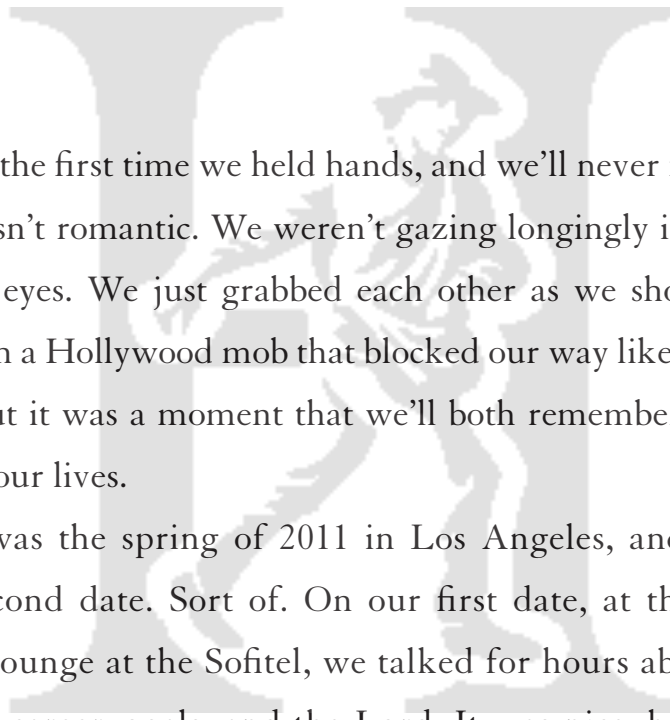


# INTRODUCTION



It was the first time we held hands, and we'll never forget it. It wasn't romantic. We weren't gazing longingly into each other's eyes. We just grabbed each other as we shouldered through a Hollywood mob that blocked our way like the Red Sea. But it was a moment that we'll both remember for the rest of our lives.

It was the spring of 2011 in Los Angeles, and it was our second date. Sort of. On our first date, at the Stone Rose Lounge at the Sofitel, we talked for hours about life, family, career, goals, and the Lord. It was nice, but when it was over it felt . . . platonic. We had known each other professionally for four years at that point, and although we felt attracted to each other, we weren't sure that there was really anything going on. Then came the Prince concert at the House of Blues on the Sunset Strip. The place was so thick with fans, celebrities, media, and security that there

was barely any room to breathe. We decided to make a mad dash through the throng to reach some people we knew, clasped hands so we wouldn't get separated . . . and it hit us.

A physical-spiritual concussion, like a jolt of electricity to the heart. It was like something from a rom-com script so cliché-ridden that it gets sent to turnaround (the film industry term for a project that a film studio decides not to develop further). Our eyes met, and it was clear that we had both felt it. It was as though two souls that God had been guiding toward each other for years had navigated all the plot twists and jumped all the obstacles to come together at last. In fact, that's exactly what happened.

After the concert, we stood outside and talked, oblivious to everyone and everything else.

MEAGAN: Some people had labeled me a wild party girl because of what they read on blogs or in the tabloids. But that night, DeVon told me that wasn't the person he saw. He said he could see a side of me that no one had ever appreciated before. I was in tears. I felt like somebody other than my family was finally seeing *me*, not the person people were quick to judge me to be. Then he said, "God doesn't show your heart to everybody. He only shows it to people he can trust with it."

DE VON: That wasn't planned; it was straight from the heart. It was like God had spoken those words to my spirit and they just flowed out of me. I remember over the years seeing Meagan in the media, and there was always something about her that I knew was more than meets the eye.

But even though the sparks were flying, we didn't kiss. The timing wasn't right. Why force it?

On our third date, we caught a movie at the Sherman Oaks Galleria. Afterward, we ended up sitting in Meagan's car for an hour and a half talking about how young people needed positive influences from Hollywood. We watched funny YouTube videos and looked at old pictures. Then we got out of the car and talked for another hour, standing in the partially vacated parking lot. Then we hugged for what felt like an eternity. Finally, as we said good night for what must have been the tenth time, we had our first kiss. As our lips touched, we could feel the Spirit of God surround and embrace us. Instantly, we were both euphoric in the Spirit, miles high. It was like a confirmation that this was right.

You can talk about God being in your life, but there is nothing like actually feeling God's hand moving in your life. This was God moving in our lives, and it was incredible.

## WHY WE WAITED

However, even with all that electricity flying, we were cautious. We didn't lose our heads. We didn't dash off to Las Vegas for a ten-minute ceremony at a drive-through chapel. It wasn't just about gushing to friends and family members that we'd finally found "the One." And as millions of people know from our many post-wedding magazine interviews, radio and television appearances, and live talks, we waited until after we got married to have sex.

When we began talking publicly about our courtship and our celibacy, the questions from hosts and audience members naturally started off being mostly about sex. Giggling like teenagers in a locker room, people would ask the obvious: How did we stay strong? How did we resist temptation? How far did we go and not call it sex? Things like that. Both of us answered honestly and clearly from our experiences, and in time the questioning became deeper and more serious. There was a desire, a hunger, behind the inquiries. The unspoken message was: *We want to have real love. Is it really possible? Your love appears to be so real. If it is, tell us how you got it, please.*

So we started looking at the choices that had taken us from being two coworkers in the entertainment business to being a blissfully happy husband and wife, sitting in front of audiences talking about how we'd made it work. As we did, a pattern

revealed itself. Again and again, faced with the choice between instant gratification and delaying our own satisfaction to pursue something better, we chose the latter. When we weren't even together but were coming out of unhappy relationships, we each chose not to be intimate (and intimacy isn't just about sex; it's also about sharing emotionally) with anyone for a time. When we grew closer but were unsure whether we were really right for each other, we waited for clarity from God. When we felt those incredible second- and third-date connections, we didn't go crazy and get engaged the next day. We waited and got to know each other. As our physical attraction grew stronger, we resolved to wait until after marriage. Faced with choice after choice, when it would have been easy and fun to throw caution and good sense to the wind, we waited.

But why? Why did we consciously delay the gratification—not just sexual but emotional and spiritual—that would have come with diving headfirst into a passionate relationship? The answer is simple: we wanted God's very best for our lives, collectively and individually, and we wanted it in whatever way he intended. This required our patience.

In the past, we'd both been burned in unpleasant relationships because we acted impulsively, leaped before we looked, or let our emotions overwhelm our judgment. We got tired of doing things the same way but expecting a different result (this is the classic definition of insanity). Maybe

there was a way God wanted us to date that would bring us peace and what we wanted most: *authentic love*.

The signs that he was guiding us toward each other were unmistakable, but he didn't want us to come together before we were ready. So we were still. We examined who we were, what we needed, and the mistakes we'd made in past relationships. We let go of some heavy baggage and some preconceptions about the kind of person who might make a perfect partner. In short, we quit trying to make things happen for our short-term pleasure and let God take the wheel.

When we finally got together and talked about the experiences leading up to our relationship, we understood that we had discovered something profound and powerful. By consciously not giving in to the desire for a quick hit of satisfaction—the intoxicating rush of a new romance, the flush of sexual attraction, the pleasure of having someone to show off to friends and family—we laid the groundwork for what has become the love of our lives.

Because we waited, we exchanged immediate gratification for what we really wanted and who we really wanted to be. Because we waited, God was able to reveal things that we would have missed if we had been blinded by the white-hot light of lust, desperate to fulfill our own desires. Because we waited, we were eventually ready.

That was the beginning of The Wait.

## YES, THE WAIT IS (SORT OF) ABOUT SEX

The Wait is not just about sex, but it really does begin with sex. How could it not? We live in a time when books like the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy have sold more than 100 million copies and grossed over half a billion dollars at the worldwide box office. Television shows like *Sex Box* are breaking TV ratings records. Almost every popular magazine on the newsstands has some headline dealing with sex. “I Like High-End Sex Parties and I’m Not a Weirdo” was an actual headline from one of the biggest magazines in the world. Well, how about “We Waited to Have Sex and We’re Not Weirdos Either”?

Human beings love sex. We think about it, talk about it, read about it, watch it on the Internet, and spend a great deal of our time, energy, and money trying to get it. Because of this, sex makes us do some truly stupid things. Ironically, as much as we like to wag our fingers at each other about the potential harm our hypersexual culture can cause, talking about *not* having sex is what raises people’s ire. The moment the two of us announced we were working on this book, a prominent blog published a post titled “Meagan Good, DeVon Franklin & the Danger of Promoting ‘The Wait.’” We had no idea that talking about our story and trying to provide a positive, healthy dialogue about relationships and sex would be deemed dangerous!

We actually think it's dangerous *not* to talk about sex and advocate the idea that it's okay to wait. How can you learn to date in a way that promotes physical, spiritual, and mental health if you don't talk about the emotional, spiritual, and physical risks of sex? Is it really okay for the majority of songs on the radio—and the melodies streaming through Spotify and thousands of HD music videos on Vevo—to market an oversexualized way of life to the masses but not okay for us to talk about an alternative way of thinking that might actually help someone become a healthier person and lead a better life?

We're also not the only ones talking about this. Russell Wilson, Super Bowl-winning Seattle Seahawks quarterback and an outspoken Christian, shocked fans when, during a Q&A at a church in San Diego last summer, he announced that he and his girlfriend, singer and dancer Ciara Harris, had decided to abstain from sex—or as Russell described it, doing it “Jesus’s way.” The media went crazy. As news website *The Root* put it in a headline, “Russell Wilson and Ciara Aren’t Having Sex and It’s Everybody’s Business.” Like it or not, abstinence is in the conversation and a lot more people are recognizing that it’s an idea that’s at least worth talking about.

But does it matter what the two of us—or Russell and Ciara—say? From a spiritual standpoint, what does the Bible say on this matter? Here are two key scriptures we find to be extremely compelling:



*God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin.*

(I THESSALONIANS 4:3, NLT)

You know the old saying, “First you eat to live, and then you live to eat”? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that’s no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honors you with a body, honor him with your body!

God honored the Master’s body by raising it from the grave. He’ll treat yours with the same resurrection power. Until that time, remember that your bodies are created with the same dignity as the Master’s body. You wouldn’t take the Master’s body off to a whorehouse, would you? I should hope not.

There’s more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, “The two become one.” Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can’t “become one.” There is a time in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for “becoming one” with another. Or didn’t you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don’t you see that you can’t live however

you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body. (1 Corinthians 6:13–20, MSG)

However, despite what Scripture says, people (Christian or not) are going to have sex. We find our reasons and justifications. The faith-minded might rationalize that waiting doesn't apply if you're dating the one you believe you're going to marry. Physically, we need and want sex, and it's just hard to resist those hormones. Socially, even the mention of going without sex is met with snickers and stares.

There's nothing wrong with sex or sexuality. God created both for the enjoyment of married couples. But for too long, there's been an ugly stigma associated with sex, the church, and where it all fits in the reality of the world we live in. Our hope is that we can finally open up a healthy dialogue that resonates with you and everyone who reads it. We would like this book to become a positive cultural conversation starter as we all strive to live our God-given destiny with emotional, spiritual, and physical health. We're not sex experts and this isn't a book about religious reasons not to have sex. It's our story, and we want to share what has worked for us.

When we took sex off the table, our minds were clearer,

our access to God was crisper, and we were able to make better decisions in other important areas of our relationship that weren't related to sex at all. Once we did that, we saw that applying *The Wait* to other aspects of relationships could really be beneficial, too. *The Wait* is about getting control of your life, reducing the dating drama, and avoiding desperate relationship choices so that you can make better decisions about your future.



## ANSWERS TO THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

We know many people who have struggled with finding not only lasting happiness in their relationships but also peace within themselves. The two are of a piece: until you know and love yourself, it's hard to find anyone else to love you the way you deserve. The practice of waiting—consciously choosing to wait for sex and denying instant gratification so that you can see clearly, make better decisions, and position yourself for blessings—is the key to finding not just happiness but spirit-deep fulfillment.

We live in a culture addicted to the quick hookup, the miracle cure, and the overnight sensation. *The Wait* is the remedy for that addiction.

With all its ups and downs, our love story is a bit like a romantic-comedy movie of its own. We're going to share

them with you: first meetings, shocking surprises, tantalizing signs, embarrassing twists, and a stirring resolution. To know that God had us in mind for each other all along and was waiting patiently for us to listen to him is thrilling and humbling at the same time.

The process of waiting was the key to our storybook beginning. The Wait isn't just a matter of stopping, sitting on the couch, and saying, "Okay, Lord, bless me." There's a lot more to it. Waiting has nothing to do with lying back and hoping that good things find you. It's about putting aside distractions, using your gifts, and becoming someone God can trust to bless with great opportunities and wonderful people.

Discovering this powerful process has brought us the kind of authentic, deep joy that comes with knowing we are truly meant to be together in every way—that we see and appreciate each other for the fullness of who we are, flaws and all. That's something we simply could not keep to ourselves. We hope we can give you a bit of insight into how God is working in your own life and help you ask the really important questions:

- Why haven't I found true love yet?
- How are some of my habits working *against* the life I really want?

- What have I been spending my energy and attention on and why?
- What have I been compromising to do that?
- What am I ready to sacrifice to become my best self?
- Do I need help making healthier choices for my life?

In *The Wait*, we hope to give you the answers to those questions. We'll offer specific advice for men and women and tell you what we've learned about the power of being still, working to become the best version of yourself, and allowing God to bring His vision of your life to fruition. In the end, we hope you'll be entertained, moved, and most important, inspired to try this powerful tool for yourself. We think you'll see that there's nothing boring, passive, or docile about waiting. Done right, it's actually the most potent force imaginable for creating the life you crave . . . the life God wants you to have.

*God bless you now and always,*

*DeVon and Meagan*



## NO SEX? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS

*Patience is not the ability to Wait,  
but the ability to keep a good attitude while Waiting.*

—JOYCE MEYERS

Just what is The Wait, exactly? The Wait is a conscious choice to pursue delayed gratification in the areas of life related to relationships. It's a decision to get your mind right, figure out who you want to be and what you want out of life, and use your time and energy to become the best version of yourself. Put simply:

*To wait is to delay the temptation for instant gratification  
in relationships in order to get what you really want in life  
and become the person you truly want to be.*

That starts with saying no to sex. The Wait isn't 100

percent about sex, but that's where it begins. Sex is probably the most compelling aspect of human gratification. It's such a powerful desire that outside of a proper healthy context it can cloud our judgment and cause us to make decisions that work against our own self-interest. The untamed, untempered drive for sexual gratification has toppled empires, scuttled political careers, destroyed marriages, and squandered fortunes. Sex can be like a McLaren F1 race car: great in the right hands, but potentially disastrous when handled recklessly.

We're willing to bet that you've experienced more of the latter. We know because we've done it. We've all made terrible decisions about who to flirt with, spend time with, commit to, and even sleep with that had nothing to do with our brains but everything to do with our hormones. Sex can become a gateway drug to all kinds of other choices intended to satisfy the need for quick pleasure: going out with that gorgeous girl even though you know she's a hot mess, spending the weekend at that dude's place even though you know you're not the only one, or having just one more drink even though you know it will impair your judgment.

When we chase the high of instant gratification, we make choices that for many reasons are irresponsible and based on poor reasoning . . . or no reasoning at all. It takes time and self-control to take in information, let people reveal



their true character, be consistent and disciplined, and give conflicts time to work themselves out. Delaying gratification means working at becoming more self-aware and humble enough to admit that our first impulses aren't always smart ones.

Let's be really, really clear on this. The Wait isn't just about not having sex, but:

*One of the keys to practicing The Wait is giving up sex.*

We know that for many Christians and non-Christians alike, the idea of giving up sex is too outrageous and impossible to consider. We get that. Yet based on our experience, we still believe that practicing The Wait until marriage will set you up for success and align you with God's perfect will for your life in all areas.

## SEX, WAITING, AND RELATIONSHIPS

At its heart *The Wait* is a book about relationships, but there's no unwinding the connection between relationships and sexuality. Love and sex are the two sides of the same coin. When you have sex with someone outside of marriage, you're not just setting off a chain of chemical reactions in your brain

that make you think they're a lot cooler than they probably are; you're giving them a part of your spirit.

When you have sex with someone, you really are leaving them a piece of yourself and taking a part of them with you . . . whether you want to or not. So each sex partner, good and bad, becomes a part of your future. Does this make you think twice about who you choose—and have chosen—to get into bed with?

Sex is an act of trust. It's about way more than physical attraction—yet when you think of it only as physical attraction you will see (or have already seen) that attraction lies and spellbinds. Strong relationships aren't built solely on physical or sexual attraction. They're built on good judgment. How many times have you become caught up with someone based mostly on sexual attraction? How have those relationships ended?

We don't have to ask *if* they've ended, because they don't last. They can't. Before too long, the hormonal haze clears and all that matters is character, integrity, intelligence, values, spirituality, and self-esteem. A person who doesn't have enough of those to suit you is a person you can't tolerate for long. Cue the dramatic breakup music! Bring in the screaming double! Can we have the boxes of his or her stuff tossed out into the street to be run over by cars, please?

Delaying gratification and getting greater control over

your behavior so that you can break the patterns that keep sabotaging you is the key to finally finding the life and the peace that you hunger for. It's the key to becoming who you've always aspired to be, an idea we'll unpack in chapter two. But it all starts with giving up sex.

## THE PROBLEM WITH SEX

Sex, of course, is a topic overflowing with religious, cultural, political, and personal baggage. Much of our popular culture is built around sexual titillation. In our business, the making of movies and television, actors are often cast as much for their good looks as for their acting talents. You don't really think that all private detectives look like Denzel Washington, do you?

As a people, we're alternately conflicted, fascinated, and appalled by sex in all its forms. Lawmakers crusade against pornography while their constituents consume it in record amounts. Abstinence-only sex-education programs deny teens basic information on the assumption that it will make them promiscuous, while the data show that teens are less sexually active than they've been in decades. The most popular magazines seem to be about nothing *but* sex: how to get it, how to give it, where to have it, how to be better at it,

how to know if your partner is having it with someone else, and so on. We're obsessed with sex, and at the same time we disapprove of our obsession. It's no wonder that sex ties us in knots.

An old saying goes, "Success makes us forgetful and stupid." Sex does the same thing. It makes us forget who we are and what we want. It makes us do things that we look at later and say, "What was I thinking?"

After we got married in 2012, we were asked to appear at numerous conferences and gatherings all around the country to share the story of our relationship and how God brought us together. Though we talked about personal growth and getting closer to God, the stories about us—online and off-line—mostly focused on one thing: waiting to have sex. No matter how deep our faith and how intense our devotion and duty to God, we're still human, and human beings tend to be like twelve-year-olds when it comes to the topic of sex.

Sex is pleasurable. Sex between two people who love each other body and soul is transcendent. But more often than not, that's not the kind of sex most people are having. A good friend of ours once said to us, "I'm not getting married until I have what you guys have." That's flattering and humbling, but it's also a reflection on how hard it is to find compatibility.

The two of us are not anti-sex. To be anti-sex would

pretty much be the same as being anti-God. God created sex and we fully advocate the joy of experiencing it the way he intended. What we do know is that we've seen and known a lot of people whose higher aspirations for love, family, and success have landed on the rocks because they put the pursuit of sex before anything else.

But sex, of course, is at the heart of *The Wait*. That's not because the most popular question when we spoke at Morehouse College or at T. D. Jakes's MegaFest or on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* was "How did you manage not to have sex?" It's because we saw the incredible and undeniable grace that came to our relationship when we decided to remain committed to celibacy before marriage.

## WHY WE CHOSE TO BE CELIBATE

We both discovered independently that to be the people we truly wanted to be, we needed to take sex out of the equation.

DE VON: I had made a commitment of celibacy long before I met Meagan. When we got married, I had been celibate for ten years. What motivated the commitment was the same thing that made me keep it. I was a preacher talking about living a life that put love of the Lord first,

and then I was going out and living a life that was the opposite of the discipline I was teaching. Trying to be two people started tearing me apart. The desire for peace and harmony within myself was a motivator to choose celibacy.

I asked myself, “What if what I was doing with this other woman disqualified me for the full manifestation of the call that God has on my life? Would it be worth it?” Of course not! No sex is worth that! I could not reconcile the idea that at the end of my life God might say, “Here’s what I had planned for you, but because you showed yourself unworthy, I couldn’t do all I wanted to do in your life.” I was not prepared to take that risk. Whatever my purpose is in this life, I don’t want anything to get in the way of that.

MEAGAN: I got saved when I was twelve and lost my virginity when I was nineteen. As a Christian, I felt a strong conviction about not having sex, but like most of us, I made excuses and swept those convictions under the rug. On some occasions I opted to proceed and then repent, while on others I didn’t even acknowledge my reservations at all. I repeated the same painful patterns in my relationships over and over, but I didn’t connect that to sex for a long time.

Finally, I knew I had to make a commitment to take

sex off the table. That was when I already knew DeVon but didn't know that he was my husband. By the time I began to entertain the thought of celibacy, my life was an emotional mess. Going celibate helped me clean it up in all areas (even areas where sex played no part). If I hadn't done that, I doubt we would have come together as husband and wife.

Later, when we got together and got the memo—the revelation that our relationship was going to happen and in fact was meant to be—we didn't want to do anything to sabotage it. Since we had both been celibate at this point, we agreed that we would remain celibate until after we married . . . if we married. So we took a calculated risk: we would forego physical pleasure so that we could really get to know each other's minds, hearts, and spirits and confirm that God was truly bringing us together.

Considering the potential payoff, it wasn't much of a risk. Sure, we were passing up sexual gratification. But by achieving real clarity we would have avoided making a life-altering mistake either way. Of course, things did work out. We fell in love with each other as whole people, and the promised payoff has been a life filled with not just joy but the peace that comes with knowing we're firmly in the center of God's purpose.

Now, we won't lie to you. It wasn't always easy. There were nights when things would get hot and heavy and Meagan would stop us and say, "I can't get down like this. I'm used to going all the way. So we need to cool off." And we would stop right there, say our good nights, and part for the evening. That happened plenty of times.

But when it dawned on us just how powerful celibacy was for our union, we both said, "Lord, delaying gratification is powerful!"

How powerful? We saw the many ways that God blessed us and continues to bless us with a relationship built on mutual respect and deep understanding of who we both are. We didn't let sex distort our perceptions, cloud our judgment, or make us rationalize something we didn't like. We fell in love as centered, intelligent people and children of God long before we fell in love with each other's physical beauty or sensuality.

## WHAT THE WAIT *ISN'T*

Despite all this, The Wait is anything but passive. You're not sitting on your hands and hoping that things will turn out all right. You're making deliberate, positive choices that change who you are and how your mind works. You're also tak-



ing the resources you've been spending to chase after sexual gratification and using them instead to improve yourself in body, mind, and spirit.

We call this “strategic patience.” While you wait, you're not putting your life on hold or wasting time waiting for something to happen. Instead, you're taking all the time and attention that you've been projecting outward and turning it inward. That's one of the most positive, life-affirming choices a person can make. From this perspective, you can finally see that hurling yourself into the path of potentially romantic relationships hasn't brought you any closer to what you want. It's time to try a different approach: letting love and purpose manifest in your life as a result of you working on becoming the best version of yourself.

Practicing strategic patience means understanding the difference between the two types of waiting:

1. Waiting that you choose.
2. Waiting that you have no choice about.

There's a big difference between something you choose and something that's forced upon you. With the first, you're in control; with the second, you resent control being taken from you. The Wait is about changing your circumstance from the second type of waiting into the first. Instead of feel-

ing resentful and angry when the pursuit of your desires hits a wall, think, “Okay, since I’m already waiting, I’m going to choose to use this time productively.” Your circumstances haven’t changed, but how you see them certainly has. Just like that you transform yourself from passive victim into active collaborator with God.

Other things The Wait is not:

- *A punishment.* God isn’t making you spend time alone as payback for some previous sin.
- *Forever.* We understand that not having sex is hard and could make a month feel like a year. But tell us this: What’s the longest time in recent years that you’ve gone without sex against your will—because your dating life tanked or you were too busy? Months? Could you do that again, this time because you choose to? We bet you could.
- *Putting your life on hold.* Hardly. Now you have time and bandwidth to work on *you*. There are definitely times when fast, aggressive action is required to get what you want. You can still practice The Wait while you’re actively going after all God has for you in life.
- *Weird.* We want to take the stigma away from waiting. What’s bizarre about valuing yourself, your body, and your God over all else? Especially if you’ve already

been through the pain of multiple bad breakups, there's nothing weird about waiting, no matter what anyone else says.

Most important, The Wait isn't powerless. Though you might not see it, God has his hand on your life during this time, rearranging the scenery in order to set you up for good things to come.

## THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEING CELIBATE

If only those facts were enough to convince people about the power of celibacy, but they're not. When we talk about The Wait and suggest that people consider going without sex, we get stares of horror. Many people can't even fathom going without sex for three months, much less years. On the male side, a lot of men have bought into the cultural brainwashing that says that being a man means chasing lots of women. In that scenario, a man's worth has nothing to do with his character, morals, or integrity. It becomes reduced to how many women he sleeps with.

As for women, our culture is full of messages telling them that their sexuality is one of the most important things they have to offer but then shames them for displaying it. It's

really not surprising that sex provokes insecurity and internal conflicts. The unchecked premarital pursuit of sex can debase and objectify us, drive us further away from God's plan for our life, and expose us to incurable STDs, unplanned pregnancies, and tons of emotional trauma. So why is it that more of us don't just stop?

Well, we like sex. We crave it. Our bodies are designed to want sex in the way an addict wants drugs. Faced with celibacy, we rationalize. We say, "I don't know how to be celibate." Or, "We weren't meant to abstain." The problem is that *what we should do is not what we want to do*. It's a perfect example of instant gratification at war with delayed gratification.

Are you staying in a relationship for the sex and telling yourself that the other person will change one of these days? Well, has he or she changed yet? Maybe you've wrecked relationships and friendships by sleeping with multiple partners, even after swearing that you wouldn't. Maybe you're tired of the empty feeling you get when you wake up next to someone you slept with because you were lonely or had too much to drink. Perhaps it feels like you're on a treadmill of discouraging, drama-filled relationships based on physical attraction and not much else.

Any of that sound familiar? Then, we think that you know exactly what to do. You may even be getting some

pretty clear signals from God about trying celibacy, but you don't want to go there. You don't want the questions, the pressure from friends, and the rejection of potential partners uninterested in waiting for sex. You think you'll be shunned or treated like some sort of freak. But there's probably a lot you don't know about celibacy:

*More people are practicing it than you might think.* According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, about 3 percent of Americans currently remain celibate until their honeymoons. That might not seem like a lot, but that means that about 5 million couples married today fell in love, vowed to wait, and kept that commitment intact until after they were joined in holy matrimony. So it can be done.

*Celibacy is about the mind as much as it is the body.* When we think about celibacy, we focus on the physical need to have sex. But being celibate isn't just about pushing down that hormonal need to engage in intercourse. It's about owning how you feel, even when those horny feelings are coming on. It's choosing to discipline the mind and think of the benefit you seek, something that is greater than the desire to give in.

You might have heard people say something like this when talking about weight loss: "You have to think like a thin person." It means that losing weight isn't entirely about

changing what you eat, but about understanding why you eat the way you do. If you overeat out of anxiety or loneliness and you can address those problems, you will change how you think about food and eat differently. Celibacy is the same. If you look at the reasons sex is important to you, you'll probably find that they are less important than having what you want in life and getting closer to God. That will change how you think about sex and make it easier to resist your physical urges.

The urges will still be there, make no mistake. They were there for us while we dated. We were tempted all the time. But our purpose was more important. Many of us don't even consider that the sexual aspect of a relationship *could be optional*. It doesn't occur to us. But what if it did? What if we made the conscious choice to make clarity and communication and closeness more important than sexual gratification?

That's what the two of us mean by celibacy being about the mind. Once you reframe sex as a choice, you can reframe celibacy as a commitment that will help you get the things you want. Your animal urges lose their power over you. You gain power over them.

DEVON: When I made the commitment to celibacy, I got a lot of disbelieving comments from friends. You should have seen the open mouths when I told people that I had

remained celibate for ten years before marrying Meagan! But my friends' shock passed, and some of them said that they admired what I was doing. They knew I loved the Lord and that I was making this commitment out of a desire to be closer to him. In the end, some of them even said I inspired them to try celibacy themselves.

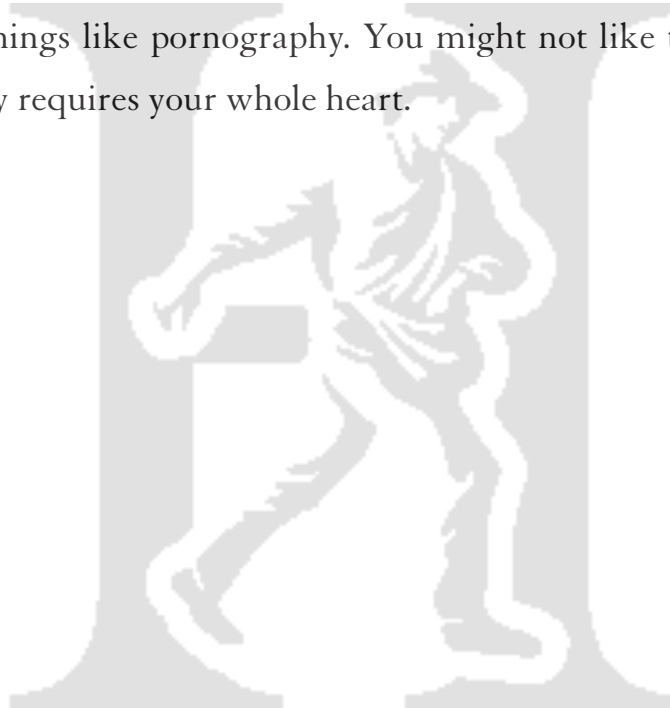
As a man, if you can be disciplined in your sexual life, there's nothing you can't do. The discipline that you create in that area of your life will be the same for the rest of your life. The Bible says, "Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you" (Matthew 6:4, NLT).

*Celibacy isn't about shame or moral judgment.* We'll say it again: we are not anti-sex. But some people are. They fear sex because it's a powerful motivator of behavior, and they judge those who have sex out of wedlock as morally inferior. Do not listen to those people when you're deciding whether or not to be celibate. Shame and the fear of being judged are the wrong reasons to practice The Wait. If you let yourself be shamed into it, you won't stick with it.

*Sex isn't sinful.* Sometimes people of faith have strange, outdated ideas about what sex is. Once again: sex itself is not sinful. Sex isn't wrong. God created the sexual act and the physical and emotional drives that make us want to have sex.

Sex is an act of creation, even if it doesn't result in a child. It creates joy and intimacy between two people. God-ordained sex between two people who are committed to each other in marriage, who know each other fully and are giving of themselves to each other, body and spirit—that is sanctified.

*Real celibacy means total abstinence.* Meaning, it's more than just not having sexual intercourse. It's also abstaining from things like pornography. You might not like that, but celibacy requires your whole heart.





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## SIGNS FROM GOD

God won't leave you guessing. He will send you signs that it's time to slow down, quiet your mind, and work on yourself while he labors on your behalf. But it's up to you to read the signs that it's time to wait. They include:

- A breakup
- Physical or mental or emotional exhaustion
- Negative or hurtful people leaving your life
- The feeling of being lost or purposeless
- An opportunity to go on a long trip or retreat
- The awareness that you've been repeating the same relationship mistakes for years
- Persistent frustration and lack of peace

Not all of God's signs are enjoyable. Some are unpleasant or painful. But if that's what it takes to get your attention, it's worth it. Pay attention to the events and patterns in your life. Is God telling you to wait? If you haven't been listening, now is a good time to start. If not, you might squander time that you'll never get back.

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## DOES IT REALLY HAVE TO BE UNTIL MARRIAGE?

We faced a really tough question in writing this book:

*Is *The Wait* only about waiting until marriage?*

Yes. We do believe that most people's lives and relationships would be stronger and more joyful if they waited until marriage. On the other hand, many of the people reading this book, no matter how strong their faith, will probably have sex or continue to before marriage. To ignore that would not only be dismissive but could be viewed as borderline delusional. Just like you, we live in the real world where we try to live as spiritual beings dealing with the challenges of our flesh every day, so we do understand.

However, even with that understanding, we are confident that saving sex until after marriage will yield the best results, both for you as an individual and for you and your partner. That's what we did. We can speak to the blessings firsthand. We've seen God do amazing things in our lives that we believe are directly connected to putting him first in all areas of our life—including our sex life.

We get that some people's strong desire for sex and their differing perspectives on premarital sex might make them unlikely to wait until marriage. That said, we believe that to

gain all the blessings connected to The Wait, celibacy should continue until you make that vow of lasting commitment. Not to say that God won't bless you if you choose to live differently, but since making our choice we've reaped the benefits of blessings that are nothing like we've ever received in our lives before.

Because we've written this book from that perspective, that's our focus. Plus, qualifying everything—different rules for people waiting for different lengths of time—would be confusing for you and us. So we're just going to talk about The Wait as we experienced it: celibacy until marriage. We're not denying the real world; we're just reflecting on the way that the two of us navigated the real world and our own sexual desires to find real, deep, authentic love.

## THE BLESSINGS OF CELIBACY

Despite all our reassurances and your best intentions, giving up sex can seem impossible. But believe us, it's worth it. The things that happened in the months after our marriage were not things we could have planned or that we even thought we deserved. We prayed for things and envisioned exactly how they would happen, but it wasn't until we were together—with the richness and respect that we had built for

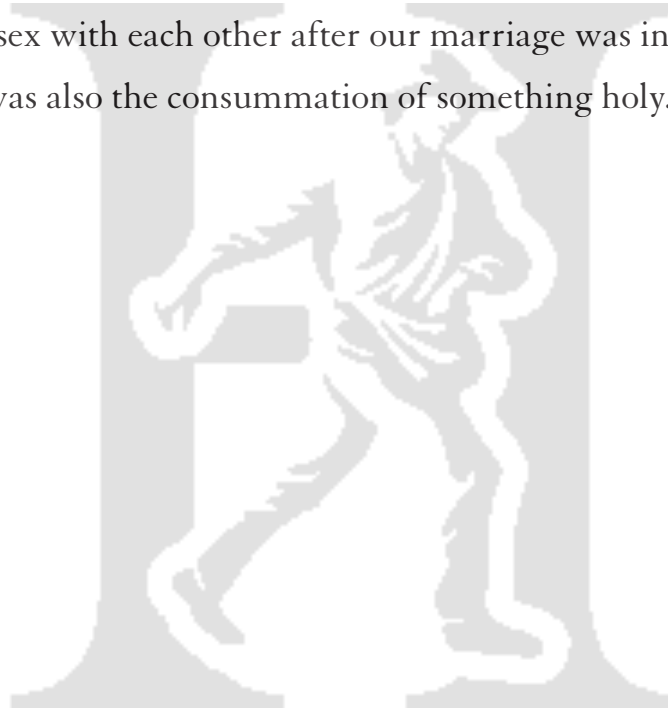
each other—that miracles began to come to pass. God’s grace has been overwhelming and life changing. Putting God first and making him the foundation of our union has been not only the best personal decision we’ve ever made but the best decision for our careers and lives.

DE VON: When you’re disciplined, obedient, and faithful, God will bring you the full manifestation of what he has in mind for you. He’ll bring you his plan A, the best destiny you could imagine. That’s what I wanted for my life when I became celibate. I knew that if I had remained undisciplined and continued to make bad choices, God would still be a benevolent God. He would bring me something from plan B, plan C, or plan D, but that wasn’t enough for me. I said, “Lord, I want it all.” And when you look at my life since then in all its facets, from family to career, God has delivered above and beyond anything I could have hoped or asked for.

MEAGAN: Everything in my life has changed dramatically since I stopped picking and choosing which parts of the Bible I would follow. I stopped saying, “I’m going to do *this* by the book, but I’m going to do *that* over there the way I want to do it. It’s not a big deal; everyone else does it.” When I stopped that and I focused on the hardest

thing, which is sex, I literally watched everything in my life and career change.

Waiting for sex isn't easy, but no important thing is ever easy. It's a sacrifice, but a worthwhile one. We took some teasing about things like our clear skin and how wild our honeymoon must have been, but it was worth it. Finally enjoying sex with each other after our marriage was incredible, but it was also the consummation of something holy.



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## WISE WAITING

Influential philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas said, “A person is said to be patient . . . because he acts in a praiseworthy manner by enduring things which hurt him here and now and is not unduly saddened by them.” We consider patience a virtue and impatience a vice, but why?

In part, it's because a patient disposition tends to give us a healthier perspective on the ups and downs of daily living. Because we're not expecting everything to come our way overnight, we keep the big picture in mind. We're less likely to become angry or depressed at life's trivial setbacks. The impatient person can't understand why everything isn't working out as planned and is more likely to react to a minor misfortune by becoming frustrated, giving up, or doing something foolish.

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## CELIBACY VERSUS ABSTINENCE

Before we move on, we need to draw a clear distinction between celibacy and abstinence. Most people think they're the same thing. They're not. *Abstinence* is simply refraining from sex; it's the absence of something with no greater meaning behind it. *Celibacy* is refraining from sex because of a vow or

faith; it's abstinence with a purpose. You might abstain from sex involuntarily, because you're not in a relationship. Celibacy is never involuntary. It's always the result of a conscious, deliberate choice. That's an important distinction.

In *The Wait* we're going to talk about celibacy because to us, celibacy is something you go into with your eyes open, fully expecting to gain something from the experience. It's about saying, "I'm becoming." On the other hand, in our culture abstinence is something grudging, something forced upon young people, for example, by well-meaning parents or ministries. It's about saying, "You will not." But there's not always purpose or learning associated with it. That can be dangerous.

Consider the news story in the spring of 2015 about a small high school in Texas with an abstinence-only sex education program that experienced a widespread outbreak of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection. That's one tiny piece of proof that just saying no to sex or pretending the sex drive doesn't exist isn't an adequate defense against pregnancy, disease, or worse.

When we talk about celibacy, the last thing we're doing is telling you to ignore sex. Just the opposite. We're suggesting that you acknowledge its power and your own desire. That way, if you choose to go without sex, you'll do so with your eyes open, understanding the realities and risks of having sex

and *not* having it. Celibacy and The Wait complement each other.

## THE ENERGY TO CHANGE EVERYTHING

Despite all those positives, type-A personalities often see The Wait as disempowering or fatalistic. Business gurus and life coaches throw out advice like, “Go for what you want in life” and “Successful people make things happen; unsuccessful people watch things happen.” That sort of glib, one-size-fits-all wisdom sounds enticing until you realize that it leaves God completely out of the picture.

For some scriptural perspective, look at Isaiah 40:30–31 (NASB), which reads,

*Though youths grow weary and tired,  
And vigorous young men stumble badly,  
Yet those who wait for the LORD  
Will gain new strength;  
They will mount up with wings like eagles,  
They will run and not get tired,  
They will walk and not become weary.*

Yes, even those vigorous young men and women, so im-



patient and confident in their ability to choose the right person or right path, will stumble and wear out without God's guidance to give them strength.

Running through love's maze, chasing one bad relationship after another—it all discourages not just the body but also the spirit. The word *discourage* says it: a loss of courage. After a while, you don't have the fortitude to face another first date or relationship. It's exhausting.

On the other hand, showing some restraint and letting God reveal your next step is like plugging into an emotional and spiritual power plant. As the verse says, you can run and not get tired. You're not just free of the maze but free of the unspoken mandate that you must find your life's partner and life's purpose right now. You're on nobody's schedule but your own, and you have God to help you figure out what to do next.

In fact, the same engine that drives the best stories also gives *The Wait* its power. We're professionals with years working in the movie business, and we know that the key to any good film is tension. It doesn't matter if you're waiting for two characters to share their first kiss or holding your breath while the heroine tries to escape from the serial killer. No matter the genre of film, what moves the story is the tension between what the main character wants and the obstacles he or she must overcome to get it.

The Wait works the same way. It takes the tension that exists between instant and delayed gratification and turns it into energy. In the Bible, giving in to the temptations of instant gratification inevitably leads to ruin. (See Eden, Garden of.) Delayed gratification, on the other hand, leads to fidelity and reward. (See the story of Joseph.) Waiting for what you want floods your life with potential energy.

## DELAYED GRATIFICATION AND MARSHMALLOWS

One memorable piece of evidence for the benefits of delayed gratification comes from what's become known as the famous Stanford marshmallow experiment. In the 1960s, a Stanford University professor named Walter Mischel started experimenting with hundreds of children around four and five years old to see how long they could delay their own gratification.

In the experiment, a researcher brought each child into a private room one at a time and sat down across a table from him or her. On the table he placed a marshmallow. Then he told each child that he would leave the room for fifteen minutes. If the child did not eat the marshmallow during the time that the researcher was gone, he or she would get a second marshmallow when the researcher came back. If the

child ate the marshmallow, he or she wouldn't get any more.

As you might expect, most of the kids ate their marshmallows. A few didn't. But the interesting part of the study came as the researchers followed the kids over the next forty years as they grew into adults. What the study showed was that the kids who were able to delay gratification were more successful in almost every area of life: reduced rates of obesity, better social skills, higher SAT scores, you name it. They were simply better at life than the kids who gave into instant gratification.

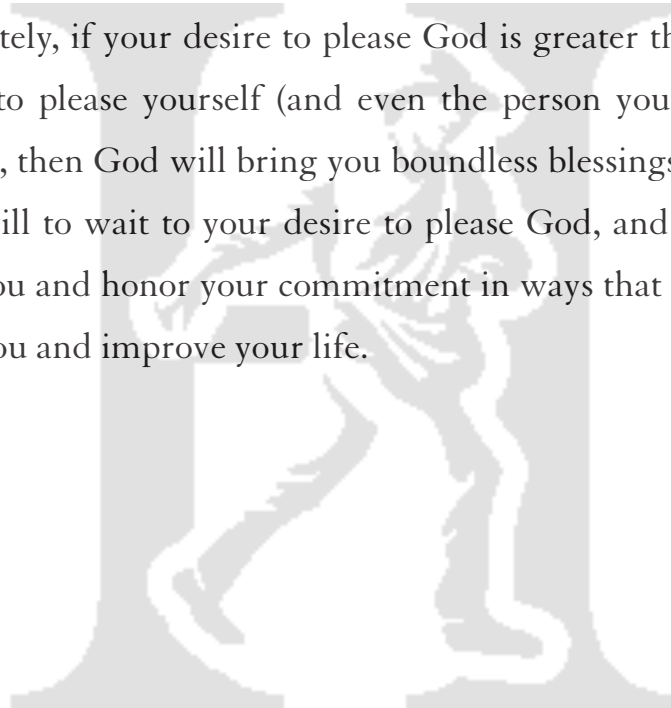
If you've never been disciplined enough to deny yourself short-term pleasure in favor of the big picture, *The Wait* is your chance to develop this skill as an adult, something most people cannot do. It's clear that doing so will increase your chances of being successful in the parts of your life that matter most, from your career to your relationships.

## BEING SELECTIVE MAKES YOU MORE DESIRABLE

Another big plus to delaying gratification and reining in your dating life is that the less available you are, the more fascinating you become. We live in a culture where most people hurl themselves blindly into the path of every possible relationship. In that world, who's most interesting and desirable?

The person who has the confidence not to date every warm body that comes along but instead is selective. Just as tension powers the action in the movies, it will do the same for you.

You may be dating and deciding to wait for the first time. You may be single and already waiting (on purpose or because you have no other choice) but becoming discouraged. Either way, have hope. The Wait will work for you. Ultimately, if your desire to please God is greater than your desire to please yourself (and even the person you may be dating), then God will bring you boundless blessings. Tether your will to wait to your desire to please God, and He will bless you and honor your commitment in ways that will surprise you and improve your life.



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## THE WAIT AND . . . CAREER

Your career is another area where you might be champing at the bit to get going, get climbing that ladder, and get the corner office, but you have only so much control. There are politics, the realities of advancement within an organization, and issues of training and education to deal with. Plus, it's hard to know what you should really do with your life.

Waiting can be a great career strategy, because believe it or not God honors your sacrifice. And let's face it, the decision to deny yourself and not have sex is a sacrifice. The two of us have witnessed firsthand how God has blessed our careers because we chose to honor him in our relationship. As you practice The Wait, you will likely see a great acceleration and advancement in your purpose and career.

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