

Ladies' Bible Studies

Summit's Ladies' Bible Studies exist to minister to women's unique needs by building relationships with God and other women that will encourage spiritual birth and maturity. Become part of this process by choosing one of these weekly studies:

Sundays from 5:30-7:20 p.m. starting September 25 (Cost \$7)

Our Mighty Fortress: Finding Refuge in God, by Joan Esherick, draws upon the imagery of a medieval fortress. As she explores each room and structure from the outside inward, she calls us to understand progressively more intimate aspects of refuge in God. By teaching us that we can escape inner chaos without escaping our lives, Joan gives practical wisdom women can apply. Come find relief behind your Father's walls.

Tuesdays from 9:30-11:00 a.m. starting September 27 (Cost: \$15)

Here and Now...There and Then is a DVD series on the Book of Revelation taught by Beth Moore. Each week we enjoy some fellowship and a snack, and then either watch the DVD or break up into smaller groups to discuss last week's light homework. Beth says, "Its hopeful purpose is to increase worship, anticipation, and yes, fear of God in willing hearts and to light a fire in our spirits to study Revelation in greater depth."

Nursery for little ones and a children's choir for Pre-K through 4th grade are available on Sunday evenings. Childcare is also available on Tuesday mornings. To register contact the church office (586-3351).

Resources

The Montrose Bible Conference, just 45 minutes northwest of Clarks Summit, offers a rich program of events and retreats in a getaway mountain setting. It's a resource well worth checking out.

Ladies Retreat, October 14-16, with Joan Esherick
Quilt Retreat, November 3-5
Single Parent Family Retreat, November 18-20
Ladies' Christmas Tea, December 1

Couples Conferences (2012):
January 27-29 - Speaker: Craig Peters
February 3-5 - The Art of Marriage
February 10-12 - Speaker: Dennis & Lucille Madeira
Visit www.MontroseBible.org or call 1.800.598.5030.

Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; the Respect He Desperately Needs
by Emerson Eggerichs

Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts
by Les and Leslie Parrott

How to Get Married . . . by Me, the Bride
by Sally Lloyd-Jones

The Hidden Art of Homemaking: Ideas for Creating Beauty in Everyday Life
by Edith Scheaffer

The Spirit of Loveliness
By Emilie Barnes



The Women's LINK is a ministry of Summit Baptist Bible Church.

Fall 2011

Volume 49



The Proverbs 31 Woman In the Twenty-First Century

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies."
(Proverbs 31:10)

"A capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman—who is he who can find her?" About 1000 years before the coming of Christ, a king named Lemuel penned his mother's instruction concerning a worthy or excellent woman. This is no haphazard list. He creatively arranged these twenty-two verses (10-31) in an acrostic; the first letter of each verse follows the complete Hebrew alphabet—in order, from the first letter to the last.

This year in *The Women's LINK*, we'd like to explore these verses and apply their relevance to women in the twenty-first century. Using John MacArthur's outline, we will discover the Proverbs 31 Woman in her role as a wife, homemaker, neighbor, teacher, mother, and saint.

On page 2, we've printed out Proverbs 31:10-31 from *The Amplified Bible*. Sometimes reading a familiar section of Scripture in another translation helps us take a fresh look. May I encourage you to read it once a day for a week or two? Take the time to slowly meditate on the truths of the Word, asking God to show you how the principles apply to this season of your life.

For this issue, we've asked several ladies (and two men) in various walks of life to comment on the excellent woman as a wife and as a homemaker. Sometimes serious, sometimes light, their commentaries give various points of view to consider. The ageless bottom line? "A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (verse 30). I pray these pages will encourage and strengthen you in your journey.

Sarah L. Phillips

"Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."

1 Peter 3:3, 4

In This Issue . . .

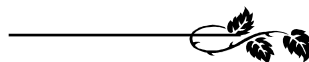
Writers:

Sherry Boykin
Sherrie Holloway
Caren Michael
Sarah Phillips
Micah Stockdale
Shawn Stockdale
Mary Ellen Thomas



Proverbs 31:10-31

The Amplified Bible



¹⁰A capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman—who is he who can find her? She is far more precious than jewels and her value is far above rubies or pearls.

¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her confidently and relies on and believes in her securely, so that he has no lack of [honest] gain or need of [dishonest] spoil.

¹²She comforts, encourages, and does him only good as long as there is life within her.

¹³She seeks out wool and flax and works with willing hands [to develop it].

¹⁴She is like the merchant ships loaded with foodstuffs; she brings her household's food from a far [country].

¹⁵She rises while it is yet night and gets [spiritual] food for her household and assigns her maids their tasks.

¹⁶She considers a [new] field before she buys or accepts it [expanding prudently and not courting neglect of her present duties by assuming other duties]; with her savings [of time and strength] she plants fruitful vines in her vineyard.

¹⁷She girds herself with strength [spiritual, mental, and physical fitness for her God-given task] and makes her arms strong and firm.

¹⁸She tastes and sees that her gain from work [with and for God] is good; her lamp goes not out, but it burns on continually through the night [of trouble, privation, or sorrow, warning away fear, doubt, and distrust].

¹⁹She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

²⁰She opens her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her filled hands to the needy [whether in body, mind, or spirit].

²¹She fears not the snow for her family, for all her household are doubly clothed in scarlet.

²²She makes for herself coverlets, cushions, and rugs of tapestry. Her clothing is of linen, pure and fine, and of purple [such as that of which the clothing of the priests and the hallowed cloths of the temple were made].

²³Her husband is known in the [city's] gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

²⁴She makes fine linen garments and leads others to buy them; she delivers to the merchants girdles [or sashes that free one up for service].

²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing and her position is strong and secure; she rejoices over the future [the latter day or time to come, know-

ing that she and her family are in readiness for it!]

²⁶She opens her mouth in skillful and godly Wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness [giving counsel and instruction].

²⁷She looks well to how things go in her household, and the bread of idleness (gossip, discontent, and self-pity) she will not eat.

²⁸Her children rise up and call her blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied); and her husband boasts of and praises her, [saying],

²⁹Many daughters have done virtuously, nobly, and well [with the strength of character that is steadfast in goodness], but you excel them all.

³⁰Charm and grace are deceptive, and beauty is vain [because it is not lasting], but a woman who reverently and worshipfully fears the Lord, she shall be praised!

³¹Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates [of the city]!



Reach for the Stars Mop!



Last week, I broke down and bought a mop!

I enjoy all that goes into homemaking: cooking, gardening, freezing fruits and vegetables, sewing, decorating, and even cleaning. But the truth is, I can't do as much as I used to do. I can't lug the vacuum cleaner upstairs, hoist my sewing machine onto the table, re-arrange the furniture, or muscle the basement clean anymore. My body is like a timer. It gives me loud and clear signals when time's up in the garden or on the tile floor with a rag in my hand.

Which brings me back to the mop. I've never used one. I don't remember my mother ever using one. Oh no! We're the get-down-on-your-hands-and-knees-type of family. I asked my mom about this the other day. She has recently modified her approach. She drops her wet rag onto the floor, places her foot on top, and scrubs away, standing up. The whole floor! It must work because it looks pretty good! Or maybe my dad's scrubbing on the sly—on his hands and knees, of course.

Every single time my more-than-willing husband helps me wash the kitchen floor, he says, "We really should do this more often, Sar . . ."

"I know . . . I know," I interrupt him, arms pressing back and forth. "It would be sooo much easier to get the floor clean." But it seems like such a big job . . .

Maybe, just maybe, it's time. Time I faced my limitations and restricted my floor activities to exercising—and playing with my soon-to-be-born grandson.

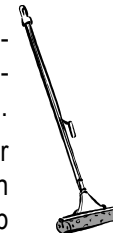
So what does homemaking look like when your "energizer bunny" batteries run a little low? When age slows you down? When your limitations trump your ideals and past routines? As I've grappled with the changes that have overtaken my life, I've adopted a few strategies that have helped me. Perhaps they will make homemaking less daunting for you too.

Ask for help. This may be hard for us independent types, but asking family members to contribute not only helps you, but develops a team spirit. I need to ask for help every time I'd like to transplant flowers, move boxes, or wrestle a turkey into the cart at Wegman's. And to be honest, I sometimes feel guilty about it. I try to remember that God can use our limitations to build sensitivity into the lives of those who help us. Perhaps ask an adult child or hire a teen to assist with cleaning on a regular basis, or buddy-up with an able friend to tackle the attic or garage.

Simplify. Less is more. Scale back. Just because you always canned fifty quarts of tomatoes doesn't mean you have to do it now. Re-evaluate what you're doing. What's really important?

Adopt realistic expectations, especially of yourself. There is something to a respectable, clean, and neat home, yet be cautious about overdoing. I find that washing a few windows at a time works better for me than cleaning them all in one day.

Relationships are more important than a *Better Homes and Gardens* décor, gourmet meals, or a weedless lawn. Proverbs 31 homemaking is never an end in itself, but a means to serve (not impress) our families and those God brings to our doors.

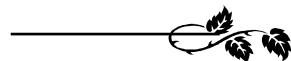


Oh . . . the mop I bought? It stands tall and proud in the pantry, still in the wrapper, price tag dangling from the handle. We eye each other once in a while. Maybe someday soon I'll actually reach for that mop and we'll become friends!

Sarah Phillips and her husband, Barry, have been married thirty-two years and have three daughters. Sarah is a freelance writer of articles, devotionals, and poems, many of which have appeared in print and online.



At Home at Home



The Proverbs 31 Woman . . . the woman who seemingly can do it all. Are her virtues attainable? Learning from older women and friends has been a valuable way for me to discover ways to be more like this great example!

The Proverbs 31 Woman was meant to serve as a model of how we are to treat our husbands and run the affairs of our households.

She works with her hands (verses 13-15).

So many of my daily tasks involve working with my hands. Whether cooking, cleaning, playing with the kids, laundry, or sewing, I am using my hands! I think of the opposite, not as using no hands, but as sitting and being idle. When I am working with my hands, I am caring for our family.

I joke with my husband that even my hobbies benefit our family. I enjoy gardening and canning the food I grow or buy at farmers' markets. It is easier to buy everything from the grocery store shelves. However, I find satisfaction in caring for a garden and canning it for future use. Why not stretch a dollar and enjoy doing it? Sewing is another hobby I like and find ways to make useful. I began making quilts and displaying them in my home. Then, I started to make a few as gifts. Now I make

crafts for gifts, mend my family's clothes, and even do simple altering. One of my favorite skirts is one I bought at a yard sale. It was too large, but after a little measuring, pinning, cutting, and sewing, I had a skirt that fit!

I have found that things will not get accomplished without good time management. I can get easily distracted, so I must focus on doing one task at a time instead of bouncing between several. Balancing time for my kids, husband, the house, friends, and myself is most easily done if I stay on task.

God has made most of us able-bodied women perfectly capable of working with our hands. Since most of us do not have the money for maids or cooks, there is no way around it. It is easy to get overwhelmed, but starting small and setting small goals for things to accomplish around the home is the best way. Find things that interest you and bring a sense of accomplishment.

She looks for bargains and is resourceful (verses 16-18).

I try to avoid buying anything full price and have become an avid bargain-hunter. God wants us to use our resources wisely. I thank my parents for instilling an attitude of frugality in me. Having four children is expensive, so I enjoy

shopping yard sales, consignment stores, and clearance racks. I also sell unused or no-longer-needed items at my own yard sale or on eBay. Just because something is a good deal, doesn't mean it needs to be bought. Balance is the key!

Because we live in such a wasteful society, I believe God is pleased when we can buy and sell used items and give things away to help others. These are ways to be a faithful steward of the time and money God has given us.

While everyone has different gifts, abilities, and interests, it IS possible to have the virtues of the Proverbs 31 Woman in different ways! Are you struggling to "do it all"? You don't have to! Ask God to help you diligently run your household, manage your time well, and be wise with your resources.



Caren Michael has been married seven years to Josh and is a stay-at-home mom to Tommy(5), Sam(3), Nate(3), and Ethan(2). She works very part-time as a surgical RN. Caren enjoys photography, quilting, gardening, scrapbooking, playing piano, running, traveling, and time with family and friends. She has been described as the "Energizer Bunny."



Marriage: A Journey in Tandem



Rege and I met during freshman orientation at Duquesne University. Rege was with a group of his buddies, and I was with some girls from the dorm. We paired off, and I guess who I ended up with?



Six years later, we married. Trust is the glue that holds a marriage together (verse 11). Early in our marriage, Rege developed problems with his neck and back. Over the next eighteen years, he had fifteen surgeries and procedures. A woman comforts and encourages her husband (verse 12). Money was tight so I worked a variety of jobs as secretary, waitress, teacher, and cook. A wife helps to provide for her family (verse 16).

Around 1990, friends invited me to a series of seminars called "Women of Worth" sponsored by a Presbyterian church. This was a life changing experience for me—and my first exposure to a church that differed from the one I attended growing up. I heard the gospel. Seeds were planted.

In 1997, we moved from New Jersey to Pennsylvania for financial reasons. It took us ten months (we lost two properties) before we settled in Dalton. God had a plan for us. We just didn't know it.

Although we had a strong religious background, we felt something was lacking. Unheard of for us, we decided to try a different church. We selected Heritage Baptist Church in Clarks Summit but somehow mixed up the directions and ended up at Summit. Our first visit was also Pastor Mark Schmitz's first day. We were saved July 21, 1998 and baptized May 23, 1999. Where God guides, He always provides.

The Proverbs 31 Woman did not brag about her great accomplishments and godly virtues. Her humility brought her honor, praise and recognition. "A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (verse 30). God is the source of her wisdom, and her life is a challenging example of what wise living brings. If we pattern our lives after her, we will gain tremendous insight in how to live a God-focused life.

Over the years God has blessed me with a wonderful husband and five beautiful children who have brought me incredible joy. "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her" (verse 28).

This wise compassionate woman is truly other-centered. Her many qualities include hard work, respect for her spouse, foresight, encouragement, concern for the poor, and wisdom in handling money. These qualities, when coupled with fear of God, lead to a peaceful, rewarding, and joy-filled life.

Mary Ellen Thomas and her husband Rege live in Dalton. She reflects, "I grew up in a dysfunctional home. Although we had a lot of what money could buy, we were spiritually bankrupt. I began to challenge these distorted values when I started my own family. After attending the "Women of Worth" seminar, the destructive cycle began to crack. I had a long road ahead of me, but I was on the right path. It would be twenty-three years before I came to know Christ as my Savior. I am grateful for the walk I have had with my Lord."

Proverbs 31: My Mom

Kay Stockdale's son, Micah, wrote this song for her birthday in 2011.

Verse 1

How many songs and poems can I write you
On that same day that comes around every year
I hope you never get tired of them coming
Because there's one thing I want to make very clear

Chorus

Not many others like you have I known
Of all other women, you are the most blessed (10)
From your mouth comes kindness and wisdom (26)
Many have done well, but you surpass all of the rest (29)

Verse 2

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain (30)
But a woman who fears the Lord, who can name (10)
Though scattered abroad and hard to be found
I can say that I'm with one when you are around

Bridge

Give her the fruit of her hands (31)
Let her works be the praise she is due (31)
And in the end when her glory has faded
Let this be said by all that she knew

Bridge 2

She was gracious; she was lovely (31)
She was gentle and always faithful (31)
She was patient; she was joyful
She was filled with kindness and good to all (2x)

Chorus

Not many others like you have I known
Of all other women, you are the most blessed (10)
From your mouth comes kindness and wisdom (26)
Many have done well, but you surpass all of the rest (29)



Micah is the son of Shawn and Kay Stockdale and a junior at Baptist Bible College. He has three sisters and a brother. Part of Summit's praise team, he sang this song in church on Mother's Day.

The Measure of a Woman

Found posted on the bulletin board in a local gynecologist's office:

A woman is often measured by the things she cannot control. She is measured by the way her body curves or doesn't curve, by where she is flat or straight or round. She is measured by 36-24-36 and inches and ages and numbers, by all the outside things that don't ever add up to who she is on the inside. And so if a woman is to be measured, let her be measured by the things she can control, by who she is and who she is trying to become . . .



Robert S McGee, in his book, *The Search for Significance*, shares a parallel thought. "If we know who we are, we will not try to become someone else in order to have value and meaning in our lives" (page 46). God has "given us a secure self-worth totally apart from our ability to perform. We have been justified and placed in right standing before God through Christ's death on the cross, which paid for our sins. But God didn't stop with our forgiveness; He also granted us the very righteousness of Christ" (page 44). "He made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Who we are and who we are becoming go far beyond statistics or performance. God's measure of a woman is based on the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Christ.

Homemaking

The term "homemaker" is by definition a managerial position, the title given to the "person who manages the household." The part of the definition that is particularly interesting to me is the part that says, "especially as a principal occupation." I think many of us would laugh at that one. As a single woman my household doesn't include children but it does include all the managerial tasks that go with living in my home, and the house itself. The "excellent woman" in Proverbs 31 is a great example of how we should be known. The scope of her job includes great and small, interior and exterior.

She is active. I can relate to that. I think eventually "multi-tasking" will be found as an option in the thesaurus for "woman." Teaching full-time, involvement at Summit and BBC, having guests in my house, preparing meals, cleaning, and improving the house regularly are all part of my daily schedule. Add to that caring for the speaking ministry God has given, finding some time for friends and basic physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual health, and we're beginning to paint a realistic picture.



Being diligent involves managing *all* that God has given me well—people, possessions, time, my body, etc.

In the midst of all else that the "excellent woman" does, she cares for herself as well as those for whom she is responsible. It is too easy to fill the days with "to-do's," but those days will have an effect long-term. Caring for myself should not be something for which I feel guilty.

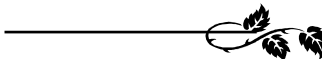
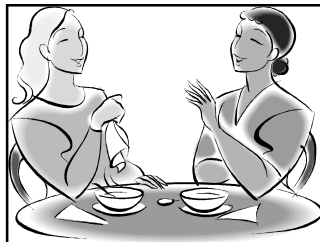
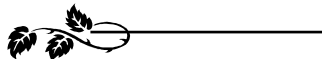
This woman is a thinker—planning, preparing, budgeting, using available resources, and being aware of the options. As a single person I have appreciated the wisdom of friends to help me think through some of the bigger financial choices like putting my name on a mortgage (and refinancing) and a car loan. Making major decisions alone can be intimidating. Thank God, I'm not really alone.

The "excellent" woman is a smart shopper, so doing my homework is important and honestly, can get a little tricky because it takes time. Any seasoned multi-tasker will attest that time is a commodity of which we will never have enough.

My parents taught me about being a diligent worker. Little did I know they were training me to be an "excellent woman" at the time. Diligence in real life looks like staying up late or getting up early to clean the house or yard (even though no one else may see it) and managing the resources God provides.

My heart's desire is to live my life passionately, using the strength He gives for His work. In order to keep that vision clear, I've got to put myself in positions for God to help me see Him, know Him better, and hear His clear direction. Then I need to get to work, letting Him take care of the outcomes. I wish each of the qualities were always true about me, but the reality is, I am not always an "excellent woman." In the end I want to be known as a woman who lived out her faith in real life. If you think about it, the woman in Proverbs 31 did just that.

Sherrie Holloway enjoys the beach, chicken cheese steaks, and Philly soft pretzels! A member of the BBC faculty since 1986, Sherrie has seen God do amazing things in the lives of those she has coached, taught, and mentored. She is a gifted communicator and enjoys helping her listeners see God's Word in a fresh way. It is Sherrie's desire to intentionally and fully LIVE life. Go to www.wellspringoverflow.com to see some of what God is doing in Sherrie's life.



Some women are kind but lack wisdom; other women are smart but lack kindness. You know you are in the presence of a virtuous woman because she is not only wise in speech but kind in heart. Her wisdom and kindness are apparent not only in what she says but also in how she says it.

as we are told by God's own hand,
to cherish you, I understand.

to lead the way and provider be,
to care for you, exclusively.

to hold your hand, to wipe your tears,
to be one flesh, to calm your fears.

to put your care above my own,
to meet your needs as they are known.

none on this list are burdens to me,
loving you, wife, comes easily.

your tender heart and humble way,
makes love no chore; it's more like play.

wrapping our home with spice and love,
you sacrifice, as God above.

why God, in His own gracious design,
gave you to me? It "wows" my mind!



Shawn Stockdale wrote this poem to Kay in 2007.

It matters more what's in a woman's face than what's on it.

Beatitudes for Married Couples

BLESSED are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate, and courteous long after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.

BLESSED are they who have a sense of humor and laugh together, for this will be a handy shock absorber in everyday problems.

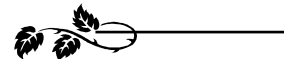
BLESSED are they who love their mates more than any other person, who joyfully remain faithful to one another, and continue to build for their family.

BLESSED are they who remember to thank God for His provision and who take time daily to read the Bible and pray.

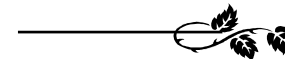
BLESSED are those mates who never speak loudly or disrespectfully to one another and who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word."

BLESSED are the husband and wife who regularly worship in their church and who work together for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

BLESSED are they who humbly dedicate their lives and their home to Christ.



Great Expectations



I was stretched out across the altar, bridal bouquet still in hand, forced to smell the scent of sudsy roses when I realized I would forevermore associate the virtues of a good rug shampoo with my wedding day. Had I actually fainted? On my wedding day? At the altar? In my dress? I could hear everything going on around me, but I couldn't speak. I had forgotten to eat something before the wedding, and I wanted to kick myself. Thank goodness the ceremony had already ended and we were only taking pictures.

Just minutes earlier, I had stood in that same spot completely spellbound. I stared so intently at Ted's mouth as he sang and promised me his undivided devotion that I couldn't even cry like everyone else. I was too busy making sure I'd never forget what he looked like in that moment. Three minutes and thirty seconds of Steven Curtis Chapman's "I Will Be Here" and all my abandonment issues were resolved.

He really would be there for me. I knew he would, just as he was for everyone else. My blood-washed, sanctified, counselor man was betrothing himself to me and life was perfect, just as it should be for anyone who waits until age thirty-eight to get married. Despite the 365 guests present, as far as I was concerned, it was just my man and me—and my dress.

It would have been *total* bliss had I not agreed to wear lace pantyhose underneath my crinoline as my mother had suggested. It wasn't enough that I was donned in a long-sleeved mass of tulle and poof, perfectly appropriate for the eighties bride I should have been. So what if it was eighty-five degrees and six months after Y2K?

Then suddenly there I was, sprawled atop the poof. I pressed my lips together, desperate to keep some lady from jamming a banana slice into my mouth as I had heard her threaten. Bananas make me gag. But before I could lament my defeat as that banana invaded my digestive tract . . . What was that sound? I heard the thump-clank of a bucket.

Water?
Uh, hey—what's going on?
Oh, no! Please let me open my eyes!
Dear God, please help me get up from here!
No, no, no! Not my face!
Not my hair...!

Too late. The right side of my perfectly coiffed, sprayed-to-stay wedding hairdo and the accompanying caked-on, matte finish natural-look makeup were destroyed in one swoosh of a dripping wet hand towel. I lay in disbelief. Not at all what I had expected.

My bridesmaids called for everyone to clear the auditorium. They lifted the tulle and poof and peeled the lace stockings from my legs. My new husband followed the crowd to the door. I heard my bridesmaids shouting all at once.

"Hey Ted, you can't leave!"
"She's yours now!"
"Bet you didn't think you'd have all this company when she got out of this dress, did you?"

Not at all what *he* had expected.



Continued next page



Continued from page five

Speaking of expectations, about two months later, I found myself with an urgent issue to pound out with my husband. We had settled into the craziness of campus ministry, and I had found dorm parenting to be a role that fit well with my night owl tendencies. This night, however, was different. We needed to talk, and I paced off five pounds waiting for Ted to realize he probably couldn't change the life of the kid he was counseling in one night if the kid's own parents couldn't do it in twenty years. I was ready to ignite. This is one time I might have welcomed the thump-clank of a bucket. After all, *this* kid was local, and his daddy was right across town. Five frustrating hours later I almost said, "Send that boy home!"

Finally, they finished their discussion. Great. It was my turn. But when my blood-washed, sanctified, counselor husband came in the door, he barely even looked my way.

He changed his clothes. I said we needed to talk.

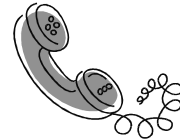
He got in bed. I said it was important.

He said he was tired. I was livid.

I packed a bag and left.

Where was I going? I had no idea. Just knew I needed to make a big splash—show I was serious, make *him* worry

a bit. I drove around aimlessly until I ended up at our local Holiday Inn—the same hotel in which we had happily housed our wedding guests two months earlier. I snatched the pen the clerk offered me, and I chiseled my maiden name on the register so that it overlapped three lines and felt like Braille. I refused to call myself by *his* name.



I sat and watched the phone for thirty minutes just to make sure Ted would be good and worried by the time I called to tell him where I was. Just when I thought I couldn't be any more worked up, I gave in and dialed home. It rang no less than seventeen times before he finally answered. He had the nerve to be asleep! I was so mad I could have put my hands around his neck, strangled the life out of him, and then eaten a sandwich over his dead body. Here I was, thinking I had a husband who cared for me and who cared where I'd be at 2:30 a.m. How could he be asleep at a time like this? I needed him. He had *five hours* to speak to some kid about his issues, but *none* to speak to me? In just two short months we had gone from "I Will Be Here" to "Where You At?"

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While some expectations may be normal and good, others are immature, unrealistic, and let's face it—downright idiotic. Lovebirds who at least consider (during brief moments of premarital lucidity) that one will at some point have to give the other an enema are headed in the right direction. But couples who can't imagine either one secretly googling the average time served for murder one, or who assume earning high and lofty degrees exempts them from relational stupidity may as well put 1-800- SAY-WHAT? on speed-dial.

My dreamboat had eight letters after his name when we got married, and in a heated discussion one year regarding vacation days he said, "So what are you saying—that Thanksgiving is *always* on a Thursday?" Anybody with me on this one? I'm ashamed to admit I could not let that comment go like I should have. Instead, I held onto it like a Rottweiler would a piece of raw meat. Only by God's sovereign intervention did I have the sense to finally button it when my husband ended the conversation saying, "Well, I guess I'm sorry that I don't know what you know." Yes, I *expected* anyone with his background and ability to

explain the complexities of theological systems and resulting human behavior to know Thanksgiving is always on a Thursday.

Though I was not a girl who had her wedding colors and bridal gown picked out by age eight, any images I did have of how the ceremony might be certainly excluded my interaction with a tin bucket of water at the altar. Though I had a full twenty years of adulthood before marriage to learn the basics of relationships, and despite the fact of marrying a man who counsels people off rooftops and away from the grille of Mack trucks driven by their loved ones, I still had immature expectations—and my share of foolish ones too.

Answer the following questions and give your intended an honest snapshot of where and who you are. Remember, he or she will eventually uncover these things anyway. Why not give them a heads up and discover where the two of you need additional help? You might just end up laughing at each other's expectations or adding another chapter to *Ripley's Believe it or Not*.

- || "What three things would make you walk away from your partner today?"
- || "Do you like surprises? Why?"
- || "Why did your last serious relationship end?"
- || "How many times have you been engaged?"
- || "How many social networks do you belong to?"
- || "What are three of your "must haves" for your first five years of marriage?"
- || "How would you describe a romantic date?"
- || "Fill in the blanks: I know my partner has always _____. I know my partner has never _____."
- || "Next year at Christmas, would you prefer to be skiing in Aspen, serving food at a homeless shelter, watching football with friends, or around the fireplace at home?"
- || "What are three elements of a perfect day for you?"
- || "What is the best gift anyone has ever given you?"
- || "Name one great thing about your mother or your father."
- || "What did you do last Tuesday from 7 a.m.-10 p.m.?"
- || "Who is the last person who checked the history on your internet browser?"
- || "When do you prefer to be alone?"



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