

God Then Us

Experiences and Lessons Learned from
Our First Year of Marriage

By Jensen and Adam Nicholson

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Spiritual "equipment" for the contest of life

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Prelude

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD A DREAM TO WRITE A BOOK, but it wasn't until Adam came along and motivated me that I really got serious about it. I wanted my book to be about God and faith. I wanted it to be something to encourage and inspire us. I started writing about our marriage and decided I could turn it into a book. I started out writing it by myself and quickly realized I would need a man's perspective if we were going to give some advice, so Adam joined in and helped me write portions of it. In this book, you'll read about some of our experiences together and some of the lessons we've learned. We both write about some of the same things, and it's funny how similar we recall these events. I didn't want to leave anything out, because I wanted you to see both sides of our story.

We've only been married for one year, and we know that we're not marriage experts. We give some advice that is straight from the Bible and lessons we've learned along the way. We pray this book provides some encouragement to you and turns your focus to God. We pray that we can help a struggling marriage or encourage a thriving marriage to go to the next level. We hope that it can be encouraging to those who are not married. Hopefully, you can learn from us and find some qualities that you need in a lifelong mate. It's helpful to know that none of us are perfect, and we will all struggle in our marriage at some point. However, if we have God first, we can get through anything. Although we fail often, we try to live our lives so that others know we're about God and not about ourselves.

1 | *Our Beginning*

AFTER DATING SOME AND REALIZING I WASN'T DATING FOR MARRIAGE, I decided to take a break. I used this time to prepare for marriage by praying for my heart and mind. I did a lot of studying on how to be a Godly wife and what I should look for in order to find a Godly husband. I promised myself I wouldn't date another guy until I saw serious marriage potential. He would have to have a true love for God and treat me how a man should treat a lady. During this time, I wrote several short devotionals. Some were about being content by myself, while others focused on God while waiting. Still others were lists of qualities I wanted to find in a husband, all supported by scripture.

Five months into being single, Adam walked into my church on a Sunday morning. Immediately, my Mom and Nana looked at me as if to say, "Did you see that cute boy?" I rolled my eyes and continued what I was doing. He came to our Bible class and sat across from me. I noticed he was answering a lot of questions and was really involved. That impressed me, but I wasn't going to let him know that. After church, some of our friends went out to eat. Adam went too. They invited me, but I declined and instead went home to take a nap. At this point, I didn't give it much thought. Later Adam revealed that he thought I was cute but was disappointed because I was sitting next to a guy who he thought was my boyfriend. Thankfully he learned that this was my brother! We had a gospel meeting going on that week, so he came back another night. This night I locked eyes with him and said hello. He looked a little nervous but said hello back. I thought he was very handsome, and I knew he was knowledgeable in the Bible. I started thinking to myself, "There's no way God is blessing me this quick. I don't deserve a good Christian man just yet." I came up with every excuse as to why he couldn't be the one.

When he came back the second time, Mom and Nana both told me, "You better go talk to him." They lectured me about him being a good guy who comes from a good family. My Nana even told me, "You better be nice to that boy, or I will spank your tail!" To this day, Adam tells people that I only talked to him because I was afraid I would get a whooping. A few days later,

he followed me on Instagram and began messaging me. I'd be lying if I said I didn't get excited when I saw that first message, but again, I didn't let him know this. I kept it to myself that we were talking because I didn't want my family getting their hopes up. They stayed on my case about him, so after a week or two of talking to him, I let them know we had been talking. They were thrilled, but I made sure to let them know that things were only casual.

At the time, I was still working at my old job. We joked about him coming to visit me at work, and to my surprise, he did the very next day. I worked in the garden center, which involved a lot of hard work. I was walking back through the gate after loading bags of mulch when I looked up and saw him walking toward me. He had on blue jeans and a blue t-shirt and looked so handsome. I was hot and sweaty and had black hands and a dirty face from loading mulch. He didn't care and smiled ear to ear when he saw me. I smiled too. He was working on building a gun cabinet, so I took him to the hardware department, so he could search for hinges. We talked and laughed, and then he hugged me before he left. I'll never forget that moment on aisle two by the hinges and nails starting to fall in love with my soulmate.

I still struggled with the fact that he came into my life so soon. I had it in my mind that I needed to be single for a long time in order to be ultimately focused on God and also prepared to meet my future husband. I prayed every single day on my way to work that God would help me make the right decision. I didn't want to date anyone else that I shouldn't be with. I asked God to help me know if this was my future husband, because I never wanted a broken heart again. I had sign after sign. Everything told me this was my man, and the rest is pretty much history.

We fell in love fast. I knew this was the man for me. We both knew early on in our relationship that we'd get married someday. Our relationship was built on the foundation of Christ and love. God was on our side, and we could see his hand working in our lives. Eight months after we met, we got engaged. Adam proposed in the middle of a cow pasture, and if you know us, you know that was perfect! He said the sweetest words and even read scripture to me before asking me to marry him. It was the easiest question I've ever answered. Nine months later we got married. Fun fact: We have two preachers at our church, and both were involved in officiating our wedding.

One of them, Matt, said something that got everyone laughing. He said, “I remember Adam coming up to me and asking what I knew about that Jensen Kirby girl, and I said man, what are you waiting for??” As he walked away, I thought . . . “that boy doesn’t have a chance!!” Little did he know!

We thought our wedding day would never come, but it finally did, and it was nothing short of an adventure. The weather forecast contained rain and severe storms. We didn’t care. We just wanted to get married. After the ceremony, we did our getaway with sparklers and came back in to change and hit the road. We barely made it inside when the tornado siren went off. There was a shelter at the school nearby, so we loaded up and went there. I walked through mud puddles and down into the shelter in my wedding dress. It finally passed and we were able to change and head out to our honeymoon. We had the best week together. It was a trip we will always remember and treasure.

When we got back, we found out some disappointing news from our wedding day. It was brought to our attention that several cards, all with money and gift cards inside were missing. We searched our house high and low. We had everyone who was involved in the cleanup search their stuff. I then remembered my mom coming up to me during the reception and saying, “Haley said there was a strange woman in the bridal suite, and she was alone with the door shut. We don’t know who she is.” I let that statement go in one ear and out the other at the time because I had so many other things to focus on. My friend, Haley, who was also our wedding coordinator, walked into the bridal suite to get something out of her bag when she noticed a strange woman. She asked if she could help her, and the lady responded that she was just borrowing some hair spray. Haley had a bad feeling and knew she was up to something. She was afraid it was one of Adam’s family members that she didn’t recognize, so she didn’t want to call her out. We hated to make assumptions, but when we realized money and cards were missing, our minds instantly went back to her. We searched and asked a lot of questions and came to the conclusion that this mystery woman was to blame.

We filed a police report, but with only a vague description, there wasn’t much they could do. Adam and I prayed about it a lot. We prayed that she

would come forward, but more importantly we prayed for us to have a forgiving heart. We also prayed about filing the police report. We didn't know if we should do it or let it go. We decided that this woman needed to be stopped so she couldn't do this to anyone else. A few months went by, and we heard nothing about her. We accepted that we'd probably never know who did it, unless we happened to see her around town. We also accepted that we would never get any of the gifts back. Thankfully, it was never about the money. We didn't get married to gain material things. We never had possession of it, so it didn't hurt us to not have it. We just hated that so many gave us gifts and we wouldn't be able to thank them.

Three months later, a news story aired about a woman caught on camera stealing from a wedding in Florence, Alabama, which is about an hour from us. I remember my Mom calling me at work to tell me about it. My phone started blowing up with people sending me the story asking if it was the same woman. Haley and Mom (the only two witnesses) confirmed that it was her. I called the officer on our case to let him know. It turned out that she was doing this as a career. She had been crashing weddings and stealing money for years. Our wedding was the least of my worries when I found out what she had done at the wedding in Florence. She stole donation money intended for a good cause. The couple has a daughter with a rare disorder known as Fox G-1 syndrome. They requested that instead of people bringing gifts and money, they bring donations for the foundation for research. She stole from not only this disabled child but from disabled children all around the world. It broke my heart.¹

We again prayed that she would come forward. Weeks and weeks went by, and she was finally identified. It was a middle-aged lady from Mississippi. She really drove that far to crash our wedding. She is a total stranger to us, and none of our guests knew her. We don't know how she found out about ours unless she searched the internet. She has since been found guilty in a few cases, but nothing has come of ours. We are perfectly fine with this and pray she has changed her ways and can be right with the Lord. Although she has denied being there, we have forgiven her. After she was identified, I was interviewed on the news several times. I tried my best to have a good

1 Visit foxg1.org for more information on this rare condition.

attitude so that I could be a good example for everyone who watched it. One station twisted my words and stated that she had ruined my wedding day. That crushed me because it was false. She absolutely did not ruin it. We still look back on it as the happiest day of our lives, and now we just have an interesting story to tell. They say rain on your wedding day is good luck, so a tornado and theft must mean we'll have the greatest marriage ever!

For Discussion

1. What do you think “dating to marry” means, and why is it so important, especially for Christians?
2. What are some ways you can prepare your heart and mind for marriage?
3. How would you have handled the situation of someone stealing from you on the happiest day of your life?