

Marriage

STILL MATTERS

Choose the ultimate teammate for lasting love

BY MEGAN ALEXANDER

LET'S FACE IT, PEOPLE. We live in a world that is going crazy. We are bombarded with sex, drugs and more sex everywhere we look: schools, magazines, television, computers and phones.

We are told there are no rules – do whatever you want, whenever you want. And along the way, pay no regard to the consequences or the destruction you leave in your path.

Self-esteem is based on how many “likes” we get on Instagram or Facebook. People think that if you are a virgin or saving yourself for marriage, you are old-fashioned and out of touch. We live in a world where the value of marriage is looked upon not as a lifetime commitment but as a contract that always has an out.

We live for ourselves, not each other, and we wonder why there are so many broken homes and broken lives in our culture.

How do we buck the trend? I could tell you, “You can do it, just stay strong,” but in today’s world, it really isn’t that simple. I am about to give you a list of the ideas and things that helped me. It won’t be easy and you will constantly face an uphill battle, but you will have a secret weapon – Jesus Christ. Here is what He has taught me and how I’ve applied those learnings to my marriage.

The secret to my success: My husband.

I am often asked about the secret to my success. How do I balance a successful career as a television reporter for *Inside*

Edition with being a mother to a 3-year-old son, assorted acting projects, writing, working in my community and all the other responsibilities that come with simply being a human in this world?

The answer: my husband. God gave me the biggest gift when he brought my husband, Brian, into my life. We are a team; he has my back, I have his. We try to fight the battle that culture wages against marriage by focusing and working on our own marriage. As I have found, waiting and finding the right partner can be one of God’s great gifts to us.

Preparing for marriage: Focus on the goal.

Most people are surprised that I decided to remain a virgin until I was married. I am reminded every day in my industry just how unpopular this decision is.

Early in my life, I decided I wanted to approach marriage in the best way I could. As I do with a big photo shoot coming up or a major assignment, I prepare in the best way I can. I try to refrain from bad food, work out often and take care of myself. I study my subject and focus on the end goal.

It is the same in marriage. If you value it, you will approach it carefully and respectfully. Marriage is hard enough in this world. I wanted to enter into this sacred and priceless covenant the best way that I knew how. That meant working on myself and treating others as I would want to be treated.

A profound moment for me came when I was in high school. I was blessed to have a great group of friends. Through discussions in our group, I realized that every guy friend of





Megan, Brian and son Chace share their happy home with Indiana, their Golden Spaniel.

mine was someone's future husband. Likewise, each girlfriend was someone's future wife.

That mindset changed my outlook on dating. Instead of simply "having fun" and acting selfishly, I treated others with respect and kindness. This approach allowed me to have a fun dating experience.

I laid out my boundaries clearly and tried to date guys who respected this decision. I had a blast! I did not stay home reading my Bible. I went to dances and kissed quite a few boyfriends. But I stood fast in my decision to save myself for marriage.

Teenagers ask me all the time, "How did you do it?" A few things helped me achieve my goal.

First, I stayed busy pursuing my career. I served as student body president of my college, worked radio and television jobs, volunteered, traveled the country, cultivated hobbies and stayed involved in a church. This variety of experiences allowed me to meet wonderful, quality and like-minded people.

I also kept setting goals. I often tell girls that I was too busy chasing my dreams in my teens and 20s to get in trouble with boys. By the time I began seriously dating my husband, I was ready to understand and respect the profound marriage commitment.

Second, I found a guy who respected me and my decisions. Brian was not a virgin when we got married, but he made the decision to seek a "second virginity" with me. He dated me five years and, ladies, I can tell you good guys are out there.

In those five years he never pressured me to do anything I did not want to do. You need both people to be steadfast in this commitment. Of course, we are real human beings and have problems like anyone else. We knew we needed to work through any issues before entering marriage, so we underwent premarital counseling. And it didn't stop for us once we wed.

Brian and I still attend a marriage Sunday school class

NICK COLEMAN

and touch base with a marriage counselor or pastor. Just as you head to the doctor once a year to make sure you are healthy, your marriage needs a “checkup” once in a while.

After the honeymoon, life is not a fairy tale.

So if we wait until we are married, the honeymoon will be a romantic, blissful fairy tale, right? Not exactly. Our honeymoon was romantic and special and fun, but it was also stressful and awkward. It's a little hard to move from “just say no” to suddenly “everything is OK and go for it.” We put way too much pressure on ourselves to have the sexual aspect of our marriage all figured out, or figure it out quickly. This is not the case. This intimate part of your relationship takes time.

My husband and I have the confidence and trust that we are figuring this out only with each other. This means we can decide at our own pace how often we need to be together intimately and how to please each other.

Communication is essential. I am still learning to be vulnerable and honest in the intimate part of our marriage. Life is not a fairy tale, but our wedding night was special for us because we had waited. One of the cutest things my husband ever said to me on our honeymoon was, “Well, honey, we have the rest of our lives to work on it!” That is a beautiful phrase to hear from your partner.

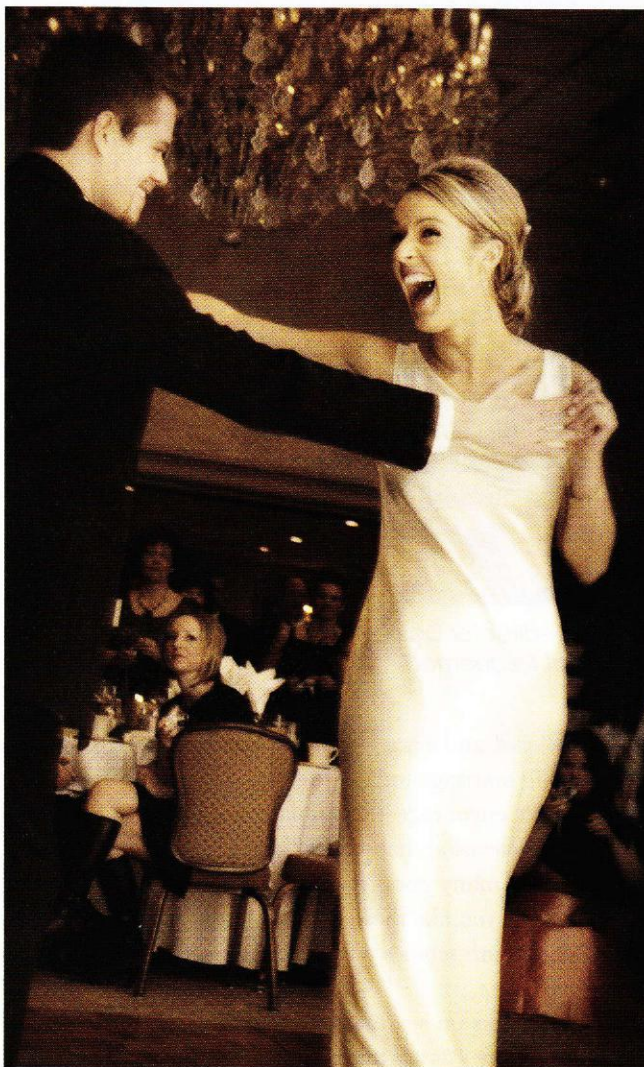
You are together for life, and there is no exit strategy. There is a sense of security and confidence that my marriage gives me in all aspects of my life.

Don't look to Hollywood for advice on marriage.

As part of my work in the entertainment industry, I interview celebrities and constantly cover movies and entertainment. I am often discouraged by Hollywood's portrayal of love. Movies and television make it seem that people should participate in sex as easily and as often as brushing your teeth. And it always needs to be fireworks and passion; if not, something's wrong with you. But today's society has lost the original meaning of what God intended sex to be – an extremely intimate, almost spiritual act that bonds you with someone's heart, soul, mind and emotions. I want to share that with only my husband.

I cringe at how lightly our world treats sex. God created us to be such complex, brilliant and sensitive human beings. We need to value all that we are and take better care of our bodies and souls. The Bible tells us to “above all, guard your heart.” (Proverbs 4:23) Take care of your sexuality and value it highly. For you were “wonderfully and fearfully made.” (Psalm 139:14)

I have met some wonderful people who work in Hollywood, and some of them are making films and TV programs. I actually have a small part in a movie coming out this spring



Megan and Brian exchanged vows, and a few dance steps, on Jan. 19, 2008.



Megan was on the field for her fourth Super Bowl with Olympic gold medalist Gabby Douglas.



Producer-director David A.R. White talks with Megan on the set of *Redeemed*.

called *Redeemed*, and it is a great film dealing with the everyday issues facing marriage today.

I would encourage the public to voice its support for movies and television that it likes. I have high hopes for 2014. It seems that many good entertainment projects are in the works. And if you like these projects, show up at the box office! That support sends a positive message to Hollywood that you want more.

Good books on sex and marriage are plentiful. Among them: *Intended for Pleasure* by Ed and Gail Wheat, *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller and *Love and War: Finding the Marriage You Dreamed Of* by John and Stasi Eldredge.

Be a team.

I heard a celebrity comment once on her third failed marriage. Instead of contemplating how challenging marriage can be, she said, "I have learned to put myself first and never settle. I deserve the best — always." I thought to myself, "No wonder she had failed three times. You cannot always put yourself first!"

Don't get me wrong. It is important to never "settle" on the man you marry, but as much as you expect to receive from your future husband, you should also strive to return. Marriage is a partnership. You have to give as much as you get.

For four years in a row now, I have covered the Super Bowl. This means a full week away from home, on location across the country, and three times out of four my husband has taken care of our son at home. While I was interviewing Beyonce or Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson, he was changing diapers.

There is no way I could thrive in my career without his support, but we take turns. He is an event planner, and when he has a big convention or conference to attend, I stay home or travel to help him. We try hard to balance our careers.

But we also are each other's biggest cheerleaders. My husband believes in my dreams and wants to see me succeed, and I for him. That is one very strong component of our marriage: We are a team.

Marriage needs good friends.

Surround yourselves with a community of encouragement. "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17) Pastor Michael Crocker of Alamo Heights United Methodist Church in San Antonio, Texas, and his wife, Gina, have become great friends. Michael married Brian and me on Jan. 19, 2008.

As we were standing at the altar with our large bridal party, he encouraged our bridesmaids and groomsmen to "stand with us" not just on our wedding day but for the rest of our lives. Can you imagine if every bridesmaid and groomsman took that seriously? Maybe we would have a few more lasting marriages. Many of those folks in our bridal party have stayed very close friends, and we can go to them for encouragement or support.

Marriage is a testimony.

My good friends Ryan and Dana Malouff, who just launched Expression Church in Austin, Texas, established their own mission statement as a couple: "Anytime, anywhere, anything." They wanted to serve the Lord and follow His lead.

Brian and I can relate. When we got married, I got the job offer from *Inside Edition*. We spent our first few years in New York City, living together for the first time in a small apartment. Talk about an adventure! We have a similar motto as our friends Dana and Ryan.

Brian and I say, "We will dream big and treat life as the great adventure, and pursue all it has to offer – together." A healthy marriage can be the best glimpse the world will ever see of Jesus.

People often ask me how I maintain my Christian morals and values in the entertainment industry. One of the best statements I can make is by proudly wearing my wedding ring. And every time people ask about it, I love saying, "Yes, I'm married!" And sometimes this leads to a conversation about marriage. I got to know a well-known couple who were having trouble with their marriage. When they asked how my husband and I deal with problems in our relationship, I was able to recommend a pastor in New York City to help them. You never know how your marriage is going to encourage someone.

Think of marriage in BIG PICTURE terms.

Another lie our culture tells us is that marriage will affect only two people. Not true. Marriage affects not only you and your spouse, but your kids, your extended family and your friends.

I have a 3-year-old son named Chace. How my husband and I cultivate our marriage will directly affect him. I was raised in a wonderful Christian home with two loving parents,

who recently celebrated 40 years of marriage. Not only do I have a wonderful example of what a strong marriage looks like, but I also had the security as a child of their love for me and each other. I want to give that same security to my son.

I am a huge fan of author and speaker Josh McDowell, and one of the greatest things he ever said was this: "The best thing you can do as a parent is love your spouse. The best way you can teach God's love to your child is to love your spouse." I know that my husband and I are setting that example for our son.

My husband came from a broken home, but that doesn't define him. In fact, that background has made our marriage even stronger. It has forced us to have some conversations that maybe we wouldn't have had otherwise. We've talked about what it will take for us to make it as a couple. He understands even more how important it is to not have an exit strategy.


To the next generation: Be bold.

My advice for the next generation is this: Be bold; dare to be different; and be proud of who you are and what you have to offer.

It is never too early to prepare for your future marriage. Value yourselves and treat your bodies like temples. Play "hard to get." Cover up your curves and let boys get to know you for your mind and soul first.

I encourage you to seek a "partner" instead of a "woman" who believes in your dreams and will support you in all areas of your life. Look beyond the physical for someone who will be your best friend and biggest cheerleader. When the going gets tough, you want a girl who will grab your hand and kneel down next to the bed with you.

For me, saving oneself for marriage is not just about sex. It is a manifestation of a bigger decision to make in your approach to marriage – placing a high value on your own self-worth and a commitment to be a great parent and spouse. Saving yourself is just one aspect of it.

If you have not waited or didn't even consider whether you should, there is always a chance for a fresh start. Ultimately, it boils down to loving and treating each other with respect, not judging each other if we fall short and encouraging each other to move forward. We get to pick very little in life, but we do get to choose a teammate. Find someone who will watch out for you, walk this road called life with you and always have your back. A partner for life is the sweetest gift God can give us. 

For speaking opportunities or appearances, contact Megan at malexander@cbs.com. Follow her on twitter: @MeganAlexander1. www.meganalexander.com.

MIND • BODY • SOUL & SPIRIT

WHOA

W O M E N

SEX and the
Christian Woman
SPECIAL ISSUE

Three trends
define new
'normal' in
relationships

Straight talk
on intimacy,
straight
from
the Bible

Single
women,
strong
desires.
What to do?

APPROVED:
YOU'RE
ALREADY
GOOD
ENOUGH

The Once
A Month Club:
Join at your own risk

Megan Alexander

**WHY GETTING MARRIED WAS
THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE**
from *Inside Edition*'s rising star

\$5.99US \$5.99CAN

4 2>



SPRING 2014