

August 12, 2023



THE MANY LOVES OF SARA

Sara was so “in love” with Tony. He was the perfect guy. When their one-month dating anniversary came up, she looked all over for the perfect gift to give him. Knowing how much he loved to read, she chose a beautiful collection of love poems, wrapped it in gold paper, and gave it to him. “Think of me as you read them,” she said.

“I always will,” he promised.

But Sara and Tony never made it to their two-month anniversary. Things went wrong. Breaking up was hard, but Sara soon felt better when she met Marc. After a few months together, Marc’s birthday rolled around, and she wanted to choose the perfect gift for him. She looked at a lot of things, but finally she wound up back in the bookstore, buying that same collection of love poems. As she wrote “*To Marc with all my love forever . . . Sara*” on the inside cover, she paused for a moment, thinking of when she’d written those same words to Tony. But this was different, she assured herself.

After she broke up with Marc a few months later, Sara met Mike. Later there was Kevin, then Jared, then Brandon. Throughout her high school and college years Sara dated quite a few guys. And every time she had to choose a special gift, the gift that would perfectly express her love, she found herself choosing that same book of love poetry.

Finally Sara met Derek. This time it really was forever. They dated for several months and finally planned to get married. Derek suggested that they buy each other a special gift to exchange at their wedding—a token of their love for each other. Sara searched and searched, but in the end she couldn’t come up with anything better than that same book of love poems that said it all just right.

When Derek opened the book, a tear came to his eye. “This is so perfect,” he said. “I’ll think of our love whenever I read these.”

Sara nodded, but she felt sad. She was sure her love for Derek was forever, but she couldn’t help thinking about all those other books of love poems floating around out there. The book no longer seemed special; the words of love between its pages no longer seemed meaningful just for her and her loved one. If only she’d saved the perfect gift for Derek!

—This illustration was inspired by a similar story called “The Gold Locket,” by Robert Wolgemuth. Copyright © 1998 by the author and Christianity Today International/Campus Life magazine.



Sabbath

FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 23, Marriage and the Family:** “Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between a man and a woman who share a common faith.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 64, 65

Sunday

RESPONDING

- » Read Hebrews 13:4.
- » As you read in Hebrews 13:4, God’s plan is that physical intimacy between a man and a woman be experienced solely within the boundaries of a committed marriage union. The Bible clearly teaches that physical intimacy experienced outside of marriage is sin and has devastating consequences (Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 6:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 13, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Some of the negative consequences of intimate relationships outside of marriage include: broken relationship with God who calls us to holy living, loss of trust, compromised conscience, unwanted pregnancies, children born outside of marriage, sexually transmitted diseases, and guilt.
 - » Yet there are people who do not view the gift of sexuality as special to be cherished and saved for the marriage union. They treat it as a casual matter to their own harm.
 - » What advice would you give someone who doesn’t understand the instructions God has given in His Word concerning love and the marriage union? (See Genesis 1:26, 27; Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11; Psalm 119:9.)

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

- » Read Genesis 2:18-24; Deuteronomy 6:5.
- » Marriage is a blessing that God gave to men and women at the very beginning—in Eden! We can truly love someone only when we are in a right relationship with God. In choosing your friends, look for the person that loves God above all else. Respect yourself and your future by setting your standards according to God’s plan for your life. Ask God to help you to remain pure and never let someone talk you into doing something that makes you uncomfortable or lowers God’s standard for your life.
- » Unscramble the following verse to learn who God tells us we should avoid choosing as a husband or wife. The verse is from the New King James Version.

has communion with what 2 Corinthians do lawlessness unequally light with for righteousness 14 not what 6: yoked darkness fellowship be unbelievers with together has and NKJV

- » Why do you think God would tell us not to enter into marriage with an unbeliever?
- » What other situations could also apply to this verse?

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read Psalm 119:9.
- » It's so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that looking good is all that matters, and that giving in to every urge is the way to go. God's Word holds up a different standard. God wants us to treasure and value our sexuality and to use it only at the right time within the boundaries of married life. When the use of sexuality begins too early or inappropriately, it loses its value, and deep scars and relationship issues arise that last a lifetime.
- » Growing up as a Christian young person means valuing your sexuality.
- » God made you a guy or a girl, with the body, the hormones, the emotions, and the desires you have. And God wants to help you learn to channel those desires into the right kind of relationship at the right time.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Look up the Bible texts and match them with the verse. You can find all the versions of the Bible that are used in this exercise at www.biblegateway.com.

Hebrews 13:4 (NIV)
 Genesis 2:18 (CEV)
 1 Thessalonians 4:2-5 (*The Message*)
 1 Corinthians 6:15 (CEV)
 Psalm 119:9 (NIV)

- _____ "The LORD God said, 'It isn't good for the man to live alone. . . .'"
- _____ "Marriage should be honored by all . . ."
- _____ "Don't you know that your bodies . . ."
- _____ "Learn to appreciate and give dignity to your body . . ."
- _____ "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? . . ."

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Read 1 Thessalonians 4:2-5.
- » Review the memory text.
- » If you make the choice to remain sexually pure, what does that mean?
- » It will likely mean walking out of step with the culture around you. But, that shouldn't stop you from holding on to your gift of sexuality. Someday God will bring into your life the person you will marry. What a joy and delight you both will have in giving yourselves to each other.
- » Be willing to be different. You will only spare yourself lots of heartbreak.
- » Don't allow yourself to be in situations that blur the lines between right and wrong.
- » By remaining pure, you will hold on to your reputation and someday share your purity with the person who loves, respects, and values you.
- » You will need to take a stand at times to walk out of step with society—to value God's gifts to you and keep yourself morally pure for your life-long partner. But such a commitment will be worth everything!

Friday

APPLYING

- » Read 1 Corinthians 6:15.
- » Are you ready to make a commitment to remain morally pure until marriage? If so, why not put it in writing? Fill in your own thoughts on the lines below:
- » I want to remain morally pure because _____

- » Some things I may need to do (or not do) to keep this commitment are:

- » When it gets difficult, here's what I'll do to help me keep my commitment:

