

PRAISE FOR

What Women Don't Know (and Men Don't Tell You)

“This book is like fresh-baked bread. My spiritual mouth watered as the aroma of its fresh revelation filled my life. I am making this book must-eating for every hungry single and un-single person in my church.”

—GILBERT A. THOMPSON, presiding bishop of Church Without Walls International and senior pastor of New Covenant Christian Church in Boston, Massachusetts

“Michelle and Joel have taken an honest and transparent look at the relationship between man and woman and have given us fourteen rules to guide us into healthy, long-lasting relationships.”

—ALICIA WILLIAMSON, author of *A Seeking Heart: Rediscovering True Worship*

“I believe this book will be a vital tool in transforming the way unmarried people view wholeness and fulfillment in life. Joel and Michelle do a wonderful job of addressing the issues, deceptions, and fears that many single women face, and how they must position themselves to receive God's best.”

—ROBB THOMPSON, senior pastor of Family Harvest Church International in Tinley Park, Illinois

“Joel and Michelle have produced a masterpiece that gives the most balanced, practical understanding of relationships I have ever read. Their commonsense approach to relationships will make you laugh, cry, and wonder, *Why didn't I read this before I entered my first relationship?*”

—DR. DALE C. BRONNER, senior pastor of Word of Faith Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and author of *Get a Grip*

“Joel Brooks speaks with a vibrant compassion that will keep you from, or rescue you out of, relational pain and heartbreak. This book is not an option. You or someone you love needs this now.”

—PAUL LOUIS COLE, senior pastor of Hope Christian Community in Grapevine, Texas

“*What Women Don't Know (and Men Don't Tell You)* is a collection of *uncommon* sense insights into the world that's crashing around us. The authors sound a clarion call for a renewed commitment to godly principles, which are being sacrificed on altars of expediency. This is an appeal to those who are continuing to fail in their relationships with the opposite sex to embrace the wisdom from above.”

—BISHOP JOSEPH L. GARLINGTON SR., PH.D., Covenant Church of Pittsburgh

“This book will encourage, motivate, and instruct you. The insightful rules amplified in this book will give direction and add fuel to any romance.”

—BOB HARRISON, president of Christian Business Leaders International

what women don't know

(and men don't tell you)



the
unspoken
rules
of
finding lasting
love

Michelle McKinney Hammond
Joel A. Brooks Jr.

Previously released as *The Unspoken Rules of Love*

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by Joel A. Brooks, Jr. & Michelle McKinney Hammond

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from Joel A. Brooks Jr.:

To my twin daughters, Victoria and Veronica. My desire to prepare you for life as single adult women was the inspiration that led me to seek out the information that I share in this book.

I am very proud of you.

from Michelle McKinney Hammond:

To all those who have done it wrong, are still trying to get it right, as well as those who have lived to laugh at their mistakes and move on to better tomorrows: The essential secret to living and loving is to leave the past where you left it and to embrace tomorrow with new hope in one hand and wisdom in the other. I wish you rivers of love that will carry you to your heart's desire.

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Use Your Head, Girl!

Even as you reached for it, you thought to yourself, *Do I need this? What unspoken rules?*

This book would never have caught your eye if you didn't need to learn these rules. You would never have responded to the Spirit within, the still small voice that said, "Go on, Girl, that's the one you need. Go ahead and get it. As a matter of fact, do not stop, do not pass go, do not collect two hundred dollars. Life is not a game, so get it now!"

We say good for you! A desire for more wisdom is healthy. It means you want results—and not the ones you've *been* getting. You want *different* results. As women we spend an awful lot of time dissecting the male psyche without any input from them, so I've enlisted the help of one of the wisest men I know, Joel Brooks, to help me break it down. One way or another we are going to make

love work. But it begins when we stop making the same mistakes based on the wrong assumptions. Someone once said that we don't change until the cost of staying the same exceeds the cost of change. No one can keep sowing the same old seeds and expect to reap a different harvest. Yet many women have the same type of relationship with men over and over again, all of which come to the same disappointing end. The common cry is "What's wrong with me?"

For those of us who don't want to examine ourselves, the defensive answer is "There is absolutely nothing wrong with me. It's all *his* fault." We do a role reversal with Adam in the garden. Remember when God confronted Adam and Eve after they had eaten the fruit? Eve blamed the serpent. Adam said it was Eve's fault, as well as God's fault, for giving him the woman in the first place. At the end of the conversation, God didn't let Adam slide. He said Adam was wrong for listening to her! Oops! Guess it was everybody's bad.

It's interesting to note that the serpent didn't even try to deny his part in the drama. It must be human to blame.

The truth of the matter is, when two people fail to sustain a relationship, both had something to do with its demise. It's time to stop namin' and blamin' and time to start dealing with ourselves. The only person you can control or change is you. For those new to the relationship game, this is your opportunity to start off on the right foot. Our goal is that you read this book and apply the principles, so that if you are not in a committed relationship, it will be only because of God's perfect timing and plan for your life, not because of anything you're doing or failing to do. No matter how together you

are, timing is still everything. If that man isn't totally ready emotionally, spiritually, or mentally, he can wound you in ways that will make your marriage difficult in the beginning. That is, if you are even able to get past the unnecessary relationship dramas to marry him in the first place.

WHY ARE THE RULES OF LOVE UNSPOKEN?

Paul said that when he was a child he spoke like a child, he thought like a child, and he reasoned like a child, but when he became a man he put childish ways behind him (see 1 Corinthians 13:11). The childish ways he referred to had to do with the subject of love. He had finally learned what true love was. Paul learned that true love is more about *giving* than *getting*, that mature love seeks the welfare of the other person first. Unconditional, sacrificial love endures through all things. This outlook involves a mind decision more than a heart condition or feeling. He changed his approach to love, and therefore, the response he received also changed. It seems that, based on 1 Corinthians 13 (the love chapter) and subsequent writings, Paul spent a great deal of time pondering the concept of love and came to some very clear conclusions about what it was and what it was not. He was grappling with God's concept of unconditional *agape* love versus the other forms of love—*phileo*, or brotherly love, and *eros*, sexual love.

Paul was not alone in his pondering on this subject. We, too, struggle with the dynamics of what makes love work between a man and a woman. Why don't we discuss this today? Why are the rules

of love for the most part unspoken? Because they are not really considered—everyone enjoys *feeling* instead of *thinking*. Much is said about love and about how to relate to one another, but the surface conclusions concerning how to relate person-to-person do not work in a love relationship because men and women are different. Even worse, to cite those differences as realities is currently politically incor-

WISE UP

As you begin to gain wisdom and balance your heart (emotions) with your head (mind), some of your habits will change and some folks won't understand. Expect the likelihood of a little resistance to the new you.

Your mother, for example, might want you to do things the way she did them. She may not see her ways as unhealthy. Many have suffered the death of a love relationship due to habits that seemed natural and normal but were unacceptable to the other partner. "But why didn't he like that? What was wrong with it? I thought everybody did that. Well, I don't know what happened at *his* house when *he* was growing up, but that's the way my family did it!" God does say to honor your parents, but it isn't always wise to follow their behavioral patterns.

Your friends may also want you to agree with their way of seeing things. They, too, may not realize that their thought patterns are wrong. The changes in you may even issue a silent challenge

rect. So in this environment, we are unable to set forth any workable guidelines for male-female interaction. We just don't talk about it. We go with the flow, which usually means we never reach our desired destination—Love City.

A woman must take into account her emotional makeup and her inclination toward relational love, which in a marriage and family

that they should examine themselves and make some changes of their own.

But your decision to approach relationships with wisdom has nothing to do with mothers or others. This is about you, about changing your life for the better. From this moment forward, decide to make wise choices. You are free to follow God's advice about every area of your life, including your love life. As you adhere to the Bible's laws and decrees, you will find your love relationships coming alive!

Once you wise up, live it, don't say it. Simply consider the ways of men and decide whether they should remain in your life and, if so, in what role. Do not tear down others or crush their spirits. Do not bury anyone's self-esteem. If exits are necessary, be graceful.

Remain on your guard. A little bit of knowledge can be dangerous. It can fool you into believing you know everything. When your nose is in the air, you run the risk of stumbling over another bad decision because you weren't looking where you should—at yourself.

setting is often the strength of that unit. The same strength, however, is often a weakness for single women. When a single woman longs for a relationship, her desire makes her vulnerable. If desire overrides wisdom, her predisposition often becomes the root of bad decisions. Wisdom and discipline must accompany this wonderful loving heart that God gave a woman.

Most women do not want to use their heads when it comes to love. They want to let love take its own course and see where it carries them. This is dangerous. So often a woman gives her heart too soon, then spends her time trying to recapture the feeling the man gave her when they first became involved.

Another reason the rules are unspoken is because men unconsciously and sometimes consciously take advantage of what women don't know about themselves, about men, and how their differences affect their relationships. In this case, what you don't know will definitely hurt you. The man who is aware of these truths and has wrong motives can manipulate and lead a woman along, never intending to commit or to allow the relationship to go where he knows the woman wants it to. The man who is unaware of these unspoken rules will find himself puzzled at the end of a relationship by the woman's disappointment and heartbreak, wondering, *What did I do?* Also, a well-meaning man can be sincerely surprised when he discovers that he isn't meeting a woman's unspoken expectations. He may find himself pulling away from someone he was initially attracted to because of a pattern of misunderstanding.

When dealing with love, we tend to spiritualize it or feel our

way through it, and we don't use our head! Have you ever been to someone's home and found yourself feeling disoriented by the way the furniture was arranged? Did it make you ill at ease? Did you cut your visit short, not caring to remain? Your thought life is like this room: Wrong thinking creates attitudes that make a candidate for a love relationship uncomfortable. Some of us need to rearrange the furniture in our minds and hearts so that the right guest will be happy to remain.

To do this, we've got to have wisdom. Now let's talk about that. While some say ignorance is bliss, don't believe the hype. What you don't know *will* hurt you—and keep on hurting you until you learn your lessons. Wisdom will keep you safe and make you happier than you thought possible! So agree to live and learn. With all your getting, get understanding and follow after what you have learned.

An often-overlooked passage of Scripture is well worth consideration. (If you are not one who gleans nuggets from the Bible as guideposts for your life, please bear with us. Whether you have chosen to anchor your faith in God or not, the Scriptures are still universal law. Whether you believe them or not, they still work.) We've made a composite of these verses from several translations so you can get the full impact of what is being said.

Know this, that in the last days will come times that are hard to deal with and hard to bear because men will be lovers of themselves and utterly self-centered. Lovers of money, greedy, aroused by an inordinate desire for

wealth, boastful, proud and arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, and unholy. They will be without natural affection or love, callous, unforgiving, slanderous, troublemakers, without self-control, loose in morals and conduct, brutal, hostile and unfriendly to good men (or women).

They will be treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements rather than lovers of God. They will go to church, yes, and maintain a facade of religion, but they will resist its influence and deny and reject the power of it. Avoid all such people. For among them are those who worm their way into the homes and captivate *silly* women and weak-natured, spiritually dwarfed women, loaded down with sins and easily swayed and led away by various evil desires and seductive impulses. (See 2 Timothy 3:1-6)

That's a mouthful but easy to break down to where we really live. It's talking about false teachers who were leading newly converted women astray from the truths they had learned. This also can apply to men who seduce women today. Do you know any men like the ones mentioned in the sentence above? Come on, tell the truth and shame the devil. We *all* do.

The desire for love is a God-given desire. However, when it becomes an obsession, it quickly turns to idolatry, which is evil and attracts more evil—men who aren't good. The men referred to in

these verses took advantage of women who were silly, weak, and led by their desires because they lacked spiritual strength. Are you beginning to see the picture? Uh-huh, they lacked wisdom. Therefore they were open to anything. Wisdom gives you safe boundaries and protects you from men whose intentions are not honorable.

Proverbs gives an account of a man who is seduced by an adulterous woman. Check it out in context with the roles reversed:

I was looking out the window of my house one day and saw a simple-minded young woman who lacked common sense. She was crossing the street near the house of an immoral man. She was strolling down the path by his house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. The man approached her, dressed seductively and sly of heart. He was the brash, rebellious type who never stays at home. He is often seen in the streets and markets, soliciting at every corner. He threw his arms around her and kissed her, and with a brazen look he said, "...It's you I was looking for! I came to find you and here you are!... Come let's drink our fill of love until morning. Let's enjoy each other's caresses..." So he seduced her with his pretty speech. With his flattery he enticed her.

She followed him at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped deer, awaiting the arrow that would pierce her heart. She was like a bird flying into a

snare, little knowing it would cost her her life. Listen to me, my daughters, and pay attention to my words. Don't let your hearts stray away toward him. Don't wander down his wayward path. For he has been the ruin of many; numerous women have been his victims. His house is the road to the grave. His bedroom is the den of death. (see Proverbs 7:6-13,15,18,21-27, NLT)

My, my, my! Can you believe all of this is in the Bible! This is serious stuff, but we know you can relate. Many women have met a smooth operator and known he was trouble with a capital *T*. Despite this knowledge, they've allowed themselves to be seduced and their hearts to be broken. This destruction can happen when their hopes for true love are fading over the horizon of their longings, and they decide that something is better than nothing: We settle for less than God's best for us. All because of a lack of wisdom or the refusal to heed it.

In Proverbs 9, Wisdom and Folly are personified as women. But just as there is a thin line between love and hate, there is a thin line between wisdom and folly, or foolishness, and it is easy to err. Folly personifies everything that Wisdom is not. Folly pursues men, is loud, ignorant, and deceptive. She is constantly bringing ruin on herself. "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down" (Proverbs 14:1). In other words, the foolish woman comes undone by her own doing.

Wisdom is gracious and inviting to everyone, stable and honest about her intentions. She is consistent and immovable because her

house is built on a firm foundation and supported with seven pillars that give her strength: prudence, knowledge, discretion, sound judgment, understanding, and power (see Proverbs 8:12-14). Not her own power, but the power that comes from above. She does not lean on her own understanding or allow her feelings to guide her. Instead she follows the leading of the Spirit of God.

The subtle danger of making choices is that Wisdom and Folly both make their appeal to you from the same place: the high place. To unspiritualize this, we mean your mind. They are both in clear view. They both call out invitations to come and visit. You are invited to eat and drink what each of them serves, but the end of the evening will be very different depending on whose party you choose to attend. If you choose to embrace Wisdom, you gain all kinds of benefits—long, good life, riches, honor, justice, and fair treatment. But make friends with Folly and suffer the death of all you hold dear: Shattered dreams and broken hearts are the door prizes at Folly's affair.

We've been told over and over to follow our hearts, yet we must be careful. God gave us a heart and a mind. We must balance the two. The heart can be a spoiled brat, wanting what it wants and wanting it right now. Caught up in the moment, the heart does not consider the consequences. The heart chooses, but the head must qualify the choice. You can feel right about the wrong thing. Listen to your heart, but use your head to sift its information. Your heart does not own you; neither should it control you. Instead, you must learn to master your heart.

Follow and embrace wisdom like a sister. Make insight a beloved member of your family. They will keep you grounded, safe, and whole. Cherish the wisdom you receive, hold it close, treasure it like a true friend, and consult with it often until wisdom becomes a natural way of life. That's when the fun will start and you will find yourself on the path to living and loving as never before.

I Have No Man

Rule #1: *Take Your Life Off of Hold*

A country could be run on the energy some women put into endlessly thinking about and discussing how to reach marital status quick, fast, and in a hurry before the biological clock strikes midnight. Their energy is not spent on living a purposeful life, and the joy that other areas of life offer is ignored, for the most part. We call this common disease one-tree-itis—concentrating on the one thing you don't have while missing the enjoyment from everything else that *is* at your disposal. The mother of all women, Eve, suffered from one-tree-itis and fell from grace. Ignoring all of her other options for satisfaction, she ate the fruit from the one forbidden tree.

Many women have decided, assumed, or been taught that true happiness comes through a relationship with a man. So they postpone their happiness and wholeness until the right man shows up in their life. When they talk about happiness or wholeness, they immediately

mention the man who isn't there or their partner who isn't right. They may even feel they have a good excuse for being unproductive in other areas of their lives—on which the presence or absence of a man has no bearing.

Are you feeling as if God is holding out on you, refusing to give you a mate, not paying attention to your needs or desires? Are you feeling like a woman's got to do what a woman's got to do in order to get what she wants? Are you feeling as if taking matters into your own hands is a better gamble than waiting any longer on God's divine timing?

You can wait so long for something you think will bring you happiness that *waiting* actually replaces the pursuit of happiness. As you fix your gaze on that one desire, you postpone or miss your happiness because you don't recognize present opportunities for joy.

I HAVE NO MAN

Here's an example. There was a pool called Bethesda whose stirring waters healed. The disciple John said (in John 5) that the pool had five porches and that it was filled with people who were blind, lame, or paralyzed. Any one of these physical conditions would describe the state of a woman who can't see a clear picture of a happy future unless there is a man in it. Some just don't have the capacity or the energy to walk through life solo. Others are stuck in waiting mode, unable to get on with the business of living or securing anything of lasting value without a partner.

There was one man who had been lying there sick for thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years! Can you imagine? Yet many women have been sick from the lack of love for more years than they care to relate.

Anyway, Jesus showed up on the scene and approached the paralyzed man. Jesus knew how long he had been ill and asked him what seems like an unnecessary question: “Would you like to get well?” or, as another translation says, “Do you want to be whole?” Now how would you respond to that question if you were in this man’s situation? You would say, “Yes! Of course I do!” But that is not what the man said. He replied, “I can’t, sir. Because I have *no man* to help me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I am trying to get there, someone else always gets in ahead of me.” Sound familiar? For women, the version goes something like this: “I can’t be whole and I can’t be completely happy, because every time I have a chance at love something happens. Everybody’s got someone but me. Everybody else is getting married before me. If I have to wear one more bridesmaid dress, I will scream.”

The setup of this scenario gives us a hint at some deeper truths. It’s important to note that Jesus addressed the man with a question that seemingly had an obvious answer. God’s questions are often designed not to extract answers but to provoke thought. When Adam and Eve hid in the garden after messing up, God asked Adam, “Where are you?” God already knew where Adam was. He wanted Adam to think about where he was. *I made you whole. I put you in the Garden where you had everything you needed. I told you one thing*

not to do and told you what would happen when you did it. You did that one thing. It happened. Now where are you? God was asking, “Where is your head, or what are you thinking now? Now that you have done what you thought would make you whole and it hasn’t, where are you? What is your mind-set at this point?” God is much more concerned that we learn to become obedient than with our mistake or sin.

What do you really want in life? List five things that you want. Look at your list and ask yourself if it would be possible to have these things and still be unhappy. If that is possible, you are focusing on the wrong list and are on the wrong path to happiness.

Let’s look again at the question Jesus asked: “Do you want to be made whole?” Clearly something was wrong with this man; brokenness was apparent, yet Jesus didn’t deal with the problem or make a diagnosis. He simply asked the man his desire. Are your desires birthed out of brokenness? Are the things on your list meant to complete you? Or are they a list of desires recorded by a person who is already complete? This man’s need was obvious, but Jesus asked him what he wanted. Ask yourself if your desire for a love relationship comes from a sense of brokenness or from feeling incomplete.

WAITING IN VAIN?

Now let’s look at the Bethesda man’s problems. This man had been at the place of healing for a long time. He was paralyzed. In order to obtain healing he has to be the *first* one in the pool after the trou-

bling of the water. Without assistance he would never make it to the pool, and even with assistance, what were his chances of getting there first? It's safe to say no well person was going to wait with him. After all, would a person really wait at the pool among all that sickness if they were whole themselves?

No other sick person was going to help him either. Wouldn't the other ill people try to get into the pool first? Anyone with an infirmity that didn't involve paralysis would certainly beat him to the pool. Realistically, the paralyzed man's chances of becoming whole at the pool were close to impossible, yet he waited day after day because that was the only way he thought he could obtain healing.

When was the last time you met a good man and felt so generous you decided to introduce him to one of your other single friends? Mmm hmm. It was all about making a love connection *yourself*, wasn't it? How many married women you know consistently hang out with single women? Probably not many. They are occupied elsewhere, protecting and enjoying what is precious to them.

So single women are resigned to a cynical belief that there are no men qualified for marriage (they're taken), while at the same time they longingly wait for that special man to come along. This frame of mind leads to two equally depressing emotions: despair and desperation. Both can have disastrous effects on a woman, not the least of which sets a woman up for one of her biggest problems—compromise, which we will discuss later.

Look at your list again. Are the items on your happiness list those that bring you happiness or what you believe you *need* in order to be

happy? Many people mistake a means to happiness as happiness itself. The paralyzed man originally came to the pool to be healed but having been there so long waiting, the object of his longing became “someone to help him” rather than his healing.

Happiness is a part of being whole. It means having an understanding of your identity and purpose, an established feeling of acceptance and value, and a sense of destiny, joy, and peace—all of which produce overall well-being. It is impossible to be consistently happy without these characteristics. All people need to know who they are, why they are here, and to whom they belong. Having an understanding of who we are in Christ is foundational to the belief system that allows you to possess these qualities. The Bible says in Romans 14:17 that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy *in the Holy Spirit*. You find in this passage all these characteristics that grow out of being in right relationship with God. His presence is always accompanied by peace and joy; in other words, a sense of total well-being.

FILLING THE VOID

Let’s take a deeper look at the concept of wholeness. We are told in Colossians 2:10 that “you are complete through your union with Christ” (NLT).

“Well how can that be?” you ask. “Jesus can’t show up and take me to dinner. He can’t hold me or deal with my physical needs...”

But wholeness comes from within. It does not rely on outward

stimuli or circumstances that constantly shift. When you know who you are, nothing can change your heart condition except you.

Knowing who we are requires filling that God-sized void in us that only God can fill. We were never meant to be apart from God. To be separated from him is to be incomplete. In the Garden of Eden, man was made whole, but he was also created with a built-in dependence upon God. The whole capacity that a man or woman has to experience pleasure and to feel good is God's idea—even the word *eden* means pleasure. Yet because Adam and Eve chose independence

LET GOD RULE

A pregnant woman quickly discovers, as her pregnancy progresses, that she is no longer in control of her body. The new life inside of her begins to rule. Favorite foods no longer agree with her system. She has to change the position she sleeps in. Her clothing has to change to accommodate her new shape. She is definitely not in control.

When we make up our minds that we want a new life, we can no longer do things the same way we used to do them. Our habits must change to allow the new life we crave to be formed within us. We should be willing to make these changes because we anticipate great things coming from the new life.

God wants to give us new life. He wants to give us new love lives, but we must be willing to allow God to rule.

and sinned following that decision, mankind became unsafe and insecure. Adam and Eve lost their joy, peace, and identity, and began their own course of trying to make themselves whole. We've been attempting to fix ourselves without consulting our Maker ever since.

Every day we read any number of different magazines and self-help books, all doling out prescriptions and remedies for making ourselves whole without the help of God, even though some allude to a higher power or supreme being. But God will make us whole in a much more purposeful and precise way. Unlike what this worldly advice offers, his solution is a permanent one with lasting effects. One amazing dose of God's prescription for overall well-being—faith in Jesus—will restore our connection to him. Isn't it incredible that one broken life can make countless others whole? Jesus, the Son of God, came to save us (John 3:16). To *sozo* us, as the original Greek infers, means to make us whole, to give us a sense of contentment, to save us from bondage and destruction. God's desire is to give us wholeness.

When we receive Christ as our Savior, our spirit is reborn. The renewing of our mind begins the transformation that leads us to wholeness. When our mind begins to think a new way, our emotions must be harnessed and our will must yield to a new and different set of instructions that will be contrary to popular world standards. God's way to wholeness is truly different—and permanent. The world offers countless paths to reach that coveted place called wholeness, but each one ultimately leads to an unsatisfactory dead end.

For example, the world tells us that we can define our identity by

what we do. We are human *beings*, though, not human *doings*, so while our vocation can help us feel good about ourselves, it can never make us whole. The same is true of money and high-end clothing. If you have a lot, you may feel safe, secure, and whole. But money and material possessions cannot provide what God was meant to provide.

Neither can wholeness come from a relationship. A woman learns from a young age that a man—her knight in shining armor—will come along and make everything all right. He will sweep her up and rescue her from her doldrums and boredom, then bring her into a new life. This happily-ever-after is an illusion. Relationships cannot provide what God was meant to provide.

THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

Now let's qualify that statement. There is the capacity for happiness in a relationship between a man and a woman that is not available to a single person. There is also a possible *misery* that people who are *not* in relationships do not experience. Ed Cole, author of *Maximized Manhood*, said that marriage is the closest thing to heaven or hell that you can find on earth. Marriage is not the key to happiness. God would not base our wholeness on something that requires another person's participation. It is God's ideal that married people share one hope and spirit, treat each other with love, serve each other, and respect each other, so that marriage is an awesome relationship that brings joy to the participants and glorifies God. However, when mates have different values and lack mutual respect, they will have

difficulty serving one another. For this reason more people are, unfortunately, enduring hurting relationships rather than enjoying healthy ones.

We make bad decisions because of a flawed belief system. Wrong beliefs lead to inaccurate conclusions, which are the basis for wrong decisions, ultimately sending us in the wrong direction. The illusion that was painted for Adam and Eve is still being presented to us today—that we can be independent of God, make our own judgments, make our own decisions, and still be whole. This line of thinking was proven wrong from the beginning of time and continues to carry us further and further away from the wholeness we crave.

One of the qualities that successful people have is focus. Focus is the ability to cut out distractions and concentrate on one thing. But, the negative side to focus is tunnel vision, focusing on something to the point that you don't see other things. Many in their pursuit of happiness or love have focused so much on relationships with the opposite sex that they miss the other opportunities for pleasure, joy, and the wholeness that God provides.

Noted author and teacher Mike Murdock states that whatever has distracted you has mastered you. On too many occasions, while on the road to wholeness, we get distracted by the things we were taught would make us whole. Just as our friend did that Jesus found lying by the pool. *In his mind*, his wholeness was based on a person. Are you lying by the same pool? What will be your answer when Jesus asks, "Do you want to be whole?" Surely you can think of a better answer than "I have no man."

Things That Make You Go Hmmm...

- What is on your list of requirements for happiness?
- What do you feel is keeping you from being a whole person?
Have you ever felt whole without whatever it may be?
- What influences have formed your ideal for wholeness? Are they reliable sources?