

You have the power to choose. Therefore, choose "What is better." choose to become...

"The Listener" – Rewind

**A Short Inspirational Book for Young Men on
Courting, Winning and Loving A Christian Woman**



By Michael Attar

Preface

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom... But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” James 3:13, 17

“The Listener”- Rewind is a follow-up to “The Listener” The reason I am calling this book “The Listener” – Rewind is because I **went back** in time to memories of my dating and courting years. It is a short inspirational Christian book that provides Biblically-based wisdom for courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman. This book will uplift, inspire, and encourage young men of any age to believe. “Yes, I can court, win, and love any Christian woman.”

This book was meant to be read and used along with the “leader’s guide” that accompanies this book. The leader’s guide includes Bible verses and questions for initiating spiritual conversations between the reader and his father, Pastor, or mentor.

The front cover picture is from Michelle’s Seminary graduation.

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Introduction

When I was only 19 years old, I heard the following four questions and made up my mind to do everything possible to find an answer—God’s answer. Every person must ask and answer:

1. Who am I going to live for?
2. ***Who am I going to live with?***
3. Where am I going to live?
4. What is going to be my profession?

That same year, I became a believer in Jesus Christ and checked question number one off my list. However, I didn’t stop there. I continued my love affair with my Savior, which is still alive and flaming to this day. Unfortunately, too many people claim to “believe” and then go on their separate way. Not me! Because I believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died as a substitute for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. I committed to spending the rest of my life living for Him, learning to hear His voice and instruction—and obeying. I hope you will, too!

Answering question number two, “Who am I going to live with?” serves as the premise and motivation for writing this book. I learned much of the material in this book during my dating and courting years from age 20 to age 25. During this time, I spent hundreds of hours reading, listening, and talking to my Pastors and mentors and gained much understanding in the ways of courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman. Then I put it use by dating many different women. Therefore, this book targets young men

who want understanding wisdom, and knowhow to court, win, and love a Christian woman.

My primary motivation for authoring this book comes from my observation that most young Christian men don't take question number two seriously. I have observed that the average young Christian man will spend more time researching what kind of new car to buy than he will spend on researching what type of woman he should date, court, and marry. After all, a car is just a car. But a Godly wife—now that is a man's REAL treasure.

Please understand that I am by no means an expert in all of the ways of courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman. I am still learning. Also, I have made many mistakes. I am 60 years old now and have been courting, wining, and loving my wife, Michelle, for over 35 years now. Marriage has been the real proving ground for all of the material in this book. Finally, this book won't help you meet the Christian woman of your dreams—only God can make that introduction. However, when God does make that introduction, with the wisdom contained in this book, you will be much better prepared to court, win, and love her. God speed to you!

Section One

Wise Answers

This first section begins with Mike answering the question, "What does 'winning' mean?"

Then Mike has a questions and answers conversation with his "Father."

The rest of this section contains wise answers to questions many young men ask.

What does “winning” mean?

The premise of this book is about courting, “winning,” and loving a Christian woman. However, let me first clarify what “winning” means. “Winning” can refer to:

- Winning a prize.

There’s a local restaurant in my neighborhood that has this placard by the cash register. “Each month, the 100th customer gets to eat free.” To win, you don’t have to do anything but hope you happen to be the 100th customer that month.

- Winning a lottery.

The most popular lottery game costs one dollar. You pick a handful of numbers, and if those exact numbers are selected, you are a winner. Winning the lottery is a game of chance. However, the odds of winning are “millions to one.” You have a better chance of being hit by lightning than winning the lottery.”

- Winning a race.

You’ve seen pictures of Olympians in a foot race as they strive towards the finish line—and win. Winning a foot race or any race requires an athlete’s complete dedication. However, to win the race and the prize, it takes years of training and preparation before the athlete is ready to compete.

Young men, preparing for courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman is more like preparing to enter and win a foot race than hoping to win a prize or chancing it by playing the lottery. Winning will require you:

- ✓ To read and study the Bible, this and similar books.
- ✓ To seek the assistance of your father, Pastor, and mentor.
- ✓ To change, grow, and mature.

Yes, it will be hard.

Yes, there will be some pain.

Yes, you may feel like quitting.

And I know how you feel.

Authoring this book was hard and painful, and I wanted to quit along the way, too. I had to relive many painful memories, mistakes, and failures to pull out the material that was deep inside of me. But I persevered for your sake. After all, the second most significant decision you will make is who you will spend the rest of your life with. It is my prayer that this project will help you to that end.

My ultimate goal for you is that you WILL WIN.

- I want you to win— to be wise.
- I want you to win—to have the confidence and knowhow to court, win, and love a Christian woman.
- I want you to win— to choose well.

God-speed!

A Son has Long Talk with his Father.

When I was nineteen years old, I met a young woman. We became friends, and though I had hoped we might date someday, we never did.

Anyhow, I strived to love my friend with “agape” love. “Agape” is a love which is selfless, sacrificial and unconditional and is NOT to be confused with:

“Eros”-Sexual love.

“Philia”-Close friendship.

“Storge”-Family love.

The following are discussions with my “Father” about some of the personal struggles I encountered as our friendship grew . . .

A LONG TIME AGO . . .

“Father!”

“Yes, my son.”

“Do you believe in love at first sight?”

“That’s a serious question, son. Do I believe in love at first sight?”

“Yes, father.”

"Yes and no!"

"What kind of an answer is that, father?"

"It's my answer. Yes and no!"

"I think I'm in love, father."

"I knew that's what you were going to say when you asked the question. Do I believe in love at first sight?"

"She is beautiful!"

"I figured as much, son. It's always the beautiful women that captivate and ignite the passions of the heart. Sit down, son, and tell me all about her."

"I saw her for the first time . . ."

"You are smitten my son, aren't you?"

"Yes, father, I am!"

"Son, what are your intentions?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you want to talk to this woman? Do you want to date her? What are your intentions?"

"I want to tell her how I feel!"

"That's a bad idea, son!"

"If I love her, I should tell her. Right?"

"Wrong, my son!"

‘Why, father?’

“First of all, you DON’T love her. Yes, your heart has been captivated. Yes, she may be beautiful. But keep in mind that you’re only 19. You are at the age when ‘feelings’ fan the flames of what many calls love. Becoming attracted to someone of the opposite sex is a mysterious thing. But I CAN assure you that you don’t love her. Therefore, in response to your question, ‘Do I believe in love at first sight?’ my answer is NO!”

“Father, but you also said ‘Yes’ to that same question.”

“Yes I did, son, yes I did.”

“Please explain.”

“Yes, you can fall in love at first sight but ONLY if this is a CHOICE. Your initial feelings may be the catalyst that attracts you to that special someone. But it is the act of the will that conveys true love.”

“So how do I love this woman without telling her? I am a new Christian, so I want what is ‘best’ in this situation. However, my heart races when I see this woman. I am breathless and speechless...”

“Yes, that is very clear to me.”

“So, what should I do?”

“You should love her.”

“I’m confused, father, how can I love this woman when you said don’t tell her? “

“That’s right, don’t tell her—SHOW her!”

"How, father?"

"Does this woman have a boyfriend?"

"I don't know."

"Well, when you discover who her 'boyfriends' find a way to become their friends, too."

"But I want to be her boyfriend. How am I supposed to be friends with my rivals?"

"The truth is coming out, my son. You just told me you want to be her boyfriend. Is that what I am hearing?"

"I guess so, father. YES!"

"Then obey and become friends with her boyfriends."

"Then what do I do?"

"Find a way to love her boyfriends, my son."

"Father, no disrespect to you, but what kind of advice is that, and how do I benefit by loving my rival suitors?"

"It's the BEST advice I can give MY son!"

"Why, father?"

"Because if you want to love someone, you have to DO what is in their best interests, not yours."

"But I may lose. I may love this woman's boyfriends and lose."

"What do you mean by 'lose' my son?"

“I mean, I may lose. You know—I may lose. One of her boyfriends might win her heart and win her hand.”

“Son, first of all, your true intentions are coming out. You’ve just used the word ‘hand.’ Are you saying ‘hand’ as in ‘the hand’ of marriage?”

“I guess...”

“Son, your FEELINGS are running away from you. *You haven’t officially met this woman.* And now you’re thinking about marriage. SLOW DOWN, SON!”

“Oh...”

“And second of all, if you do what I tell you to do, you will NOT lose.”

LATER

“Father, I’ve become friends with her boyfriends. “

“You’re an obedient son. Tell me...”

“Well, one boy . . .”

“How does that make you feel?”

“I don’t like it?”

“Why don’t you like it?”

“Because...”

"TOUGH! *What did I tell you to do?*"

"You told me to find a way to love this woman's boyfriends."

"That's right!"

"How, father?"

"This way...try this...do this..."

LATER

"Father, I think I am making progress with this woman."

"Tell me, my son?"

"We talk on the phone all the time."

"You haven't TOLD her you love her, have you?"

"No!"

LATER AGAIN

"Father, she broke up with her boyfriend."

"Okay."

“I also learned she is flying on a trip. So I purchased some books, put them in a nice bag, and went to her home to give it to her.”

“Wonderful!”

“I rang the doorbell, the father answers the door and says, ‘My daughter is having a rough time she’s not seeing anyone.’ And I say, ‘I understand but here are some books for her trip.’”

“Nicely done!”

LATER

“Father, her brother invited me to spend the night at their house for a sleepover.”

“That’s encouraging. So what’s the matter?”

“I have an idea...”

“What’s the idea?”

“If I reach out to this woman’s brother, I can be at her home more often. You know...”

“Son, that’s a TERRIBLE idea!”

“But why, father?”

“That’s manipulation—using someone to get something that you want. I am NOT pleased with that kind of behavior. Stop it right now!”

“I am sorry!”

“Son, you are not this boy’s father. Therefore, don’t reach out to him. Let this boy’s father be his father—not you.”

LATER STILL

“Father!”

“Yes, my son.”

“Something happened...”

“What’s that?”

“The current flame in this woman’s life is getting married to someone else.”

“So?”

“He gave me money to buy him a ring...”

“That’s saying a lot...”

“I went over to her house, and I told her father what had happened...”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. It seemed like a good idea at the time.”

LATER AGAIN

“How is it going with this woman?”

“It’s going nowhere.”

“But you’re dating other women. You’ve brought several of them home to meet the rest of the family and me.”

“Yes, I like them all right, but this other woman still has my heart. How will I know about any possible future with this woman?”

“Son, you’ve asked a difficult question with NO easy answer. But here is a ‘guidepost’ that will help you.”

“What guidepost are you referring to?”

“You’ve known this woman for several years. You’ve learned to love this woman’s boyfriends, and this woman’s family knows you. Tell me who is for you?”

“Her brother!”

“Okay! Who else?”

“Her grandmother likes me.”

“Good, and who else?”

“Her mother likes me, too.”

“Okay, but what about this woman’s father?”

“I don’t know for sure.”

“Until you do, know this. The father is the head of the home, and he knows what is best for his family and his children—especially when it comes to his daughter and matters of love and the heart.”

“So I should quit and give up and stop loving this woman. Is that what you are saying?”

“Absolutely not my son, you should continue to love the father’s daughter in every way that is possible.”

A LITTLE LATER

“Father, last night was a good night.”

“What was so good about it?”

“This woman’s mother invited me to go to . . .”

“Why?”

“That’s where they wanted to go.”

“Did her daughter go also?”

“Yes!”

“So, what was so good about last night.”

“We connected emotionally. She was there WITH me. I drove back to my apartment so happy and giddy like a lost puppy that had just been found. Maybe things were changing for me.”

"How long did that feeling last."

"Until the next day, when I called her."

"What happened?"

"I felt like she was saying, 'Oh, it's you again. What do you want?'"

"What do you want?"

"I wanted what I felt last night with her to last forever. I thought she was finally feeling something for me."

"What did you learn?"

"Feelings feel nice."

"But?"

"Feelings come in like a tide one second, and the next second they are washed back into the ocean."

ONE CHRISTMAS.

"Father, I was invited to share Christmas with this woman's family."

"Sit down, my son, and tell me ALL about it."

"It didn't go very well."

"What do you mean?"

"Her father took me for a long car ride to talk."

"What did you talk about?"

"It was complicated, but he suggested that I tell his daughter how I felt."

"And..."

"I told him that I couldn't."

"Why?"

"Because you told me not to tell her."

"That's right."

"He said I should be his daughter's friend."

"I told him I WAS her friend."

"I see."

LATER

"Father, I was invited to see a movie last night with her mother and father."

"That's progress. Did the daughter go as well?"

"Yes!"

"Did you like the movie?"

"Yes, and afterward, they invited me to their house."

"Good for you!"

"I didn't go."

"WHAT!"

"That's right, and I didn't go."

"Why in the world—not?"

"It just didn't feel right."

NOT MUCH LATER

"Son, why are you crying?"

"I still feel the need to call this woman every couple of days and talk to her?"

"Why?"

"That's the MILLION-dollar question."

"And what's the MILLION-dollar answer?"

"For reasons, I cannot understand I need HELP when it comes to women."

"What kind of help are you talking about?"

"I can't get STARTED on my own."

"You can't make the FIRST move, can you?"

"I'm paralyzed."

"As I recall, it's the daughter's family that says, 'Come with us here and here... You've NEVER been able to call and ask, have you?"

"That's right."

"And because she had deep feelings for someone else. It seems like the wrong thing to do. You're not able to ask under those conditions, can you?"

"Yes!"

"It's tearing you up inside, isn't it?"

"That's right!"

LATER AGAIN

"Father, I'm still confused. My feelings and my mind are at odds with each other regarding this woman."

"Sit down, my son, and tell me all about it."

A LITTLE LATER

"What's the matter, my son?"

"Father, my heart is crushed."

"What did she do?"

"No, Father, it's not what she did. It's what she said."

"What did she say?"

"Father, she said . . ."

"Oh, oh!"

"Father, all we do debate and argue about it."

"My son, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to continue crying. I'm angry . . ."

"Take some time to think about what you need to do."

"GOD, it hurts!"

SHORTLY after that

"Father, I've decided."

"What have you decided?"

"I've decided . . ."

"Is that the way it has to be."

"Yes, Father, that's the way it has to be. Anyway, I've also decided to continue to call her. Maybe she'll change her mind."

"Good for you. Keep loving her as a very good friend."

LATER

"Congratulations, my son."

"Thanks, father!"

MARRIAGE DAY

"Mike, what have we talked about in the last five years?"

"Father, we talked about . . ."

"And?"

"But I still have so many questions."

"Son, marriage is an act of love, an act of hope, and an act of faith. If you had ALL the answers to all of your questions, then you won't need faith. Would you?"

"Father, thank you! It was hard getting to this place. It wasn't easy. Who I will marry and spend the rest of my life with is the second greatest decision I will ever make."

"And what's the greatest decision?"

"Choosing YOU! Thank YOU!"

"You're welcome, my son."

ABOUT ONE HOUR AFTER I SAID, “I DO.”

“The father of the daughter...”

“The father of which daughter?”

“The father of the woman . . . you know . . .”

“So, what happened?”

“I am in the men’s room. He comes in, shakes my hand and, ‘palms’ me a piece of paper.”

“What did you think?”

“I thought it was a check. What else could it be?”

“How much was it for?”

“It wasn’t a check but a folded-up piece of paper.”

“What had this father written on this piece of paper?”

“It said, ‘You were married on October 12, 1985, at exactly...’”

“Okay? What did it mean?”

“It meant you’re married, so DON’T ever forget.”

“Was this an appropriate thing for the father to do?”

“Yes!”

MUCH, MUCH LATER

“Father!”

“Yes, my son.”

“I didn’t lose.”

“I didn’t know you had lost something. What are you talking about?”

“Do you remember our conversations about my friend? That “agape” love doesn’t touch or kiss. I never did any of it with her.”

“*NOTHING?*”

“That’s right—nothing!”

“That, my son, gives you the freedom to remain friends.”

“Wonderful! That means I won!”

MANY, MANY YEARS LATER

“Father!”

“Yes, my son. What’s bothering you? You seem sad and weepy.”

“My friend posted some pictures for herself when she was a teenager.”

“So, what happened when you saw these pictures?”

"My heart BURST into tears."

"Why, my son?"

"The pictures reminded me of a time many years ago..."

"So, what's on your heart, my son?"

"I realized that I NEVER told her how I felt about her."

"I see my son. You never told her how you felt because I told you NOT to tell her. But show her by being friends with her boyfriends and doing what was in their best interests, not yours."

"Yes!"

"And now you think it might be inappropriate. Is that what I hear you saying?"

"Yes, I never told her, 'I love you.' I can't do that in the grave, and NOW seems like the right time to tell her."

"What do you mean by, 'I love you?'"

"It means, 'You are my friend, I care what happens to you. I will pray for you when you ask me to.'"

"What do you hope will happen if you tell her?"

"I hope she will say something like, 'Thanks for telling me. Happy, you were finally able to get it out. You're my friend, and I love you, too.'"

"So, you want my permission to tell this woman because you never did?"

"Yes!"

“Before I give you my answer. I have a question to ask you.”

“Ask away, father!”

“Son, if you had a son of your own and he came to you with the same scenario you’ve experienced. What advice would you give him?”

“I would say that loving someone is special . . . but there are so many factors to consider in deciding to date someone and choosing a marriage partner.”

“What else?”

“I would ask my son if any of his love interests have caused him to experience rejection, a broken heart, or other painful emotions. And if he said, yes. I would advise him to get HELP before he entered into the marriage covenant.”

“Good advice, my son. Is there anything else?”

I would say the same things you taught me. LOVE is a VERB. Love is a choice—it is an act of the will. Feelings may initiate love, but it must be driven by the right choices and by right actions.”

“Again, well-received, my son.”

“Father, NOW, can I tell her?”

“Son, you just did!”

What is the Truth about "First-Love" and "Love at First Sight?"

Young man, admittedly, there is nothing like the first person you have truly loved— "first-love." And though you've fallen for your "first love," that doesn't mean you can or should date or marry that person. That's because there is so much more to consider than just "first love."

I have friends who courted, won, and married their "first love." But for the rest of us, this is the exception and not the rule. However, if you are going to pursue your "first love," is your "first-love" a Christian? I can't tell you how many marriages have failed because their "first love" wasn't a believer. The line in the divorce court is strewn with "first-loves"—gone bad!

"Mike, what about "love at first sight?"

Unfortunately, youthfulness, plus hormones, plus lust, plus chemistry, plus unknowns, are all too often mistaken as "love at first sight." The bottom line is this:

- ✓ Love is a choice.
- ✓ Love is a verb.
- ✓ Love is an act of the will.

You can DECIDE to love someone—at first sight!

Why Should I Keep my Private Parts Private?

The GREATEST gift you can give to your spouse or your spouse can give you on your wedding night is their virginity. How do I know? Michelle was a virgin on our wedding night. Michelle never had sexual intercourse with anyone before our wedding night, and even if she hadn't been a virgin. It wouldn't have made a difference to me, and I would still have married her.

We are living in a day when boys and girls are having sex and sexual intercourse at a very early age, with multiple partners, and without regard to God's Biblical mandate. And just because your friends are "doing it" doesn't make it right.

Young man, look yourself in the mirror and repeat.

"If I take what isn't mine, I am a THIEF."

That's right!

If you take a woman's virginity (even if she wants you, too), you are a THIEF. You have not only stolen from yourself, but you have also stolen from her, and you have stolen from God.

"Mike, so what do I do if I am not a virgin? And what I do if my girlfriend is not a virgin?"

Excellent questions!

Draw a line in the sand and say the following in prayer.

God, from this moment forward, I promise to keep my private parts private. I will wait until marriage to have sex and sexual intercourse. God, please forgive me for stealing the virginity of "so and so." And please forgive me for having sex and or sexual intercourse with "so and so" before marriage. As of this moment, please keep me pure in thought and pure indeed. Amen!

If you've prayed this prayer or similar know this. God has forgiven you, and as far as He is concerned, you are a virgin. That's wonderful news! Therefore, save yourself and your virginity for the marriage bed on your wedding night.

Now for the fun part! When you get married, you and your wife should have lots of sex and great sex whenever possible. Sex was meant to be enjoyed between one man and one woman who are married.

Word of exhortation!

Young man, if you take out your private parts, I pray your girlfriend will run to her father and, if necessary, to the police. They will know what to do with you.

If you call yourself a Christian—a believer in Jesus Christ—you have been mandated to stop all sin. This includes having sex outside of the bonds of marriage. However, you cannot stop on your own accord. You must rely on His Holy Spirit who resides within you. Run to your earthy father, Pastor, or mentor and ask them for help, too.

Where do I look for Dating and Courting Opportunities?

There a new show on television called "Hillbilly Hand Fishing." Since I like fishing, I was drawn to the show. Essentially Hillbilly hand fishing is about catching very BIG catfish with your bare hands. To do it, you wad into a muddy lake, put your hands into a rock crevice to locate the catfish, and then grab the catfish and pull it out. Hillbilly hand fishing looks like a lot of fun—if you like catfish. However, I hate catfish, so I'm not interested in going Hillbilly hand fishing.

I'm not God, so I can't tell you when and where you will meet the woman you will date and court. However, I'd like to point you in the right direction. As a fisherman, I can only catch native fish in their native waters. For example, I can only find a trout in a lake or a stream that has trout in them. I certainly can't catch a trout in the ocean since a trout isn't a saltwater fish. You get the picture!

To locate the "fish," you want to date, court, and eventually marry. You will have to decide what kind of fish you want to catch and the "native" waters that are common to that species. As a young man, I knew the type of woman I wanted; a Godly woman of character, a woman who loves people and loves God's Word. I also knew that this kind of "fish" will be swimming in the "native waters" of the local church. Therefore, any church-related activity increased my chances of catching a fish that is a "keeper." This includes:

- ✓ Church mission trips.
- ✓ Church service projects.
- ✓ Church choir and orchestra.
- ✓ Church nursery.
- ✓ Church Bible studies, “small groups” or “cell groups.”
- ✓ Church volunteering opportunities.
- ✓ Bible school of Seminary if one is available where you live. Godly fish was always swimming there, too.

“Mike, what about blind dates?”

Young man, if you, the person who is setting up the blind date knows what types of fish you are looking to catch. If they feel they have found her and you two should meet, then a blind date can be fun!

“What about online dating?”

Though I know a few couples who met online and were married, I’m not a big fan of online dating services. The problem with meeting on-line is that people lie and misrepresent themselves. Also, you can’t judge the character of a person by a questionnaire or by looking at their picture. I believe it is still best to stick with catching “keeper fish” in native waters—the local church.

What about Hookups?

I love fishing. There isn't anything about fishing I don't like. Wait a minute—there is. I don't like taking the fish off the hook after catching a fish. The reason I don't like taking the fish off the hook is that I get emotional. I look into the fish's eyes and see that he's not a happy guy. I think he instinctively knows that he's about to be descaled, skinned, gutted, and is about to be my dinner. Poor fellow!

Another reason I enjoy the sport of fishing is that after catching a fish, I ALWAYS have the option of throwing the fish back into the water. It's a pretty cut and dry event. If I don't like the fish, I can simply choose to release it. Lucky fellow!

In recent years, a new phenomenon has occurred in the lives of young people. It's a phenomenon called hookups. Now, I don't pretend to know a lot about hookups, but here is what I do know. Two people meet. They spend a few minutes getting to know each other, and suddenly they are— a couple. What a terrible idea! The primary reason hookups are a terrible idea is because people are not fish. Whereas you can unhook a fish and release it without any emotional or physiological damage, "unhooking" a person is painful, complicated, and often very damaging. Therefore, stick to group dating and when you are ready, dating

Is it Okay if the Woman Makes the First Move?

I am for lack of a better term—old fashioned. Yes, I still believe a man should open the car door for his date, girlfriend, or wife. Yes, I still believe in sex only after marriage. Yes, too many things . . . However, I am open to new ideas and new possibilities. One of those ideas is letting the woman make the first move.

Why?

When I was 23 years old, in the singles department of our church, I always sat next to my friends, Nathan and Melanie. Nathan and I loved to eat cheese pastries, and we would often fight (ha!) over the last one.

One day, Michelle (now my wife) came into our Sunday school class for the first time. She tells the story of how the class Pastor mentioned that Nathan and Melanie were getting married the following Saturday and invited the class to the wedding and reception. However, on this day, I was sitting next to Melanie and NOT Nathan, as I usually did.

You got it!

Michelle thought I was Nathan and said to herself. “Rats, there goes a fine handsome man. I missed my chance!” By the way, I’m not embellishing my handsomeness. That’s how Michelle tells this story.

So what did Michelle do the second she learned I was still available? She tried to get my attention is what she did. But did I notice?

No!

I have a confession to make. I was paralyzed when it came to making the first move. There are probably many reasons for this, which is not important anymore. However, all the women I began dating during my dating and courting years all made the first move on me. I can't recall having a first date with any woman who didn't make the first move. And what they did to get my attention is also not relevant anymore. So what Michelle did to get my attention?

Michelle continues her story and says, "I sat in a pew one Sunday, smiled at Mike as he was walking by, and hoped that he would 'get it' and sit next to me."

I never did get it.

So she helped me along . . .

Again, how she did it is not important.

Yes, I am an introvert, and yes, I needed a little push and some encouragement. But once I got going, I was good. You need to know this because it is likely that you need help getting going, too.

Here is what I NOW know.

When a woman smiles at you, makes eye contact with you and your eyes lock but for a microsecond. She IS interested in you. Therefore, if she "lets you know" and is sitting down.

See if there is space for you to sit next to her. If she is across the room, go and talk to her. A smile, eye contact, and locked eyes are CLUES! She is saying that she is available and she is interested. That’s good news!

Now, for the bad news!

Women will continue to make themselves available to you even after you are married.

Young man, this is SERIOUS!

The following was drilled into me by my Pastors and mentors. “A Christian man, if he is to fall, will fall because of money or because of a woman. Therefore, keep yourselves free from the ‘love of money’” and keep yourselves free from the ‘illicit love’ of another woman.”

Young man, we’ll talk about setting up boundaries in a subsequent chapter. However, keep in mind that “it” (an illicit emotional or physical relationship) can happen to you. The only way to prevent “it” is to put distance between you any other woman. Therefore, when you are committed to someone or engaged or married. Ignore the CLUES. THEY ARE BUT A TRAP!

How will I know if I’m “In” Love?

To answer that question, we must first define what love is. The Bible has much to say about the subject:

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging

cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away, if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."
(I Corinthians 13:1-13)

In summary:

- ❖ Love is patient.
- ❖ Love is kind.
- ❖ Love is not jealous.
- ❖ Love does not brag.
- ❖ Love is not arrogant.
- ❖ Love does not act unbecomingly.
- ❖ Love does not seek its own.
- ❖ Love is not provoked.

- ❖ Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.
- ❖ Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.
- ❖ Love rejoices with the truth.
- ❖ Love bears all things.
- ❖ Love believes all things.
- ❖ Love hopes all things.
- ❖ Love endures all things.

“Mike, so how is love produced?”

Excellent question! Galatians 5: 22 says that “The FRUIT of The Holy Spirit is . . .

- ❖ Love
- ❖ Joy
- ❖ Peace
- ❖ Patience,
- ❖ Kindness
- ❖ Goodness
- ❖ Faithfulness
- ❖ Gentleness
- ❖ Self-Control

In summary:

Love is the FIRST FRUIT of The Holy Spirit. Love is produced by the working of The Holy Spirit in a Christian who is being led by The Holy Spirit. You’ll notice that LOVE is followed by the other “fruits” of the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ Love
- ❖ Joy
- ❖ Peace

- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Kindness
- ❖ Goodness
- ❖ Faithfulness
- ❖ Gentleness
- ❖ Self-Control

Therefore:

- ✓ To be “in” love is to walk in step with The Holy Spirit.
- ✓ To be “in” love is to obey AND listen to The Holy Spirit.
- ✓ To be “in” love is to live a life that is moment by moment being led by The Holy Spirit.

“Mike, so how will I know if I’m “IN” love?”

When you are walking “in” the light of The Holy Spirit, you are: “IN LOVE.” You are also:

- ❖ In-Joy
- ❖ In-Peace
- ❖ In-Patience
- ❖ In-Kindness
- ❖ In-Goodness
- ❖ In-Faithfulness
- ❖ In-Gentleness
- ❖ In-Self-Control

Finally . . .

Young man if you are “IN LOVE” you love a woman:

- ✓ Even if she doesn't love you back.
- ✓ Even if your relationship has failed.
- ✓ Even if you can't establish a relationship.

Love is, after all—a choice!

When do I Tell Her, "I Love You?"

The word "love" is so flippantly used that we don't know what "love" really means anymore? We use the word "love" to describe just about everything. For example:

- I love my dog.
- I love my car.
- I love my house.
- I love ice cream.
- I love my job.
- I love my life.
- I love babies.
- I love it when it is hot outside.
- I love it when it snowflakes.
- I love it when it rains.
- I love it when I have a day off.
- I love . . .

The same is true with the term, "I love you." We use that term without regard to what it SHOULD mean. Now it is acceptable to say, "I love you" after the first or second date. Big mistake!

Young man tell your parents, family, and your siblings, “I love you” OFTEN. But save saying “I love you” to that special woman in your life—for the right time.

“Mike, so when do I tell that special woman in my life, I love you?”

Excellent question!

I am of the firm opinion that you only tell that special woman in your life; I love you—only when you’re confident that her response will be something like this.

“Yes, I know you love me. I can SEE it.”

If you tell her, “I love you” before you’ve set the groundwork of “love in action.” You’re going to come off as insincere, spiritually immature, and it will turn her off. She is, after all, a Christian woman, and she knows that “love” is a verb—an action word.

Love in ACTION includes:

- ✓ Helping her move into her new apartment or home.
- ✓ Becoming friends with her girlfriends and loving them, as well.
- ✓ Sending her cards, letters, books, and other encouraging gifts that will minister to her.
- ✓ Praying for her.
- ✓ Doing what is in her best interests and not your own.
- ✓ Becoming friends with her siblings and her family.
- ✓ Finding and then meeting her needs as discreetly as possible.

- ✓ Not showing off or bragging about your good deeds.
- ✓ Becoming friends with her boyfriends and loving them, too.
- ✓ Speaking well of her at all times.
- ✓ Speaking well of her dates—your rivals.
- ✓ Remembering her birthday and other special days in her life.
- ✓ Opening and closing her car door for her.
- ✓ Not touching her or trying to have sex with her.
- ✓ Providing or supplementing her financial needs if appropriate and if not, then secretly.
- ✓ Giving her Godly, Biblical advice when she asks you.
- ✓ Listening to her.
- ✓ . . .

"Mike, so once I've laid down a solid base of 'love in action.' Then can I tell her 'I love you?'"

Let me preface my answer by saying what I've already said and will say throughout this book that if you have a moment by moment, Spirit-led walk. He will guide you in ALL things. The only person who can answer the question of when to say, "I love you" is The Holy Spirit. Therefore, ask Him.

"So when can I tell her?"

Young man, what do you hope to gain by telling that special woman in your life "I love you?" Are you saying, "I love you" to gain favor? Is it a preamble to asking her out on a date, or asking her to marry you?

You need to think this out—prayerfully.

Saying “I love you” to that special woman in your life before she is READY to accept it and BELIEVE it—is pointless. That’s why prayer and communion with the “Father” are so crucial.

If you haphazardly say, “I love you” to every woman in your life, you’re going to confuse them and yourself in the process.

It is much better to lay down a solid foundation of “love in action” and wait to be directed by The Holy Spirit. He will tell you if and when that special woman is ready to accept and believe it when you say, “I love you.”

What do I do if God tells me I’m supposed to Marry “so and so?”

If God tells you to marry “so and so,” that’s wonderful. We serve an awesome God who talks to us through His Word, His Holy Spirit, through Godly counsel, etc. Hopefully, you already have a relationship with “so and so,” and she is someone you would be happy marrying.

However, DO NOT under any circumstances tell “so and so” that God spoke to you and said, “I’m supposed to marry you.”

Young man, if you don’t heed my warning, I can say with 99.99% certainty. “So and so” is going to respond with,

“Funny, God never told me I was supposed to marry you!” And therefore, you will have just permanently sabotaged a budding, growing or maturing relationship. Or if you don’t have a relationship with “so and so.” She will most likely think you are a “spiritual nutcase” and probably won’t heed your advances.

I’m not saying God hasn’t or won’t tell you that you’re supposed to marry “so and so.” What I am saying is to love “so and so” with “actions” and save the “God-said” talk until after you are married.

Why does Love have to hurt?

I have answers to some things. But I don’t have an answer for “Why does love have to hurt?” Like you, I wish that love didn’t have to hurt. But experience has revealed that sometimes loves does hurt. For example:

- Unrequited love hurts.
- Failed love hurts.
- Not having a love interest in your life hurts.

But what I do know is this. The God we serve knows more about “love” than anyone. God has so many stories of love in His Word. His Word is the Love Story—of all time. Read about them, and He will heal your heart—it will just take time.

Young men, though loves, do hurt sometimes. Love shouldn’t hurt all the time. Therefore, DON’T seek or continue a serious relationship with someone who is always

hurting you. And of course, DON'T marry someone who is always hurting you, too.

I once had a relationship with a woman who was always hurting me. I don't think she was hurting me intentionally. But after almost every interaction with her, I was left with an "ache" inside the pit of my stomach. So instead of telling you how this relationship turned out, let me tell you through this antidotal story . . .

I can remember the first time I had an encounter with pepperoni pizza. It was love at first sight. It looked so good!

Then, I fell in love with the smell of pepperoni pizza. It smelled so wonderful!

Then I tasted pepperoni pizza. I fell in love with how it tasted.

I wanted to eat pepperoni pizza every day for the rest of my life.

However, the next morning, I woke up with a stomachache from eating pepperoni pizza.

So did I change my mind about pepperoni pizza? No!

I had fallen in love with pepperoni pizza. I was in love. And to this day, I still love eating pepperoni pizza very much and I always will. However, I FINALLY realized that whenever I ate pepperoni pizza, I could ALWAYS expect a stomachache the next morning.

Young man, you've fallen in love. This is a wonderful thing.

- ✓ Grow in your love.
- ✓ Nurture your love.
- ✓ Feed your love.

But when it comes down to whom you will marry and spend the rest of your life with, marry someone who doesn't give you a stomachache.

What am I going to do when—it's OVER?

I don't know of more hurtful words than— "It's over!"

- You've been laid off from work.
- You've just buried a parent or best friend.
- You've just been "ejected" by a girlfriend.

What does "It's over" mean?"

- It is finished!
- The end of the story!
- There is no hope whatsoever!

Therefore:

- You won't be getting your old job back.
- You can't resurrect the dead.
- Your girlfriend has made up her mind.

So what are you going to do about it? Unfortunately

- Some people end their lives.

- Some people fall apart emotionally.
- Some people quit and give up.

"Mike, so what's the answer?"

The answer is you need—HELP!

Who can HELP me deal with my Broken Heart and other Painful Emotions?

I'm a very positive guy, so let me give it to you straight. In the dating and courting process that precedes marriage. I am POSITIVE you will experience a broken heart and other painful emotions.

What exactly is a "broken heart?"

- ✓ A broken heart is an emotional reaction to a failed relationship.
- ✓ A broken heart is an emotional reaction to an unfulfilled expectation.
- ✓ A broken heart is an emotional reaction to the death of a dream, a loved one, or something of great importance.

Notice the common thread—emotional reaction.

Let's take a closer look:

- 1) **Failed relationship.** Without a doubt, this is the number one reason for a broken heart. For example,

you fall for a young lady. You reach out and love her in every way possible. But for whatever reason, she doesn't respond and doesn't love you back. Or she does love you back, but the relationship doesn't work out, and you have to split up. This hurts!

- 2) **Unfulfilled expectation.** Whenever you expect another person to perform in a certain way and they don't perform, you are disappointed. For example, if you take your suit to the drycleaners and expect it to be ready by Saturday and it's not. You're mad. You're disappointed. But that type of unfulfilled expectation doesn't lead to a broken heart. Does it? The unmet expectation that leads to a broken heart is when a person you love does not or will not perform to your expectations.
- 3) **Death of a dream, something of great importance or a loved one.** To dream is to be human. Dreams are good. Dreams are necessary. But if a dream turns into a nightmare. For example, your fiancé breaks it off with you and then starts dating your best friend. You will experience a broken heart. Also, when you lose something of great importance like a business or someone you love dies unexpectedly, you will also experience a broken heart.

When you have a broken heart . . .

- ✓ You can't eat.
- ✓ You can't sleep
- ✓ You can't think straight.
- ✓ You're sad.
- ✓ You hurt all over.
- ✓ You're angry.

These are all normal “healthy” human reactions.

However, you may experience “unhealthy” reactions.

This includes:

- The inability to resume normal activities.
- Severe mood struggles
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Thoughts of revenge

Either way-you WILL need HELP . . .

- ✓ To heal.
- ✓ To forgive.
- ✓ To move on.

People who can and are willing to help you include:

- ✓ Your parents
- ✓ Your pastor
- ✓ Your mentor
- ✓ A school counselor or school physiologist
- ✓ A professional counselor
- ✓ A psychiatrist

Will healing from a broken heart be easy?
NO, it will not. It will be hard.

Will healing from a broken heart be an overnight process?
NO, it will not. It will take time.

Will you need to seek help to heal from a broken heart?

YES!

During my dating and courting years, I experienced rejection, a broken heart, and painful emotions.

- Rivals hurt me.
- Mistakes hurt me.
- Women hurt me.

But instead of getting HELP right away, I stuffed the pain deep inside of me. I never acknowledged the pain, did anything about it. Consequently, I entered my marriage relationship with unresolved pain still inside me. It took God's providential timing, which motivated me to author this book to finally seek HELP.

As I write this chapter, I am finally releasing the pain to God and getting it all out of me. I am dealing with memories that were long forgotten, and contacting people as God leads to resolve our relationships. And I KNOW there is light at the end of the tunnel. Therefore, I can speak with great authority. Get HELP right away after you've experienced a broken heart. For me:

HELP included talking to a trusted friend and mentor.

HELP included owning up to my feelings.

HELP included talking to a professional psychiatrist and counselor.

HELP included crying and releasing the pain that was bottled up inside of me.

HELP included letting Michelle read the manuscript and talking about it.

HELP included receiving and appropriating the love of God through His Son, The Lord Jesus Christ.
HELP included reading God's Word.

HELP included being reminded that God knows exactly how I feel. After all, the "first" man and woman, Adam and Eve, broke God's heart. But God did something to mend and fix that relationship. His Word HELPED me, and I know it will HELP you, too.

What is Spiritual Leadership?

My spiritual journey began at the age of nineteen at a church in Dallas. I was baptized at this church, I was married there, and I also taught Sunday school and served as a deacon. I loved everything to do with this church except one thing—legalism.

I define legalism as a "would-ah," "could-ah," "should-ah," mentality. Instead of hearing about grace and the freedom we have in Christ to live and to be led by the Holy Spirit. I heard the message of "You have to do this, and you have to do that. Otherwise, you're not growing and maturing disciple of Jesus Christ."

By the way, if you ever hear this or similar message, "You must read your Bible every single day, and you must pray every single day. You also must have a 'Family-Time' where

your entire family gathers to hear and study God’s Word. You must...you must...” Go up to that person and say, “Oh really, so how’s that working out for you?”

I didn’t know I was under the bondage of legalism until I moved to another church. Looking back, I wish I had known sooner because, in many ways, legalism stifled me and my walk with Christ.

Now that you better understand my spiritual background, you’ll feel sympathy for me because I was also indoctrinated with the rules for dating. “Men, you are the spiritual leader. Therefore you must have a short Bible study and prayer time with your dates.”

Getting into the Word and communing with God with a date sounds great in theory, but it never worked out for me or anyone else I knew.

So when I told my date, we are going to have a short time dedicated to reading the Word and to pray. I came off looking like a “spiritual jerk.” I might as well have had a sign on my forehead that read “Joe Bible Thumper.”

Looking back, I am also confident that my reputation for being a spiritual jerk probably turned off women I might have been able to date.

Another offshoot of the “spirit of legalism” was my constant habit of giving the women in my life recordings to listen to and books to read. Frankly, I not only felt justified in giving them “spiritual things” to do. I was confident that I would score points and win their hearts. Boy, was I wrong!

I was a good-hearted spiritual jerk. But I was a spiritual jerk never-the-less.

Why?

The only thing a young teenage woman wants to do is to “go out” and have some fun. The last thing they want is to be lectured about what they should and shouldn’t be doing.

So how does a young man who is dating and courting lead their dates in spiritual things? For sure, it’s not forcing your date to read the Bible and to pray with you. Nor is it forcing them to listen to a recording or reading a book.

Young men! I am writing this to save you the heartache of being labeled a “spiritual jerk” and being rejected by the women you would like to date.

Here’s what I discovered...

Go out on your date and have lots of fun. Surprise your date with fun things to do. Laugh together. Cry together. Eat together. Talk together. It is in your talks that you will discover the spiritual needs of your date. For example, in a moment of vulnerability, your date tells you that she is very angry with her best friend because her best friend lied to her.

As she begins to reveal her feelings, you discover that your date doesn’t know how to handle her anger. You surmise that she is spiritually immature regarding anger.

This is good!

This is your opportunity to step up and be the spiritual leader God has called you to be.

Word of caution!

Avoid the temptation to pull out your Bible (in front of your date) to discover what God has to say about the subject of anger. And don't go out and buy the book, “Ten Ways to Overcome Anger” to give to her on your next date.

“Why not, Mike? After all, I've just discerned that my date is spiritually immature regarding how to handle anger.”

That may be, but what did I say earlier? All your date wants to do is to go out and have fun!

“But what about my date's issue with anger. How do I lead her spiritually?”

You lead by being a “self-feeder” of God's Word and pray the woman in your life becomes a “self-feeder” one day, too. You lead by going home and reading all there is to know in the Bible regarding anger.

To that, you also begin studying subjects that are directly related to anger, such as forgiveness, grace, and mercy. Then go out and buy a few good books on the subject(s). Also, ask your Pastor and mentor questions about the subject(s). You get the picture, don't you?

“Got it! Then what?”

Take her out again and have lots of fun.

- ✓ ENJOY life!
- ✓ ENJOY each other's company!
- ✓ ENJOY each other's youthfulness!

Therefore, the next time your date brings up the subject of being angry. You are ready. Aren't you? Say something like this. "I remember reading somewhere in the Bible where God says, "Be angry but don't sin."

But don't overwhelm her with your Biblical knowledge. Also, resist the temptation to quote chapter and verse or throw a book or recordings at her to read.

"So what should I do and say, Mike?"

I can't tell you what you should do or say because that is legalism.

However, let God's Holy Spirit lead you in your response.

Pray in the Spirit and let Him guide you.

You are now well on your way to be a spiritual leader.

Why Must I have nothing to do with a "Maneater?"

In the early 1980s, a popular group, Hall and Oates, penned the following lyrics entitled "Maneater."

She'll only come out at nights
The lean and hungry type
Nothing is new
I've seen her here before
Watching and waiting
Ooh, she's sittin' with you
But her eyes are on the door

So many have paid to see
What you think
You're gettin' for free
The woman is wild
A she-cat tamed
By the purr of a Jaguar
Money's the matter
If you're in it for love
You ain't gonna get too far

Chorus
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
Watch out boy
She'll chew you up
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
She's a maneater

I wouldn't if I were you
I know what she can do
She's deadly man
And she could really rip your world apart
Mind over matter
Ooh, the beauty is there
But a beast is in the heart

Repeat chorus

The woman is wild, whoooa
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
Here she comes
Watch out boy, watch out boy
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
Oh, watch out, watch out

Watch out, watch out
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
(Yeah, yeah) she's a maneater
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
(She's a maneater)
She's watching and waiting, ooh-oh
(Oh-oh, here she comes)
Oh, she's a maneater

"Mike, who is a "Maneater?"

Admittedly, I don't know Hall and Oates's original intent when they wrote "Maneater." Therefore, I am speculating and interpreting the lyrics to form my personal opinion.

As I read the lyrics and heard the song. It is my personal opinion that:

- A "Maneater" could be a prostitute. Someone who has sex in exchange for money.
- A "Maneater" is a wild woman. Someone who is rebellious.
- A "Maneater" is a heartbreaker. Someone who leads men on and then breaks their heart.

Let's take a look!

A "Maneater" could be a prostitute.

Following are the lyrics that lead me to believe that a "Maneater" could be a prostitute.

"So many have paid to see."

"What you think."

"You're gettin' for free."

Young man, the Bible has MUCH to say about prostitutes. There are a thousand reasons why having sex with a prostitute is wrong and why you **MUST RUN AWAY** from prostitutes. These reasons include the genuine possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, guilt, and shame.

However, the most compelling reason **NOT** to have sex with a prostitute is the realization that the act of sexual intercourse has spiritual implications. In short, a person who has sex with a prostitute “spiritually speaking” is having sex with all of her partners, too. This truth also applies to having sex with—anyone. **Young man don’t go out with a prostitute.**

A “Maneater” is a wild woman.

The following are the lyrics that lead me to believe that a “Maneater” is a wild woman.

“The woman is wild.”

A wild woman does what she wants, when she wants to, and with whomever. A wild woman will often drink, go “clubbing,” and have sex. **Young man don’t go out with a wild woman.**

A “Maneater” is a heartbreaker.

The following are the lyrics that lead me to believe that a “Maneater” is a heartbreaker.

“Watch out boy.”

“She'll chew you up.”

A heartbreaker will have many relationships, one right after the other. And even though some of them might appear to be serious, they all end up the same—in heartbreak for the man. **Young man don’t go out with a heartbreaker.**

Keep in mind that a man can be a “Womaneater.”

- A man can be a prostitute
- A man can be wild.
- A man can be a heartbreaker.

Young man, don’t be a “Womaneater.”

Why do I need a Pastor, Father, and Mentor to help you?

You NEED a Pastor’s help... When I was 21 years old and beginning to date and court. I made an “arrangement” with one of the pastor’s from my church. After the second date or third date, I would “accidentally” run into him at church or a predetermined location. “Pastor, I’m so glad to see you. Oh, this is my friend ...”

After a few minutes of chit chat, I would say, “Pastor, would you excuse me for just a moment. I need to go to the restroom...” So what happened while I was gone, and what questions did he ask? I don’t know, and I never asked my girlfriend. But here is what I do know. My pastor was getting a “read” on my girlfriend. Additionally, I also met the pastor to talk about the women in my life, and he would candidly tell me what he thought of each of my girlfriends.

“Mike, so how do I get a pastor to help me?”

Just ask!

Pastor, I am in the dating and courting phase of my young adult life, and I need your help. Pastor, can we arrange so you can meet the women I am dating? I need your personal and spiritual insights. Pastor, I know that God has placed you in authority over me for my spiritual wellbeing. I WILL listen AND obey.

“Mike, what are some of the benefits of having this type of relationship?”

My pastor and I had many candidate discussions about the women in my life. He was quite direct and to the point. “Mike, she is...I sense this...My spirit is telling me this...”

I can remember one event that changed the course of my entire life. This one moment in time helped me to finally see the light about Michelle, who would soon become my wife.

We were at an all-church retreat, and the pastor and I were riding bikes. Suddenly he stopped his bike, get off, and asked me this question.

“Mike, what do you see?”

“See where?”

“Over there, Mike, what do you see?”

“Pastor, that’s Michelle, and she is reading a book.”

“Mike, come on, what do you see?”

“Pastor, I see Michelle sitting and reading her Bible. What are you saying?”

“Mike, what do you see the other women doing?”

“I don’t see them. The other women are playing...doing something.”

“Mike, that’s right. Michelle had the opportunity to participate in any other activity at this retreat, and instead, she has chosen to sit alone and read her Bible? What is that saying?”

Looking back, did I know that Michelle would one day graduate from Seminary and become a pastor? Of course not! Just because the woman you are dating reads their Bible doesn’t mean she will one day be in a church staff position. But a woman who reads her Bible indicates that she loves The Lord. Doesn’t it?

You see, Michelle was well known but all of the pastors and spiritual leaders in and around our church. She was in the single’s Bible study and participated in most of the activities of our church. She sang and played her cello in the orchestra. She worked. She served. The overwhelming consensus was that Michelle was a Godly woman of character. I am not saying the other women in my life weren’t. It’s just that the pastors gave their total approval of Michelle.

Therefore, I can’t emphasize this point strongly enough. Find yourself a pastor or spiritual leader and follow my example. Do it NOW! The road is strewn with the casualties of love—heartbreak and heartache. If the “read” from your pastor is negative, you can break it off long before your

relationship gets serious. Think about what I am saying! Please!

You NEED the father's help... In addition to a pastor, you will need the help of the daughter's father. The support I am referring to are the words or similar, "I am for you." "I am for you," means you have the father's approval regarding your relationship with his daughter. I am not saying that your relationship will fail if you don't have the father's blessing. Or that the father will never come around and accept you one day. What I am saying is that God has put the father in the place of spiritual leader in the home and that you must do everything possible to receive the father's blessing.

I am of the firm opinion that if the father is not willing to say, "I am for you." It is time to reconsider your intentions. Also, without the father's approval, don't even think about getting married. The father's approval or disapproval serves as a "guidepost" in determining how to proceed with his daughter.

I am also of the firm opinion that you should contact the father of the woman you want to date BEFORE the first date. I know this sounds old fashioned—and it is. However, this gesture shows respect and honor. It also sets the stage for possibly winning his approval. And either way, I am convinced it will bring you blessing and favor. God is well pleased when we respect and honor those who have authority over us.

I have a long-time friend who found himself incarcerated for a couple of years because of choices and circumstances related to his business. Whenever I went to see him, it

required a drive of about one hour each way and more than two or three hours of waiting before I could see my friend.

He tells the story of a young man who wanted to date his daughter. This young man drove over four hours one way, waiting for several more hours more before he asked my friend if he could date his daughter. What would motivate this young man to take such directed action when he could have easily written a letter or gone ahead and dated my friend's daughter anyway?

RESPECT and HONOR!

The young man displayed respect and honor. Didn't he? Most people wouldn't give an incarcerated person the time of day, let alone respect and honor. But this young man did. Good for him. Well done, young man!

How do you begin?

Draw a line in the sand and say, "From this day forward, I will ask the father for permission to date his daughter before the first date. But you ask.

"What if I have already begun dating his daughter?"

Go and ask for his permission to continue. Also, ask for his forgiveness for not coming before the first date. Believe me, after he recovers from his coronary. He will most likely give his approval. But what if he doesn't?

"What if he doesn't give permission to date and/or continue dating his daughter? Worse yet! What if he doesn't give me his blessing to marry his daughter?"

These are all excellent questions, but here is MY bottom-line answer. The father is the head of the home, and he knows what is best when it comes to his daughter. Especially when it comes to matters of love and the heart, his approval or disapproval of you is a "guidepost" for you to consider seriously. Think about it!

How do I know?

In one instance, a young woman I was dating was really into me. We had lots of fun on our dates, and it was clear that she wanted to be with me. However, after meeting me, her father told his daughter to break it off. And she did! Good for her! Was I upset and disappointed? No, I was not. Why? Because we had only known each other for only several dates. Our hearts had not fused. Can you imagine the heartache if we were connected emotionally and been dating six months or one year? It would be devastating for both of us to learn that we didn't have the father's approval.

In another instance, the father of a woman I wanted to date was for me. However, after the first date, his daughter and I looked at each other and said, "This isn't going to work." We both laughed and went our separate ways.

In another instance, I wanted to develop a dating relationship with a young woman. So I went to her father to tell him how I felt about his daughter and my intentions. The father was not for me, so I interpreted this to mean his daughter was not the one for me. How could she be? I am so glad that I talked to her father.

"What do you the moment you learn that the father's daughter is for you?"

The second he says those words or similar, "I am for you." Get down on your knees in front of him and ask that he place his hand on you and pray a prayer of blessing over you. I'm SERIOUS!

"When should you bring the woman you are dating to meet your family?"

My answer is as soon as is humanly possible.

"Why?"

Because your family can also provide their "read" about the women, you are dating. Let your family scope her out. Don't wait until you're serious about bringing your girlfriends over to meet your family. You especially want to know what your grandparents think of your girlfriends.

"Why?"

They have lived life. They just know! Also, do something together as a family. Have dinner, go to a ball game, play a board game altogether at home. The point is to have your girlfriend interact with your family in as many ways as is possible.

You NEED a Mentor's help... I have always had a mentor in my life. A mentor is someone who has been assigned the task of doing all he can to make you successful. As an example, a mentor at work might be assigned the task of making sure you succeed at your job. You need a mentor to help guide you through the dating and courting phase of your life.

"Mike, how do I find a mentor?"

When you've decided on what area of life you want to be successful. Go and find someone who is successful in that same area of life. Remember that a mentor is not your friend. He is not your buddy. He is not a person you hang out with. A mentor's sole purpose is to do whatever is necessary so that you will succeed. Therefore, here is how you approach a prospective mentor.

Mr....my name is Mike Attar, and I know you to be a success at...I want to be a success at..., too. Would you please consider mentoring me? If you agree to be my mentor, I promise to do everything you tell me to do. I promise to complete every assignment that you give me. I promise to show up ON TIME at our predetermined meeting place.

Timing-When do I ask her out?

I hope you've come or will come to the realization that dating is MORE about discovering if the person you are dating is a potential marriage partner then just having fun. Yes, I'm all for having fun on your dates, but I would strongly caution against dating anyone who isn't a potential marriage candidate. That said, when do you ask the woman of your dreams out on a date?

Young man, please ask God's Holy Spirit, who resides in every Christian believer for His answer to the question. "When do I ask her out?" Also, I would ask the woman's father for permission to date his daughter. I would also make sure there are no observable or known "issues" that

would prevent a dating relationship. I provide my list in a subsequent chapter “When do I walk away from ‘Love?’”

Your father, pastor, and mentor comes in. They can help you navigate and anticipate the right “timing” for asking the Christian woman of your dreams out on a date.

How will I know if she’s the One?

Young man, you **MUST** use your head when making the second most significant decision of your life, who are you going to live with—marry.

The **BEST** starting place is to prayerfully make a list of the “must-have” qualities you desire in a Christian wife. This gives you a specific picture in your heart and mind of what you’re looking for. Unfortunately, most people don’t know what they want and consequently wind up with whoever comes their way. How sad!

Thankfully, my Pastor and mentors **FORCED** me to write down exactly what I wanted. Here’s part of my list.

The woman I marry:

1. Must be a Christian who is growing in her faith and is growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. Must be known by the pastors and spiritual leaders in her church. They must approve of her.
3. Must be a musician and proficient in her instrument. Must love music and going to concerts. Should at least like classical music.

4. Must be someone who works at something.
5. Must be educated. Loves to read and to study.
6. Must be physically attractive and have nice feet.
7. Must be from a family that, at a minimum, likes me. Her father must be "for me." That means he has said I could date and court his daughter.
8. Must be someone who has a countenance that comes from inner beauty.
9. Must be a woman who is led by The Holy Spirit.
10. Must be a woman who is encouraging and elevating to me. Not a woman who hurts me.

Young man, one of the reasons it was easy to say "NO" to the advances of some woman was my list. And though very painful but necessary, I was able to say "goodbye" to women who I came to find out didn't meet the criteria on my list.

Finally, it shouldn't surprise you when I say that Michelle is a 10 out of 10 and MORE!

"Mike, how is it that you were able to court, win, marry, and love Michelle?"

God's grace is always my answer to that and any similar question. However, I will repeat myself. The dating and courting process is MORE about becoming than it is about finding. Women kept saying, "Mike, you're too serious." I would always reply, "Choosing who to marry is a serious business."

How do I deal with Rejection?

Young man, are you feeling rejected, or have you been ejected? There is a BIG difference between rejection and ejection.

Rejection means there is still a chance.

- a. Think of rejection as, "I need more information."
- b. Think of rejection as, "Love in disguise."
- c. Think of rejection as, "You're too intense for me. Back off and come back later."

On the other hand:

Ejection means you're no longer in the game. It's over!

Certainly, you've watched a baseball manager curse out the umpire because of a bad call and then proceeds to kick dust on the umpire's clothes. You know what going to happen next, don't you? The umpire is going to throw the manager out of the game. "You're out!"

- a. Ejection means, "Don't call me again."
- b. Ejection means, "You better not call me again."
- c. Ejection means, "If you do call me again, you're going to hear from my father."

Now that you know the difference between rejection and ejection let's also agree that both are painful.

So whether you are:

- Rejected from a job opportunity.
- Rejected from a spot on the team.
- Rejected by a woman.

Rejection hurts!

But you haven't been ejected. Have you?

Therefore you can always:

- Reapply for that job after you get more experience.
- Try out for the team next year after becoming better trained.
- Find another reason to call that special someone.

Young, man, did you catch this new change in thinking?

Being rejected isn't the end of the world. Being rejected OPENS up a whole new world.

I began a friendship with a young Christian woman whom I spoke about earlier in this book when I was nineteen years old. As a new Christian, I was spiritually ignorant about His Word, His church, His ways, and most certainly about how to date and court a Christian woman. So when I first began calling her. She said to me, "Mike, you're not a spiritual leader. You're not this, and you're not that." And she was RIGHT!

If I was even to have a chance at dating her or ANY Christian woman, I would have to change, grow, and mature in every area of my life. And that's what I chose to do. I used the pain of rejection as a motivational tool. It forced me to read many books, listen to hundreds of recordings, and ask

my Pastors and mentors a ton of questions. It also motivated me to open up my Bible and begin learning how to read and study it.

Then when I made ONE positive change in my life, I called her again. But NOW I had something to talk about. “Hey, I’ve been reading this book, or I’ve listened to this recording.”

And guess what? She and I would talk on the phone, debating what I was learning. We talked about so many different ideas, i.e., choices, spiritual leadership, goals, etc. We almost never talked about how her day was going or what was going on in her life (in retrospect, I should have).

Anyhow, she and I didn’t agree on everything, and I can recall some very heated debates. And over a period of almost five years, we had many conversations. I also sent her many letters about what I was learning and applying to my life.

“Mike, please clarify the paradigm shift?”

I chose to see her rejection as “love in disguise.” I wanted to be accepted, so I changed, grew, and matured. Thankfully, I was never ejected (goodbye, don’t call again). BIG difference!

“Mike, she sounds like a very special woman. Did you ever date her?”

Yes, she was, but I didn’t date her.

“Mike, so what you’re telling me is that you lost. Is that right?”

Excellent question!

Yes, I never dated her. But I didn't lose.

Young man, if winning (dating or marrying), the girl is your only goal, then you're missing the bigger picture of the dating and courting process. It's more about BECOMING—than just winning the girl.

As far as, why bother?

When I met Michelle, I was well on my way, "spiritually" speaking. My spiritual walk was one of the first things Michelle noticed about me and what attracted her to me. So yes, I am thankful that rejection forced me to change, grow, and mature. Michelle is, too!

When do I walk away from "Love?"

Young man, to love and be in love with a Christian woman, is one of God's magnificent blessings. But as I've already said, "Just because you love someone doesn't mean you can, should or can date and/or marry that person."

"Mike, I get that! So tell me how I will know when to 'move on?'"

That's an excellent question!

My Pastors and Mentors FORCED me to write out reasons why I couldn't date, or continue dating a woman. One of them paraphrased lyrics from a popular country song to emphasize his point, "You have to know when to hold your cards, and you have to know when to fold them."

“What does that mean?”

It means without a road map for walking away from “love,” a young man may get stuck and not know when it’s time to find another Christian woman to love. That’s not to say you don’t have the choice or the option to wait for the person you love to “come around.” But then again, maybe she will not. That’s why it’s imperative to have guild lines that will help you to make the hard choice—to move on.

Here is part of the list I developed when I was about 22 years old. It isn’t the complete list. However, it should serve to demonstrate that you need to set up your inventory or “guild lines” for walking away from “love.” Your father, Pastor, or mentor can help you.

I, Mike Attar, will walk away from “love” and will not date or continue dating (or marry) any woman if:

- She isn’t a Christian.
- She isn’t interested in growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- She isn’t engaged in a local Bible-believing church.
- She isn’t a “Spirit-led” Christian.
- She and I don’t have common interests.
- She is known to have a habit of being wild and hanging out with wild friends.
- She considers herself to be “free-spirited.”
- She has a family who doesn’t like me.
- She doesn’t have a LOVE for the Nation of Israel and Jewish people.
- She is known to enjoy and have a habit of “clubbing.”

- She is known to drink alcohol excessively.
- She has a reputation for being sexually active.
- She is known to use drugs.
- She has a reputation for being a heart breaker.
- She is beautiful on the outside but has nothing of real substance on the inside.
- She is seriously involved with or has deep feelings for someone else.
- She doesn't have the approval of my Pastor and mentor.
- She is always hurting me.
- She isn't a musician and/or musically inclined.
- She has a father who is not for me."
- She doesn't have the approval of my Pastor, mentor, and spiritual leaders.

"Mike, please discuss several of these."

I wouldn't date or marry a woman if she weren't a Christian.

"Mike, why wouldn't you?"

Because I've read the Bible and it says, "Don't be unevenly yoked with an unbeliever."

"But Christians date unbelievers. Why?"

That's right! Many young Christians (who have read the same passage and heard the same sermons) go ahead and date and/or marry an unbeliever?

Are they stupid?

Are they ignorant?

Do they lack formal education?

Not at all!

I KNOW many smart, intelligent, and educated Christians who date and/or marry unbelievers.

“So why do they?”

They are NOT wise!

Wisdom isn’t just reading and knowing what the Bible says. Even the devil knows what the Bible says.

Wisdom is reading what the Bible says, believing it, and then acting on it.

“Mike, what if I don’t believe what the Bible says?”

Young man, it’s perfectly okay not to believe—initially. Therefore, pray, “Lord, help my unbelief! But in the meantime, I am going to do what the Bible says to do—by faith. I am going to act according to how the Bible says to act—even if my heart, my emotions, and my intellect are telling me, not too.”

“Mike, give me another example.”

I wouldn’t date a woman if she had a reputation for being sexually active.

“Why not, Mike?”

Let me add to what I already said regarding sex. A Christian woman who is sexually active isn’t a “Spirit-led” Christian. If she were, she wouldn’t be having sex and sexual

intercourse outside of marriage. I have observed that many women (including Christian women) use sex to get what they want, i.e., a baby, a relationship, or a husband. The problem for the man is that he is placed in a position he never expected to be in and/or is not ready for. Any way you slice it—it’s bad news!

Young man, you want a Godly Christian woman. Therefore she is going to have a reputation for being a prude and “not putting out.” This is good!

I would also like to point out that many well-intentioned Christians have failed in the sex area. So again, we need to circle back to the reality that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Therefore, if you have sinned sexually, ask God for His forgiveness and then make a plan to protect yourself, so it doesn’t happen again. But please DON’T trample on the grace of God by continuing to sin over and over again. Yes, He will forgive you, but you MUST change your mind. That’s what true repentance is all about.

Also, if a woman had a sorted past but had repented and was genuinely walking in step with the Lord, it doesn’t matter to me what she did and who she did it with. That is “love in action.” However, don’t date someone in the hopes that you can “fix” their sorted past or their morality. It can’t be done! Better to ask God to accomplish His work in that person’s life well before you date that person.

“Please give me another explanation, Mike.”

I wouldn’t date a woman if she was seriously involved with or had deep feelings for someone else.

“Why not, ‘All’s fair in love and war’-right?”

If a woman I was interested in were seriously involved, I wouldn’t ask her out for a date. And if I knew she had deep feelings for someone else, I wouldn’t ask her out either. To me, it just wasn’t right!

As far as “All’s fair in love in war.” That’s a lie.

Young man, if you genuinely love a woman, you will do what is in her best interests AND the best interests of her boyfriends—your rivals. Anyhow, are you a bear, moose, or dogfighting for mating privileges? No! To fight, lie, steal, misrepresent, etc. about your rivals so you can win the woman is plain wrong. It shows that you don’t love the woman you are fighting over.

“But what if she doesn’t come around and I never get my chance even to date her? Then, I’ve lost, Mike.”

That’s a great question that I will address in greater detail in an upcoming chapter. But NO! If you go about dating and courting God’s way—you WILL NOT lose!

“Mike, tell me about a ‘Free-Spirit.’ Some so many people claim they are one?”

I wouldn’t date any woman who considered herself to be “Free-Spirited” or a “Free-Spirit.

“Mike, why not?”

To help you better understand my dislike for the term “Free-Spirit.” I have to take you back in time. One of my cousins said she was a “Free-Spirit.” She dropped out of school, moved to another state, literally lived on the street, and made a meager living picking apples. There were other “Free-Spirited” issues and choices she made in her life, too. They were, for the most part, all terrible choices. That’s why the term “Free-Spirit” resonates so many bad feelings in me whenever I hear it. But as my cousin was not a Christian, she was using the correct term (“Free-Spirit”) to describe herself. However, it upset me whenever I heard a Christian use the term “Free-Spirit” to describe themselves.

“But why, Mike?”

It’s incongruent for a Christian to be both a “Free-Spirit” and “Spirit-led.”

Let’s take a look.

A “Free-Spirit” or “Free-Spirited” person desires:

- To live life according to their own terms.
- To do what they want, whenever they want, and with whomever they want.

In contrast, a “Spirit-led” Christian desires:

- To walk step by step, moment by moment, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- To be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Here’s another way to look at it.

Non-Christians naturally go their own way and do their own thing. They are “free-spirited” or a “free-spirit” by “default,” whether they call themselves that or not.

However, Christians by “default” have The Holy Spirit to guide and direct them. Christians are free to choose to listen AND obey—or not. Therefore, if a Christian wants to be a “Free-Spirit.” They are in effect, saying, “I’m not going to listen, obey, and be guided by The Holy Spirit.”

“How do I tell the difference, Mike?”

Young man, if a Christian woman in your life claims to be a “Free-Spirit” probe to see precisely what she means by that. Maybe she is trying to communicate another thought. That’s always possible. However, if she is living a “Free-Spirited” lifestyle, don’t date or continue dating her. Instead, pray that she will come to the end of herself and realize that the only spirit that can guide a Christian is The Holy Spirit. Until then, continue to love her as a very good friend.

“Mike, please give me another example?”

I wouldn’t date a woman if she wasn’t a musician and/or musically inclined.

My previous examples are validated under the light of Scripture. However, the following is a “personal” example. The reason I wouldn’t date or marry any woman unless she was a musician/and/or musically inclined is that music is so vital to me. I had the privilege of formal music education and training. I also played my trumpet in the church orchestra and worship band for over 25 years.

Also, I’ve had the privilege of being on stage playing in the worship band as Michelle sang on the worship team for many years. Michelle also plays the cello (and piano), and we served together for many years in the church orchestra on Sunday mornings and in many orchestra productions.

One of the more memorable moments was when Michelle sang with the Dallas Chorus for three years. The Dallas Chorus is a full orchestral chorus that sings along with the Dallas Symphony. I had the opportunity to watch her sing with the Dallas Chorus many times, including at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Michelle and I work well together because we have common interests. One of them is music!

“Mike, give me two more examples.”

I wouldn’t date a woman if she weren’t interested in growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I’m not going to spend a lot of time explaining what a disciple is because I address it in an upcoming chapter. But in summary, a disciple is a “student-learner.” And the reason why I wouldn’t date a woman unless she was as “student-learner” is that I am a “student-learner,” too. I enjoy reading my Bible and studying it. I also like to read books and enriching my life with learning.

I can’t tell you how many women (men, too) I knew who weren’t the least bit interested in the Bible. Sure, they went to church on Sunday and carried a Bible, but there was nothing beyond that.

So it shouldn't surprise you that Michelle is a disciple of Jesus Christ. Since I've known her, she has always been a “student-learner” and one of the many reasons why she went to Seminary and earned a master's degree. Michelle has always been interested in learning “new” things.

“Mike, why wouldn't you continue dating (or marrying) a woman if she didn't have the approval of your Pastor, mentor, and spiritual leaders?”

My Pastor, mentor, and spiritual leaders have been placed in a position of authority over me—for my protection. Why wouldn't I WANT to have their approval? And if my or her Pastor won't perform the marriage ceremony, shouldn't that be a BIG red flag to wait and reconsider?

I know couples that either never got their Pastor to “okay” their upcoming marriage. Or they got a “thumbs-down” from the Pastor and went ahead and got married anyway.

How sad!
How foolish!
How stupid and unwise!

Some of them are now divorced. Thankfully, our church and many churches like ours will not marry a couple unless they have had premarital counseling.

Young man, I would not be married to Michelle had it not been for my Pastor, mentor, and spiritual leaders. They HELPED me throughout the entire dating and courting process. Young man, you NEED them!

In conclusion, walking away from “love” is painful and difficult. I know! I’ve been there! However, by having a list similar to mine, you’ll KNOW when “love” isn’t going to work and when you MUST walk away. It won’t make the process less painful—just more manageable.

What about us, “Good Guys?”

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Good guys always finish last?”

“Mike, what does that mean?”

Young man, it means that UNTIL you’ve reached, your early to mid-twenties. “Good guys always finish last.”

The reason why “good guys finish last” in their teenage years is that many young women are drawn to “bad boys.” Bad boys are cooler, smoother, worldly, suave, and debonair. They usually drive better cars, have more money, exude more confidence, and appear to be more gifted. They have it ALL going for them—on the OUTSIDE. But here’s but happens if YOU press-on and continue to:

- ✓ Serve, grow, and mature as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Learn, mature, and develop in high school, college, and singles class at your church.
- ✓ Remain steadfast and resilient in your core values.
- ✓ Honor, respect, and obey parents, teachers, pastors, mentors, government, and laws.

- ✓ Stay in school, decide on a vocation, and prepare by attending college or vocational school.

Somewhere in the early to mid-twenties, almost all the women who were drawn to “bad boys” wake up from their “horrible dream.” And guess what happens? These young women finally realize that their “bad boy” boyfriends—are bad. And guess what they want, now.

They want a—MAN.

They want a— GODLY MAN.

They want—YOU!

- ✓ A man of integrity. Someone who tells the truth and doesn’t lie.
- ✓ A man who will be a nurturing father.
- ✓ A man who works and will be a good provider with a good career and a financial future.
- ✓ A man who is solid in his values and moral convictions.
- ✓ A man who is well respected in and around God’s house-the local church.
- ✓ A man who can rightly divide the Word of God and mentor others.
- ✓ A man who knows how to have fun on their dates
- ✓ A man who knows how to shut up and just listen.
- ✓ A man who is true spiritual leader.
- ✓ A man that can hold their girlfriend just for the sake of holding them and isn’t going to “try anything.”
- ✓ A man who will keep secrets—secret.
- ✓ A man who knows how to romance and be romantic without the expectation of anything in return.

- ✓ A man who isn't afraid to express his true feelings and emotions.
- ✓ A man who loves babies and children.
- ✓ A man who respects and honors his elders.
- ✓ A man who loves and treats his mother and grandmother with loving reverence.
- ✓ A man who will admit his sins, issues, hang-ups, and is getting help to deal with them.
- ✓ A man who is willing to protect "his own" even to the death.

You're getting the picture aren't you?

In the END—good guys—finish FIRST!

Section Two

Wise Insights

Mike begins this second section with a treatise about Heaven and Hell. Mike wants to make sure that his young readers are Christians.

Following that are wise insights, Mike discovered as he changed, grew and matured, through his dating and courting years—and beyond.

Conclusive "Pictures" that Heaven and Hell are Real Places.

I authored this book to provide wisdom for young men in their pursuit of courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman. So are you are Christian? After all, it is unlikely and (STUPID) for a Christian woman to date or marry a non-Christian. Therefore, are you a believer in Jesus Christ? Have you trusted Jesus and Jesus alone for your Salvation? Have you believed that Jesus Christ died as a substitute for your sins rose from the dad on the third day? If not or if you are not sure, then consider the following . . .

There WILL come a day when you are lying on a metal gurney with a bedsheet over your dead body. Your feet will be sticking out from the bedsheet. And on your big toe, someone will have tied a "toe tag" on which is printed your name and physical description.

On that day, your loved ones will have one of two choices to make. "Should we put your body in a casket and bury you six feet in the ground? Or should we put your body in a crematorium and incinerate your body at 3500 degrees, until all that is left of you is an urn full of ashes?"

What I've just described is an absolute fact. It is irrefutable, and it will happen to EVERYONE. You will die, and you will either be buried or incinerated.

"Mike, this will never happen to me anytime soon. I'm still very young."

Really and by what authority do you know you won't be dead by sunrise tomorrow morning?”

When I was in my 20's and 30's, I wasn't concerned or thinking about the possibility of dying. However, in my 40's some of my friends had already died, including my grandparents and many of my friend's parents. I just turned 50 and will more than likely face the death of my parents and Michelle's parents before I reach my 60th birthday. By 60, I am told, the reality of death will be well within my grasp, and by 70, I am told I will be living every day as if it were my last.

“Mike, so what's the point?”

The point is that you and I have a soul, and your soul will leave your body the microsecond your body dies.

“Mike, so what will happen to my soul?”

Your soul will either go to Heaven to live with God and all who know Him for eternity, or it will go to Hell to be with the 'evil one' and all unbelievers for eternity as well. It's your choice to make.

“Look, Mike, I believe what you've said, 'I am going to die.' I also know that my body will either be buried or cremated. I have no problem with that. But Heaven and Hell! Come on? There is absolutely no proof that either exists. I've heard sermons about how Heaven is a place where the streets are lined with gold behind the backdrop of a crystal sea. And Peter is standing at the pearly gates ushering everyone in. But I'm not buying it. I've also heard that Hell is where all the bad people go, it's scorching, and a devil of some kind is in charge. It's all a

fairytale! Mike, show me a definitive picture, and I might reconsider hearing more.”

Picture this...

In my left hand is a picture of the Grand Cayman Islands. Notice the glossy white sand beach, the bikini-clad young women, and people lying under cabana’s consuming alcoholic drinks with little yellow umbrellas in them. You’ve seen a picture of the Grand Cayman’s on television or movies such as “The Firm.” If not, you know the Grand Cayman’s exists. Why? You can get on the Internet and see “pictures” from a travel brochure, or you can see pictures from someone’s vacation trip to the Grand Cayman’s on Facebook. And if you still don’t believe that the Grand Cayman’s is a real place. You can always buy a plane ticket and see for your self-firsthand. Isn’t that right?

Now picture this...

In my right hand is a picture of the “South Bronx,” which is located in New York City. Notice the burned-out buildings, the filth covering the streets, and the wretchedness of poverty and decay. Again, you’ve probably heard of the South Bronx, and certainly, you’ve seen the South Bronx depicted in movies. But if you haven’t, you can most certainly buy a plane ticket to NYC and take a short cab ride and see the South Bronx for yourself. You’ve still with me. Aren’t you?

Now let’s suppose that:

- The Grand Cayman Islands represents Heaven.
- The South Bronx represents Hell.

Young man, you WOULD believe in the existence of Heaven and Hell if you could see what?

“Mike, I would believe in Heaven and Hell if I could see a real ‘picture.’ After all, I know the Grand Cayman’s and the South Bronx exists because someone has gone there and taken a picture.”

Jesus . . .

Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2-3

Jesus is saying.

- Heaven—is a place.
- Jesus is preparing a place just for you—in Heaven.
- Jesus will return to take you to Heaven—to be with Him.

Jesus goes on to say that He is “leaving behind” . . .

- “The Comforter” or
- “The Holy Spirit” or
- “The Earnest”

“The Comforter,” or “The Holy Spirit” or “The Earnest,” is the; “down payment,” or “deposit” or “guarantee” that Jesus WILL return and take all that know Him to Heaven.

Picture of down payment, deposit or earnest . . .

Suppose you are driving with your father to the sporting goods store one Saturday morning to buy some ammunition for a hunting trip. Just a few blocks from the store is sign on a very busy corner that reads, "Corner Lot for Sale." Your father suddenly gets all excited because this lot is what he needs to build a gas station-convenience store. He pulls the car over and calls the number on the sign and asks the agent to meet him at the lot in one hour. Both of you go to the sporting goods store, purchase your ammo, and then go to meet the real estate agent.

Your father tells the agent to write up the contract.

"How will you be paying for the property?" The agent asks.

"With a Bank Check first thing on Monday morning."

Then the agent responds.

"Wonderful! But I need a "down payment" a "deposit." I need an "earnest" that proves to me you are sincere and that you will come back on Monday morning to pay for this transaction."

Then your father replies. "I don't have my checkbook with me, but I am sincere. I an earnest, which guarantees I will be back on Monday morning with all of the money."

The agent says, "What is your earnest?" Your father takes off his watch and says. "Here is my gold Rolex watch. It is worth \$30,000. Will you accept this as my down payment or earnest? Will you accept this as proof that I will be back here on Monday to close this deal?" "Why, of course. A \$30,000 gold Rolex watch is a sign of your sincerity. It is an acceptable down payment, deposit, and earnest that you will

be back here on Monday morning with all of the rest of the funds.”

Putting all the pictures together . . .

- Jesus has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for those who know Him.
- Jesus didn’t leave a \$30,000 gold Rolex watch as a down payment, deposit, or earnest of His sincerity.
- Instead, He has left a person—the Person of “The Holy Spirit,” or “The Comforter,” or “The Earnest” as a down payment, deposit, or earnest that He will return.

I KNOW that Heaven is a REAL place is because whenever I see a person who names the name of Jesus Christ—a Christian, displaying the “FRUITS” of “The Comforter,” or “The Holy Spirit” or “The Earnest.” I see a **LIVING PICTURE** that Heaven exists.

Galatians 5: 22 says that “The fruit of the Spirit is . . .

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience,
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control

I KNOW that Heaven exists because the Person of “The Comforter,” or “The Holy Spirit,” or “The Earnest” exists. He is the down payment, deposit, or earnest of better things to come - HEAVEN.

“Okay, Mike, I SEE the picture of Heaven. But what is the picture of Hell? “

Young man, the picture that Hell exists is a brand-new baby.

“Mike, you have got to be kidding me. How is it that a brand-new baby is a picture of Hell?”

EVERY person who is born is born into sin. Just as soon as a baby is walking and talking they will begin to display the “FRUITS” of sin . . .

But if you still don’t believe me, then flip on the news channel. There you will see “pictures” about what the Bible calls “the enemy” or “evil one.” The enemy comes to:

- Kill
- Steal
- Destroy

Therefore, whenever you see or hear anything to do with killing, stealing, and destroying, this is the “PICTURE” that Hell is a real place.

And if you still don’t believe that what I have just said is true. Stand in the mirror and ask yourself these questions.

- Did I?
- Have I?
- Do I?

Want to be involved with . . .

- Sexual Immorality
- Impurity
- Debauchery
- Idolatry
- Witchcraft
- Hatred
- Discord
- Jealousy
- Fits of Rage
- Self-Ambition
- Dissensions
- Factions
- Envy
- Drunkenness
- Orgies

There is only one answer, isn't there?

EVERYONE has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Every person who is born into this fallen world is **AUTOMATICALLY** going to go to Hell. They don't need to do anything but be human.

However, God, in His loving and gracious favor, has provided a way for **SOME** not to go to Hell.

- God has provided a way of escape.
- God has provided a substitute to take your place.

- God has provided the Person of His Son Jesus Christ to BRIDGE the gap between Heaven and Hell.

ALL that is required is for YOU to BELIEVE in faith.

Jesus, I believe that you died as a substitute for my sins and that you rose from the dead on the third day.

If you have believed . . .

- You are NOW a part of God's Kingdom.
- You are NOW absolutely, positively going to Heaven.
- You are NOW a brand-new Christian—CONGRATULATIONS!!!

To do **IMMEDIATELY**.

- Do you have a Bible? If not, get one right away!
- Do you have a church home? If not, find one right away!
- Do you have another Christian you can tell about your conversation?

If not, find a Bible church, walk in and tell the Pastor's secretary you a new believer. She'll find a Pastor for you to talk to . . .

A pig can NOT be transformed.

ALL sin (including all addictions) have their roots in the "Fruit" of the Flesh. Galatians Chapter Five lists "sin" in this order:

- Sexual Immorality
- Impurity
- Debauchery
- Idolatry
- Witchcraft
- Hatred
- Discord
- Jealousy
- Fits of Rage
- Self-Ambition
- Dissensions
- Factions
- Envy
- Drunkenness
- Orgies

A pig is a pig is a pig. You can clean him up, put a beautiful bow around his neck, and a little perfume on its head. But the second you put him on the ground, he WILL ALWAYS run to the pigpen. He will jump into the mud and roll around in it until he is dirty again.

It's interesting to me that the fruit of the flesh begins with sexual immorality (sexual sin) and ends with orgies (sexual

sin). Maybe it's to remind us of the lure, temptation, and addictive nature of illicit sexual sin (mental images and actual physical acts) encapsulates every aspect of modern life. And it's the NUMBER ONE killer of marriages.

Pornography is the most prevalent addiction common to young men and women. Nevertheless, every known addiction has its roots in the "flesh."

Young man, if you have an addiction and you manage to hide it from your father, Pastor, and mentor. You still haven't hidden it from your heavenly Father. Have you? Anyhow, what does that say about you? If you LIE and win the heart and hand of a Christian woman WITHOUT admitting your addictions (if you have any) and getting HELP!

Young man, your girlfriend, fiancé or wife is going to find out one way or the other eventually. BETTER to resolve your addictions NOW!

Every person, before placing their faith in Jesus Christ, has NO CHOICE but to SIN. It's part of his or her HUMAN nature. No matter how hard you try to be a good person, you will eventually revert to the sinful nature.

However...

Every Person, after placing their faith in Jesus Christ, has a CHOICE-to Sin or Not to Sin. It's part of his or her DIVINE nature.

You can choose this

“Fruit of the Flesh”

- Sexual Immorality
- Impurity
- Debauchery
- Idolatry
- Witchcraft
- Hatred
- Discord
- Jealousy
- Fits of Rage
- Self-Ambition
- Dissensions
- Factions
- Envy
- Drunkenness
- Orgies

Or can choose this

“Fruit of the Spirit”

- ❖ Love
- ❖ Joy
- ❖ Peace
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Kindness
- ❖ Goodness
- ❖ Faithfulness
- ❖ Gentleness
- ❖ Self-Control

It’s YOUR Choice to Make

NO ONE can produce the Fruit of the Spirit. It is the byproduct of walking in step with the Holy Spirit.

“What does that mean?”

It means if you will listen to His VOICE and you do exactly what He is telling you to do—in faith. He will provide everything you need to accomplish that step. As you listen and obey, He will divinely manifest the Fruit of the Spirit through you. After you have accomplished that step, He will guide you to the next step and so on.

However, at ANY TIME, you are free NOT to listen and to go your own way. You will then revert to fleshly ways, fleshly thinking, AND fleshly consequences.

Thankfully, you can at ANY TIME repent, turn back, confess your sin and be immediately restored and continue the faith walk. But sin has consequences. And spiritually speaking, that's a good thing! Think of the shepherd who is continuously looking for that one lost sheep. After a few times, the shepherd has NO choice but to BREAK the sheep's leg. Then the sheep will NEVER wander off again.

A mature Christian has come to the place where they CAN hear His voice, AND they WANT to obey. However, it often takes "brokenness" (getting to the end of yourself) for a person to understand this.

Remember that the flesh was crucified on the cross of Jesus Christ. Christians (we) are dead to sin. We have the power not to sin. It's your choice.

The Bigger Picture.

I've said a lot of important things already, and the rest of this book is no exception. However, you need to have a BIGGER picture in mind.

- ❖ You are not just dating to find a marriage partner.
- ❖ You are not just going to get married to have sex and make babies (if you are able, too).

And though you may want to get married, you may find yourself single by choice or by circumstance. Either way, the

bigger picture is that God wants to change and transform you. The bigger picture should be:

- ❖ To align yourself to God through His Word
- ❖ To hear His voice.
- ❖ To obey His voice.

That being said—does the person you want to date, court, and marry help or hinder the above? Therefore if you have the BIGGER picture in mind . . .

- ❖ How important are looks, anymore?
- ❖ How important is family background anymore?
- ❖ How important is “anything” YOU want anymore?

“WOW! The BIGGER picture changes everything. Doesn't it?”

As it should!

Sex and the Lies People Tell.

Young man-following are a few of the lies many people believe about the topic of sex.

“Unless it's sexual intercourse, it isn't sex.” - Not sure who coined this lie up, but I'll bet you a million dollars it had to be a teenage boy. Come on, you already know about what sex is. This isn't a biology or anatomy book. But in case you've been living under a rock. Sex is ANY contact with the mouth, the hands, and eyes on the genitals. And “YES” sex is contact with the eyes, too. It's called lust. LUST IS SEX!

“An extra-marital affair is good. It will help with our marriage.” - There is NOTHING good that comes out of any marital affair. To think otherwise is SICK.

“Living together is okay. It will help us decide if we are compatible and should get married.” - Ha! Let me give it to you straight in case I haven't already. Living together is just another term for FREE SEX! Free sex for the man with absolutely NO commitment on his part. Young man, are you a Christian? Are you serving in His local church? Do you have a Pastor or mentor that you are working with? If you answer yes to any of these questions, how can you suggest such a thing to your girlfriend? Living together is NOT God's will or His best for you.

A Pastor I know recently began premarital counseling with a couple who were living together that attended their church. Living together is common these days, even within the Christian church. However, it was this Pastor's policy to refuse premarital counseling and to refuse to perform the wedding unless the couple immediately found separate living arrangements. The Pastor's position was this, “If you want God's blessing at the altar, best to get to the altar His way.” Thankfully, this couple heeded the Pastor's counsel; they found separate living arrangements and were married several months later.

“Pornography will stimulate our martial sex life.” - What would you tell me if I asked you to take your garbage can filled with garbage, and I asked you to dump it out all over your bed? You would say, “You're crazy. I would never do that.” Exactly!

“Friends with ‘benefits.’” - This is the most recent lie that has crept into mainstream society. Friends with “bennies” (benefits) are nothing more than two people having sex outside the bonds of matrimony. Sexual intercourse is a spiritual act that joins two people together as one. There are NO benefits to having sex outside of marriage—only consequences.

“Swinging, group sex, and orgies are acceptable.” - The “fruit” of the flesh listed in Galatians chapter 5 begins with “sexual immorality” and ends with “orgies.” The only thing that occurs if you engage in such practices is death—spiritual death AND all kinds of sexually transmitted diseases.

“It’ didn’t mean anything.” -Again, we are talking about a man who had sex with a woman and then wants to get back together with his current or former girlfriend. What have I already said about sex? That’s my answer for this lie, too

“Let’s ‘do it’ nobody will ever know.” - Why is it that the newspapers and tabloids always find out and know about extra-marital affairs? After all, did the two parties take off their clothes, hop into bed and say, “Let’s tell the world about what we are about to do?” No! So how does “it” always come out? Because ALL sin and darkness is always uncovered by the light, it’s just a matter of time!

“There are no consequences to having sex. Sex is just sex.” - EVERY single solitary choice you make has consequences. It doesn’t matter whether the choice is sex-

related or not. Anyway, having sex outside of marriage has the most devastating consequences. When God invented sex, He ordained sex to bind two people together as one. That's why breaking up with someone you've had sex with is SO much more painful than if you hadn't had sex. And if a pregnancy occurs, two people who shouldn't be married may be forced to get married. This presents even more problems.

"Pregnancy isn't a problem. We'll just get rid of it." - To begin with, "it" isn't a blub of tissue. "It" is a person. "It" is a human being made in the image of God, the Creator of all. Again, we're delving into a serious issue here. However, if you call yourself a human being, you have an obligation to let that tiny person have a chance at life. Get help! It's out there for the taking.

"I'll respect you in the morning. Or I'll still love you in the morning." - Again, this is another lie made by a young man who isn't ready for any serious relationship. God invented sex. He wants you to have as much sex as you can handle. But His instructions are also crystal clear. Have sex only after you are married and then ONLY with your marriage partner. There are so many reasons why sex is a terrible idea before marriage. They include pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, guilt . . . Will it be hard not to have sex with your girlfriend and fiancé? It sure will! But some things can be done to protect yourself from falling into the trap. But this is best left for your father, pastor, and mentor to discuss and implement.

I know a couple who had their first kiss at the altar on their wedding day. God is not opposed to kissing before you get married. However, it is long, passionate kissing, which

begins the slippery slope to petting, sex, and then to intercourse. Therefore, if you have respect for yourself, your girlfriend, and for God's Word, you will make and take precautions so that sex is not part of your dating and courting experience.

The Eyes—Window into the Soul

Every year, I make an appointment to see my optometrist and receive a comprehensive eye exam. Before I see the optometrist, an assistant uses a special machine to determine if there were any changes in my prescription from the previous year. Then the assistant uses several other machines to make sure my eyes are still healthy.

One of the machines the assistant uses takes a digital image of both eyes and then displays the image on a computer screen for the optometrist to examine. And each year, my optometrist makes the same comment at the start of his examination. He shows me the digital picture of my eyes and says, "Mike, the eyes are the window into the soul."

"What does that mean?"

By looking at the digital image of my eyes, the optometrist is literally able to "see" into my body and is able to determine my overall health.

Young man, your eyes are the window into your soul. Therefore, take precautions to ensure that what you allow your eyes to "see" is wholesome, honoring, and pleasing to the Lord.

"How so?"

ALL men have been tempted by the allure of a beautiful woman. This fact is undeniable. However, you can CHOOSE what you allow your eyes to see.

ALL men have been tempted with youthful lust that desires to view naked women. This fact is also undeniable. However, you can CHOOSE what you allow your eyes to see.

ALL men have viewed naked women in sexual, arousing depictions—pornography. It could be scantily clad women in a Sports Illustrated "swimsuit" edition, a centerfold from a Playboy or Penthouse magazine, a late-night cable movie, or images directly from the Internet. This fact is also undeniable. However, you can CHOOSE what you allow your eyes to see.

Young man, please don't allow pornography into your life and when you are married into your bedroom. If you struggle with pornography as a single man and don't do anything about it, you will most certainly struggle with it when you are married. Please have the courage to go to your father, Pastor and/or mentor and admit your struggles or addiction with pornography. They will understand.

"Why?"

Because EVERY Christian man that I know has, at some point in their life, come to the place where they said, "God, I need help with my lustful thoughts."

We older men were all once young men, too. We know what you are going through, and we can help. Come to us!

Finally, if your girlfriend (later your wife) catches you or suspects, you are looking at pornography. I pray she will have the courage to drag you by the ear to your pastor and to say, “Pastor—my boyfriend (husband) needs help. Please get them the help he or she needs. I expect him or her to own up to their addictions and to begin the process of confession, renewal and restoration.”

Have the courage to get help now, OR you will find yourself being dragged by the ear one day.

Young man, the condition of your soul will be determined by what you allow your eyes to “see.” Think about it!

The Four Syllable Word No One Wants to Talk About

I’ve purposefully placed this chapter towards the end of this book because this is a topic no one wants to talk or read about. But as this book pulls no punches, we’ve going to talk about a four-syllable word—masturbation.

“What is it?”

Masturbation is having sex with yourself.

“Why talk about it?”

Young man, until you are married and can experience the joy of having sex with your marriage partner. The issue of masturbation will be with you. Therefore, we must address this issue.

Why does EVERY young person do it?

Masturbation allows a young person “sexual release” without the severe consequences of having sex with a partner outside the bonds of marriage. It also allows a young person to understand the sexual workings of their body and to learn about orgasm.

“Is it a sin?”

I’m convinced that the reason no one wants to talk about this topic is that inevitably the question of sin is raised. So here is my answer.

Young man, if you are a Christian, then The Holy Spirit resides in you. He lives and dwells there. If any action or thought grieves the Holy Spirit, then He is letting you know that you have sinned. Remember, that The Lord Jesus Christ is the full and final payment for all sin—no matter the cause. Therefore, if you will confess it, He will blot it out and remember it no more.

“Is masturbation while watching pornography a sin?”

YES!

“Why?”

If you are viewing pornography while masturbating, this is not a healthy thing. Pornography intensifies the act and release, but it also causes a habitual and “chemical” addiction to both masturbation and pornography. This is because the human brain “desires” the chemical excitement

that comes with viewing pornography while masturbating. This is very similar to being addicted to drugs or alcohol. Please get HELP!

Brokenness—The end of “myself.”

Throughout this book, you’ll find a recurring theme.

- Be a “Spirit-led” Christian.
- Walk step by step, moment by moment in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Young man, how do you get to this place in your Christian walk? I wish I had a simple three-point plan, but I don’t. But what I do know is this. For me, it took brokenness—the end of myself. To get to the place where I TRULY wanted and BEGAN living in step with The Holy Spirit. The process of brokenness began at the age of 32. And within seven months, I lost the following:

- The president of my company committed a fraudulent act that led to closing the doors of our company. I, therefore, lost straight commission income I had spent many years developing.
- I had to leave my first church home and therefore lost the opportunity to continue teaching my beloved Sunday school class. I also lost my leadership position as a deacon.
- My first friend, Angela, died along with her two seven-month-old fetuses.

This and related issues led to a severe emotional and psychiatric breakdown that lasted four years. When that dark period was over—I was broken. Now, I was consistently able to hear AND always desiring to obey whatever God's precious Holy Spirit was telling me.

Young man, I have two goals for telling you this story.

- 1) I am confident that you know or will know a special person who is in a very dark place emotionally or spiritually. Or they may be "wayward" and living life on their terms. I want you to commit to be their friend. I also want you to pray for that person often. Ask God to allow that person to go through whatever He has for them. In order that they might come out of their darkness and waywardness desiring to walk step by step in the light of The Holy Spirit.
- 2) I want you to ask God to do whatever He has to do so you will hear AND obey His precious Holy Spirit, too. Please pray with your father, Pastor, and mentor to this end.

My first book entitled, *"My Pursuit of a Good Mood"* speaks of my dark period (mood struggles) and how He changed me in the process. I am confident that the book will be a source of HELP and a great encouragement to you.

Email me at MAttar@GoodMoodFoundation.org. Please provide your mailing address, and I'll send you a copy at no cost(s). Or you can read it online at www.GoodMoodFoundation.org

Friends-Birds of a Feather DO Flock Together.

I am not a prognosticator, but I am confident of this. Pigeons choose to stick with pigeons and eagles choose to stick with their own kind. Birds of a feather DO flock together. Therefore, I also know that:

- People will choose friends who are most like them.

When I was a teenager, I hung around musicians because I was a musician. My musician friends were into:

- Partying
- Drinking
- Womanizing

Since I wasn't a Christian and I also didn't know any better. It shouldn't surprise you that I became like my friends and did what my friends did, too.

However, after becoming a Christian, I noticed the same phenomenon. Birds of a feather DO stick together. Even Christians chose to date and court people who were very much like themselves.

- Slutty guys chose to date slutty girls.
- Average guys chose to date average girls.
- Insecure guys chose to date insecure girls.
- Wild and rebellious guys chose to date wild and rebellious girls.

- Guys from families with money chose to date their own kind.

You get the picture!

I, however, chose to be a contrarian.

- I chose to be a person who CONSCIOUSLY chose friends who I wanted to become like.

“But Mike, I don’t know how to fit in with the circle of friends I seek to be with.”

Exactly and that is as it should be—initially. Part of your job is to make internal changes that will enable you to fit in with your NEW circle of friends. Making these internal changes WILL require work. It will also force you to read books, listen to recordings, and ask lots of questions.

“But how do I become accepted in my new circle of friends?”

Excellent question! Here are three things to do that will help you to fit in quickly:

- Pray, listen, and obey to God’s leading.
- Look for opportunities to serve.
- Learn the “language,” “mannerisms,” and “dress code” of the friends you seek to be with. Then mimic it.

One of the benefits is that when I changed my “circle of friends,” the pool of women I dated and courted also changed.

“Mike, what kind of friend should I strive to be and strive to have?”

- Seek friends with solid Christian who live out their morals and values. They walk the walk, not just talk it.
- Seek friends who a “real.” They aren’t afraid to express their feelings, failures, and shortcomings.
- Seek friends who genuinely seek after God. They seek to listen to His voice AND to obey.
- Seek trustworthy friends.
- Seek friends who won’t intentionally hurt you.
- Seek friends who look out for the interests of others.
- Seek friends who serve others.
- Seek friends who you can call on in the middle of the night if you have a real need.
- Seek friends who are willing to tell you what you need to hear for your good. But who will still love you, anyway.

Maybe the best advice I can offer is to be friends with that special girl BEFORE you begin dating and courting her. Look for opportunities to BE her friend, and I can promise—you will FIND a friend.

I believe that group activities, preferably church group activities and then group dating, should be the first place to begin cultivating friendships. Dating and courting are then the outcomes of being friends with that special girl.

Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise you that I also married my “friend.” Michelle was my friend—first.

I have many friends who HAD to get married. So, for the most part, they never experienced the joy and the benefits of being friends—first. Now that they were married, they were forced to learn how to be friends. Unfortunately, many

then discovered that they couldn't get along, or be friends and later divorce. The biggest reason young people are forced to get married is pregnancy.

Young man be a TRUE FRIEND and don't engage in sexual activity with anyone until you are married. REAL FRIENDS don't have to have sex with each other.

Young man, who are your friends?

- ✓ You WILL become like your friends.
- ✓ Your character will be forged by who you choose as friends.
- ✓ Choose your friends—WISELY!

Therefore, if your friends and your girlfriends aren't really "friends," have the courage to—Walk Away!

Finally, birds of a feather DO flock together. In a previous chapter, I detailed how I became "broken." Since then, I'm very much attracted to similarly "broken" Christians. Lasting friendships and REAL ministry are birthed out of brokenness.

***Become somebody by being a
NO-body.***

Young man if you are to become a man of character. If you are to become a man that any beautiful, Godly, Christian woman would drool over to date, you are going to have to learn to say, "NO!"

Please remember that “No” isn’t “No, you can’t.” Instead, it is, “No, there is something MUCH BETTER for you.” The choice of “Yes” and “No” is yours and yours alone to make. And yes, sometimes you may choose to taste the reality of sin before you truly appreciate the grace and freedom you have in Christ.

Therefore say:

- “No” to mindless television shows and yes to mind enhancing reading and studying!
- “No” to harmful drugs and yes to exercise and keeping your body in shape!
- “No” to alcohol and yes to orange juice and club soda!
- “No” to pre-marital sex and yes to long cold showers and patiently waiting for marriage!
- “No” to aimless hanging out and yes to board games with your friends and your (their) parents!
- “No” to selfish spending and yes to purposeful saving and investing!
- “No” to being rebellious and yes to giving honor and respect!
- “No” to the sinful desires of the flesh and yes to the Holy Spirit!
- “No” to wicked ways and yes to Godly character!
- “No” to comic books and yes to inspirational, Christian books and the Word of God!
- “No” to be with the “in” crowd and yes to being with the youth and young adult church crowd!
- “No” to lies and deception and yes to telling the truth!
- “No” to stealing and yes to a part-time job!

- “No” to asking for things you don’t need from your parents and yes to doing something nice for them!
- “No” to half-hearted homework preparation and yes to a wholehearted effort!
- “No” to borrowing money for school and yes to excelling at “something” and shooting to obtain a partial or full scholarship!
- “No” to being without a purpose and yes to playing music, participating in athletics, and burning the midnight oil scholastically!
- “No” to dating non-Christian women and yes to dating only Godly Christian women!
- “No” to pornography and yes to “I need help!”
- “No” to selfishness and yes to selflessness!
- “No” to being served and yes, to serving!
- “No” to aimlessness and yes to having goals!
- “No” to taking or demanding any leadership position and yes to be a servant-leader!
- “No” to cursing and coarse joking and yes to good clean jokes and wholesome kidding around!
- “No” to desiring popularity and yes to being friends with the outcast and the friendless!
- “No” to wasting time and yes to volunteering!
- “No” to dating any Christian women who are rebellious and yes to Christian women who are led by the Holy Spirit!
- “No” to dating any woman before you’ve asked her father for his permission—yes!
- “No” to letting your date open her car door for herself and yes to opening it for her!
- “No” to being alone with your date petting and touching and yes to group dating, instead!

- “No” to being late and yes for making sure you are always on time!
- “No” to making up excuses and yes to taking and accepting personal responsibility!
- “No” to any music with bad, unwholesome lyrics and yes to music that is uplifting and edifying!
- “No” to legalism and yes to listening and obeying God’s Holy Spirit!

Buzzards or Busy Bees in God’s Local Church.

I became a believer in Jesus Christ at the age of nineteen years old and quickly learned that the local church is God’s Plan A. He doesn’t have a Plan B. Knowing this, I planted myself at this church and took root there. I became a “busy bee” in the college, single and married ministries, where I served and grew for 12 years. Then I moved our membership to another church and have been a “busy bee” there for the last 25 years.

I believe that you ought to consider your quest to find that special someone beginning at your local church. Find a church where you can be a “busy bee” and where you can serve and grow. If you dedicate your efforts to one local church body, I am convinced that God in His time with providing dating and courting opportunities. I’m not saying you can’t visit other churches, have activities with other churches, or maybe even move your membership to another church.

One of the oddities I discovered while in the singles department was the propensity for single men from other churches to visit our singles class. At first, I thought they might be moving their church membership but soon realized all they were interested in was scoping out the ladies. These “buzzards” flew in and out of different churches. Young man, please don’t be a buzzard. A buzzard is a selfish, carnivorous, and predatory bird.

***It’s never too early to Learn about
Finances.***

It’s been said that “Money is a part of every equation.” What that means is that whatever you want to do or want to have—you will need money.

I wrote this section to get you going in the right direction.

But you WILL need to get solid Biblical and practical grasp on how to:

- ✓ Earn,
- ✓ Give,
- ✓ Save,
- ✓ Invest and
- ✓ Spend money.

Therefore, I’ll highlight the key points and trust you to find a Pastor, father, or mentor(s) to assist you further.

I “earned” my first dollar when I only eight years old. My next-door neighbor was eleven and old enough to have a

paper route. So one day, he asked me to help him deliver his papers, and for my efforts, he gave me one whole dollar. I was ecstatic! So what did I do with my dollar bill? It was Christmas time. So I spent the entire dollar I had just earned to buy from this same friend a small yellow toy truck. I wrapped the little truck and took it over to his house. Then I called him on the phone and told him I left him something at this front door. I'm dating myself because this was 1968. I've found many ways to earn money since. I'm assuming you are, too.

I became a believer in Jesus Christ at the age of 19 and can remember the first check I wrote out to His church. It was for \$1.50, and it might as well have been a thousand dollars because the day I wrote out the check, I had less than \$100 in the bank. I've been tithing ever since.

A few years later, I had a lucrative small business and, in the church, auditorium listening to someone talk about the needs of their ministry. God tugged at my heart, and I obediently wrote out a check for \$100. I love to give and have been obeying God ever since, as well.

Before I was 22, I had already saved \$1,000. I was so proud and can remember having a coke with my mentor and telling him. He was so proud of me, too.

Buying a house. One of the best investments you can make is to pay off your house as quickly as possible. Why? Because it will provide your spouse with additional security and peace of mind. And when you buy your first home buy the most house you can afford on a 15-year mortgage and not a 30-year mortgage. Your mentors will explain how and why.

Buying a used car. Park your car at the corner drug store in your neighborhood and observe all the new cars and their drivers, as they stop at the traffic light. You will notice an interesting phenomenon. The drivers who are driving brand new cars are either: wealthy people, salespeople, or executives in a “company car” or poor people. Make no mistake out it. Unless you are very rich or have the privilege of receiving and driving a company car, you will be poor if you drive a brand-new vehicle. Why? Driving a brand-new car is the worst thing you can do with your hard-earned money. Instead, buy a car that is at least five years old and has been well maintaining. The difference you save in not have to pay for the depreciation of a new vehicle, you can invest in beautiful furniture for your home, etc.

Live below your means—not at the level of your means. Why? How do you expect to give, save, and invest if you are spending everything you earn?

Buy plenty of life and disability insurance the second you graduate from college. Then as your income increases, remember to buy more life and disability insurance. Why? The only time you can buy life and disability insurance is TODAY—when you are not ill and can still work. Trust me, and I know! Life happens. The human body sometimes gets sick and breaks down.

Personal ministry. God has given you a ministry, so you must discover what it is? Why? God desires to work His purposes and build His Kingdom through you! A big part of my personal ministry is giving away books, CDs, and DVDs. I’ve been giving away resources since I was 21 years old. Who pays for this? I do! By living a lifestyle of earning, tithing, giving, saving, investing, and spending less than I

earn. There is always a little leftover to engage, invest, and spend on personal ministry. Do the same!

Having money. Inheritances and trust fund accounts are for ensuring the recipients have a more secure but modest lifestyle. This so they can expand their level of service and not for self-indulgence and self-gratification. Why? If your parents and or grandparents have told you that you are “set for life” because of an inheritance, you will receive at their passing or a trust fund account that has been set up for you—wonderful. However, it is unlikely they have also instructed you on how to handle such wealth.

Therefore, if you are a **parent or grandparent reading** this book, do your children or grandchildren a BIG favor by changing the payout terms of their inheritance or trust account. Change it so that the majority of their payout begins after they have reached their 40th birthday. I am speaking here with great authority.

Yes, provide for their education (but they should still have a part-time job during college) and possibly for a modest down payment their first home. Also, if they present you with a solid business plan, you might consider a small investment but don't underwrite the entire project. And except for a dire emergency such as an uncovered medical expense. Don't give your children or grandchildren a handout. Give them a hand-up! Provide the encouragement, values, and work ethic that enabled you to have such great wealth in the first place.

Young man don't under any circumstances discuss with any of your girlfriends the details for your family's wealth. Especially about any inheritance or trust accounts you have

or will receive. Why? It’s none of her business (until right before or after you are married), and if she finds out you are set for life, she might become someone she is not so that she can marry you. And when she does, the real her will come out. Not good! Also, if you have to tell your girlfriend about your money in order to “land her” or gain her affections, what is that saying about you? Better to wow her with your love for Jesus, work ethic, Christian values, spiritual leadership, love and service to others, your business aspirations, and personal dreams.

Mothers and Grandmothers- God’s X-Ray Systems.

Recently I was at my dentist getting my six-month oral exam and teeth cleaning. After the dental assistant put a lead apron over my chest and inserted a special device into my mouth, she took four x-ray pictures of all my teeth. Within seconds, the results of the x-rays were displayed on her computer screen.

No doubt you’ve experienced the same procedure, too. However, you probably are too young to understand that until recently, it took ten to fifteen minutes to develop the x-rays. Now with digital technology, making and receiving the results from an x-ray picture of your teeth (or any other part of your body) only takes seconds.

When I was a teenager, I was rebellious, self-centered, and self-absorbed. The BEST word to describe my behavior

was—a sinner. And who knew this better than my mother and grandmother.

As a very young boy growing up, I loved my mother. I never was disrespectful or “overly” disobedient. But that all changed when I became a teenager. I became harsh towards my mother and gave her “lip” whenever she demands or requests didn’t agree with me. I also committed many sins against my mother. One of the most heinous sins I committed was when I stole my mother’s credit card and charged several thousand dollars for clothes and car stereo equipment. My mother came to me in tears about her credit card bill and asked, “Mike, do you know anything about this?” I denied making the charges and claimed “someone” else must have stolen her credit card number, and made all the purchases.

My relationship with my grandmother was no different. I can remember my mother requesting that I go see “mea-mea” (as she was called) many times, but I refused. When I graduated from high school, a “graduation picture” was taken with my mother, my grandmother, and me. To give you an idea of my dislike for my grandmother, I took that picture and cut my grandmother out of the picture. How sad—for me! Not too long after, I stole my mother’s credit card. I hit my grandmother up for several thousand dollars and claimed I needed the money for college bills. I also instructed my grandmother not to tell my mother that she has given me money.

Now that you understand my heart for my mother and grandmother, it should come to no surprise that I treated every other woman in my life during my teenage years with

the same disrespect and EVIL. I abused all of my girlfriends, emotionally and physically.

However, when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and became a Christian at the age of 19, God immediately changed my heart. In brokenness, I wrote my mother a letter admitting my sin of stealing her credit card and asking her to forgive me. I did the same with my grandmother, and as soon as I had money, I sent her a check. I also went to see her several times before she died. I only wished that I had listened to my mother and gone to see her when I was a teenager. Also, I called my mother very, very often and always ended our conversations with “I love you, Mom.”

“Mike, so what’s the point?”

Mothers and grandmothers are God’s x-ray systems, so if you want to know how a young man will treat the women in his life. Know this. He will treat the women in his life exactly how he treats his mother and grandmother.

That said, it shouldn’t surprise you that when I met the mothers and grandmothers of the women I was dating, I treated them exactly how I treated my mother and (before she died) my grandmother. I was respectful, honoring, considerate . . .

When the mother of one of the women, I had a relationship with went into the hospital. I went to see her with one yellow rose to give her. Whenever I was invited to share a meal or Christmas with any of the women in my life, I always arrived with “something” in my hand to give to the mother, grandmother, or both.

Young man, you will treat the women in your life the same way you treat your mother and grandmother. And if you should decide to fake it, you will probably get away with it—until your girlfriend SEES the truth. Therefore, get your relationship right with God first. Then get your relationship with your mother and grandmother right. In so doing, you will get your relationship with your girlfriend right, too.

Work!

Young man, if your girlfriend aspires to a lifestyle that includes a foo-foo dog she can carry around in her purse, manicures, and pedicures at two in the afternoon, and eating bon-bons while lying by the pool all day—RUN!

Men find a woman who—WORKS!

Please understand I am NOT saying “works” at a paid or unpaid position outside of the home. I am saying find:

- ✓ A woman who wants to work at having and raising children.
- ✓ A woman who wants to work at keeping the kids organized and chauffer’s them to school and their activities.
- ✓ A woman who works using a sewing machine.
- ✓ A woman who works finding and buying a home.
- ✓ A woman who works when she plays a board game.
- ✓ A woman who works... and if she doesn’t know how to do something is busy working to learn how-to.

The fact that Michelle worked her way through college attracted me to her. I liked that!

Early, I mentioned that if you have been blessed with wealth via an inheritance or trust fund, do not under any circumstances tell your girlfriend about it. Wait until you are married. Why? You want a woman who works and is not afraid of work.

Ladies, the same applies to him, too. Find a man who works. And if your boyfriend isn't motivated to work—fire him.

Not having the things of this world will motivate you to go to work. And that is a good thing! Goals will motivate you to work. Work at doing "something." It doesn't matter how trivial or insignificant the work may seem to you or to others. If you are working and it is honest work—keep on working! Trust me; you'll feel better about yourself, you'll sleep better, and maybe you'll earn a few dollars in the process.

And when you are out of the home, unless you have a real emergency, don't ask your parents for money. Why? Money generally isn't the answer to most of your problems. Work, on the other hand, is the solution to most of your problems.

In my lifetime, I have known many young people who were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. And for the most part, they never accomplished anything of significance. An entitlement mentality and dependency on parents for every need and want ROBS children of the joy, benefits, and fruits found from working. Therefore, parents do your children a BIG favor and put them to WORK.

Be a Sorry Person.

If you are to court, win, and love a Christian woman, you must learn the following verbiage. Ingrain the following into your brain and then begin to change your actions and behaviors.

"I am sorry."

"Please forgive me."

"Please pray for me."

"It won't happen again."

"I was a jerk."

"I failed."

"I'll try something different next time."

"What can I do differently?"

"Give it to me straight."

"I want to be God's man."

"With God's grace and your encouragement, I can and will change."

"I LOVE YOU!"

Serve your Girlfriends and your Rivals.

When I was beginning to date Michelle, she called me late one evening because her apartment had been broken into. Thankfully, she was at work at the time. The front door was damaged, and it could not be closed or locked. Immediately, I got into my car and drove to her apartment. I calmed her down, and we called the management company and police department.

Unfortunately, no one could be reached to fix the door at such a late hour. What to do? So I offered to stay overnight, and Michelle agreed. Michelle went to sleep in her room, and I stood guard in the living room. I barely slept because I feared the person who broke in might come back. I held her telephone in my arms as I lay on the sofa staring at the ceiling and ready to call 911 if needed. Thankfully, the night turned into the day without incident.

In another example, Michelle was making just enough money to get by, but there was nothing left over for the extras. So one day, I went to my bank and put \$500 into an account in her name so she could buy a few extras. And of course, there were several instances where her car broke down, and she needed rides to and from work and money to pay for the repairs.

Serving the woman you are dating and courting is not very difficult because your actions are driven by love. You want to win their heart and possibly their hand.

However, what I am about to purpose is very difficult. I am going to ask that you follow my example by becoming friends with your rivals and by loving and serving them, too.

I realize that this admonition is contrarian to both cultural and personal attitudes. However, I can assure you that if you find ways to love and serve your rivals, you will be the recipient of untold blessings.

Word of caution!

Do not under any circumstances, tell your girlfriends what you are doing. Resist the temptation to say to your girlfriend, “I love you. Can’t you see I’m going out of my way to befriend, love, and serve my rivals?”

If you give in and brag on your good deeds (though it never happened to me because I shut my mouth), I am very confident your self-righteousness will blow up in your face.

“Mike, so what did you do to love and to serve?”

Great question!

However, I’ve decided not to list any personal examples. But what’s important is to be ready at every opportunity to befriend, love, and serve your rivals.

“But what if the woman I want to date or am dating falls for my rival— then I’ve lost.”

“No! You have not lost; you have won.”

Don’t fall for the urge to compete or the lie that says, “All’s fair in love and war.”

- The winner is the one who learns to humble himself.
- The winner is the one who learns to love.
- The winner is the one who learns to serve.

Follow this narrow road, and I am very confident that God will reward and bless your efforts.

“Mike, but what if I lose the one I wanted?”

Another excellent question!

Are you befriending, loving, and serving your rivals to gain a woman’s attention and affections? Or are you befriending, loving, and serving your rivals because it is the Godly thing to do? Does He not know you desire a Godly wife? Does He not already know what is BEST for you? If you lose what wasn’t yours, to begin with, have you REALLY lost at all? Young man be a winner—befriend, love, and serve your rivals.

Know who you are.

Some of the most rewarding conversations you can have with a woman are discussing who you are. Sure, you’ll discuss your favorite color, favorite car, and favorite food. However, you NEED to find an answer to the more profound questions of who you are. For example:

- ❖ What are your natural strengths?
- ❖ What are your natural weaknesses?
- ❖ What is your spiritual gift?
- ❖ What is your spiritual weakness?
- ❖ What is your “love language?”

To answer these and similar questions, you're going to have to dig deep. Personality, self-assessment, and spiritual gifting tests are worthwhile. They may be costly and time-consuming. But I can promise that the rewards of being able to understand and communicate who you are will be well worth the effort.

Be a Disciple and Make Disciples.

I've been part of God's local church for over 30 years. During that time, I've heard many sermons on being a disciple of Jesus Christ and going out into the world to make disciples. After all, that's what Jesus commanded His disciples to do.

So what exactly is a disciple?

A disciple is a "student-learner."

Therefore, if you're a student at XYZ high school and you're learning at XYZ high school. You ARE a disciple of XYZ high school.

"Mike, I never knew that."

That's right!

"So what does a 'student-learner' look like?"

A disciple (student-learner) looks like this. He or she:

- ✓ Asks questions.

- ✓ Reads books that are edifying, uplifting and encouraging.
- ✓ Listens to wholesome teaching and recordings.
- ✓ Has a mentor and meets with them.
- ✓ Takes notes during the sermon, Sunday school and teaching environments.
- ✓ Attends a Bible believing church.
- ✓ Listens well and with intentionality
- ✓ Has and is building a personal library of books and resources
- ✓ Reads and studies the Bible.
- ✓ Seeks to know the truth of the Bible.
- ✓ Has a personal walk with The Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Is prayerfully on the lookout for opportunities to replicate themselves in someone else.

Being a “student-learner” of Jesus Christ means you are His disciple. It also means you will NEVER feel worthy, capable, or up to the task to make disciples. After all, you will ALWAYS a “student-learner,” too.

Now that you know what a disciple is. Look for opportunities to BE a disciple in your dating and courting relationships. Allow your date to SEE your “student-learner” mindset and habits in action. Just MODEL discipleship including asking questions, also, by reading books that are edifying, uplifting, and encouraging.

Volunteer

What in the world does volunteering have to do with courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman? EVERYTHING!

Young man, if you are to serve your wife so she can be everything God intended for her to be, you WILL need training. And the BEST training on how to serve—is by becoming a volunteer.

You can’t buy a book to learn how to serve and develop a servant’s heart. You can’t inherit or buy a servant’s heart, and you certainly can’t fake it. Either you have a heart of service, or you don’t.

To gain a servant’s heart and keep it aflame, you must be constantly vigilant to find opportunities for service.

When I was 20, I HATED to serve. I despised it. Even though I was a Christian (NEW), I thought it was demeaning to perform menial tasks. I felt sorry for the volunteers at my church who were setting chairs on Saturday night for Sunday school. “Losers,” I would say to myself.

Well, ten volumes couldn’t hold the lessons of how God cured me of my “disease.” Nor could it contain all of the opportunities I’ve had to display the love of Christ to others through noble, worthwhile, and selfless service. But here is one story that comes to mind.

One of my mentors was one of Ross Perrot’s lieutenants. He and I met for breakfast for ten years and we also attended a men’s “leadership” luncheon every week. I can still close my eyes and see this event so vividly.

The water pitcher at our table was empty, so I tried to get the waiter’s attention to “demand” he takes care of us.

“We need water,” I barked!

My friend calmly and gently said,

“Mike, take the pitcher, and YOU go get the water.”

“No, not me, it’s NOT my job.”

“It most certainly is your job, young man. And by the way, go take every other pitcher from each of the tables and fill them with water, too.”

Did this one event cure me of my self-centered and selfish ways? No, but it set the stage and opened my heart to the realization that it was the waiter who had the GREATEST position. The one who serves—the servant is the one who is fit for leadership. And I have been learning how to serve—by serving--ever since.

Here is a more recent example.

Very recently, I was tasked with managing a piece of property for my father. One of my responsibilities was to make sure the property was kept up, that the lawn was mowed; the pool and landscaping were maintained. The tenants and I got along great, and there was never an issue with how they lived in the property. However, after about a year, the rent began to be late. Month after month, the rent was turned in later and later. However, I was still tasked with sending my father his portion of the rent on the 1st of every month. What to do?

I did what any servant would do. I wrote a check from my personal funds to my father, even though I had not been paid by the renters. This went on for over six months. Finally, the rent went past due over 30 days, and the renters were now in default of their lease. So, the Management Company that I had hired began the eviction process.

Thankfully, the renter's called me, and we had a very "long talk." It was then that I learned that renters didn't have any money. Yes, they worked and had an income, but their expenses and situation just got past them. Again, what to do? After a few days, it became clear that I should go and buy them groceries. So that's what I did. I went to the best grocery store in town, bought the best of everything, and then delivered all the bags of groceries to them. A month later, my father tasked me with selling this property. I put it on the market and had a contact within ten days and closed within the month. So what's the moral of the story?

Servants are the winners!

Oh, and when you volunteer. Work as hard as you can. Also, ask God to make you the BEST volunteer there.

"Timeout"-Recovering From Each Other.

As I’ve gotten older, I’ve also gained a little weight. At first, it was only a few pounds and barely noticeable. But now that the world has noticed, I’ve decided to get back on a regular exercise plan. Part of the plan involves exercising with an instructional DVD to help keep me motivated and on track.

The trainer on the DVD makes it a point to get my heart rate up for a few minutes with very intense exercise and then lets my heart rest for a few minutes. This resting time is known as a “timeout” or “recovery” period. The key to a good workout is both intensity and recovery—they go hand in hand.

People that are around me for any length of time will tell you that I am a very intense person. However, I am the MOST intense when I am writing a book or engaged in any writing project. That being said, I can wear my wife out with my writing ideas and updated drafts. There are times when she MUST tell me to “chill-out.” She will force me to shut my computer off and take a drive with her so we both can unwind.

Young man, most dating and courting relationships start with intensity, and this is a good thing. Intensity is motivating, stimulating, and exciting. However, intensity must be followed by a recovery period.

During the recovery period, you take time by being away from each other. This is a time when you regroup emotionally, readjust and rethink your expectations, and wait in anticipation to get back together again.

You NEED to periodically take time and recover from your dating and courting relationships. During that away time here are some questions to consider:

1. Where is this relationship headed?
2. Is this a God-honoring and Christ-centered relationship? If not, what do I need to change?
3. Is this person marriage material? If not, why am I dating this person?
4. What does her family think of me?
5. Is her father “for me?” If not, why?
6. Am I honoring this woman by not being physical with her?
7. What do my father, pastor, and mentor think of her? Am I really listening and obeying?
8. If this woman became a paraplegic, would I still want to date her? Would I still want to marry her?
9. Is there any area in my life that she has told me needs to change? If so, what am I doing to proactively change?
10. Am I expecting her to change? If so, what?
11. Am I harboring any unresolved emotional issues? If so, what are they?
12. Why exactly am I in this relationship to begin with? Is this a hookup or rebound relationship?
13. Am I her friend? Does she trust me? Is what she says “safe” with me?
14. Am I serving her? How? Why?
15. Do I love her? If so, what is love? What is the evidence that I love her?
16. Am I friends with her other boyfriends? If so, how? If not, why? How would I react if my best friend wins her heart and her hand? Am I friends

- with her girlfriends? Do I want to date any of her girlfriends? Do any of them want to date me?
17. Do I know and understand her level of emotional maturity? Do I meet her there?
 18. What is friendship? Am I really her friend? What is the evidence?
 19. Is there anything I am faking? If so, what?
 20. Am I transparent, vulnerable, and real? If not, why?
 21. Can I make her feel what I am feeling? If not, why?
 22. What am I doing to serve her? Is this what she needs?
 23. Do I have to marry this woman? If yes, why? If no, why not?
 24. What would happen to me emotionally if she broke it off with me tomorrow? Is this a good or bad reaction?
 25. What other questions do I need to be asking AND answering during this timeout and recovery period?

Debunking the Lies of Love.

If you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, you have been called into the light and not darkness. You have been given the Truth. Therefore, don't fall for the "enemies" lies. The "evil one" is the father of all lies.

"God has just one woman for me." - Oh really! Just where in the Bible, does God ever say there is just ONLY one woman for you? I can't tell you how many young men I have met over the years that are looking (and still looking) for just that ONE woman.

Imagine all of the streets in your neighborhood lined with silver dollars. Now, if God put an X on just ONE silver dollar, (representing "one" woman) and threw it into the mix. Then He told YOU to find it. How long would it take for you to discover that "one" silver dollar? Most of your life and well into eternity! What kind of a God would do such a cruel thing? Not my God!

"I'll have a chance with her when I 'make' it." - Yes, the love for a woman will spur you on to go great things, like finishing your education or starting a business and making money. However, if you've set your heart on someone and believe she will respond to you once you've "made it" you believe a lie. You want a woman who will be there alongside you through the process.

"It's my responsibility to find a spouse." - There's some truth in that statement. Yes, you should begin by making a list of the absolute essentials your future spouse MUST possess. And yes, you should measure the women you meet against your list of must have's. However, it is God's way that is always best. Therefore seek to serve Him first. He will provide dating and courting opportunities. Young man, it's not about finding the right woman, it's about becoming the RIGHT man! Therefore, focus most of your energy on becoming—NOT finding.

"Soul mate." - Anytime I hear a sentence with the term soul mate, I cringe. Again, there is NO mention of this or any similar term in the Bible. God created the woman to be a companion and helper. Your soul doesn't need an earthly mate. Your soul needs an eternal mate. And that eternal mate is the person of Jesus Christ.

“Dating is just dating—we’re just going out to have some fun.” - Young men, dating is not just dating. Dating is the first step in the courting process that leads to marriage. Therefore, DON’T go out with any girl who doesn’t potentially meet your criteria and/or standards as a possible mate. Anyhow, if you want JUST to have fun, then go out on group dates.

“She completes me.” - Oh, bother! NO woman can complete you. If you are looking for someone to complete you, you are certainly not ready for marriage. The ONLY person that can complete you is the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Michelle (or your wife) is your better half.” - Now, I get the motivation behind that statement. A Godly wife is in a manner of speaking always “better.” But she is not a half. The correct thought is this. One man plus and one woman equals—ONE. My spouse and I are ONE. We are not two halves that have become one. We are two persons that have become one. This concept is so important to grasp because as long as you see yourself as a half of a person needing another half (a spouse) to be complete, you will fall into the enemy's trap. Your spouse CAN NOT and was not designed to complete you—ONLY Jesus Christ can!

“I don’t need HELP.” - Yes, I believed that lie, too. And do you know what I got for finding it. UNRESOLVED PAIN! Now I’m dealing with my “issues.” Man-up! You do the same!

“I thought she would make me happy.” - This is a regrettable statement, and I have heard it many times after a failed marriage or relationship. Here’s the truth. If your

source of happiness is a person, you will be disappointed every time. Jesus Christ MUST be your source.

"You had me at hello." - I love that line, I really do. It's so romantic. But it's still deceptive. Here's the truth. You can ONLY have each other after you say, "I do!" NOT hello! "I do" I am afraid has become, "I do until I can't stand you anymore," "I do until you get old and fat and it's time to trade up," or "I do until you sin and I have a reason to leave."

"I have peace about it." - Having peace is NOT the definitive criteria for making decisions. The Word of God is! I recall a friend telling me, "Mike, I have peace about my upcoming marriage to 'so and so.'" However, their fiancé wasn't a Christian. How sad! They were divorced a few years later. Obedience to the Scripture comes first—peace follows that!

"I don't need the father's approval. I'll just date or marry her anyway." - That's right, you don't need the father's approval—but you do NEED his blessing. Let me repeat it. The father knows what is best for his daughter, especially when it comes to love and matters of the heart. Therefore, "man-up," humble yourself, and ask the father for permission!

"I better get a pre-nuptial agreement—just in case." - I understand that argument and the logical reasons for getting one. Often one of the potential spouses has a lot of money, and they want to make sure the other spouse isn't a gold digger, etc. However, if you feel you must have a pre-nuptial agreement, I believe something is wrong somewhere in your relationship. I also think that having one opens the

door to the possibility of divorce. Young man, this shouldn't be an issue for you. Why? Prenuptials are mostly written on the second, third, or fourth marriage. I am confident you are going to choose wisely and will remain married to your first spouse— until death do you part.

"I must have my potential spouse's background professionally investigated. They also need to be checked out for sexually transmitted diseases." - This, I am afraid, may not be a lie if your potential spouse has told you about their sorted past. Then getting a background check and medical checkup might be a good idea. But isn't that a sad testimony on our society. Young man, now do you see the wisdom in remaining sexually pure and keeping the purity of your girlfriends intact?

"I deserve to be happy." - I think we get this mentality from the concept that we were all indoctrinated with the entitlement of "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Don't get me wrong. I love being happy. And given the choice of being happy over being sad, I will choose happy every time. However, in this life, we WILL have tribulations. God often will use sad, depressing, hard, pressing times to shape and mold us. God is in the business of taking "broken" people and putting them back together again for His purposes.

If your only goal is to be happy, you will miss one of the major tenants of Scripture. He came to give us "Life" and so that we may live "Life" to the full... There is a BIG difference between "Life" and happiness. Happiness is a place you ascend to and only find once in a while—when everything is perfect, in order, and stress-free. "Life,"

however, is a state of mind that overwhelms you NO matter what the circumstances of life may bring.

“I deserve to be married, and I deserve to have so and so, I deserve . . .” - The problem with believing that you deserve is that you and I don't deserve anything. Everything I have, everything I hope to be, is a gift from God. It is by His grace and His grace alone that I am alive and that I live and have breath. It is by His grace that I have Salvation. It is by His grace that . . . The concept of “deserving” is a slap in the face to His GRACE. Grace is God's unmerited favor. Grace is not earned. Grace is not bought. Grace is a free gift from God.

“I deserve better.” - If you're dating then you always have the option to stop the relationship and date someone else. However, once you're married—you're married. Your spouse deserves a better you. Therefore, change—YOU!

“I know she's an unbeliever, but if we date, maybe I can win her over to the Lord.” - Young men DON'T date an unbeliever. If you want to win her to the Lord, invite her on group dates, to church functions, your home to play games with your family, and to church on Sundays. Then pray!

“If it feels good, do it.” - ALL sin feels good, at least initially. That's what makes sin so attractive. Sin feels good on the front end but feels terrible on the back end. If sin felt bad on the front end, would you sin—NO! The allure of sin is that you think you can get away with it. After all, it feels so good. What could possibly go wrong? EVERYTHING!

“If it doesn’t work out, we can always get a divorce.” - Look, if the word divorce is on your lips on the onset. It’s just a matter of time until the divorce is finalized. Divorce is the MOST painful event any person can endure. I don’t know and don’t want to know how it feels. I have seen the effects of divorce with some of my friends, and it isn’t pretty. Yes, I will acknowledge that there is a Biblical basis for divorce. Yes, I will also agree that sometimes there are other mitigating circumstances (physical and sexual abuse, etc.) that necessitates a divorce. However, in the grand scheme of things—it should not be! You’re going to have to work with your father, Pastor, and mentor to divorce-proof your marriage.

“If I wait, she’ll come around.” - That depends. She may not. Not much more, I can say than that.

“You hurt me so bad. You make me feel...” - I am not going to dispute that someone you love and care for deeply, said, or did something that caused you deep emotional pain. I know! My father walked out on me at the age of 33, and I NEVER heard from him for 10 LONG years. I hurt so badly; whenever I thought of him, the saliva in my mouth turned to bile, and I spit it out in utter and total disgust.

However, no matter the source of your pain or the intensity of your pain. YOU are ultimately responsible for how you feel. Yes, it will take time, time until the pain subsides, but YOU are still responsible for your physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being. Until you say, “I need help.” Until you are willing to go through the process of grief and restoration, you will continue to FEEL precisely like you do. I never said it would be easy. I’m just saying that one day the pain WILL subside.

“It’s my body, it’s my life, and I can do whatever I want with it.” - How can you claim to be a Christian and still believe that lie? Your body and your life are not your own anymore. They have been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ. He has ownership now. Therefore, what does HE want you to do with HIS life?

“It just happened.” - An illicit emotional or sexual affair, a theft, an addiction . . . Whatever “it” is—it just didn’t happen. “It” always begins as one single solitary thought that entered into the mind and was fed. You and I are the products of our thoughts. All action is initiated by thought. So please don’t say that “it” just happened. Acknowledge your actions and take responsibility for “it.”

“If I can’t have you, nobody will.” - Young man, the woman you claim to love doesn’t belong to you. She belongs to her father—her Heavenly Father. What gives you the right to dictate what she can and cannot do? Okay, she hurt you. Now what? And even if this woman married you, she still doesn’t belong to you. She is ON LOAN to you. That’s right! The best you can ever hope for is a day to day relationship. My Michelle is on loan to me. One day, the loan will be “called-in.” She (or I) will have to be returned to the original owner. Therefore, let it go.

“I PROMISE not to hit you again.” - We’re getting into some pretty heavy stuff. But here’s the bottom line. If a man hits a woman—HE NEEDS HELP! Ladies, you need help, too. Run to your father, Pastor, and police as fast as you can. Young man, if you hit any woman for any reason, you have just revealed the TRUE condition of your heart and your soul. Your heart and your soul can be restored, but the last

thing you need right now is a woman (any woman) in your life. Get help!

"Compatibility"- There is a lot of talk these days about the concept of compatibility. I think dating sites are to blame. I won't speak on the issue of compatibility because I don't like the term. Instead of compatibility, I am all about "common interests." On my list of absolute must-haves, I wrote down the following. "My potential spouse must have a musical background. She must play or have played an instrument and be proficient in her instrument. She must love music, going to concerts, etc." Michelle and I first met in the church orchestra. I was on one end of the orchestra pit playing the trumpet, and I noticed a new girl on the other side of the piano playing the cello. "Hello, my brother plays the cello." "Hello, my father and brother play the trumpet." The rest is history as they say.

"I'll never love anyone else again." - Sure, you will! Once you get the help, you need to overcome your emotional crisis. You'll get better, you will meet someone, and you will love again. Count on it!

"The 'grass' is greener on the other side." - If the grass is greener on the other side, it is because the grass has been better fertilized and watered more. Now that you understand why the grass is greener on the other side, what are you going to do to water and fertilize your "grass?"

"If it doesn't work out, we can still be friends." - This could be is a true statement if you haven't had sex. If you've had sex, I don't see how you can still be friends. At least not the kind of "friend" I would like to be and like to have. Young man keep your private parts private, and you can

experience the joy of being “friends” with a woman who is not your girlfriend.

“I have to be 100 percent, absolutely, positive about my fiancé before I am married.” - NOTHING in this life is 100 percent certain—except death and taxes. Ha! Speaking from personal experience and from talking to so many of my friends, here’s the truth. We were ALL scared to some degree or another at the marriage altar. And we all had questions. Marriage, like all decisions, requires a measure of faith. That being said, “Who you live with” is the second greatest question you must answer. Therefore, you must take your time and gather as much information as you can about your potential marriage partner. You must also seek wise and Biblical counsel. But in the end, marriage is still an act of faith.

“I love you if . . .” - Why is “I love you is . . .” a lie? Because it is not “I love you!” If there are three dots after “I love you if . . .” your love is conditional. “I love you if I can date you,” “I love you if I can court you,” and “I love you if you love me back” is not LOVE! Is it?

Words-The Courter’s Ultimate Bait.

As you know by now, I love fishing. I’ve fished from a pier, a dock, a boat, and from the shore. But my all-time favorite type of fishing is deep water fishing. I love deep water fishing the most because there are so MANY different kinds of fish to be caught in the deep waters of the ocean. And though I’m not an expert fisherman, there is one thing I do know. If you are going to fish, you must have “bait” on the

end of your hook. Otherwise, you don’t stand a chance of catching a fish.

I have a good friend who wanted to marry a woman who loved God and was also well versed in His Word. So he decided to look for dating and courting opportunities at a local Seminary. My friend took many “lay” classes which didn’t cost very much and “audited” other classes which didn’t cost anything at all. By taking classes, he was able to identify possible dating opportunities. He also found the Seminary yearbook and looked through it. There he found the picture of a woman who got his attention. So my friend walked all over the Campus until he found the woman in the yearbook and started a “conversation.” Three years later, they were married. This woman is now a Seminary professor, yet my friend never finished college. So how did my friend land such an educated woman?

Words!

Words—are the courter’s ultimate bait.

Have you ever wondered why the “dorky” guy is going out with that fine young woman? Words! The dorky guy knows how to use words. Using words, he was able to reach way down deep and capture the fine young woman’s heart.

Young man, you are going to be judged as possible dating, courting, or marriage material based on your ability to communicate. The time to start learning how to communicate with words—is right now!

Learn how to write—yes. But also learn how to communicate who you are through your words.

- ✓ Women want to FEEL what is going on inside of you.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL what you are thinking.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL your character.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL your dreams.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL your Christian testimony.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL your passion for your work.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL your pain.
- ✓ Women want to FEEL . . .

Young man, if you can make a woman FEEL using words. You stand an excellent chance at getting a first date and moving forward from there.

Prayer-Step by Step to the Alter and Beyond.

Undoubtedly, there is much to consider in the dating and courting process. Hopefully, this book, along with your father, Pastor, mentor, and your Bible, will help you. However, NOTHING is more important in choosing who to date, court, and marry than prayer. Think of prayer as gasoline. Without gasoline, a car won't run, no matter how beautiful the car maybe.

"Mike, so how do I pray?"

I am not an expert on prayer, and though I am still a baby in terms of understanding prayer. I can say the following with utmost certainty.

- ❖ Prayer is talking directly to God.
- ❖ Prayer is listening for His voice.
- ❖ Prayer is obeying His voice—step by step.

I think most Christians view prayer as merely talking. Yes, talking is essential, but so is hearing and obeying.

You will recall that in chapter one. I had to make some tough choices. But it was prayer—listening and obeying that brought me through. You do the same.

Finally, I had to make many decisions in my dating and courting years leading up to my marriage and beyond. Some decisions were easy, some more difficult, and some were excruciatingly painful. However, it was PRAYER that brought me through. Here are some critical questions to ask and answer—in prayer.

- ✓ What qualities should I be looking for in a potential mate?
- ✓ What am I doing to proactively become a Godly man of character?
- ✓ How do I initiate a relationship with someone I am interested in?
- ✓ What do we do on our dates?
- ✓ How do I lead my date spiritually?
- ✓ What can I do to proactively love my date?

You get the picture . . .

- ❖ Prayer isn't about asking God to change people and things, so they align with your plans, desires, and agenda.
- ❖ Prayer is about asking God to change YOU so you will align yourself with His plans, desires, and agenda for your life.
- ❖ Therefore, in ALL things—PRAY!

Beggars CAN Be Choosy.

We've all heard the age-old adage, "Beggars can't be choosy." Beggars, as a general rule, have to accept whatever is given or thrown their way. However, the GREAT news is that when it comes to matters of love and the heart. Beggars CAN be choosy.

Young man, I am confident you are going to meet a Christian woman who you feel is way out of your league, but you want to date and even marry. What to do?

You feel inferior, inadequate, or unworthy. I know because I've been there. However, what you really need is a new perspective.

Stand in front of a mirror and think on this thought . . .

"The woman you want to date is going to get married to someone. That's right! She is going to get married! And if you take the wisdom in the book to heart, you stand an excellent chance at winning her heart and her hand."

Young man, I can't get that first date for you. You're going to have to figure that one out on your own. And what happens after that first date is also up to you. However, I am going to help you reel in the woman you have decided you want to marry.

How?

BEG!

What begging is NOT!

Begging is not the picture of a dog standing on his hind legs begging for a scrap of food-give me!

Begging is not the picture of a man kneeling on both knees, with his head in his hands, and begging-have pity on me.

What begging is!

You'll have to meet Michelle to understand fully. There was NO other way to get her except to beg. And beg, I did!

- Women want to know WHY they are wanted.

Michelle, I **NEED** your feminine insightfulness. Your insights are so helpful to me in making decisions. I would be so honored to have your insightfulness each day for the rest of my life. Michelle, **PLEASE**, I want to be with you because of your feminine insightfulness.

Michelle, I **NEED** your Godly encouragement. Your encouragement motivates me to be a better man. I would be so honored to have your Godly encouragement and support each and every day for the rest of my life. Michelle,

PLEASE, I want to be with you because of your Godly encouragement.

Michelle, I **NEED** your amazing countenance. I am lifted up when I am seen with you in public. I would be so honored to have your amazing countenance each and every day for the rest of my life. Michelle, **PLEASE**, I want to be with you because of your amazing countenance.

Begging displays . . .

- ✓ Humility
- ✓ Vulnerability
- ✓ Transparency

Word of caution!

Don't "beg" to gain the affection of a girlfriend or to get a date.

"Mike, when do I get out the BIG GUNS and start begging?"

Young man, you ONLY get one shot at begging.

Start begging when you KNOW the woman you are dating is the woman you WANT to marry.

Forgiveness—God's Healing Medicine.

Young man, I can say with 99.99% certainty, a woman you care deeply about will hurt you. And I am just as certain you will say or do something that hurts a woman you care deeply about, too. Knowing this, what are you going to do about

it? You can choose to forgive—or not. Forgiveness is easy to say but is sometimes hard to do. I know!

My good friend, the late Paul J. Meyer, authored a book entitled, *“Forgiveness...the Ultimate Miracle.”* It is the BEST book I have ever read. So when I mentor someone, this is the first book that we read together and talk about. It’s that powerful!

Before reading Paul’s book, I harbored a deep spirit of hatred and unforgiveness towards German people and the country of Germany because they killed almost all of my family who lived in Poland during WWII. I never had the opportunity to know my grandfather because he was shot in the head and killed right in front of my grandmother. Except for my grandmother and her two daughters, every other family member was killed by the German Nazis. But after reading Paul’s book, I realized that I had been forgiven much. So I forgave the German people and the country of Germany! As an outward testimony of my forgiveness, I have chosen to only drive German cars.

So what is forgiveness?

For starters, most people mistakenly believe that forgiveness is all about forgetting.

Not so?

Forgetting is next to impossible.

However, forgiveness is:

- ❖ Letting go of your pain and “stuff” and giving it to God.
- ❖ Love in action.
- ❖ Touching the heart of God.

Another major take-a-way from Paul’s book was to make a list of people who had hurt me and then ask them to forgive me. Did you catch that? I was to contact the people who hurt me and ask them to forgive me. Most people think it’s the other way around. They say, “The person who hurt me should ask for my forgiveness.” Unfortunately, if this is your attitude, you will probably never hear from those who hurt you for several reasons.

- They don’t know that they hurt you.
- They don’t care that they hurt you.
- They may be dead, or they can’t locate you.

The central truth that Paul J. Meyer conveys in his book is that ***almost all illnesses and sicknesses can be traced to a spirit of unforgiveness.*** That’s a mind-blowing concept. Because I NOW know this, I have the power to HELP heal my broken heart and broken emotions by the act of—forgiveness.

One of the best ways to do this is by letter writing. I’ve written many letters. Some I sent and others I just wrote and didn’t mail. But the process of writing released the pain, and I was able to forgive. Keep in mind that if the person you seek forgiveness from is dead or can’t be located, you can do what I did. Just write the letter. You’ll be GLAD you did.

I can't live without you.

Young man, I am for you. I hope you meet the Christian woman of your dreams, date, court, and fall in love. I also hope that when you ask the woman of your dreams to marry you, she says, "Yes!"

Therefore, to say "I can't live without you" when you are down on one knee proposing marriage is both appropriate and loving. It is also appropriate and loving to tell your spouse when you are married. "I can't live without you" means just that. The two of you have been down the road of life—both good and bad—and you literally "Can't live without her."

"Fine, Mike, I get that. But what about using the phrase, 'I can't live without you' pre-marriage proposal?"

Young man, though the phrase "I can't live without you," has inspired many love songs and made us all cry when uttered in a romantic movie. I am going to suggest that you avoid using that phrase altogether until you propose. The reason I say this is because the phrase, "I can't live without you" conveys a spirit of codependency, a grabbing and clutching mentality rather than true love. And without any REAL history together, if you say, "I can't live without you," you're going to come off as being emotionally "needy."

"Okay, what do you suggest?"

I’m going to suggest that when you begin dating that you ***turn the woman in your life over to God***. I am suggesting that you—LET HER GO!

“So, Mike, how does that look like?”

After dating a woman several times, I would write that woman’s name on a piece of paper. Then I would hold that piece of paper up in the air and say.

“God, I give ‘so and so’ over to You. You know what is ultimately best for her, and I will abide by that. Please make me sensitive to your Holy Spirit, and please show me how to be a loving man to this woman.” Then I would place that piece of paper in my Bible or “secret place” in my apartment.

When I began to have feelings for a woman, I would retrieve that piece of paper and pray again. “Lord, I would like to be with this woman. But it is not what I want but what You want that is best for me. Therefore, I let ‘so and so’ GO! If she returns, I will be happy, and if she is persuaded to date and possibly marry someone else, that is good, too.”

“Mike, I can’t live without her.”

Exactly! You can’t live without her until you LET HER GO, and God brings her back.

“Mike, I got it. I CANT live without her’ until I let her go, and God brings her back.”

That’s right! And don’t ever forget it

Give her to God and let her go. If she comes back—wonderful! If she doesn't come back—that's wonderful, too!

Young man, I know that you may have feelings, deep feelings for a woman. However, if you are not able to do what I've just suggested, you may need HELP. It's OKAY to ask for HELP.

Develop Integrity - She Needs Know that You Won't Leave or Abandon Her.

Through my life experience, I have come to the following conclusion about the greatest fear men and woman have

- A man's greatest fear is that he may not be able to provide for his family.

Let me help you eliminate the fear that you won't be able to provide for your family.

- ✓ Are you're willing to work?
- ✓ Are you willing to get an education by "learning" so you can earn?
- ✓ Are you willing to work at any job if necessary?

If you've answered "Yes" to the above, don't sweat it. By choosing a Godly woman to date and marry. Know this. A Godly woman will eat popcorn for dinner until you get on your feet. And if you can't work due to an injury or disability. Or you can't find work. A Godly woman will work two jobs if need be. To help out until you can work again.

- A woman's greatest fear is that her husband will leave and abandon her.

Let me help you eliminate every woman's fear.

Answer these questions?

- ✓ Are you a truth-teller?
- ✓ Can you be trusted?
- ✓ Are you a man of integrity?
- ✓ Do you tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?
- ✓ Are you a man who is willing to own up to your sins, shortcomings, and hang-ups?
- ✓ Do you take full responsibility for your actions?

If you can say "YES" to the above questions, you are well on your way to eliminating a woman's fear that she may be left and abandoned.

However, if you've answered "no." NOW is the time to begin the process of becoming a man of integrity.

Why?

On your wedding day, you are going to make this vow before God and all of your friends and family. You are going to say, "Yes, I PROMISE" to your bride . . .

- ✓ "Yes, I promise to love you."
- ✓ "Yes, I promise to love no other woman."
- ✓ "Yes, I promise to keep myself faithful to you."
- ✓ "Yes, I promise to provide for you."

- ✓ "Yes, I promise to protect you."
- ✓ "Yes, I promise to stay with you and our children."
- ✓ "Yes, I promise . . ."
- ✓ "Yes, I promise to do all these things, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer until death do us part."

Essentially you are saying,

**"YES, I PROMISE NOT TO LEAVE OR
ABANDON YOU!"**

- So why do married Christian men leave and abandon their wives and children to start over?
- So why do married Christian men leave and abandon their wives to be with another woman?
- So why do Christian men leave and abandon their responsibilities?

THEY ARE LIARS!

These men never earned their integrity, or somewhere along the road lost their integrity.

I knew a young Christian man who lied to obtain sex with different women before he was married. He lied by telling his girlfriends he loved them. Unfortunately, they believed him, and they gave themselves to him. So it shouldn't surprise you that the man left his first wife for another woman and married her. He eventually abandoned his second wife for yet another woman.

WOMEN—BEWARE if your boyfriend is a liar. Unless he takes personal responsibility for his actions and makes things right and changes, why should you trust him? Why should you believe him when he says, "Yes, I promise not to leave or abandon you." If your boyfriend is a liar and he isn't remorseful and repentant—fire him!

Young man, the ONLY way to eliminate a woman's fear that she may be left and abandoned—is to become a man of integrity.

Does your "yes" REALLY mean, "YES?"

Engagement Period—Finding Closure Before your Wedding Day.

The day you're engaged to that special woman in your life will be a "red letter" in your life. Congratulations!

Young man, engagement is a very special time for you and your fiancé. There are so many things to do:

- ✓ A reception hall has to be reserved.
- ✓ A wedding cake has to be ordered.
- ✓ A reception caterer has to be chosen.
- ✓ Invitations have to be printed and sent out.
- ✓ Your fiancé's wedding dress has to be fitted.
- ✓ Your pastor has to make himself available to perform the wedding ceremony.
- ✓ Wedding rings have to be sized.

- ✓ Gosh, there’s so much to do and so little time in which to do it.

However, if you’ve been dating and courting other women, your engagement announcement is probably going to break a few hearts. After all, it is conceivable that one of the other women you were dating was praying that you would ask her to marry you.

So what I am about to propose comes under the heading of “lessons learned.” Therefore, I am trying to save you from the possibility of deep emotional pain that could come your way, many years down the road.

“Mike, what are you talking about?”

The conventional thinking that prevails in the Christian circles is this. “You’re engaged, forget about all the other relationships you had. Just ignore them. Your feelings will go away with time. Make pretend they don’t exist. Move on. You’re getting married.”

I agree but also disagree. Here’s why.

Yes, the second I got engaged. I was essentially saying “goodbye” to the other women in my life. However, no one ever bothered to tell me that I NEEDED to seek and find closure with them. Since I didn’t attempt to find closure, I entered my marriage with a lot of “emotional baggage.” Had I dealt with my emotional baggage in a healthy way during the engagement period, I would not have stuffed so much emotional pain deep inside of me.

“Mike, so what do you suggest?”

- Find an appropriate way to AFFIRM each of the other women in your life. It may be through personal contact, letter writing, or gifts. Thank them for their friendship.
- Go to their parents and tell them “thank you” for the privilege it was to date, court and/or be friends their daughter. If possible, tell her grandparents and siblings “thank you,” too.
- PRAY! If The Holy Spirit brings specific issues to your attention. Listen for and follow His leading. Also, you may need the HELP of your father, Pastor, and mentor to assist you.

Being Married-What to Expect.

I'm amazed at the thought that so many people seem to have—marriage will be so much better than being single. Yes, marriage will be better than your single life in the area of sex. Hopefully, you will keep yourself pure and wait to have sex until you are married. But in many ways, your married life will be harder than your single life.

Young man, I'm not going to bore you with all the “can't” realities of marriage.

- You can't sleep all day anymore.
- You can't stay out all night anymore.
- You can't spend all your money on yourself anymore.

“Is that it?”

Young man, being married doesn't change you or your spouse. You will be the same people you were the day after you both said, "I do!"

Change requires WORK!

Therefore, unless you make a full-hearted attempt to change, you can expect to be the same person in married life as you were as a single person. And unless your spouse makes a full-hearted attempt to change. You can expect her to be the same person in married life as she was in a single life.

***"Would-ah, Could-ah, Should-ah"-
Get Rid of it.***

When I was a teenager and still living with my parents, my brother and I engaged in an odd but enjoyable habit. Every Sunday, without fail, we would get out the classified section of the New York Times and read the "Jobs" section. The reason it was so much fun was the way prospective employers wrote their ads. One ad that has stuck with me for over 35 years was a sales job with the caption line that said.

"Are you a would-ah, could-as, should-ah loser? If so, we don't want you. We just want winners."

That line still resonates in my mind.

Young man, what I am about to say is SERIOUS.

ONCE you get married, there is no turning back.

Therefore, get rid of “would-ah, could-ah, should-ah” thinking!

Consider having someone write down the **exact time** you were married on a piece of paper. This will help you to remember that there is no truing back.

***The Man is the Head, but the Wife is
the CROWN.***

Most Christian women cringe when they hear a message on the phrase “The man is the head” and rightly so. If the totality of the message is “The man is the head,” then I can understand why Christian women are afraid to hear it, for fear that it will enslave and degrade them.

However, the complete message is, “The man is the head, but the wife is the CROWN.”

When I was a teenager, I worked at my local Burger King restaurant. I remember the restaurant giving away a paper “crown” that came with the kid’s meal. This crown didn’t cost more than a few pennies, was worn for a few moments, and then quickly discarded.

No doubt, you have seen the Queen of England on television. Let your mind recall the Queen in all her splendor and glory—adorning her CROWN. Her crown is priceless and is encrusted with diamonds emeralds, sapphires, and other precious stones.

Make no mistake about it. Your wife has something resting on YOUR head. You are either adorning a cheap two-cent paper crown or—a CROWN. The choice is yours to make.

Now let me show you how to have a CROWN that adorns your head...

When Michelle and I were first married, we sat down and had the following conversation.

"Michelle, what is it that you want to do?"

"I want to continue working at the Department Store."

"Wonderful, what do you need?"

"I need a paper bag lunch every day because I hate making my lunch."

So for the next several years, I made Michelle a paper bag lunch. Often, I would put a love note in the bag or made a silly drawing on the bag to make her smile.

Into our first year of marriage, I bought myself a new (used) car. There was nothing wrong with Michelle's car, However, after the first week she said,

"Mike, give me the keys to your car."

"Why? It's my car. There is nothing wrong with yours."

"Oh yes, there is..."

And you know what happened after that. Don't you? Michelle got my car because she is the CROWN.

Subsequently, we had many similar conversations . . .

“Mike, I want to volunteer.”

“Wonderful, Michelle, what do you need?”

“I need this...and this...and this... Mike, I also want to work at the church.”

“Wonderful, Michelle, what do you need?”

I need this... and this and this...Mike, I want to watch MY favorite show, “The Biggest Loser.”

“Michelle, I hate that show!”

Guess what show my CROWN, and I watch together?

“Mike, I want to go to Seminary to get a master’s degree.”

“Wonderful, Michelle, what do you need?”

“I need to pay for tuition.”

“Michelle, I’ve looked at our finances, and we can’t pay for all of the tuition.”

“Mike, that’s okay, someone at church has already told me they will pay whatever we cannot afford to pay. Also, the church will reimburse some, too.”

“Wonderful, what else do you need?”

“I need a new computer.”

“Here is my laptop, Michelle, you can have it.”

“I don’t want that laptop.”

“Why not, it’s a nice laptop. Look . . .”

“Mike, I need a laptop like everyone else has in my classes. Yours is not like theirs. I don’t want it.”

“Okay, what do you want?”

“Mike, I want a Dell...with...and don’t forget to get me that thingumajig that you stick into the side of the laptop.”

“Thingumajig? Oh, yes, you mean a USB flash drive.”

“Yes, that thingumajig I can use to back up my files.”

You get the picture, don’t you?

There are many things I wanted to do with my life and might have done. And in making my choices, I have heard the following and responded appropriately.

“Mike, you never build a big business like you thought and said you would when you were young.”

“Yes! I changed my mind. Instead, I had a smaller business so I could invest my time to get a CROWN.”

“Mike, you never made a million dollars like you thought and said you would.”

“Yes, that’s true also. I changed my mind. I made less money so I could invest my money to get a CROWN.”

“Mike, you never got these degrees like you said you would.”

“Yes! I changed my mind. I changed my priorities, so I could invest my time and money to get a CROWN.”

“Young man, your business is NOT your crown—your wife is your CROWN.”

The purpose for your business is to provide financial resources so that your CROWN can do and become what God has ordained for her to do and to become.

Your bank account is NOT your crown—your wife is your CROWN.

The purpose of your bank account is not so you can buy “toys” and then say, “Honey, this new boat is for you.” Your bank account is there to provide what your CROWN needs—NOT what you want. There is nothing wrong with having a boat. But if it comes at the expense of what your CROWN needs and wants, it’s time to sell the boat.

Your achievements, social standing, power, or fame is NOT your crown—your wife is your CROWN.

When you get into your 50’s 60’s and 70’s, you will realize that the awards, the accolades, the degrees, etc. mean absolutely nothing. Why? You are not taking any of that with you to Heaven. You are either taking a crown, or you are taking a CROWN.

The time to begin having the CROWN mentality is NOW while you are dating and counting. At some point in your relationship, explain to your girlfriend that your major purpose as a husband is to provide the resources, love, and encouragement so she can be ALL that God created her to be a—CROWN. Ask her this question, “What do you really, really, really want to do and to become?” When she gives you an answer, ask her.

What can I do to help you?

What can I give you to help you?

How can I encourage you?

Then begin...

If it is Possible, have Children.

I love children, but I can't speak on the issue of children because Michelle and I were not able to have any. Michelle wanted kids, but I could not give them to her. Not willing to talk about it publically. However, I've included this chapter because it will probably be a part of your married life. Therefore, please discuss the issue of children and what God says about them with your father, Pastor, or mentor. This will help clarify the discussions of “kids” you should have with your serious girlfriends and fiancé.

“In-Laws” or “Out-Laws.”

If you're anything like me, you love to hear a good joke and to laugh. Unfortunately, many jokes are “Mother-in-Law” jokes. They make fun of mothers-in-law. In a previous chapter, I mentioned that mothers and grandmothers are God's x-ray system. That how you treat them is exactly how you will treat your girlfriend and spouse. Young man, if you can't stand your girlfriend's mother, something is wrong—you. And no matter how horrible your girlfriend's mother

may really be. It is your attitude towards her that is of great importance. You are to LOVE your girlfriend’s mother as she may also become your mother-in-law. And if that happens, you must continue loving her.

Young man, no person in your girlfriend’s family is going to give you the “once-over” more than her mother. Mothers were once single, too, and they know how young men can be. They have also experienced pain in their dating, courting, and marriage years, so they want their daughter to avoid the same pain and the same mistakes. Knowing this just “be yourself” and please avoid being pretentious.

So have I ever had problems with my mother-in-law? Have I ever had any fights, or have I had any blowups with my mother-in-law? As God is my witness—no! Of course, living 1200 miles apart helps, too. Ha!

Have a Hobby(s).

When Michelle and I were first married, it never dawned on me that Michelle would ever be on a staff position at church. Let alone attend and graduate from Seminary. However, I always knew that Michelle loved God and loved people. She loved to serve God and people. That’s one of the many attributes that attracted me to her.

When I was dating and courting, one of the other women I was dating said to me. “Mike, why are you dating Michelle? She JUST works in a department store. I’m going to be a...” Her comment didn’t register with me at first. On the

surface, she was saying, “Mike, don’t date Michelle—date me.” It took me a while to think her statement through, and this is how I responded to her.

Michelle LOVES people and serves them at the department store.” That truth is what separated Michelle from this other woman and others I might add.

Michelle’s strong work ethic earned her many accolades and was noticed by a former colleague who recruited her to a Jewelry company. Of course, you now realize that Michelle didn’t work at a Jewelry company. Michelle LOVES people and serves them at Jewelry Company.

Then she was again recruited to a Watch Company.

You got it!

Michelle LOVES people and serves them at the Watch Company.

Later Michelle stopped working and began to serve as a volunteer for a few years. Michelle LOVES people and serves them at the Service Center.

Then Michelle began serving at our church. Michelle LOVES people and serves them at Bent Tree Bible Fellowship.

Then Michelle began working part-time at church. Michelle LOVES people and serves them at church.

“Mike, so what’s the point?”

The point is Michelle LOVES people and serves people outside of the home. She also keeps long hours. I, on the

other hand, had jobs that enabled me to be home more often. I got lonely and could watch TV for so long.

So I found a few hobbies. They include shooting guns, astronomy, writing, building computers, working out...

Young man, the goal is for your wife to become all that God indented her to become. Your job is to provide whatever she needs to that effect. Therefore, you will need a hobby(s) to keep you occupied when she is away from home and/or is in the home working.

"But Mike, you guys didn't have children. My wife and I are going to have kids, and she will always be at home."

Yes, that may be true.

However, I have observed from my friends who do have kids and a wife who stays at home and/or works outside the home.

You still need to have a few hobbies.

She does, too!

Winning AND Keeping.

An old friend of mine called me late one night to tell me he had just gotten married. Of course, I congratulated him, but I knew in my spirit that's not why he was calling. He was really calling me to gloat. He had finally married the woman he had talked about wanting to get years earlier.

Winning isn't all about just getting the woman you want. Winning is about becoming a man that will KNOW how to keep the woman he marries.

Let me put it to you in another way.

- Are you the winner the moment you open up your textbook or years later when you've graduated?
- Are you the winner the moment you pick up the instrument of your choice or years later when you have mastered the instrument?
- Are you the winner the moment you put in the pads and helmet and step onto the football field or years later when you are a starting varsity player?

Unfortunately, my friend didn't get it . . .
So what happened to my friend?

Yes, he got the woman to the altar, and she said, "yes."
But years later, she kicked him out of the house and divorced him. He had acted foolishly in his moral choices.

Young man, it will take 100% of your efforts to get the girl.
AND it will require 100% of your efforts to keep her.
Think about it!

Setting up Relational Boundaries for Old Boy Friends, Girlfriends, Flames, First-Love and Love Interests.

It's happened to all of us. You are busily working on your computer one evening and up pops a "Friend Request" from and an old boyfriend, girlfriend, flame, first-love, or love interest on Facebook. What to do? Do you "Fiend" them? And what do you do if an old someone is already a "Friend?" I don't subscribe to any other social or relational site except Facebook, but the following applies just the same.

Before I address the specific boundaries for dealing with relationships from our past, I am in favor of rekindling and renewing relationships. I like the idea of finding out what my old friends from high school, college, military, job, church, etc. are up to.

I also like to share my Christian faith with my old friends when appropriate and especially love to discover that an old friend has found Christ, too. Sometimes rekindling old friendships leads to our families and kids getting together for a meal, a picnic, or a pool party at our house. And sometimes, rekindling an old friendship can lead to a job or business opportunity. This is all good, but we must have and maintain boundaries.

Keep in mind that every relationship from our past has unique characteristics that may force you to ADD additional

boundaries. However, the following will point you in the right direction.

For purposes of this chapter, I am addressing the topic of setting up boundaries as it relates to the marital relationship. But the concept of setting up boundaries can also be applied to old boyfriends, girlfriends, flames, first-loves, or love interests during the dating and courting phase of your life, as well. Your father, Pastor and/or mentor can help you define and set up boundaries that are specific to you and your situation.

One of the biggest killers of marriages is an illicit emotional or illicit physical relationship, commonly referred to as an “affair.” To begin with, you **MUST** get rid of the notion that “it” (an illicit emotional or illicit physical relationship) can never happen to you. “It” can happen to you. No one is impervious or immune—**NO ONE**. That said, the sooner you stop thinking “it” can’t happen to you, the sooner you will begin to take the steps that will make sure “it” doesn’t happen to you.

You’ll notice that I mentioned an illicit emotional relationship also constitutes an affair. Most people think that only an illicit physical relationship constitutes an affair. Not true! An illicit emotional affair begins when you have an intimate mental relationship with someone who is not your spouse.

This kind of affair begins innocently enough. You are reconnected to an old boyfriend, girlfriend, or love interest, etc. And out of nowhere, you have thoughts of, “I wonder if...” or “If only I had that...”

Do these thoughts that pop into our minds constitute an illicit emotional affair? No, they do not unless you entertain and feed these thoughts. I am convinced that EVERYONE has had these thoughts pop into their head. I believe this to be true because, as a rule, thoughts of all kinds are constantly “popping” into our head. Therefore, it is what you choose to do with these thoughts that will either lead you to emotional health and well-being or begin to lead you down the slippery slope of an illicit emotional affair.

To say “I need HELP” is a good thing. I have sought counseling and pastoral care for most of my adult life. In so doing, I know how to deal with the issue of “thought” in general, no matter what they are or the source that triggers them. Therefore, you must take personal responsibility for your mental and emotional health. So I’ll defer continuing how to deal with thoughts that pop into your head to your own expertise. Or ask that you begin the process of learning “how-to” by seeking fatherly, Pastoral, mentoring, or professional counsel.

It isn’t rocket science when I say, “Sexual contact with a person who is not your legal husband or wife can’t take place unless both parties are within arms-length of each other.” That’s very obvious, isn’t it? So why does an illicit physical or adulterous relationship occur? I am not an expert, counselor, or clinician, so I’m not going to address factors that play into an illicit emotional or adulterous physical relationship. I am, however, going to provide some necessary boundaries that I have set up in my own life.

When you are married and plan on initiating or continuing a friendship with a former boyfriend, girlfriend, flame, first-love, or love interest, you need to communicate strict

boundaries. Write out the boundaries you expect in your relationship and email it to them. Also, allow the other person to add any additional boundaries to your list.

Keep in mind that the following are boundaries that I have set up as a married man. They will serve as a starting point for you to think through what boundaries you need to set up in your dating and courting pursuits.

- 1) **Limited marital discussions.** All emotional and physical affairs often begin when an old someone says, "You must be doing something right in your marriage, please tell me" Or, "I'm having marital problems, what do you think I should do?" These are all excellent questions but questions that must be addressed by a pastor or professional—not you. Therefore I will limit communications about my marriage or the other person's marriage.
- 2) **No sexual discussions.** That being said, anything related to sex, sexual experiences, or sexual thoughts must be grounds for immediate "defriending" and immediate spousal intervention.
- 3) **No telephone communication.** What does that say about you and the state of your marriage if you have to "talk" to an old boyfriend, girlfriend, flame, first-love or love interest? "I just want to catch up," you say. Wonderful! Catch up with email. Talking is very personal and intimate. Writing is too, but we are setting up boundaries for having a healthy relationship. So what if there is an emergency or death in the family or other emergency that you need to tell an old someone. Fine! Then use the telephone. However, the phone is not the

tool to use to catch-up with a former boyfriend, girlfriend, flame, first-love, or love interest.

- 4) **No unsupervised personal interaction.** “Let’s meet for coffee” or “I’ll be at so and so. I sure would like to see you there.” If you meet an old boyfriend, girlfriend, flame, or love interest without a mutual and agreed upon chaperon, you are already down the slippery slope. Every affair began with one innocent, well-intentioned, unsupervised personal contact at a public place. Get real! “It” can happen to you. Set up boundaries so “it” doesn’t happen to you. What if you see each other on Sunday at church or bump into each other at the store. Okay! But you must have boundaries in place for your protection. As an example, in the 35 years of marriage, I had to see an old “someone” from my past—once. I was just beginning a painful part of my life journey, and I called her. I felt that she had to know... We agreed to see each other with her parents. But only after my wife, Michelle, approved. And yes, Michelle had an old flame that we met for dinner. But only after I approved, too.
- 5) **Clarifying “I love you.”** What does “I love you” really mean? And should you say, “I love you” to an old “someone?” Good question! We live in a day and time when the term “I love you” means basically whatever you want it to mean. And since we are talking about setting up boundaries to prevent an illicit emotional and/or illicit physical affair this needs to be addressed. Personally, I believe in saying, “I love you” to all the people that I love. Also, I think the best way to communicate the meaning behind “I love you” is to tell that old someone what it means. Yes, you should get it out there. You are setting up boundaries to protect yourself. Therefore, write that old someone an email

and tell them what you mean when you say "I love you" to them. Here's what I recently wrote to an old someone.

Dear...

In my recent email to you. I said, "I love you." However, I didn't clarify exactly what that meant. So I am writing to define what it means. "I love you," means you are my friend. I will pray for you if you ask me to. I think of you and care what happens to you. I love your family very much, as well. Because I do love you, I am sending you a shortlist of boundaries so that we can protect ourselves, my marriage, our ministries, reputation, and be a testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to add to my list of boundaries, please do so, and I will honor it.

Mike

Trials-God's Ultimate Change Agent.

As I've studied the Bible, I've concluded that there seems to be more written about the subject of trials than most topics. For example, I have noticed that there is so much more written about the subject of trials than the subject of marriage. I say this because I have often heard messages that attempt to convince me that "Marriage is God's Ultimate Change Agent." Certainly, you WILL be changed in the union of God's sanctified union called marriage. But it is through trials that you will be changed the most.

Whenever my wife Michelle talks to young couples, she comments, "The man I married is NOT the same man I am

married to today. There were distinct trials in our marriage that changed Mike—for the better. My family didn’t like Mike very much before we were married, but they love the ‘new’ Mike.”

Michelle continues . . .

“For the first 12 years of marriage, Mike was the man I married. Mike was outgoing, full of life, aggressive, overly confident, and ambitious. You could really see all these qualities displayed when he taught Sunday school. He was always prepared, to the point, and animated. But I was unaware that Mike was secretly struggling. He had thoughts of suicide that he never shared with me and strange “oddities” for getting through the day. Looking back, Mike was overwhelmed with mood struggles that we were able to hide, but eventually, his mood struggles were too much for him, and he collapsed emotionally. The next four years were a blur with me trying to find the right doctors and combinations of medications to keep Mike alive. During this time, Mike was sleeping 18 hours a day, lethargic and without ambition or motivation. He appeared dull and often unkempt in public. People that knew Mike before this episode was stunned at Mike’s appearance. He was unable to communicate verbally as he once did. His thoughts were fragmented, and he rarely smiled. To be frank, my family told me to divorce Mike, but I couldn’t because I had taken a marital vow to love Mike ‘In sickness and in health.’ And as dramatically as he got sick, he got better. Now, I would categorize Mike as kind, gentle, loving, service-oriented, polite, overly caring, generous, a friend, and yes, silly, almost child-like at times. But child-like in a good way. Mike has a child-like faith and unwavering belief in the love,

providence, and grace of God. Mike, however, stutters and can't communicate verbally with the same level of confidence as he once did. His ambitions are also gone. They have been replaced with a list of God-focused, and God-centered ambitions. His motivations have also changed. He loves to write and share through the many books he has written and is writing. I love the NEW Mike. He looks the same (actually more handsome). I thank God for the trials that He has graciously brought us through to affect the changes in Mike. Trials are God's ultimate change agent."

Music—Healing Words . . .

Young man, life isn't easy. Nor is the process of growth and maturity, which is necessary for courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman.

- Rivals will hurt you.
- Mistakes will hurt you.
- Women will hurt you.

Additionally, you will experience pain . . .

- When love leaves you hurting.
- When rejection leaves you crying.
- When saying good-bye leaves, you emotionally devastated.

And what do you do when OBEYING what the Bible says (being wise) leaves you feeling all alone?

One of the BEST ways I've discovered for getting through the above (and more) is MUSIC. Let me preface that I don't mean just ANY music. I mean carefully choosing songs with lyrics that directly SPEAKS to the issues you are going through. That's POWERFUL medicine.

Here's the science and the practicum to consider.

"In the last 25 years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person's state of mind the way that one simple song can."

Dr. Richard Pellegrino—Neurologist

We are admonished to sing. *"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."* Ephesians 5:19.

God sings over you. *"The LORD, your God, is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, and he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."* Zephaniah 3:17.

- ✓ With a song, you can choose what goes into your mind.
- ✓ With a song, you CAN control your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions.
- ✓ With a song, you can survive the present reality and thrive into your future reality.
- ✓ It takes anywhere from 5-11 positive messages to offset a negative message.
- ✓ You must also repeat the positive message over and over again for it to take hold of us.

The “right” songs repeated over and over again literally “override” negative lies and sad, broken emotions. And if repeated enough times, eventually, the old pathways in the brain (triggering the memories of past hurt and pain) are replaced with new ones.

During the process of authoring this book, I experienced DEEP pain, aloneness, and old PAINFUL memories. What to do? I’ve been listened to specially chosen songs over and over again at night and during the day. Consider this:

An average song is about 4 minutes long. Most people sleep eight hours a night. So the song’s message is repeated 15 times every hour or 120 times each night. In a week, the message of the song is repeated 840 times and in a month is repeated 3,360 times. This means that in one year, your mind will have listened to the message of a Christian song or hymn you have selected over 40,000 times.

The benefit to this activity is that I am singing the song or hymn I’ve been listening to at night over and over during the day. I’m thinking about what I want to think about not what the world is trying to dump into my mind. I am also overriding the old negative and painful emotions and replacing them with the TRUTH.

I took the iPod that I have by my bedside to listen to songs at night. AND I took my other iPod for listening to songs during the day and loaded the following three songs. ***I have been listening to these songs over and over again . . .*** These songs have been soothing and calming as it ministers to the emotional pain I have inside of me.

I Am Loved

By The Gaither Vocal Band

CHORUS

I am loved, I am loved
I can risk loving you
For the One who knows me best
Loves me most
I am loved you are loved
Won't you please take my hand
We are free to love each other
We are loved

VERSE 1

I said if You knew You wouldn't want me
My scars are hidden by the face I wear
He said my child My scars go deeper
It was love for you that put them there

CHORUS

VERSE 2

Forgiven I repeat it I'm forgiven
Clean before my Lord, I freely stand
Forgiven I can dare to love my brother
Forgiven I reach out to take your hand

CHORUS

TAG

We are free to love each other, we are loved

Bridge over Troubled Waters

By Simon and Garfunkel-Sung by Michael W. Smith

When you're weary feeling small
When tears are in your eyes I'll dry them all
I'm on your side oh when times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

When you're down and out
When you're on the street
When evening falls so hard
I will comfort you ooh
I'll take your part oh when darkness comes
And pain is all around
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

Sail on silver girl
Sail on by
Your time has come to shine
All your dreams are on their way
See how they shine
Oh when you need a friend
I'm sailing right behind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind

Love Lifted Me

Words: James Rowe, Music: Howard E. Smith

I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more,
But the Master of the sea, heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

Refrain

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help
Love lifted me!

All my heart to Him I give, ever to Him I'll cling
In His blessed presence live, ever His praises sing,
Love so mighty and so true, merits my soul's best songs,
Faithful, loving service too, to Him belongs.

Refrain

Souls in danger look above, Jesus completely saves,
He will lift you by His love, out of the angry waves.
He's the Master of the sea, billows His will obey,
He your Savior wants to be, be saved today.

Refrain

"Mike, that's powerful! I never knew that songs could change emotions."

Yes, that's right.

“STUPID—Go get Her Back.”

As we conclude this section, I’d like to share a story that sums up what I hope for you. I HOPE you will realize that you are incapable of navigating the dating and courting phase of your life all by yourself. You WILL NEED the help of your father, Pastor, and mentor.

Admittedly, my heart was captivated by other women. My girlfriend Michelle (now my wife) knew this because I told her. I had been dating Michelle for almost one year when this story took place. She and I were riding together, coming home from a singles retreat, when I told her that I wanted to break it off with her. Of course, she was not very happy, but I was convinced in my heart that this is what I should do. So that’s what I did.

Young man, if you want to break off a current relationship to date another woman, that’s fine. It’s your choice to make. But breaking off a dating relationship is something that you MUST talk to your father, pastor, or mentor about BEFORE you act on it. Anyhow, I made this decision before consulting my Pastor and mentor and also ignored other “signposts” I mention in this book. It was several weeks later that I confessed what I had done to my Pastor in his office. I told him that I had acted foolishly. He immediately said, “STUPID—Go get her back.” He put his hand on my shoulder, prayed for me, and then I ran out of his office . . . I married Michelle one year later.

Section Three

Wise Outcomes

Mike concludes by answering key questions.
He ends by providing a summary of this book.

30 Years Later—Wisdom is STILL Necessary.

"Mike, if you had to do it all over again. What would you do differently?"

That's an excellent question! I wouldn't do or change much of anything. I would still seek to follow the wisdom found in the Bible. But in summary:

- ✓ I would still pursue the dating and courting process with the attitude that choosing who to marry this is this second greatest decision of my life.
- ✓ I would still pursue the dating and courting process with the attitude that I need the help of my father, Pastor, and mentor.
- ✓ I would still pursue the dating and courting process with the attitude that it is MORE about becoming than it is about finding.

I also wouldn't **marry** any woman unless she met "standards" that I've already talked about in this book. But in summary:

- She must be a "Spirit-led" Christian.
- She must have the approval of my Pastor(s) and mentor(s).
- She must have a father who was "for me."

"Mike, was the dating and courting process easy?"

No! It was not! There were many lessons to be learned, many obstacles to overcome, and some pain to endure. But that is as it should be.

“Do you have any regrets?”

Yes, I have ONE!

During my dating and courting years, I experienced rejection, a broken heart, and other painful emotions. Women hurt me. My rivals hurt me, and my mistakes hurt me. However, instead of dealing with these emotions, I stuffed them deep inside of me because NO ONE told me that I needed to deal with it. This is why, NOW, my advice to fathers, Pastors, and mentors is to HELP your disciples with their emotional baggage—before they get married.

Thankfully, during the development of this book, God revealed that these negative emotions were still inside me, and I needed to resolve them, which I did and am doing.

“Mike, how are you dealing with your past emotional issues?”

At first, I thought if the women who hurt me affirmed me, I would feel better. Of course, the events that caused my emotional pain occurred over 25 years. And even if I were able to contact everyone, it’s doubtful I would get a response. “Mike, I’m sorry to have hurt you.” Anyhow, the HELP I am now receiving includes:

- ✓ Talking to a trusted friend and mentor.
- ✓ Owning up to my feelings.
- ✓ Talking to a professional psychiatrist and counselor.
- ✓ Crying and releasing the pain that was bottled up inside of me.

- ✓ Letting Michelle read the manuscript and talking about it.
- ✓ Receiving and appropriating the love of God through His Son, The Lord Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Reading God's Word.
- ✓ Being reminded that God knows exactly how I feel.

Young man, in conclusion, if you are to court, win, and love a woman as I've outlined in this book, I am afraid you will be hurt, too. But don't sweat it. Seek HELP right away, and you should be fine. You'll also avoid long-term pain.

So other than getting HELP for managing my broken heart, rejection, and other painful emotions. If I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't change much of anything.

I acquired wisdom and WON!

- I won Michelle. You'll have to meet her to understand fully. Michelle has been everything I ever expected in a Godly Christian wife and a thousand times more. I also won from writing this manuscript. I realized again how much God loves me and how good He has been to me. And I fell in love with Michelle all over again, too.
- I won a changed me. The women I dated and courted profoundly impacted me, and in the process, I grew, changed, and matured in every area of my life. Thank you!
- I won the wisdom, know-how, and experience to love a Christian (and non-Christian) woman. They include Michelle, her two sisters, nieces, grandmothers, her mother, my mother, aunts, cousins, sister-in-law. Also, women in; our small

groups, church, the sphere of influence, personal ministry, marketplace, friends, and extended family.

“Mike, could you summarize this book?”

1. Young man, are you counting on “winning” the Christian woman of your dreams by chance or blind luck (no such thing as luck). Surely not! Be wise and begin the process of winning the Christian woman of your dreams through preparation and discipline.
2. Young man, just because you love someone doesn’t mean you can, should or must marry that person. Love is only one of the many factors to consider in making the second most significant decision of your life—who you will marry and spend the rest of your life with.
3. Young man, most of all, I would say to be SURE and include The Holy Spirit, Prayer, His Word, your parents, Pastor, and mentor throughout the entire dating and courting process. **YOU NEED THEM!**

Young man—to court, win, and love a Christian woman is one of God’s magnificent mysteries.

Prepare wisely!
Choose wisely!
God-Speed!

Last Word

Young man, I hope you've enjoyed reading this book the first time through. However, it was meant to be read over and over again. Please ask your father, Pastor, or mentor to obtain the "leader's guide" that accompanies this book. Together you can work through Scriptures and questions related to this book. And by doing so . . .

You will be WISER! You will have the confidence and knowhow to court, win, and love a Christian woman!

Related Topics

This book only scratches the surface on the topics related to courting, winning, and loving a Christian woman. Further study and learning are recommended.