

God wants the best for you and I, therefore, want you to be the best you can be. When you know and commit to Jesus, you find that you want the best for every one of His children because that is the love He has placed within you. Love knows only how to lift up and make better; it does not condemn or tear down. God created you in His image. You are like God; you have His blood flowing through your veins, His character traits, and His power! You are not made in the image of societal norms such as your job, your wealth, or your socio-economic status. These norms do not define who you are or what you are capable of becoming, in relationships or otherwise. God does. He, and He alone, knows everything about you: with whom you are meant to spend your life, if you will be obedient and settle down with the one He destined for you, and He knows if you will reject Him and follow your own desires.

The Lord gave me the vision to write this book because He wants you to know exactly what it means to be a man in and out of relationships, and how men should respond to the challenges faced in relationships. It is time to change the perception of what it means to be a *man*, and it is time to put God's values first in your relationship. This book is for every man who desires a godly relationship and who wants to do better in all areas. It will help you steer clear of the traps that prevent you or hinder your ability to have a successful and healthy relationship. You will understand the dynamics and importance of living a life that pleases our Father, thereby pleasing you and your mate, and being the man He has called you to be.

This book was written with a pure heart and with the intention to help you be the man God has called you to be and to support the man who wants to be better. Being better means rebuking societal norms about women and how you relate to women. These societal norms include: believing that your job dictates who you are; believing your socioeconomic status determines when you are ready to have a positive and committed relationship; and believing it is acceptable to play with a woman's heart. God wants you to know that He does not work that way. Some of you may think you have to have the right job and your future planned out before you start a relationship; or you may think you need a 401k and money in the bank before you take the next step in your relationship. God wants you to stop believing in the world and trust in Him.

God says you are made in His image and you follow His instructions. He is the God of abundance, of overflow, of perfection. He knows what you need and what your future looks like, but many men believe what the world tells them they need. The societal norms tell you that your life is what you see, not what God has planned for you. Instead of walking by faith and not by sight, you are encouraged to walk by sight and not by faith.

As a professional counselor and mental health clinician, I see men and women with relational trials and challenges come to me for support and healing, to regain trust, and to understand each other better. I have counseled people from all walks of life: young and mature, professional athletes, corporate executives, the educated and uneducated, laypersons, entrepreneurs, and many others. People will often ask me relationship questions because they desire to strengthen their relationships and be better for their significant others. However, they are competing with societal norms and do not know how to utilize the tools they have to be better.

I have spoken to men and women who have been on both sides of infidelity, failed relationships that they once anticipated would lead them down the aisle of marriage, and of their share of games. In the majority of my clients and through the many conversations I have had with people, I see a common theme among these relational challenges: The men enjoy having the stability of *good*women in their lives, but still find themselves in scenarios that lead to inappropriate behavior. In turn, the women attempt to accommodate the needs of their men and to work through the relational challenges they have. This is not the case in every relationship but in the majority of them of the individuals I counsel.

Before my daddy died in 2012, he would regularly say, “I feel sorry for women who are single these days.” He was referencing how difficult it was to find a real and good man—one who would be honest, faithful, a good steward; put the needs of his family first; be a provider, and love the Lord.

What does the Bible say about the traits and characteristics of a man? In the book *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*, co-author Steve Harvey shared the notion that because men think about the “who, what, and how much”, it is necessary for women to adapt to these standards. This is contrary to and does not support godly traits or a healthy, resilient and loving relationship. As a Christian man, your goal is to be Christ-like: to have and show love, compassion, and understanding. Galatians 5:22–24(1) reads, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” These are the components on which you should base your relationship. When Paul wrote Galatians, he was giving direction for everyone in the way they should live. This is to help you not only in your relationship, but also in every aspect of your life. When you have the spirit of Jesus living within, this is the fruit you produce...and it should be evident in your life.