

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

—I John 5:4-5

HOW TO CHOOSE A WORTHY
MATE AND FIND TRUE LOVE

BY BREAKING THE CYCLE OF
GENERATIONAL CURSES

MICHAEL EATON

ISSACHAR PUBLICATIONS, DALLAS TEXAS

For reasons of confidentiality, we have changed the names of individuals mentioned in this book, unless otherwise noted. In all cases, the stories faithfully reflect the ideas, attitudes, and experiences that others and the author have had.

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Dedication

To my friends, pastor, and boss (smile) Pastor E. K. Bailey
and Sheila Bailey

We (the Concord Church and the nations) love you both
and are praying that our God will send a Rema Word to heal
you Pastor Bailey (of lung cancer). Until your body is healed
Pastor we will hope again hope (Romans 4:18-24 NASB).

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To God, who truly works all things together for good for those who love the Lord (Roman 8:28&31).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	6
FOREWORD	9
INTRODUCTION	13
WHAT IS A FATAL ATTRACTION?	17
FATAL NATION	31
FATAL FATHERS: AN INHERITED WEAKNESS	49
THE FATAL CHOICE: OUR CHOICE FOR A MATE	63
LOVE AND MARRIAGE	73
THE FATAL CARETAKER	95
THE FATAL FOOL FOR LOVE	115
Overcoming the World A FATAL INVITATION	129
Coming Soon A MARRIAGE SCORNED	131
About the Author	139

FOREWORD

This book in its first printing was released in December of 2000. On January 7, 2001, I sit awestruck in the Concord Church as I was listening to a sermon by Dr. E.K. Bailey entitled, “Breaking The Cycle of Generational Curses.” On this Sunday, Dr. Bailey would share some of the most profound truth about generational cures.

Bailey shared a brief biblical portfolio of a man by the name of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. “Jabez pain was born under a generational curse,” he said. “His mother named him ‘Jabez’ which in Hebrew means pain. This was a word curse that was passed on to him by his mother. Jabez would begin his life in the cycle of his mother’s pronounced generational curse. Every time Jabez’s mother called his name, she would be perpetuating the cycle. Jabez would begin to believe that he was the source of pain.”

Dr. Bailey explained, “In your family tree there are cycles of curses and blessings that are being reproduced from generation to generation. Some of us have inherited from our forefathers a spirit of immorality, impurity, sensuality, and lust. Others of us have inherited a spirit of idolatry and sorcery. In many of our families there is a spirit of hostility, strife, jealousy, bad tempers, disputes, dissensions, factions, and envy. Some of us have even inherited spirits of overeating, alcoholism, drug addiction, and partying. The tragedy is that we do not know how to “break the cycles”. Many of the problems we have in our lives today are a direct result of the spirits we have inherited from our family members.”

Generational curses can have a very profound effect on our relationships, especially, when we consider the decision to marry. As Singles, it is very important that you take the opportunity to meet your potential mate’s family prior to

committing to the marital relationship. Dr. Bailey also shares, “For the most part, we are products of our environment. If the mother does not respect the father often times the daughters will find it difficult to respect men. If the dad does not honor and cherish the wife, the sons will find it hard to honor and cherish women. An even more devastating result is that the daughter may seek out a man who does not know how to cherish and honor her because that is all that she has known. The son may seek a woman who disrespects him because that is what he witnessed with his mother and father. Then their children will do the same thing, and the cycle continues. Everything produces after its own kind.” A person’s family history is often the greatest indicator of the success of many relationships.

“Now you can understand what your parents meant when they asked, ‘What is his family like?’ Growing up, when a man came to court a young lady, the old folk used to ask, ‘Who is his daddy and mama?’ They understood the cycles of generational curses. They understood the old adage that the ‘Apple don’t fall too far from the tree.’” says Dr. Bailey.

“Unless you experience the most life-changing event of all, accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, chances are you will be just like your mama, daddy, grandmama, or granddaddy. (If you come from a fatal family even after accepting Jesus Christ if you do not learn to develop good and Godly mate selecting skills a relational generational curse can be passed on.) You will find yourself making the same kind of destructive decisions that they made in the past. Ultimately, the family you produce will be just like the family of your forefathers. Before you can overcome your fatal family cycle you must deal with your daddy’s demons and your mama’s mess.”

In this manuscript, I share how we, like Jabez, in his pain have to call on God to deal with our daddy’s demons and our mama’s mess to break the generational curses of failed relationships. From my own personal pilgrimage, I teach youth, college students, singles, divorcées, and wid-

ows how to choose worthy mates to produce happy families for generations to come. I invite you to take a look at the person in the mirror and experience healing, restoration, and rejuvenation!

Pastor Michael Eaton

Singles Pastor

Concord Missionary Baptist Church

INTRODUCTION

Breaking the cycles of generational curses to find a worthy mate and true love is a passage one must take to have healthy relationships. The completion of this passage is a mandate for those of us who are on our first or second divorce or in a second or third marriage. The woman who is being physically and emotionally abused must complete this rite of passage. The man who thinks there are not any good women left, the woman who thinks there are not any good men left: this man and woman are good candidates for this rite of passage. The mandate to take this passage goes out to the man or woman who is addicted to drugs or alcohol. The little boy or girl who grew up in a home where emotional needs were not met must finish this passage.

Breaking the cycles of generational curses to find a worthy mate and true love is for those of us who are intuitively attracted to people who can not love us back. Why do we choose to love the people that we do? The answer to this question can only be answered on this passage. This passage may take us back to who we were as children. The answer to this question may be found in the family we grew up in. The answer found may be what happened or did not happen to us as children. Generational curses can have a very profound effect on our relationships. Especially, when we consider the decision to marry. What happened to us on the way to adulthood holds the key to why we choose to love the people we do. It may also play a role in why we seem to be preprogrammed for additive behavior.

If you came from a cursed family tree you will find a cursed or bad relationship to be more comfortable and familiar than a blessed one. Therefore, this passage holds the key to why we are the multitude of life's tragedies of

love. We are like Mark Anthony, who squandered his empire and emotions on a femme fatale who lead him to his ruin. We end up looking like fools. We are fools for love. We inspired the songwriter to write the song that posed this question, "Why do fools fall in love?" The relationship ends after we have wasted our love on Mr. or Ms. Wrong. Then we ask ourselves the same question. After we convince ourselves that we are ready for another relationship, we rebound into the same fatal cycle that leads back into still another wasted love affair with the same type of person.

It is time to confront your issues head on. I invite you to take a look at the person in the mirror and experience healing, restoration, and rejuvenation. You deserve a worthy mate and true love!

I THINK I'VE FOUND MR. RIGHT?

Recently a woman named Mary and a friend of hers approached us after a service at our church. Mary said, "I'm living with a man, and I know I shouldn't be. So I'm going to marry him . . . I think. There are a few problems, though. My friend keeps telling me I shouldn't go through with the wedding, but I want to know what you think."

She proceeded to tell us of her boyfriend's drinking problem, his cocaine use, his frequent unemployment, his temper, and finally, his verbal and physical abuse toward her. She looked at us expectantly.¹

ONE

WHAT IS A FATAL ATTRACTION?

Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a
woman . . . one of the daughters of the
Philistines; now therefore (Samson said), get her
for me as a wife.
Judges 14:1&2b

In 1987, the movie *Fatal Attraction* drew blockbuster crowds. It's a story about a successful attorney who had a loving wife and a adorable child. He found himself attracted to a female co-worker and indulged in a one-night stand with her. This femme fatale refused to let go of what she imagined was a relationship. She angrily reacted to his subsequent rejection of her.

The consequence for the attorney's infidelity turned out to be fatal.

One woman after seeing *Fatal Attraction* gave this review of the movie: "It summed up my forty-year relationship history in two words."

Fatal Attraction

When I share with people the title of my book, I have never been asked this question: "What is a fatal attraction?" It seems that everyone I have spoken to knows the answer to this question. In most cases either they themselves, or someone they know, have been victimized by a fatal choice for a mate. I like the way the author, Melody Beattie, describes this phenomenon of choice:

Many of us have lived with this phenomenon of being instinctively and powerfully attracted to people who aren't in our best interest. For years, I mistakenly called it "falling in love" and "God's will."²

I define a fatal attraction as the phenomenon of being instinctively and powerfully attracted to a bad boy or a femme fatale. Christy, in Melody's book, describes this phenomenon this way: "I can walk into a room of 500 men, 499 of whom are successful and healthy, spot the one unemployed felon in the bunch, and find him catching my eye."

She Caught My Eye

I, like Melody and Christy, have had fatal attractions. The most fatal attraction I had was to my ex-wife Joan.¹ Let me share my story with you.

I had been a Christian for about six years. I loved God with all my heart, mind, and soul. I was a member of a well-known church, and my pastor was nationally recognized. Life was great! I served God there for about five years on the singles' committee.

Joan was only the second woman that I had ever dated. I was twenty-six years old when I met her. She was thirty. She was the only lady that I had ever fallen in love with. I had never felt love like that before. I would soon learn that this was an instinctive and powerful attraction that would turn fatal.

I met Joan on New Year's Eve of 1992 at a church singles' get-together. It was the tradition of the singles in our church to have a singles' party on New Year's Eve. We would get together right after the watch service. The party usually lasted all night long.

Joan was the most beautiful woman that I had ever seen. She stood at about five foot ten in heels; had mocha-colored skin; had long, braided hair that hung down to the middle of her back; had big brown eyes like Diana Ross; had a smile

like the actress, Holly Robinson-Peete; and had high cheekbones. Joan was beautiful in both face and form. Joan not only looked like Diana Ross; she also had the figure of Diana Ross, the shape of a diva beauty queen. Joan was thirty, but she looked nineteen. We were married six months later.

My Fatal Story

I can remember Joan saying before we got married that "we will never mention the word divorce." Two weeks into our marriage she not only mentioned the word divorce, but she left me and ran off to her mother's house. To Joan, it seems to me, divorce was always an option because she had been previously divorced. Needless to say, almost four years after we were married, Joan is no longer in my life.

My story began to read like Gustave Flaubert's "Madame Bovary." This piece of French literature scandalized the nineteenth century. This novel is a poetic and realistic portrayal of what happened to Madame Bovary when she committed adultery and left her home in Normandy. This novel would mirror my life.

My family life fell apart while I was working in a new church in Garland, Texas, and attending seminary. Joan went to spend a week with her sister and never returned. I had to tell the people at my church that Joan had left me. I wanted to step down from my position. After all, how could I counsel others when my own home life was in a shambles (I Tim. 3:4-5)? Yet my fellow church members did not want me to step down at that time. The advice they gave me was to wait and see. Maybe Joan would want to come back home. Two weeks later, she was ready to come home. But only "if you quit the church and you quit seminary," she said.

One week later, Joan disclosed to me that she had committed adultery. Two months after she left me, she departed for Germany with my brother-in-law's brother, who was in the United States Army. Two months after that, I received a letter informing me that she was three months pregnant.

Seven to eight months into her pregnancy, Joan called to inform me that because she was still married to me, German law required that the baby be born with my last name. So there I was with my wife in Germany, on a United States Army base, pregnant with my brother-in-law's brother's baby, who would be born with my last name. Life doesn't get any worse or humiliating than that!

Seeing My Faith in My Crisis

It had taken me many years to discover what I believed God wanted me to do with my life. In contrast, in one instant, I would lose my past and my future. With this scandal in my past, many churches will not hire me in the future.

How do you describe pain? How do you describe humiliation? Right now, I'm at a loss for words. I had lived all my adult life faithfully for Christ. I had not lived the wild life. I had loved God, but had God loved me? Why did this happen to me? I had a vision of love, and this was not it. I had been waiting a lifetime for somebody to love me. I was having a crisis of faith.

I couldn't concentrate. I was in an emotional gridlock. I can really relate to what Harrison says in an article entitled "The X Files: What Really Happens To A Man When He Goes Through A Divorce? Five Men Tell The Truth About The Toughest Journey Of Their Lives":

It's hard when you fail. To see that you've failed in the public eye is even worse. It's okay if you didn't make the touchdown, but it's different if you go for something under God and family, and then it doesn't work. I had a real hard time with the fact that two people can really care for each other or think that they do - and it just goes awry.⁴

Although many people are martyrs for enduring great pain, enduring great pain does not a hero make. I believe that God is the sustainer of life. In other words, through the

most difficult journey in my life, God woke me up every morning, and He keeps waking me up. God woke me up at 5:00 a.m. this morning to write this, even though my alarm was set for 8:00 a.m. God kept me going, like the little engine that could or the pink Energizer bunny (Ps. 3:5). God kept me going at a time in my life when I can only describe my pain as being lost in space. I began to see that my crisis of faith became my faith in my crisis. My faith took over my crisis to enable me to see that there is life after death.⁵ My entire faith depends on that fact. The apostle Paul said, "If there be no life after death, then we among all people should be pitied" (I Cor. 15:12-19).

A Marriage Scorned

When you begin a relationship with a fatal attraction, you end up in a fatal relationship. In my marriage I had, figuratively speaking, been as far as hell and back. William Congreve once wrote, "Heaven has no rage like love to hate returned, nor hell a furor like a woman scorned." I say, "Heaven has no rage like love to hate returned, nor hell a furor like a marriage scorned." My marriage was full of bitterness, hopelessness, and pain.

Joan told me after we married that she never really loved me. She had only married me to get away from her mother's home. Joan told me that I was a good person and that maybe she could grow to love me. Joan had some health problems that may have helped to motivate her to marry me as well. Joan never loved me; she used me.

On the cover of the March 1996 issue of Esquire magazine for men, the caption reads, "I'm Sorry I Ruined Your Life: In Praise of Dangerous Women." On the cover, dressed in black leather with dark makeup and a deep plunging v-neck, is a dangerously provocative looking young woman. Joan didn't look that part of a dangerously provocative femme fatale (2 Cor. 11:14). But she played the role. I didn't know that when I looked into those big brown eyes of Joan and fell in love, my life would be ruined.

It became very apparent that there would be no reconciliation. Joan had committed adultery and was living in Germany with my brother-in-law's brother. I filed for a divorce on grounds of adultery and began counseling for divorce recovery. This would be the beginning of my passage to overcome fatal attractions, though I didn't know it at the time.

Following the first two months after Joan had left, I developed a peace that I couldn't understand. Even though my life had fallen apart . . . there was peace. My main concern was to make sure that I was dealing with my emotions because I didn't want my emotions buried deep within me.

I hated having to get a divorce because of the public shame. I hated having to go before my church, the seminary's vice-president of student relationships, and the director of diploma studies to explain what had happened. It indeed was an open shame. I hated having to see the reaction of people who did not know about my divorce, such as fellow students and church members, when I told them what had happened. Joan had escaped to Germany; I had to face the music and deal not only with my own pain, but the pain of others who were hearing the news for the first time. This was not supposed to be happening to me. However, it was. So even though I hated the open shame of my divorce, I discovered in counseling that I somehow felt relieved.

My Ruin

As I continued with my counseling, I began to see why I felt relieved. From the beginning of our marriage, Joan never had to work outside of our home. She did a great job with our daughter. By the end of our marriage, she was not taking care of our home; I was. Not only did I work and go to school (seminary) full-time, but I also worked at the church, came home to cook, shopped for groceries, washed the clothes, cleaned the house, and spent time with the kids.⁶ Joan was also taking prescription drugs that decreased her libido.⁷ I was not getting any of my needs

met. I realized that our divorce had taken these heavy weights off of my shoulders.

Joan didn't change in the four years we were married. That instinctive and powerful attraction that brought us together repelled us when we were married. I had always said that I wanted a challenging woman. The challenge that I sought was the fatal attraction of the Greek mythological Siren mermaid, seducing sailors to their ruin. My marriage had changed me because I no longer wanted the seducing sounds of my Siren mate.

My Siren Mate

My Siren mate began to play her sweet, seductive song from Germany; she wanted to come home. I was not willing for Joan to come home because she had never shown any signs of remorse. I had already forgiven Joan (Matt. 6:14-15). If she had only shown true signs of repentance, I would have taken her back and there would have been a way for our marriage to work. Only because Joan was my wife would I have taken her back, because God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). But I refused to take her back unless she learned how to play a new song. Those Siren songs were old, and I didn't want to listen to them anymore.

In counseling, I had written up a separation covenant,⁸ to teach my Siren mate a new song. I was not willing to listen to the same songs that had ruined me before. I would not just take her back unchanged. My pastors, counselors, and I all agreed on that point. This is a principle taken from Dr. James C. Dobson's book, *Love Must Be Tough*.

OK By Myself?

Because I had never really dated much, I never had to deal with my fatal attractions. I was just fine all by myself. I didn't know that I even suffered from this malady. I don't know whether or not dating much was a help or a hindrance to me. If I would have dated more, then I could have

discovered this disturbing trend in my choice for dates. I had seen this trend in my sister with her choice for mates. She would always choose boyfriends who were an exact image of my emotionally abusive, alcoholic step-dad (Matt. 7:3-5). It was only in counseling, as I reflected back on one young lady I could have chosen for a mate, that I also noticed this same trend in my life.

I had the opportunity to meet many young ladies who came from good, middle-class, Christian homes. Most of these young ladies were Christian, well-educated, and independent. One young lady that I really should have pursued was a beautiful twenty-four year old with a master's degree. She had the most beautiful hair I had ever seen. She came from a radiant Christian home in Texas. I could tell she really liked me before she met her sweetheart, the love of her life now. She ended up marrying a very good friend of mine. However, I just couldn't relate to her because she couldn't feel my pain.

Feel My Pain

I couldn't be attracted to women who were not fatal because I couldn't understand them. All that I could understand was pain. Because of my family background, I had a pain in my heart. If a woman couldn't understand that pain, then I couldn't be powerfully attracted to her. If you have fatal attractions, you have a pain in your heart, and you are looking for someone to understand that pain. So you are only attracted to pain-filled people.

In your unconscious search for a mate, you are looking for that perfect package. That perfect package is someone who meets your criteria, looks good to you, and feels good to you. If that someone can also feel your pain, then the next thing you know, you find yourself head-over-heels⁹ for that pain-filled person.

Soon after I met Joan, I was head-over-heels for her. She was not only beautiful, but she could feel my pain. She was also a pain-filled person. She had been emotionally abused

as a child, sexually abused, raped, and had been in a physically abusive first marriage before I met her.

Joan was the perfect package for me at that time. She was someone who met my criteria, looked good to me and felt good to me because she felt my pain. We could relate to each other. Not only could she feel my pain, but she also had some pain to spare.

Pain To Spare: A Titanic Love Affair

The Titanic is a good example of my fatal attraction to Joan. It began with great wonder and the promise of adventure. I believed I could fly because I was the king of the world. I had tasted love. This love was an unsinkable love. This love was a watertight love. I was having a titanic love affair. Unbeknown to me, life's Atlantic Ocean of love was filled with the icebergs of deceit, and the sweet songs of the frigid lies of the siren. The steel brittle in the frigid Eaton family waters and fractured easily during the collision of everyday life.

Sadly, at that time in my life, I was willing to embrace Joan's pain, love her pain, and nurse her pain.

Joan had pain to spare. I somehow had to embrace that pain. This is a dynamic of a fatal attraction. Its attraction is so powerful that it seems magical. In the beginning stages of these relationships, it seems like God is bringing you two together. In actuality, I was being drawn into a role that I had to play. I had a lot of my love, which was made from the steel of pain, became need to be needed and Joan had the needs. She never loved me, but at that time in her life she needed me. When the dynamics of our relationship changed, she no longer needed me and she left.

Life Preserver Complex

People who have a life preserver complex come from very dysfunctional homes, where their emotional needs were not met. Most life preservers had to fill adult roles as

children. They had to grow up fast in order to take on adult responsibilities. They became adults at a time when they should have been developing themselves as children. They will forever be adult children who can take on responsibility, but never have the maturity to ask, “Why am I taking on these responsibilities?”

People who take on the life preserver role need to see that their relationships are based on the same compulsive disorder that drives an alcoholic to drink, a compulsive gambler to gamble, and a workaholic to work. Preservers do not have mature relationships; they have compulsive disorders. This compulsion can be a major factor of a fatal attraction. They don’t fall in love; they fall in sickness.

In order to understand this idea of falling in sickness we have to understand our past. If our parents did not give us the love that we needed or if our emotional needs were not met when we were children, then we’ll try to meet these needs ourselves. When we have to meet our own needs, it often turns into a compulsion. That compulsion or neediness is what fuels fatal attractions. This is how a fatal attraction begins.

The one thing that torments me the most out of my four and a half-year drama is that I chose Joan. I walked into a room of 500 women, 499 of whom were successful and healthy, spotted the one femme fatale in the bunch, and found her catching my eye.

Releasing Emotional Ties

In counseling, I was assigned homework. As I was doing my research, I noticed that the way I went about my relationship with Joan was opposite of what most counselors and relationship experts would advise. Hence, at the end of each chapter I will give you perfect examples of the wrong way to go about relationships. Having been in relationship hell, I would like to be analogous to the rich man in Luke 16:27-28 and would like to warn my brothers and sisters lest they also come to this place of torment.

I hope that these insights will enable you to release the emotional ties that bind you to fatal attractions.

- Relationships should not solely be based on a physical attraction. As I look back on my relationship with Joan, there was a powerful physical attraction that I had for her. This physical attraction was one of many encumbrances that impaired my ability to choose an equivalent mate. Psychologists call this “the halo effect.” The halo effect occurs when a physical attraction, or any one characteristic, dominates the way you see a person. When you are attracted to someone solely based on the physical, you perceive that person as more spiritual, intelligent, sensitive, kind, interesting, and sociable (Prov. 31:30).
- Relationships should not progress to marriage too soon. I met Joan New Year’s Eve of 1993, and we were married July 1, 1994. This seems very foolish as I look back on this relationship. Most relationship experts would advise that you date at least a year before you even consider marriage. Some would advise two to three years. All would say, take your time to make this life-time decision slowly (James 1:4)!
- Be very cautious of marrying someone who has been divorced. People who have been divorced have shown that they did not have the ability to choose the right

mate or be the right mate. This can be a very good indicator of emotional or spiritual immaturity. As I look back on my relationship with Joan, I was not emotionally mature enough to choose a mate (1 Cor.13:11).

- Never wait a lifetime for someone to love you. The greater your expectations are before marriage, the harder it will be for you to adapt to marriage. Give up whatever romanticized notions you have about marriage and begin to see that marriage will take work even if you find the perfect mate. Marriage does not start by you living happily ever after. Marriage takes work (Eph. 5:21-33)!

- Never marry to escape or rescue someone from a bad situation at home. I believe that Joan's home situation was another motivation for her to marry me. Joan was thirty, living at home with her mother and step-dad who was dying of cancer. She loved her step-dad and could not bear to see him die this way. This situation also motivated me to marry her so soon (2 Cor. 1:10-11).

- Never marry to take care of someone. Another big mistake I made in marrying Joan was I wanted to take care of her. Joan had some health problems, and I was there for her. When Joan got better, she no longer needed me and left the marriage. Also, if you marry someone for this reason, you most likely are codependent and need to seek counseling. Marriage is for a man and woman, not for a woman and a boy, or a man and girl. If you have to be his mother, you will never be his wife (Gen. 2:24).

- Never marry someone you do not love. Many people marry for many different reasons. Some people marry for money, sex, power, children, or fame. Some people believe that they can grow to love someone. However, to me the ultimate betrayal was that Joan never loved me (Rom.12:19).

- Be open to the dating process. Dating should be a process of self-discovery. If you are only attracted to the bad boy, this indicates that you need to begin the process of recovery. The type of people you attract or are attracted to can be a very good indicator of how much work you need to do before marriage. Use dating as a process with which you begin to prepare for marriage (Prov. 11:14).

Notes

- 1 Bill Hybels and Lynne Hybels , *Fit To Be Tied: Making Marriage Last A Lifetime* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 36.
2. Melody Beattie, *Beyond Codependency and Getting Better All the Time* (San Francisco: A Harper/Hazelden Book, 1989), 151.
- 3 This name has been changed to Joan, which is short for Joan of Arc, a woman of war.
- 4 142. Mark Baker, "The X Files, What Really Happens To A Man When He Goes Through A Divorce? Five Men Tell The Truth About The Toughest Journey Of Their Lives," *Men's Health*, March 1997, 166.
- 5 I just thought of a word to describe my pain.
- 6 Along with my daughter, Joan had two sons from a previous marriage whom I loved dearly.
7. Sex drive
- 8 A separation covenant is an agreement to separate or to stay separated for a stated period of time to develop oneself individually and corporately with one's mate through Christian marriage counseling.
9. In love

America's Most Wanted?

As someone who grew up resenting authority and conventionality, I'd been attracted for as long as I can remember to women who were dangerous, not just to individual men but to the entire social order: Joan of Arc, the witches of Salem, Emma Goldman. So I was prepared to be swept away by the erotic impact of Faye Dunaway's fusion of criminal and sexual transgressiveness in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Which probably set me up for my even more intense and foolish fixation: fugitive Weather Underground bombing suspect Bernardine Dohrn. The supreme romantic image of my somewhat misguided youth was Bernardine's face on her FBI wanted poster (A picture that will always be on my personal ten-most-wanted list).¹

TWO

FATAL NATION

“ . . . but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.”

Numbers 14:18c

There is a film entitled *Damaged* that is based on a best selling novel by Josephine Hart. The story is centered on Dr. Stephen Fleming, a married, British government official, who has a fatal attraction to Anna Barton, a young woman he met at a reception.

Anna Barton is a dark character who refers to herself as “damaged.” Anna Barton says in the novel, “I have told you in order to issue a warning. I have been damaged.” Anna Barton would not hurt anyone, not by an overt act, but her presence would eventually lead to harm.

I am writing *Overcoming Fatal Attractions* in order to issue a warning. People who come from fatal families are damaged. Without the proper emotional help, either their presence or their choice of a relationship will eventually lead to harm.

One of the most emotionally destructive forces in our nation today is that of the fatal family. People who have fatal attractions come from fatal families. I will define fatal families as those families that do not give children the proper emotional nurturing that they need to become mature adults.

Generational Curses

In Dr. Susan Forward's book, *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy And Reclaiming Your Life*, she shares a letter from a woman named Janet. She then gives her insight into the fatal family: ". . . what I realized was that not only was my husband abusive, but that I had come from several generations of victimized women and abusive men." Even though the cast of characters may change, the repetitive cycle of toxic behavior can remain for generations on end. The family drama may look and sound different from generation to generation, but all toxic patterns are remarkably similar in their outcome: pain and suffering.²

There is a Biblical principle that says that the wrongdoings of the parents are visited on their children and on their grandchildren to the third and fourth generations (Num. 14:18c). Some Biblical experts site this passage when referring to generational curses.

Whatever you call the process, in which your parents in a negative sense affect you, is what I would like to explore. This is what I am calling "the parent trap."

The Parent Trap

In a Newsweek magazine article entitled "The Parent Trap," a claim was made that:

After parents contribute an egg or a sperm filled with DNA, virtually nothing they do or say - no kind words or hugs, slaps or tirades; neither encouragement nor scorn - makes a smidgen of a difference to what kind of adult the child becomes. Nothing parents do will affect his behavior, mental health, ability to form relationships, sense of self-worth, intelligence or personality. What genes don't do, peers do.³

This belief opposes any study done on children from fatal families, and I disagree with it! The parent trap that you

came from will affect you as an adult. Therefore, understanding your family is crucial to overcoming fatal attractions.

Providence Grants Little

In a book from 1886 entitled *Damaged Parent*, Charles Loring Brace made remarks on fatal parents, or the parent trap, to newsboys staying in a lodging house that his Children's Aid Society had set up for them. These words spoken over a hundred and twelve years ago still apply to fatal families of our time. Brace said,

Providence has granted you very little of the world's greatest blessing - the affection of the home. Your father, if you ever knew him, probably beat you when he was drunk, and worked you like a beast of burden when he was sober. Your mother, very likely, half-starved you and whipped you, and finally, in her intoxication, drove you out of house and home. Your faces are worn and your bodies scarred often with the abuse of those who ought to have loved you.⁴

Fatal Roots

As I began to discover my family roots, I discovered that my family seemed to be trapped or cursed into a very disturbing family pattern. I traced this pattern back to my grandmother who had ten children. One of her children died at a young age. The very fact that I mentioned my grandmother without any reference to my grandfather is because I never really knew him. It was not until after he died that I came to know him. I began to ask questions about my grandfather.

When I asked my uncle about him, he responded with this question, "You mean what sort of fellow he was?"

My Grandfather

My mother spoke of the many times her parents used to fight. These fights sometimes got physical. One time they were fighting, and a gun went off. Evidently, my grandfather had pulled a gun on my grandmother. When asking questions about my grandfather, one story kept coming up. "We'd be picking cotton all day long. When it was time for us to get paid, we'd go to collect our money. The men we were working for would say, 'Your dad has got that money and gone.'" They were picking cotton for their school clothes. My grandfather had made it a habit of taking their money for school clothes and spending it on other women. Quite often people from town would come and tell my grandmother that they had just seen my grandfather with another woman in his car. At one time he had run off to live with a woman in another town. When he got sick, the woman discarded him. "You had yourself a good woman!" she said, "You had oughta to kept her!" My grandmother took him back.

I also discovered that my grandmother went out with men behind my grandfather's back. One aunt has been scarred for life because she told my grandfather that their mother had been with another man. My aunt remembers being chased, beaten, and left on the road by my grandmother.

All of my aunts and uncles did not get the world's greatest blessing, the affection of the home.

The Curse Passes On

Almost every one of my aunts and uncles have had fatal attractions. Most of my aunts and my mother ended up in relationships with or married to, figuratively speaking, their father. The same way their father treated their mother was how they may have unconsciously wanted to be treated.

Men who behaved badly mesmerized them. My aunts would suffer the whiplash of crashed relationships. Two of

my cousins' fathers were killed at very young ages. Many of the men they were attracted to were alcoholics, drug users, physically violent, in a gang, or womanizers.

They did not have the ability to choose a proper or an affectionate mate because they unconsciously did not want affectionate mates. They felt most comfortable in tense environments. They needed this tense stimulation in relationships to feel whole or to feel at home. This stimulation made them feel alive. As a drug addict is addicted to drugs, so were my aunts and uncles addicted to men and women who behaved badly. In relationships or marriages my mother's generation perpetuated the same family drama as the household from which they came. The curse of the unaffectionate home had passed on because of the parent trap.

Then Came Cupid

My mother and my real father did not marry. Their relationship lasted almost two years. At one point, my father had pulled a gun on her, the same thing that her father had done. My real dad was indeed a man behaving badly.

My Father

I was born on November 3, 1967, in Dallas, Texas, to Lula Mae Eaton. I was the youngest child born both to my mother and to my dad. My dad's name was Floyd G. Harper. He passed away on January 12, 1989. He did not raise me. He was a man who worked hard, was well liked, and had a very outgoing personality.

Because Floyd did not raise me, I got to know him when I was older and I wasn't impressed with him. I loved him, but I didn't like his life-style. Floyd had another side to him that would eventually destroy him. He used drugs, drank alcohol, smoked, and enjoyed pornography. He lived with a woman who was not his wife and cheated on her with prostitutes. Sometimes he would even pay for his friends to visit prostitutes.

The last days of his life were spent in a hospital bed. He had been smoking marijuana for years. He tried crack cocaine and became an addict. He lost his business and everything he owned. He broke into his brother's house to steal, trying to feed his drug habit. He and one of his brothers got into a fight, and Floyd's neck was broken. He died in the hospital about eight months later. I didn't know which brother had broken Floyd's neck. But at the funeral, I felt that this brother would be the one crying the most and the loudest - I was right.

Floyd always told me that he loved me, but I didn't believe him. His philosophy on parenting was that I didn't have to go behind his back to smoke cigarettes, use drugs, drink alcohol, look at pornography, or go to prostitutes. Just come and do it with dear old dad. Because of his lifestyle, I began to ask this question: How could he love me when he could not love himself?

He had no intention of marrying my mother, so she left him. My father never married. I am Floyd G. Harper's only known son.

After my mother left my real dad, she met my step-dad. It would be in this fatal family environment that I was raised.

My Step Monster

If there was anyone in the world I hated, it was my step-dad. Joe Thomas was his name. He died on December 14, 1992. My mother married him when I was about five years old. He was kind to my sister and me before he married my mother. He would buy us things. Once they got married, Joe changed. He wouldn't let Floyd come visit me. I didn't see Floyd for eleven years. My mother and my step-dad were unhappily married for about fourteen years before I left home. They raised me in this unhappy place.

My step-dad was a hard worker. He was an entrepreneur. He said he owned about six taxicabs and a liquor store. We always had three to four cars. He was a good provider financially. Joe always had a roll of money in his

shirt pocket, pants pocket, and his socks. He worshiped his money. He would always show his money to me, but he never gave me any when I asked for it. So I made a vow to stop asking him for money, and I never asked him again.

Joe Thomas was a raging alcoholic. I used to wonder what happened to him out in the world that made him come home and take it out on his family. Away from home, everybody liked him. Yet, in our home I hated him. He was a tale of two cities. He was always verbally abusive to my mother. I remember him always trying to throw my mother out of the house. He would find fault in every little thing. If there was nothing wrong, he would create something. No one could ever please him. While married to my mom, he had an affair and a child was born. The child's mother would call our house and taunt my mother, which made her upset. Something had caused Joe so much pain that he wanted to escape it by using alcohol.

He became an alcoholic. He even killed a construction worker while driving under the influence. He and my sister always fought. She would wait until he would fall asleep and steal his money to buy her drugs. But he was never too drunk to not keep up with his money. He would realize that his money was missing the next morning, and they would get into fights. I was always the peacemaker. I resented this adult role I was playing. I was still a young man. They were older and should have been more responsible.

In the early years that they were married, Joe was never physically abusive. However, the alcoholism would change that. He and my sister fought more frequently. My step-dad pulled a knife on my sister and on me as well. He once tried to hit her with a television. One day after I left home, while trying to stop Joe and my sister from fighting, he hit my mom and she left him. One of my aunts said, "You will take anything but a lick." Lula never returned to stay.

My Mother

The one thing I appreciate the most about my mother's influence on my life was that she had a real relationship with God through Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:5). I used to notice hypocrites in our church, and I resented them. I told myself when I was given the choice to go to church or not that "I didn't want to go because of those hypocrites in the church" (Heb. 10:23-25). Therefore, I appreciated my mother for living out her faith outside the church.

Again, I hated my step-dad, and I didn't feel that he was even capable of leading our family in any decisions that were to be made. Yet my mother would always submit (1 Pet. 3:1-2 & 5) to this verbally abusive, alcoholic tyrant. She would honor him. This really upset me because I knew he didn't deserve to be treated that way. She did not believe in divorce. And even when she had biblical grounds for divorce, she still didn't divorce him.

Lula was not the perfect mother. I used to be angry with her because she did not make me do better in school. This world can be an abyss without an education, and she never really supported me in school. I was a good actor and had won several awards in school. She never came to a school performance. I knew she worked at night and couldn't be there. I just couldn't understand why she even wanted to work because her husband paid all the bills. It hurt that she was there, yet she wasn't. She always gave me money and bought me clothes. We would go shopping together. Yet I wanted her to be there not so much financially, but emotionally. I knew my mother loved me, but I don't remember her saying it to me when I was growing up. She couldn't give me what she didn't get in her unaffectionate home. I was all alone with no affection in the home. I came from a fatal family, and I was damaged.

Mother to Son

As I was finishing this chapter of the book, I received a letter from my mother about my real father's fatal past. One thing that always grieved me the most about my real father was that he never married. My mother said this in her letter:

The green light generation has produced the red light generation. The red light generation has to find a way to stop the pain and abuse that their parents have caused. Son, you must choose to forgive the known and unknown abusers who have infected your life (with the dog's ticks). If you choose not to forgive, it will affect your life (Matt. 6:12; 14-15.) You will become depressed. When you have time, let us look at the unknown abuse of your father who never married. What may or may not have happened we do not know. However, suppose he could not forgive a mother who was cheating on his father. So he said, "You can never trust a woman. . ." Can you, Son, set someone else free? Do not be covered by the ticks of the past!

I had never known about my father's fatal family drama. Through this letter, God was saying to me that I could not blame my real dad for my suffering. I must forgive him. My real father also was a victim of his parent trap.

Joan's Fatal Family Drama

For Joan, providence had granted her very little of the world's greatest blessing—the affection of the home. Joan also was a victim of her fatal family drama. Joan's mother left her husband for another man. Joan's mother got pregnant with Joan by this man. Somehow the relationship ended, and Joan's mother went back to her husband where Joan was born and raised to believe that her stepfather was her real father.

Joan somehow sensed that her stepfather was not her real father because her stepfather never treated her the

same as her two half-sisters. Joan grew up feeling the rejection, the hurt, and the pain caused by her mother's adultery. The man she thought was her real father would treat her as the stepchild of adultery that she was. Joan's mother would never admit that her step-father was not her real father. The only way Joan found out this fact was through her grandmother.

As Joan's grandmother was preparing to die, she could not take this fatal family secret to her grave. Joan's grandmother told her something she had suspected for years—that Joan's father was not her real father. Joan's grandmother had even kept a picture of her biological father for over thirty years to prove this fact. Joan looked just like her real father.

In Joan's family, this repetitive cycle of fatal choices can clearly be seen. This family drama is remarkably similar. Just like her mother, Joan was married, but pregnant with another man's child. In Joan's fatal family drama the cast of character had changed but there was the same outcome: pain and suffering.

My Daughter

Children of divorce have an increased likelihood of dropping out of school, suffering depression and other mental and emotional problems, engaging in precocious sexuality, getting hooked on alcohol or drugs, having children outside of marriage, slipping economically below the poverty line, committing suicide, and, last but not least, getting divorced.

A 1985 study of teenage girls found that girls in divorced families consumed more drugs, committed more petty thefts, and skipped school more often than did their peers in intact families.⁵

It is said that a man has more compassion on his daughter than on his own son. My greatest regret is exposing my daughter to this fatal family drama. I sent a letter to Debbye Turner, a wonderful Christian woman whom I great-

ly admire, with a picture of my daughter and asked her to pray for my daughter. Debbye Turner won the Miss America pageant in 1990. Debbye shared in the November 1998 edition of Christian Single magazine that she also was a child of divorce. As I look at these bleak statistics that I shared earlier, I am praying that my daughter will grow up to be like Debbye Turner who overcame these fatal statistics.

Four Generations

I have shared with you four generations of my fatal family drama. In my family, one can easily see the destructive patterns of fatal attractions and fatal choices.

The Buck Stops Here

One of the things that hurt so much is that I was aware of this generational curse, and I wanted to break this fatal family cycle. I pridefully (Prov. 16:18) said, "The buck stops here." I wanted an affectionate home. I wanted to break the curse. I wanted a biblical home. I wanted to do things God's way. I wanted to escape from this heredity of destitution. When I left home, I wanted to be a better man than my fathers were. Both men served as perfect examples of what not to do. I didn't want to be trapped into the same drama as my parents.

For a time it seemed as if I did succeed in breaking my fatal family curse. I didn't carry on the fatal behavior of my fatal fathers. I got involved in my church where God, through his word, taught me how to be a real man. I was a better man in the sense that I was not a womanizer; I didn't use drugs, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes; I never went to a prostitute; I didn't become verbally or physically abusive. In my first home away from home I never had a girlfriend over. In that five to six-year span, I never even had a girlfriend because I was not looking for a wife at that time (1 Cor. 7:32&35).

These were the last kinds of behavior that I wanted.

The curse wouldn't be carried on through my family or me, so I thought.

Here Comes Cupid

Therefore, I seemed like a wholesome person. I seemed like any other person who grew up in an affectionate home. I felt like any other person who grew up in an affectionate home. However, the powers that be slipped me a mickey.⁶ I did not know that the devil plays Cupid. I didn't know what I was up against (Eph. 6:11-12). I wouldn't know how deceived I was until this curse slipped by my defenses through my choice for a mate.

Releasing Emotional Ties

The Bible says in Prov. 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he (or she) is old he will not depart from it."

Everybody was busy doing his or her own thing while stumbling over the present and falling over the past. Lula Thomas

- Understanding your family is crucial to overcoming fatal attractions. My fatal family is a perfect example of the unaffectionate home and the training of the children that take place in that home. My mother was raised or trained by her father on how a man should treat a woman. My mother when she was older didn't depart from this training. She went out and found men who would treat her the same exact way her father treated her mother.
- People who have fatal attractions come from fatal families. I have defined fatal families, as those families that do not give children the proper emotional (training) nurture that they need to become mature adults. In my mother's family there was bad emotional training. They did not have the ability to choose a proper or an affectionate mate because they unconsciously were trained not to want affectionate mates. They felt most comfortable in tense relationships like their parents' relationships. They needed this tense stimulation in relationships to feel at home in the relationship (Num. 14:18c).
- People who come from fatal families are damaged. Providence has granted you very little of the world's greatest blessing – the affection of the home (Ps. 128:1-4). Without the proper emotional help, either their

presence or their choice of a relationship will eventually lead to harm.

- People who come from fatal families often end up in relationships that become emotionally and physically abusive. My mother is a good example of what to do when the relationship gets physically abusive. My mother left. She left her house of fifteen years, clothing, and everything else she had. She had to start over with nothing (Prov. 15:17).
- People who come from fatal families may not be able to develop intimate relationships. I was longing for a deep personal, emotional relationship from my mother. She couldn't give me what she didn't get in her unaffectionate home (2 Cor. 1:3-4).
- People who come from fatal families must forgive and not blame their parents for the past. Most likely your parents come from a fatal family as well. I was very surprised to find out about the fatal families my parents came from. Grandparents seem to have it all together. Grandparents in their younger days could be the problem why you are having fatal attractions and titanic love affairs today (Num. 14:18c). If you choose not to forgive, it will affect your spiritual life (Matt. 6:12;14-15.)

Notes

- 1 104. Ron Rosenbaum, "In Praise of Dangerous Women," *Esquire Magazine*, March 1996, 110.
- 2 Susan Forward, *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy And Reclaiming Your Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 306-307.
- 3 52. Sharon Begley, "The Parent Trap," *Newsweek*, 7 September 1998, 53.
- 4 Charles Loring Brace, *Damaged Parent* (1886).
- 5 39. John J. Dilulio Jr, "Deadly Divorce," *National Review*, 7 April 1997, 39-40.
- 6 This is a term that is used when someone gives you drugs without you knowing it.

AUNT TO NEPHEW

APRIL 7, 2000

Dear Michael,

As always, I am praying for you! I said many prayers during my many years of tormented pain. . . . There is no way, I can explain my pain in any way, other than saying it was straight from the pits of hell. Satan used people who were supposed to love. They allowed him to use them, and I almost died. I had major surgery due to the stress and pain I was in. Michael, Satan is trying to wipe our family out. . . . Satan comes to steal (our joy, peace, and blessings), kill (our hopes and dreams), and destroy our seed (our children) and us. . . . As you look at your life, say to yourself, Jesus died for me to have a choice. I can choose peace and joy or pain and sadness. No matter what has happened to you, you still have that choice. Once a week for over a year I've stopped by your aunt Mary's apartment when I left work to say to her, what I am writing to tell you. I've been in pain all my life; your aunt Mary has been in pain all of her life. I told her, the only difference between Mary and me is I cried to God, and she tried to do it her way. Michael, the pain we are being set free of is from our fore-parents. . . . Ask God to forgive you, heal you and fill you, so you can help Christal, your baby. I remember when you took your first steps; you were such a sweet little happy boy. I love you, Michael!!!

Aunt (Bug) Bertha

HARD TIMES AND BUBBLE GUM

Halfway through Terry McMillan's book *Waiting to Exhale*, I realized I was so much like her fool-for-love character Robin it was embarrassing. I'm a sucker for a pretty brother with a smooth line, and in my eight rocky years of playing the dating game, I have had my feelings hurt more times than I care to remember. Up until recently I kept going back for more abuse. This behavioral pattern was obsessive, I realize, but I loved the idea of being in love with men who couldn't offer me much more than, as my girlfriend put it, hard times and bubble gum.

THREE

FATAL FATHERS: AN INHERITED WEAKNESS

“. . . yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

Exodus 34:7d

Like my mother, aunts, and uncles who had fatal attractions, women who behaved badly mesmerized me. I too would have to suffer the whiplash of a crashed relationship. The outcome of the crash was that my marriage with Joan was good for nothing except for hard times and bubble gum.

Enter Joan

Indeed the cast of characters had changed in this generational drama. Exit parents. Enter Joan. Joan first saw me at a Friday night singles' meeting that I led along with the rest of the singles' committee. Her two sisters came regularly to these meetings, and there was a buzz that night about Joan being their sister. I was asked later that night if I had met Joan, and my response was "no". I had slightly noticed a new young lady that night, but I couldn't recall anything about her. Joan later revealed to me that she had asked her

sister about me that night. She asked if I had a girlfriend, and her sister informed her that I had been engaged to a young lady, but the engagement had been broken off.

The Engagement

When Joan first saw me, it was about three months after my engagement had been broken off. It was one of the most painful experiences I had ever been through as an adult up to that point. Being in the singles' ministry, I had determined that the majority of the singles were wasting most of their time looking for Mr. or Ms. Right. In their vigorous attempt to find this person, they often left a trail of bitter, broken relationships behind them. Keeping in mind that nothing good comes from broken relationships, I decided not to date until I was ready to marry. I only wanted to have one God given relationship.

When I decided that it was time for me to marry, I had never had an adult girlfriend, and I was twenty-five years old. I began to date a young lady whom I had known from some of our singles' events. Alice was her name. Alice stood at about five foot three and had an hourglass figure. She had beautiful, long black hair that almost touched her shoulders. She had mocha-colored skin and high cheekbones. Alice looked like Alice. No woman in Hollywood or on the cover of any magazine could compare to her beauty.

Alice was a college student, and we had a good relationship until her grades began to fall. Unfortunately, she was in a tug-of-war between her education and me. This had always been a source of tension in our relationship. She didn't get a chance to go to college at a young age, and this was very important to her. She grew up very poor and had some regrets about what she had to do as a child to survive. College was her way out of her childhood regrets. We had an on-again, off-again relationship.

I had asked her to marry me, and she said "yes" to my proposal. However, her grades continued to drop, and she just couldn't handle our relationship and school at the same

time. So she kicked me to the curb. I was determined to move on, and three months later I met Joan. I later heard from some friends that Alice still loved me, but it was too late. I had moved on.

My Broken Relationship

I mourned the breakup of my engagement for about two months. They were the two darkest months of my life up to that point in my life. I didn't want to become bitter and unforgiving over this relationship. I had seen many singles' relationships end, where they were mourned over for months and sometimes years. I also noticed that some young ladies could never forgive. These young ladies were very bitter over past relationships. Hence, I believe that many Christian singles are not growing spiritually because of unforgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15). Some had come to believe that there were no good men. Many men had come to believe the opposite as well.

I didn't believe that God would have me mourn for years over this broken relationship.

Therefore, I mourned for two months, crying out to God for his help, comfort, and intervention. God healed my broken heart.

Rebounding or Bounding

It was also my concern that I would not enter another relationship to help me get over my first fallen relationship. We, in the singles' ministry, called this type of behavior "being on the rebound." Being on the rebound is using another person to help you, without their knowledge, get over your pain. This type of behavior leads to a destructive pattern of broken people who are used. I did not want to be on the rebound. I wanted to bound.

Some people at that time did not think that I was over

Alice, including Joan. She was very insecure about this until I shared with her what my friends had said about Alice. However, once we were married, Joan would tell me that she had never loved me. Maybe that is why Joan was so threatened when she heard that Alice still loved me.

So I was not with a woman who loved me but kept breaking off our relationship, and I was with a woman who did not love me but would marry me. Therefore, I was out of the frying pan and into the fire or somewhere in between.

The Devil Plays Cupid

Cupid was the god of love in Roman mythology. The earliest images of Cupid show him as a handsome, athletic young man. By the mid-300s B.C., he was portrayed as a chubby, naked infant with wings, holding a bow and arrows. A person shot with one of Cupid's gold-tipped arrows supposedly fell in love. Cupid was described as a happy lad who united lovers. In all the old movies he would be behind the scenes shooting people with his love arrows and causing them to fall in love.

It seemed to me that the forces behind the scenes (Eph. 6:11-12), causing people to fall in love, were dark forces of fatal destitution. As I discovered revealing facts about my family and myself, I couldn't help but conclude that the little angel that I thought was Cupid, was actually the devil in disguise. Cupid was no friend of mine.

Some theologians believe that generational curses are passed down from generation to generation by familiar spirits. I will call this familiar spirit Cupid. When I met Joan, I felt like I knew her forever. There was something familiar about her. I did not know where she ended and where I began. We were like one being. Could this have been familiar spirits wooing me to love Joan? Was this the devil (2 Cor. 11:14) in disguise as Cupid? Or was it that there was just something familiar about Joan?

My Codependency

There was something familiar about Joan. The following definition of codependence helped me to see what was so familiar about Joan. Don and Jan Frank state in their book, *When Victims Marry*,

Codependent relationships form between a weak and a strong person. The strong person, the codependent, has a need to be needed, to be leaned upon, to help. The weak person, the emotionally dependent, is needy, wants to lean and to be helped. Both feel better when they operate within these roles. Each one feels good when he or she is joined with the other in a relationship.²

I was the strong person, the codependent. I had a need to be needed, to be leaned upon, and to help. This is what was so familiar about Joan. She allowed me to play the role I had started to play as a young man. As a young man, when I should have been figuring out who I was, I played the role of an adult in my family drama. I was the one who had to step in between my older sister, who was addicted to cocaine, and my stepfather, who was an alcoholic, to stop them from fighting because I feared that my nephew, born addicted to cocaine, would get hurt.

Joan was the weak person, the emotionally dependent one. She had a need to lean and to be helped. She was not loved by who she thought was her real father. She was divorced from a husband who beat her. Joan had two sons. She was sexually molested by a close family member, and she had been raped when she was a young girl. With Joan I felt good because I was playing the role I was so familiar playing.

So I Married An Axe Murderer

So I Married An Axe Murderer is the title of a movie. The lead character is a San Francisco poet named Charlie. Charlie stops at a foreign meat market where he sees a beautiful young woman who just happens to be the butcher. Charlie experiences the phenomenon of being instinctively and powerfully attracted to this enchanting butcher. However, his mother has a premonition of danger about his new girlfriend when she reads the Weekly World News. The Weekly World News was running a cover story on an ax murderer, and the description of the woman seemed to match Charlie's butcher girlfriend. Charlie then begins to suspect his girlfriend to be an ax murderer.

I married Joan on July 1, 1994, six months about we first met. I later learned after my marriage fell apart that my mother had a premonition of danger about Joan. My mother told me that she had not felt comfortable sharing her insight with me because of the way I was living my life. By the age of twenty-three, I had my own place. I was active in church. I was a virgin. And I had a pretty good job. When my mother was my age, she had already made two fatal mate decisions. From those fatal choices, two children would be born out of wedlock by two different men. So she felt uncomfortable giving me advice about relationships when things seemed to be going so well for me.

Fatal Silence

Her silence would prove fatal to me. Many parents who grew up in the sixties have that tension with their children. They compare the way they were living at that age to the way their children are now living and think that their children's lives are much more tame. At their children's age, many were into drugs, sex, and rock-n-roll. And although they may see some fatal behavior in their children's lives, they will be hesitant to speak out.

The Slaughter

So, I married an ax murderer. I married a woman who was a butcher. Joan would butcher my hopes and dreams for a Godly marriage (Ps. 128:1-4). Butchered now are family relationships. Butchered now is every friend that has heard of this marriage ending. Butchered now is the very close relationship that I had with my two stepsons. Butchered now is my baby girl who now falls in the fatal category of children of divorce. Butchered now are the very close relationships with nephews and nieces. Butchered are many ministry opportunities because of my divorce.

Many churches will not hire a pastor who has been divorced. Many missionary organizations will not choose a missionary to service in nations around the world if they have been divorced.

Butchered now are my choices for a new mate. Some women do not want a man that has been divorced. Many women do not want a man with a child. Butchered are the past four and half years of my life. Butchered is my future. This butchering happened because of my fatal choice. The generational curse had continued. Indeed the cast of characters had changed as I traced my family fatal drama. Three generations of my family were locked into this repetitive cycle of fatal choices. Even though my part of this family drama looked and sounded different, the same fatal patterns were remarkably similar in their outcome: pain and suffering.

The Blame Game

Who can I blame for my suffering? Should I blame my mother? I can not blame my mother. My mother was just a victim of her fatal family cycle. Should I blame my real father? My real father was the one I had the least compassion for, and I really don't know how that happened. I guess I felt like he had abandoned me. For my father there would be no excuses for him not seeing me for eleven years. There

would be no excuses for how he lived and died. There would be no compassion until I learned of his fatal past.

Well then, should I blame Joan for my suffering? After all, she committed the ultimate betrayal. As I was going through this emotional inventory, God was also saying, “You must forgive Joan completely” (Matt. 6:14-15). God didn’t want me to develop the same philosophy about women as my real father. If I were to buy into that philosophy, I would never get married again. I can’t blame Joan for the same reasons that I can’t blame my mother and father.

Fatal Gump

The movie *Forest Gump* opened to rave reviews and was unlike any movie that had ever been made. *Forest Gump* had some incredible life adventures even with a seventy-five intelligence quotient. Forest, having had to wear leg braces, discovers that he can run like the wind. Hence, the adventures of *Forest Gump* began. Forest became a football hero, a Medal of Honor winner in Vietnam, a ping-pong champion, and a millionaire stockholder of a new fruit company named *Apple Computers*. Forest, for a man with a low intelligence quotient, had profound wisdom. Forest even understood what it is like to have a fatal attraction.

Forest was fatally attracted to a young woman he fell in love with in grade school by the name of Jenny. Jenny came from a fatal family where her father abused her. Jenny ended up living a troubled life. Jenny became a part of the counterculture. She dropped out of school, went to California, tuned out, and got turned on. She fell into psychedelics, flower power, antiwar rallies, love-ins, drugs, and needles. Jenny come back home to the place where life became so fatal to her. She looked at the now abandoned house of her childhood and began to feel the hurt of her fatal past. She began to frantically pick up stones and throw them at the house. When she ran out of stones to throw, she lay on the ground with tears in her eyes. She was emotionally and physically spent. Forest said, with the profound wisdom of

a man with a seventy-five IQ, “Sometimes you can’t get enough rocks.”

As I look back on my fatal marriage, I, like Jenny, “can’t get enough rocks.” Needless to say the generational curse, or parent trap, had passed on. We would have a baby girl that would be born to this fatal union. The curse would now be passed on to my daughter through her being a child of divorce.

Don’t Let Cupid Be Stupid

It’s Our Choices That Matter

I have entitled the next chapter, “A Fatal Choice” to emphasize the importance of our choice for a mate. Charles P. De Santo, in his book *Love and Sex Are Not Enough*, makes this very momentous statement, “Remember, it is the choice of a compatible mate before marriage, more than anything that one does after marriage, that will determine one’s happiness in marriage.”³ Our choice for a mate not only determines one’s happiness in marriage; it also determines the happiness of our children and their children for up to three or more generations.

Studies have shown that the couples who have the highest chance of succeeding in making a happy marriage are those who are happy individuals and who are satisfied with their lives before marriage. Most remember their childhood as being happy and their parents as being happy with each other. Therefore, it is wise to know all you can about the background of the person you marry, especially about their home life, the relationship between their parents, and the kind of feelings there are in the family, one for the other.

Never Love A Wild Thing

“Never love a wild thing,” Holly advised Doc, referring to herself in Truman Capote’s novel *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*:

That was Doc’s mistake. He was always lugging

home wild things. A hawk with a hurt wing. One time it was a full-grown bobcat with a broken leg. But you can't give your heart to a wild thing: the more you do, the stronger they get. Until they're strong enough to run into the woods. Or fly into a tree. Then a taller tree. Then the sky. That's how you'll end up looking at the sky.

People who have fatal attractions have the same problem as Doc in that they are always lugging home wild things. A man who looks like trouble. A woman who looks like she will do you wrong. They are fatally attracted to wild men and wild women. But you can not give your heart to wild things.

Releasing Emotional Ties

- Understanding your family is crucial to overcoming fatal attractions. My fatal family is a perfect example of the unaffectionate home and the training of the children that take place in that home. In my home I was trained by my mother and step father in how to be treated in a relationship. When I was older, I didn't depart from this training. I went out and found a woman who would treat me the same exact way my stepfather treated my mother. I, like Doc, had learned to love a wild thing (Prov. 22:6).
- People who come from fatal families must forgive and not blame their parents for the past. Most likely your parents come from a fatal family as well. As I said before, I was very surprised to find out about the fatal families my parents came from. Now I was looking for someone to blame. Not only could I not blame my parents, I could not blame Joan because of her fatal family background. I then began to realize that forgiveness would be one of the keys to overcoming fatal attractions (Num. 14:18c) (Matt. 6:12;14-15.)
- Studies have shown that the couples who have the highest chance of succeeding in making a happy marriage are those who are happy individuals and who are satisfied with their lives before marriage. How could I be a happy individual, who was satisfied with my life, with bitterness stored up inside of me over my fatal family, fatal attractions, and my titanic love affair with Joan (Matt. 6:12;14-15)?
- Couples who have the highest chance of succeeding in making a happy marriage, most remember their childhood as being happy and their parents as being happy with each other. It seems that you will be attracted to

what you remember the male-female relationship being like in your home. If you remember bitterness in that relationship you will attract a bitter mate. That is why forgiveness is so important (Matt. 6:12; 14-15).

- It is wise to know all you can about your family background and the background of the person you marry, especially about their home life, the relationship between their parents, and the kind of feelings there are in the family. I married Joan and created the exact same family experience that I came from (Num.14:18c).

Notes

- 0 Tracy E. Hopkins, "An Obsession Confession," *Essence Magazine*, March 1995, 48.
- 1 She ended the relationship.
- 2 Don Frank and Jan Frank, *When Victims Marry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 152.
- 3 Charles P. De Santo, *Love and Sex Are Not Enough* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1977, 99).

A Marriage Scorned

He says, "I had a premonition before I married Lucille that this is the way my marriage would turn out. . . . There is no day that goes by," he continues, "that Lucille doesn't get after me for something. If I don't ask for a raise at work, she ridicules me. If I should happen to get a raise, she says it isn't enough and it proves I'm a sucker. She has a terrible temper, and when she lets go, she really lets go. It doesn't make any difference where she is or who is there. I've lost my last five jobs because she called me so often at work, talking endlessly and telling me off. She has thrown everything at me that she can lift. If I watch TV, she yells at me for not talking to her. If I don't watch TV or read the paper, she says I'm glaring at her. We haven't lived as man and wife for twelve years. Last night she kicked me out of the house although it was close to zero and she knew I didn't have any money."0

FOUR

THE FATAL CHOICE: OUR CHOICE FOR A MATE

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2:24

I had never given much thought to marriage and family as a single person. All I knew was one day I would marry. I was just a normal human who would choose to marry.

Every normal human being has a sense of incompleteness, a feeling of the need of someone to complement life, someone to discover the hidden possibilities of the soul and make life whole. It is the universal hunger of a man for his mate.¹

I had heard more sermons on marriage than I had heard on being single. The truth of the matter is that most single people will marry, so hearing about marriage was a good thing. I had stored up all this information until I was to marry. Little did I know this causal decision was fatal.

Fatal Hell

A biblical proverb says, "It is better to live in a corner of a roof, then in a house shared with a contentious woman." In chapter one, I mentioned William Congreve's statement,

“Heaven has no rage like love to hate returned nor hell a furor like a woman scorned.” I chose to marry a scorned and contentious woman. Joan at that time could not help me to fulfill the fatal purpose of my choice for a mate. What would help me to overcome fatal attractions after Joan left, was to learn the purpose and meaning of marriage and family.

The Fatal Purpose of: Marriage and Family

One thing that is a driving force in my life is a need for purpose. I can not believe in any philosophy or theory that does not give me a purpose. In a lot of theories and philosophies, they can not give us the meaning of marriage and family. However, of everything that surrounds mankind, science has and is discovering its purpose. Except for mankind, everything seems to have a purpose. If man does not have a purpose, then it would seem that there is no purpose for marriage and family. My biblically driven worldview (Gen. 1:1; 25-31) will sanction us to find the purpose of marriage.

Turn Your Heart Toward Home

I would like to give three definitions for marriage and family. The first definition I would like to share is from an organization called Focus on the Family.

This is how Focus On The Family defined the family in a recent newsletter:

There is no substitute for a healthy home. It is here that husbands and wives share meaningful communication and develop intimate, fulfilling marriages. It is here that siblings learn to care for each other and defend other family members. And it is here that children learn the difference between right and wrong, discover the concept of community, and form the foundation of their faith.

The second definition of family and marriage I would like to use is from the controversial decision made by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1998. This was a revision of the Southern Baptist 1963 Baptist Faith and Message:

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to Biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God’s image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people.

A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect and to lead his family.

A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God’s pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent life-style example and loving discipline, to make choices based on Biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

The third definition I would like to use for marriage and family is a statement to which I added my insights and

fused together a segment from the canon law of the church with Pope Pius XI's encyclical on Christian Marriage.

Marriage is a divine covenant or contract between God, a man, and a woman for the purpose of mutual help to fulfill divine callings, spiritual growth, the fostering of reciprocal love, and the abatement of concupiscence. It is in this healthy environment of marriage that God wants procreation and education of children to take place.² In this divine contract children also discover divine calling, and are educated by example to model this divine covenant in their own homes as adults. In the covenant of marriage, God wants His will to be done within this family unit and for each marriage to be a model of Christ and the church.

For the person who has fatal attractions I believe this third definition of the meaning of marriage and family gives the best insight, particularly the insight from Pope Pius XI that adds to this definition. Pope Pius said that marriage is for "mutual help, the fostering of reciprocal love, and the abatement of concupiscence."

The abatement of concupiscence simply means that in marriage the man and woman can find a proper utilization of the sexual attraction which exists between the sexes.

Relational Incest

In fatal attraction relationships and in fatal marriages the features of mutual help and reciprocal love are missing. With these two features missing in a relationship, you have a relationship that is more like a parent-child relationship than a healthy, mature relationship between two adults. I mentioned in an earlier chapter that codependent relationships form between a weak and a strong person. The strong person, the co-dependent, has a need to be needed, to be leaned upon, to help. In this case, the co-dependent fulfills the parent role. The weak person, the emotionally dependent, is needy, wants to lean on and be

helped. This person fulfills the role of a child. Both feel better when they operate within these roles. Each one feels good when he or she joins with the other in a relationship. Fatal attractions have this dynamic of parent-child. With this dynamic, one could never fulfill the true meaning of marriage. When you add to this dynamic of parent-child role-play, the abatement of concupiscence, you then commit relational incest.

In Dr. Neil Clark Warren's book, *Finding the Love of Your Life*, he says:

A great marriage requires two healthy people, and the time to get healthy is before you get married . . . What I'm particularly concerned about here is the emotional and mental health of the two people considering a lifelong partnership. This kind of well-being contributes significantly to marital strength and happiness. In fact, when a couple is not healthy, they will inevitably damage, and maybe even destroy, their marriage.³

The Code of Canon Law has this same concern in Canon 1095 which deals with matrimonial consent in the Catholic Church:

Canon 1095 - The following are incapable of contracting marriage:

1. those who lack the sufficient use of reason;
2. those who suffer from grave lack of discretion of judgment concerning essential matrimonial rights and duties which are to be mutually given and accepted;
3. those who, because of causes of a psychological nature, are unable to assume the essential obligations of marriage.⁴

A person who has fatal attractions is not emotionally ready for marriage. Marriage is for emotionally mature adults. People who have fatal attractions are like adult children. As adults, they can reason that they have fatal attractions. As children they continue their fatal behavior by establishing relationships with fatal mates.

Choosing A Mate

The most important element of choosing a mate for a person who has fatal attractions is being able to choose someone who can reciprocate love on a consistent basis. That which separates a child's love from an adult's is that an adult love is a consistent love. A child will love you one minute and hate you the next. In fatal relationships, there is some reciprocal love. However, for the most part there is not the reciprocation of the kind of love for a mature adult relationship. After he or she hits you physically or emotionally, he or she says that he or she is sorry and begins to treat you nicely until the next time he or she hurts you. The mates you choose do not have the ability to love you consistently because you choose to have relationships with emotional children. You make that choice because you yourself lack sufficient use of reason.

Mutual Ruin

Most of us, who have fatal attractions, clearly lack sufficient use of reason. We should be able to reason that we need love that is a mutual help to us. Reciprocal love is the healthy environment in which we receive this mutual help. Without this dynamic in a relationship, you have mutual ruin instead of mutual help. This dynamic of mutual ruin is codependency. In relationships we clearly enable our mates to continue their destructive behavior because of our lack of reason.

Healthy mature adults fulfill the purpose of marriage. Therefore, you can never fulfill the purpose of marriage and

family unless you overcome your lack of reason or codependency.

Dr. Strother Campbell in his book, *Making Marriage Christian*, declares the task that you face:

Few decisions in life are more important than the choice of a mate, for thereon hangs one's happiness, one's fortune, one's life. When a man goes courting, he enters upon an adventure that either makes or ruins him. Love is responsible for a multitude of life's tragedies as well as many of life's triumphs.

For love of his Median princess, Nebuchadnezzar built the Hanging Gardens, one of the wonders of the world while for the love of Cleopatra, Mark Antony squandered an empire and wasted his manhood. Delilah and Jezebel of the Bible and Lady Macbeth of secular literature are examples of wives who succeeded in dragging their husbands to their ruin.

On the other hand, the pages of history are replete with the names of wives who inspired their husbands to mount the ladder of success and fame.

There is little else that ennobles life as does the love of a good man or a pure woman. It quickens the intellect, awakens ambition, and fortifies against temptation.

Young man, if you would redouble your strength, see to it that your life is fortified by such a love! If you would climb to the highest of which you are capable, choose a mate who will help and not hinder.⁵

Releasing Emotional Ties

- A person who has fatal attractions is not emotionally ready for marriage or a relationship. For the Christian a relationship leads to marriage. Marriage is for emotionally mature adults. When I chose Joan at that time in my life, I wasn't prepared emotionally to have a relationship or a marriage. Therefore, we couldn't have fulfilled the purpose of marriage and family.
- A great marriage requires two healthy people, and the time to get healthy is before you get married. Before I got married to Joan, this should have been my concern: the emotional and mental health of Joan and me as we were considering a lifelong partnership.
- The most important element of choosing a mate for a person who has fatal attractions is being able to choose someone who can reciprocate love on a consistent basis. In fatal relationships, there is some reciprocal love. However, for the most part there is not the reciprocation of the kind of love for a mature adult relationship.
- Marriage is a divine covenant or contract between God, a man, and a woman for the purpose of mutual help to fulfill divine callings, spiritual growth, the fostering of reciprocal love, and the abatement of sexual love. My relationship with Joan did not live up to the purpose of marriage. I had no mutual help to fulfill divine callings or any reciprocal love.
- In fatal attraction relationships and in fatal marriages the features of mutual help and reciprocal love are missing. With these two features missing in a relationship, you have a relationship that is more like a parent-child relationship than a healthy mature relationship between two adults.

- Fatal attractions have this dynamic of parent-child. With this dynamic, one could never fulfill the true meaning of marriage. When you add to this dynamic of parent-child role-play, the abatement of sexual love, you then commit relational incest.
- If you would climb to the highest of which you are capable, choose a mate who will help and not hinder.

Notes

- 0 Robert F. Winch, *Mate-Selection: A Study of Complementary Needs* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1958), 315.
- 1 Strother A. Campbell, *Making Marriage Christian* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1937), 3.
- 2 John Marshall, *Preparing for Marriage* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962), 21.
- 3 Neil Clark Warren, *Finding the Love of your Life* (Colorado Springs: Focus On The Family Publishing, 1992), 63.
- 4 The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Code Of Canon Law* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 195.
- 5 Strother A. Campbell, *Making Marriage Christian*, 3-4.

Real Love?

I met Robert when I was 19. Our two-year relationship made me realize just how obsessed I could become with another human being. This turbulent experience proved I was far too capable of giving a man power over me, no matter how disrespectful, callous and self-absorbed he was. I loved drama, and Robert gave me plenty of it. On one occasion I literally attached myself to his leg and begged him to stay. Because I was so obsessed with Robert, I forgave all his sins. For instance, he called mainly when he wanted sex or money, though I didn't have the latter to give. I convinced myself that he loved me but was just incapable of expressing himself. The closest he ever came to the sentiment I sought was "Yeah, I love your dumb behind." I would like to say I emerged from this relationship with a new attitude, but I didn't.

FIVE

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; .
 . . and is not arrogant, does not act unbecom-
 ingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, .

. .
 I Corinthians 13:4-5c

Most of us begin our quest for love in the same way the scientist returns to an island where dinosaurs survive in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*. "oooO, ahhh, that's how it always starts. But then later there's running and screaming."

Jurassic Love

What is Jurassic love? I will define Jurassic love as the quest to define love. Trying to define love is indeed a lost world.

"Love begins with life itself. To live at all is to love, and to live healthily implies, throughout life, at least some love for life. The love of a man for a maid is a complex and wondrous thing. Its history, seen from Freud's vantage point, is so tortuous that its occasional success is astonishing."¹

Up to this point, we have not considered love in the equation of marriage and family. What is love anyway? Most of us can not define love. However, we know love should be the foundation of every relationship, marriage, and family. With that in mind we must then carefully define what love is. Love can be defined as a science, art, and a spiritual endeavor.

Love As A Science

Love is the one English word that describes all the aspects of the make-up of love. Therefore, the English language is limited to describe love in science.

The nucleus of what we mean by love naturally consists (and this is commonly called love, and what the poets sing of) in sexual love with sexual union as its aim. But we do not separate from this-what in any case has a share in the name “love”-on the one hand, self-love, and on the other, love for parents and children, friendship and love for humanity in general, and also devotion to concrete objects and to abstract ideas.²

Dr. Ed Wheat has this to say about the one English word for love in his book, *Love Life For Every Married Couple*:

The English word love has to be one of the most unusual words in our language! It's supposedly packed with meaning, yet it seems inadequate when we really want to say something. (So much so that Edgar Allen Poe wrote, “We love with a love that was more than love.”) The word is overworked Just having the one word for everything leads to confusion and absurd comparisons. For example, we love our lifelong sweetheart. But we also love fried chicken or quiche Lorraine, thus comparing our marriage partner of thirty years to a French cheese pie! We love our parents and our children, but we also love books or football or skiing vacations, apparently putting Mom and Dad on a par with a weekend at Vail, or little Johnny in competition with the Dallas Cowboys.³

With this discussion in mind we can come to the conclusion that the English word for love can not describe all the elements of love. Scientifically, the English word love will not help us to define what love is. What will help us to define love will be an understanding of the different elements of love.

Love: It's all Greek To Me?

Dr. Ed Wheat does a good work in defining love in a chapter of his book entitled “The Five Ways of Loving.” Dr. Wheat recognizes the need to use a precise language to define love. The language Dr. Wheat chooses to use is the Greek language. “. . . in writing a book about love in marriage, we can call upon the precise language of the Greek New Testament for help. As one expert pointed out, ‘Greek is a very subtle language, full of delicately modifying words, capable of the finest distinctions of meaning’. The Greeks of the New Testament era had at least five words that we can use to distinguish and describe the various elements of love in marriage.”⁴ In choosing to use these Greek words, Dr. Wheat can help us to define all five elements of the make up of love.

It is very important that love be defined with these five elements to escape the platitudes of love. Platitudes do not have any scientific elements to help us to formulate a loving relationship. Those who have fatal attractions must have love defined as a science to help formulate a healthy, mature, and affectionate relationship. Love in every case must have the same elements to be properly defined as a science. But, these elements may differ in configuration from relationship to relationship.

Love Potion #9

The Five Elements Of True Love

The makeup of love is contained in the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical characteristics of mankind. The understanding of these characteristics of true love will help those of us who have fatal attractions and titanic love affairs to set boundaries in our quest for true love.

1. Love At First Sight

(Physical Love)

Most fatal attractions begin with physical attraction. The Greek word used for the element of love that has to do with physical attraction is *epithumia*. *Epithumia* is defined as strong desire. This element of love in relationships is the physical attraction that evokes sexual desire.

Freudian Love

Considered a genius Sigmund Freud is called the scientist of love. Some of Freud's theories on child sexuality are still controversial today. Most people would have a tendency to place Freud's work into the *epithumia* element of love. "In lay language, Freudian love is identified with sexuality. This identification both is and is not justified in Freud's writings." Freud's work in this area is indeed intriguing. Freud writes, "Being in love consists in a flowing-over of ego-libido on the object It exalts the sexual object into a sexual ideal . . ."5

Love is in the eye of the beholder. When a man or a woman beholds beauty, *epithumia* is the element of love that is evoked. Do you believe in love at first sight? If you do, this is the element of love that you believe in.

In the November 1998 *Ebony Magazine's Ebony Advisor* column a young lady writes, "My friends think I am crazy. You see, about five-and-a-half years ago I fell in love with a man in a picture. I'll call him SSS. I have a picture of him everywhere, and there's not a day that goes by that I don't think of him. He is a part of me. I am 18. My reasons for loving him are so endless. But we have never met, and he doesn't know I exist. I have faith that one day we will meet and fall in love. We live in the same city, and we are bound to meet one day. Do you think I'm crazy? Despite what anyone might say, I will continue to love SSS always."

I do not think this young girl is crazy. I believe she has this one element of love, *epithumia* for SSS. She can not

truly love a person she has never met. This is not a relationship. This is a fantasy.

Every marriage relationship should begin with and keep this element of love. A man or woman who is not physically attracted to his or her mate will find it very difficult to be faithful in most cases to that mate. One should not marry with the hope that the prospective mate would lose weight or change any physical aspects. Every marriage should have begun with love at first sight. However, this element of love is normally the only element of love present in most relationships.

To fulfill the purpose and meaning of marriage and family, one must have more than a physical attraction.

Beauty Plus

Dr. Walter A. Maier has this to say about the Biblical view of beauty plus:

Yet beauty in itself, detached from all ideals of morality and intelligence, is never exalted in the Divine Word On the contrary, the fatal attachments of beauty without a corresponding inner attraction are plainly outlined in some of the tragedies of Scripture Because there must be beauty plus, Solomon warns: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion" (Prov. 11:22); and since beauty of the soul is far more essential than outward adornment, the summary of everyday wisdom which we call the Book of Proverbs closes its 900 verses with this impressive statement: "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31:30, 31).6

2. Romantic Love (Emotional Love)

The Greek word used for the emotional element of love is eros. Eros by definition is a yearning to unite. Eros is romantic, passionate, and sentimental.

When I think of this kind of love, I remember the waterfall scene in *Last of the Mohicans*. Hawkeye, a white man adopted by the Mohican Indians is a scout and hired to lead a British officer's two daughters to the fort where he is in command. On this journey Hawkeye and one of the British officer's daughters "fall in love." They made it to the fort where they are engrossed in a battle with the French troops. Hawkeye leads them into the fort. The British would surrender and would be able to leave without harm. The British troops would be ambushed by the Huron tribe who had alliance with the French army. The British officer is killed in this ambush. Hawkeye saves the daughters and begins to flee. They are about to be captured as they try to escape behind a waterfall. Hawkeye, knowing that the Huron tribe would not kill the women, says to the lady he is in love with, "Stay alive! I will find you! Just stay alive!" Hawkeye then jumps into the waterfall and escapes.

Uta West has this to say about this kind of love:

The force which is in true opposition to death and is genuinely life-affirming is eros-and that is not at all the same thing as sex. In fact, Dr. Rollo May, the noted psychotherapist and author, postulates that sex, in our time, is in direct opposition to eros. Defined as desire, that is, the spirit that infuses us with energy and enthusiasm, eros is characterized by yearning, longing, excitement . . . a passionate involvement of one's total being. While sex seeks release and the reduction of tension, eros strives for nothing less than union with the beloved-whatever he or she or it may be. "The

essence of eros is that it draws us from ahead, whereas sex pushes us from behind . . ."7

Women and some men alike long for this type of love. It is this type of love longing, which has inspired the masses to buy romance novels. In reading these romance novels, they are longing secretly to be a part of the plot. Many a little girl is instilled with the idea that some day her prince will come.

It is eros love that inspires the poet's psalm. It is this element of love that inspired Elizabeth Barrett Browning to write sonnet number twenty-one in *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, which I have titled for her, "The Cuckoo-Song."

The Cuckoo-Song

Say over again, and yet once over again, That thou dost love me. Thought the word repeated Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost treat it, Remember, never to the hill or plain, Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.

Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain Cry, "Speak one more-thou lovest!" Who can fear Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll, Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year? Say thou dost love me, love me, love me-toll The silver iterance! -only minding, Dear, To love me also in silence with thy soul.8

The eros element of love is the passion that drives us to dream. Whatever that dream you may have, you can be sure that it is your eros love that is the spirit that infuses you with energy, enthusiasm, yawning, longing, and excitement that is a passionate involvement of your total being. With this definition in mind, you can have an eros love for a person, social work, your career, golf, or the Dallas Cowboys, but this love should only be an element of the love you have for a mate or prospective mate.

A fatal attraction will have the first two elements of love. With these two elements of love only, you will worship the ground the other person walks on. The other person becomes your god. You will do anything for that person.

It is the kind of love that causes Christians to date and even marry a unsaved person (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Christians will have sex (1 Cor. 6:18-19), stop going to church (Heb. 10:23-25), live together (1 Cor. 7:9), and have affairs with a married man (1 Cor. 6:9-10) when they have this eros love for a mate. Many Christians are lead away from the faith by this kind of love alone.

3. Family Love (Social Love)

The Greek word used for the social element of love is storge. Storge by definition is a sense of belonging to each other. Storge provides an atmosphere of security.

Out of the five elements of love, storge love intrigues me the most. This element is so intriguing to me because I have never known this type of love. When you come from a fatal family background, you have no sense of belonging or security. For this sense of belonging, a kid will join a gang. To be a part of the team a person in the corporate world will cover up wrong-doing in business practices at audit time.

Looking for love in this sense will sometimes be the motive behind a young college student pledging to a fraternity or sorority. This sense of belonging is why people will join a cult and try to reach heaven's gate by committing suicide. Wanting to belong, a politician will turn his back on his own moral convictions for the sake of the party. Even ministers who never had this need met as a child will lose their sense of conviction for the congregation, or the religious association, just to be a part of the group.

For this sense of belonging, a person will join the armed forces wanting to be one of the few and the proud. For this sense of belonging, an intern will lie under oath on

behalf of a president, and a wife will stand by her husband.

The lack of storge love leaves victims with a vacuum in their hearts that will make them desperately hold on to miserable relationships just to keep that false sense of belonging. Because we all have a need to belong to something or someone, we will get that need met somehow. The need for belonging or security in family is so momentous that cursed to a place called loneliness is the person who does not have this need met.

My discussion of storge love has been about its effect on people who never had this love in family. Dr. Wheat in his book shares the importance of this storge element of love in the marriage relationship.

Because this is such an unspectacular, down-to-earth form of love in marriage, its importance may be underestimated. As someone has observed, "Familiarity breeds comfort and comfort is like bread-necessary and nourishing, but taken for granted and unexciting." I suggest to you that this facet of love we call belonging is essential to your happiness in marriage. We all need a place we can call home-not just brick and mortar and four walls, but an atmosphere that is secure, where we feel completely comfortable with each other in the sureness that we belong, and that our happiness and well-being are of the utmost importance to our partner. John Powell has captured the essence of this love in one sentence: "We need the heart of another as a home for our hearts."⁹

For the intent of defining the purpose of marriage and family, I must stress the importance of this element of storge love concerning children. I suggest to you that this facet of love we call belonging is essential to the emotional development of children as well. Children must have a secure environment. In order to fulfill the purpose of marriage and

family, this element of love must not be missing from the home.

4. Friendship Love? (Intellectual Love)

The Greek word used for the factor of love for the intellectual element is *phileo*. *Phileo* by definition is sharing or communicating. When *phileo* is present in a relationship, the most intimate thoughts, feelings, attitudes, plans, and dreams are shared. *Phileo* always expects a response.

Greek scholars in the past have defined the *phileo* element of love as friendship.

Contrary to popular thought on relationships, friendship should be a very important element of a relationship. Men and women alike can never seem to see their friend of the opposite sex as a future mate. Yet, they will share all of their intimate thoughts, feelings, attitudes, plans, and dreams with that friend. Then this will happen. They will find someone they are interested in for a relationship and drop the friendship. In the relationship, they will not share themselves, as an effort to make a good impression on the other person. Because they are playing this game, they can not share their intimate thoughts, feelings, attitudes, plans, and dreams. They end up getting married and finding out that they have to continue playing the role in the marriage that they played during courtship. This sometimes explains why some married men try to get their *phileo* love needs met with mistresses or extramarital affairs instead of their wives:

In the past, and to a lesser extent still today, men would often find this kind of friendship among “women of easy virtue,” as they used to be called. With their mistresses, or with courtesans, men might drop their masks and relax; they could be themselves, show their weaknesses, their angers and sorrows, and their true sexual nature. They

need not project onto those women virtue and frailties they did not possess and, in turn, be forced to comply with rigid standards of masculinity.¹⁰

Men or women who have committed relationships of a marginally sexual nature outside of their marriage are many times seeking to fulfill the *phileo* love that is missing in marriage. In this relationship, men or women will share things they would not share with their mate, family, or friends. Therefore, after discovering the importance of the *phileo* element of love with the opposite sex, they end up finding some other man or woman with whom they can share their intimate thoughts, feelings, attitudes, plans, and dreams.

Because of the intimate nature of *phileo* love, they find themselves committing adultery. Uta West described this phenomenon in a chapter in her book entitled, *Balling Buddies*.

Quite a few extramarital affairs may be of this order. Here, sex is not the prime basis for friendship. The people may move in the same social circles and see each other all the time; they have a friendship based on other mutual interests. Upon learning that a married man and a divorced woman living in the same small town had an ongoing sexual relationship for years, their mutual friends expressed astonishment and shock. How, they wondered, could they keep such a secret for so long? Well, it seems the sex, when it happened, did not loom very large in their lives. “It’s almost as if it weren’t there,” the man explained. “We’re like a couple of five-year-olds, or something. We giggle a lot.”¹¹

Of course this adulterous relationship is of no fault of their own; they just fall in “love.”

This is what one young lady on her website had to say about the same situation.

My husband knew nothing, but work and TV...Many years I remained angry and bitter, erupting horribly with words and sarcasm. In 1987, I decided to go to work...the children were now back to school and we could use the extra income. I found a job I loved in photography... I also found myself getting attached to my employer....: (Little by little we began to talk and share our hurts and disappointments. Soon, we started having lunchtime together...and eventually the relationship continued into adultery....: (At that time I felt happy, but I felt very guilty before God. I kept trying to end this relationship, but I truly thought I was loved and ready to give up everything....: (for the grass is greener deception . . .

So again I say, contrary to popular belief friendship with the opposite sex in relationships is a very important element of love. Marriage is meant to be the most intimate relationship of all relationships. One can only establish an intimate marriage relationship through a intimate friendship with a mate.

An article that appeared in the May 1995 edition of McCall's magazine was entitled "The Choice of a Lifetime." In this article, the author shares her choice for phileo love:

I listened to girlfriends saying "Oh, look at that hunk. Look at those buns," as I watched them fall for fellows who were cute and flashy, which is what the culture says you are supposed to like-and then I would look at Shearwood. He's no Rudolph Valentino. But when I thought about what I wanted out of life ten years down the road, there was Shearwood-intelligent, gentle, generous, caring-and I knew he was the man for me. Even if he didn't have cute buns. I told

myself that I would be marrying my best friend, which was true.¹²

To fulfill the purpose of marriage and family to its most delightful degree you must choose to have this element of phileo love in your relationship. You should choose to marry a friend to share the rest of your life with because of the permanency of marriage and family. Marry a friend of the opposite sex who shares your intimate thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. He or she must also be willing to pursue all your plans and dreams as well as you being willing to pursue your mate's. When marriage is a friendship, life can be a fun adventure together.

5. Divine Love (Spiritual Love)

The Greek word used for the spiritual element of love is agape. Agape's definition is totally unselfish love that has the capacity to give and keep on giving without expecting in return. It is exercised as a choice of your will and has no dependence on feelings. Agape brings a person's feelings into obedience with the will.

The first four elements of love fall into the elements of purely human love. The agape element of love taps into the supernatural. Agape is the element of love that needs God as an accomplice. The Rev. Raoul Plus, S.J. describes the agape element of love as follows:

Supernatural love takes away one thing only from natural and spontaneous love-selfishness, the arch-enemy of love Supernatural love in us seeks to love in the manner and according to the desire of God . . .¹³

I began this discussion of love by saying love is a science, art, and a spiritual endeavor. The agape element of love applies to the science of love, the art of love, and spir-

itual endeavor of love. Agape is the keynote of the meaning of love.

Because of the role that agape plays in the spiritual endeavor (1 Cor. 13:4-13) of love, I will not discuss this heading. However, I do feel I need to consider love as an art.

The Art of Love

Both art and science require technical skill. Both artist and scientist try to create order out of the seemingly random and multifarious experiences of the world. Both try to understand and appreciate the world and to convey their experience to others. An essential difference, however, exists: the scientist studies quantitative sense perceptions in order to discover laws or concepts that are universally true. The artist selects qualitative perceptions and arranges them to express personal understanding. Whereas further investigation may cause a scientific law to be invalidated, a work of art, despite changes in the artist's view or the public's taste, has permanent validity as an aesthetic statement at a particular time and place.

I stated earlier in this chapter that love in every case must have the same make-up or components to be properly defined as a science. However, these factors may differ in methods and configuration from relationship to relationship. This is where the art of love comes into play. Once these five elements of love are understood as needed for a healthy relationship, one is freed up like an artist in the quest for love. An artist has a unique genius to choose his or her subject or subject matter. The material that the artist works from seems to be the most important part of his or her artistry. The artist then, having selected the qualitative perceptions, arranges them to express personal understanding. You will find in the art of love the ability to express your new personal understanding of love. The art of love will enable you to select a better choice for a mate. The art of love is cultivated by an understanding of love and the way you interpret how and whom you will love.

Once you, like an artist, develop genius to choose your subject, your love relationship will have the permanent validity as an aesthetic statement of the purpose of marriage and family.

Choosing How and Whom to Love For The Purpose of Marriage

I stated in the last chapter that for the person who has fatal attractions I believe the third definition of the meaning of marriage and family gives the best insight. Particularly the insight obtained from Pope Pius XI that adds to this definition. Pope Pius said that marriage is for "mutual help, the fostering of reciprocal love, and the abatement of concupiscence."

The most important element of choosing a mate for a person who has a fatal attraction is being able to choose someone who can reciprocate love. We should be able to reason that we need love that is a mutual help to us. Reciprocal love is the healthy environment in which we receive this mutual help.

My definition of reciprocal love is my thesis: To truly be in love with a person you must have all five elements of love. Also, the other person in the relationship must have all five elements of love to reciprocate to you. Without this dynamic in a relationship, you have mutual ruin instead of mutual help.

The Love That Never Was True Love

As we have gone to a great degree to define the love that should be the basis of marriage and family, I have concluded that I have never been in love. That is not to say that I have never loved. Remembering my thesis for love, in any relationship I have had, no one has loved me the way that I have loved them. In my marriage relationship, when we began the relationship, I loved Joan with all five elements of love. However, her love for me only had one or two of the

five elements of love and a component that appeared to be phileo love.

Joan had told me many times after we had gotten married that she never loved me. I did not believe her because I knew that there was an attraction that I called love from her to me. I did not know the true meaning of love when I was married.

However, when Joan told me that she had never loved me, she was saying to me that she never had eros for me. For most women this is the only element of love known.

Women will try to use the epithumia (sexual) element of love to get eros (romantic) love. This is why some women will dress sexy to attract a man. But, in most cases, she wants eros love. When some women marry, they will stop dressing sexy. Nevertheless, she will expect her husband to have eros for her for the rest of her life.

Men will use the eros element of love to get epithumia love. This is why at the beginning of relationships men will send flowers or do those romantic things to attract a woman. When the man marries the woman, usually he will stop being romantic. Moreover, he will expect his wife to fulfill his sexual needs for the rest of his life.

This is why it is so important to have all elements of love at work in a relationship. Agape is so important because agape in a woman will motive her to stay sexy and fulfill her husband's sexual needs. Agape in a man will motive him to stay romantic and fulfill his wife's romantic needs.

Unknown to Joan she was also saying to me that she did not agape or storge me either. Joan's attraction to me had some elements of epithumia, phileo, and eros.

Before I knew the true meaning of love, I was crushed and intrigued over the fact that Joan could marry me and not love me. How could I be so wrong and believe that she loved me?

As I began to apply the true meaning of love, I discovered Joan's attraction to me was physical. The physical

attraction was a part of what drew her to me and played a great part in what drew me to her.

In addition, at the beginning of our relationship there was what appeared to be a deep intimate phileo love. We had begun to talk and share our hurts and disappointments with each other. We began to exchange emotional baggage. At the beginning of our relationship, I carried her baggage, and she carried mine. We shared some new baggage in our relationship. We shared baggage that no one else had ever carried before because we shared some things about ourselves with each other that we had never told anyone else. This appeared to be phileo love.

But, the things we share with each other can best be described as the information that is needed to refer one for psychological counseling.

My relationship with Joan had seemed so confusing to me but now makes sense. Our relationship was doomed from the start. As I look back on failed relationships, one or more of these elements of love were missing. All relationships that have ended end because they are missing one or more of these elements of love. This is something that can be explained by knowing the true meaning of love. These can be some of the most frustrating relationships to have because something is there and something is missing. This is the reason love is so complicated. One person in the relationship can have any combination of the five elements of love. The other person in the relationship could have one element.

The most important element of choosing a mate for a person who has fatal attractions is being able to choose someone who can reciprocate love. Without this dynamic in a relationship, you have mutual ruin instead of mutual help. If you would climb to the highest of which you are capable, choose a mate who will help and not hinder.

Fatal attractions (or codependency) ruin a person's ability to choose a mate who can reciprocate love. Therefore, fatal attractions have been an invisible, dev-

astating force behind the ruin of numerous marriages and families.

Mother To Son

November 6, 1998

Dear Son:

God is building a good foundation in the life of a Christian when seemly one is going down a dusty road full of potholes with the bridges behind them washed out! However, I want you to see that a rock is what God, the solid rock, is looking for in you to build a solid foundation of faith in your life.

And son, may I ask what is the material that's in you that God is searching for with which to build? May it be a solid foundation of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? So stay open and don't be afraid to travel on the path where He is leading you.

Your Mom

Releasing Emotional Ties

- A person who has fatal attractions is not emotionally ready for marriage or a relationship. For the Christian a relationship leads to marriage. Marriage is for emotionally mature adults. When I chose Joan at that time in my life, I wasn't prepared emotionally to have a relationship or a marriage. Therefore, we couldn't have fulfilled the purpose of marriage and family.
- A great marriage requires two healthy people, and the time to get healthy is before you get married. Before I got married to Joan, this should have been my concern: the emotional and mental health of Joan and me as we were considering a lifelong partnership.
- The most important element of choosing a mate for a person who has fatal attractions is being able to choose someone who can reciprocate love on a consistent basis. In fatal relationships, there is some reciprocal love. However, for the most part there is not the reciprocation of the kind of love for a mature adult relationship.
- Marriage is a divine covenant or contract between God, a man, and a woman for the purpose of mutual help to fulfill divine callings, spiritual growth, the fostering of reciprocal love, and the abatement of sexual love. My relationship with Joan did not live up to the purpose of marriage. I had no mutual help to fulfill divine callings or any reciprocal love.
- In fatal attraction relationships and in fatal marriages the features of mutual help and reciprocal love are missing. With these two features missing in a relationship, you have a relationship that is more like a parent-child relationship than a healthy mature relationship

between two adults.

- Fatal attractions have this dynamic of parent-child. With this dynamic, one could never fulfill the true meaning of marriage. When you add to this dynamic of parent-child role-play, the abatement of sexual love, you then commit relational incest.
- If you would climb to the highest of which you are capable, choose a mate who will help and not hinder.

Notes

- 0 Robert F. Winch, *Mate-Selection: A Study of Complementary Needs* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1958), 315.
- 1 Strother A. Campbell, *Making Marriage Christian* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1937), 3.
- 2 John Marshall, *Preparing for Marriage* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962), 21.
- 3 Neil Clark Warren, *Finding the Love of your Life* (Colorado Springs: Focus On The Family Publishing, 1992), 63.
- 4 The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Code Of Canon Law* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 195.
- 5 Strother A. Campbell, *Making Marriage Christian*, 3-4.

Quicksand Love

He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery: love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow; that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking-still-that thing was there. . . . He came to me for help. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksand and clutching at me-but I wasn't holding him out; I was slipping in with him!0

SIX

THE FATAL CARETAKER

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; only a few things are necessary . . ."

Luke 10:41-42a

The headline read, "Man paralyzed in attempt to save suicidal woman's life." The story tells the tragic but somehow heroic event that happened in the life of John Hanansmith. Mr. Hanansmith was a twenty-six year old security guard. His neck was broken trying to catch a sixty-eight year old cancer stricken woman who jumped six stories to her death from the garage of the Sherman Oaks Galleria in a suburb of Los Angeles, California. Mr. Hanansmith's sister had this to say about her brother: ". . . trying to help others is so characteristic of my brother that his family was not surprised by his selfless act."

People who have fatal attractions have some of the same heroic characteristics of Mr. Hanansmith. Yet, they are addicted to a life-style of compulsive helping.

It's A Wonderful Life?

Portrait of A Fatal Caretaker

One heroic character on movie screens that seems to have this same compulsive need to help is George Bailey. Did George Bailey live a wonderful life in Bedford Falls, the

town where he grew up and never left? The writers of this movie seem to think so.

However, what would you say of a man who never fulfilled any of his own hopes and dreams? Not even one. What would you say of a man who wanted to go to college but didn't? What would you say of a man who never traveled to see the world? What is your impression of a man who never left his small town? What would you say of a man who wanted to build bridges but never crossed one? What is your impression of a man who wanted to build skyscrapers but never had gone to the top of one?

George Bailey lived in a town he didn't like. He had a job that he didn't care for at all. George married, which was something he did not want to do. He had children that he did not want. George lived in a house that he disapproved of vehemently.

George Bailey would give himself away to each crisis he faced for the happiness of his family and friends in Bedford Falls. When George's father died, he cancelled his plans to travel and see the world. When the Bailey Building & Loan voted him in as chief executive officer, George postponed his plans to go to college. George would send his brother Harry to college instead with the understanding that he would go and finish college and come back and take over the Bailey Building & Loan. Yet, four years later Harry came back from college married to a woman whose father had offered him a job in research. George would then cancel his plans to go to college. George got married. The day of his wedding the stock market crashed, and there was a run on the bank. George would cancel his own honeymoon to save the Bailey Building & Loan once again. That would be his last chance to travel. When Uncle Billy lost an \$8,000 deposit, George would consider suicide to get the money on a life insurance policy to pay the bank. When Clarence the angel jumped into the icy waters from a bridge on a snowy winter night, George jumped in to save him.

George Bailey was a big dreamer. He would lasso the

moon for the woman he loves. He wanted to travel and see the world. George wanted to go to college. After college, he wanted to build bridges and skyscrapers. These were his hopes and dreams.

Everyone in George's life got what he or she wanted. Mary, the woman he married, was able to go to college, marry George whom she loved, live in a house that she wished to live in. Harry, his brother, was able to go to college, marry his college sweetheart; he traveled, became a war hero, and met the president of the United States. The people whom George worked for at the Bailey Building & Loan were able to live in new homes they wished to live in. All of George's friends got to go to college and moved to New York. Even the angel, Clarence, got his wings for helping George to see he lived a wonderful life!? Everyone but George, in my judgment, lived a wonderful life. George Bailey is a classic example of a person I call the "fatal caretaker." In his effort to take care of others, he lost his own identity. In losing his identity to take care of others, he formed his identity, which was the basis of his so-called wonderful life. This wonderful life was lived in the Bedford Falls of lost hopes and dreams.

Langston Hughes once wrote this commentary on the Bedford Falls of lost hopes and dreams:

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.¹

George Bailey, with every crisis, would lose a part of his own hopes, dreams, and identity. Instead of considering sui-

cide by jumping from a bridge to save the Bailey Building & Loan once again, George should have been building bridges. George was addicted to a life-style of compulsive helping. He was a broken-winged bird that could not fly.

Who Am I?

I can remember being in an African-American history class in high school. On the first day of that class the teacher asked this question: "Who are you?" We were to answer this question without stating our name. This was a hard question for the class to answer without using our names. The teacher's thesis was, "You are the sum total of your past experiences."

As my marriage to Joan ended, I came face to face with this question. Who am I? Bedford Falls to me was the fatal family that I grew up in and never left. I was like George Bailey who was thought to have lived a wonderful life. However, I was just addicted to a life-style of compulsive helping.

Like George Bailey, I had big hopes and big dreams for God to use me as a minister. I wanted to go to seminary. I wanted to travel and build God spiritual bridges and skyscrapers. For the woman I loved, I wanted to lasso the moon. Yet, I had given myself away to the happiness of Joan in Bedford Falls.

I gave myself away at work full-time. I gave myself away at home in a fatal relationship, which was a full-time job. In my relationship with Joan, there was always a crisis to give myself to when I got home. I didn't know what it was like to have peace in my home.

I now realize that I was the sum total of my past experiences. I am an adult child of alcoholism and drug addiction. I had some-how repeated the cycle of my past experiences in my childhood home.

A vast number of adult children of alcoholics either become alcoholics themselves, or marry them (or

persons with another compulsive disorder), thus recreating the harmful family system from which they came . . ."2

Instead of coming home to deal with the daily crises of an alcoholic step-dad and drug addicted sister, which was the Bedford Falls that I grew up in, I was coming home dealing with the daily crises of a manic-depressive wife (Num. 34:7). This was the Bedford falls I never left. I had given myself away to each day's crisis as a young man, and that is how I formed my identity. In my effort to take care of others, I lost my own identity. In losing my identity to take care of others, I formed my identity. I was a broken-winged bird that could not fly when I went looking for a wife. I naturally wanted a broken-winged woman. Joan was the perfect broken-winged woman for me.

Joan's leaving was a continuing process of every crutch in my life being taken away. I was laid-off my job about a month before Joan left. Joan left, and I lost her and the children. I lost my position at the church. Everything that I got my identity from was lost. I was emotionally nude. I had to face myself for the first time in my life and begin to form an identity. I had to kick the dust off my feet (Matt. 10:14) in this crummy little town of Bedford Falls. I would have never accomplished any of my hopes and dreams had not the emotional crutches of Bedford Falls been removed. I had to learn to walk without the emotional crutches of my past. I had an identity crisis. Who was I? I was addicted to a life-style of compulsive helping. I was a fatal caretaker.

The outward appearance of a fatal caretaker's life may seem heroic. However, a compulsion is not heroic; it is a sickness. This sickness is shown most evidently in a fatal caretaker's choice in romantic relationships.

The Fatal Caretaker: Romantic Relationships

The fatal caretaker in romantic relationships is intuitively attracted to pain-stricken people who are falling to their deaths through alcoholism, drug addiction, or other compulsive disorders. They then feel compelled like John Hanansmith to stop them from falling. In the relationship they become paralyzed by what they call love. A very good example of a paralytic that I call the fatal caretaker is Vi. Vi is married to Len who is an alcoholic.

As strange as it may sound, individuals like Vi often seem attracted to persons with a drinking or other drug problem, despite their insistence that they find such habits deplorable. Everyone is acquainted with the woman who stays married to an alcoholic husband for twenty or thirty years apparently getting very little that seems to be rewarding or positive for herself. She may spend a major portion of her time taking care of her husband and fussing and pleading with him to quit his drinking. She may look for hidden bottles and pour the contents down the sink when she finds them. She may even leave him but usually comes back after a few days, and the pattern is repeated again and again. With these couples it is hard to determine who has the bigger problem.

The Bigger Problem

This may sound like an extreme position to take in the evaluation of this couple. However, the fatal caretaker may have the bigger problem. Vi is a fatal caretaker. Vi may be the one with the bigger problem.

I worked with a singles' group in my church for about five years. In my work, I discovered that most of our singles'

group was composed of single women. Every woman in the group wanted a nice or good man. Every man in the group seemed to want a nice or good woman. Yet, many of these men and women through their years of dating had this philosophy. The men's bitter philosophy of women was that there were no good women. I in my limited experience with women had this philosophy also. The women's bitter philosophy of men was that church men were boring. Men in general were dogs. And if I have to choose between a boring man and a dog, I choose the dog.

It seemed that many of the men and women were embittered by past relationships. However, as I think back, I can not believe that these men and women could not find one good person in the group, the men especially in this group. I also have come to believe that a person with this philosophy of the opposite sex really has the bigger problem.

As I look back through the eyes of a fatal caretaker and a fatal fool for love, I can think of a few women I should have pursued. These women were nice and sweet. Yet, the women who had a fatal edge to them bewitched me. I was attracted to the embittered vixen.

"Why do men want Delilahs?" the acutely observant essayist Phillip Lopate asked rhetorically. "Why is the Bad Woman, the deceitful betrayer in all her film noir guises," so magnetically attractive. Yes, there are the conventional reasons, Lopate conceded: "Her treacheries are exciting in an operatic . . . way, they keep you feeling alive and angry, and anger is an aphrodisiac."³

The women who were sweet and sour caught my eye every time. I had a bigger problem.

William July II does a good job at answering the above question in a chapter in his book entitled, *Are You Ready For A Good Man?* I would like you to think of his remarks in

a gender-neutral way. His remarks will apply to men just as much as they do to women.

Women (or men) who are always saying they want a good man but end up with duds need to take a long look in the mirror. Although many of them say they're sick and tired of men who cause all sorts of problems in their lives, they continue to loop back around to those same types of men (or women) time after time. This type of woman is usually sure there is nothing wrong with her. Instead, she's convinced that the men (or women) of the world are the problem. To make matters worse, she's (or he's) probably surrounded by girlfriends (or guys) who feel the same way, and who don't challenge her (or him) to take a look at herself (or himself) and the bad choices she's (or he's) making . . . The problem, in other words, is not that we attract a certain kind of person, but rather that we are attracted to a certain kind of person.⁴

I think that Valerie Shaw in her book *Himpressions* gives good insights to this dilemma as well. Take her remarks in a gender-neutral way also. Her remarks will apply to men just as much as they do to women.

Every normal, breathing single Sister (or man) says she (or he) is looking for a nice guy (girl). Yet when she finds him, she treats him like the best friend of a new bride who tags along on the honeymoon. Sure, he's a man (or woman) with feelings, and she doesn't really want to lose him. But then, on the other hand, she wonders why he hangs around where he's not wanted. Another problem with nice guys (or girls): because they're there, it's tempting to do unto them as you've been done unto. If you're being jerked around by some heel (or heelette), sometimes

you just have to give someone else the boot!⁵

The fatal caretaker has the bigger problem because of the compulsive need to help. You can only help those who are in trouble. Fatal caretakers appear to be saints in relationships. Fatal caretakers give of themselves in relationships and receive little in return. The fatal caretaker has a need to be needed.

Relationships should be entered into out of a desire for companionship. Companionship should be a lifelong friendship. Friendship is sharing. Sharing in relationships is a mutual giving and receiving. Any healthy relationship should be a lifetime friendship that is based on sharing. Therefore, fatal caretakers must examine themselves emotionally and mentally before considering entering a relationship or marriage. Fatal caretakers appear to be saints, but they "ain't." They have a compulsive need to be needed.

The fatal caretaker's relationship will resemble the words to this country-western song entitled "She's Got To Be A Saint."

I'm out late ev'ry night, doin' things that ain't right,
And she'll cry for me. When I'm down in the dumps
and she nurses my lumps, How she cries for me.

And she'll never complain, she keeps hiding the
pain. But I know all the while: She's not feeling too
well 'cause I've put her thru hell; Still she forces a
smile.

She's got to be a saint, Lord knows that I ain't. I finally
realized right before my eyes, Here is a saint.
There's dress in the shop that'll make her eyes pop.
But she'll look away She'd-a gotten a lift if I bought
her that gift. For her birthday. But her birthday has
come and I feel like a bum. Cause I spent my last

dime On a worthless old friend on a drunken week-end. I've done it time after time.

She's got to be a saint, Lord knows that I ain't. I finally realized right before my eyes, Here is a saint . . .⁶

The woman in the song is a fatal caretaker. She is addicted to this relationship just as much as her husband is addicted to alcohol. She may appear to be heroic, wonderful, and a saint. However, she is just an addict. She is addicted to need.

Addicted to Need

The fatal caretaker in a relationship may appear to be in love. This person may have some of the elements of love spoken of in chapter five. This is the reason why fatal caretakers in relationships can be so complicated. The fatal caretaker could have all but one element of love in the relationship. The other person in the relationship could have one or more elements as well. So there may be the appearance of true love. However, what appears to be love can really be the fatal caretaker's unconscious attempt to get a selfish need met. Therefore, the fatal caretaker is missing the most important element of love, which is agape. In chapter five, agape is the supernatural love that takes away one thing from natural love. That one thing is selfishness, which is the arch-enemy of true love. Love does not seek its own (1 Cor. 13:5b).

The Fatal Caretaker: Discerning What Is Acceptable Behavior

I am 28 and strongly in love with a young man who is two years younger. He paints cars for a living. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for this man. We have known each other for about two and a half years

and we have even tried to live together. I recently bought a new home and I am looking forward to him being there with me, whether or not he pays any bills. I just feel happy, whenever he's around. When he's at my place I fix his lunch, do his laundry, cook and clean the house-the whole nine yards. He only tells me he loves me when we're making love, and that's it. He snorts cocaine three to four times a week. I am really trying to work with him because everybody else just turns their backs to him, and I would really hate to see a good man like him just go to waste. Should I continue to let this man tell me he's going to quit using drugs and using me for the things I do for him, which is a lot, or just forget about him and find myself someone who is willing to do 50/50 in a relationship?

A woman that is ready for a beneficial and nourishing relationship is not interested in playing mother to a brother. A man in a healthy relationship should be looking for a lover, not a mother (1 Cor. 6:18; Gen. 2:24)

One of the keys for fatal caretakers to establish beneficial and nourishing relationships is to recognize this unconscious attempt to get selfish needs met. However, this will not be the only key for the fatal caretaker. Another key would be being able to discern what acceptable behavior is in relationships. This for the fatal caretaker will be an immense task. This task is immense because the fatal caretaker has been desensitized to acceptable behavior in relationships. The fatal caretaker can not discern that he or she is in an abusive relationship. This is what a young lady by the name of Sandra had to say about her abusive relationship. "I had no idea I was being abused. Then my mother showed me a book and I read other girls' stories of their abuse. I realized what they were saying was happening to me. It changed my thinking from 'What did I do wrong?' to 'I don't deserve to be treated like this.'"⁷

The fatal caretakers in relationships are “in love and in danger.” This is the title of a book written by Barrie Levy for teens in abusive relationships. Many fatal caretakers are in or have been in very destructive relationships. The fatal caretakers are in or have been in relationships with alcoholics, drug addicts, compulsive gambling, and men or women with other compulsive disorders. They fall in love with men or women who will not work, who force them to have sex, are emotionally or physically abusive, and men or women who have been unfaithful. Because of their emotional scars of the past and present they can not discern acceptable behavior. The fatal caretaker has increased tolerance for unacceptable behavior in relationships. In an article entitled “On Being Addicted to the Addict-Co-Dependent Relationships,” Kathy Capell-Sowder does a great job explaining this phenomenon. In Kathy’s discourse, I will replace the word co-dependent with the term for fatal caretaker.

As the alcoholic loses control of the amounts and frequency of his drinking, the fatal caretaker naturally loses more control of the drinker and his behavior, and as the alcoholic’s tolerance for alcohol increases, the fatal caretaker hangs on more compulsively to her defenses, however unconscious, designed to control the drinker and his response. Therefore, she, too, is in essence building an “increase in tolerance” to unacceptable behavior from the drinker (one characteristic of enabling), and losing control, not only of the drinker’s responses, but her own emotions, mood-swings and reactions.

The fatal caretakers are instinctively and powerfully attracted to people who are not in their best interests. They have developed a tolerance for unacceptable behavior. This is why the fatal caretaker can be in love and in danger. The fatal caretakers have tolerated in relationships all kinds of abusive behaviors.

Fatal Caretakers and Tolerance

Are you giving yourself completely in a relationship and tolerating this kind of behavior (1 Cor. 13:4-7)? Do you tolerate a relationship with a man or woman who is extremely jealous and possessive? Do you tolerate in a relationship a man or woman with an explosive temper? Do you allow this man or woman with this temper to break your things or throw things at you? Do you tolerate a boyfriend or girlfriend who is an alcoholic or drug addict? Do you allow the man or woman you are in a relationship with to hit, push, or kick you? Do you tolerate your mate in a relationship to threaten to hurt or kill you or someone you love like a family member?

Are you tolerating a man who only says “I love you” when he is having sex with you or trying to have sex (1 Cor. 13:5b)? Are you in a relationship where the man or woman forces or intimidates you to have sex (1 Cor. 13:4)? Are you in a relationship where sex or withholding sex is used as a weapon to control you (1 Cor. 7:3-6)? Do you believe that sex should only be in marriage but tolerate a man or a woman who continually tries to devise plans to get you to have sex (1 Cor. 6:18)? Do you tolerate this line in your relationship: “If you loved me, you would (1 Cor. 6:19-20)?” If you tolerate this kind of behavior, you are not in love; you are in danger!

Do You Tolerate OO7 Relationship?

“My name is Bond. James Bond.” Hearing these words in a coming attraction for a movie about to be released, we know what to expect. James Bond OO7 is about to be released to save the world again. OO7 is a spy. OO7’s vocation calls for him to get secret information about valuable military, political, scientific, and economic facts about the enemy. James Bond movies are always filled with danger, love, and technology.

With James Bond OO7 in mind, I ask you, “Are you in a

OO7 relationship?” A OO7 relationship is a relationship where the jealous and possessive man or woman spies on the other person in the relationship (1 Cor. 13:4c). OO7 in the relationship must know everything you do, every place you go, and every person you see, and every secret you have. You must give OO7 an account for every moment you are away from him or her. You must get permission from OO7 to go out, get a job, go to church, to see your friends, to see family, and even to see your own parents. OO7 constantly calls you at home and at work. He or she calls you on your beeper, e-mail, voice mail, call-notes, answering machine, instant messenger, palm pilot, web phone, cell phone, and in your favorite chat room to check up on you.

Since OO7 is always watching you, he or she will spot the guys or girls who are flirting with you and accuse you of flirting with them. OO7 will wrongly and repeatedly accuse you of seeing other guys or girls even when his or her spy efforts have not fostered any secret evidence against you. However, you are almost convinced that OO7 in your relationship is a double agent. You feel bonded. James Bonded. You are bonded to Sue, Mark, Jenny, or Joan. Your relationship is always filled with danger, so-called love, and technology.

Fatal Caretaker Tolerance and the Law

Most of the times the fatal caretaker in the relationship will tolerate unacceptable behavior in the relationship in order to help the other person to change. Much of the unacceptable behavior that the fatal caretaker tolerates is illegal by law. Do you tolerate illegal behavior in your relationship? Have you ever been in the car when your mate was intoxicated? Was your mate going over the speed limit while intoxicated? Do you allow illegal substances in your home such as drugs? Do you have to be concerned about a mate having illegal substances in your home? Has the person you are seeing stolen from you? Do you allow the person you are with to pawn your belongings without your permission? People

go to jail everyday charged for these illegal acts that the fatal caretaker tolerates.

Assaults, beatings, sexual coercion, rape- these are illegal ... Violent boyfriends or girlfriends can be charged with:

Criminal harassment: subjecting you to physical contact, following you around or phoning you continually; it is done to harass, alarm, or annoy you.

Reckless endangerment: placing you in serious fear of bodily injury or death.

Assault: intentionally or negligently causing or attempting to cause bodily injury.

Aggravated assault: intentionally or negligently causing or attempting to cause grave injury, as with a weapon.

Rape or attempted rape: sexual intercourse (penetration of the vagina) forced by violence or threat of violence.

Sexual assault: touching, rubbing, stroking or using object in a sex act forced by violence or threat of violence. Also, touching, rubbing, or stroking by an adult of someone who is under eighteen.

Sodomy: forced penetration of the anus. Forced oral sex. ⁸

Fatal caretakers will accept this unacceptable behavior in their relationship. Sadly, while they are in this type of relationship they will be giving themselves fully and completely to their mates. The fatal caretakers in the relationship may seem heroic from outward of appearances. However, they are just fatal fools for love.

Releasing Emotional Ties

- People who have fatal attractions must realize that they are the sum total of their past experiences. I now realize that I was the sum total of my past experiences. As it was said in this chapter, “A vast number of adult children of alcoholics either become alcoholics themselves, or marry them (or persons with another compulsive disorder), thus recreating the harmful family system from which they came.” This is so true. I had married Joan who would later in our marriage be diagnosed as having manic depression, now known as bipolar disorder. I was a broken-winged bird that could not fly when I went looking for a wife. Joan was the perfect broken-winged woman for me (Rom. 12:2).
- The outward appearance of a fatal caretaker’s romantic relationships may seem heroic. However, a compulsion is not heroic; it is a sickness. What appears to be love can really be the fatal caretaker’s unconscious attempt to get a selfish need met. Therefore, the fatal caretaker is missing the most important element of love, which is agape. In chapter five, agape is the supernatural love that takes away one thing from natural love. That one thing is selfishness, which is the arch-enemy of true love. Love does not seek its own (1 Cor. 13:5b). Fatal caretakers appear to be saints, but they “ain’t.”
- One of the keys for fatal caretakers to overcome fatal attractions and establish beneficial and nourishing relationships is to recognize this unconscious attempt to get a selfish need met. I thought I loved Joan with all five elements of love and even stated this in earlier chapters. However, I was just trying to get an unconscious selfish need met (1 Cor. 13:5b). I had fooled myself.

- People who have fatal attractions and titanic love affairs must realize that they don’t deserve to be treated poorly (Gen 1:27; Ps. 139:13-14). Hence, another key to overcoming fatal attractions would be discerning what acceptable behavior is in relationships. This for the fatal caretaker will be an immense task. This task is immense because the fatal caretaker has been desensitized to acceptable behavior in relationships. The fatal caretaker can not discern that he or she is in an abusive relationship. Fatal caretakers in relationships are normally “in love and in danger.” I had no idea that I was in an abusive relationship. However, later on in the marriage I began to think I deserved to be treated better than Joan was treating me. Joan had even made this statement herself.

Notes

- 0 Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (New York: New Directions Books, 1947), 111.
- 1 Arnold Rampersad, *The Collected Poems Of Langston Hughes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 32.
- 2 Health Communications, Inc., *Co-Dependency An Emerging Issue* (Pompano Beach: Health Communications, Inc., 1984), 2.
- 3 106. Ron Rosenbaum, "In Praise of Dangerous Women," *Esquire Magazine*, March 1996, 110.
- 4 William July II, *Brothers, Lust, and Love: Thoughts on Manhood, Sex, and Romance* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 102.
- 5 Valerie Shaw, *Himpressions: The Blackwoman's Guide to Pampering the Blackman* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1996), 31.
- 6 Dr. James C. Dobson, *Love Must Be Tough* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 25-26.
- 7 Barrie Levy, *In Love and Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1993), 41.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 85.

Recommended Reading List

As of this (May 2000) date you can order these books @ www.family.org or amazon.com.

Adams, Samuel and Young, Ben. *The Ten Commandments of Dating*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.

Beattie, Melody. *Beyond Codependency and Getting Better All The Time*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1996.

Cloud, Henry and Townsend, John. *Making Dating Work Boundaries in Dating*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000.

Dobson, James C. *Love Must Be Tough. New Hope For Families in Crisis*. Waco: Word Books, 1996.

Levy, Barrie. *In Love and in Danger*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1993.

Mellody, Pia, Miller, Andrew W, and Miller J. Keith. *Facing Love Addiction Giving Yourself the Power to Change the Way You Love*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.

Warren, Neil Clark. *Finding the Love of your Life*. Colorado Springs: Focus On The Family Publishing, 1992.

Warren, Neil Clark. *How to Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing in Two Dates or Less*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.

Problem Lover

Gerald, a handsome and personable man in his early forties, calls himself “a success in business but a failure in relationships with women.” During high school and college, Gerald dated many women. He was popular and considered a good catch. However, after graduation, Gerald stunned his family and friends when he married Rita. Rita treated Gerald worse than any other woman he had dated. . . . Thirteen years later, the marriage ended in divorce when Gerald discovered some things he had suspected for years were true: Rita had been dating other men since they were married, and she was abusing alcohol and other drugs. . . . “Give me a room full of women, and I’ll fall in love with the one with the most problems—the one that will treat me the worst. Frankly, they’re more of a challenge,” Gerald confided. “If a woman treats me too well, it turns me off.”⁰

SEVEN

THE FATAL FOOL FOR LOVE

After this it came about that he (Samson) loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Judges 16:4

As I begin my confession, I am reminded of the country western song entitled “Some Fools Never Learn,” which discusses this phenomenon of the fatal fool for love who can love someone without being loved in return. The song ends like this:

Some fools never learn
 You play with the fire and you’re gonna get burned
 It’s only love when you’re loved in return
 Some fools never learn
 Some fools never learn
 Some fools never learn

Fatal caretakers are fatal fools for love. They will accept all kinds of unacceptable behavior in their relationships.

Confession of a Fatal Caretaker

Like fatal fools for love because of my family background, I had devolved a high tolerance for unacceptable behavior. When you come from a family environment where unacceptable behavior is an everyday occurrence, unacceptable becomes the norm. Therefore, most people from this environment can not discern what acceptable should be or what is normal for relationships. I had noticed the unacceptable behavior in my ex-wife, Joan, before we got mar-

ried, but for me this was normal.

When Joan and I first started dating, I noticed she was extremely jealous and possessive. This should have been a red flag for me to stop the relationship. I had many red flags before we got married. Joan had a very explosive temper. Before we got married, she once attacked me. These should have been the signs I needed to end the relationship. I was in an abusive relationship and did not know it because for me this was normal in my family.

After we married, things got worse. Joan was extremely jealous and possessive, had an explosive temper, broke my things, threw things at me, and threatened to hurt women from my past. A few times, I came home to find my suitcases on the front porch waiting for me. If she was really mad at me, she would attack my books. I loved my books. I had to account for my every moment because she would accuse me of seeing other women. There were many nights I felt I had to sleep with one eye open.

I was clearly in love and in danger even before I got married. I had accepted unacceptable behavior before and after we got married. I was a fatal fool for love. Some fools never learn. However, this fool did.

Fatal Fool For Love: Endorsed By Acceptance

People who came from fatal families where unacceptable behavior was endorsed by acceptance grow up to be very ridiculous when it comes to love. Ridiculous means absurd, ludicrous, nonsensical, preposterous, foolish, irrational, idiotic, and stupid. If these words can be used of how you feel about your choice or choices in relationships, then you are a fatal fool for love.

Fatal Loneliness

Fatal fools for love are very lonely people because they grow up in households where unacceptable behavior was acceptable. Most of the time they never expressed their feelings. Feelings of disappointment, anger, resentment, fear, and even love went unexpressed. Therefore, the unexpressed emotions begin to create a deep vacuum of loneliness in their souls. They are in many ways partial people looking for a love that will fill their vacuum of loneliness.

He groaned softly. He had sent her away because he was losing control of his desire, of the fierce hunger that drove him relentlessly, urging him to take what he needed, to bring her across the vast gulf that separated them so that she might ease the loneliness of his endless existence. He had always been arrogant and selfish, but he had never been cruel, and so he had sent her away to protect her for his own desire.¹

Fatal fools for love are people who are looking for someone to ease the loneliness of his or her endless existence. Some people to abandon loneliness will use drugs, alcohol, or develop other compulsive behaviors to fill the hole in their souls. Other people use relationships to fill the hole in their souls. These people would rather be with anybody than to be alone and lonely. This also leaves them open to make idiotic choices for relationships. Because they are drowning in the sea of loneliness, they will latch on to any relationship or life preserver thrown their way. However, the boats that sail in this sea only have life preserver with holes in them. The person drowning will hold on for dear life, not recognizing that he or she is sinking to death, dying to not be alone.

. . . women feel: ALONE. In dealing with what I call the underlying "CYCLE OF MEN" PROBLEM (no man, that man, any man), we will do anything to

keep a man—even a bad one—that is not healthy . . . Then we go out, don't get on with our lives, feel lonely, and choose someone of the same ilk (any man). Get abused again and believe we were better off with the first guy (that man). We feel locked into bad relationships—but forget we have the key.²

The feeling of belonging is one of the most important aspects of the human psyche. The feeling of belonging is also one of the elements of love mentioned in chapter five. When one is isolated in the family by adults who accept unacceptable behavior, the children in this family unit become very lonely because of the emotional turmoil of unexpressed emotions. Any adult children from this background of loneliness will be lonely their whole lives. They will look for mates to fulfill this need. They will marry and find themselves lonelier than ever. This is what one young lady by the name of Billiana had to say about this feeling. "I was lonely in my marriage, and I would have preferred to be lonely alone. There's something less lonely about that than being lonely with someone."³

Lonely in A Relationship

A young lady by the name of Blanche was asked this question: "What do you do on the days that you're miserable?" This is how she answered:

I call a friend. Exercise, go on a bike spree, try to get to work reading and writing. It's usually pretty acute, but not lasting. It's in transition, like when people leave. Sometimes it's also lonely when you leave a party. Or after you give a great talk. Like when you accomplish something and you have people around you—and then you're back by yourself. If things are bad, I sort of need other people to help me not hate myself . . . Now, do you want to talk about loneliness when you're with somebody? That's worse.⁴

Children who have never formed intimate relationships with their parents will have a difficult time forming intimate relationships with anyone else. Since they can not form intimate relationships, they often find themselves in relationships feeling lonelier than ever. This is a fatal loneliness. There is a vacuum in their hearts, which longs for intimacy, that haunts them. Their whole lives they feel as if there is a dark cloud following them from abusive relationship to abusive relationship. Often times these fatally lonely people are suicidal (Heb. 13:5-6). A lot of time these fatally lonely people end up dead by their own hands or by the hands of their mates.

Tragic Stories:

Fatal Fools for Love

In Oscar Hammerstien II and Otto Preminger's movie musical "Carmen Jones," an adaptation of Bizet's "Carmen," Don Jose is Joe, a young soldier headed for flying school but who instead is ruined by Carmen. Carmen is a very beautiful, popular, and an unrestrained vixen. In her first musical score, Carmen begins to share her thesis on love. Carmen sings in broken English a very insightful song about love. Joe would give Carmen a diamond stud. Joe was a fatal fool for love.

Dat's Love

I want pick out a man
And he want pick out me
It don't go dat way
You can't ever know
Where your crazy heart wants to go

Love's a baby that grows up wild
And he don't do what you want him to
Love ain't no bodies angel child
He want pay any mind to you

One man gives me his diamond stud
And I want give him a cigarette

One man treats me like I was mud
And all I got that man can get
Dat's love, Dat's love, Dat's love, Dat's love⁵

Me and Ms. Jones

I can really relate to Joe's story. Before Joe met Carmen, he was a bright young soldier with the world before him. He was to begin flying school within twenty-four hours. He was the only man on his base chosen to attend flying school. He was a black man in World War II. This made his appointment an even greater honor. He met Carmen, and in twenty-four hours his life was ruined.

At this point in the writing of this book, Joan has been gone about a year. My life has been ruined for about a year. No one will hire me in the profession that I am studying. In the words of the last organization that I interviewed with, "We don't think you will be good to work with our kids because of your family problems." In other words, because Joan left you for your brother-in-law's brother, we do not think that you will work out here. This is a recurring theme in the last few interviews that I have had.

Therefore, here I am. I have lost my wife. I have lost my daughter who is half way around the world. I have lost my two stepsons with whom I love with all my heart. I lost my job. I lost my church. Now I have to drop out of school because I did not get a job that would have worked out perfectly for me to be in school and pay my back bills in school. I have lost everything that was dear to me.

In addition, after this interview, I have had to drop out of school and move in with my mother. Now I am a thirty-one year old man living with his mother out of necessity and not by choice. This was the final blow to my male ego. I am truly at the end of myself.

A Dream

After writing this section of the book, I had a dream. I dreamed that I was going to be a part of a protest walk. The issue that I would be protesting was a very controversial issue. In the dream, the issue was not stated. I showed up early to the protest walk with my friends. My friends and I were having a good time talking before the walk was to begin. When the walk began, I started to walk. It was then that I noticed that my friends were there to protest the protest walk. At the beginning of the walk my friends were cutting me off and making it very difficult to walk. At first, I thought it was funny. I began the walk laughing with my friends. I ended the walk having to run away from my friends with tears in my eyes to finish the protest (Ps. 126:5). The protest walk turned into a race.

I immediately understood what this dream meant. These organizations that I would like to work for are composed of good people. They have been chosen to save the world. I would feel very comfortable calling these people my friends. The dream was telling me that my friends were rejecting me. The rejection of my friends made the gratifying protest walk or cause turn into a race for my life. My dream was telling me that I would finish the race or overcome this difficult time in my life with tears in my eyes (Ps. 126:5). However, I would have to outlive or outrun the difficulties of this time in my life (Heb. 6:10&12). The difficulties I was having came from the people who should have understood.

Groundhog Day

I am perplexingly trying to go on with my life. Nevertheless, with each job interview it is like Groundhog Day. I emerge from the winter of my discontent only to see my shadow. There will be six more weeks of winter. My life gives credence to the life of Phil in the movie Groundhog Day. The theme of the movie is that Phil, a disgusting, ego-

tistical weather forecaster played by Bill Murray, because of his loathsome behavior, is condemned to live Groundhog Day over and over again permanently. It seems, like Phil and I have been permanently condemned to live Groundhog Day over and over and over again. I have been trapped in some kind of time-lapse apparently until the end of time.

Before I met Joan, I was a bright young soldier for God with the world before me. I was a fly-boy chosen to bring hope to this world. Now I am beginning to wonder if there is any hope for me (Col. 1:23). I have heard it said that "it is better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all." This is one of the most foolish statements I have heard. I would like to have never loved. My life is ruined a whole year after Joan left me for another man. After Joan left, I filed for a divorce.

Deadly Divorce

Getting a divorce is only slightly less harmful to your health than smoking a pack or more of cigarettes per day. Divorced men who smoke have a 71 per cent greater risk of premature death from cancer than married men who puff as much. The premature death rate from cardiovascular disease for divorced men is twice that of married men. The premature death rates due to pneumonia and suicide for white divorced men are four and seven times, respectively, those of their married counterparts. Both men and women who divorce are more likely to succumb to substance abuse. For example, adults who are separated or divorced are 4.5 times more likely to become alcohol dependent than comparable married persons. And divorce-escalated mortality and illness rates are not just an American phenomenon. In countries as diverse as Taiwan, Sweden, Canada, and Germany, divorced men had the highest death rates, higher even than other unmarried (single, wid-

owed) men.⁶

"Few decisions in life are more important than the choice of a mate, . . . either makes or ruins him. Love is responsible for a multitude of life's tragedies . . ."⁷

I, like Don Jose and Joe, have been a fatal fool for love in an operatic manner.

Another Dream

This has been a very difficult time in my life. A week has passed since the last time I have written. This morning I had another dream. I usually do not remember my asleep dreams. I was sitting watching a movie in a movie theater with a crowd of people. Then these two big bullies came walking down to the front and changed the channel like it was a TV. All the people in the crowd were upset and started to walk out. I was infuriated. I went down front to the big bullies and began to confront them both. I was enraged. I began to poke one of the big bullies with my index finger. Then I noticed what was coming on. It caught my attention. It was a story about my old high school. At that moment, I forgot about what I had been watching. I was more interested now in what was coming on. Since the crowd thought I was being a hero for confronting these two bullies, I said to the bullies, "Make it seem like you are making me sit down to watch." The bully I was poking with my finger took hold of my index finger and forced me to sit down. The bullies and I began to watch what was on. I woke up.

The dream was telling me that I was in for a violent change in my life (Isa. 45:2-3). The two bullies were two angels who had the power from God to change my life by force. In the force of the life change, I would be upset. I will be enraged. However, when I see the change coming, I will

quiet down. I will forget all that I have been through in my life (Gen. 45:7-8; 41:51-52). I will enjoy the difference the change will make because for me high school was the best time of my life. The dream was telling me to be open to change.

Open To Change

If you see yourself in the chapters of this book, be open to change. If you want this to be more than a reading of a book, you must be open to change. I have split many hairs talking about the same subject matter of fatal attractions. In the first chapter, we defined fatal attraction. In chapters two and three, we defined the family legacy-past, present, and future-of a person who has fatal attractions. From the information gained in chapters two and three, in chapter four we had to determine the boundaries of the purpose of our choice for a mate. This led us to define the meaning of marriage, which helps us to set boundaries for our present relationships. We could not talk about marriage without love, so in chapter five we talked about love and marriage. Having a clear understanding of love also helps us to set boundaries. In chapter six, we embody the fatal caretaker to learn what it is that the person who has fatal attractions is getting out of a titanic love affair. We learned that a fatal caretaker has no boundaries in relationships. This too will help us to begin to set boundaries. Chapter seven is a picture of a fatal caretaker in love. We have concluded that a fatal caretaker in love is a fatal fool for love. We can also understand that a fatal fool for love can ruin his or her life for love. In the next chapter (or book), we will see a fatal fool for love in marriage, which is where most of the destruction takes place.

There Must Be Change

However, in order to make a difference in the people you choose to have relationships with, you must be open to

change. The change that most of us have to make will change the quality of the relationships that we will have in the future. This change will affect the destiny and quality of the relationships that our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren will choose to have in the future. With this in mind, we must be open to change.

Undoubtedly, I know I am writing to people who have various degrees of fatal attractions. Applying the mechanics or the laws of motion in physics, we know that for every action there is an opposite yet equal reaction (Gal. 6:9). The change that you must be willing to make in your life is a change that is equal to the opposite, yet equal, reaction to the circumstances of your fatal attractions.

One person who comes from a good family background could have had a fatal attraction experience, while another person may have thought that he or she has come from a good family and has had a lifetime of fatal attractions. Fatal attractions vary by countless degrees. However, if you have a lifetime of fatal attractions and you want your life to change, let us not play the emotional game of considering ourselves victim. We must be willing to do whatever it takes to change. This means it will take work.

For those of you who are in love and in danger, the change that you must make will put you in provoked danger. It may even put me in danger for writing this book to encourage you to change in some extreme cases. However, like me, you must be willing to change, or forever be a fatal fool for love.

The force of the life change will be upsetting. However, when you see the difference the change will make in you and in your choice for a mate, you will become more settled with the change. After the process of the change, you will forget all that you have been through in your life. You will enjoy the difference the change will make. The dream I had is now the dream for you. The dream is now telling you to be open to change.

Fork in The Road

You are now at the proverbial fork in the road. You have to make a selection. You can either live the dream or live the nightmare. Both of these selections will take work. Those of you who will select the dream will apply the principle I have shared and learn more about yourself, marriage, and family. Those who don't will select the nightmare.

There are some that have reached this fork in the road while they are in a fatal relationship or in a fatal marriage. You have to make a difference but the same selection. Your selections are to live the dream or to continue to live the nightmare that you have been living. You are in the fatal marriage. Heaven has no rage like love to hate returned nor hell a furor like a marriage scorned.

Releasing Emotional Ties

- The dream I had is now the dream for you. The dream is now telling you to be open to change. You are now at the proverbial fork in the road. You have to make a selection. You can either live the dream or live the nightmare. The force of the life change will be upsetting. However, when you see the difference the change will make in you and in your choice for a mate, you will become more settled with the change (James 1:2-4).
- For those of you who are in love and in danger. The change that you must make will put you in provoked danger. For you will have to leave and stay away from that situation before change in you can take place (1 Cor. 7:10-11). We must be willing to do whatever it takes to change. This means it will take work. Some fools do learn! It's only love when you're loved in return.
- Please take a proactive approach to the preservation of the family. Seek counseling for codependency or any other fatal family traumas. Seek counseling for divorce, spouse abuse, child abuse, verbal abuse, rape, sex abuse, incest, depression, and abortion. If you are struggling with bisexual emotions, homosexual emotions, sexual addiction, drug addiction or alcoholism, these issues need to be addressed before you marry. Also seek help for compulsive gambling, spending, or eating.

One or more of these issues may play a role in why you have fatal attractions or why you come from a fatal family. (James 1:5; Prov. 11:14).

Notes

- 0 Melody Beattie, *Codependent No More*, 17-18.
- 1 Amanda Ashley, *A Darker Dream* (New York: Madeline Baker, 1997), 130.
- 2 Dr. Ingird D. Hicks, *For Black Women Only: A Complete Guide To A Successful Life-Style Change Health, Wealth, Love, and Happiness* (Chicago: African American Images, 1991), 17.
- 3 Marcelle Clements, *The Improvised Woman: Single Women Reinventing Single Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 224.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 225.
- 5 Oscar Hammerstein II and Otto Permyer, *Marilyn Horne sings Carmen Jones with Orchestra and Chorus*, Herschel Burke Gilbert conductor, Adaptation of Bizet's "Carmen," RCA ARL1-00046(e).
- 6 39. John J. Dilulio Jr, "Deadly Divorce," *National Review*, 7 April 1997, 39 & 40.
- 7 Strother A. Campbell, *Making Marriage Christian*, 3.

Overcoming The World

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

I John 5:4-5

Stan Carder is a pastor on the staff of Grace Church. He pastored a church in Montana. While there, he was riding one night in a truck that was involved in a very serious accident. Stan suffered a broken neck and other major injuries. That was one of the most difficult periods in Stan's life, yet God used it for a specific purpose. Today, Stan ministers to more than 500 physically and mentally handicapped people. God needed a man with unique qualifications to show love to a group of very special people.

Similarly, God is using my experiences to show love to those who come from fatal families. Many of you come from my fatal family background and have fatal attractions. Because of the sins of your fathers and your own sin, life has been very difficult for you. Like Stan and I, you may have suffered emotional and physical major injuries. Yet, God is using these difficulties to call you to Himself. Here is a suggested prayer:

Lord God, I am a sinner. Thank you for dying and being raised on the third day for the forgiveness of my sins and to offer me Your new life. I now accept by faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Now, through Your Holy Spirit, teach

me about Your love, Your family, and about the new life that You have given me. Begin the work of making me into the image of your Son, so that I might overcome the experiences that I have had in this world. Amen.

Use the information at the back of this book and contact me.

HOW TO SURVIVE A MARRIAGE SCORNED

Coming Soon.....

Psycho Chicks

I dated this huge Canadian model who used to cold cock guys in clubs without provocation or sweep the glasses off tabletops. The bouncers all knew her well, and I sort of reveled in it. Once in a while, she'd even haul off and give me a shot. I really enjoy psycho women-I mean, I go out of my way to find them . . .¹

ONE

FATAL MARRIAGE

Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than
a house full of feasting with strife.

Proverbs. 17:1

I can remember the first time I had come to this conclusion. It was one of the many all night arguments that we had before. Joan was accusing me again of loving my ex-fiancée. She in the beginning of our marriage was somehow obsessed with my ex-fiancée. This drove her mad. Before we got married, Joan had heard that my ex-fiancée was still in love with me.

My ex-fiancée's love for me seemed to make her feel insecure. I remember on this night Joan would go mad.

Sleeping With the Enemy

After a night of attacking my books, Joan would get angry and begin to throw my books off the shelf. This was normal behavior now in this fatal marriage. However, this night she would begin to rip the pages out of the books. Next, she would begin to attack my clothes. This was normal behavior now. Joan would pull all my clothes out of my closet and throw them everywhere. Later, she went to her own closet and began to take all the outfits that I had bought her and began to throw them everywhere.

On this night she would get a pair of scissors and begin

to cut all the garments that I bought her into little pieces. Following that, Joan got a ballpoint pen and began to write my ex-fiancée's name all over her body. Subsequently, she wrote my ex-fiancée's name all over the bed mattress. Afterward, she began to carve my ex-fiancée's name in the headboard. It was as if somehow the love of my ex-fiancée was taunting her (Song of Sol. 5:8). Ha! Ha! Ha! - Hee! Hee! Hee!- a very good joke indeed. It was as if buried in the walls of our home was the true love of my ex-fiancée, in the same way Fortunato was buried in the walls of a trusted friend in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask Of Amontillado."

I did not know this at that time. However, Joan never really loved me. Joan was taunted because she knew that she never really loved me. Joan knew she should have ended our relationship to let true love have a chance. Nevertheless, she did not. This drove her mad.

Ha! Ha! Ha! - Hee! Hee! Hee!- a very good joke indeed, Fortunato said from the walls that would become his grave. Fortunato was so drunk he never knew the danger he had gotten himself into following a friend he thought he could trust. Poe does not give the sobering details of what it must have been like for Fortunato to wake up the next day. However, I can imagine that it must be a sobering experience to wake up in your grave.

In the same way for me, this night was sobering. When Joan finally calmed down about four hours later, she lay down and went to sleep. That night I realized that I was sleeping with the enemy. I was in a titanic love affair. There is nothing more sobering.

Bad Boys, Bad Boys

There is a television show on the Fox network that reveals the true stories of police officers in the line of duty called "Cops." Most of the people who watch the show can easily remember the theme song. "Bad boys, bad boys, what you gonna do? What you gonna do when they come for you?" I had never been a bad boy before. I had never gone

to jail. The two times I had gone to a penitentiary was with the Bill Glass prison ministry of my own accord. However, on this day when the Garland, Texas, police officers had come to my door, as far as they were concerned I was the bad boy.

This was the second domestic violence call to our household. The first time the Garland police department had come to our household was the time that I called them. I had told Joan I would call the police many times before. This would stop Joan from her violent rages. Joan had \$900 of outstanding tickets, and she did not want to go to jail again. She told me that she had been to jail before, and it was not a very pleasurable experience. To me, it was not a very pleasurable experience to see my household and everything in it being destroyed.

Being married to Joan was like being married to a tornado. You never know when a tornado will strike, but when it touches down there is destruction. On the day I called the police, Joan had touched down and began her vicious rage of destruction. I had all I could stand that day. I called the police.

When the police officers had gotten to our home, they were very concerned because our apartment was in a mess. When the police officers found out that Joan had made the mess, they told me there was nothing they could do and suggested counseling. I did not tell them that Joan had \$900 in tickets. I just wanted the violence to stop. From then on, Joan had a license to destroy.

My pastor was not happy to hear about me calling the police on my wife. He suggested that I call him instead. My pastor was always there when anyone called him. After that, I did not call the police on Joan again.

However, the second time the police were called to our apartment, Joan made the call. It was about a year later. I had paid the \$900 for her tickets. The laws on domestic violence calls had been changed. Now every time a call was made, someone had to go to jail.

I do not remember what set Joan off that day. Nevertheless, it probably was the same old thing: ex-girlfriends or other women that seemed to make her jealous. It seems as I look back on the situation that Joan always feared that I would find a woman who truly loved me. What set Joan off the most always seemed to center around her accusing me of being fond of other women: ex-girlfriends, women supervisors, women at my church, a woman talk show host when I was to make a TV appearance, and women who worked in the same building of my company. It seemed that her own guilt was eating away at her.

In the book entitled, *The Angry Marriage*, Dr. Bonnie Maslin asked the question, "Do your battles always take the same form?":

My friend Themis once offered me her "take" on marital discord: "You know around Christmas time every year Johnny Carson always used to say that there is one and only one fruitcake and it gets passed around in a new box from person to person around holiday time. I think," she went on philosophically, "that marriage and this fruitcake have something in common. In my marriage, Ted and I really have one and only one fight. It may not always look it but it's always the same argument. It just comes rewrapped in a different package every time we have it. And you know I think it's about as stale as Carson's fruitcake!"²

Almost every argument that set Joan off in a violent temper tantrum was the same fruitcake rewrapped in a package of another woman she was threatened by.

As I look back, I wonder why I stayed with Joan. I can honestly say that I stayed because of my religious belief (Matt. 19:8-9). When I married Joan, it was "until death do us part." At the time I made that commitment, I did not know I would have to sleep with one eye open for fear of

what seemed like Joan's commitment to death "doing us apart."

However, something happened this day to cause Joan to touch down, and she began her destructive rage.

I would no longer let Joan destroy our household. Now when Joan would have a violent seizure, I would hold her. Joan would calm down, and the violent epileptic-like fit would be over. This plan of action worked very well until this day. On this day I would reach to hold her and would trip over the side of the bed where my baby girl was lying. I would fall, knocking Joan, our baby girl, and myself to the ground. Joan got up screaming and yelling and ran out the door as I was looking after our baby girl. Joan ran across the street to a pay phone and called the police.

I did not know that Joan was calling the police. Joan's normal routine was to run home to her mother, call my brother-in-law, or to call the pastor. Since she was doing all the calling, naturally everyone thought I was the one with the problem. Our society does not believe that men can be victims of domestic violence.

The majority of couples embroiled in intimate power struggles engage in a spectrum of violent acts, which women are statistically as likely as men to initiate, the slaps across the face, the glass suddenly hurled, the bite, the fierce pinch, the waved gun, the kick to the stomach, the knee to the groin. Add the invisible wave of violence that washes over American households in an acid bath of words, the children used as pawns, the destruction of property, the enlistment of community as a means of control, and all this paints a much more complex picture of domestic violence . . .³

However, on this day I would have to suffer the humiliation of being arrested. Although the Garland police officers treated me with the utmost respect and dignity, it still

was humiliating to me.

I was sitting in my home with the door open. This was after I had settled our baby girl down. She had fallen back asleep. I had her in her little rocking sleeper. Two Garland police walked into my home. They asked me to tell them what had happened. I told them what had happened, and they arrested me. I would spend my first night and half the day in jail. Garland police do not have a good reputation for the criminal element in the Dallas area. However, they did treat me with respect. Because of the great work of the Garland Police Department, Garland has been listed as one of the safest places to live in America. Sadly, I would have been safer on the streets of Garland, Texas, than in my own home (Prov. 21:19).

To be continued in my next book

Notes

- 1 104. Compiled by Jennifer Kornreich, "Dangerous Women," *Esquire Magazine*, March 1996, 106.
- 2 Bonnie Maslin, *Angry Marriage: Overcoming The Rage, Reclaiming The Love* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 35.
- 3 92. Patricia Pearson, "Women Behaving Badly: The Truth Is That Women Are Just As Likely To Batter As Men," *Saturday Night*, September 1997, 96.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Eaton is the Singles Pastor of the Concord Missionary Baptist Church and Author of *How To Become A Good Thing* (Spring of 2003), *Keepin' It Real Christian Singles Ask...* (Summer of 2003) and *Overcoming Fatal Attraction* (Fall 2000).

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He is also a Singles' Speaker, Supply Preacher, and Revival Evangelist. Michael is single and has a daughter, Christal, and lives in Fort Worth, Texas.

If you would like to have me come to your church singles' group, singles' retreat, or singles' conference to speak, please contact me. You may also want to consider hosting an "Overcoming Fatal Attractions" seminar at your church.

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If you prayed the prayer to Overcoming the World please pray that God would lead you to the right local church.

If your life has been impacted in other ways, I would very much appreciate hearing from you.