



NOT YET MARRIED

The Pursuit of Joy in Singleness & Dating

MARSHALL SEGAL

“I have been married for forty-eight years. But even now, a half-century later, the days of falling in love and ‘going with’ Noël are still vivid in my memory. They are in a class by themselves. Marriage knows its unfettered ecstasies, but those years leading to marriage were supercharged with never-before and never-since emotions. We need God’s wisdom. And we need his supernatural help to live it out. Marshall Segal is a trustworthy guide. He is conscious of the world but conformed to the Word. God did not leave us without wisdom or power for this volatile season of life. Marshall will point you to both.”

John Piper, founder, desiringGod.org; Chancellor, Bethlehem College & Seminary

“Singleness is not a punishment, and marriage is not a right. Yet more and more, I encounter young women who are single longer than they planned to be, and they wonder how they missed the dreamboat. What’s more, they wonder why God hasn’t answered their prayers for marriage. That’s why I’m thrilled to get my hands on *Not Yet Married*. This is a book not just about waiting well or about preparing for marriage. It is a book about God, grounded in God’s Word. Married, engaged, or a long way away from the altar, this book paints a beautiful, biblical picture of marriage and the God who designed it.”

Erin L. Davis, blogger; Bible teacher; author, *Beyond Bath Time*; *True Princess*; and *Beautiful Encounters*

“This is a book about God and his glory before it is a field guide for the not yet married. That will be its sticking power. Segal has done a great job of connecting gospel truth to how we think about ourselves and our love lives, which is desperately needed in a culture that wants to keep God sequestered to the sanctuary. It’s weighty but accessible, taking on serious topics in a way that reads like a chat over coffee. I know the title is *Not Yet Married*, but after eleven years of marriage I found myself challenged and encouraged on every page. I am really grateful for Marshall and his honest, theologically sturdy counsel. This book is a must-share.”

Jimmy Needham, recording artist; Worship Director, Stonegate Church, Midlothian, Texas

“Marshall’s writing never fails to be richly insightful, thought provoking, and heart probing. He is also refreshingly transparent as he shares out of what he has experienced—sometimes the hard way—of God’s Word and ways. As Marshall chronicled his journey through years of singleness, I was delighted to see God bring Faye into his life ‘in due season.’ Now I rejoice that he has written this book, which will be a feast to men and women in any season of life, as they press through every unfulfilled longing this side of heaven, to pursue joy in Christ.”

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, host, *Revive Our Hearts*; author, *Lies Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free*; *A Place of Quiet Rest*; and *Seeking Him*

“Timely. Relevant. Solid. In a cultural climate where singleness is equally celebrated and stigmatized, and dating is misunderstood and mispurposed, Marshall Segal injects a breath of biblical fresh air. With Scripture as its undergirding, *Not Yet Married* is a helpful guide to honoring God in any relational status. Married or not, single or dating, I hope you’ll read this book.”

Louie Giglio, Pastor, Passion City Church, Atlanta; founder, Passion Conferences; author, *The Comeback*

“In a culture that constantly communicates false—even destructive—messages about dating, *Not Yet Married* is the Christian response we need. Marshall is deeply biblical and writes with the empathy, humility, and wisdom of a brother who has walked this road, made mistakes, and found grace. Now he shares his experience and gospel-rich insights with us. Teenagers especially will benefit from Marshall’s words. For that reason, this book will be one I joyfully recommend far and wide.”

Jaquelle Crowe, Lead Writer and Editor in Chief, TheRebellion.com; contributor, The Gospel Coalition; author, *This Changes Everything*

“For years, I’ve longed for a book I could recommend without hesitation to single men and women. My wait is over. Marshall Segal’s *Not Yet Married* is everything I hoped for and more. His foundations are thoroughly scriptural, his applications are rooted in the good news of the gospel, and he provides some of the clearest counsel for navigating the unmarried years I’ve ever seen. He humbly acknowledges his own failures and addresses past sins with sensitive pastoral skill. If you’re single, this book will increase your faith in God’s good plans for you and inspire you to passionately pursue a Christ-exalting life. I can’t wait to recommend and give this book away.”

Bob Kauflin, Director of Worship, Sovereign Grace Ministries; elder, Sovereign Grace Church, Louisville; author, *Worship Matters* and *True Worshipers*

“Instead of settling for our culture’s cheap version of love, sex, and dating, *Not Yet Married* challenges and inspires Christian singles to live their lives with greater intentionality. This down-to-earth book is a must-read for every guy and girl who desires to glorify God to the fullest while they’re not yet married.”

Kristen Clark and Bethany Baird, founders, GirlDefined Ministries; authors, *Girl Defined*

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The Pursuit of Joy in Singleness and Dating

MARSHALL SEGAL

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Not Yet Married: The Pursuit of Joy in Singleness and Dating

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To Ellis Kai
Married or not,
may your heart be God's

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Introduction

We live and date in a society of now. We can watch anything we want, anytime we want, anywhere we want. We can have any kind of food delivered to our front door in minutes. And we can “like,” flirt, and text from the safety and comfort of the crumb-filled couch in our bachelor pad. The same selfishness and impatience are also the main ingredients in a tidal wave of premarital sex, leading more than half of us to give ourselves away before we even graduate high school. With a little computer-generated imagery, it all looks like unfenced and unfiltered freedom and adventure. But what if we’re missing a fuller freedom and a greater adventure while we settle for something quicker, easier, and cheaper? What if we realized we were skipping all-you-can-eat meat at a Brazilian steakhouse for a few stray Froot Loops at the breakfast table?

As we look at dating, even in the church, we have to admit that too many of us have got it all wrong. We hurry to date as soon as we hit high school but wait to settle down and marry until after we’ve started our career and enjoyed some freedom. We come in and out of relationships like buying new shoes, slipping off anyone who begins to feel uncomfortable or inconvenient and then picking up whatever pair we like best the next day. Most of the time we like the idea of saving ourselves sexually, but not in the most important moments. Meanwhile, the world is always inventing new and easier-to-use technology to help us give ourselves away

too soon to someone we don't even know. We love to be loved but aren't completely sure we even know what love is.

The whole dating game thrives on adrenaline and ambiguity—always showing enough to pique someone's interest and curiosity, but never enough to answer the most important questions. It's a game of cat-and-mouse without any mice (and I think we can all agree there's nothing worse than a room full of cats). We bait each other with half-truths about the best parts of ourselves, always selecting exactly what to show and how to show it, only revealing what might entice or intrigue each other. Dating today also tends to center the whole world around me—my interests, my friends, my preferences. Many of us think we're pursuing marriage as we chat and flirt with one another, but we're really just pursuing ourselves—our own image and self-esteem, our own selfish desires, and our own ego. We're always projecting and positioning ourselves to get the attention and affirmation we crave but without ever risking or giving up too much in the process.

Jesus invites us to love and date differently, in ways that resist and rise above almost every trend among the not yet married today. When worth and identity are being measured in society by who likes us and how many like us, he reminds us we're already worth far more than we know and defined by a love higher than any human love. Against all the hide-and-seek ambiguity, he injects us with intentionality—with the liberty to communicate clearly and carefully in love and the luxury to know and be known in relationships. While so many recklessly mingle in this me-generation, he sets us free from selfishness, showing us how to put others' interests, needs, and hearts before our own, and teaching us to refuse to satisfy ourselves at others' expense. And when everyone else feels entitled to have everything now, he sets us apart as the strange and strong who are willing and eager to wait. If Christian dating—the intentional, selfless, and prayerful process of pursuing marriage—sounds like slavery, we don't get

it. If low-commitment sexual promiscuity sounds like freedom, we don't get it. Jesus may ask more of us, but he does so to secure something far better for us.

Not Yet Married

Some of you will readily identify with the title of this book, and others will be offended by the label. If you're in the latter group, you are probably reading through this introduction not so secretly wanting to validate your utter dissatisfaction with such a shallow view of singleness. Why would we define ourselves by the absence of marriage, especially when many of us are children of the living God through faith in Jesus, bought at infinite price, filled with divine power, and promised an eternity of life and happiness?

Even though I responded that way to married advice and encouragement at times during my single years—"Stop defining me by my singleness!"—I've come to like the phrase "not yet married" for at least four reasons. First, there are lots of Christians who do have a deep and enduring desire for marriage, people whose hearts ache to find a husband or a wife. It's a calling they believe God has put on their life, yet it remains an unrealized and unconfirmed calling today. Many of them have tried to pursue marriage the right way—not diving in too quickly, setting clear standards and boundaries, and leaning in to good friends and counselors. But it hasn't worked out. The dates they have been on haven't gone well, or no one's ever shown any interest. Others have thrown themselves into relationship after relationship, dragged around by their desires for intimacy and led into any manner of sexual immorality and regret. They've been told their desire is good, but they have no idea how to take the next step, or how to think about all these months or years of brokenness and loneliness. That may not be you, but it was me, and it's probably at least a few of your Christian friends. I want to shape our waiting and longing to reflect everything Jesus has *already* given and

promised us, and to honor the work he's given us to do in every season of life, regardless of our marital status.

Second, statistically most of you will be married. A few of you will be called to lifelong singleness, and it will be a beautiful thing to watch you savor Christ and serve others as a single man or woman. It will be a stunning thing for the world to see, someone trading the pleasure of marital love and sexual intimacy for a lifetime of loving God and laying down his or her life to bring others to Christ. But most of you will be married, even if that's not on your radar or priority list today. If trends from the last couple hundred years continue, the average believer will be married at some point in life. Therefore, it seems appropriate to talk to most believers in their twenties or thirties as if they might one day be married. We should not be consumed by that reality, define our progress or contentment by our marital status, or give all of ourselves to pursuing marriage. We should, however, prepare ourselves to be ready and faithful if God calls us to love and serve a husband or wife.

Some of you are not convinced. You're still skeptical and offended. Ironically, that's another reason I've come to like the phrase "not yet married." More and more, young people are disillusioned with and pessimistic about marriage. There are several factors here, I am sure. Divorce may be the biggest. Many of us have tasted divorce firsthand as children, or watched our friends suffer from it. Why would I think *my* marriage would survive? Why would I subject myself to that kind of regret and pain? I want at least a few of you to believe again in marriage. One of the most radical and countercultural things we can do today to declare our faith in Jesus is to marry someone and remain faithful to that spouse until we die.

Finally, on this side of heaven we are all not yet married. Every wedding day is only a small and inadequate picture of a wedding day to come, when we are given again forever to our Savior and

King. On *that* day, we will sing, “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). God made our marriages to be movie posters of a marriage to come. The way we love a husband or wife, as imperfectly as we will love him or her, says a *lot* about the kind of love God has for us, but it will be nothing compared to the real thing—an eternity of peace, joy, and life purchased for us by our Bridegroom at the cross. One day we’ll get to meet him face-to-face. It will be the greatest family reunion of all time—the wedding to end all weddings—when God with open arms receives broken us, made beautiful by the blood of Jesus. We *will* all be married, and that marriage should shape every other desire and longing we have in this life.

Not Yet Married is *not* about dwelling on the negative. If we are in Christ, we are never again defined by what we are not. We have too much in him to be discouraged about not having anything else—even things as important in this life as a job or a spouse or children. The things that fill our lives and make us happy here are simple grains of sand compared to the endless beaches of knowing Christ. It *was*, after all, an unmarried man who said, “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Phil. 3:8–9).

My Not-Yet-Married Story

I wanted to be married long before I could even drive. Maybe I watched too many Disney movies. Maybe the “burn” just began too early for me (1 Cor. 7:9). I believe the desire was born, at least in my best moments, watching my parents love each other. My parents are not perfect, and their marriage has not been perfect, but the lasting pictures in my head from my childhood are of them happy together—kissing when Dad got home from work, reading

together in the living room night after night, loving their sons, laughing at each other's lame jokes, sitting down most mornings to read the Bible and pray together, even if for just a few minutes. I saw the friendship and romance they enjoyed, and I dreamed of finding that for myself.

It was a good desire, but it did not produce many good things in immature me. In fact, nothing in my life and faith has been more confusing and spiritually hazardous than my pursuit of marriage. From far too young, I longed for the affection, safety, and intimacy I anticipated with a wife. Sadly, those desires predictably did much more harm than good. I started dating too early. I stayed in relationships too long. I experimented too much with our hearts and allowed things to go too far. I said "I love you" too soon. I desperately searched for love but without my heart and hope anchored in Christ. So I would always end up back where I started, alone, only more insecure and ashamed. I sinned against and hurt a number of young women along the way because I was led along and blinded by my own selfishness instead of leading well in relationships like a caring and self-controlled son of God. So, when God withheld marriage from me long into my twenties, my singleness became a regular reminder, for more than a decade, that I had messed up, missed opportunities, and done it wrong.

I met Alyssa Faye Nera on October 11, 2012, a day before we walked side by side in someone else's wedding, just a groomsman and a bridesmaid. We were married two and a half years later. I was twenty-nine. She was twenty-eight. I wrote a lot of this book, and learned almost all of the lessons, before I married my wife. God taught me a lot through her over those two years, especially through her contentment in and with Jesus, her prayerfulness, and her zeal for purity. My relationship with Faye was an unexpected, undeserved anomaly in my broken search for marriage. A good deal of our story will be scattered throughout the book, but our dating, engagement, and now marriage is a story of God healing

what was broken, restoring what had been lost, redeeming what had gone wrong, and building something entirely new.

Looking back, I'm convinced God did withhold marriage to discipline me—not to *punish* me but to prepare me and mature me as a man and as a future husband. I also believe he withheld marriage to draw me closer to himself and to allow me to use my gifts to serve others while I was still single. Because of that, *Not Yet Married* is not a book about waiting quietly in the corner of the world for God to bring a spouse, but it is about mobilizing you—a growing generation and movement of single men and women—out of shame, selfishness, and self-pity into deeper levels of love for Christ and more consistent and creative ministry to others.

The Not-Yet-Married Life

This is a book for not-yet-married people that's not mainly about marriage, or even dating. I set out to write a book *for* not-yet-married men and women *about* God, and about our role in his world. Instead of being *mainly* about do's and don'ts and not yet's, the book is meant to inspire and deploy single you with what God has for you now. The first half of the book focuses on the not-yet-married life—on a sense of joy, purpose, and belonging in singleness. I desperately want you to know that you were made for more than marriage—that marriage will never satisfy or fulfill your deepest needs and cravings. That hole in our hearts will swallow and destroy any relationship if we look to a person to make us happy or whole. And I say that as someone who chased marriage for years, relationship after relationship, searching for love, worth, and identity in a wife. These chapters address singleness in the not-yet-married life, but they will not speak to every single person's situation. Singleness takes on different forms and different trials over time. My not-yet-married story started in my teens and lasted through my twenties, so I am writing mainly with

young people in mind. If that's not you, you might be disappointed that I don't talk to you more, but I hope you also resonate with and take away more than you expected.

I could have written another book just about dating, but I didn't. I wrote about *singleness* and dating, because the most important things I learned in singleness and dating were not about dating or marriage. They were about life and God, about finding *real* purpose and *real* satisfaction deeper than any romance. Marriage does not unlock God's plans and purposes for us. He sends us into the world when he saves us, not when he watches us walk down the aisle. Not-yet-married Christians are not junior varsity Christians. You're as Christian as any other Christian—the same Savior rescuing us from wasting our lives, the same Spirit making us new and equipping us to make a difference, the same mission to tell the whole world about Jesus.

In the second half of the book, we'll focus on dating. We'll start by rebuilding a vision of marriage that eclipses the small, shallow pictures we see in movies and on television. We'll ask what makes marriage something worth wanting. The reality is, many of us want it for wrong or second-rate reasons. Others are ready to pass altogether. But God did something uniquely and stunningly beautiful when he brought man and woman *together*. And we will never date well until we have a big, clear, and compelling idea of what marriage was really meant to be. The rest of the chapters slowly turn the diamond of Christian dating, looking at what makes this kind of dating dramatically different. How do I know he's the one? Where should we set boundaries in our relationship? What do I do when she breaks up with me? We want to date in a way that makes Jesus look real and reliable to others around us.

We're in the pursuit of joy, not marriage. Before anyone could ever make us happy in marriage, we have to have already given our hearts away. The surest love, the fullest happiness, and the highest purpose are all available to you in Jesus, just as you are.

Find them first in him, and you will have a far happier and more meaningful marriage, if God brings you a husband or wife one day. And if, in his wisdom and his unfailing love for you, he chooses not to, not-yet-married you will enjoy more than you ever could have dreamed or found for yourself apart from him.

Part I

THE NOT-YET-MARRIED LIFE

Love Is Looking for You

We are all wired to want happiness, love, and significance. We all want our hearts to soar for something. We taste happiness in lots of things—in the first bite of a slightly undercooked brownie, in an overtime playoff win, in a new dress or pair of shoes—but the joy is always just enough to know we’re made for something more. Every joy here carries some kind of empty, unsatisfying aftertaste. Wrapped up with that desire to be happy is a desire to be known and loved. Our life was formed and given to us to be shared. We are all designed for relationship, regardless of whether we’re married. And we all want our lives to count for something. We want to contribute something significant to a meaningful cause. We want to make a difference. Discontentment and disappointment rise up in the not-yet-married life when we start pursuing that love, joy, and significance in a person and not in God. We become miserable *not* because we’re not married, but because many of us think marriage might finally make us happy.

If you had asked me when I was twenty what would make me happy, I was already Christian enough to say, “Jesus.” I knew the right answer. But if anyone watched my life closely enough back

then and could answer for me, they probably would have said, “Marriage.” I went to church every Sunday. I had quiet times. I was doing ministry to high school guys. I really did love Jesus. But, if I’m honest, I gave more of myself to girls than to God. I really wanted to be married, and I loved the attention, affection, and security of having a girlfriend. I had already plunged myself into one long serious relationship after another for five or six years—five or six first dates, five or six premature first kisses, five or six devastating breakups. I didn’t experiment with marijuana or go through a drinking phase. My drug of choice was more socially acceptable, even encouraged. I was recklessly trying to feed my heart’s hunger for God by running after romance and intimacy.

I began each new relationship under the banner of “my pursuit of marriage,” but much of it was really just my pursuit of me. I loved the idea of marriage, because I thought marriage would fill and complete *me*. But because I was looking for love, happiness, and significance mainly in marriage, singleness turned into a nightmare some days. Singleness felt lonely, waiting for someone to come into my life and never leave again. Singleness felt incomplete, wondering if God would bring my other half or fill the massive, glaring hole in my life (at least it looked massive and glaring in the mirror). Singleness provoked self-pity, wanting what others already had, and thinking I deserved it more than them. Relationships towered above all my idols, so singleness became simultaneously my unrelenting judge and unwanted roommate, reminding me at all times of what I didn’t have yet and what I didn’t do right.

The American-Dream Marriage

The Bible says that people who are fixated on experiencing as much happiness and pleasure as possible here on earth—in a career, in sex, drinking, or spending, even in marriage—are like those who dream they are eating and drinking, but wake up hun-

gry, thirsty, and without anything to eat or drink (Isa. 29:8). The beautiful banquet before their unconscious and closed eyelids—perfectly grilled meats, colorful and fresh fruits and vegetables, bread right out of the oven, the fountain of wine, chocolate filled with chocolate, drizzled with chocolate—is all just a mirage, a cruel figment of a hungry person’s imagination. For the not yet married, the imaginary buffet might feature a good-looking, funny, considerate, and committed spouse, two or maybe three children, the house you always wanted, summer vacations somewhere nice, and blissful married memory after blissful married memory—the American-dream marriage. But every delicious dream must end.

The problem is not that we are hungry but that we’re hunting in the wrong pantry. The cravings deep inside us are a *mercy* from God meant to lead us to God. God is trying to give us unconditional love, indescribable joy, and unparalleled purpose, but many of us are just trying to get married. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6). God wired appetites—intense biological, emotional, sexual, spiritual, unavoidable desires—into every human soul so that *he* could fill them. He wants us to be full, not empty; to be loved, not lonely. One of my favorite verses in the Bible says, “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). No greater joy. No expiration date. Happiness and love like this are free—“by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:5, 8)—but it is not cheap. It takes patience, hard work, and perseverance—day after day, pouring ourselves into God’s Word, sacrificing for the sake of others in his name, and surrendering ourselves to his will. Paul calls the Christian life a fight and a race (2 Tim. 4:7). It can be hard, and it may hurt along the way, but we’ll never regret it. Jesus may ask a lot of us between here and heaven, but whether we ever get married or not, he will give it all back a hundredfold and more (Matt. 19:29).

Believe in Love, Again

At least part of what makes singleness so lonely and miserable is that we have such a hard time believing someone like God could really, genuinely love someone like us. Some of us have experienced so little love in this life that we don't have categories for what that would even feel like. We've been abandoned by parents, betrayed by friends, or left behind by another boyfriend or girlfriend. Marriage feels like one last-ditch effort to find love, but deep inside we're terrified we'll just find more of the same. We simply cannot imagine being truly, deeply, and consistently loved. And then God says, "I love you." Really?

God does love you. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1). We are prized sons and daughters. God loved us even though we never deserved his love (Rom. 5:8). You and I were dead without Christ—not wrong, not sick, not stupid, but dead. "You were *dead* in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked" (Eph. 2:1–2). We were absolutely, stubbornly unlovable. "*But God*, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved" (vv. 4–5). God found you dead in your sin, in full rebellion against him, utterly hopeless, and he loved you to life and made you his own. He was willing to send his Son to a cross for you to show you what real love looks like and to give you a reason to believe in love, again.

This love will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5). He will never call to break up with you. He will never walk out on you like your dad walked out on your family. He never lies, and he will never die, leaving you behind and alone. In fact, *nothing* can take this love away from you (Rom. 8:38–39). If you are hidden in Christ through faith, God loves you, and nothing and no one can stop him from loving you. God has plans for you, good

plans better than anything you could dream or want for yourself. “No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). Your Father loves you, far more than a future spouse ever will or could.

God Made You on Purpose

The God who loves you also made you. He designed you—your physique, your personality, every inch of you—and knows you completely (Ps. 139:14–15). You were not an accident. You were created in love and on purpose. *But why did God make me, and what did he want me to do?* A lot of us start asking that question more seriously in college. I remember I had to dream a little harder my sophomore year when Wake Forest University made me declare a major. It felt like I was deciding what to do with the rest of my life—fifty or more *years* on the line. I sat and stared at three candidates: education, business, and Christian studies. At the time, it seemed like education would make me happy, business would make Dad happy, and Christian studies would make God happy. Ultimately, I chose business. But that same sophomore year, in the midst of all the accounting, human resources, and marketing, God was teaching me why I was made and how he wanted me to spend the rest of my life, regardless of whether I was a teacher, an account executive, or a pastor—and regardless of whether I ever got married.

Every single person on the planet was made to say something about God. The Creator and Sustainer of the universe made each of us, and filled us, along with the other seven billion people on the planet, with a purpose. Most of us have a hard time really believing we were created *by someone*, and for something far bigger than ourselves. We’re raised, trained, and spent in a much smaller world, a world centered on ourselves and reaching only as far as we can see. But God made you and me for far more than marriage, business, or whatever else we each might choose for ourselves. If

we miss this, we risk wasting our lives running in wrong directions, pursuing pitiful dreams, and serving tiny gods. The earlier we answer the biggest questions about our life, though, the better we'll answer all the smaller ones—like what we will study, where we will work, and whom we will marry.

A lot of us want to keep God close enough to save us but far enough away to let us do what we want to do. But we have to be brave enough to ask why God made us in the first place. With this question, it really does help to start in the beginning. “In the beginning, *God . . .*” (Gen. 1:1). The Bible doesn't begin with Adam. It begins with God. God is the author, the painter, the creator in this story—in every person's story. So, why did God create you? “Then God said, ‘Let us make man *in our image*, after our likeness.’ . . . So God created man *in his own image, in the image of God* he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26–27). Why did God make you? He repeats himself three times to make himself clear. He made you in his image, in his likeness—to *look like him*. Why does someone make anything in someone else's image—a painting, a sculpture, an Instagram?¹ Why do we create things that image or look like others—our parents, our best friends, our favorite athletes or artists? Because we want to see them, and we want others to see them. Why did God make you? That question is infinitely more important than asking whom we will marry (or even *if* we will marry). The shortest answer is that we were meant to show others a bit of who God is, to share and display the love we've experienced with him. We're seven billion Instagrams of God.

A Love Too Good Not to Share

Made in the image of God, we're meant to be living, breathing pictures of him and his glory—his beauty, his integrity, his mercy, his justice, his love (Isa. 43:7). We were formed and made on purpose, for a purpose. The most important thing we could accomplish here

on earth, then, is to give ourselves completely to telling the world with our whole life that God is truer, greater, and more satisfying than our wildest imagination—than the most successful career, the biggest platform, or the happiest marriage.

So how do we live for God and his glory? We don't *make* God glorious or add any glory to him. We simply draw attention to him and his glory—to the beauty we see everywhere we look, to the infinite power and wisdom we read about in the Bible, to the stunning grace and mercy we receive in his love for us. The breakthrough that exploded in front of me were these words from John Piper: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."² God begins to look like everything he already is *through* me and my life—his perfect holiness, his flawless justice, his unstoppable love—when he and his love begin to be everything *to* me. When our lives tell others *he* is our greatest treasure, he begins to look as great and glorious as he truly is. God made us to show *us* his glory, and by showing us more of himself, he planned to make us the happiest people who have ever lived. I learned that the bigger and more glorious God is in my heart, the bigger and more glorious he will be through my life, and the more I'll be what he made me to be.

What is God's will for your life (and for your future marriage)? "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all *to the glory of God*" (1 Cor. 10:31). In absolutely everything you do—even down to how you drink Gatorade after you work out or sip your favorite drink at Starbucks—do it for the glory of God. What does that mean? Paul goes on to say that he seeks "to please everyone in everything . . . not seeking [his] own advantage, but that of many, *that they may be saved*" (1 Cor. 10:33). Drink and eat, work and play, date and marry in ways that strive to win the world for Jesus. Invite them into the overwhelming, life-changing love you've found. Whatever you do, do it to say something about what God has done for you and about how much he means to you.

Don't do anything just to do it, just to fit in and follow the world's script for your life. Let all of your life—your waiting, your dating, your wanting—be brought up into the purpose God had for you when he made you, weaving you together with love in your mother's womb (Ps. 139:13). Build your life on his love and make your purpose his glory.

An Awful Trade and Greater Love

But “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We all fall short of his glory, and not just in our past but today and every day. You, me, and everyone you know, no exceptions. Paul says we “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (Rom. 1:23). Instead of living to be an image of God, we take our eyes off him and let our hearts focus on something else. We trade the infinite worth of the unseen for a few minutes with things we can see. We are born into sin, and we live in love with our sin (Ps. 51:5; John 3:19). And “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Not a slap on the wrist, not some inconvenience in this life, not a little less from God. Death. Unbearable pain and agony away from God and his grace, and the pain never ends. We deserve *that* for disregarding God's love and his purpose for our lives, for rejecting the path to happiness he paved for us.

How has God responded to our sin—to trading his glory for our own, looking to marriage or money or anything else for life and happiness instead of to him? He “became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In Jesus Christ, God came in all his glory to save those who had trashed his glory and to remake them into living, breathing, and believing images of his worth and beauty, again. You were made for glory, and you were *saved* for glory.

A Heaven without God

This landed on me for the first time that same year I decided to be a business major, and it changed my whole perspective on my dreams, my major, the possibility of marriage, and the rest of my life. I realized that the gospel was a story for me but that it was not a story *about* me. This good news—the news that rescued me from hell and promised me heaven—was not about God making me happy apart from him and his glory, but about satisfying me now and forever *with himself*. He loved me enough to give me himself. I highlighted this paragraph then, and I go back and read it once a year or so:

Christ did not die to forgive sinners who go on treasuring anything above seeing and savoring God. And the people who would not be happy in heaven if Christ were not there, will not be there. The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God.³

Why did God save you? Not just so that you could escape hell or relieve some shame and regret, not even so that you could get into heaven. God saved you *for God*. The Bible says God loved you, chose you, saved you, and made you his own “to the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph. 1:6). Paul goes on to say that the one who works *everything* in the world according to his will has set aside an infinite and everlasting inheritance *for you* “to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:12). “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, *to the praise of his glory*” (vv. 13–14). *Saved* to make God look glorious. *Blessed* to make God look satisfying. *Kept* to make God look worthy. And because he loves you.

His love for you is unlike any love you have ever known. You will never fully understand or grasp it. But by his grace and

strength, you will know and feel more and more of it. Paul prays and asks “that you, being rooted and grounded *in love*, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:17–19). You will spend forever exploring this love, discovering its breadth and length and height and depth. His purpose for you began before you were even born and lasts into eternity. God wanted to make you infinitely happy forever, centuries after your future marriage is a sweet but faint memory. Can you live now for the glory of a God who saves you and loves you like that?

LIFE IS NEVER MAINLY ABOUT LOVE AND MARRIAGE. SO LEARN TO LIVE AND DATE FOR MORE.

Many of you grew up assuming that marriage would meet all of your needs and unlock God's purposes for you. But God has far more planned for you than your future marriage. *Not Yet Married* is not about waiting quietly in the corner of the world for God to bring you "the one," but about inspiring you to live and date for more *now*.

If you follow Jesus, the search for a spouse is no longer a pursuit of the perfect person, but a pursuit of more of God. He will likely write a love story for you different than the one you would write for yourself, but that's because he loves you and knows how to write a better story. This book was written to help you find real hope, happiness, and purpose in your not-yet-married life.



"In a cultural climate where singleness is equally celebrated and stigmatized, and dating is misunderstood and mispurposed, Segal injects a breath of biblical fresh air."

LOUIE GIGLIO, pastor, Passion City Church, Atlanta; founder, Passion Conferences

"Segal is a trustworthy guide. He is conscious of the world but conformed to the Word. God did not leave us without wisdom or power for this volatile season of life. Segal will point you to both."

JOHN PIPER, founder, desiringGod.org; chancellor, Bethlehem College & Seminary

"In a culture that constantly communicates false—even destructive—messages about dating, *Not Yet Married* is the Christian response we need. Segal is deeply biblical and writes with the empathy, humility, and wisdom of a brother who has walked this road, made mistakes, and found grace."

JAUELLE CROWE, author, *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years*



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RELATIONSHIPS / DATING

