

A
Widow's Advice
to
Young Wives

by Danna Shirley
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DEDICATION

I affectionately dedicate this book to my amazing husband,
Ronald Kline Shirley
without whom none of these memories would have been tenderly
learned nor lovingly shared.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank **GOD** Who woke me one morning with the inspiration for this book and helped me to put it down on paper. This is His book, a source of encouragement to His daughters and sons to live in harmony as husbands and wives.

I send sincere appreciation to my friend, **Patricia Sanderson**, who supported me greatly as I shared with her how this book came to be birthed. She gave me great encouragement as she sensed a deep touch in her spirit that this would minister to you, the reader, as it did to her.

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I also acknowledge with gratitude the feedback I received from many of my **Family** and **Friends** who read this manuscript and shared how it touched them deeply . . . some moved to tears.

INTRODUCTION

A Widow's Advice to Young Wives

I was watching a video of my husband's memorial service late one evening, something I hadn't done in a long while. It reminded me again that he was such a fine and honorable man. Looking back, I knew if I had the opportunity to live my life with him over again, I would regard him differently, I would most assuredly do a better job as his help meet (helper, aid).

The Lord brought a scripture to my mind:

“The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine,

***teachers of good things—
that they admonish the young women
to love their husbands,***

to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

(Titus 2:3-4 NKJV)

My intention is not to tell you ‘*how*’ to have a happy marriage – for there are numerous books that do that very well, although none exceeds the Bible—buy them! study them! apply them!

Rather, I want to stress that you ‘*seek*’ after a happy marriage with all your heart . . . *before it's too late!*

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LOVE

LOVE—there are so many kinds . . .

LOVE as a mother for her children . . .

LOVE as a husband for his wife . . .

LOVE for your fellow man . . .

The sweet, innocent **LOVE** of a child . . .

LOVE for nature and God's creatures . . .

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, as from God for His creation man.

Sometimes our heart seems like it will burst
from dwelling fondly on a particular recollection . . .

Maybe it is that thought of spoken words of

LOVE and affection from a spouse . . .

Maybe it's that mother's **LOVE** of pride and tenderness
when her child makes the first attempt at the "firsts" in life,
especially those first steps in leaving to establish another home,
patterned after the **LOVE** known from mother.

And of course, there is **LOVE** for friends.

God brings them into our lives for a season and then they are gone,
but oh, how much they were needed *for such a time as this*.

Sometimes **LOVE** is painful.

Remember when you hurt for someone else because they hurt
and you could do nothing but weep and grieve with them?

You may have even asked God "Why?" but no answer came.

Why was God silent when you needed Him
to give you glowing words of comfort to speak?

Maybe the best words are those that are never spoken;
just the gentle hug of empathy and consolation for a friend.

Then there is that **LOVE** betrayed; oh, why did it have to happen?

There were vows of **LOVE** eternal but eternity was short-lived.

We are in need of **LOVE** unconditional . . .

LOVE that is blind and deaf to our mistakes
and the mistakes of others . . .

LOVE that remembers not the disappointments
and heartaches and sins in life.

We want and need them forgiven and remembered no more.

Where do we go to find this kind of forgetful **LOVE**?

GOD IS LOVE!!!

Chapter 1

How we met . . .

In early 1968, Ron's ship, the USS Merrick, came into port in Richmond, California. He, along with several of his friends, rented an apartment across the courtyard from mine. Sailors could be seen coming and going at all hours of the day or night. Needless to say, my roommate and I had our pick of these young men. Although I dated a few others, Ron stood head and shoulders above them all with his confident and unassuming manner.

Our courtship was only three months long. Before leaving for his third tour of duty in Vietnam, he proposed. My friends said I would never last the eight months he would be gone. They were sure I would send him a 'Dear John' letter.

Due to mail delivery overseas, our correspondence was feast or famine. I might get ten letters in one week and none over the next three weeks. During those long, silent periods my imagination would run wild with doubt. Regardless of those fears, I waited for him and three days after his return, we eloped to Reno, Nevada.

Wedding Reception - February 1969



We were quite a combination. A young man from Southern Alabama weds a liberal California girl. Needless to say, all didn't go smoothly. You've heard the expression, "The first year is the hardest." Well, our first five years were the hardest. It took time for us to get to know each other, to accept one another's quirks, and to live with each other's differences. When Ron stepped into my world and I into his, we were both in for a rude awakening and a whole lot of compromises along the way. But isn't that what marriage is all about?

If you and your husband were raised in the same environment and culture, then you're one step ahead of the game. You know the thought processes of your mate, what you can say or do that will not shock him or leave his chin resting on his chest. It seems silly now, but we were each trying to find (or take) the high ground in our marriage and stand firmly upon it. I learned very quickly not to patronize him. That approach just set him in stone all the more. As I look back now, I wonder how we ever made it through those first trying years.

I was in my first apartment, an immature, twenty-year-old only five miles away from my mom and dad. I had never even flown on an airplane.

Ron was mature at twenty-one, a man of the world, who joined the Navy at eighteen and had already been on three deployments to Vietnam. He was meticulous when it came to his uniform, but he thought nothing of throwing his civvies (civilian clothes) in a heap on the floor. I remember one battle in which neither of us would budge; we were both determined to hold out until the end.

I refused to wash his clothes unless he put them in the hamper. "Ron, the hamper is right here next to the shower!" I would say condescendingly. "All you have to do is raise the lid and in they go! Simple!" I then demonstrated, tossing his pants into the hamper with flair, but to no avail.

Stubborn to the end, when he got down to his last pair of socks, he took everything to the cleaners. It was an expensive lesson to

learn—we could hardly afford to pay the bill. This valuable lesson forced us into a compromise. I started washing his clothes and he started putting them in the hamper—occasionally.

If only he was here to drop his clothes on the floor again. I would gladly pick them up in a heartbeat.

LIFE TO CONSIDER . . .

It is my desire to have a happy marriage and live with a contented husband. My marriage is for life; therefore I will consider . . .

What trait or virtue attracted me to my husband, but now irritates me?

What changed and why?

List some petty quarrels that you've had with your husband. Which ones could have been easily avoided, forgiven, or forgotten?

Look up the following scriptures and explain how they might speak to you regarding your relationship with your husband.

Why We Should Forgive

Proverbs 24:29

Matthew 5:23-24

Matthew 6:14-15

Matthew 18:21-22

Luke 6:37

Romans 12:17-21

2 Corinthians 2:10-11

Ephesians 4:32

Hebrews 12:14-15

1 Peter 3:8-9

Steps to Forgiving

1. Tell God how you feel about the hurt. Be specific; He already knows, He just wants you to know.
2. Give yourself a reason to forgive, i.e. to restore your relationship, to cleanse your heart, because God commands it.
3. Face the offense; look within. Did you say or do anything to receive the problem? Was your attitude wrong?
4. Ask God to forgive the wrong on both sides.
5. By faith in God and trusting Him to perform it—FORGIVE!
6. Speak to your unforgiving heart (2 Cor 10:4-5; Phil 4:8-9).
7. Form a habit of forgiveness . . . and do it quickly!

Chapter 2

Happily married . . . ???

Maybe you have not made the commitment to stay married to your husband for a lifetime or perhaps you have an escape clause that can be used at any time. If so, then my advice is probably not something you wish to hear or would ever intend to follow. No, this advice comes too late for me but I feel compelled to share it with you so that you might avoid some of my missteps.

Although my husband, Ron, and I were ‘happily’ married, there were often times when raised voices were heard throughout the house. There were plenty of tears shed along the way (mine), there were welcome sabbaticals from each other (his), and somewhere in there was a five month separation with no reconciliation in mind.

I am thankful that God helped us over the bumps and through the woods because eventually the end was better than the beginning. Yes, we did arrive at our destination—*we truly did become happily married.*

Ron died at the young age of fifty-six. He always told me he would go first, and I always said I wouldn’t let him go without me . . . *but* he did. I learned death doesn’t have a timetable.

Ron was a person of strong resolve. When he decided to quit drinking, he quit! When he decided to quit smoking, he quit! His tenacity got in *my* way more than once.

Although a high school dropout, Ron was well-read and well-educated. When high school didn’t hold his interest any longer, he attended a trade school for one year and then joined the Navy. Seeing his potential, the Navy paid for his college education at Ole Miss, and he graduated with an Engineering Degree four years later. I could ask him anything and he always knew the answer.

While house-hunting during one of our many military moves, I asked him, “Honey, if we bought this house for \$36,000 at 3.7% interest ☺, (wow, that was a long time ago) what would our monthly payment be?” I could see his mental calculator at work. Seconds later, he had the answer.

“Honey, will you show me how to work my new digital camera?” I hated trying to figure out the latest technical gadgets since it could be obsolete in twenty minutes. He would simply read the directions and walk me through it step by step.

“Honey, what does r-e-n-a-s-c-e-n-t mean?” I asked while he drove. “Showing renewed vigor,” he answered. He always knew the answer.

“Honey, how much are we going to get back this year?” I asked as he sat at our computer every April 15th with papers strewn about him. Now it takes all of thirty minutes, or less, for a CPA to do my taxes using the figures *I’ve* provided.

When the computer age was just thrusting its nose under the tent flap, I was in need of a new typewriter. Ron said it was time we got a home computer.

“No, I don’t want a home computer. I just want a nice electric typewriter with a correct-o-ribbon!”

“No, trust me. We’re getting a PC and I’ll show you how to use it one feature at a time.”

Although Ron had to bring me kicking and screaming into the computer age, I’m so glad he did. He held my hand through cut and paste, save and retrieve, highlight and delete. Because he saw the future clearly, I could use the skills he’d taught me at:

Vancleave United Methodist Church (MS)
Ocean Springs Fire Department (MS) and
Bartlett Senior Center (TN).

How does anyone live today without a computer?

I miss my husband! I trusted him. He accepted me where I was and encouraged me to go beyond what I thought I could do. He read the fine print and I safely signed my name next to his. *I trusted him!*

LIFE TO CONSIDER . . .

It is my desire to have a happy marriage and live with a contented husband. My marriage is for life; therefore I will consider . . .

Do I actively and verbally show appreciation to my husband?
How?

List ways you can acknowledge your husband's *efforts* even though he may misinterpret your reaction to a situation.

What can I do to correct any problems that *I* may have created?
