



Direct Answers

from Wayne & Tamara
No Shortcuts

I am 31 and divorced. I have dated Shaun for a year and a half. I love him a lot. He is sweet and funny and attentive, and he seems to care for me a great deal. We spend almost every night together, and he has invited me to family occasions like weddings and Christmas.

I'm afraid, however, that Shaun has a fear of commitment he will never grow out of. Since I am 31 and would like to have a family, I don't feel I have the luxury of time.

Shaun is 34, never been married or engaged. Until last month he was very firm that, despite his many relationships (he has dated a lot of women, usually for around a year) he has never been in love. He told me he believed love is like a lightning bolt that would suddenly strike and change his life forever.

He acknowledges his opinion of love may be romanticized, but it truly is the way he feels. When I pressed him, he said after a year with me and no lightning bolt, it would probably never happen.

Suddenly last month he said he loved me. I have my suspicions his statement was caused by a fear I was going to end the relationship. I don't have real confidence that he really loves me, as he defines the word. By the way, since he said "I love you" last month, he hasn't said it again.

Shaun's told me he thinks marriage is a huge sacrifice and a big adjustment. He insists he wants to be married and have a family sometime, but he has some "growing up" to do first. He says if it weren't for the pressure he feels from me to make a commitment, he wouldn't consider marriage for at least another two years.

I love him but fear I might be pushing him into something he is not ready for. My fear is, if we marry under these conditions, he will eventually resent me for "forcing" him into marriage.

I already had one marriage end. I don't want to be divorced again. If I had confidence he truly loved me and wanted to marry, I would marry him tomorrow without a second thought. But I have so many nagging doubts.

Kara

Kara, we give you credit for not letting the plans you have for your own life, override the foundation it needs to be built on. But every day you went down the road with him not saying "I love you" put you in this position.

You are an experienced, adult, smart woman. You are too emotionally savvy to delude yourself into thinking that marrying a man who doesn't want to marry you will end well.

Shaun says he hasn't grown up yet, and it will be at least two years before he would consider marriage. That's just kicking the can down the road. How can he estimate when he will be grown up?

He's dated a lot, so the issue is him. He enjoys the benefits of a long-term relationship, but like a man who wants a new car every year, that's what he enjoys more. Though he has had your model longer than most, he hasn't closed the door on getting next year's model.

A pressured marriage proposal has as much sincerity as a forced apology. We always say, if you have to ultimatum the other party, the relationship is over. Why? Because what you will initially be thrilled to have, once you realize it wasn't given freely, that will be all you can see.

That will always loom over the relationship. You may love and care about him, but one-sided love is imperfect. To be perfect, to last a lifetime, it must be mutual.

Wayne & Tamara

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Increasing Your Ability to Influence Others in 2019

By Larry Tomczak -

Think how many times you've engaged with somebody about Christianity only to find the person not interested because they've been turned off by those they say are a "bunch of hypocrites." In the past 30 minutes alone I interacted with a mechanic who told me he has "no interest in religion" and I wondered if this was his experience. Respecting his time, I quickly told him the difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus before giving him my personal testimony tract that he willingly accepted. At the same establishment a brother in Christ told me he's getting ready to attend his high school reunion. When I attended mine, a fellow thanked me for leading him to Christ decades ago and told me how he's influenced people positively ever since.

Jim Rattay is Arizona's winningest high school football coach with nine state championships at four different schools! In his first assignment he took a 1-9 team to the state championship plus his son, Tim, became an NFL quarterback with the San Francisco 49ers.

Jim gives God the glory, modeling excellence and calling young people to follow his example in always giving their best. He told me how many he's coached whom he's pointed to Jesus. His winning ways while serving his players have given him a powerful platform to influence thousands for Christ. Same thing with Tua Tagovailova, quarterback for Alabama's outstanding football team. After winning the national championship last year, the first thing he said on nationwide television when interviewed was, "First of all I want to give all the glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!" In the Bible, Daniel was one who stood up in a fall down culture of idolatry and immorality similar to America today. As a young man he was promoted to governmental leadership because of his excellent behavior and healthy appearance, being found "Ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers" (Dan.10:20). Daniel was a statesman leader in four different administrations and one king placed him over 120 officials! "Daniel was preferred above the presidents and officials because an excellent spirit was in him" (Dan.6:4).

Instructions for Impact

In our post-Christian culture that is hostile and antagonistic to Christianity and a Biblical worldview on today's important issues, how are we to conduct ourselves as we look forward to and pray for a day of visitation by God? The days in which we live are as my friend Mike Bickle describes, both "alarming and exciting." The reality is that immorality, dishonesty, homosexuality and incivility are on one side, yet urgency, fervency, expectancy and opportunity are emerging increasingly on our side through passionate and purposeful disciples of Jesus.

Peter the Apostle addressed this same challenge in 62 A.D. when he wrote his first epistle to believers in the midst of a similar time. He outlined three components that they and we should focus upon to be influencers in the days when God is preparing to visit the land.

"Live your lives honorably (keep your behavior excellent – Amplified) among the Gentiles, so though they speak against you as evil doers, they shall see your good works (observe your good deeds – Amplified) and thereby glorify God in the day of visitation" (1Pet.2:12).

1. Excellent Behavior

In his letter to the persecuted Christians, Peter called them to provoke curiosity among the pagans by their conduct in three specific realms: relating to government, in the workplace and in the home. When onlookers inquired about the quality of their lifestyle, they followed 1 Pet. 3:15, "Always be ready to give an answer to every man who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." Where ever God has placed us, it's imperative that we be people of authenticity, integrity, charity and humility. We really are the only Bible that many people will ever read!

Tertullian, a Christian author wrote in 200 A.D. that the early Christian community was having major impact with people turning to Christ because of their excellent behavior in a time of visitation.

They avoided entertainment like gory gladiatorial spectacles.

No one was jailed for crimes but only for his faith.

No slaves were seen in Christian services.

As plagues hit, they ministered to the sick and dying while the heathen deserted them.

They cared for discarded babies and wounded cast into the streets.

Onlookers observed, "See how these Christians love one another." Multitudes were positively influenced then converted! May this be said again of us in our developing day of visitation not only because of private church services but more importantly our engagement and exemplary example in the public sphere.

2. Observable Good Deeds

Peter exhorted the early Christian community the same way Paul did with those in Ephesus. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

We are not saved by good works but we prove the genuineness of our faith through them. Opportunities to express God's love through good works are all around! They often provide a pathway for sharing the transformative message of the gospel through our testimony. This is why I offer my personal testimony tract to a few people daily after serving them practically.

"Whenever God's love is shown, He is making His Presence known." Consider:

Reaching out compassionately to a single woman in crisis pregnancy situation.

Engaging in efforts to alleviate suffering and hopelessness among the sick, homeless and dying. Affording support and encouragement to someone going through an unexpected death, divorce or job loss. Providing a warm welcome to a new neighbor with a meal and kind offer of assistance in a time of disorientation and feeling alone.

Helping a mother with groceries as she juggles her baby and uncooperative toddler.

This weekend we continued our outreach to children from the inner city whose daddy died 2 years ago, having them over for a sleepover with bowling and a birthday party where we gave them electronic children's Bibles. Their beautiful persevering mom whom we've been blessed to serve for years joined us. What joy it is to follow "...true religion is to care for widows and orphans..." (Js. 1:27).

3. Time of Visitation

A time of visitation is when there is an inbreaking of God to rescue a collapsing culture. Although many are currently asleep concerning the serious condition of America, God is stirring the hearts of believers to pray passionately and act obediently for another spiritual awakening. God's 2nd Chronicles 7:14 promise to bring healing to our land can happen if we heed His call.

We have seen this in the past on many occasions when God's people awakened to the urgency of the hour and responded accordingly. Reflect upon the First and Second Great Awakenings; Latter Rain; Welsh and Hebrides Revivals; the Pentecostal Outpouring; the Charismatic and Jesus Movements.

When people lament that "the church in America is dying," I remind them of Lazarus who stunk and actually was dead but whom Jesus raised up four days after his burial! Likewise, God is moving across this land and calling forth a prophetic people to align with His promise for the "harvest at the end of the age" (Matt.13:39). Our "excellent behavior" and "observable good deeds" in a "time of visitation" provides the powerful catalyst as we share the gospel faithfully today.

Here's the deal: revivalist Leonard Ravenhill said, "The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of the opportunity!" May we all do our part to influence others to see the incredible harvest for which we all long before His glorious Return.

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