LIVE RIGHT NOW

HONEST ANSWERS TO LIFE’S TOUGH QUESTIONS

DR. SABRINA BLACK
CONTENTS

Introduction . . . 9

1. Relationships . . . 17
2. Church and Religion . . . 69
3. Emotional Healing . . . 127
4. Sex and Sexuality . . . 167
5. Parenting . . . 210
6. Self-Image . . . 246
7. Financial Matters . . . 282

Conclusion . . . 312
Further Reading . . . 324
Acknowledgments . . . 333
Do you know who your true friends are? Do you know what a true friend is? Who can you call in distress? Who can you cry with? Who will encourage you? Who will help you forget your problems? Who will help you live life in spite of your problems?

But just as importantly: who will challenge you?

I am that friend. People know to call me when they are ready to live right. When they are ready to pick up their mat and walk. People come to me when they are done making excuses and blame-shifting. I help people who are ready to take ownership of their lives, the choices they are making, and how they respond to the things they cannot control. When you are ready to live right, I am the person who will help you with the difficult decisions.

It would sure be nice to have someone tell you to comb your hair before you took an important photo or went on television; or that a certain shade of green looked more like puke than grass. Wouldn’t it be great to have someone care enough to tell you the truth about a bad relationship? To have someone not only tell you about your life issues, but help you work through them? Wouldn’t it be nice to also
have someone remind you of the difference between right and wrong, according to God’s Word?

One of my favorite classic movie phrases is, “You can’t handle the truth!” When Jack Nicholson made that statement from the witness stand in *A Few Good Men*, he was furious because he was being challenged to tell the truth. His retort implied the prosecuting attorney and everyone else in the room would rather be lied to than forced to deal with the plain truth that made up the realities of their lives. Think about how often in the last twenty-four hours the plain truth appeared dressed up and camouflaged to the point of being incognito. Most of you have heard it or at least thought about it at some point when you struggled to share the truth others would rather not hear.

As Christians, we should desire the truth in all things—especially in our hearts. In spite of this, we lie to others and even, subconsciously, to ourselves.

The apostle Paul is transparent about his own struggles in Romans 7. He suggests the good he would do he does not do and the evil he knows not to do he continues to find himself doing. He asks a critical question: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The answer: “Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus!”

The truth Paul knew then is still relevant today. Through the Word of God and our relationship with Christ, we gain strength to overcome the battle within and to do right in the midst of a world where people are doing wrong.

The world reinforces and glorifies wrong actions, wrong choices, and wrong thoughts. If we let the world impact our thinking, we will give in to the desires of our flesh. You may remember the world’s hedonistic philosophy: “If it feels
good, do it.” This mind-set feeds the flesh, perpetuates the lies of the enemy, and leads to wrong living.

When you are ready to live right, you must turn away from the world’s system—no matter how good it may feel or convincing it sounds. It does not even matter if you think everyone else is doing it (which you will find is most often a lie).

We are living in a time when many people no longer listen to or endure sound doctrine. They would rather hear things to satisfy the desires of their flesh. They would rather believe a lie than recognize the truth according to the Word of God. Consider the words found in Isaiah 30:10: “They say to the seers, ‘See no more visions!’ and to the prophets, ‘Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions’” (NIV).

In other words, “lie to us.”

The world conditions us to become unintentional liars. We lie to others and ourselves because it makes us feel good. The lies we believe impact our spiritual growth, interfere with our intimacy in relationships, and impede our leadership.

We should not become like the people mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:3: “For a time is coming, when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear” (NLT). Instead, consider the plain truth found in the Word of God, which tells us in Genesis 4:7: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (NIV). Jeremiah 29:11 tells us God knows the plans He has for us, the promises He has given to us, and the timing things will be revealed to us.

Consider taking this simple test. Listen for and tell only the plain truth to yourself and to others for the next twenty-four
hours, and then meditate on what God is speaking to you. It sounds easy, but we are so accustomed to embellishing the truth, framing the truth, and skewing the truth, we no longer realize we are lying. Lying has become our way of telling what we have convinced ourselves is the truth. Sometimes we color the truth so much, it is no longer even a shade of the original.

This book is based on the truth of God’s Word. It is straight talk, and it is “naked truth.” We are bare before God; He sees all. God wants us to be honest with ourselves, honest in our dealings, and honest in our hearts. When obedience to God’s Word is practiced, we experience the fruit of the Spirit proclaimed in Galatians 5:22–23—the true love, joy, and peace that eludes so many.

This book is a topical compilation of real questions by real people—people who have struggles with which you just may be familiar! If you use it in a group study, you can create a “mutual accountability” group to help all of you stay on course. Sharing your growth in a supportive community as you embrace and/or wrestle with the answers given in each scenario will help you to grapple with your own situations. You may also discover God’s Word of truth lives in you—waiting to be drawn out and applied to real-life situations. Consider what you would tell the person in the stories you will read and what you would want someone to tell you if you were that person. Consider what a difference it would make in our homes, churches, and communities if we began to more consistently and intentionally live guided by God’s truth and encourage others to do the same.

We need to shake the people of God and wake them up so they no longer slumber and sleep with the enemy. If we continue to believe lies even when confronted with God’s
truth, the enemy will creep into our lives and establish a foothold. There is a great need for someone to tell the truth and expose the lies and deceptions we live with daily. This book is designed to take you into the heart of God’s truth.

I am the friend you call when you are ready to live right. It has been my discovery over the years when people who would normally exercise good common sense, practical wisdom, and godly behavior make questionable choices, it is because they are usually under some pressure from an external source or external locust of control. It is the “evil we know not to do.”

There are times in all of our lives when we stop and ask ourselves the “what if?” questions. Most of us resolve that the question is not worth entertaining. We may laugh at ourselves, shrug, and keep going. However, there are people who struggle with “the good they know to do, yet they don’t do.”

There are also those who really think they are doing right, but have been exposed to subtle or even blatant false teachings. These people struggle with the idea of doing wrong when they have followed what they have been taught. They want to live right, but they have done wrong because they were led astray by someone else’s wrongdoing. Whether you have not been living right based on your own choices—or because someone else deceived you—it is time to get back on the path of righteousness.

It is my prayer that you are already living right and just need a few answers for life’s tough questions. This is the time to challenge yourself—and those around you—to stop accepting the ways of the world and live the truth of God’s Word. *Live Right Now* will help you and the people in your circle get excited about living guided by God’s truth. My goal is to help you become equipped and empowered to live according to the Word of God and thereby enhance your life.
Introduction

The transformation in your life from being in the presence of the Lord and applying the Bible will display the intimacy of your relationship with God for others to see.

Whatever you are fighting to overcome right now, you have been in it already far too long. I have always been a bottom line, no nonsense person. So when I counsel in my practice, I bring a sense of urgency. Why wait another week, day, or hour to address what you know to be an issue impacting the state of your emotions, relationships, and spiritual growth? I am often reminded about the story of Pharaoh and Moses in the eighth chapter of the book of Exodus. Pharaoh was given an opportunity to change his situation and circumstance at any time and he chose tomorrow, rather than today. Don’t wait! Decide today you want to become more like Christ in your daily walk. Decide today you want to be strengthened in your resolve to live right.

I speak from a heart of love and a strong desire to see people live the abundant life God promises in John 10:10. Overcoming whatever battle you are fighting in your life right now requires a sense of urgency. Honestly, you have probably been fighting far too long. When you consider every good and perfect gift God has for you and the life He died for you to live, you should be compelled to stop wasting time and live life to the fullest. Join me on this journey to live right now!
Introduction

When you are ready to live right, you will study the Word of God. Then, you will let God’s Word influence your thinking. When godly thoughts impact the way you live your life, you can live, share, and defend our faith. We study the Word of God to understand how to apply it in our lives. We share God’s Word to help others live right and to reinforce what we know. It is a blessing to hear yourself proclaim the Word of God. It is affirmation that you have successfully hidden the Word of God in your heart so you will not sin against Him. With the plain truth of God’s Word guiding your heart, you can encourage others to not sin against God by following the ways of the world. When you study the Word of God, you can defend your faith against foolishness, wickedness, old wives’ tales, and societal propaganda.

Are you ready to live right? Now?
CHAPTER 1

RELATIONSHIPS

What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are, but how you deal with incompatibility.

Leo Tolstoy

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

John 13:34 (KJV)

I remember the first time I heard someone say, “Oh, I love God; it’s His people I have a hard time with.” It baffled me. Were they serious? I heard it again and again. The Bible asks the question in 1 John 4:20, “for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (NKJV). If we do this, the Bible says we are liars. That may sound harsh, but it is the key relationship question we must ask ourselves.

We serve a relational God who wants us to be in right relationship with Him and with one another. The intensity and intimacy of our vertical relationship with God greatly
impacts our ability to engage, maintain, and sustain our horizontal relationship with others. When we feel loved by God—valued and significant—we can embrace others.

Too often, we avoid people and withdraw ourselves from the company of those who challenge us. Instead, I challenge you to risk entering into relationship with Christlike vulnerability. People are important to God. Just as He loves you, God also loves others. People are lovable, forgivable, valuable, and changeable—not by us, but by the Lord. He is still in the process of perfecting us all.

Relationships are not just about you, but what God is doing in you and through you for others.

We are bombarded daily by the world’s view on relationships. “Lies are the only things that keep couples together.” “Good sex is the only way to have a good relationship.” “You are the most important person in any relationship.” Books, movies, and talk shows reinforce these ideas by providing false evidence to support them. However, according to Scripture we are living epistles, and others are reading our lives. We therefore become the model of how to live effectively in relationships. But how do we become the models God is calling us to be?

God promises in James 4:8, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” He calls us to abide in Him and He will abide in us in John 15:4. The first commandment is to love God, and then to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:28–31). The most effective Christian models of godly relationships get the vertical part right first.
But no man is an island; we need each other. We are interdependent and cannot be a fully developed human being without interacting with others. There is an important progression to consider, and that is the progression from family to the church to the world. The order is important: to engage in godly relationships with believers is useless if you have not tackled the challenge of living in a family structure. Then, once we have matured in our relationships with believers, we can confidently face those in the world, whose views and values may be different from ours, with love and compassion. There are so many different types of relationships: spouses, friends, neighbors, coworkers, parent/child, employee/employer, and many more. Each of these relationships gives us an opportunity to demonstrate godly living by applying Scripture to every situation we encounter. Consider how many of these verses you live daily and research others as you have time. Investing in this study will improve the quality of all your relationships:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love one another</th>
<th>John 13:34, 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build up one another</td>
<td>Romans 14:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be kind to one another</td>
<td>Ephesians 4:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be at peace with one another</td>
<td>Mark 9:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admonish one another</td>
<td>Romans 15:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear one another’s burdens</td>
<td>Galatians 6:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort one another</td>
<td>1 Thessalonians 4:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgive each other</td>
<td>Ephesians 4:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confess your sins to one another</td>
<td>James 5:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show hospitality to one another</td>
<td>1 Peter 4:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give preference to one another</td>
<td>Romans 12:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak to one another in psalms and hymns</td>
<td>Ephesians 5:19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19
**LIVE RIGHT NOW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encourage one another</th>
<th>1 Thessalonians 5:11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pray for one another</td>
<td>James 5:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have fellowship with one another</td>
<td>1 John 1:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spur one another on to love and good deeds</td>
<td>Hebrews 10:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not slander one another</td>
<td>James 4:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not grumble against one another</td>
<td>James 5:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in harmony with one another</td>
<td>1 Peter 3:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay down your life for one another</td>
<td>1 John 3:16–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restore one another</td>
<td>Galatians 6:1–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear with one another</td>
<td>Colossians 3:12–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not lie to one another</td>
<td>Colossians 3:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciple and teach one another</td>
<td>2 Timothy 2:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please one another</td>
<td>Romans 15:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept one another</td>
<td>Romans 15:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffer with one another</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 12:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejoice with one another</td>
<td>Romans 12:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor one another</td>
<td>Romans 12:10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

God’s Word abounds with truth and gives us instructions or guidelines of how we should relate one to another. Making and maintaining right relationships is symbolic of our level of spiritual growth. When we live God’s Word, we enjoy the relationships God chooses for us and avoid toxic unhealthy relationships. These Scriptures can be a checklist for your relationships. Where do you need growth? Which of your relationships could be transformed immediately if you applied Scripture to your behavior and interaction?

- Marriage and In-Laws
- Dating
Now, let’s take a look at some real-life scenarios. Maybe you will find yourself in these; if you do, counsel yourself. Maybe you will find that these scenarios remind you of others; if you do, you now have information to help them.

Q: I’m 40 years old and my life is a lie. I have what many consider the perfect lifestyle. I have two kids (boy and girl), the big house with the white picket fence, and I’m a stay-at-home mom with a husband who makes over six figures. I have an eight-carat diamond solitaire ring along with all the high fashion shoes, bags, and clothes. In addition, my husband is the perfect father and my family adores him. However, my husband is a serial cheater. I spend most of my nights alone in my big house with my two kids while my husband travels the country claiming that he is working hard to keep his family in this lifestyle. I still love him with all my heart and I’ve given up my life for this man. I trusted him with our future and depended on him to love and adore me our entire life. I know God is aware of my burdens, but I’m afraid to confess them aloud. For some silly reason I feel if I say them aloud, then I will have to face them and admit that I know what he’s doing. I know this sounds crazy, but it’s the truth! Can I pray to God for deliverance from this
love that I have for him in order to release myself from the burden and falsehood of this lifestyle? Signed: Matthew 6:6

A: Dear Matthew 6:6,

God is love. He will never deliver you from love, but He has already provided deliverance from an adulterous spouse. When a spouse breaks the marriage vows, you are free to stay and forgive your spouse or you are free to leave. This is because your spouse has broken covenant with you.

I am glad you know this is not a perfect lifestyle. You have many wonderful things in your life. Some of them are gifts from God and some are the trappings of the world. Your children, your health, your knowledge of God’s love, and the power of prayer are all gifts from God. On the other hand, the eight-carat diamond solitaire ring, along with all the high fashion shoes, bags, and clothes you could ever want, appear to be a trap your husband has set to hold you captive, silent, and alone.

You don’t have to confess your husband’s sins aloud to face them; you are already facing them, and their consequences. You speak of your husband as a serial cheater, which means you know he will continue his cheating ways, just like a serial killer who will not stop until caught and brought to justice.

God gives you the ability to confront and forgive your husband. Who knows, maybe he will admit, confess, and repent of his sins. If he does not, you have a choice to make—you can stay and carry the burden and falsehood of your present lifestyle or you can walk away and build a God-honoring lifestyle based on love and truth for you and your children.
Q: My husband and I are both saved. I am young, sexy, pretty, and intelligent. I am also a good wife; so why did my husband cheat on me? I can't imagine what I did wrong. Yet somehow I'm wondering, “Whose fault is it?” He is the one that cheated so why do I feel so guilty, embarrassed, and ashamed? He is involved with a woman on his job; he doesn't know that I am aware of what is going on. I believe he loves me and is just having a fling. I am willing to forgive him even before he asks me to, and I know he will when he finds out I know. My problem is I want to get even with him before I tell him I know. Should we stay together? What about diseases? Will he ever change? This has happened more than once. I am daydreaming about having an affair. Then we can forgive each other. Should I trust him again? Signed: Why Must We Cheat? or Two Can Play That Game!

A: Dear Why Must We Cheat? or Two Can Play That Game!

You must let go of any desire for revenge. Furthermore, stop daydreaming about having an affair right now! That is not an option. It helps that you are willing to forgive, because adultery does not have to lead to divorce. Couples can recover after an affair.

Infidelity studies show numerous reasons why men/women cheat. I'm sure you can identify a few reasons of your own. However for me, sin continues to be the problem plaguing us most often when we look at the issues of life. First Corinthians 7:2 (KJV) says, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (KJV). First Thessalonians 4:3–5 says,
“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (KJV).

When you are faced with adultery, dealing with your emotional roller coaster will be one of the greatest challenges. Even beyond the decision to trust your spouse again, is the decision to trust God with your emotions. Psychologically the person whose trust has been betrayed will often feel depression, anxiety, anger, grief, and loss. Adultery is an indication something is wrong at a much deeper level. When a man cheats, it is not only against his wife, but he has acted contrary to his conscience and his heart has strayed from God.

Your marriage is not a game. Don’t begin to play with your emotions, your affections, or your body. Your husband has already played enough. The reality of sin is not make-believe. Stop pretending and approach your husband. If you know he loves you, don’t sit around waiting on him to find out you know about his affair. Bring it up as a matter of concern. Since both of you are saved, the conversation should focus more on sinning against God. Your marriage should be holy ground and a representation of Christ’s love. I don’t know how the matter was addressed the first time, but this time, you should seek outside help from a professional Christian counselor or pastor.

Q: I married a good Christian man and looked forward to a life of joy and happiness ever after. I had a wonderful sense of security because I thought I was in a lifelong relationship with this man. I thought we would be together forever. I thought we
were both happy, but then two years into our marriage things started to change. He started spending more time with his friends. Now he has even stopped attending church with me, reading the Bible, and praying with me. These changes are so unlike him. He is acting suspicious and has stopped answering his cell phone around me. I am worried that he is being unfaithful to me. When I asked him about the calls, he started finding fault with me and refused to answer me. A few days later my friend told me he was cheating. She said she could prove what I already knew to be true. I am devastated. Signed: Why Do Christian Men Cheat? And What Am I to Do Now?

A: Dear Why Do Christian Men Cheat? And What Am I to Do Now?

Those are both good questions! Let’s start with the first one. The responses are as vast as the people you ask. You have heard it said before, if you ask twenty people you will get twenty different answers. Well, I prayed about whom to ask between men and women knowing that their answers would vary. I opted to poll the gender in question. So, I asked men who only identified themselves as Christians and men from different denominations. Christian men who will not be faithful continue to pose a growing problem for lasting relationships.

It can be shocking for a woman when she discovers her spouse is cheating even though she may have seen the signs of infidelity for months. Even more shocking is learning that other Christian women are facing the same heartbreak. Often many among their circle of friends have lived through similar situations. Before we look at the men’s responses, let’s make sure we have the same understanding of what it means to
cheat, have an affair, commit adultery, or sin against God, your body, and your spouse. Here are a few definitions:

- Sexual behavior desired or realized outside of the confines of marriage.
- A sexual liaison outside of the marriage relationship.
- A violation of God’s holy ordinance concerning marriage.
- A voluntary sexual act between a man/woman and someone other than his/her spouse.
- Non-sexual behavior that involves sharing intimate feelings and thoughts with an extramarital partner or secrecy that violates trust.
- Sexual behavior outside of the marriage that violates the explicit or implicit expectations of the relationship.
- Lack of sexual boundaries and regard for intimacy.
- An amorous relationship between two people who are not married to each other.

Here are the top twelve reasons men gave me for why they cheat. These responses were from men in four different denominations.

1. Sin nature.
2. Lack of self-control.
3. Christian women change.
4. Same reason as other men.
5. Pressures of work.
6. Sexually explicit material all around them.
7. Women make it easy for them.
8. They want to have their cake and eat it too.
10. In need of a conquest.
11. Forbidden fruit.
12. Lonely at home / unmet emotional needs.

Sometimes knowing why is helpful; other times it still makes no sense at all. And now your second question: What can you do about it? There is nothing you can do about his choices. God will hold him accountable. But there is something you can do about your responses. Pray! Pray for God to move him to repentance and convict him regarding sin. Pray for the Lord to keep you and your husband safe from disease. Pray your husband is willing to seek counseling and stay the course of recovery. Pray that the two of you are able to work together on forgiveness. Pray.

Also, you must protect yourself. Since your husband has decided to be unfaithful, you should insist on him wearing a condom every time you have sexual relations—and you should explain why. Who knows? That just might make him wake up!

Q: Before becoming Christians my husband and I were both unfaithful. We have hurt each other but still want to work it out. Will counseling help us? How can couples recover? Can a marriage relationship be healed that has been shattered by adultery? Can couples rebuild broken vows after an affair? Signed: Please Say There Is Still Hope
Dear Please Say There Is Still Hope,

Absolutely! There is hope. Healing is a process that takes time and willingness on the part of both individuals. The process of rebuilding and reconciliation include three key components: repentance, forgiveness and restoration. How do we rebuild broken vows after an affair? After years of experience helping couples work through issues of adultery and rebuild their marriage, I have developed a three-stage integrative model based on Hope, Help, and Healing.

I am encouraged the two of you want to work it out. If your husband is willing to seek counseling, then I would suggest finding a Christian counselor who can walk with the two of you through the process. But don’t wait. You can begin with the stages below.

Stage 1: HOPE (1 Corinthians 10:13)

In the first stage, hurting and unfaithful partners are directed to make sense out of the avalanche of emotions released by the adultery. This will give them a sense of balance so they will not feel they are crazy, hopeless, or alone. Key areas of focus include:

- Hope to survive the trauma.
- Hope that the relationship can be transformed.
- Hope that God is working in the midst of the situation.

Stage 2: HELP (Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 61:1–4)

In the second stage, partners are coached to make a biblical—not emotional—decision to recommit to the marriage.
They are encouraged to explore their ambivalence about their relationship, develop a realistic yet biblical concept of love, and take responsibility for how their early experiences compromised their ability to be intimate and faithful in this relationship. Key areas of focus include:

- Help sorting out your emotions.
- Help seeking God’s will.
- Help working through the process of pain (adultery hurts).

Stage 3: HEALING (Ephesians 4:22–24)

In the third stage, a road map is provided for rebuilding trust and intimacy, and learning to forgive. Marriage partners are encouraged to focus on personal growth as a result of the experience.

- Healing in the area of forgiveness.
- Healing in the area of trust and intimacy.
- Healing in the area of love according to God’s Word.

In conjunction with this integrative model is the need to restore the soul and renew the mind—following the biblical theme that reconciliation to God precedes restoration with one another. This model mandates obedience to the Word. What God hath joined together . . . let no one separate, even the two of you. Remember God is faithful; hope is possible.

Q: I’m a 37-year-old woman; I have been with my boyfriend for over five years. He is much older, twenty years my senior.
I don’t have any children, but he does from his previous marriage. I truly love this man. I attend church almost every Sunday and Bible study when I can. My boyfriend doesn’t want to get married again and has never told me he loves me—only that he cares deeply. I do not want any children due to the fear I may turn out like my mother, with whom I no longer have contact. My boyfriend doesn’t attend church but believes in God. He is a wonderful man, and I appreciate him being a part of my life in so many ways. I’ve received advice from various individuals in my life, ranging in age, about this type of relationship with all of them saying the same thing: “There is no future for you with him.” My passion for Christ has grown so much over the past year I now find myself at the crossroads with what’s right in God’s eyes. I hear so many stories of other women with justifiable reasons to leave their relationships, but still they stay. Other than what I’ve mentioned, my boyfriend is a very good man. I know all things are possible with Christ, but this man is dead-set on not remarrying or saying the words “I love you.” Signed: Can I Keep Him Please?

A: Dear Can I Keep Him Please?

The answer is no, no-no, no, not as a boyfriend, unless you are a glutton for punishment. If you are saved, the only relationship you can have with this man is friendship—and that without benefits. I am not trying to be harsh; I just see too many red flags, which mean stop before you get hurt. Clearly you have concerns. If you thought it was permissible to keep him, you would not be asking questions.
How many people need to tell you no before you get the message? First, he is too old for you; when you are 62 he will be 82, if he is blessed with extra strength. Second, do you ever want to marry? He never wants to marry again. You have already held on five years. He has not changed his mind. Do you want to sacrifice another five years of your life waiting? Third, you love him and he cares for you—how do you feel about that? Do you ever long to be loved, or is his care sufficient? Finally, he has children, and you say you don’t want any; someday that may change. If it does, he may be too old to have any children and you still won’t be married.

Now that you are at the crossroads and want to do right in God’s eyes, unless you can have a sexless friendship with this man, you are headed for heartbreak. As wonderful as you say he is, he is still dead-set on not remarrying or saying the words “I love you.” It doesn’t matter what other women are doing. Don’t run past the red flags. You already know in your heart you held onto him too long. Hear this as confirmation and a final word of instruction: Let him go; there is no future there.

Q: I’m 30 years old and I feel discouraged with God because I still haven’t received an answer to my question concerning the continuation of my marriage. I’m in love with another man, and I want to be with him. I do not want my current husband anymore. Neither my husband nor I have cheated. What can I do! I understand that a delay doesn’t mean it’s a denial. I really need an answer. I can’t live like this anymore! I’m very unhappy. I’m in love with another man. I keep
reminding myself of Hebrews 10:36–37 but nothing has changed. Signed: Pilot Marriage

A: Dear Pilot Marriage,

Well, that’s a misnomer. Marriage is a covenant between the two of you, honored and sanctioned by God. Feeling discouraged is nothing new and certainly not a reason for wandering or divorce. Discouragement is not from God, but a trick of the enemy to cause you to question God’s faithfulness in taking care of your needs.

You say you are 30 years old, but you sound more like a spoiled two-year-old. “I don’t want the red lollipop anymore; I want the orange one; it looks better. I don’t want my current husband; I want another one.” You are not waiting on God; you are looking for a way to justify your behavior. God has not kept you waiting; your answer has been in your Bible all the time. Read Genesis 2:20–24. God has answered; are you listening? Will you hear and obey?

God never intended for marriage to be a ninety-day option, but a lifetime commitment. There is no test drive, trial period, warranty rebates, refunds, or exchanges on your mate in marriage. Once you say, “I do,” it’s done.

How did you fall in love with another man and believe you are still faithful? Your affections are sorely misplaced; you are unfaithful in your heart. Love God enough to not violate His Word or yourself. God can renew, restore, or bring forth love from you toward your husband. I encourage you to cut off all ties with this other man before you go any further. Start rebuilding your marriage. Don’t allow inordinate affections to lead you further on the path to fornication and
adultery. What can you do? Repent. Guard your heart with all diligence. Ask God to show you what voids in your life need to be filled, and then let God fill them.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:36–37 KJV). You have need of patience while you work on your marriage, and nothing is going to change until you do. Doing wrong will only provide temporary happiness and much conflict. Remember, lasting joy is the by-product of obeying God.

Q: I have been dating this guy for several months and we have really been enjoying each other. So much so that I believe I may need to broach a sensitive subject with him before we go any further in the relationship. I had a serious illness three years ago that caused me to have a hysterectomy. I had not brought this up to him before because I figured it was too early in the relationship. He is the first guy I have been serious about since my surgery. I don’t want to lose him but I feel like I am being deceitful the longer I go without telling him. How should I bring up this issue to him? I will never be able to have children. Our relationship has been like the perfect dream and I don’t want to wake up. Signed: Sleeping Beauty

A: Dear Sleeping Beauty,

I am glad to report that life can be like a dream even when we are awake. Wake up, Sleeping Beauty; if you think he may be the one, you owe him the truth. It would be deceitful not to tell him, because he seems to be enjoying the relationship
as well. If you lose him, he was not the one. Better to find out now than later. I know it will hurt now, but it will hurt even worse when you are more involved in the relationship. There is only one way to do this—just tell him the truth. And you can still have children. There are so many options open to women who cannot carry a child themselves. Wake up and check them out, and be prepared to discuss them with your friend with whom you believe there may be a future.

**Q:** I have been married for ten years. I have a wonderful husband and all that any woman could ever want in a marriage. But I cheat! I’ve never been able to be faithful to a man. I’ve also had counseling and it helped for one year, and then I was back to doing what I know best—cheating! I don’t want to divorce my husband because I truly love him with all my heart, but I’m always finding myself needing more. I love the thrill and excitement a new lover brings; it is like a new car, new shoes, or jewelry. I have all I need in life; still I lust for more. Signed: Lusting for More

**A:** Dear Lusting for More,

Do you really know what love is? Just keep it up, and you will end up with nothing. All the things you identified are temporal, yet I hear a deeper longing in your soul. It appears you are attempting to fill a void in your life by reaching for what does not satisfy. Are you a Christian? If not, nothing will ever satisfy you for long and you will not find true contentment until you find rest in God.

Your situation brings to remembrance the woman at the well (John 4:1–30, 39–42). Her story speaks to the grace,
Relationships

love, and forgiveness of God. I would encourage you to study the following Scriptures:

• Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:13–14

• Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 1 John 3:4

• Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 1 John 2:15–16

• And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Matthew 6:13

Seek Christian counseling to help you get to the root of your sins and transform your life. If you are a Christian, you know the error and folly of your behavior. Remember God is not mocked. I pray you repent before God’s judgment falls heavily upon you.

Q: I’m a 37-year old woman who has lost faith in finding true love. I’ve done everything God asked me to do, but still I’m alone. I’m not the kind of woman who looks for love. I remained abstinent until marriage. I waited on God to show me the way. I waited for the right man. I felt one man was the right one for me (heaven sent), but he wasn’t. He betrayed me. He became distant and often left home.
for long hours without any explanation. I recently learned he has been sleeping around. I’m very hurt and bitter; I’m heartbroken and it’s hard for me to see past the pain. Signed: Sent from Heaven; Took Me Through Hell

A: Dear Sent from Heaven; Took Me Through Hell,

I started to pray for you as I read your letter. You sound emotionally broken. I can imagine and certainly understand how you must feel. It is devastating to feel God has let you down. Please believe me when I tell you God is faithful and always fulfills His promises to us. He will never let you down. The problem is not with God; it is with people. We believe God owes us because we have done everything He asked us to do.

Why did you think this man was sent from heaven? Did he take you through hell or did you allow yourself to go just to be with him? Were there signals along the way warning you this relationship was heading in the wrong direction? We will miss the signs when we think, “God has to send me a good man because I have been such a good woman.”

Be encouraged, my sister. Use this time to get to know God better. I know you are very hurt and bitter right now, but remember, a man betrayed you—not God. Turn to God, cry out to Him, and pour out your pain and disappointments before Him. You will find Him waiting to heal your broken heart and mend your wounded spirit.

You are not the first woman who has been betrayed. Bitterness will keep you in bondage and lead to further betrayal in future relationships. Dig up every root of bitterness. Seek biblical counsel to help you work through issues of forgiveness. Follow the example of the One who was truly sent from heaven. Jesus prayed to God to forgive those who betrayed
Him. Continue to be the kind of woman who waits on God to show you the way.

Q: I recently found out that my dad has another daughter attending the same university as my older sister. My mother is always preaching about the goodness of a godly man and how her husband is the best among the brothers in our national denomination. Should I share my father’s double life with my mother? I do not want to hurt her, but I also do not want her to continue to believe my father’s lies. Signed: Ready to Tell

A: Dear Ready to Tell,

If your mother chooses to see her husband’s goodness, why would you want to break up your mother’s home, destroy her dream, or bring up the truth she may already know? How do you know your father is lying and has a double life, if you just recently found out about your other sister? This may be an incident your mother and father have dealt with, not a lifestyle. Your mother has been with your father a long time. She sees her husband as the best among the brothers in her national denomination. I would rather believe his lifestyle is based on their years together—not an incident that happened many years ago. Remember the goal of love is to cover and protect, not uncover and reveal.

Everything you know does not need to be told nor is it yours to tell. In some situations you should tell, and in others . . . maybe not. It depends on the person and their relationship. If this was a baby, maybe my advice would be different, but she is already in college. Who will you help by telling your mother? You say you don’t want to hurt your
mother. Then don’t! If you desire a relationship with this sister, then pray before you proceed. Her life may also be turned upside down by the revelation, or you may discover you are the last to know. Everyone else may know and have already forgiven. Check your motives and check with God.

Q: I’m a 40-year-old woman and I’ve never been married. I don’t understand what I’m doing wrong. I’m starting to doubt that this will ever happen to me. Like most women I would like to have the experience of being married to someone I could spend the rest of my life with. I’m so afraid of being alone. What kind of advice can you give me? What type of prayer should I say for God to bless me with the right husband, and what should I believe? Signed: Why Not Me, Lord?

A: Dear Why Not Me, Lord?

Well, for one thing, you are putting the horse before the cart. The Bible instructs you to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33 KJV). God is always with you. Therefore, you are never alone. Just rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him to give you a mate. You are still very young; remember, 40 is the new 25! Often the unlimited opportunities of being single are overlooked because of the preoccupation with finding a mate.

The apostle Paul (who, by the way, was single) said in Philippians 4:11 that we should learn to be content in whatever state we find ourselves. No one can make you happy. That is too great a burden to put on another human being. You must learn to be happy and complete within yourself. Cultivate
friendships with other singles; plan outings and trips. Widen your circle of interest by volunteering and doing missionary work. Being single, you have the freedom to make choices to enhance your life experience; that is, if you don’t spend your time living in frustration always looking for “Mr. Right.”

Unfortunately, when a person reaches their 30s (and in your case, their 40s) and is still unmarried, that person sees himself or herself as deficient. Many singles think, “If I could just be married, my life would be complete.” Being married doesn’t solve your problems. In fact, you carry problems with you into a marriage and they become compounded by the problems your spouse brings into the marriage as well. First Corinthians 7:27 tell us those who are married seek to be free and those who are free seek to be married. One counselor said, “Half of the people who come to me have problems because of their marriage, and the other half have problems because they are single!”

Now don’t get me wrong, a good marriage is a blessing. However, developing a good relationship comes before a good marriage. You can’t just jump out there and marry the first man who comes along. A good marriage is the result of two people who seek God’s guidance. There are no formulas or prayers to get God to give you a husband.

If God has not given you the gift of singleness, then believe He desires for you to be married. I advise you to stop worrying, doubting, and being afraid and use your time and energy to prepare yourself to be a complete, well-rounded person. Then you will be ready to give and receive in marriage.

Q: I am 38 years old and am considered very successful by many, yet I am always alone. I do not want to hear that my position intimidates men because I never bring it up in a
relationship. I know I have standards but why should I lessen them for a date that will never lead to anything? So I am now contemplating online dating. Is this considered outside the will of God? My friends tell me that “Who God has for me will show up in his timing” . . . but I feel the timing is off. Please help! Signed: Successful Without, Lonely Within

A: Dear Successful Without, Lonely Within,

Is online dating a sin? No. Is it advisable? No. Matchmaking websites are popping up daily, and online dating is an emerging trend among Christians. Proverbs 18:22 says, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (KJV). The purpose of Christian dating should be to find an appropriate mate, and as this Scripture indicates, the man should be doing the looking and finding. I know you may have heard success stories about online dating, but you have no idea who you will meet when you are online. Many impatient women have become victims by meeting people online. I urge caution. Consider the dangers inherent in meeting someone for a date neither your family nor friends know. Isaac’s father Abraham sent one of his servants to find a mate for him. In those days, the father was responsible for making a good match for his children. It is still advisable to meet someone your family or friends can vouch for as a person of character and integrity. You should not lower your standards, and God’s timing is never off. He is always on time. We sometimes struggle with waiting on the Lord and being “of good courage.”

Q: I am so sick of my mother-in-law, who also is the pastor’s wife. My husband and I have been married for almost three
years and have not had a child. She continues to ask us why not. We both worked very hard through college and graduate schools. We just purchased our first home and are almost done paying off student loans. My mother-in-law acts as if I am embarrassing her by not being pregnant or active in the church. To top it off, she consistently reminds my husband, who is a CPA, his call is to be a pastor because her husband has built a mega church. Help me before she makes me want to move us or her out of the way! Signed: Can I Please Get a Witness?

A: Dear Can I Please Get a Witness?

Before you make a move you will regret, let me remind you that you do have a witness. According to Job 16:19, “Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high” (KJV). The Lord knows your heart and the love you show to your husband and his mother. Regardless of what she says and does, the Lord still holds you accountable for your loving response. Remember your husband is her son, and it must be challenging for him to know the pain you both are experiencing. I appreciate your statement of honest emotion. You have a right to feel tired, sick, and frustrated; so does your mother-in-law.

Your mother-in-law has a vested interest in her son and her future legacy. As two wise women that love the same man, instead of resenting her, try to understand her.

Overbearing mothers-in-law are not new. They are usually well-meaning women who don’t know how to let go. You sound as though you have endured a great deal. Do not throw away all your hard work. However, she cannot get you pregnant or live your life. The Lord gives life and
allows us to be fruitful and multiply. It is up to God—not you, your husband, or your mother-in-law—to determine the appointed time God will allow you to conceive (if you are not interfering).

Concerning your husband’s mother’s belief that your husband has been called to the ministry: God calls into ministry, not parents. Your husband knows if such a call has been made on his life, and it is his responsibility to answer that call. Overall, it is your husband’s responsibility to deal with his mother. He is now the head of his own household and should gently remind his mother of that fact. He should 1) thank his mother for her concern and advice; 2) remind her as the head of his household that he will seek God for the right decisions; and 3) explain that he and his wife are responsible to God for fulfilling their God-given roles in the marriage.

Praise God for your education and that you have been able to pay off your financial debts. Your mother-in-law can huff and puff, but she cannot blow your house down if it is built on the solid rock. However, you and your husband should keep the law of kindness in your mouth. As children, we also have a debt to our parents to honor them (Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2–3). The Deuteronomy parent-honoring command comes with the promise that it will go well with you. May you be pregnant with love and wisdom, and then deliver with grace.

Q: My boss is very belittling and condescending. Every day, I hate coming to work. However, I’m very good at my job and I receive a handsome salary. My office is located near my home, which stops the burden of dealing with the
Relationships

traffic others face every day. Other than dealing with him, my job is great. I’m very afraid one day I may blow up at him and lose my job because I have endured so much over the years. What can I do? I pray every morning prior to walking through those doors for peace! Signed: No More Cheeks to Turn!

A: Dear No More Cheeks to Turn!

Sounds like a wonderful job; you did not mention what you have endured, but any type of harassment on the job is unlawful. Sexual harassment is not the only kind of abuse we sometimes face in the workplace. When there is a problem on the job, ignoring it or just putting up with it never makes it go away or get better. Don’t you dare blow up and lose that great job. After you have used up both your cheeks, just do something to put a stop to the harassment. Find out what your legal rights are, and then take the appropriate steps to resolve this issue and keep praying for peace. Opposition is a great opportunity to let your light shine brighter.

Begin to pray for your boss and others in the office who are being impacted by his inappropriate behavior. What is going on in his life or has happened to him that would lead to such public display of belittlement and condescending responses?

You have already used your cheeks. Now, use your knees—not to kick him, but to pray. Others are watching and probably waiting for the drama. Don’t give them a show. God hears your cry. The Bible says in Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” If peace is not possible in this situation and it has become
unbearable, count the costs before you walk away from an otherwise wonderful job.

Remember, God can give you inner peace in the midst of outer turmoil.

Q: My sister is the other woman. She has been dating this guy for more than three years. His wife lives in another city with the children; he was transferred for a five-year assignment. My sister actually believes God sent this man to her because he is so unhappy and she makes him very happy. Her husband died suddenly from a massive heart attack, and she met this man a couple of months after his death. She said she had just finished praying, seeking an answer to her pain, and met him at the drugstore. I think my sister is depressed. This is not her character. She has always been a serious, no-nonsense, saved, respectful, and committed person. I have tried reasoning with her, I have tried sharing the Word with her (which she knows better than me) and I have tried shaming her, but nothing is working. Signed: I Need a Miracle

A: Dear I Need a Miracle,

Yes you do. Begin to fast and pray for divine intervention. Your sister is possibly delusional in addition to being depressed. She is substituting fantasy for reality. Even though she knows God hates adultery and fornication is a sin, she has convinced herself God has sanctioned this relationship.

She is running away from the grieving cycle. There is no way that she has dealt with all her emotions and resolved life issues regarding her loss in two months. She is using this
man to avoid her pain, her emptiness, and to fill the void left by her husband’s absence.

Your sister is in need of counseling and a strong reality check. Is there someone (other than you) that can do that for her? She is in shock. Thank God you know her and realize this is not typical of her character. Everyone needs someone in life who knew them when they were sane. Your sister is not in her right mind. Pray that the Lord reveals truth. If this relationship has been going on for more than three years, she will grieve twice when this is over. She will need those who truly love her to be close by and provide support.

The cycle of grief is filled with many emotions. Pray when she is delivered from this she does not fall into despair. God is able to keep her and restore her. He is a miracle-working God. As you lift up your sister, be mindful to pray for the family of this unfaithful man. Sin complicates things for all those involved.

**Q:** When I met my husband I thought he was so strong and protective; he picked the best restaurants and shows, and he always wanted me to have the best. My family and friends tried to tell me he was a control freak, but I just thought my friends were jealous and my family was still trying to tell me what to do. I was happy and blind until after the honeymoon, when he started vetoing every idea, thought, or change I had. Our life was wonderful as long as I said “Yes, honey” to everything he said. I thought it would get better, but we have been married a year now and it is worse than ever. I don’t know what to do! I am so unhappy and ashamed of the way I dismissed my family and friends. I can’t stand to hear them say “I told you so.” I still love him and I believe he loves me. What can I do? Signed: Controlled
A: Dear Controlled,

When you feel smothered—with no choice, no voice, or no input into the relationship and no ability to make big or small decisions—you feel like a child. You are told what to do and how to do it. You may have limited access to financial resources, transportation, and other information. Controlling often masks as overprotection and sometimes feels abusive. It is difficult to have every move questioned and challenged. Many give in and acquiesce to the demands of their partner in order to minimize confusion and arguments. This type of relationship is stifling for the growth of the individuals and the marriage.

Your husband may have some misconceptions about each of your roles in the marriage. Genesis 2:18 defines the wife as a partner. She was made to help the man in accomplishing common goals. Furthermore, husbands and wives are to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 7:3). If the woman was to stop thinking and acting on her own once she becomes a wife, then God would wrap her brains and emotions up in a nice little present for the husband upon the wedding day. Find an experienced counselor in your congregation you both trust and respect and seek counseling.

It is obvious your friends and family saw warning signs in this man and you refused to listen. Therefore, you may be outside of God’s will by marrying. One of the first things you need to do is to ask God’s forgiveness. Then, ask Him to restore you and give you the tools necessary to deal with your husband’s overprotectiveness. Be honest with your husband. Ask him if you have done something to give him the impression you are incapable of making competent decisions.
Discuss your feelings about his controlling actions in a non-confrontational way. Negotiate.

**Q:** I am married with three children and a good husband whom I love dearly. We get along all right, but lately I noticed he does not want to be home much after work. He is spending more time with his friends at their homes. We have been fussing lately over life challenges and he is saying he would rather be elsewhere, where he can get peace and quiet, than at our house. What can I do to shape our home into the place where my spouse and children long to be? How do I turn my house into the haven that will keep my husband home and happy and give my children a protected location where they see the two of us getting along better? Signed: My Home Is Falling Apart

**A:** Dear My Home Is Falling Apart,

Please read Proverbs 31:10–31 and Ephesians 6:1–4; you will find them both very helpful. The Bible is a book filled with wise answers. Proverbs 17:1 tells us it is better to eat a dry morsel with quietness than to eat a feast where there is strife. It also says it is better to live alone in a tumbledown shack than share a mansion with a nagging spouse.

You and your husband need to take time to reassess your communication style. You must be able to voice your concerns with him without yelling and being accusatory. Being angry and contentious only increases the problem rather than fixing it. Therefore, you need to set aside a time when both of you are calm and willing to listen. “You must let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but only what
is beneficial for the building up of the one in need, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29 NET).

You said your arguments are ongoing and affecting the household. Maybe you should step back from the problem and allow your husband to deal with it. God has placed him as the head of your household (Ephesians 5:22–25). Since you don’t seem to be getting anywhere, you should let him know you are going to defer to him as the head and you will be praying for God’s wisdom and guidance in each situation. Then do just that! Marriage is all about sacrifice. If you want a godly marriage, then you have to apply godly principles. This may just be the sacrifice God is looking for to show the light of Christ in you.

Your husband told you what he needs, so a good start would be to give the man what he asked for—some peace and quiet. Entice him back home with a well-prepared meal and some alone time. Maybe you can schedule a time to spend together after dinner, when you both are relaxed and not so stressed, to just have fun and enjoy each other’s company. Proverbs 14:1 says, “A wise woman builds her home, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands” (NLT).

Q: My best friend is mostly a wonderful person. I say mostly because she has become a chronic complainer. She tells me all about her husband’s shortcomings, as she calls them. We have known each other all our lives and I used to enjoy our fellowship, but now I dread it when she calls me. If she is not complaining about him, she is trying to fix me. How can I tell her I don’t need to hear all about her husband’s faults without offending her? I don’t want to lose a lifelong friend. Signed: Please Help
A: Dear Please Help,

Complaining often takes the form of criticism. The Bible tells us it is better to live in a house with a continual drip than to live in a house with a nagging woman or man. Living with a critical or complaining person is draining. If your friend complains and criticizes her spouse until you (and him, most likely) are ready to scream, she needs to change and learn to view life differently. She needs to stop looking for things to complain about. She needs to look for the beautiful qualities in him that made her fall in love in the first place.

All complaints are not necessarily rooted in pessimism; some are actually legitimate concerns. But nagging and criticizing do not help, whether your friend complains to you or her spouse. Your friend is living in a pessimistic place, wrapped up in her situation; she may even derive comfort in her misery. She will ignore sound advice, and rebut your counsel with a litany of additional problems. She wants sympathy, not solutions.

Ask God to give you the grace to listen for a while, and then give you the wisdom to redirect the conversation away from the complaint to another subject. As Christians we want to glorify God and lead others to Him. In the midst of complaining, tell your friend you cannot fix the situation, but you are willing to pray with her about it. Then stop and do just that: pray! Remember you cannot change anyone else, so work on changing how you respond to her.

Q: Both my parents are over eighty and I am becoming their caregiver. It is so strange. I feel like my world has turned
upside down. I just don’t seem to have enough time to take care of everyone and everything. My husband expects me to keep the house clean, the meals ready, and the children disciplined as I did before I began caring for my parents. Can you give me some points on balancing my life and my parent’s lives? Signed: I Need Balance

A: Dear I Need Balance,

Yes, you do. Not only do you need balance but you also need to have a conversation with your husband and others in your family who may have expectations of you, including siblings, children, your employer, and others to whom you have obligations. When our parents begin to age and need more of our time and attention, we do feel like our world is turned upside down. In order to get balance, you need to get understanding. You are only one person and you can only do so much. As a caregiver it is important for you to also care for yourself. If you don’t take good care of you, then you will not be good to anyone else—your husband included.

Start by listing all of your duties and responsibilities; then identify who is available to help with each of these items. What will you need to let go as you assume the additional responsibilities in caring for your parents? It may be that your husband is not aware of everything required or the toll it takes on you daily. Caring for parents is more than just a list of to dos; it takes an emotional as well as physical toll. There may come a time when you have concerns about your parents living alone. Worries include using the stove, climbing stairs, healthy eating habits, exercise, and social activity.
It is always best to talk with your parents early before their living situation becomes an issue. Find out what they expect and how much you are willing to take on in light of your own situation. Pray for guidance and wisdom as you move forward. You want to honor your parents and your husband. Both of them are important primary relationships. However, if you do not have a conversation soon, you will end up bitter and resentful toward all of them as you give and give and give beyond what you have capacity to do.

If there are other family members, involve them in developing a plan for your parents’ care. As the primary caregiver, you may need them to step in from time to time to give you some assistance. You may also need your husband to step in and give you some relief by assisting with the meals, cleaning, and caring for your children. This is a life-changing situation for you, and you need to be aware of the challenges ahead. Caring for elderly parents can be exhausting both mentally and physically, so make sure you set aside some personal time for yourself.

If there is no one else to give assistance, check out respite facilities where you can leave your parents for a few hours or even overnight. Some respite organizations can even assign a caregiver to your home for a few hours or several days a week. Remember, God knows how much you can bear even when others don’t. We are oftentimes more resilient than we give ourselves credit for being. Give yourself permission to rest periodically, refuse certain tasks, and release the mixed emotions you will feel throughout this transition of life.

Q: We had several people over for the holiday. It was a mixture of family and friends, including a young married couple
and their two children. The mother wore an extremely low-cut blouse that was offensive to me (and probably others as well). I never said anything to her. However, as I noticed her jiggle across the room on several occasions it brought to mind that she has worn inappropriate clothing to events in the past. How could I have handled this without it being offensive to her? Signed: Wanting to Be Appropriate with Those Who Are Not

A: Dear Wanting to Be Appropriate with Those Who Are Not,

Is this woman a family member, acquaintance, or friend? How often do you come in contact with her? If she is an acquaintance and her manner of dress is truly offensive to you, then you are under no obligation to invite her into your home again. However, you have no control over what she wears to other events. Unfortunately, the world is full of people who believe too tight, too short, too low, too tasteless clothing is fashionable. And while it certainly is a fashion faux pas to encourage people to believe spandex is for everyone, going to the other extreme to criticize anyone who dresses inappropriately doesn’t work either.

If she is a family member and you do not feel comfortable talking to her, find out if there is someone who you think she will listen to and ask them to speak to her. However, maybe you could find an opportunity to take her aside and tactfully mention what she wears is unflattering or suggestive. She may not take kindly to the suggestion, but at least she will be aware what she may think looks good on her does not.

If this woman is a friend, then you are obligated to mention your concerns. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful”
(KJV). Perhaps she is not aware that she is being offensive in the way she dresses. Too many women buy into the hype that less is more, trashy is the new sexy, and if you got it, flaunt it. As a friend, you should be willing to take a chance on being honest with her. It may hurt her feelings temporarily, but it would be better than to also have others talking about her as well.

Now, in any of these three cases, if the woman is a Christian, she should be made aware it is her responsibility to be a role model for other Christian women (Titus 2:3–5). She can be stylish as well as modest. She can be fashionable and still godly. If she is open to the idea, have some fun going through each other’s closets and clearing out the items that do not reflect Christian attire. You can also plan a day for shopping. This will give you an opportunity to see the types of clothing she likes and to gently guide her in a modest direction.

Q: My mother has been living with my husband and me for the past three years. She has been very ill. My four brothers have not been much help. They send money but always remind me they have families and just cannot do the daily activities. My husband and I have decided it is time to put her in hospice. The doctors can no longer do anything to sustain her and we can no longer afford 24/7 care. My brothers are angry with my husband and me about our decision. They don’t seem to understand how much work is involved.

Signed: She’s Their Mom Too

A: Dear She’s Their Mom Too,

It is a difficult situation when a loved one is in need of care. God has commanded us to love and honor our parents; take
comfort that as you have lived in obedience to Him you will be blessed. There always seem to be some members of the family who will not do what we deem is their fair share. Try not to judge them, as they are dealing with their own set of circumstances. When you need help caring for the daily needs of your loved one, choosing hospice care can provide some relief for you and your family. They may also provide additional comfort and medical attention for your mother.

Don’t feel guilty about making this decision. Many people seek hospice care when they have done all they can at home and the disease has a terminal prognosis. Hospice care can also offer you support and help you deal with the emotional stress of the changes taking place in your life and in your mother’s life.

God will help you in this trying time. Turn to Him in faith and hear the encouraging words of Isaiah 40:28–31: “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (ESV).

As God comforts you, seek to show compassion for your brothers. When your mother passes, you and your brothers will still be here to reconcile your differences. The Bible charges you in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (KJV). Your brothers may not understand the decisions you and your husband are making. Invite them to be a part of what is being done. Maybe they will have some ideas or offer assistance or even emotional support. As you have indicated, she is their mom too.
Q: My mom and dad have been divorced since I was 16 years old. They still fight like cats and dogs and are always contacting each other for one reason or another. Then they call me to take sides. The issues they argue about are so trivial. Neither of them has remarried, although both of them dated other people years ago. Whenever there is a family event they promise to come at different times but somehow show up together and make a scene. I am so tired of being in the middle. When I talk with them it is usually about what the other one is doing now or has recently said. I no longer want to be the referee. Signed: Dropping the Flags in Florida

A: Dear Dropping the Flags in Florida,

Your parents have established a very dysfunctional relationship that is somehow working for them. They may never change and there is nothing you can do to change them; however, you can remove yourself from the position of referee. You are an adult now and they are hanging on to you as the glue that causes them to interact with each other. They will always be your parents, but they no longer make decisions for you, nor should you make decisions for them. Your parents may have numerous reasons for disagreeing but you do not have to be in the middle. Set some boundaries in your life and refuse to take sides. Graciously consider setting a timer and letting your parents know there is a limit on how much time you will spend discussing the other person and absolutely refuse to pass on any information.

If your parents don’t comply, you can also consider limiting your time altogether until such time as they change their
behavior. It may be hard to believe but there are people who actually like to fuss and fight. They don’t try to avoid each other; they have instead made bickering a way of life. The Bible talks a lot in Proverbs about those who are cantankerous, spiteful, rabble rousers, and even foolish. People who like drama need prayer. Please spend some time in prayer before you drop the flags or approach your parents. Dealing with parents who raised you can be sensitive, especially if they feel their behavior is being challenged. Ask God to give you wisdom so you can honor your parents even as you draw the line.

Q: My little sister, who is 14, is the primary caregiver for my mom’s 8-year-old son by her third husband. I’m not passing judgment but there are four of us—all with different dads. William has cerebral palsy. Jen has been taking care of him since he was born, while my mom works. She has missed most of her childhood. I’m concerned that she is also going to miss out on all the wonderful things about being a teenager. I want to ask her to come live with me. My mom’s new husband makes enough money for her to just stay home and raise her son. I believe she works so that she doesn’t have to deal with William. Am I wrong for wanting to rescue Jen?
Signed: Sister to the Rescue

A: Dear Sister to the Rescue,

I understand your concern for your sister. But remember you are on the outside looking in. Don’t jump to conclusions without all the facts. You don’t know what the financial arrangements are in their household. Your mother may have to work.
All siblings at some point provide care for one another. How much time is spent varies from house to house depending on the situation. You say you are not judging but it does sound as though you take issue with your mother’s choices. Some of the things you are concerned about were God’s choices. He is aware of your sister’s situation. God placed her in this family with these circumstances. He knows. Maybe God is doing a mighty work in her and this experience will be needed to help prepare her for a great destiny. Her future ministry calling may be connected to what she is presently doing.

Have you tried talking over your concerns with your mother? Maybe you and your mother together can provide some relief for your little sister. Why don’t you try helping your sister by relieving her as you take on some of her childcare duties, thus allowing her some free time to play? I want to caution you that taking on the full-time care of a teenager is a big undertaking for anyone at any age. Think long and seriously before you seek to make any changes to other people’s lives. Your sister may be very happy with being able to provide care for her brother and may not feel that she is missing out on as much as you think.

Q: I have a girlfriend that’s very gullible when it comes to men. As a consequence, she makes bad decisions, and then asks why this has happened to her. I’ve shared with her that the answers she seeks concerning relationships with men are in the Bible, but she still continues to believe she has the right answers to everything without noticing she doesn’t. I’m now to the point that just speaking with her about her problems has frustrated me and I want to discontinue our friendship all together. I’m

57
also to the point that I’m becoming rude! How can I minister to her and not display my total disgust with her lack of receiving? Signed: Birds of a Feather Don’t Flock Together!

A: Dear Birds of a Feather Don’t Flock Together!

A friend knows and exercises the proper approach in various situations. There is a time to warn and admonish, as well as a time to encourage. At all times when we confront sin in the lives of others, we should speak the truth in love in a spirit of gentleness and meekness. Consider that Paul admonished us to be mindful that we all were there once. You did not always make the right decisions or heed godly counsel. We learn God is longsuffering with us and has loved us to repentance. As we grow and change, God gives us opportunities to help others achieve the same success by applying the Word of God, modeling appropriate behavior, and sharing our testimony. As a Christian, you may want to demonstrate the same grace and mercy to your friend God extended to you. If you want to see your friend soar in her relationship with God and with others, then don’t abandon her—teach her to fly.

---

**LET US PRAY**

*Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you that you are a relational God. You understand how I sometimes struggle with my relationships. Help me to honor and respect everyone, especially my own mother and father. Help me to see their actions as love with the intent to help, not as intrusions into my lives. I thank you, Father, for being a friend that stays closer to me than a brother. I*
want to be like you and befriend others without judging them. Help me to be that way with my friends. Help me not to be a people-pleaser. I want my relationships to be pleasing to you. Lord, please work in my heart so that I will honor and respect those under my authority in the same way I do those in authority over me. I want to be a person of integrity in my dealings with others. I pray that all of my relationships will help me to bring glory to the name of Christ. Lord, help me to be loving, giving, and forgiving.
Scripture Truth to Help You LIVE RIGHT NOW

Category: RELATIONSHIPS

Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:23–25 (ESV)

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Exodus 20:12 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17–18 (ESV)

[Walk] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:2–3

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.

1 Corinthians 13:4–8

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:24–25

He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 13:20

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8 (ESV)

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Romans 12:9–10 (ESV)

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

1 Timothy 5:1–7 (ESV)
Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”
1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?
2 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV)

Live the Word. Live Right Now Application

Select five verses about relationships from the previous pages and complete these exercises.

Verse # 1 __________________________________________

How would you summarize this verse of Scripture?
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________

What does the Bible verse mean to you? ______________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________
Does this verse give you instructions for hope, help, or healing?
_____________________________________________

As you read this Scripture verse, do you feel the need to repent, reflect, or rejoice? _________________________

What do you need to do differently to live right now?
_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

Name at least one person to whom you can be accountable and share your decision to live right now.
_____________________________________________

Name at least one person you can encourage by sharing this Scripture.
_____________________________________________

Verse # 2  _____________________________________

How would you summarize this verse of Scripture?
_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________
What does the Bible verse mean to you?

Does this verse give you instructions for hope, help, or healing?

As you read this Scripture verse, do you feel the need to repent, reflect, or rejoice?

What do you need to do differently to live right now?

Name at least one person to whom you can be accountable and share your decision to live right now.

Name at least one person you can encourage by sharing this Scripture.
Verse # 3 _______________________________________

How would you summarize this verse of Scripture?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What does the Bible verse mean to you? ________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Does this verse give you instructions for hope, help, or healing?
__________________________________________________________________________

As you read this Scripture verse, do you feel the need to repent, reflect, or rejoice? ___________________________

What do you need to do differently to live right now?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Name at least one person to whom you can be accountable and share your decision to live right now.

_____________________________________________

Name at least one person you can encourage by sharing this Scripture.

_____________________________________________

Verse # 4 _____________________________________

How would you summarize this verse of Scripture?

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

What does the Bible verse mean to you? ____________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________
Relationships

Does this verse give you instructions for hope, help, or healing?

________________________________________________________________________

As you read this Scripture verse, do you feel the need to repent, reflect, or rejoice? ______________________________

What do you need to do differently to live right now?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Name at least one person to whom you can be accountable and share your decision to live right now.

________________________________________________________________________

Name at least one person you can encourage by sharing this Scripture. ______________________________

Verse # 5 ______________________________

How would you summarize this verse of Scripture?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

67
What does the Bible verse mean to you?


Does this verse give you instructions for hope, help, or healing?


As you read this Scripture verse, do you feel the need to repent, reflect, or rejoice?  


What do you need to do differently to live right now?


Name at least one person to whom you can be accountable and share your decision to live right now.


Name at least one person you can encourage by sharing this Scripture.


68