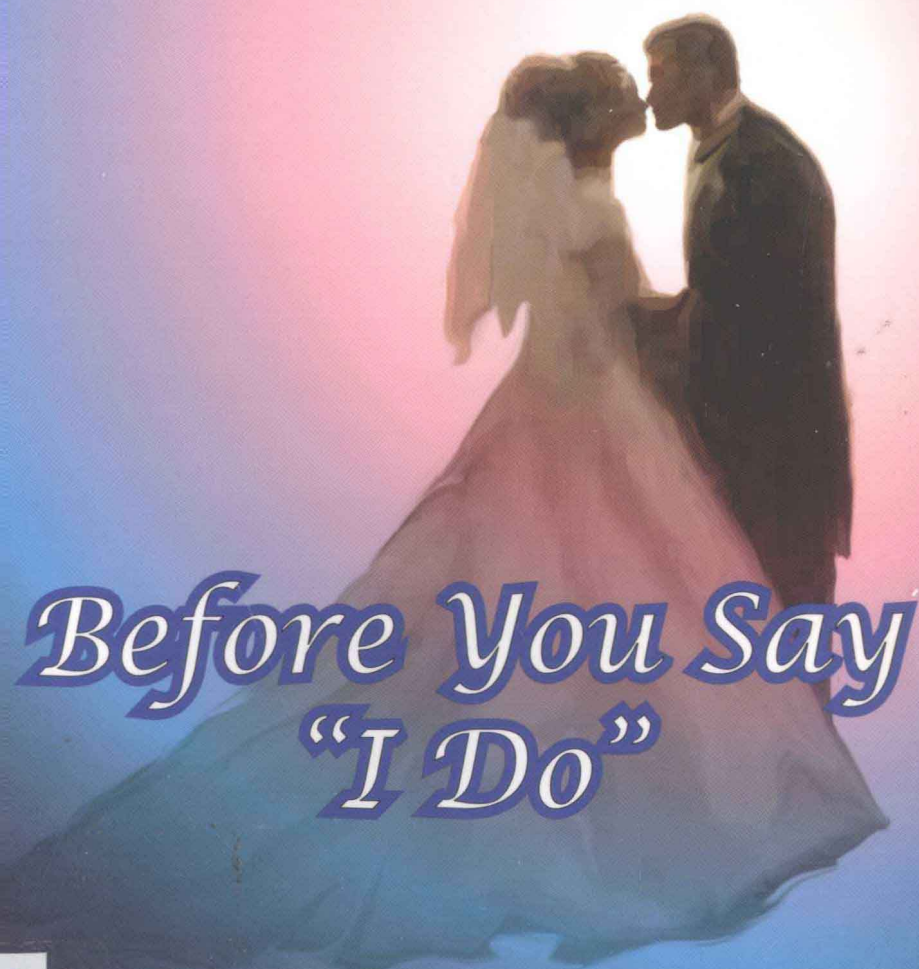


MARRIAGE WORKS!



*Before You Say
"I Do"*

Elisabeth Pendley

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Introduction

The definition of marriage is no mere policy issue. We're talking about the very integrity and meaning of one of the primary elements of civil society. For years, I have spoken and written about the numerous attacks on this important institution: welfare rules that undermine the family; the attempts of same-sex advocates to deconstruct marriage, the lack of a constitutional amendment to protect marriage between a man and a woman; the dangers pornography poses for the family and for children. Without question, these attacks on traditional marriage and family life constitute one of the most perilous developments of modern times.

For thousands of years, every society and every major religious faith have held that marriage is a unique relationship by which one man and one woman are joined together for the primary purpose of forming and maintaining a family. Today our society faces serious threats to this basic institution. Divorce has undermined family life and weakened our social structure. As a result of America's rampant divorce rate, more than one million children per year are involved in divorce; more than eight million children are now living with a divorced single parent. The decline in marriage is accompanied by other serious social problems such as the dramatic rise in the number of children born out of wedlock. These children are more likely to encounter poverty, welfare, physical abuse, behavioral and emotional problems, sexually transmitted diseases, lower educational achievement, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and imprisonment.

If we care about the very fabric of our society, we must take action to support the institution of marriage. However, this is not a matter for public policy alone nor is there some magic governmental solution. It is time that all elements of society support a culture and a social infrastructure to help couples prepare for a lifetime marriage. It is time that words like ‘until death do us part’ become meaningful again.

Lis Pendley has made a magnificent contribution to this effort with *Marriage Works! Before You Say “I Do”*. She believes, as do I, that couples must know each other well before they marry. In the vernacular of this book, couples are repeatedly asked: “Is this your best choice?” Numerous questions and stories from hundreds of dating and married couples tackle such issues as family relationships, in-laws, money, religious and ethnic differences, expectations, employment, sex, children and blended families. The goal? To find a life mate. At a time when expectations for a successful marriage are at an all time low, and couples engage in ‘catch and release’ relationships, this book will guide them through difficult issues. If the questions are answered seriously, secrets will be dispelled. And if the common sense advice given in *Marriage Works!* is heeded, couples will be equipped with the insight necessary to make their marriage successful.

Lis has performed a valuable and farsighted service by illuminating simple truths necessary for lasting relationships, truths that are too often ignored in our politically correct, non-judgmental, media-driven culture. *Marriage Works! Before You Say “I Do”* will help society to move forward, on a couple by couple basis, to reinstate commitment, compatibility, and communication into the institution of marriage.

Edwin Meese III
Washington, D.C.

Author's Preface

My family has given me a nickname, the "V.O.R.," which stands for the "Voice of Reason." Over the years, the V.O.R. has insisted on always wearing a helmet when riding a bike, on attending drivers' training classes before driving down our narrow mountain roads, and on eating pounds of vegetables.

Once my sons started to date, I focused on the issues faced by dating couples, including a skyrocketing divorce rate. I worried about the lack of commitment to marriage and the lowered expectations of relatives and friends.

And just as the V.O.R. has protected her sons in the past, I decided to give them a handbook on how to find their lifetime mate. So, *Marriage Works! Before You Say "I Do"* was written. This book contains questions that must be answered before marriage, stories from the many married and divorced people who shared their experiences with me, and finally, advice from the V.O.R.

I dedicate this book to my sons, W. Perry and Luke for whom this book was written.

Most specifically, I wish to thank my husband, Perry, who is my lifemate, my dearest friend, and my source of courage. Without his continued support, this book would not have been written.

Like all books, *Marriage Works!* is the product of many hands. I am deeply grateful to those who shared their most heartfelt experiences with me. Their stories are the core of this book!

In particular, I wish to thank my dearest friends and relatives who spent hours discussing this topic with me and giving me their advice.

My thanks to Alan M. Gottlieb of Merrill Press, who accepted my manuscript for publication and to Ron Arnold, editor-in-chief of Merrill Press, for his unending patience with me and for his yeoman duty guiding my book through the intricate production process.

Since this book was written, my son W. Perry has married Blair, a most remarkable young lady. I am now blessed with a daughter!

Whatever merits this book may have belongs to these fine people. Any errors of fact or judgment are mine alone.

Elisabeth Pendley
Evergreen, Colorado

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Chapter 1

Your Best Choice?

At the time of the wedding, one bride had “hers” and “his” monograms etched on the gift of heirloom pewter candlesticks so that there would be no arguing over the gift when they divorced.

At another wedding reception, relatives of the bride commented that the groom was a darling fellow who would make a perfect “starter” husband for their niece.

No surprise, both of these marriages ended in divorce!

Most couples marrying today are aware that up to fifty percent of first marriages will fail with even higher divorce rates for second marriages.

Cohabiting before marriage is no protection from divorce; cohabiting couples face divorce rates higher than those who do not live together before marriage.

Studies now show that divorce is hazardous to health, with divorced women losing significantly more work time to illness and injury than married women.

On average, divorce lowers the standard of living, with a shocking thirty-eight percent of children of divorced parents living at or below poverty level.

Divorce profoundly affects the children. Children of divorce are more apt to suffer from poor school performance, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, teen pregnancy, and suicide.

Recent studies have also shown that children are more at risk for abuse from live-in boyfriends and stepfathers than their natural fathers.

And finally, children of divorce are more likely to divorce as adults.

No one doubts that divorce has a lasting emotional, physical, and economic impact on the divorcing couple, the children, and society at large.

While numerous books are written on “how to fix” a troubled marriage, very few are written on how to avoid a troubled marriage to begin with.

Marriage Works! offers stories, questions and advice to help you evaluate your marriage success before you marry. Based on the premise that an in-depth knowledge of Your Beloved and the future in-laws will insure your marriage success, I now offer you my first piece of advice: sit down with Your Beloved, answer the questions, read the stories and discuss the issues raised in this book.

There isn't any reason to hurry through these chapters; you are building a relationship to last a lifetime.

So let's begin.

Is this your best choice?

When you daydream about finding Your Beloved, what do you wish for?

My top requirements for a husband were (1) kind, (2) very intelligent, (3) excellent sense of humor, and (4) religious tolerance. My husband of thirty years has all of these characteristics.

— Jean

List your expectations in order of importance, beginning with the most important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Does Your Beloved meet all ten of these wishes?

If not, which ones are missing? Be honest. List them!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How important are the missing expectations?

Are you planning to change Your Beloved to suit your expectations?

Assume that you can't change Your Beloved. Is he or she still your best choice?

I really believe that "what you see is what you get!" If he drinks too much before you get married, or can't hold a job, or is too critical, or his mother is a pill, then that's what you have after you get married. Don't plan on changing anything!

— Betty

How lasting are the characteristics you are seeking?

Are the qualities or characteristics enhanced by the passage of time?

And since this is a lifetime commitment, are these qualities and expectations going to be important to you twenty or thirty years from now?

If those characteristics were erased, would it matter to you?

I wanted gorgeous, sexy, wealthy, and fun. I got it! After a few years, he gained weight, lost hair, and filed for bankruptcy. I filed for a divorce.

— Alma

Where did you meet Your Beloved?

School? Work? Church? Through friends or relatives? Personal ad? Internet? Vacation? Singles bar? Exercise club?

How long have you known Your Beloved?

How long have you been seriously dating? Days? Months? Years?

It takes time to achieve a stable relationship, a relationship that will survive the inevitable conflicts of married life.

All my life I searched for her, a beautiful brainy woman. After dating for six months, I married her. If I had spent more time courting her...if I had met her parents before we married...if I had paid attention to all the clues I refused to see...I never would have married her!

— Steven

We were intimate on the first date and married a few weeks later. What a mistake!

— Molly

To avoid surprises, have you taken all the time you need to know Your Beloved before you marry?

I knew she had been married before ...once before... but actually it was twice before. I was her third husband.

— Mike

I met and married him in less than three months. I married a stranger.

— Cindy

She was slim and energetic. I thought it was because she ate well and exercised; after we were married I learned that she had bulimia for years.

— Hal

After we got married, I realized that he needed a drink or two or three or more just to get through the day, every day!

— Mary

She was five months pregnant when we got married in a formal church wedding. I didn't know that the baby wasn't mine.

— Jim

He was so very shy and respectful when we were courting. There was handholding and a few chaste kisses. I was so very young and inexperienced. After marriage, I learned that my husband was a homosexual.

— Judy

The questions in this book must be answered honestly in order to help you find and marry Your Beloved, your best choice, your best friend, your lover, your life mate.

To begin with, is Your Beloved your best choice?

Have you dated numerous others, and fallen into and out of love several times?

Have you dated others and known they were not your best choice?

Is your life "settled" and are you mature enough to make a lifetime commitment?

Why do you want to get married?

Check those reasons that apply to you:

- ☐ Your parents are pressuring you to settle down.
- ☐ All your friends are getting married.
- ☐ You have an unpleasant home life and you want to escape.

- ☐ You believe that Your Beloved will be a career asset.
- ☐ You believe that Your Beloved will be less expensive than maid service and carry out.
- ☐ Your biological clock is ticking and you want children.
- ☐ You are tired of the dating scene or of being alone.
- ☐ You're bored and want a change.
- ☐ You're in debt and need financial help.
- ☐ You believe that marriage will make you happy.
- ☐ You want to be a U.S. citizen.
- ☐ Your Beloved is already the parent of your child.
- ☐ Your Beloved is your best friend.
- ☐ You are living with Your Beloved and want to make it legal.
- ☐ You believe that Your Beloved is your life mate.
- ☐ You have already spent so many years on this relationship that it would be a waste of all that time not to get married.

If you are getting married because “no one else will ask me” or because “if it doesn’t work out, I’ll just get a divorce” or because “all my friends are getting married” or because “the invitations have been sent out and the dress has been bought and the honeymoon is paid for,” stop right now!

These are not good reasons for getting married.

Being lonely, lustful, in love with love, in a hurry, in an unpleasant situation is not enough.

This is the most important, life changing decision you will ever make.

You can go back to school, change your career, move to another city, buy or sell your car or your house.

None of those decisions (important as they are) begin to equal your decision to marry.

This decision will affect you, Your Beloved, and your families forever.

Chapter 2

Know These Basic Facts

How well do you know Your Beloved?

I spent more time deciding on the perfect dog for the family than I did choosing my husband. You know, one kid had allergies, so the dog couldn't shed and the yard was small so the dog couldn't be very big and the kids were rambunctious so the dog had to like roughhousing. I even read dog books on the "perfect dog for you" and I borrowed dogs to try them out. My husband? I only knew him a short time before we eloped. I was young, tired of being at home, and I thought I was "in love." I hadn't met his parents and really didn't know him very well. It didn't take long to figure out I had made a big mistake.

—Ellie

Without asking, can you list some information about Your Beloved? Then fill in a list about you.

Very basic information about Your Beloved:

Name
Age
Height and Weight
Hair and Eye Color
Ethnic Background
Educational Background
Occupation
Religion
Political Affiliation
Parents: Married or Divorced
Names of Siblings

Very basic information about you:

Name
Age
Height and Weight
Hair and Eye Color
Ethnic Background
Educational Background
Occupation
Religion
Political Affiliation
Parents: Married or Divorced
Names of Siblings

Are there similarities and differences between Your Beloved and you on this basic information list?

What are the similarities?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.