

Expectations in Dating: Part Two

Mar. 20, 2009

(If you haven't already, see [Part One](#).)

I want to really drive this idea home, so I'd like to read a story from – yep, you guessed it – Lauren Winner's *Real Sex*.*

I recently attended a women's retreat where one of the workshops was about singleness. The speaker, whom I'll call Myrtle, encouraged the single women in the audience to think carefully about what type of guy they're looking for. "You want a Prince Charming," Myrtle said, "and Prince Charmings are attracted to modest women. You might attract certain men by sporting skimpy skirts, but you won't attract the kind of man you really want to be with."

It's encouraging to think that mature Christians are more interested in character than cleavage; yet there is something unsettling about this assurance that chastity will be the erotic mystery that will lead Mr. Right (or Miss Right) to our door. Prince Charming can begin to rival God as the object of our attentions. Myrtle ended her talk on this note: "What we single women have to do is no more and no less than faithfully pray that our perfect guy is out there. We don't need to hunt him down, we just need to wait for the Lord to deliver him to us. [Is he a pizza?] We don't need to worry about him. Instead we need to focus on ourselves, becoming the pure, modest woman that our Prince Charming will be on the lookout for. We need to devote ourselves to prayer, humility, and grace. We need to continue becoming godly women, so that when the time is right, we will have those godly characteristics that the godly man we dream about will love."

[And that sounds right doesn't it? I mean, that does sound like what we ought to be doing: focusing on prayer, humility, and grace. But this is the point:] I'm not disputing the desirability of the chaste woman or man. It may well be that one of the benefits of practicing chastity is that you attract friends and admirers that admire chastity. But attracting others is not the goal of chastity. Indeed, if Myrtle is focused on catching the eye of the guy who likes chaste women, she may not be inhabiting chastity at all.

Myrtle seems to be working toward becoming, principally, the kind of woman Prince Charming wants, which incidentally may be the kind of woman God wants. Her priorities, I would suggest, need to flip-flop. We are to become the persons of God, and this may bear the incidental fruit of attracting a great partner. The point of chastity is not that you turn your attention away from other people to make you more attractive to them, but that you turn your attention away from sexual and romantic entanglements with other people, and orient yourself toward God. (129-131, bracketed parentheticals mine)

What does it mean to orient our lives toward God?

Right. It means we align ourselves with God's ways. Why would we do that?

[Silence.]

It's a tough question, I know, but an important one. Why does it matter? Why should we bother? Let me help you put words to what I suspect some of you know in that deep, unspeakable way. God's way is the way it's supposed to be. We talked last week about the physical reality of sex being evidence that God's creational intention for sex is good and right and true; how sexually transmitted diseases evidence the fact that when we misdirect our sex-lives, something isn't right. Look around you. Look around you and you'll see things aren't the way

they're supposed to be. There's so much hurting in the world. There's so much hurting sexually; things are no longer true – or straight – they're bent. Jesus came and he began the process of righting all the wrong and healing all the hurt. Those of us who believe are called to continue the work Christ began until he returns, when everything will be made right at long last! We do this by orienting our lives toward God.

Here's where I get back to why it's important to have standards concerning who you will and will not date. Because purity, sexual purity, is bigger than sets of dos and don'ts, rights and wrongs, standards and judgments; it's about shaping our lives to the themes of the Gospel, themes such as love, mercy, justice, healing, forgiveness; themes such as defending the oppressed and supporting the weak; themes that express God's way. Learning how to do this is a life-long process. Jesus promises in Matthew 6 that if we will orient our lives toward God's Kingdom, everything else will work out. In light of this promise, let me challenge you to commit the rest of your lives invested in communities dedicated to learning what it means to pray and live out, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Marry the man who has oriented his life toward God and journey toward the Kingdom together... for as long as you both shall live.

* Winner, Lauren. *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005.

This blog post originally appeared at
<http://reneamac.com/2009/03/20/expectations-in-dating-part-two>
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Your Board of Directors

At a conference several years ago I was given a thought-provoking challenge, to identify the people on the board of directors of my life: whose voices do I listen to? Whose counsel do I follow? Whose values do I respond to?

The speaker pointed out that some people ought to be kicked off our board—like parents, if their voices of shame and criticism still control and restrict us. So should voices of much of the media, especially TV. And we can replace them with wiser, more godly voices who can offer us direction and perspective. There was a discussion of categories of potential board members. They don't have to be alive, and we don't have to personally know them, either.

The Lord Jesus, of course, needs to be the #1 board member. If we're married, our spouse should be on our board. The Apostle Paul is a good board member. Peter and James are good too, as is Solomon. So are some of the church fathers and Christian writers like C.S. Lewis. Or a pastor, and not necessarily our own. (I have a friend in a distant city who has adopted my pastor as hers, and listens to every audio recording my church puts online.) Mentors are great board members, and so are wise and trusted friends.

A few weeks ago, John Townsend, one of the co-authors of [the Boundaries series](#), was at my church. I love what he writes and listen to him on the radio show "New Life Live" whenever possible. I had a chance to talk to him briefly, so I told him about my board of directors. "John," I said, "Several years ago I installed you as a permanent member of my board. Other people have come and gone, but you're always there. I really appreciate your wisdom and godly perspective, and you have equipped me to respond to various life challenges. Just wanted you to know how you've blessed me even though we've never met."

(To my delighted surprise, he lit up and asked if he could hug me!)

Who's on your board? Who can you kick off to the glory of God? (Hint: magazines that make you unhappy with how God made you as you compare yourself to the celebrities and models inside, certain internet sites, particular TV shows. . .)

Who can you put on your board? Let's hear it.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/your_board_of_directors
in July 2009.

“Are There Biblical Solutions to the Issues Self-Help Gurus Address?”

People like Wayne Dyer offer some interesting answers to everyday problems, like moving on with your life, overcoming excuses, etc. Are there Biblical answers like these self-help gurus offer?

Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud, writing and speaking partners who wrote the *Boundaries* books, are exceptionally wise men whose perspective is drenched in scripture and biblical thinking. In fact, Dr. Townsend earned a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary, which means he REALLY knows his theology. Between the two of them, who have written a number of books together and separately, there is a wide range of “self-help” resources, but which are really about plugging

God's principles into our needs. (And then, the reader discovers, it's actually about plugging *ourselves* into God and His principles—first things first!) I would especially recommend *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Townsend and Cloud) and *Changes That Heal* (Cloud). Here's a link to their website: www.cloudtownsend.com

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

Addendum: My colleague at Probe, Heather Zeiger, sent this follow-up email:

Just for reference to the Biblical Self-help question. One can be encouraged that many of the Puritans have written on these self-help issues, so Christian authors have actually been publishing in this area for a while. I wouldn't necessarily direct someone to the Puritans right off the bat, but I think it is encouraging that back in the 1600s, Jonathan Edwards wrote about procrastination (one of his selected sermons in book form is entitled "Procrastination or The Sin and Folly of Depending on Future Time") and about those things (affections) that we love more than we should. I'm reading John Owens' *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*. Basically he applies it with addictions. He wrote in the 1700's.

Two recent books written by psychologists/counselors also with theology degrees are *How People Change* by Timothy S. Lane and Paul D. Tripp, which is the modern-day version of Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affections* – learning how to get over the gospel of works and accept grace. And deals with how people handle when tough things happen in life and what they turn to in order to cope. The other book that is really good is *When People are Big and God is Small* by Edward T. Welch, which is all about people-pleasing and co-dependency.

The theme in all these books is exactly what you said in your

email – not some program or steps to make yourself better in the world's eyes, but understanding what God thinks of these things and how through Him we can be free.

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“Is My Husband's Cybersex Grounds For Divorce?”

My husband has been having cyber sex. Sometimes there was a camera on the other end. Is this biblical grounds for divorce?

Dear _____,

I am so sorry. What a horrible betrayal you are feeling!

I don't know God's definitive answer on this, but I do think that cyber sex and webcams are high-tech ways of extending the sins of lust and fantasy, which are mental and emotional sins . . . but I don't believe they cross the line of adultery. Actual sex between two people has an effect of creating soul-ties to each other that compromises the marriage covenant.

I think the bigger issue is one of hard-heartedness. If you have asked your husband not to engage in cyber sex and to get rid of the camera, and he refuses because he wants what he wants even if it means hurting you, then that's the real issue. What kind of marriage is it if one person makes self-centered choices that insure the other will be hurt?

May I respectfully suggest you read Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud's excellent book *Boundaries in Marriage* for some wisdom on what to do next. For example, I have a friend whose husband refuses to stop going to a website where he can play

games and chat with other women, and he has fallen into at least emotional affairs with a couple of them. She has said, "As long as you won't get rid of Pogo, you can do your own laundry." This way, his stubbornness and selfishness are costing him something.

Hope you find this helpful. Again, I am so sorry. My heart hurts for you.

Sue Bohlin

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