

## Marriage Messages

I was involved in a relationship that was really pretty good in all respects. After six months, the growth of this relationship stopped. I really was not sure what I should do, but I knew that I liked this relationship and that it could possibly develop as a lasting one.

My girlfriend and I decided not to “sleep” together any more. It really took a lot of discipline, but we figured it would pay off in the long run, no matter what became of the relationship. Time passed and the desire to be “together” was strong, but because we had committed ourselves to this special agreement we were successful. It felt like we were doing something together as one, to strengthen our relationship. We found that our relationship had grown more in one month than over the first six months combined. We had discovered a new life within our relationship.

A month had passed when I realized that I did indeed love my girlfriend. The love was strong and had grown stronger by the week. We developed a great deal of respect and found many new and wonderful things about each other. The relationship had come alive. Sex no longer seemed as desirous because we were having so much fun learning new things about each other and ourselves.

The next great thing to happen to us was our new relationship, together, with God. This really put our relationship on an even stronger foothold. We could barely believe how great a relationship we had. We were so proud of ourselves and each other. When our relationship did hit a low point, which I feel all relationships will at some time, we had recalled experiencing the beauty and gratification of a full relationship. The low point quickly passed and the relationship actually became stronger. With a strong faith in our relationship and God we realized that our life together could and can overcome anything.

From a small agreement and commitment between two adults came an incredibly wonderful relationship based upon mutual respect for each other and upon faith that God will be with us at all times. My girlfriend will no longer be my girlfriend, she will be my wife in a few months.

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My own parents divorced 15 years ago, so I was determined not to jump into a marriage. That's why I moved in with Tom so we could develop our relationship and get to know each other first.

It went from beautiful to miserable in about four months. I was knocking myself out to please him, feeling insecure whenever the arrangement seemed the least bit shaky. And I was using sex in a way that was false to myself. Intercourse was my way of reiterating, “The relationship is still on.” It was my way of saying, “Keep me, I'm good!” (even when sex wasn't always that good), and of reassuring myself, “See he still loves me.”

Important questions were never settled, things such as: “What if I get offered a good job in another state?” or “What if he decides to go back to school?” or “The pill is making me depressed—should I stop taking it?” We'd just end up in bed again, without resolving things. I got to the point where I felt like yelling, “Sex,

schmex! I just want you to talk to me!”

I told Tom I wanted to move out and think things over. I wanted him to really see me and hear me as a person—something our sexual involvement made it hard for him to do. I wanted perspective—and friendship.

I must say that—after the initial shock—Tom rose to the challenge. We spent a whole year getting to know each other every way but horizontally. We must have logged 1,000 hours just talking. And I knew I wasn’t sliding into something through compliance and neediness and emotional fuzziness: I was exercising real sexual intelligence. That gave me new respect for myself—and for Tom.

We’re getting married. It took a while, but now we know we’re committed.