

*Finding a Man Worth Keeping*  
10 Dating Secrets that Work

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**READ Except of Intro & Chapter One below**

## Introduction

### How the Secrets Came to Be

When I was a little girl, I dreamed of getting married, having kids, and living happily ever after. I wanted the fairy tale. At age five I was ready for a husband! As I grew up, I prayed earnestly for him to appear. Certainly God would honor my consistent requests and come through for me, right?

Wrong. *Decades* passed with no husband. In fact, I didn't have my first "official" boyfriend (one who would claim he was actually dating me) until I was *twenty-one*. And I was moments away from *thirty-five* when I finally walked down the aisle of holy matrimony to long-awaited wedded bliss.

Between those years I earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in theology; but what I deserved most was an honorary PhD in dating. I devoured dozens upon dozens of books on dating and the psychology of relationships. I got lots of trial-and error, hands-on experience; made many naive and often painful mistakes, and spent many long hours in persevering prayer. I topped off my dating education by observing glamorous models, movie stars, and other women who were actively pursued by appealing men during my career as a Hollywood agent. I watched. I studied. And I learned.

The result? During my twenties and thirties, I dated more than one hundred men—ninety-seven of whom asked me out for a second date. I *know* the secrets for attracting a man. More importantly, I know the secrets for finding, dating, and keeping the *right* man!

Was it always fun during my active dating years? No. Did I always get a third, fourth, or fifth date? No. Did I cry often? Absolutely. But every step of the way, I learned and I grew. And now, after more than seven years of marriage, I can honestly say without hesitation that my husband, Will, is worth every tear I ever shed over a boy—and believe me, there were barrels full!

Through exhilarating highs and devastating lows, I finally triumphed in the soap opera of my personal single life by diligently practicing the secrets I am about to share with you in this book. You can triumph too. Believe me, I've been there. I know your struggle. I know your tears. I've walked in your shoes. That's why I want to talk with you openly, honestly, and practically in the pages that follow, not as some kind of clinical expert armed with theories and statistics but rather as a friend—a girlfriend who truly wants you to have what I have: the man of my dreams.

SOMETIMES PEOPLE DON'T SAY THE RIGHT THING

I was having lunch one day with a handsome Christian D.J. who was in his early forties. I was thirty. It didn't take long to figure out why he was still single. Though he loved God dearly, he couldn't forgive himself for dodging the draft during the Vietnam War. I tried my best to be helpful by emphasizing God's grace, but he just didn't want to hear it.

"Don't you get it?" he finally snapped at me. "Just as a woman is not a woman if she hasn't had children by thirty, a man is not a man if he hasn't seen combat!"

*All-righty, then. I get it now . . .*

My lunch date was not the first person to say the wrong thing to me during my single years. Have you noticed that people rarely seem to say the right thing to single women? Do any of the following comments sound familiar?

"Why are *you* still single?"

"Better hurry up if you want children."

"You're too picky."

"Oh, you'll find someone. Just pray about it."

"Maybe you're too needy."

"You're trying too hard."

"Maybe God is trying to teach you something first."

"Stop looking, and God will bring you someone when he's ready."

I could go on and on. Sadly, well-meaning Christians are often the ones who say the most hurtful things. Their words sting, especially when you feel you've been doing everything possible to make yourself worthy of a spouse—from getting right with God to becoming a great catch. Yet your dream mate still eludes you.

Does any of this strike a chord? Then this is the book for you! The secrets I'm about to reveal will not only help you find your man worth keeping, they will also help you discover the exciting plans God has had for your life all along. You can actually begin being happy and single right now, even as you move forward toward your goal of wedded bliss.

## MY STORY

As I mentioned earlier, when I was little girl, all I ever dreamed about was getting married, having babies, and living happily ever after. I would play house for hours, imagining what my life would be like when I grew up. I was raised in a Christian home with a mom and dad who held hands and kissed. I wanted to have that one day! But for a long time, it seemed that God had other plans.

Jesus was very real to me back then. In fact, he has been a very real part of my life for as long as I can remember. Still, I was very insecure

as a young girl. I was absolutely terrified of rejection, confrontation, and conflict. In school I became a goody-two-shoes, straight-and-narrow type. I didn't know how to be popular. I wasn't pretty, so the boys didn't notice me—which, through my preteen and teenage years, kept my confidence level at the bottom of the sea. I specifically remember walking into the girls' bathroom in junior high as the pretty girls were primping and saying to myself, "Oh, if only I could be pretty like them, *then* the boys would like me." I had the pity-party thing down pat....

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## **Chapter One**

### **Secret 1**

#### **Find Out What You Want**

How Stacy's heart melted every time her boyfriend of six months showed up at her front door! He was gorgeous, fit, funny, charming, and he *loved* Stacy. Never mind that he had no idea what he was going to do with his life career-wise. Yes, he could be a little controlling and critical at times, but he was *so* sweet. And while it was true he was divorced with two young kids and in debt deeper than he could calculate, he thought Stacy was great and wanted to marry her—music to Stacy's ears!

Still, something was not quite right. Stacy couldn't put her finger on it, but something inside her felt hollow every time they were together. At least she had a man who wanted to marry her, right? Wasn't that enough?

Have you ever felt like Stacy? Just thrilled that someone finally noticed you or flattered you? Forget the fact that he's a mess inside and far from the ideal mate.

But wait. *Hello*. You can't forget! That's the whole purpose of this book—to help you wake up, face reality, and get on a path toward finding a man worth keeping for the rest of your life. Believe me, heartbreak now is better than the realization later that you married the wrong mate.

Too often the formula for dating and marriage goes like this: girl yearns for love, girl meets boy, girl experiences instant attraction, as inexplicable fireworks go off inside her head; girl and boy become inseparable and addicted to one another—much like a person becomes dependent on Diet Coke, alcohol, or drugs to maintain a certain "feelgood" sensation. And since being together "feels right,"

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girl ignores any negative signs that might warn her that something is wrong with this picture. After all, the boy says he loves her, so he must be “the one.” Hence, girl blindly walks down the aisle—and ends up married and lonely, living for years with someone with whom she has nothing in common but fading passion.

You don’t have to be that girl! But you risk being that girl if you don’t know what you’re looking for ahead of time. To recognize your man when he finally shows up, you must first take the time to discover what you really want in a mate. That’s the first secret to finding a man worth keeping. Sound simple? You’d be amazed at how many women I meet who are clueless about what they really want in their man!

In this chapter we’re going to do two eye-opening exercises right up front to immediately remove any potential you may have for falling into the “clueless” category. The first exercise is a reality check that will help answer the question, “What have you been getting thus far in your love life?” Maybe you’ve done a great job attracting some of the worst men on the planet. Don’t you think it’s time to start attracting some good ones? The second exercise will help answer the question, “What do you really want in a mate?” You need to know what you *really* want in your husband *before* you walk down that aisle—in fact, before you go on your next date! By the time you finish the second exercise, I think you’ll have a good idea of all you have to gain and what little you have to lose by following the ten dating secrets in this book.

The truth is, if you want to catch a man worth keeping, you have to first be absolutely committed to yourself and your own needs. Yes, that’s right—sometimes it *is* all about you! The wisest man who ever lived once said, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There is a time for you to focus on your life—to learn your likes, your dislikes, and your God-given gifts and talents. *Now* is that time. Don’t feel guilty; this is going to be a healthy self-evaluation with a purpose. My prayer for you, dear reader, is that by the time you’re done, you will be much better acquainted with the *real you*.

Let’s face it. Too many of us are preoccupied with wanting to be wanted, wanting to just *be* with someone, *anyone*, rather than being alone. Loneliness is a killer feeling—one that I have known intimately. And it can drive us to make unwise choices. But listen: it’s OK to feel desperate. It’s OK to admit you have those feelings. What’s not OK is to allow your feelings of desperation to affect your choice in a husband.

I didn’t.

I know from experience it’s not easy. It takes a willful, sacrificial, conscious effort. You will have to stop wasting years dating guys who show you early on they’re not the ones for you. You will have to sacrifice

the comfort of being with “just anyone” in order to find the “right one.” Your commitment to choose what’s best for you *will* deliver an exciting and fulfilling future. So hang in there with me. You can be strong in the face of loneliness. I have faith in you; otherwise I wouldn’t be spending months at my computer for you!

The fact is, you will only marry from the pool of men you date. So be picky! You’ve only got one life to live. From this point forward, focus on the qualities you admire in a man rather than on your gnawing inner need to be wanted. It will pay off, I promise.

To continue, you will need some supplies: a notebook or journal and a pen. Every time you pick up this book, pick up your journal too. Are you ready? Open your notebook, grab your pen, and let’s get started.

### EXERCISE 1: HOW DID I GET HERE?

Have you ever stopped and asked yourself, *How in the world did I get here?* I know I have—usually right after being dumped and having my heart sent through a paper shredder. What has *your* love life brought you thus far?

Let’s consider the personal want ad you’ve been subconsciously carrying around with you in your dating life. Open your journal. Use one page for each dating relationship you’ve had. Put each ex-boyfriend’s name at the top of a page and then draw a line down the middle. On one side of the page, write all of this person’s good qualities; on the other side, write all his bad qualities. Do this for each guy you’ve gone out with. Some of you may need only one or two pages; others may need to buy a second notebook....

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