

“Heidi has given to us – and to our daughters – a crucial gift: the shining picture of godly womanhood written for a generation that has been told more lies than we can even imagine. This loving book, clearly and accessibly written, cuts through the dishonesty and deception of this confused world without belaboring its values or belittling its captives. Heidi talks directly to her young readers with respect and care. The writing is fresh and clear, and the subject matter is vital. Parents, give this book to your girls. Better yet, read it and discuss it with them.”

**Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, Speaker, Homemaker
and Author of *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert***

“If I could give any book to myself when I was a younger woman with dreams about love and marriage, it would be this book. *Choosing Love* casts a deep, wide, and stalwart vision for the purpose of marriage and beautifully invites readers to be a part of a story that is so much bigger than their own. *Choosing Love* will make your heart beat fast for the beauty God intended to flourish within the context of marriage.”

Ellie Holcomb, Dove Award Winning Singer/Songwriter

“I’ve known Heidi for years, and have seen her love for her family, her church, and her Savior up close. She’s the real deal. Amidst all the clamor of the untrue story the world tells us about who we are and who God is, Heidi’s voice is a calm, clear, and wise reminder that there’s a better, truer story to be told. I can’t wait for my daughter to read this book.”

**Andrew Peterson, Singer/Songwriter and Author of
Adorning the Dark and *The Wingfeather Saga***



CHOOSING
LOVE



CHOOSING LOVE

IN A BROKEN
WORLD

HEIDI JOHNSTON

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10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com
Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England
Email: info@10ofthose.com
Website: www.10ofthose.com



To Ellie and Lara,
never forget that you are already loved.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 3:16–21)



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CHOOSING LOVE

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Finally, to You, my God and Saviour. May these few faltering words, written in weakness, be used in your strength to push back against the darkness and build your kingdom.



DEAR READER...

I'M GLAD YOU are here. Before we go any further, there's something I want you to know.

Right now, in this moment, you are already loved.

The greatest love you will ever experience will not be found in another person but in the God who placed the stars in the sky, who brings the sun up every morning, who gave you life and who was prepared to give up everything so you could know him. He loves you endlessly, completely and just as you are. You can do nothing to make him love you more and nothing to make him love you less. No matter what happens in your life, whether you marry or don't, whether you have children or don't, no relationship will ever matter more than your relationship with the God who carries your name on his heart. If you can really grasp that, I have a feeling that the rest of this book will feel like common sense.

CHOOSING LOVE

If you were hoping for advice on when to date, how to date or even if you should date at all, it's only fair to tell you now that we're going to talk more about love and marriage than we are about dating. I realise that might seem like a strange choice. Surely you need to figure out dating before you start to think about love and marriage? You don't need to think about what might happen in the future until you get there, right?

Think about how often we start preparing for the future long before it happens. If you want to be an Olympic athlete, you start training when you are just a child. If you want to be a great musician, you spend hours and hours practising. Often before you are ready, you start to choose subjects at school that will help you with the career you might be interested in. The person we marry or the decision whether to get married at all will have a huge impact on our lives, yet we do very little to prepare ourselves. To me that doesn't make a lot of sense.

The reason we are not going to focus on dating is simple. It's not because I'm trying to avoid the subject; I know that those conversations are important. It's because I think it makes sense to decide where you are going before you decide how to get there. The kind of love you want to end up with will impact if, when and who you date along the way. My prayer is that, in God's design for relationships, you will catch a glimpse of a love that so many people before you have missed. This love is so beautiful that it is worth working towards.

DEAR READER...

We live in a world where instant happiness seems more important than something better that is further down the road. What is easy often appears more desirable than what is good. If you believe the messages that will come at you from most movies, TV shows and adverts, and maybe even from some of your friends, you will be fooled into settling for love that is just a shadow of the real thing. To live in the twenty-first century and pursue the kind of love God describes in the Bible takes enormous courage.

We're going to look at lots of things together, including why other people matter so much to us, what it actually means to love someone (this one might be a bit surprising!), what you might want to look for in someone you are eventually going to marry and why sex was God's idea all along. Through it all, I hope you will see that God is on your side. He created you, he understands you and he knows what you need even better than you do. The problem is that unless we allow him to teach us how to love and be loved, we will always settle for less. The love God wants for you, even when it takes courage, is better than anything you'll find on your own.

Starting with chapter two, you will notice that each chapter ends with three short sections: *Questions*, *Think about* and *Digging deeper*. You don't have to use these sections but you might find they help you think through what you have read.

CHOOSING LOVE



Questions

If you will be working through this book with a parent or youth leader, or even a friend, it would be great to discuss these together. (If you are planning to discuss it with a parent, get them to read the letter at the back of the book first.) I know it can take courage to be honest about some of these subjects but if you get used to talking openly now, you'll find it so much easier to talk about any bigger issues that might come up later.

Even if you are reading the book on your own, the discussion questions can be used to help you reflect on each chapter.

Either way, you may also find it helpful as you read each chapter to have a journal handy, where you can write down questions you have, things you have learned or even decisions you have made about your own approach to relationships. These subjects are important and you might want to come back to them again at a later stage.

Think about

Each chapter finishes with the same three questions:

- Was there anything in this chapter that you found difficult to understand? If so, what was it?
- What did you learn from this chapter that you hadn't thought about before?
- Can you think of one question you have after reading this chapter?