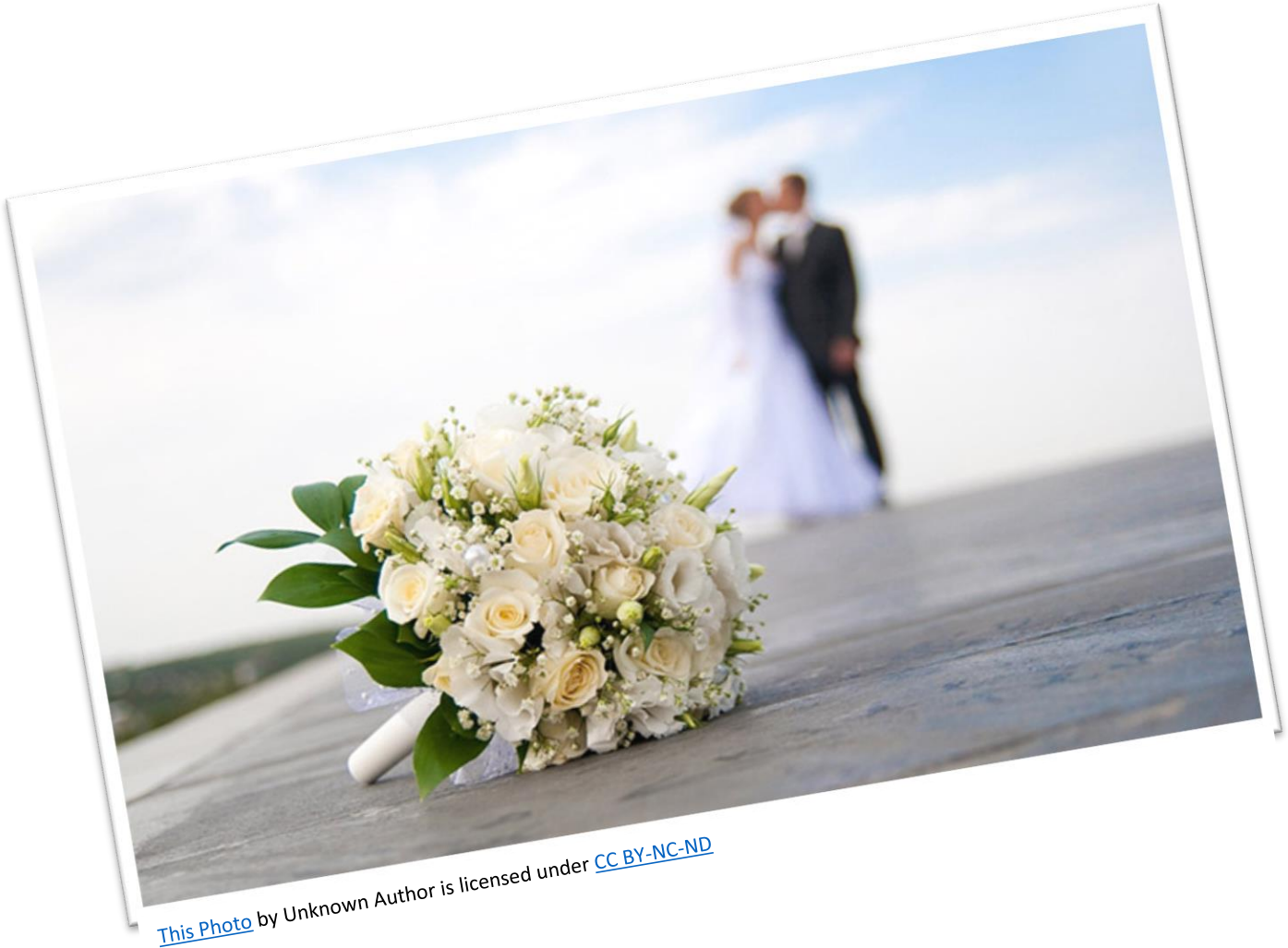


The EXperience

Couples Workbook

by: Shaundale Hornes Johnson



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*"No matter how beautiful your wedding was... there's nothing pretty about marriage; not even the kids.
'Cause, sometimes, you just want to send everyone back." Shaundale Hornes Johnson*

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Dating Yourself Again

Married people break up just like single people do. The only difference is they don't always have the ability, nor the luxury, to move out or to move on. Oftentimes, the inability to do either forces them to make up or to make do. Either way, let's just make a decision to jump back into life and commit to getting to know ourselves a little better, or never losing sight of ourselves in the first place. Think about it.

Getting to Know You

Consider this: Not only should our gifts make room for us, but they should also complement our mates. Designed to fit like gloves, two people born of one flesh don't choose to get together; they are created to be. Ask yourself the following:

- What am I good at doing that makes my mate better? Would it bother me if he/she assisted? Why or why not?

- Do I enjoy doing what I'm good at whether it's for my mate or not, even when I'm alone? Why or why not?

- What is it that I most enjoy doing by myself? With my mate? With my friends?

Meeting Your Spouse Again

If most of us told the truth, we would admit laughing, smirking, rolling our eyes, smacking our lips, or all of the aforementioned when reading the above header. Trust me; I know. Hence, this workbook. It's been my experience that marriage isn't hard; people are just difficult. Therefore, let's drop all pretense and be as practical as possible. Some folks would rather die than get to know their mate again. Many wish they hadn't met the first time. In all seriousness, let's relive the magic, create new memories, or release ourselves from the nightmare. Think about it.

Getting to Know Them

Consider this: The first time you met, time stood still. Okay, maybe not. But, under the circumstances, for whatever reason, maybe you've both found yourselves in an unending loop of disappointments, illegitimate expectations, and vague communications. This activity is designed to make you think about the reasons why. Ask yourself the following:

- Was being married a decision we made, or a circumstance we created?

- Did he/she want to be married, or to have a wedding?

- Did he/she love me, or were they in love with the idea of loving me?

Loving Yourself More

It's no secret that any great relationship starts with a little give and take. The problem is, over time, give becomes a little more "snatch and grab," and take becomes—more or less—an expectation. He takes her for granted; and, she gladly—sometimes, begrudgingly—returns the favor. Forgive yourself for the choice(s) that got you here, and embrace the newness of life that awaits you each new day. You are here for a reason, and your spouse isn't necessarily it. I believe if you pursue any natural relationship more than Purpose, then you are destined to fail. Purpose says you are here for more than me, more than you, more than us. Think about it.

Growing in the Grace of Who You Are

Consider this: Never try to make a leaf a branch, or a branch the trunk, or the trunk the whole tree. Each does what is necessary in its own season. Enjoy yours. Ask yourself the following:

- When we married, who did I love more? Myself, or my mate? Why?

- Can I say that if _____ had not happened (i.e. pregnancy, parents/friends/church getting involved), I would not have married my spouse? Why or why not?

- Could it be possible that I did marry the right person in the wrong season? (i.e. Not time yet—school, finances, another relationship, etc.) Explain.

- Might it be possible that I did marry the wrong person in the right season? (i.e. Perfect time for marriage; just not him/her.) Explain.

Trusting Your Partner is Your Partner

Depending on your comfort level, it may be necessary to do this part with each other. The point is to be able to process your thoughts, and then communicate your feelings. Some couples have managed to create the life they desire together, even if separately, while others are able to enjoy the life they deserve separately, even if together. I know; that's too much. Let me explain.

There are some couples who have managed to acquire material success together, at the expense of their relationship (i.e. divorce). Others have decided to choose to enjoy the life they deserve and forsake the marriage altogether under the same roof (denial). The difference? One couple has decided to take their gains, forfeiting their losses, and the other has decided to take both. Their choice; their business. What they've based their decision(s) on is neither mine to consider, nor yours. Just know any two people can decide to make a marriage work. That doesn't mean they're supposed to be together. Think about it.

Making a Decision

Consider this: The difference between a marriage and a partnership is that there are no romantic feelings surrounding most business transactions. Smart people see a need and fill it. That's how most business deals are made. In marriage people tend to feel needed and end up not being wanted. Ask yourself the following:

- Did I know that marrying who I wanted to marry was consequential? Am I okay with the consequences? Why or why not?

- What are some of the consequences that I have had to deal with as a result of my marriage decision? (i.e. baby-daddy/baby-mama drama, lies/deception, manipulation, infidelity)

- Am I aware that in choosing to marry my mate, I may have spiritually married someone else's husband/wife? Am I okay knowing that my spiritual husband/wife may be married to another, or still single and searching?

- If being in God's will means marrying who God ordained, where does my current mate fit into my purpose if He did not ordain him/her? Am I in or out of alignment? Why or why not?

BONUS CONTENT:

Some people wonder why other folks are still together. It's been my experience by either hearing about, seeing for myself, or knowing the following. If you are number two or three, it's time to talk about it.

1. God has given them grace and anointed them for that marriage and all that comes with it. Evidenced by them still actually being together and actually being happy regardless of what happens. (Soulmates)
2. They have decided to stay together no matter what. Evidenced by the distance and loneliness married couples often feel forced to endure and the lack of joy that would sustain an anointed couple in the same situation. (Sole-mates)
3. They have created a lifestyle neither can afford alone. Evidenced by regret and bitterness often accompanied by conversations surrounding their relationship or their mate. (Neither)