm persisted. After 43 minutes and 18 seconds of an annoying alarm clock, I finally heard silence.

I thought, ‘Maybe I can just hold on to this couch for another hour…it’s nothing like a late Saturday morning, sleep marathon.’ Just as fast as I turned over to get into a comfortable position for another round of slobbering sleep, uhnn uhhnn uhhnn uhhnn uhhnn…I turned over, faced the ceiling and began talking to it, “I don’t believe it. I don’t believe this!” You’re not going to believe this either, but the honest to God’s truth, the alarm clock went off for two and half hours! I am so serious with you guys. My brother-in-law finally comes out of the room at 8:42 a.m. with crud in his eyes and before he could open his hot fire cracker breath to say good morning, I looked at him with indignation and said, “Don’t even say good morning, cause it’s not one! That don’t make no sense! Ya’ll crusty butts snoozed for three and a half hours; of that time you slept through the alarm and never heard it at all!” He looked at me with his eyes half opened and with hot morning breath, said, “Ah, you can give me my hotel fee.”

And some of you are just like that: not with hot breath and cynical like my brother-in-law to charge a new alarm clock. The alarm is to alert you to awaken from sleep but you ignore the uhnn uhhnn uhhnn and go back to sleep. There are alarms, signs of decay in the marriage, neglect, lack of communication, heated arguments, silent financial obstacles brewing, signs of failing sexual intimacy, signs that adultery could be at the next intersection or U turn…There are alarms sounding in your marriage to alert and awaken you from your unconsciousness, your lack of awareness to silent dilemmas and breakdowns ahead. This is how problematic or troubled marriages happen because they are in a state of unconsciousness, they appear to be awake, but they’re sleep walking, unaware and oblivious to what’s happening. The warning signals appear but we silence them by our snooze buttons, what I call the ignore button. But just because you ignore it, doesn’t make it go away. Alarms are only warnings in attempt to get you to wake up and snooze buttons only prolong the inevitable. And as the saying goes, ‘you snooze, you loose.’ Successful marriages don’t just happen, they are produced. And failed marriages don’t just happen; they are a result of snoozing, ignoring and negligence.

IGNORE: to refuse deliberately to consider or take notice of; disregard or neglect.

With that said, it’s time to wake up! Don’t sleep on your marriage. Below is a list of ways to awaken you from your slumber.

DON’T OVERSLEEP o-ver-sleep, v., to sleep beyond the proper time of waking. As with problem solving, you will learn that appropriate timing is key. Some times when alarms sound, there may be instances when you should not immediately react. Wisdom will show you how to step back and gauge the situation before approaching it because sometimes responding to an alarm immediately can make things worse. Wisdom will tell you to rest, ‘don’t respond yet, this isn’t the proper time,’ but waiting too long before you put closure to a problem is setting you up for failure. Time lapse is a serious hindrance to solving problems effectively. Weeks should not have gone by before you approach a problem and bringing an issue up when a new one springs, only compounds trouble for your marriage. You must solve the problem when it arises so that you can bring closure to it to prevent it from silently affecting your marriage. Handle a problem as it arises but determine if the timing is fitting, if the environment, emotional level and sensitivity are conducive to solving any challenges.

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS With any marriage, there will always be ups and downs and challenges through the years but tension, stress and an emotionless marriage are signs of neglect. Your sleepless nights are an opportunity to diagnose and tend to the health of your marriage. Shift in focusing on solving the problem, than the problem itself. What have you personally neglected? What can you change or improve? Take an honest approach in evaluating the source of the problem and collectively discover ways to overcome these challenges. Diamonds are found in rough places and heat is what yields its brilliant shine, so don’t fret over troubled times in your marriage; it’s all in your attitude and your approach that will determine the outcome. It’s not what happens to us but how we interpret and respond to what happens to us. Challenges and obstacles are only camouflage and the hidden potential of a great marriage becoming.

PAJAMA PARTY! Comfortable nighties, popcorn, pizza, and up all night! That’s all some of you need: get out of the rut of life! Grab a sleeping bag and a tent, find a park or turn your own back yard into a pajama party with your baby, honey-dew, sweetie-pie, big-Daddy…whatever his nickname is, and have a blast with him! Hint: the purpose of a pajama party is not for sleeping!”

NEW ALARM CLOCK One of the things that I noticed about my brother- in-law’s inability to wake up when the alarm sounded was because he’s had that same ole alarm clock since he and my sister have been married! You can become so accustomed to the alarm that you sleep right through it; the sound of it has become synchronized, in harmony with your snoring! Is your marriage constantly living in a state of alarms that you have become accustomed to living in them?
You can’t remember when the space in the bed between you two grew bigger, where you don’t even touch or cuddle any more. You’ve developed a habit of living in heated arguments, you’ve adapted to over working and no play and not making love to your spouse often; you’ve become accustomed to living together separately, going on auto-pilot…doing life detached. It almost puzzles me how marriages of 25 years can end in divorce but then I realize…they’ve been living in snooze for the last 20 years; they’ve been accustomed to living in alarms and it became their norm. But don’t pull the plug on your marriage! Your marriage can be revived again and made anew. Bringing in professional help to assist you in reviving your marriage can help you restore your covenant back to the place where you first made that decision, when you laid eyes on him, and in that moment you knew in your heart, ‘I’m going to spend the rest of my life with this man.” That spark can be rekindled, and it begins when you wake up.

I’ve been so privileged to learn so much from my sister’s marriage of 17 years to my wonderful brother-in-law that I’m going to go out and buy him a new alarm clock. May you find rest in the one you promised to love and sleep with the rest of your life.

Need marital advice? Visit Dr. Ty online at www.tyadams.org.
1. **SEX**—Many have it but few make love. Love making is different from sex and requires God, the Manufacturer of it, in order to achieve the maximum benefits. Don’t engage in intercourse without God. Sex is an act of worship and God should be included in every aspect of all your worship experiences.

2. **BIOLOGY**—Testicles, penis, vagina, clitoris, ejaculatory duct, climax, orgasm…words that many Christians squirm at and are afraid to say and unaware of their full functionality. Often times many couples do not experience sexual fulfillment because they skipped PE class or totally forgot how their bodies function. Understanding, not only your body, but also his, is a key component in achieving ultimate pleasure. Like your PC muscle. What’s a PC muscle? Hmmm…I think some of you women should close this book for a moment and find out. When you learn its function and how to contract your pelvic floor muscles, it will enhance and intensify your sexual experiences. It can give you the ability to have multiple orgasms and simultaneous orgasms with your husband. Don’t allow your sexual ignorance to rob you of one of the greatest experiences you can have with your spouse.

3. **BEYOND HANDS**—When couples think of stimulating one another, they often focus on just using the hands. Consequently, touching without feeling becomes the norm in many bedrooms. But beyond the touch of hands, there are other ways to arouse your spouse to achieve the ultimate level of stimulation and sexual achievement. Awaken the other senses: sight, taste, smell, and sound….when you engage the entire sensory mechanism of your spouse, sensual lovemaking awaits you.

4. **COME INSIDE**—Into me, see…intimacy…to fully know. Intimacy begins in the spirit. You have to tap into the spirit of your lover in order to become one with them. If you haven’t created it there, no physical touch will. When you simply have sex “physically” but not engage into the spirit of your spouse, you limit yourself to becoming fully naked and known by your covenant lover. You don’t want to ever have sex without knowing; otherwise, you will illegally access a barren place. You’ll have an entitlement (marriage license) to enter, but no wisdom to penetrate within. “Sex without interpersonal intimacy is like a diploma without an education.” - Lewis Smedes

5. **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE**—“And the two shall become one.” No amount of positions, biology courses or experience will achieve the ultimate fulfillment like oneness. Don’t reduce your oneness down to a mere sex act; don’t allow any acts into your covenant that will separate you into two.

6. **MISSING IN ACTION**—Your body’s here with me, but your mind is on the other side of town. Don’t allow lovemaking to become an involuntary act: there, but not involved. Achieving an orgasm does not necessarily mean you have accomplished your goal; it’s a reflex, and does not mean automatic fulfillment. Synchronizing your body, spirit, and your mind is the harmony of lovemaking. When you come together with your spouse, don’t bring anything else but you; all of you. Distractions are not allowed. Fully engage your mind, deleting all the downloads from your day and allow your spouse to become your total focus.

7. **FOREPLAY**—Where lovemaking begins. Don’t ever enter into your sexual union without foreplay; without stimulating the spirit, caressing the mind, and embracing the body. Foreplay is not just the acts that precede sexual intercourse but it’s the everyday fabric of your marriage.

8. **AFTERPLAY**—Love making does not end at orgasm. Marinate…linger…bask in the afterglow. Kissing is an intimate expression of endearment. When you eliminate kissing from your marriage, you risk trivializing your sexual covenant to prostitution: sex for hire, having sex out of obligation or trading sexual favors but not intimacy. Prostitutes don’t kiss their clients because it’s understood that it’s reserved for intimacy. Don’t allow your sexual union to become paid for hire act; only having sex with your husband out of obligation because he pays the mortgage. Don’t allow the intimacy to die. Breathe life back into your marriage, kiss! Kiss for no reason at all. Kiss like you did when you were dating. Do mouth to mouth resuscitation and revive the flames! Put the fire back into your marriage with a long, passionate kiss!

9. **ZOOM, ZOOM, ZOOM!**—So many couples rush to the finish line that they never come to experience the journey. Sure, “quickies” may be erotic and electrifying but slow, easy, steady rhythms can be just as stimulating…slow down and enjoy the process.

10. **LOOSE YOURSELF**—Bedroom boredom will embezzle passion out of love making. Routine is romance’s enemy. We are creatures of habit, so vibrant, vivacious, creative lovemaking will come by your deliberate decision to break the cycle of the mundane and awaken your imagination to do the unimaginable!

11. **MORE, MORE, MORE!** Frequency is not indicative of a healthy sex life, but it’s the quality of the sex that’s important. The condition of your sex life takes precedence over quantity.

12. **POSITION**—Positioning goes beyond technique or acrobatically moving the torso or legs, but discerning the location, the position of your spouse’s mood is key for proper entry.

13. **THE BEST SEX IS UNADULTERATED!** Don’t allow your sexual union to become contaminated. Ensure that you allow God to heal you from past sexual partners and remove negative imprints from society and media.

14. **GOOD MORNING!**—Estrogen and testosterone levels (the primary generator of sexual desire) are at their highest level at dawn; common love making takes place at 11 pm. You might want to consider some 6 o’clock-in-the-morning love making. Be his alarm clock tomorrow morning!

15. **KISSING**—If it’s the essence of breathing your life into your covenant lover, then by all means, don’t stop kissing. When couples get too use to one another they can become accustomed to not kissing. Kissing is an intimate expression of endearment. Don’t allow your sexual union to become contaminated. Ensure that you allow God to heal you from past sexual partners and remove negative imprints from society and media.

16. **ORAL SEx**—Lovemaking has a language, a language of its own. Lovemaking is a pivotal time to express to your beloved your deepest feelings. Words...
give life; life is in the power of your tongue. When you develop a language for lovemaking you speak life into the existence of your sexual union. Your words become the heartbeat that sustains the vitality of your oneness, making it come alive, again and again. Open your mouth and speak life.

17. NEVER FAKE IT! For the eternal health of the marriage, you must be honest. True lovemaking is birthed out of nakedness. To achieve an authentic climax, unclothe the deepest parts of you and you will never have to utter a false moan again. Your willingness to be open and candid with your spouse is the key to getting your needs met. He will never know unless you tell him; your dishonesty leaves him in the dark but the truth will set you free!

18. SEXUAL HEALING-- Better sex begins with a better you! Heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, hormonal imbalances, vascular problems, stress, drugs, medication, fatigue, insufficient exercise...all can affect your ability to experience great sex. Consult with your doctor to improve the state of your health and it will improve the quality of your sexual experiences.

19. AGE AIN'T NOTHING BUT A NUMBER-- Aging should not effect your capacity for great lovemaking! Many couples continue in sexual activity beyond their seventies, even without Viagra! All it requires is a change in your sexual behavior. With age and sexual maturity, you increase your capacity for intimacy when you come to understand that lovemaking is not a means for sexual fulfillment, but oneness and intimacy with the one you love...

20. THE BEST GIFT HE'S EVER OPENED-- You won't always have the same interest or drive simultaneously and therefore should not be used as a gauge if you should have sex. So don't deny your spouse if you're not at the same heightened level of sexual interest. Sexual fulfillment is about meeting the other's needs. Your spouse should never have to long for sex or beg you to have sex. Withholding is a sin. Never, ever use sex as a pawn. Sex is a gift, not a game. A wife has the great pleasure and responsibility of giving this gift to her husband, not because of what he does, but for who he is to her.

For more advice on lovemaking, visit Dr. Ty online www.tyadams.org.
Touching with love isn’t something that anyone can do just by simply using the hands. If you are going to touch with love, then you have to be an extension of God. When you place your hands on someone else, you are actually sharing God with that person. When you are filled with God’s divine love, then we are truly sharing the power of love and the power of touch. Filling yourself with love before touching your partner, erasing all of your thoughts of the day and distractions should be the goal of every couple as they become in unison with their spouse. You are exchanging spiritual components at that time of touch and a new outlook on love, intimacy and sharing with each encounter. You can’t give love and not get any love in return because touch is reciprocal; therefore selfless love is the key to intimacy. Intimacy and sex are totally different. Intimacy is knowing; knowing your spouse on a level that you didn’t know before you became intimate. In getting to know your partner’s body, you should slowly caress them from the head to the toe extending hands movements that consist of simple long flowing strokes and then tracing the body with your fingertips.

Touch triggers the senses. Because there are mechanisms in our skin that send messages to the brain, the brain responds based on the type of touch that takes place. It’s either going to be a pleasurable message that says, ‘relax, it’s ok, you’re safe’, or it is going to be light or flight. Now the chemical that is going to cause euphoria, a sense of comfort and safety, is serotonin. If the touch is negative, chemicals will release that causes the person to want to move fast or get out of the way. Send a message to the brain that it’s safe to stay and the body will respond in many positive ways. One of the physiological things that takes place when a person receives a positive or loving touch is that the blood pressure automatically lowers. Then, the second thing that takes place is the slowing of the breathing and you start to breathe deeper and slower. When you breathe slower then more oxygen is coming into the body and when more oxygen is coming in, it’s being moved all around the body and oxygen is what the body uses to heal itself. Hence, pleasure and healing simultaneously.

**The Power of Touch**

Touching with love isn’t something that anyone can do just by simply using the hands. If you are going to touch with love, then you have to be an extension of God. When you place your hands on someone else, you are actually sharing God with that person. When you are filled with God’s divine love, then we are truly sharing the power of love and the power of touch. Filling yourself with love before touching your partner, erasing all of your thoughts of the day and distractions should be the goal of every couple as they become in unison with their spouse. You are exchanging spiritual components at that time of touch and a new outlook on love, intimacy and sharing with each encounter. You can’t give love and not get any love in return because touch is reciprocal; therefore selfless love is the key to intimacy. Intimacy and sex are totally different. Intimacy is knowing; knowing your spouse on a level that you didn’t know before you became intimate. In getting to know your partner’s body, you should slowly caress them from the head to the toe extending hands movements that consist of simple long flowing strokes and then tracing the body with your fingertips.

**Random acts of touching**

Practice caressing and touching your spouse on a regular basis. Couples should touch one another at least three times a day or go beyond what you would normally do. Before and after work and before you go to bed, you should make a conscious decision that I am going to touch more. Touching should not just happen when sexual activity is taking place. It has to be a touch of comfort, holding of hands, or touching your partner’s hair. If you have to go through the process of learning a simple foot massage just to interact, do it. It’s worth all the money in the world to learn how to be a good masseuse or masseur. People think they have to go to school for a year and learn how to be a massage therapist to learn how to satisfy their partner. No, you’re not doing it for a living. You are learning to touch your partner in a way that you might not be aware of. You have to relearn how to touch.

**Soft Hands**

Men are firm and forceful. Their normal contact is aggressive and they move fast. So, when they come and touch their partner, they often are too aggressive and moving too fast; it’s like they are racing. Men should learn to slow the movement down and to visualize their partner’s body as a work of art and not just a body, and then they can actually take pleasure in touching and enjoy it. Visualize when God was forming man from the ground…when you are touching, you can visualize that same type of forming with your hands, then it becomes a work of art.

**Firm Hands**

Women tend to be too gentle or timid with their touch. It’s not that men don’t enjoy a feminine touch, but they want an assured touch, that says, ‘I know what I’m doing and I’m not just tickling you.’ You have to place your hands there and KNOW that they belong there. A woman has to think a little bit differently in terms of confidence, ‘that this body that I am touching is mine. It has been given to me to touch and to feel pleasure and so I am going to touch knowing that I am not touching something I’m not supposed to, so it’s OK!’

**Heal me, Thrill Me**

Touch triggers the senses. Because there are mechanisms in our skin that send messages to the brain, the brain responds based on the type of touch that takes place. It’s either going to be a pleasurable message that says, ‘relax, it’s ok, you’re safe’, or it is going to be light or flight. Now the chemical that is going to cause euphoria, a sense of comfort and safety, is serotonin. If the touch is negative, chemicals will release that causes the person to want to move fast or get out of the way. Send a message to the brain that it’s safe to stay and the body will respond in many positive ways. One of the physiological things that takes place when a person receives a positive or loving touch is that the blood pressure automatically lowers. Then, the second thing that takes place is the slowing of the breathing and you start to breathe deeper and slower. When you breathe slower then more oxygen is coming into the body and when more oxygen is coming in, it’s being moved all around the body and oxygen is what the body uses to heal itself. Hence, pleasure and healing simultaneously.

**Make your Lover glow and grow**

Many couples have touch deprivation even though they have sexual activity. When sex is finished the body is still yearning for that nurturing, that comfort, that security that comes from that loving touch which is intimate that is not a part of the physical act of sex. The touch is physiologically and emotionally nurturing that’s needed not just for our bodies, but for our brains to grow and develop as well. After you go through the entire process of learning and knowing the body on an intimate level and on a non-sexual level, then it’s time for the afterglow. In that afterglow, whether the person is awake or asleep, share some affirmations of love. Say things to your spouse that’s affirming and loving and that can help them to know, “my spouse is here for me…my spouse truly loves me…my spouse wants the best for me and wants my healing.” And not just healing on the physical level, but my mind, my body and my spirit.

Versandra Jewel Kennebrew, a myomassologist and holistic health advocate, provides solutions for optimal health through her lectures, workshops and private massage practice. www.versandra-kennebrew.com
**OVERLY CONFUSED!**

One of the problems with Christian women is confusion with their sexuality, confusion about what they can do without feeling guilty, confusion regarding the messages they have received from their parents, society, the church, whether all those things agree with one another or if they disagree. Many Christian women from ages 25-55 are overwhelmed with guilt of kissing, fondling and sexual intimacy and now are entering into marriage trying to figure out where the line is or where they should move the line to. If women have any old baggage with things they have learned about sex or taboos about sex, they need to deal with that. Otherwise, there will be a lot of shame and guilt about sex or taboos about sex, they need to deal with that perception. Otherwise, there will be a lot of shame and guilt in the marriage.

A real big issue for Christian women is being overwhelmed with guilt of kissing, fondling and sexual intimacy and now are entering into marriage trying to figure out where the line is or where they should move the line to. If women have any old baggage with things they have learned about sex or taboos about sex, they need to deal with that. Otherwise, there will be a lot of shame and guilt in the marriage.

**OVERWORKED!**

I think our society is over-extended. To some degree, I think it is just natural physiology; our bodies are just tired. Women are exhausted and they just don’t have the energy. They work a 9 to 5, they cook dinner, they take care of the kids and now it’s time to take care of him. And then, sometimes he has to take care of so much during the day that he is exhausted and would rather not. I think because couples are over committed, they don’t have that time to set aside just for them. Just like you plan everything else, you need to plan that time for just the two of you.

I don’t know too many couples that have sex everyday or every other day. Though there was a report that indicated that, I don’t know who these “average” men and women were or if people have ever really been able to live up to that. I think that once or twice a week is about the norm for most typical couples and it’s not so much the frequency of sexual activity but the intimacy during those times. Couples need to get an understanding and ensure that one person is not withholding or one is not being deprived, but we have mutually agreed that once or twice a week is good for us and we are looking forward to that. Don’t succumb to society’s pressure to perform.

**OVER SEXED!**

Some women are engaging in sexual activity but they’re really not present; their body is just going through the motions. They are really feeling like, “I am only doing this because I have to; you’re my husband and I’m only doing this to keep you from doing it with somebody else.” I think the missing element has a lot to do with an emotional connection and the intensity of the relationship, where you want to do everything you can to satisfy them and they are doing everything they can to satisfy you. In that, women would be more orgasmic. But then again, I think in terms of how people describe an orgasm is also an issue because what the perception of an orgasm is: my body contracts and withdraws, my hair is swirling left and right and I’m just groaning and moaning to the top of my lungs. But when I don’t meet that perception, I begin to wonder, “Am I really being fulfilled?” You may be fulfilled without all of that. You can still have a fulfilled experience without an orgasm. It’s OK. Women need to go back and look at how they are defining that and what type of release is it that they are really looking for. You also have to look at the fact that 1 in 3 women have been sexually abused in their childhood or 1 in 4 women being raped at some point in their lifetime. A lot of times women have had traumatic sexual experiences so they are doing good just to be engaging in sex. So, the thought of enjoying sex then becomes a conflict because they have these memories of something being forced on them and they didn’t enjoy it. And so now to say that I am actually enjoying what someone has violated then becomes an issue of counseling. Many women have had traumatic childhood experiences, physiological problems and just need to seek counseling and have their heart transformed.

**OH, GOD!**

Getting to a place of enjoying sex would be getting back to a better relational place. First, getting back to a relationship with God and then with your spouse. A relationship with God is critical because when you are in a right relationship with God, you don’t have unrealistic expectations of your partner. A right relationship with God first keeps the marriage centered and the focus is then on your spouse instead of you. When you talk about taking off your clothes, it’s almost like taking off layers of yourself; it’s being fully exposed and we want to get to a place where we are naked and not ashamed. Getting to that place can only begin with a relationship with God; intimacy with God and intimacy with the other person will bring about a fulfilling sexual union.

**OH, ME!**

A lot of women don’t have fulfilling sexual relationships because they are overweight, they are out of shape, and they think they’re not attractive. That’s something that you can fix. Women need to work out, get in shape, take better care of themselves, and present themselves in a way that says, “I feel good about me.” Get to a place where you realize you are fearfully and wonderfully made; a place where you have a good self-esteem, where you accept your body with whatever frailties you may have. In order for that to take place a woman has to really be comfortable in her skin and come to believe that she is valuable and worthy of being in a good relationship. It’s helping women realize that it goes beyond their physical bodies. So many women get stuck there and you have to realize that there are going to be better bodies that come along. Even if you are in good shape, there is going to be a body that is younger and stronger; so it’s got to be more than just a body. Instead, get connected at the heart.

**OH, TALK!**

If a women has any unmet needs in the relationship and she’s just giving, giving, giving, that becomes frustrating over time. Women need to get to a place where they really express their needs and then encourage their husbands in ways they can fulfill that. Many women struggle with being verbal during sexual activity and they expect their husbands to know what they want, but then they go away unsatisfied; all the while, he’s having a great time! But she is laying there thinking, “I wish he had done this, I wish he would have moved here.” If you don’t open your mouth and...
tell him, how is he going to know? Another part of the whole sexual healing is that if a woman has had any type of traumatic experiences in the past, she needs to be open about that and share it with her spouse. Her husband will then understand why there is a deeper level of sensitivity. Sex should be a mutual experience; it should be something that we agree to, not just something you accompany. When you feel like you are being forced to do something you don’t like or agree with, that’s not going to be a good sexual experience in any kind of way. Couples really need to dialogue about what is acceptable to them and what they feel good about. If those issues are addressed then sexual healing can definitely take place.

**OH, HELP!**

Couples should seek counsel when there is sexual dissatisfaction and they have tried to discuss it but no progress has been made. Sexual intimacy is an integral part of the relationship but it’s not the only part of the relationship and if other things are working well, then sometimes it’s not that big of an issue. I have counseled couples who have not had sex in months or years but they are satisfied and they are fulfilled. They practice ‘outercourse’ as opposed to intercourse where they do things that are sexually stimulating without penetration and they are happy and very content with that. But when people become dissatisfied they can begin to look outside of the relationship for fulfilment. Most people know right away if they need help. It is just a matter of being willing to get help and I think that in the African-American community, we have done such a disservice as it pertains to mental health or pastoral counseling. It’s a perception that all you have to do is pray and trust God. You definitely need to pray, definitely need to trust God, but sometimes you need intervention with the help of someone who is professional and experienced in dealing with these kinds of issues; somebody who will keep the situation safe and respect the God in you. If you need help, don’t wait and just hope it is going to get better. You want to be actively doing something to help ensure that it does get better because marriage is for a lifetime and you shouldn’t have to just go along, but should really enjoy the process. Why just have good sex when you can have maximum sex?! Go for it!

Author and speaker, Dr. Sabrina Black is the Clinical Director of Abundant Life Counseling Center and president of the National Biblical Counselors Association www.sabrinablack.com.

“**Sex is a gift given to us by God. To give life and to be enjoyed to its fullest and God has released me to be free in my intimacy with my husband. Say, ‘Yes, I Do’, to the gift.”**

**NICKI MICHEAUX**

Actress of the hit ABC Family Original Series, Lincoln Heights
Although the investment of marriage. financial advisor on how to manage it in order to keep love. and if love is going to cost you, you need to find out from our financial advisor on how to get the greatest return on the investment of marriage.

**INVESTING IN LOVE**—If you are about to spend the rest of your life with someone, now is the time to introduce yourself to their money. In the dating stage? Maybe that is pushing it but there are questions that you need to even know while dating. You should get their perspective on things like their relationship with money and their spending habits or if one feels that the wife should work or not. A good thing, also, is to interview the person to see how their mom or dad handled money because how we treat or operate with money is learned. Give them scenarios such as: which should come first, a medical bill or the mortgage? For what reasons would you borrow money? We all have financial disasters—I don’t care who you are—we all have to make financial decisions that are sometimes tough. So asking questions like, “If one of our parents needs to live with us and our income goes to that parent, then how can we afford that expense and our bills at the same time?”

I think couples should go and talk to other couples. Talk to a couple that is really just down right broke. If you talk to a couple that has money problems, you can ask them what they would have done differently. You will learn from someone’s bad experiences. Then talk to couples that have been together for years, like their 50th anniversary. Ask them how they made it financially. There are also a lot of blended marriages now. Some people have been married before or have children from a previous relationship. How is that going to affect the financial situation? You have to look at every issue, including how much of their check is going to child support and how are they taking care of their child. That will give you insight on how they also take care of their finances. In addition, it’s good to take a financial planning course together and to do different worksheets; include everything from your budget to dealing with the kids.

If couples find themselves having difficulty in talking about money, they should start off with bringing in a third party if they don’t like to bring up the issue of money. But the first thing you should do is not talk about money when there is a particular issue at hand. Wait until there are no money issues involved and then just talk about it in general. That’s the first thing to find out and agree to disagree when it comes to money. But find out their thoughts on co-mingling money: Is it a good idea or should it be kept separately? Who will be the designated bill payer? Do they contribute equally or proportionately, depending on their income? Normally, one person makes more than the other and as the relationship grows, then the income and the assets increase.

But before they do anything, before marriage, you need to see one another’s credit report and you need to track spending. Then, have a money session: “Who do you owe and how much? Ok, is your car insurance cheaper than mine? Who can get the best rates?” Do comparison-shopping, like the best health insurance or even the best bank or credit union. Even who has the best dry cleaners? All of that adds up. But you can’t do anything until you track your spending to see where each other’s money is going. Do it together. Also, look at each other’s retirement account. Look at who is the better investor, who is putting money into their retirement account and how are we investing the funds that we are putting in the retirement account. If you are putting away 1 percent and I am putting away 15 percent, then we have to balance that out. Everything comes to balance. It is give and take.

**WHAT’S YOURS IS MINE**—Although marriage is the merging of assets and money, you should have more than one account. You can have your own account but definitely have a joint account. Even with separate accounts, you can make your spouse the beneficiary on the account. You should also keep separate credit cards, too, in order to maintain your separate credit history. In the event that a spouse dies, it may be difficult to get a mortgage or something without credit. But no matter what, you do need a joint account. When you own property and merge assets, you want to make sure you know what you have. You should not own property or own a joint account until you are married. Wait until you are married to purchase a car or a home together. If it is only held in your partner’s name and you are not married, nothing belongs to you. You want to make sure that when you are not married, you don’t buy anything major together. When you are married, that’s when you can go ahead and do that.

**THE BUSINESS OF LOVE**—A housewife has one of the most difficult jobs because she has to make sure the home is up and running. She is the CFO of the home. One person needs to be the chief financial officer and the other person needs to be the operating officer. She needs to put herself in that position to know what is going out and coming in. Knowledge is power. She is the one that does the grocery shopping. We spend a disproportionate amount of money on food. She goes to the grocery store but she needs to say, “If we need to cut back, let me know.” That’s what we need to do with our home—with a board of advisors. Before we get married, we need to make some temporary layoffs or we need to fire some people. “I am going to layoff my hairdresser and go every other week instead of going once a week…I am going to get my nails done once a month…These are some lay offs I can make, what are some layoffs you can make? Can you change your gym membership? Or can you add on to mine?” It’s like two companies merging. You take two companies coming together; one with either debt or no assets, but how are you going to bring them together?

Running a marriage and a family is like running a business. Once you get married, you should say that you need a board of advisors to keep the marriage together. We are going to “hire” a banker to work for us; and by hiring a banker you need to have a relationship with them to say, “Look at our bank statements, fees, etc.”
It comes down to spending and realizing that many of us live above our means. We look at marriage thinking we will have more money now; thinking that you won’t have to pay a separate light or gas bill but that’s not the way we should look at it.

Get an attorney to work out your wills and your trusts. Hire an accountant and have a life insurance agent on your board of directors. Even though they might not know they are on the board, you have a team of advisors that you need to talk to and also interview and say, “Who do you think is the best for our team?” You may be broke or with little money, but you still need a team because you are not going to be broke your whole life and so you’ll need this team of advisors to lead you for a happy marriage.

MONEY TALKS- A great, wealthy marriage is built on honesty and communication. If one has run up the credit card and didn’t communicate, you run the risk of sabotaging your investment. Don’t blame each other for the problems, keep the blame out of it and figure out how you can tackle this together. Everybody has a financial disaster and, if you think about it, every situation could be worse. Maybe this disaster can give you a fresh start. Go to an agency or a credit counselor; do debt consolidations and establish solutions to the financial problems. Just like when you have a health problem, you go to the doctor… you have spiritual problems, you go to a minister or a therapist. You definitely need to go to a financial counselor and talk to someone. There are non-profit agencies that will help out. Get to the root of the problem and fix it because sometimes we just go out and buy stuff as “retail therapy”, you’re mad and you go shopping! No, you have to find the source of the problem because financial communication is definitely the key to not becoming a marital statistic from money issues.

We look at money now; thinking that you won’t have to pay a separate light or gas bill but that’s not the way we should look at it. Before we have this merger or acquisition, we should look at making some cutbacks and looking at our spending habits. Find out your financial goals. If your financial goal is to have a Harley Davidson, let’s start with buying Harley Davidson stock. Let’s start there! Let’s own the company! If her goal is to own a ring from Tiffany’s, let’s own Tiffany’s before we go to Tiffany’s. So, don’t start off saying that you want a motorcycle, because we know that boys love their toys! But you also don’t want to go into a marriage and be deprived. Resentment could set in because you are depriving yourself of things that you had when you were single. Remember, there is balance. Before going into marriage, you can find out a lot about how the person feels about money, what they value most, and where their priorities are by asking if they are going to pay a lot for their wedding. If your parents can’t afford it, I would rather they contribute to your IRA or down payment of your home. Then ask yourself, “do you need a big engagement ring to show off, or can you get that on your 5th anniversary?” There is nothing to look forward to with an engagement ring that is already three carats. The fewer carrots now, the more carrots you can eat down the road. I know jewelry is an investment, but it is something you can have later. You want to make sure you set priorities before you are married. Establish beforehand that you are not going to break the marriage or break the bank.

Pennies add up- Do you have a little bit of extra money? If you are bringing home an extra $1,000 in your paycheck, then you should put that into your retirement account. Both of you could increase your contributions and that would save you money on taxes in the long run. We will be bringing home less money but it will still be working for us and tax deferred is the best thing. It’s also wonderful to have a joint savings account that is earning interest and also an IRA or a Roth IRA. Know what your goals are. When you pay 10 percent to the church, you should pay yourself 10 percent also. Maybe you have a home already or planning to buy a home. You need an account for every single thing you are trying to do whether it is in a credit union or in a bank. Specify that account for the down payment of a home so it can earn interest. You need a vacation account with both names on it. You don’t want to deprive yourself but you want to make sure that if you do something, you are going to save for it together. You want to have separate accounts designated for a certain thing. That way you have a little bit here, a little bit there. A little bit goes a long way.

Pennies the Joneses- Years ago, most moms stayed at home and the dad worked, but now many homes have two working adults. If that is the case, let’s make the most of it. Out of my many clients, I only have one where the man felt that he and his wife needed to live on his income only. It’s so wonderful if two working people live on one income and save the other income. That is the biggest blessing ever! In this particular situation, she made more money than him, but he felt that by being the head of the household that they were to live within the means of his income only. So, her income was banked for years and now they have over a million dollars saved. The average person, in their lifetime, has made over a million dollars. What if you saved that million? How wealthy your marriage could be if you adopted this philosophy? If one person is making 50K and the other person is making 40K, don’t live at 90K. Try to live at 50. It will pay off later. Don’t live above your means attempting to live up to the Joneses. Save and invest it now and then the Joneses will have to keep up with you.

For the love of money- Don’t ever love anything that can’t love you back; and money can not love you back. Health comes before wealth; investing in the health of your marriage should be your central focus. Don’t allow the stress of financial issues or the pursuit of the almighty dollar to destroy your health or your marriage. I would rather have a financial disaster any day over a health disaster. It comes down to if we are taking care of ourselves and doing preventative things in terms of the health of our marriage and also in terms of our money, then we can survive any financial issues.

Financial guru, Gail Perry-Mason is well known in the securities industry where she has climbed the corporate ladder from receptionist to First Vice President-Investments of Oppenheimer & Co, Inc. She is co author of the bestselling, “Girl, Make Your Money Grow!” Email her at gail.perry-mason@opco.com
...For you to pray for him...For you to submit to the God in him...For you to respect him...For you to cherish him...For you to forgive him...For you to encourage him...For you to praise him...For you to trust him...For you to support him...For you to understand him...For you to provide a safe place in your home...His own time and space...To spend time with you...To know that he is important to you...To feel safe with you...For you to date him...For you to maintain your beautiful appearance...For you to protect his sexual drive...You to make love to him...For you to maintain your passion for him...To know how much you love him...
Ty: What do you think hinders an unbelieving husband from getting saved and coming to Church?

Tonya Lumpkin: Predominately not living what they preach, a lot of hypocrisy, and no real teaching in some Churches. There’s a lot of judgment and not showing the love of Christ. For many Christians, Church is what we do on Sunday, but it is not a part of who we are but a part of our outer expression and religion; not a real conviction. It’s just something that we do. But when we’re not conforming to what we’re hearing preached, then there’s no way that we can expect an unbeliever, whether he’s a husband or not, to even want to come in. Why would you want to be a part of that? Where people are nasty, or where you see people serving but not with a servant’s heart; instead, you’ve got an attitude while you’re ushering and seating people…there’s no love. And when you don’t feel that or don’t see it, you feel like, ‘Why would I wanna be a part of that?’ Where people are nasty, or where you see people serving but not with a servant’s heart; instead, you’ve got an attitude while you’re ushering and seating people…there’s no love. And when you don’t feel that or don’t see it, you feel like, ‘Why would I wanna be a part of that?’ Stop being a sinner? For what? I’m better off where I’m at! At least I know what I’m dealing with out here in the world. In the church, you’re dealing with some people that pretend that they’re something that they are not. But I thank God because He placed me in a Church that’s not just talking about money, “name it and claim it” and what you can get, but our pastor is also teaching us about holiness and our responsibility in living it. My husband barely believed in God. His father was an atheist; his father killed himself. His mother took him to church but there was no real relationship; so he wasn’t taught all of these things. So to come into a place where he said that he can look at the men in our church and watch them live it has been one of the biggest blessings.

Ty: We have to understand that when people come to church the only God that they “see” is us.

Tonya: Yes, because that living what you preach included me! I was like, “God, why can’t you fix my husband?” When I asked God to fix him, He started working on me and dealing with me instead. I was the one going to church, but I was the one that needed to be fixed! The Lord began to work on me because my husband was looking at me as an example. God really started showing me, me, and where I needed to change and grow, because not only was my husband looking at me, but my children were too. I had to become that meek and quiet spirit because he was watching me. He was wondering if this was even real. And when he started realizing that this was a real change, that this was genuine, and that there was a real love for God, then he said, “Well, maybe it is something to this…maybe it is.”

Ty: Let’s talk about this meek and quiet woman. What did that mean to you and what was that process like? Was that difficult for you?

Tonya: OH, WOW! Meek, quiet, and submissive – I think those are all words that are like bad words in today’s society ‘cuz you know women have a lot to say! And Tonya had a lot of mouth! And don’t let
Tonya: Oh, my God! It’s been a complete turnaround! God is not through dealing with neither one of us, but things are completely different. ‘Cuz when God gets finished with him, he’s gonna give his own testimony, but my husband is saved now and seeking God now more than ever! In the past when I wanted him to go to church, I would nag him every Sunday, “Why can’t you go to church? Why can’t you go with me? Why can’t you just go?” I was mad with an attitude every Sunday ‘cuz he’s laying in the bed. And God told me one Sunday to SHUT UP! And with an attitude I said, “Okay, I’m not gonna say nothing!” And then my husband was like, ‘AND WORK ON YOUR ATTITUDE!’ Because how am I gonna get up and try to get him to go to a place that’s supposed to be making me a better person, a place that I’m supposed to be going to praise the Lord but I got an attitude and mad? He ain’t getting up! I’m high and mighty now but I was just out there doing the same things he was doing just a year before that! And God was like, ‘Be quiet, give him a kiss, say I love you, get dressed, and just go. The joy and the peace that you have from what you’re receiving from Me, will speak more to him and cause him to go to Church more than your attitude and nagging.’ That attitude was making him think, “Oh, now I really don’t wanna go!”

I started obeying God and every Sunday me and the girls would get up and get dressed, and one day he turned around and said, “I’m going with you.” All that asking and fussin’ didn’t do it, it was being quiet! It was about being loving even when I didn’t feel like it. As much as it was hard, it became easier and natural when I practiced it. It’s like when you practice unrighteousness so much it becomes an automatic response, but if we start forcing ourselves to practice righteousness, it becomes an automatic response. We have to practice it just like we used to practice unrighteousness. So now he’s getting up and going EVERY Sunday, he’s in Bible Study on Tuesdays…..and before, he wouldn’t have even thought about getting up! Now he’s praying with our kids. Now he’s reading his Bible; he’s a totally different person. I can’t even explain it all; there are so many different things. Our home is so peaceful now.

Ty: You know the Bible says never despise small beginnings. Oftentimes when we see somebody new come into the fold we prematurely judge their process and we give up on people too soon. And I look at people and say, ‘Puh--leaze! As many times as you backslid before God cleaned you up? Sit it down and keep your mouth off of folks!’ We may not like the route or understand the process or even see the silent workings of God in a person’s life and will chain them to their past, but don’t doubt what God can do….He can change anybody! Backshked, you married him that way; now you have the great opportunity, as the Bible says, “To love the unbelieving husband to Christ through your sanctified life.”

Tonya: Right, Right! And so many people grow faster than others and for others it takes more time, because I was that person at first. When I started my walk, it was 0 to 100 and I was on fire! I was very judgmental and very impatient and God was like, ‘Hold on!’ Lemme show you where you just came from, “Sole”! It wasn’t overnight for me, coming from a recording artist myself. When I started my walk, it was 0 to 100 and I was on fire! I was very judgmental and very impatient and God was like, ‘Hold on!’ Lemme show you where you just came from, “Sole”! It wasn’t overnight for me, coming from a recording artist myself. My transformation may have been quicker than what my husband’s or somebody else’s….and maybe I didn’t have some of the struggles as others, but trust me, I’ve had just as many issues. I said, “God, I’ve been so uncompassionate to my husband and what he’s going through.” I had to remember what it was like when I had to walk away from so many things and give up my secular music career. I then had to look at it through my husband’s eyes and understand, I’m not a man and I don’t know what it feels like to have a wife and be the sole provider and have that on my shoulders and then to come into a relationship with God and feel like, ‘What I’m doing is wrong and I don’t know what I’m going to do?’ That’s not an easy place…As I look back, I think about where God has brought me from…how He loved me beyond my mess, how His love caused me to change the way I live…that gave me the ability to love my husband that way. And I just

When I started my walk, it was 0 to 100 and I was on fire! I was very judgmental and very impatient and God was like, ‘Hold on!’ Lemme show you where you just came from, “Sole”! It wasn’t overnight for me, coming from a recording artist myself. My transformation may have been quicker than what my husband’s or somebody else’s… and maybe I didn’t have some of the struggles as others, but trust me, I’ve had just as many issues. I said, “God, I’ve been so uncompassionate to my husband and what he’s going through.” I had to remember what it was like when I had to walk away from so many things and give up my secular music career. I then had to look at it through my husband’s eyes and understand, I’m not a man and I don’t know what it feels like to have a wife and be the sole provider and have that on my shoulders and then to come into a relationship with God and feel like, ‘What I’m doing is wrong and I don’t know what I’m going to do?’ That’s not an easy place…As I look back, I think about where God has brought me from…how He loved me beyond my mess, how His love caused me to change the way I live…that gave me the ability to love my husband that way. And I just
Is your sex life healthy? Answer true (t), false (f), or sometimes (s). See results on page __.

I like sex.  
My spouse is my friend.  
We talk openly about sex.  
I am a good lover.  
My spouse’s pleasure is important to me.  
We share our sexual feelings and sexual desires openly with each other.  
My spouse and I have a large difference in the amount we desire sex.  
I avoid sex.  
We are both satisfied with the amount of affection shared between us.  
My spouse and I are equally open to trying new sexual activities.  
I have difficulty relaxing during sex.  
We rarely have sex.  
I say what I want sexually.  
I have sex, even when I don’t want to.  
I do not have orgasms.  
My spouse and I disagree on which activities should be included when we have sex.  
I fake orgasms.  
We caress outside of sex.  
Foreplay is usually apart of our sexual encounters.  
Sometimes it takes too long for me to reach an orgasm.  
We argue about sex.  
We have great sex.

My pleasure is important to my spouse.  
We caress, cuddle, or talk after sex.  
We make time to be sexual.  
I wish our sex life was more passionate.  
I dislike my body.  
My spouse is not affectionate enough.  
Sex feels dirty.  
Pornography is a problem in my marriage.  
I masturbate.  
We have sex but there’s no intimacy.  
Our sex life is satisfying.  
Sex is uncomfortable for me.  
I fear we could get pregnant.  
I fantasize about my spouse.  
During sex, I am dry.  
Intercourse is painful.  
I am satisfied with the amount of sex that we have.  
My spouse masturbates.  
Kissing is important in our marriage.  
I want our sex life to be different in some ways.  
I have no desire for sex.  
It is hard to stay present during sex.  
My spouse initiates sex all of the time.  
My spouse is satisfied with the amount of sex we have.
THINGS THAT SILENTLY KILL A RELATIONSHIP

George Fraser: Why are you single, Ty? And what are we going to do about that?
Ty: I don't know! Hey, wait a minute! I'm supposed to be asking the questions!
GF: How old are you?
Ty: I am 33. I will be 34 in about 18 days.
GF: And you have never been married? Fine as you are and you have never been married...? I don't believe it...something is wrong...and where do you live?
Ty: In Michigan, outside of Detroit.
GF: All the brothers in Detroit?!
Ty: I know! So why am I not married? What's wrong?
GF: That's what I'm asking! What's up with that?
Ty: You know, this call is really not for the interview, but actually to really get some help for myself, to find me a man!!!
GF: You got to swing it out here, baby, you got to swing it now!
Ty: You know, this call is really not for the interview, but actually to really get some help for myself, to find me a man!!!
GF: You got to swing it out here, baby, you got to swing it now!
Ty: Yes! Swing it! So what else is a single girl to do besides swing it?
GF: What does a sister do?
Ty: See, that's what you should throw into some of your networking conferences.
GF: That's actually a good title: 'What Should A Sister Do, Up in Here, Up In Here'!
Ty: You know, it's amazing to me because I do a lot of conferences with women and they always ask the same question, when is the husband coming? There's like, ten women to one man, so we are all trying to fight over the same man. And it's not working out, George!
GF: I know. That's not a good thing for the brothers. You know...it makes them stupid. Too many choices, too many options. They can't make up their mind; they won't commit. All these men out here with six girl friends. They have too many options and too many choices. Therefore, that leads to a lack of commitment. They are thinking with the little head and not with the big head.
Ty: Wow! I'm going to have to highlight that! So, what's your secret? When I finally get a man how can I stay successfully married for 30, 40 years? When I get him, I wanna keep him.
GF: This is heavy stuff! You are really plowing new ground here with this book, Ty. You want to know: what seems to happen in a long term marriage that turns the man off and begins to gnaw at the ultimate destruction of the relationship? What are those things that ultimately contribute significantly to that relationship dissolved? Well, I'll tell you. There are 8 things that happen. This can actually occur both ways, but I will take it from the male perspective. So from a male perspective, there are 8 things that could lead to the destruction of a relationship. What did we say earlier, this is from a man's perspective. Women can take these same things and apply them to men. So, you just have to stop talking over someone. Let them talk. Reiterate what they said so that you have a complete understanding. That can go both ways.
1. A lack of interest in what I'm about and what I do. Not interested? Then I am going to find someone who IS interested in what I do. The person who shows interest in what I do and what I am about will get more of my time. Let me put that another way: do you fall in love or stay with a man who had no interest or did not care about what it is you do with your life?
2. A woman wants me to earn a lot of money, and wants me at home with her too. The two are not compatible! You can't earn a lot of money in a marriage and be at home all the time.
3. Qualified sex and conditional sex. Qualified or conditional sex, if you do and-so, this-and-that, we can have sex. It is sex upon certain prescribed conditions and those conditions are laid out. You ruin the relationship with conditional sex.
4. Conflicts on strategies or procedures, when raising children. If two people are not together on tactics, strategies and principles for raising children you are going to have continual and ongoing conflict. So, discuss your principles on raising your children, and in particular, raising boys.
Ty: What do you think women are doing with their sons, that is not favorable to what a father would see as conducive to parenting?
GF: Women are very nurturing, very forgiving, and very mothering. Not that boys don't need that kind of love, but they need it in the right proportion. You also need disciplining, demanding fathers. They need both sides.
5. With women there is a real difference in spending habits. Women love shoes, they love clothing. Women have a whole different mindset about spending. They use it as a form of therapy! But it needs to be managed and it needs to be budgeted. I am not saying women should not be allowed to spend, it just should be moderated. It can get out of control. I mean, my wife has boxes of shoes she's never even worn. She bought them five years ago. What's that about?
Ty: I think it's just the fact of knowing that the shoes and clothes are in there. Hey, I have options!
GF: Yeah, right! On to number six...
6. Deteriorating listening skills. Women stop doing what they think is the right thing, if they think and not what they feel. We need to make the adjustments to eliminate confusion. So, with that as an observation, some couples need to begin to address these issues. If you don't fix them, over time they will be the demise of your relationship.
Ty: Like you said earlier, Mr. Networker, can you hook me up with one of your handsome sons? Oh, yeah, one of those business leaders? All of those millionaires that were at your last conference, how about a hook up with one of them?
GF: Ty: George, you there? George!
Dial Tone...♥
George Fraser is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on networking and building effective relationships and is the founder of the annual Power Networking Conference (the largest gathering of Black professionals, business owners and community leaders). Fraser has been married to Nora Jean for over 30 years and they have two sons, Kyle and Scott. Visit George Fraser online www.frasernet.com

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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HE’S NOT INTO YOU

1. He tells you he’s not but you’re in denial.
2. He doesn’t return your calls.
3. He’s always making promises he doesn’t keep.
4. You’ve been on several dates and you have not met his friends or parents yet.
5. He only calls you at night time.
6. You’ve been dating a while but he has not made a commitment.
7. He’s never bought you gifts or presents.
8. He doesn’t pick up the tab or you’re always going “dutch”.
9. The only conversation you two have is about sex.
10. He’s seeing other women.
11. He stands you up.
12. He’s not into God.
Researchers have found that women suffer a decline in mental health following divorce. Some of the mental health indicators affected by divorce include depression, hostility, self-acceptance, personal growth and positive relations with others.\(^2\)

The problem with many divorcees is that they attempt to run from or through pain by finding temporary peace in a new relationship and the divorce papers have not dried yet, the children have not healed, and they hide in religion, church activities, mothering, and work. Though they avoid the critical steps of both grieving and healing, they believe that because time has passed, that so has the pain. But all too often it shows up in the second marriage.

Some psychologists say that the average divorce recovery time is at least one year for every year you were married. Most agree it takes a minimum of one year just to get over the shock and get back on your feet. Yet many people can stay stuck in denial for years in attempts to avoid facing the pain of a failed marriage. Ultimately they place relationships in lieu of that, but even more startling, they replace their relationship with God for a relationship with another man as a means of escapism. God, prayer, and counseling are necessary for healing and not just for finding new love but to live. If you have experienced divorce:

- Don’t consider any relationships if you have not been divorced at least two years or more.
- Don’t remarry or consider another relationship if you still have deep emotional or sexual ties to your ex-husband.
- Don’t run into a second marriage because you don’t want to have to go without sex or to avoid fornication.
- Don’t run into a second marriage to avoid the pain of divorce, attempting to get someone to fill the holes in your life.
- Don’t remarry to avoid financial burden from divorce.
- Don’t remarry if you find it hard to trust people.
- Loneliness is a prominent issue with divorcees.

Don’t allow loneliness to run you into another marriage.
- If you haven’t forgiven your former spouse, you are not ready to remarry.
- You may have become accustomed to the married life, but don’t run to another marriage to avoid the single life.
- If you’ve said this about your first marriage, “I knew better than to marry him,” then you should take even longer to overcome irrational or destructive behavior to your own life.

You can consider marriage again if:
- You are whole and one with God.
- You have gone through counseling. (Include your children if you have them.)
- You are emotionally healthy. (Include your children if you have them)
- You desire to get remarried but don’t need to.
- You have resolved legal affairs from your previous marriage.
- You’ve allowed God to heal you of guilt and anger caused by the divorce.
- You no longer resent your ex-husband and have forgiven him.
- You forgive yourself.
- You’ve identified the role you played in the failure of your first marriage and have developed means to never repeat them.
- You are happily single again!
- You’ve allowed yourself to heal and now you are able to give more than you gave in the first marriage.
- You have found peace with your divorce and you have closure.
- The love you have inside of you is no longer contaminated by divorce; you can love like you’ve never been hurt!

Love at second sight is not only possible but it can also be successful. Allow God to heal you and make you whole so that you can have the opportunity of experiencing love the way it was meant to be! ♥

Visit us online for more advice on divorce and healing www.tyadams.org.

21 WAYS TO MAKE LOVE OUTSIDE THE BED

Lovemaking does not always require sex. Here’s 21 ways to make love to your husband without sex. Well, I’m not promising that it won’t lead to it....

1. Run a bubble bath, turn off the lights, turn on soft music, put floating candles in the water, and bathe in the dark with your spouse.
2. Place an ad in the newspaper or post bulletins across the internet telling your spouse how much you adore and love him.
3. Leave a greeting card in the refrigerator.
4. Hire a baby sitter, niece or nephew for the weekend and rent a hotel room for the night. Have dinner in the hotel without letting him know you’ve rented a room. Closer to the end of the meal, excuse yourself for the restroom and have the waiter take a note to your spouse that says, “Meet me in room 112 for dessert.” Lavish the room with rose petals and for added optional excitement, change the light bulb color.
5. Rent a hot air balloon.
6. On a Friday afternoon have luggage and tickets sent to his office and a note inside that says, “We’re running away from home.”
7. Give coupons: 1 hour foot or back massage -- Thursday night is cuddle night -- What ever you request tonight will be granted --- Kisses after dark....
8. Have a picnic in the backyard or at a shady park.
9. Leave your wedding picture in the refrigerator or on the bathroom sink before you leave for work that says, “On our wedding day, I vowed to love, cherish, and hold you. Tonight I want to cuddle in your arms and show you how much.”
10. Send an email while he’s at work, “If work is stressing you out today, I have something to work it out. Meet me tonight at 10:15.”
11. Send lunch to his office, with a piece of chocolate cake for dessert that says, “I love you and chocolate.”
12. Leave a red bow on the bed that says, “I’m God’s gift to you. Unwrap it tonight.”
13. Take a 40 minute flight or train ride to the state closest to yours, for dinner and a movie.
14. Leave your cell phone on the counter and say, “Today, I’m turning my cell phone off and turning you on.”
15. Before going to bed, leave sticky notes everywhere: bathroom mirror, closet door, the car steering wheel, so that when he gets up for work the next morning, he’ll see, “I’m reminded how much I love you...Your face is one of my favorite places to kiss...I will be thinking of you all day...Sometimes I forget a few things and need to be reminded, but I’ll never forget how much you mean to me...I’m driven by your___________....”
16. While walking into the church lobby, slip him a note that says, “After service, I’m going to serve you.”
17. Send a non-occasion card or telegram to your spouse’s office.
18. Serve him breakfast in bed with a nice bed tray. Add a note that says, “Dinner and dessert will be even more delicious.”
19. Rent a horse and carriage for the evening.
20. Take the day off of work and go to a day spa with your spouse for the afternoon. Have dual massages and pedicures while a hired cook/chef prepares dinner for you back at home.
21. On the day that he has to have his hair cut, have balloons and cake for 12 delivered by the local bakery to the barber shop. Don’t forget mini plates and forks. Have a message read by the delivery guy aloud that says, “Out of all the men in the world, you are the only man that could make the CUT! You are my King and I celebrate the fact that I get to spend the rest of my life serving, pleasing, and loving you!” He’ll be the conversation for the next 32 minutes amongst the men in the shop. Not only will his ego surge but so will his heart for you.

Now, your turn. Get creative and have a lifetime love affair with your husband!
Ty: How did you first learn about sex?

SJ: Sex has the power to control people. Unfortunately, I learned this at a very early age. I was molested for 7 years beginning at age 5. From my uncles to friends of the family, everyone seemed to think it was okay to use me to satisfy their lust. Therefore, in my teenage years I considered sex to be the “in thing.” I wanted to have sex. I associated sex with love and affection, so I thought having sex with a man would make him love me. This led to me living a very dangerous and promiscuous lifestyle. I’ve seen and done it all, including clubs, after hour bars, sex, alcohol, and drugs. It was a way of life for me.

Ty: We have the magical thoughts of being married not knowing the hidden pain that’s lying dormant. Tell me how the difficulty in the sexual experiences you had with your husband and how your past experiences affected your sexual relationships with your husband.

SJ: Too many people think that marriage is a cure all and that it will fix their messed up situations. That’s couldn’t be farther from the truth. Of course it wasn’t until after saying “I Do!” that I discovered this for myself. I recall wanting to hurry up and get married, because I thought it would make the past just disappear. Instead of dealing with the hurt and shame that I felt because of my past, I brought it into my marriage. Immediately after getting married I started feeling worthless and invaluable. I didn’t feel that I deserved such a great husband. I felt used and abused. I was so overwhelmed that eventually I lost all desire for sex. The last thing I wanted to do was have sex! I barely wanted to kiss! It had nothing to do with my husband or my desire for him, but I felt like sex is what had ruined me in the first place. I felt like I wasn’t going to make it. Honestly, I was on the edge. I was having panic and anxiety attacks everyday. I was afraid of having a heart attack and dying. I felt nothing but fear from the inside-out. I used to say to my husband all the time, “Please, don’t ever leave me!” I wanted to make it all go away; to somehow erase the past, but I couldn’t.

Ty: How were you able to heal and get past this?

SJ: Jesus and more Jesus! I began to immerse myself in the Word of God. I’m talking 5, 6, and sometimes 8 hours per day. I heard a minister by the name of Derrick Green say that it’s important to go after the Word of God at all cost and to stake your life on it. That’s exactly what I did. I put a demand on God to bring me joy, peace, healing of my soul and marriage. I held God accountable to do what His Word says He will do. Of course that required that I began to walk in obedience and forgive those who had misused me. Being able to forgive them and look them in the eyes and say I love you is an awesome feeling! Of course I can’t leave out the most wonderful husband in the world. God outdid Himself when he gave me Robert A. Jones, Jr. He has been so caring and understanding. I also minister and teach on healing from child sexual abuse. this really helps me in my on-going process of healing. I have a book coming out in November 2007 called “The Enemy Between My Legs.” I’m hoping that my story will help a lot of men and women understand why they’re in the wilderness feeling lost and brokenhearted.

Robert and Stephanie Jones are happily married and they are now enjoying a fulfilling sexual covenant. Visit them online www.stephanieljones.com
Prayer is the fountain for forgiveness. Marriage
Prayer is a banner of protection. It will warn
Prayer is the conduit for effective
Prayer is the catalyst for intimacy. Intimacy
Prayer is the exchange of power for weakness.
Prayer will give you wisdom on how to solve

Many couples say that they don’t pray because: we
I mean think about it, if a man asked his bride’s father
for his daughter’s hand in marriage and he graciously and freely
invite Him in to your marriage.

The only way for your marriage to remain a
reflection of God’s Love is to remain in Him. Prayer is
the nutrition of a marriage. It nourishes and gives it the
vital ingredients to stay alive. The excuse of divorce,
we grew apart, is nothing more than negligence of a
committed relationship with God. They didn’t grow
apart; they stopped growing together in God. Instead
of running for a divorce decree when hardships and
obstacles arise, you need to stand in God’s decree.
Don’t ever make the mistake that Adam and Eve
did, hiding. The mistake of hiding yourself from the
presence of God will prevent Him from giving you
the wisdom you need for your marriage. Genesis 3:8
In the presence of God is the safety from divorce and
adultery.

My father, Dr. Myles Munroe, says that divorce is
the ripping of two souls. That’s equivalent to a believer
severing prayer from their life: a spiritual divorce. You
kill the soul, the life of the marriage when you don’t
pray. It opens the gateway to adultery, divorce, and
neglected marriages. This is a result of not protecting
the environment of your marriage. Prayer is not simply
praying, but belief in action. Often people think that
all you have to do is just pray. No, I’m not talking about passive prayer, where we utter empty words in
open air. No, prayer is not just words but action; it’s
working and doing what you believe and what you
are asking God for. “God fix my marriage.” Prayer is
generating up off of your knees and then “doing” what
you just prayed. Prayer is tending to the needs of your
spouse. Prayer is searching out solutions to problems.
Prayer is developing your communication skills.
Prayer is seeking out ways on a daily basis to enhance
your marriage. Listen, I don’t care what challenges
you face in your marriage. UNSHAKABLE PRAYER
HAS THE POWER TO FIX ANYTHING!

“Prayer is Reaching...For Divine Assistance.”
Mike Murdock

The Power of Prayer:
• Prayer is the exchange of power for weakness.
  Divine ability to accomplish what was impossible
  in your own strength.
• Prayer is the catalyst for intimacy. Intimacy
  with God results in a greater degree of intimacy in your
  marriage giving you the ability to meet the superior
  needs of your spouse.
• Prayer will divorce proof your marriage. It
  will safeguard the walls of your covenant and give you
  wisdom when a gateway or access is being opened
to someone else who does not have rights to your
  covenant.
• Prayer is a banner of protection. It will warn
  you of the enemy’s plans of attack. It will place a
  wedge between you and danger.
• Prayer is the conduit for effective
  communication. It will give you wisdom on how to
  orchestrate your words and maintain peace in your
  marriage.
• Prayer will give you wisdom on how to solve
  problems. It’s the remedy to any troubles you will
  face.
• Prayer is the fountain for forgiveness. Marriage
  will produce every opportunity to exercise it. Prayer is
  the mercy seat for your covenant, giving you the ability
to freely forgive without resentment or bitterness.
• Prayer is the containment for joy in your
  marriage. A wealth of happiness is the entitlement of a
  praying marriage.

Prayer does not have to be long hours of praying but
daily moments where you and your spouse share an
intimate encounter with God. Make a commitment to
spend time in prayer with your spouse and the Word
of God daily:

For direction and wisdom as to what areas your
It all happened 22 years ago, in a crowded, faith-filled church, when Lee and LaShell Griffin said, “I do.” LaShell, was a stay at home mom of 5, and Lee, who owned a successful cleaning company until the day LaShell decided to enter into the Oprah Pop Star Challenge and had the audacity to win! And as they say, it all went up hill after that. With winning the Oprah Pop Star Challenge, came an attractive recording contract with Sony Music and LaShell went on to record her debut CD, Free. As a result, major success arose for the Griffin’s and thanks to Oprah Winfrey, Lee was able to walk away from his cleaning company to become LaShell’s manager, proving that dreams are possible! “Working along side LaShell as her manager and husband has brought tremendous joy to me. God is so awesome in allowing part of both of our destinies to benefit each other. It would be a major problem if I loved her, but hated my position as her manager. God is the master planner,” Lee said emphatically.

LaShell says that winning the Oprah Pop Star Challenge gave her the opportunity of a lifetime, “It was simply awesome! It was like standing in the middle of a dream. Ms. Winfrey and her staff are beautiful, kind-hearted people. Working with them helped me see that you can succeed and be a blessing to many people through morals and integrity. To have such a huge business, Ms. Winfrey sets the bar very high and for this I admire her.” With both the success of her music career and marriage, LaShell believes that the same hard work that you put into a successful music career, has to be the same due diligence in marriage and that the ‘business’ of marriage is to “maintain the intense passion that drew you and your spouse together…you have to play as well as pray together,” said the accomplished pop star. Both Lee and LaShell believe that sacrifice, unselfishness, and staying in the will of the Lord is the key to any happy marriage; proving that if you can win the Oprah Pop Star Challenge, you can win and overcome any challenges in your marriage!

You can visit Lee & LaShell Griffin online, www.lashellgriffin.org.
MY PAST
Growing up in a broken-up home and living in multiple foster homes at an early age, I looked for love. At the age of 13, I began having intercourse. I learned early to give sex to receive love; I gave my body to men because I equated sex for love. Eager to be loved and cherished, I thought marriage was the answer, so I married at age 17, divorced at 21, and then remarried a second time at the age of 24. Prior to marriage I dealt with many issues, I suffered abuse and low self-worth. I came into marriage rejected, wounded and poised to fight. Since I used sex as a tool, I was under the assumption that sex would settle everything. I was very hypersensitive and didn’t know how to handle my emotions beyond the bedroom.

MY HUSBAND’S PAST
For years my husband was an international drug courier, living a life of power and great wealth. Though he had plenty of drugs, alcohol and women he could find no peace. During one of his transactions, he was going back to NY to meet his connection, but met God on the runway. He started down the runway and heard the voice of the Lord say, “If you go on this trip…you won’t come back!” He stopped, tore up the ticket and ran to call a former madam (prostitute) who had been working with two former marriages and three children. I had so many sexually polluted concepts from my former relationships that involved pornography and vile sexual acts. However, because of my husband’s personal vow to the Lord to honor me as a woman of God, he loved me beyond my past and his love cultivated and healed me within our union. Regardless to what I wanted to bring to the bed he never changed his position to be pure. My husband caused me to realize early in our marriage that I was more to him than his personal sexual gratification. He simply found contentment in just laying in the bed holding me, nurturing me with his words…until God could drive the lustful passion out of me and satisfy me with pure love. Although I had multiple struggles and an inability to embrace his pure love apart from sexuality, my husband remained steadfast in his pursuit of sanctifying me sexually. My husband pulled me out of darkness and into righteousness. That not only changed me but our marriage.

Many people don’t consider their sexuality to be tied to their self worth, but many of us encountered some type of sexual act that occurred at a young age in our lives and that sexual act shaped our idea of how we see ourselves. Consider Adam and Eve when they sinned against God; the first thing they covered was their sexual organs. They could have covered any other part of their body but the shame from sin caused them to see their own nakedness. Most of us are just like that….the shame from the sexual acts that we have committed causes us to see ourselves different or indifferently, which greatly affects our relationships.

In spite of being loved by my husband, the distortion of my worth would pull me back to the sexual violations of my multiple past relationships. I was sexually married to a Godly man who dearly loved me, but my old thought patterns of sex continually produced friction or frustrations in our marriage bed. Oftentimes we mask what we are going through and are never able to deal with the real issue. We were struggling. During this time, the enemy began to whisper thoughts in my ear, “Maybe you need to find another man to satisfy your needs.” This thought scared me because I knew I loved my husband and God had put us together. These struggles led us to the point where we knew we needed God’s intervention in our marriage or we would be in trouble.

THE MARRIAGE BED
One night in our bedroom we took ourselves through deliverance. We decided to go back and trace the delusions that had occurred in our bodies. We were open, honest and more sensitive to one another than ever before. In that revelation, we realized that our souls had been tied to multiple people and in order for us to be whole in our marriage, the ties had to be broken. I Corinthians 6:19 says “whoever ties himself to a harlot becomes one with them…” A sexual relationship is meant to tie the soul and body to your spouse, so when it occurs outside of the marriage covenant, the principle still works. We began to cry out to God that we wanted our marriage bed to be pure and unfulfilled.

That night we repented over every prior involvement. We pleaded the blood of Jesus. We cried out for God to redeem our souls from the people we tied them to. We acknowledged our sin and asked God to cleanse us and to teach us the purity of sexuality. Going through deliverance is often a process and there are often multiple layers of deliverance. As we truthfully talked, we realized that we never really prayed over this area of our marriage.

We assumed because we loved God and each other that prayer was not a priority in our sexuality. Therefore, we never dealt with the spirits that was upon us and it produced a stronghold in our marriage. But we cried out to God for the victory, recommitted ourselves to one another, anointed our bed and then allowed the cleansing and healing to take place. No longer were we ashamed because we brought healing into our bedroom.

THE MISSING ELEMENT
“I do” is a must in every area of your life. Think of how many legal situations you encounter that require your unwavering commitment. In a court of law, as a citizen to your country, and even in the military, you have to swear to uphold your allegiance to the United States. How much more in a marriage since marriage reveals Christ and the Church? Christ died for the Church. His life took responsibility for His Bride, The Church. In like manner, He calls husbands and wives to give themselves to each other for the freedom, healing, edifying and redemption through the allegiance, the commitment of their union. “I do” means I take the responsibility for this person through an allegiance to God.

So often men select a woman/wife based on appeal and assets in her life, not perceiving that she comes with needs, flaws and wounds. The story of Hosea with Gomar is a beautiful story of love and redemption. Gomar is an example of where a lot of women are today. Women whose lives have been used and misused by multiple lovers. In this age, the average woman does not enter marriage without having prior experiences or children. In the same manner I entered my marriage with two former marriages and three children. I had no idea of how much I needed to be covered by real love, which the Bible says, has no failure. D.K. Jones took the assignment to bring healing to a wounded woman and her children. He said “I do” to God. I believe the power of God’s love is so evident in my marriage because he took a man who had never been faithful to one woman, but he said I do to God. He agreed to allow God to work through him to bring me healing. He knew that his love for God could love me when he couldn’t touch that part of me that was so needy. He allowed God to teach him how to love me through…through all of my pain, my wounds, my past…God is still searching for people who will take the assignment to fulfill the love of God in the life of their spouse and allow their marriage to truly reflect HIS Glory in the earth.

Apostle D.K. and Prophetess Alice Jones are founders and pastors of Immmanuel House of Prayer in Indiana. Visit them online www.immanuelinterrisine.org
There should never be, “I love you because I love you when. I love you if.” And your love changes—it’s supposed to get deeper and deeper.

Ty: Mom, what do you think the benefits of marriage are that people don’t see?

Ruth Munroe: (For instance) You’re going to a job to work, right? They say you have to be there at 9 o’clock, but you are going to be there at 8. Why? Because you are working for a promotion. You don’t do a promotion if you are getting to work late or if you don’t work. The promotion in the marriage is, “If I do everything in my power to bless my husband, he is going to love me even more and we are going to have a happy marriage.” It’s an investment; you are investing in you. And it takes investment from you and me. So, the boss says, “If you come to work on time, this is your promotion.” He is watching you and you get perks! Yes! But if they see you are lazy, you aren’t getting anything. So in a marriage, if you don’t put any effort into it, there’s no promotion.

Ty: You know what I love about you and Dad’s marriage? It doesn’t have an expiration date. What is your secret?

RM: Because we are consistent. If there is a condition for my love, then it’s not love. There should never be, “I love you because, I love you when, I love you if.” And your love changes—it’s supposed to get deeper and deeper. When you first get married, it’s almost like an excitement kind of love. But the older you get, you get into the mature kind of love where you know that if someone says something, you know exactly how to take what they say. You don’t love them any less because of that. We have been together so long, it’s like, I don’t care what you say, there is nothing you can do, nothing you can say; I STILL LOVE YOU. Now, what are you going to do about that?

Ty: Then, I guess, that’s what made us come to God because with that kind of love, you have no other choice than to respond. When you first met Dad, were you all googly-eyed in love with him?

RM: We met in high school. I did not like him. Ty: What? Dad is so cute!

RM: (laughing) I was shy and all that sort of thing. And you know, any man that will get up, play the piano, grab a mic, they are all googly-eyed over him. There would be girls all in the front, wanting to get a front row seat; that wasn’t me. And for him, it was because I wasn’t that type, that’s what attracted us. I think he got my phone number from somebody else. His music group used to have concerts every Sunday night after church and I would go. And, you know, he still kept me in the back of his mind and he would ask people, “Who is that girl?” So, you know, we called each other and it just mushroomed like that. We finished school, and he went off to ORU in 1974 so it was like we were interested in each other, but not seeing each other every day. I don’t know if that would be for everyone, but to me it was more maturing to have the distance because we had letters upon letters - which I still have. And when he would come back home, it was the excitement of him coming and you have so much to share. It was good because we didn’t have time to get too familiar with each other and being in each other’s company where temptations would come to you. To me, that was exciting, so you grew in love. And it gets deeper and deeper.

Ty: Mom, you’re blushing! Now, you married him when you were 24 years old and he was 25 and you’re still smiling when you think of him. I love it, because Dad always says you took his virginity! How do two Christians make it to that point where they are still virgins and waiting until marriage?

RM: I was so busy in church, we had a youth group; we were just busy doing different things. I can’t even look back and see that I needed these things, or saying I need a man. There were so many other things I could focus on and I think it all evolved around church and God says, “If you focus on Me, I will take care of you.”

Ty: How did he propose to you?

RM: Well, when he came home, I think it was 1978, that Christmas. Everyone knew I think because we went out to dinner and then back to his house and all of his sisters were there. I didn’t know what was going on. We were going somewhere and we were driving along the beach and he just stopped and we got out and he bent down to pick up something and then all I saw in his hand was something black and I jumped because I was frightened! And then, he proposed! After that, I found out that he had already talked with my parents and he had called my father.

Ty: What happened to men asking for the father’s blessing or permission for his daughter?

RM: That’s what you need to do. They need to say, “I am interested in marrying your daughter.” Now the kids come and say, “Mom, I have a boyfriend. I’m going out!” But I want to see that boyfriend. Many parents don’t demand to see them. Well, we do. Our kids are not going out with anyone that we don’t know. Before you go out, you are introducing him to me. I want to know who you are going out with and I want to know where you are going. At the age of 16, my husband took our daughter out on her first date and said this is how you are supposed to be treated and if you are not treated like this, show him where the door is!

Ty: What does Dad do affectionately when you are not in the pulpit? What just dazzles you?

RM: It’s like, chasing….You know, touch, tickle; those kinds of things. If I’m somewhere, he just comes
up behind me and just says I love you. He knows that I like to have a cup of tea and a glass of water before I go to bed so he makes sure that it’s on the nightstand. Every morning he runs his bath. He knows I love bubbles so he puts my bubbles in.

Ty: Diddy still chases after 28 years? That is so wonderful! He is always thinking about you, you are always on his mind. The thought of that…This morning when you went to get into the shower, you were still thinking about me, even as I was laying in bed. My husband has to be like dad! What is your favorite pass-time with him?

RM: Just sitting down, looping feet and talking.

Ty: That’s a wonderful thing. God is still the mastermind behind the convent of marriage and it still works. To see people still married and in love after 28 years of marriage is only something God can do. He submit to Dad, and it’s pleasing to you, and it’s like there’s no effort or struggle for you to do that whatsoever. I think women have gotten away from the word submission.

RM: Right. I think people need to have the definition of submission said all over again. People think of submission means that you are a doormat. You are letting people run all over you; letting them talk to you a certain way or talk down to you. No! submission is letting people run all over you; letting them talk to you of submission said all over again. People think that word submission.

Ty: And they think that that's a wonderful thing. God is still the mastermind behind the convent of marriage. They both are a reflection of their mirror of success. They both are a reflection of God. And I realize that it’s a product of what you do at home.

RM: The Bible says, “If you cannot manage your own house, you cannot manage His Church.” The word you just used, mirror? You cannot see the mirror, but the people looking in your life, as a mirror would be able to see. So I don’t care how you try to fake it, you are going to break down at some point. But if it is something that comes natural, something that you don’t have to think about, if it is an original with you -not a copy- if it is the truth, you don’t have to put on a face when someone comes. This is everyday life. And when it comes natural it just goes with you. People looking on it if it is real or if it’s not. See, I don’t have to fake a hug or a kiss. It’s just natural. I don’t have to hide from my children to give him a hug or a kiss. This is family. They are supposed to see that my mom and dad love each other and “when I get married, my husband or my wife is going to love me like that..” and he’s not even speaking like that.

Ty: Like when your daughter was saying she wants a husband just like her Dad—that’s incredible. A lot of people who are pastors, their kids end up resenting them. And to see that Dad has made his family number one and God has submitted to God’s Will concerning your family is to be applauded and certainly celebrated.

RM: Many people have been married for 25 years but they are miserable, they are just hanging on for dear life. But to see people who have been happily married for 27 years as if they got married two days ago...

RM: One prayer I had after we had children was that I did not want my kids to have the label, “PK.” I do not want that label because the only picture I had of preacher’s kids was that they was too wait to get a certain age to leave and go and do their own thing. I want our kids to grow up loving God, to love the things that Dad has made his family number one and God has submitted to God’s Will concerning your family is to be applauded and certainly celebrated.

RM: If you have a husband, you are not wasting perfume. If you have a husband, you are not wasting perfume going to bed! not my Gucci perfume. But then after, they start to falter and they only look good some of the time. You need to look good all of the time. All the time!

Ty: A lot of people, once they have been married for 20 or 30 years, they get comfortable. They are wearing rollers and granny nightgowns and never try to attract him or awaken his senses. I talk to some mom and they say, “I don’t have perfume? Don’t you want him to be drawn at the scent of you? What are you thinking?”

RM: I have perfume that I use for bedtime only. It’s reserved only for him.

Ty: I’m going to have to walk on that one!! You have perfume just for bed? If I don’t take anything else away from this conversation, I am taking that! In the minds of a 21st Century liberated woman, she believes that she’s wasting perfume going to bed! Not my Gucci or Prada perfume to bed!

RM: If you have a husband, you are not wasting perfume.

Ty: WOO HOO! I’m about to do a cartwheel, Mom! I need to give you a check for that advice!
RM: It’s visual and the fragrance that comes from you will cause the zoom-zoom that you preached about last night, Ty! It’s up to you to put the excitement in the marriage.

Ty: A lot of times most women argue about the fact that their husbands are not affectionate, but they don’t understand that they have a role in drawing that affection to them. You have to put in to get out. You need to make a deposit, if you will. Women need to get some perfume! We are so spiritual; we don’t awaken the senses. We forget about the natural aspect that we need to develop and feed as well.

RM: Yes, that’s the word. You may be a bishop or a pastor but after you finish preaching and you come home, you are not a preacher—you are a man. You are my husband. I’m not the first Lady—I am your wife. So, if you can do that in the home, when you get in church, it comes natural to you. If we are traveling and he calls me to him, we just kiss each other on the lips. And, I have had ladies come up to me and tell me that they have never seen their Pastor be affectionate with his wife, especially in the pulpit. The way I see it is if a pastor and his wife cannot be affectionate in front of their congregation and if he can’t hold her hand, give her a hug, then something is wrong.

Ty: There are so many pastors that think they can’t show that they are natural or that we can hug and kiss. But this is affection and love and that is how it’s supposed to look and when people don’t see their own leadership embracing their own wives, they don’t show that level of affection when they get married; it’s a snowball effect.

They say they are trying to protect the single people but that right there, every time I see that I say, “That’s why I’m waiting…because I want that right there. I want my husband to look at me like Papa Myles does Mom.” You are the true essence of beauty. You don’t even know it, Mom; I silently watch you because I want to replicate the eternal. I always say you are the essence of Grace; when you walk into the room, it just exudes from you. You are the essence of...

Dr. Myles Munroe: …She is the essence, the quintessence of the true grace of a woman. She is the epitome of lady hood.

Ty: Dad! What are you doing walking in on our conversation?! Mom told me some stuff about you! First of all, you run the bathwater every morning?! It’s rare to find husbands preparing the bathwater and if they do, they forget about the bubbles!

See the rest of what Dr. Munroe had to say about his lifelong love, Pastor Ruth, at www.tyadams.org. Visit Dr. Myles and Ruth Munroe online www.bfmm.com
Nothing will gain the trust and security of a man like a woman who knows how to speak in his ear. Shape your lips with these shades so that you are in lip sync with God and your words will capture your man’s heart!

**SHADE # 1**
The perfect shade of lip color is Psalms 141:3. A woman that allows God to shape her lips and keeps guard over the door of her mouth will attract the attentive ear of a man.

“Set a guard, O Lord, before my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.” AMP

**SHADE # 2**
You can always tell a true woman of God; she coats her lips with wisdom. She is a woman of choice words and she will never tear him down with what she says. Before she even speaks, she applies Proverbs 8:6 to her lips and top coats it with Proverbs 10:32.

“A good person’s mouth is a clear fountain of wisdom; a foul mouth is a stagnant swamp.” MSG

**SHADE # 3**
Proverbs 15:4 is the perfect lip balm. A woman should carry this on her because her words of choice should always restore and heal a man’s spirit. Apply liberally.

“A gentle tongue [with its healing power] is a tree of life, but willful contrariness in it breaks down the spirit.” AMP

**SHADE # 4**
A rich, luminous shade of Proverbs 18:21 should be applied daily. Your choice of words should bring life to any ear that it reaches. Your words should bring life to him and affirm who he is in God.

“Words kill, words give life; they’re either poison or fruit—you choose.” MSG

**SHADE # 5**
If you own a tube of black colored lipstick, get rid of it! A woman of grace never curses at her man or lies to him. Stop in aisle eight and get a shade of Psalms 34:13.

“Guard your tongue from profanity, and no more lying through your teeth.” MSG

**SHADE # 6**
Want the most kissable lips? Apply a liberal amount of Proverbs 15:1 and Proverbs 25:15 and he will go crazy, head over heels for you! A woman that screams, explodes with anger, or yells all the time is a sure way to get a man to run in the opposite direction, but a soft spoken woman will be irresistible to him!

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.” AMP

**SHADE # 7**
When a woman lends her vocal chords to be the mouthpiece of God, a man humbly submits to her because he can trust that she can go to God on his behalf and get divine instructions. Line your lips with Proverbs 25:11 and you will have his heart forever.

“The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry.” MSG

**SHADE # 8**
Skip the Mac counter and go over to Ephesians 4:29-32! It’s your all-purpose shade. That cute hand bag, with that yellow sundress…girl, it will compliment whatever you wear!

“Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth, but only such [speech] as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others…let all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passions, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger, animosity) and quarreling (brawling, clamor, contention) and slander (evil-speaking, abusive or blasphemous language) be banished from you.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
Well, we found her! One evening I stumbled upon a special documentary on the TLC network entitled, “Kids By The Dozen.” And there she was, Cathy Arndt, the Proverbs 31 Woman, with her husband and their 14 children. Yes, 14! No twins, all single births; so many kids that they have their own softball team and a twelve hundred-dollar monthly food bill! I was intrigued by their success, their balance, the peace in their home, their pastoral service to God’s people in praying for them all around the world; and more importantly, her sacrifice to her family. Not to mention that all of her sons were still virgins. As I sat in awe of this woman’s wisdom as both a mother and a wife, I knew it was necessary that you and I find out her secret. It has been one of the greatest interviews that I’ve ever conducted. Sit back and enjoy her story and you will see why she is valued far above the price of rubies.

We met at a prayer group when I was 13 and he was 17. My family is Catholic and my dad at that point was going to a non-denominational, charismatic prayer group. At first he was real stubborn and thinking, ‘This isn’t Catholic!’ But he really was touched by the Holy Spirit and born again and I wanted to see what was going on. My sister was going at that time too, and she kept on telling me about this good-looking hunk who she planned on marrying and she wanted me to come and meet him. That good-lookin’ hunk was Rick! The first time I met him, he rode his bike to the prayer group - he was adorable! We just hung out together, played ping-pong at my moms’ house; got pizza. My mom wouldn’t let me go if my sister didn’t go because they were all about three years older than me and more of “her friends” so they let me tag along. But then, little by little we got to know each other. We weren’t allowed to date at that time and my parents were pretty strict on waiting so we just “happened” to be at every prayer group. It’s kind of a good way to start a relationship when God is just all over the place in it.

We got engaged when I was 18 and we married when I was 19 and he was 23. I felt like God told me Rick was the right one for me. But I had the good sense not to tell him! The guy has to feel like it was his good idea and he conquered!

I think people have the first two [children] and think, gosh, it was so hard with these two, but it’s not like that. First of all, you become a more experienced parent. After your first two, you’ve been broken in. You learn how to go without sleep here and there, you learn how to recognize illness, and you kind of get an idea of how you are going to handle two year-olds and their emotions. You get so much more confidence after the third or fourth baby that you really enjoy it, and you can kind of relax. It’s like, you’ve done those ages a few times and you get your confidence. But you have to get broken in; you have to learn on the job, and so, I always feel sorry for someone who stops after two kids because they probably don’t realize how much easier it would be. Even before we got married we always said we just wanted what God wanted. You know, in the Bible it says over and over that children are a blessing and God will never give you more than you can bear or that you will never be tested beyond your strength; all these promises that He would be there. In a way, we thought that God was asking us to try Him. Like, ‘come on, double dare Me. See if I’m kidding or if I really mean be fruitful and multiply.’ Most people don’t want to think that God really meant...
it; they think he was just…teasing. I don’t know if we were just extra nice, but we wanted to see what would happen if we just trusted God. Even now, if God were to bless us, we would be thrilled. It’s just that I’m 47 and I’ve miscarried my last 3 so at this point we are just assuming that we are not going to have anymore, but who knows? The doctor says I’m armed, ready and dangerous! We’ll just have to see what happens.”

“Mom has inspired me in so many ways. Her selflessness and patience have set a great example and helped set the tone throughout the family.” - John 25

“Mom, without using any words, has taught me exactly what I want in a wife someday.” - Mark, 24

“My mom just amazes me in so many ways. Her selflessness is constantly on display, and I just admire the joyful attitude that she chooses to have, regardless of the circumstances. As I think about what I’m looking for in a future wife, I can honestly say I look at Mom as a perfect example. She is living proof that these kinds of women do still exist!” - Luke, 22

“Mom always helps me see things objectively and keeps me accountable in everyday life.” - James, 18

“Mom has always helped me see things objectively and keeps me accountable in everyday life.” - Phillip, 17

“Mom is a great parent, and she’s very good with the kids.” - Seth, 13

“She’s never in a bad mood. She always stays optimistic.” - Jacob, 13

“She’s always fair with everything, and she has a lot of wisdom.” - Nathan, 12

“She always makes everything fun. She takes us places, like to the zoo.” - Nathan, 12

“She has taught me to have a good attitude; even when I don’t feel like it, I’m supposed to be joyful. She made a really pretty dress for me to wear to an upcoming wedding. It’s pink with flowers on it.” - Mary Elizabeth, 10

“She’s a real good cook, especially at making pancakes.” - Caleb, 8

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“We have our crazy moments. Anytime you have three pre-schoolers, you are going to have some fights over toys. Even the young teenagers, their feelings get hurt easily. They aren’t sure of who they are yet. You are always dealing with forgiveness. If you don’t tell your child that they are doing something wrong and you just let them get away with it, it will cause problems in jobs, it will cause divorces. We have to catch their integrity issues and their attitudes, all of those things. The most topic frequent in e-mails that we get is someone saying they told their child never to do this or that again and they did it again. People are so surprised that they have to repeat themselves and they have to teach but that’s just parenting. You are constantly helping them. I’m helping one of my sons to remember to wash his face twice a day. I am helping him to do that but of course I wouldn’t let other people know or see. I need to do everything I can so that he is presented to the world as a complete package and so he won’t be embarrassed if other people say it to him. I think that’s a parent’s job. You are teaching them how to respect elders, how to talk to people, and how to handle themselves in this world. You have to have patience and go over the same thing over and over and just remember how much you love them. You are the most gentle, loving person who can do that. We have to teach them, even at a small level, to obey rules and

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obey laws. Everyday is a learning process and you have to learn how to do it with love.

PROVERBS 3:27

There can be joy in all these things, you don’t have to think ‘poor me.’ I have a home and a family whom I love and a husband who adores me. What have I got to complain about? People wish they had families to clean up after, so I make sure not to complain about the messes they make when they are healthy enough to be up and running. It’s sad to not be needed and it’s wonderful to have someone need you and love you. I figure wherever you are in life, there is a blessing and something you should thank God about. The Bible says, “Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS and again I say rejoice!” It’s like, ‘hey, I said always! Whether or not things are going your way, I said, always.’ Just think to yourself, OK this is where I’m at now, there must be a blessing here. What is good about this? Don’t go into self pity; no poor me! There is always something fun going on in my house and I am boy crazy! If you believe that something good is going to happen, it will. I also believe if you have a negative attitude, it chases you down. You are planting a seed of discontent and naturally the kids will start complaining, being sad and depressed. Think of all the things we could be thanking God for. Did you thank Him that your legs are working? That your eyes work and you can see? There are hundreds of things we can thank God for but if one thing goes wrong we start grudging! I think we have that backwards; we should be so busy thanking that we have almost nothing to complain about.

PROVERBS 3:23

I have to give a lot of credit to my husband. Rick has been strong on his heart, to raise good young boys with healthy role models. He wrote a book with testimonies from Christian major leaguers who were really living our softball classic. Rick will have some of the really strong Christians ball players come over and give autographs and testimonies during the game. You have to show them honorable roles. Then they hear how much I admire honor in a man. Mommies are their first to show them honorable heroes. then they hear how our softball classic. Rick will have some of the really healthy role models. He wrote a book with testimonies from Christian major leaguers who were really living from Christian major leaguers who were really living to provide for her and take care of her; you can’t just take some of her. You can’t just take bits and pieces and whatever you want. If you fool around with a girl, that’s your wife forever. Are you willing to make that type of commitment or are you just ‘hit and run’ or selfish enough to take what you want and then leave? Are you that dishonest? Are you teaching your child sexual purity when you are walking down the street and he picks up a newspaper from a neighbor’s yard and you tell him that’s not his and to put it back. We don’t take something that’s not ours. So we teach them that that’s not yours, until it is yours. Now when it IS yours, hey, go and live that wonderful life in every way! Let’s be honorable with it.

TITHEING YOUR LIFE

I don’t think church should be separate from your everyday life. You’re not in life mode and then in religion mode; that’s everyday in your life. You are teaching Biblical values every day, even while you are eating dinner. We do our own home church here and we have a Wednesday night prayer group and a Sunday group that we have and then at every night we will have a prayer time. We all squish into my and Rick’s bedroom and there are all these bodies lying on the floor. We will watch a movie together or talk about their day. Like the day before the Softball Classic, we were all just in there talking about the next day, and praying for people. It’s amazing because everyone on our healing list that we pray for gets healed. It’s really building the guys faith up. After that we will hug each other and get on to bed. We have always been very touching and nurturing with the kids. They know that they can get as many hugs and love as they need. It’s free and it’s endless, just as God’s love. Each one of the boys has a time everyday we call it our tithing time. Out of the 24 hours in the day, each one of the boys gives 10 percent of that. We have a room that’s set aside for our church and they go in there and pray, or if the weather is nice they will go outside. And then they will share it during church or dinner. It’s hard to separate church and not church because I don’t think God is only in church. He is every part of our lives and he is teaching us constantly and it’s not just within those four walls.

PROVERBS 3:12

Honestly, I’ve always kind of figured out - and I don’t know if you want to put this in the publication - that God knew what He was doing when He made ‘this work’ for a woman! Rick earns the money and I spend the money. I love the arrangement! But that’s almost not fair. [Being a wife and mother] is something I can give him. “It’s” almost a security thing in my way and I know that sounds weird but guys don’t get sympathy. They break their leg and no one really is there to pat them on the back and say, “hey, how you doing?” Unlike with women, people cry and say, ‘oh you poor thing’ and constantly feel sorry for you. No one feels sorry for you if you are a guy. Whoever hears about Joseph in the Bible? He worked his tail off! Everyone talks about motherhood and apple pie and all of this, but fatherhood…he doesn’t get the same type of credit.

LOVEMAKING...HER GIFT TO HIM

I very much appreciate that I don’t have to go out and earn the money. If Rick wasn’t here, there is no way could be the type of mommy that I want to be. So to me, ‘this’ is something I can give him. Lovemaking in his only time for refuge, the only time to be vulnerable; some pay off for him. And that’s an easy thing for me to give. Hey, it’s not a lot of skin off my nose…and I like him! He’s a cutie! You know, of course there are times when the desire isn’t there as strong, especially for the baby after a baby and while they are healing, but I don’t think that always happens. I don’t think it always has to be what you are feeling like at that moment. I don’t like getting up in the middle of the night to clean up throw up or it needs to be done. Throw your heart in it and whistle while you work. Have fun with whatever your job is. I feel like that’s my responsibility: to keep him close and to keep him too worn out to look at other girls! I get up in the morning, get dressed, put on some makeup and not because I’m going out but because he is going to see me. It’s not fair to him for me not to take care of myself. He’s stuck with me! I’m his wife for the rest of his life! I know he would have plenty of takers if he did look around. He’s a doll! He would be the guy to do anything for anybody and I can do this for me. For whatever, whether I get something out of the deal or not—and I do get plenty out of the deal—to me I’m not loving him for my sake, it’s for his sake. He needs attention, too. It shouldn’t be only when I’m in the mood but this is a way I can look out and feel what he feels. No one needs to feel jeered as just he is always looking out for mine. It’s nice to have something special to give to him, you know?

PROVERBS 3:30

I remember when I was 13 years old praying and I had just finished reading about when Solomon asked God for wisdom. And you know, he could have asked for anything like wealth or life - many things - but he asked for wisdom so that he could handle what God had given him. God was so pleased that He blessed him with those other things, because Solomon was seeking first the Kingdom of God and all the other things were added. The Bible is so consistent when you read it all the way through. Anything He says in one place is backed up in another. I decided at that point that that was what I was going to ask for, that was class and detail and the rest of my life; for God to give me wisdom. I was 13 and for a solid year I just kept praying for God to give me Wisdom. Honestly, I think He answered my prayers. When you are asking for something like that, you are asking for the blindered to be taken off of your eyes. And sometimes what you see is that you need to work harder and it’s not always easy! He made me pray for it and then he answered it, too. That’s lifeline to me.

I’m sure with every mother you have one strong-willed child who has been very different from the last

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
three who have been docile. There’s always someone in the family with a different personality or a different slant. You need God there constantly with wisdom. This is a daily thing; it’s not, “I prayed for this in 1995 and I expect the results for eternity”; no, He wants us to have a relationship with Him constantly. It originates with Him and it ends with Him. I don’t know if this sounds really religious but I need Him constantly and daily. There is always a new set of circumstances where I need Him to guide me. We are supposed to be always looking to Him for strength, grace, and wisdom. Thank God He doesn’t give us our yearly bread and our yearly grace; it would be stale and old. He wants us to be His children who trust Him just like our kids trust us. It’s a natural rhythm that we will be taken care of and not stress out in crazy times. That happens when is God there.

You can join the Arndt's family online for worship service, prayer, advice or for their Softball Classic family weekend www.famteam.com
Thank You

Daddy God, my life is pointless, barren, void, vacant, purposeless, meaningless, nothing…without You. I don’t want you, I NEED YOU! Your love shaped me into who I am…sculptured by your hands, a tattoo of your existence…I am, only because of You…

My Husband-to-be, this book is dedicated to you. The Lord has been preparing me all my life to love you. Because to love, is to love you.

Heaven, the love of my life, you are my greatest joy. Your smile makes me live. You and God have defined what love is to me. Because of you and God, I am able to live life at its greatest. Thank you for praying everyday without me ever having to ask. You are the most gifted child I know, dancer, gymnast, figure skater, designer, artist, author, and film producer; all at 10 years old! I’m proud to be your Mommy. I love you more than you love me! Promise, you are my “first born.” I will always love you and cherish that God called me to raise you.

Momma, no matter how old I get, I will always pull at your pants legs. You are my heartbeat, I love you. Dad, I have your DNA, I can’t help but be great! Thanks for being my business partner and teaching me to see farther than I could see. My spiritual parents: Dr. Juanita Bynum, Dr. Myles and Ruth Munroe, the mere fact that God would honor and entrust me to you, I am eternally grateful.

Toy, life would be empty without my twin. You have been my mother, my sister, my partner, my best friend. You are everything to me. I love you, Shawn and the boys. Prena, you hold a special place in my heart that can’t be filled by anyone but you. Kinya, you are the joy of this family. I love you and the girls. Man, I like Evangelist Sam, God’s not finished with you.

John Gray, my best friend. You’re like air, filling my life without me knowing it.

The entire Heaven Enterprises and Ty Adams Int’l Staff. Special thanks to Rochelle Mann, you are the technological genius! The face of this ministry has a purposeless, meaningless, nothing…without You. I don’t want you, I NEED YOU! Your love shaped me into who I am…sculptured by your hands, a tattoo of your existence…I am, only because of You…

Life Savers and ministry partners of Ty Adams Int’l all around the world. Thank you for your much needed prayers and your financial support that has allowed us to do what the Lord has mandated us to do. Thank you for partnering with me to save lives.

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