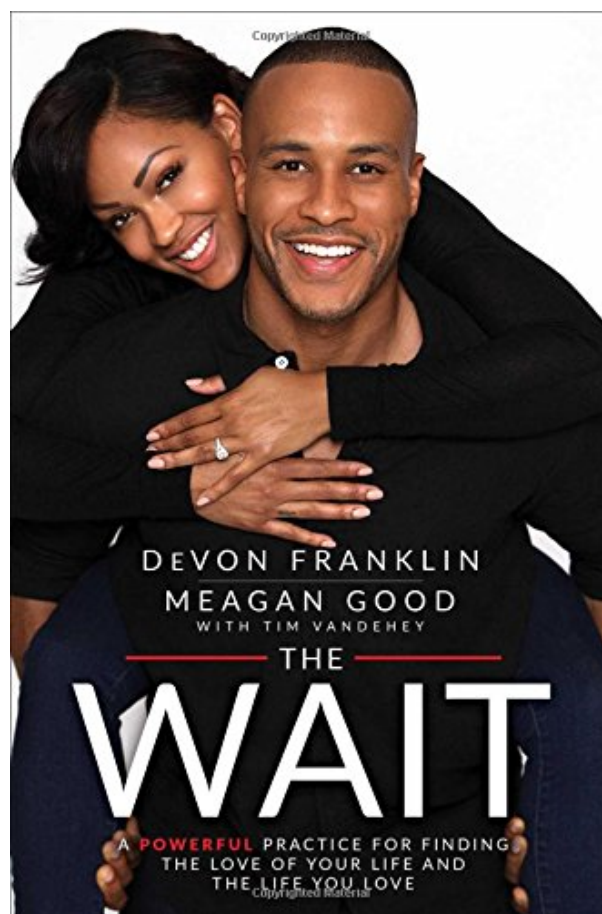
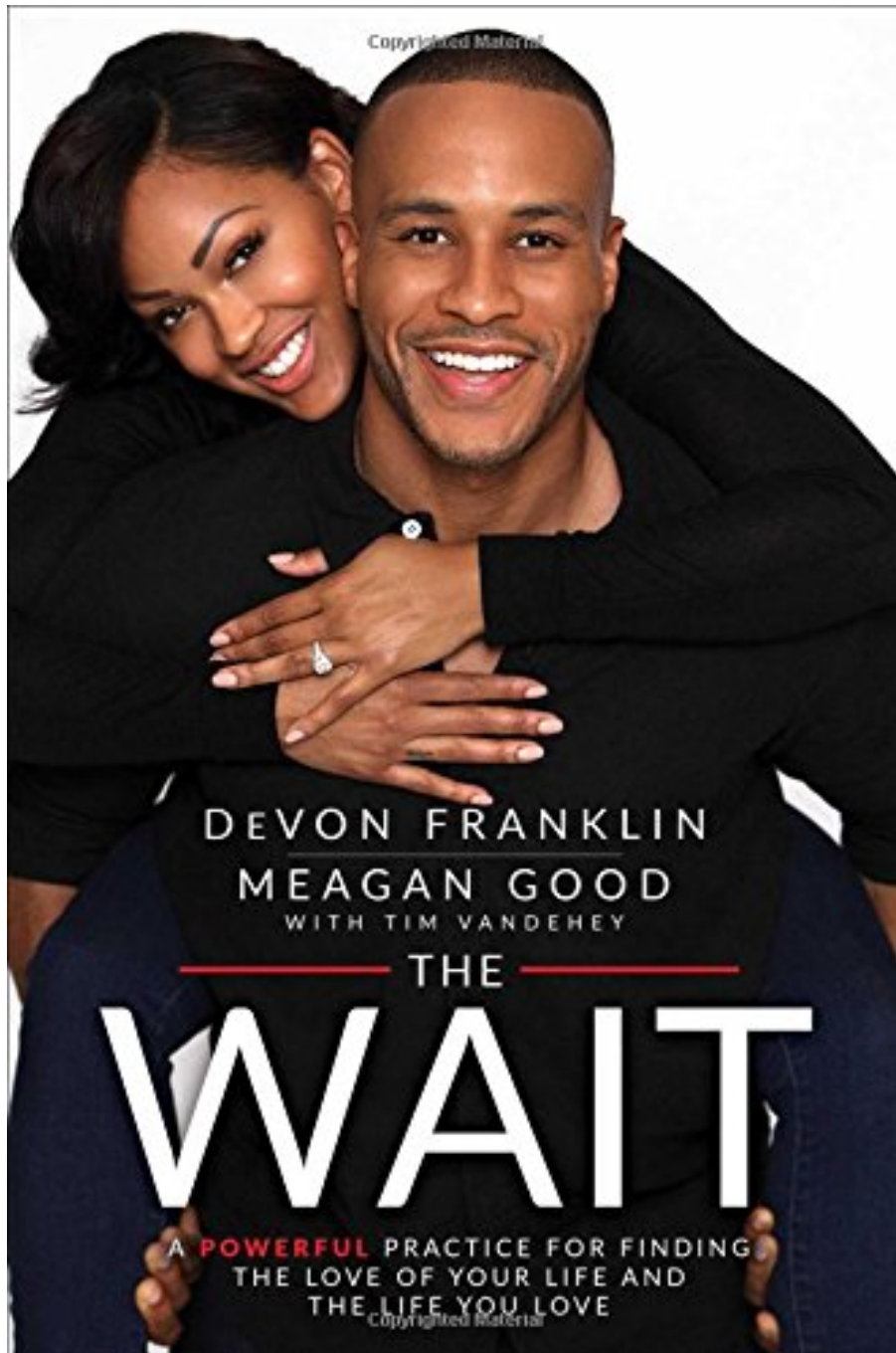


**THE WAIT: A POWERFUL PRACTICE FOR
FINDING THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE AND
THE LIFE YOU LOVE BY DEVON
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Review

"The Wait is an easy read, filled with powerful gems for someone ready to begin living a life free of addictive behaviors that drain away self-awareness." (EBONY Magazine)

"Who we marry is the most important decision we make. The Wait is a must-read for any person considering marriage and seeking to discover the greatness life has to offer! DeVon and Meagan offer a transformative and honest blueprint to unlock your blessings. This book has changed my life...you can't afford to not read *The Wait*." (Charreah K. Jackson, ESSENCE Lifestyle & Relationships Editor)

About the Author

DeVon Franklin is a growing force in entertainment and media. Beliefnet named him one of the "Most Influential Christians Under 40." The bestselling author of *Produced By Faith* is also President & CEO of Franklin Entertainment, a preacher and motivational speaker. He most recently produced the Sony Pictures film, *Miracles From Heaven* starring Jennifer Garner. He's a graduate of the University of Southern California. DeVon and Meagan married in the summer of 2012 and live in Los Angeles.

Meagan Good is an award-winning actress and producer. She's top lined some of Hollywood's biggest blockbusters including *Think Like A Man*, *Think Like a Man Too*, *Anchorman: The Legend Continues*, *Stomp The Yard* and the critically acclaimed *Eve's Bayou*. She's also cofounder of The Greater Good Foundation, a non-profit organization that advocates for the empowerment and enrichment of young women.

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The Wait — CHAPTER ONE — NO SEX? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS

Patience is not the ability to Wait,

but the ability to keep a good attitude while Waiting.

—JOYCE MEYERS

Just what is The Wait, exactly? The Wait is a conscious choice to pursue delayed gratification in the areas of life specifically related to relationships. It's a decision to get your mind right, figure out who you want to be and what you want out of life, and use your time and energy to become the best version of yourself. Put simply:

To Wait is to delay the temptation for instant gratification in relationships in order to get what you really want in life and become the person you truly want to be.

That starts with saying no to sex. The Wait isn't 100 percent about sex, but that's where it begins. Sex is probably the most compelling aspect of human gratification. It's such a powerful desire that outside of a proper healthy context it can cloud our judgment and cause us to make decisions that work against our own best self-interest. The untamed, untempered drive for sexual gratification has toppled empires, scuttled political careers, destroyed marriages, and squandered fortunes. Sex can be like a McLaren F1 race car: great in the right hands, but potentially disastrous when handled recklessly.

We're willing to bet that you've experienced more of the latter. We know because we've done it. We've all made terrible decisions about who to flirt with, spend time with, commit to, and even sleep with that had nothing to do with our brains but everything to do with our bodies. Sex can become a gateway drug to all kinds of other choices intended to satisfy the need for quick pleasure: going out with that gorgeous girl even though you know she's a hot mess, spending the weekend at that dude's place even though you know you're not the only one, or having just one more drink even though you know it will impair your judgment.

When we chase the high of instant gratification, we make choices that for many reasons are irresponsible and based on poor reasoning . . . or no reasoning at all. It takes time and self-control to take in information, let people reveal their true character, be consistent and disciplined, and give conflicts time to work themselves out. Delaying gratification means working at becoming more self-aware and humble enough to admit that our first impulses aren't always smart ones.

Let's be really, really clear on this:

One of the keys to practicing The Wait is giving up sex.

We know that for many Christians and non-Christians alike, the idea of giving up sex is too outrageous and impossible to consider. We get that. Yet based on our experience, we still believe that practicing The Wait until marriage will set you up for success and align you with God's perfect will for your life in all areas.

SEX, WAITING, AND RELATIONSHIPS

At its heart The Wait is a book about relationships, but there's no unwinding the connection between relationships and sexuality. Love and sex are the two sides of the same coin. When you have sex with someone outside of marriage, you're not just setting off a chain of chemical reactions in your brain that make you think they're a lot better for you than they probably are; you're giving them a part of your spirit.

When you have sex with someone, you really are leaving them a piece of yourself and taking a part of them with you . . . whether you want to or not. So each sex partner, good and bad, becomes a part of your future. Does this make you think twice about who you choose—and have chosen—to get into bed with?

Sex is an act of trust. It's about way more than physical attraction—yet when you think of it only as physical attraction you will see (or have already seen) that attraction lies and spellbinds. Strong relationships aren't

built solely on physical or sexual attraction. They're built on good judgment. How many times have you become caught up with someone based mostly on sexual attraction? How have those relationships ended?

We don't have to ask if they've ended, because they don't last. They can't. Before too long, the hormonal haze clears and all that matters is character, integrity, intelligence, values, spirituality, and self-esteem. A person who doesn't have enough of those to suit you is a person you can't tolerate for long.

Delaying gratification and getting greater control over your behavior—so that you can break the patterns that keep sabotaging you—is the key to finally finding the life and the peace that you hunger for. It's the key to becoming who you've always aspired to be, an idea we'll unpack in chapter two. But it all starts with giving up sex.

THE PROBLEM WITH SEX

Sex, of course, is a topic overflowing with religious, cultural, political, and personal baggage. Much of our popular culture is built around sexual titillation. In our business, the making of movies and television, actors are often cast as much for their good looks as for their acting talents. You don't really think that all private detectives look like Denzel Washington, do you?

As a people, we're alternately conflicted, fascinated, and appalled by sex in all its forms. Lawmakers crusade against pornography while their constituents consume it in record amounts. Abstinence-only sex-education programs deny teens basic information on the assumption that it will make them promiscuous, while the data show that teens are less sexually active than they've been in decades. The most popular magazines seem to be about nothing but sex: how to get it, how to give it, where to have it, how to be better at it, how to know if your partner is having it with someone else, and so on. We're obsessed with sex, and at the same time we disapprove of our obsession. It's no wonder that sex ties us in knots.

An old saying goes, "Success makes us forgetful and stupid." Sex does the same thing. It makes us forget who we are and what we want. It makes us do things that we look at later and say, "What was I thinking?"

After we got married in 2012, we were asked to appear at numerous conferences and gatherings all around the country to share the story of our relationship and how God brought us together. Though we talked about personal growth and getting closer to God, the stories about us—online and off-line—mostly focused on one thing: waiting to have sex. No matter how deep our faith and how intense our devotion and duty to God, we're still human, and human beings tend to be like twelve-year-olds when it comes to the topic of sex. (LOL).

Sex is pleasurable. Sex between two people who love each other body and soul is transcendent. But more often than not, that's not the kind of sex most people are having. A good friend of ours once said to us, "I'm not getting married until I have what you guys have." That's flattering and humbling, but it's also a reflection on how hard it is to find compatibility.

The two of us are not anti-sex. To be anti-sex would pretty much be the same as being anti-God. God created sex and we fully advocate the joy of experiencing it the way He intended. What we do know is that we've seen and known a lot of people whose higher aspirations for love, family, and success have landed on the rocks because they put the pursuit of sex before anything else.

The question, "to have sex or not to have sex?" is at the heart of *The Wait*. That's not because the most popular question when we spoke at Morehouse College or at T. D. Jakes's MegaFest or on Jimmy Kimmel Live! was "How did you manage not to have sex?" It's because we saw the incredible and undeniable grace that came to our relationship when we decided to remain committed to celibacy before marriage.

WHY WE CHOSE TO BE CELIBATE

We both discovered independently that to be the people we truly wanted to be, we needed to take sex out of the equation.

DEVON: I had made a commitment of celibacy long before I met Meagan. When we got married, I had been celibate for over ten years. What motivated the commitment was the same thing that made me keep it. I was preaching about living a life that put the Lord first, and then I was going out and living a life that was the opposite of the discipline I was teaching. Trying to be two people started tearing me apart. The desire for peace and harmony within myself was a motivator to choose no sex.

I asked myself, “What if what I was doing with this other woman disqualified me for the full manifestation of the call that God has on my life? Would it be worth it?” Of course not! No sex is worth that! I could not reconcile the idea that at the end of my life God might say, “Here’s what I had planned for you, but because you showed yourself unworthy, I couldn’t do all I wanted to do in your life.” I was not prepared to take that risk. Whatever my purpose is in this life, I didn’t want anything to get in the way of that.

MEAGAN: I got saved when I was twelve and lost my virginity when I was nineteen. As a Christian, I felt a strong conviction about not having sex, but like most of us, I made excuses and swept those convictions under the rug. And in some relationships I tried hard to abstain; in others I just guiltily went with the flow because I had failed miserably, so what was the point. On some occasions I opted to not even acknowledge my reservations at all because the guilt was exhausting. I repeated the same painful patterns in my relationships over and over, but I didn’t connect that to sex for a long time.

Finally, I knew I had to make a commitment to take sex off the table. I knew I couldn’t do the same thing and expect a different result. I knew I was giving most of me but not all of me at this point. I already knew DeVon but didn’t know he was my husband. By the time I began to entertain the thought of celibacy, my life was an emotional mess. Going celibate helped me clean it up in all areas (even areas where sex played no part). If I hadn’t done that, I doubt we would have come together as husband and wife.

Later, when we got together and got the memo—the revelation that our relationship was going to happen and in fact was meant to be—we didn’t want to do anything to sabotage it. Since we had both been celibate at this point, we agreed that we would remain celibate until after we married . . . if we married. So we took a calculated risk: we would forego physical pleasure so that we could really get to know each other’s minds, hearts, and spirits and confirm that God was truly bringing us together.

Considering the potential payoff, it wasn’t much of a risk. Sure, we were passing up sexual gratification. But by achieving real clarity we avoided making a life-altering mistake either way. Of course, things did work out. We fell in love with each other as whole people, and the promised payoff has been a life filled with not just joy but the peace that comes with knowing we’re firmly in the center of God’s purpose.

Now, we won’t lie to you. It wasn’t always easy. There were nights when things would get hot and heavy and Meagan would stop us and say, “I can’t get down like this. I’m used to going all the way. So we need to cool off.” And we would stop right there, say our good nights, and part for the evening. That happened plenty of times.

But when it dawned on us just how important celibacy was for our union, we both said, “Lord, delaying gratification is powerful!”

How powerful? We saw the many ways that God blessed us and continues to bless us with a relationship

built on mutual respect and deep understanding of who we are. We didn't let sex distort our perceptions, cloud our judgment, or make us rationalize something we didn't like. We fell in love as centered, intelligent people and children of God long before we fell in love with each other's physicality or sensuality.

WHAT THE WAIT ISN'T

Despite all this, The Wait is anything but passive. You're not sitting on your hands and hoping that things will turn out all right. You're making deliberate, positive choices that change who you are and how your mind works. You're also taking the resources you've been spending to chase after sexual gratification and using them instead to improve yourself in body, mind, and spirit.

We call this "strategic patience." While you wait, you're not putting your life on hold or wasting time waiting for something to happen. Instead, you're taking all the time and attention that you've been projecting outward and turning it inward. That's one of the most positive, life-affirming choices a person can make. From this perspective, you can finally see that hurling yourself into the path of potentially romantic relationships hasn't brought you any closer to what you want. It's time to try a different approach: letting love and purpose manifest in your life as a result of you working on becoming the best version of yourself.

Practicing strategic patience means understanding the difference between the two types of waiting:

1. Waiting that you choose.
2. Waiting that you have no choice about.

There's a big difference between something you choose and something that's forced upon you. With the first, you're in control; with the second, you resent control being taken from you. The Wait is about changing your circumstance from the second type of waiting into the first. Instead of feeling resentful and angry when the pursuit of your desires hits a wall, think, "Okay, since I'm already waiting, I'm going to choose to use this time productively." Your circumstances haven't changed, but how you see them certainly has. Just like that you transform yourself from passive victim into active collaborator with God.

Other things The Wait is not:

- A punishment. God isn't making you spend time alone as payback for some previous sin.
- Forever. We understand that not having sex is hard and could make a month feel like a year. But tell us this: What's the longest time in recent years that you've gone without sex against your will—Days? Weeks? Months? Years? Could you do that again, this time because you choose to?
- Putting your life on hold. Hardly. Now you have time and bandwidth to work on you. There are definitely times when fast, aggressive action is required to get what you want. You can still practice The Wait while you're actively going after all God has for you in life.
- Weird. We want to take the stigma away from waiting. What's bizarre about valuing yourself, your body, and your God over all else? Especially if you've already been through the pain of multiple bad breakups, there's nothing weird about waiting, no matter what anyone else says.

Most important, The Wait isn't powerless. Though you might not see it, God has His hand on your life during this time, rearranging the scenery in order to set you up for good things to come.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEING CELIBATE

If only those facts were enough to convince people about the power of celibacy, but they're not. When we

talk about *The Wait* and suggest that people consider going without sex, we get stares of horror. Many people can't even fathom going without sex for three months, much less years. On the male side, a lot of men have bought into the false idea that says that being a man means chasing lots of women. In that scenario, a man's worth has nothing to do with his character, morals, or integrity. It becomes reduced to how many women he sleeps with.

As for women, our culture tells them that their sexuality is one of the most important things they have to offer and then shames them for displaying it. It's really not surprising that sex provokes insecurity and internal conflicts. The unchecked premarital pursuit of sex can debase and objectify us, drive us further away from God's plan for our life, and expose us to incurable STDs, unplanned pregnancies, and tons of emotional trauma. So why is it that more of us don't just stop?

Well, we like sex. We crave it. Our bodies are designed to want sex in the way an addict wants drugs. Faced with celibacy, we rationalize. We say, "I don't know how to be celibate." Or, "We weren't meant to abstain." The problem is that what we should do is not what we want to do. It's a perfect example of instant gratification at war with delayed gratification.

Are you staying in a relationship for the sex and telling yourself that the other person will change one of these days? Well, has he or she changed yet? Maybe you've wrecked relationships and friendships by sleeping with multiple partners, even after swearing that you wouldn't. Maybe you're tired of the empty feeling you get when you wake up next to someone you slept with because you were lonely or had too much to drink. Perhaps it feels like you're on a treadmill of discouraging, drama-filled relationships based on physical attraction and not much else.

Any of that sound familiar? Then, we think that you know exactly what to do. You may even be getting some pretty clear signals from God about trying celibacy, but you don't want to go there. You don't want the questions, the pressure from friends, and the rejection of potential partners uninterested in waiting for sex. You think you'll be shunned or treated like some sort of freak. But there's probably a lot you don't know about celibacy:

More people are practicing it than you might think. According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, about 3 percent of Americans currently remain celibate until their honeymoons. That might not seem like a lot, but that means that about 5 million couples married today fell in love, vowed to wait, and kept that commitment intact until after they were joined in holy matrimony. So it can be done.

Celibacy is about the mind as much as it is about the body. When we think about celibacy, we focus on the physical need to have sex. But being celibate isn't just about pushing down that hormonal need to engage in intercourse. It's about owning how you feel, even when those horny feelings are coming on. It's choosing to discipline the mind and think of the benefit you seek, something that is greater than the desire to give in.

You might have heard people say something like this when talking about weight loss: "You have to think like a healthy person." It means that losing weight isn't entirely about changing what you eat, but about understanding why you eat the way you do. If you overeat out of anxiety or loneliness and you can address those problems, you will change how you think about food and eat differently. Celibacy is the same. If you look at the reasons sex is important to you, you'll probably find that they are less important than having what you want in life and getting closer to God. That will change how you think about sex and make it easier to resist your physical urges.

The urges will still be there, make no mistake. They were there for us while we dated. We were tempted all the time. But our purpose was more important. Many of us don't even consider that the sexual aspect of a relationship could be optional. It doesn't occur to us. But what if it did? What if we made the conscious choice to make clarity and communication and closeness more important than sexual gratification?

That's what the two of us mean by celibacy being about the mind. Once you reframe sex as a choice, you can reframe celibacy as a commitment that will help you get the things you want. Your sexual urges lose their power over you. You gain power over them.

DEVON: When I made the commitment to celibacy, I got a lot of disbelieving comments from friends. You should have seen the open mouths when I told people that I had remained celibate for more than ten years before marrying Meagan! But my friends' shock passed, and some of them said that they admired what I was doing. They knew I loved the Lord and that I was making this commitment out of a desire to be closer to him. In the end, some of them even said I inspired them to try it themselves.

As a man, if you can be disciplined in your sexual life, there's nothing you can't do. The discipline that you create in that area of your life will be the same for the rest of your life. The Bible says, "Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you" (Matthew 6:4, NLT).

Celibacy isn't about shame or moral judgment. We'll say it again: we are not anti-sex. But some people are. They fear sex because it's a powerful motivator of behavior, and they judge those who have sex out of wedlock as morally inferior. Do not listen to those people when you're deciding whether or not to be celibate. Shame and the fear of being judged are the wrong reasons to practice The Wait. If you let yourself be shamed into it, you won't stick with it.

Sex isn't sinful. Sometimes people of faith have strange, outdated ideas about what sex is. Once again: sex itself is not sinful. Sex isn't wrong. God created the sexual act and the physical and emotional drives that make us want to have sex. Sex is an act of creation, even if it doesn't result in a child. It creates joy and intimacy between two people. God-ordained sex between two people who are committed to each other in marriage, who know each other fully and are giving of themselves to each other, body and spirit—that is sanctified.

SIGNS FROM GOD

God won't leave you guessing. He will send you signs that it's time to slow down, quiet your mind, and work on yourself while He labors on your behalf. But it's up to you to read the signs that it's time to wait. They include:

- A breakup
- Physical or mental or emotional exhaustion
- Negative or hurtful people leaving your life
- The feeling of being lost or purposeless
- An opportunity to go on a long trip or retreat
- The awareness that you've been repeating the same relationship mistakes for years

- Persistent frustration and lack of peace

Not all of God's signs are enjoyable. Some are unpleasant or painful. But if that's what it takes to get your attention, it's worth it. Pay attention to the events and patterns in your life. Is God telling you to wait? If you haven't been listening, now is a good time to start. If not, you might squander time that you'll never get back.

DOES IT REALLY HAVE TO BE UNTIL MARRIAGE?

We faced a really tough question in writing this book:

Is *The Wait* only about waiting until marriage?

Yes. We do believe that most people's lives and relationships would be stronger and more joyful if they waited until marriage. On the other hand, many of the people reading this book, no matter how strong their faith, will probably have sex or continue to before marriage. To ignore that would not only be dismissive but could be viewed as borderline delusional. Just like you, we live in the real world where we try every day to live as spiritual beings dealing with the challenges of our flesh, so we do understand.

However, even with that understanding, we are confident that saving sex until after marriage will yield the best results, both for you as an individual and for you and your partner. That's what we did. We can speak to the blessings firsthand. We've seen God do amazing things in our lives that we believe are directly connected to putting him first in all areas of our life—including our sex life.

We get that some people's strong desire for sex and their differing perspectives on premarital sex might make them unlikely to wait until marriage. That said, we believe that to gain all the blessings connected to *The Wait*, celibacy should continue until you make that vow of lasting commitment. Not to say that God won't bless you if you choose to live differently, but since making our choice we've reaped the benefits of blessings that are nothing like we've ever received in our lives before.

Because we've written this book from that perspective, that's our focus. Plus, qualifying everything—different rules for people waiting for different lengths of time—would be confusing for you and us. So we're just going to talk about *The Wait* as we experienced it: no sex until marriage. We're not denying the real world; we're just reflecting on the way that the two of us navigated the real world and our own sexual desires to find real, deep, authentic love.

THE BLESSINGS OF WAITING

Despite all our reassurances and your best intentions, giving up sex can seem impossible. But believe us, it's worth it. The things that happened in the months after our marriage were not things we could have planned or even thought we deserved. We prayed for things and envisioned exactly how they would happen, but it wasn't until we were together—with the richness and respect that we had built for each other—that miracles began to come to pass. God's grace has been overwhelming and life changing. Putting God first and making him the foundation of our union has been not only the best personal decision we've ever made but the best decision for our careers and lives.

DEVON: When you're disciplined, obedient, and faithful, God will bring you the full manifestation of what He has in mind for you. He'll bring you His plan A, the best destiny you could imagine. That's what I wanted for my life when I became celibate. I knew that if I had remained undisciplined and continued to make bad choices, God would still be a benevolent God. He would bring me something from plan B, plan C, or plan D, but that wasn't enough for me. I said, "Lord, I want it all." And when you look at my life since then in all its facets, from family to career, God has delivered above and beyond anything I could have hoped or asked for.

MEAGAN: Everything in my life has changed dramatically since I stopped picking and choosing which parts of the Bible I would follow. I stopped saying, “I’m going to do this by the book, but I’m going to do that over there the way I want to do it.” When I stopped that and I focused on the hardest thing, which is sex, I literally watched everything in my life and career change.

Waiting for sex isn’t easy, but no important thing is ever easy. It’s a sacrifice, but a worthwhile one. We took some teasing about things like our clear skin and how wild our honeymoon must have been, but it was worth it. Finally enjoying sex with each other after our marriage was incredible, but it was also the consummation of something holy.

WISE WAITING

Influential philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas said, “A person is said to be patient . . . because he acts in a praiseworthy manner by enduring things which hurt him here and now and is not unduly saddened by them.” We consider patience a virtue and impatience a vice, but why?

In part, it’s because a patient disposition tends to give us a healthier perspective on the ups and downs of daily living. Because we’re not expecting everything to come our way overnight, we keep the big picture in mind. We’re less likely to become angry or depressed at life’s trivial setbacks. The impatient person can’t understand why everything isn’t working out as planned and is more likely to react to a minor misfortune by becoming frustrated, giving up, or doing something foolish.

CELIBACY VERSUS ABSTINENCE

Before we move on, we need to draw a clear distinction between celibacy and abstinence. Most people think they’re the same thing. They’re not. Abstinence is simply refraining from sex; it’s the absence of something with no greater meaning behind it. To us, Celibacy is refraining from sex because of a vow or faith; it’s abstinence with a purpose. You might abstain from sex involuntarily, because you’re not in a relationship. Celibacy is never involuntary. It’s always the result of a conscious, deliberate choice. That’s an important distinction.

In *The Wait* we’re going to talk about celibacy because to us, celibacy is something you go into with your eyes open, fully expecting to gain something from the experience. It’s about saying, “I’m becoming.” On the other hand, in our culture abstinence is something grudging, something forced upon young people, for example, by well-meaning parents or well-meaning ministries. It’s about saying, “You will not.” But there’s not always purpose or learning associated with it. That can be dangerous.

Consider the news story in the spring of 2015 about a small high school in Texas with an abstinence-only sex education program that experienced a widespread outbreak of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection. That’s one tiny piece of proof that just saying no to sex or pretending the sex drive doesn’t exist isn’t an adequate defense against pregnancy, disease, or worse.

When we talk about celibacy, the last thing we’re doing is telling you to ignore sex. Just the opposite. We’re suggesting that you acknowledge its power and your own desire. That way, if you choose to go without sex, you’ll do so with your eyes open, understanding the realities and risks of having sex and not having it. Celibacy and *The Wait* complement each other.

THE ENERGY TO CHANGE EVERYTHING

Despite all those positives, type-A personalities often see *The Wait* as disempowering or fatalistic. So many times we hear self-help tropes like, “Go for what you want in life” and “Successful people make things happen; unsuccessful people watch things happen.” That sort of one-size-fits-all wisdom sounds enticing until you realize that it could possibly leave God completely out of the picture.

For some scriptural perspective, look at Isaiah 40:30–31 (NASB), which reads,

Though youths grow weary and tired,

And vigorous young men stumble badly,

Yet those who wait for the LORD

Will gain new strength;

They will mount up with wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

Yes, even those vigorous young men and women, so impatient and confident in their ability to choose the right person or right path, will stumble and wear out without God's guidance to give them strength.

Running through love's maze, chasing one bad relationship after another—it all discourages not just the body but also the spirit. The word discourage says it: a loss of courage. After a while, you don't have the fortitude to face another first date or relationship. It's exhausting.

On the other hand, showing some restraint and letting God reveal your next step is like plugging into an emotional and spiritual power plant. As the verse says, you can run and not get tired. You're not just free of the maze but free of the unspoken mandate that you must find your life's partner and life's purpose right now. You're on nobody's schedule but your own, and you have God to help you figure out what to do next.

In fact, the same engine that drives the best stories also gives *The Wait* its power. We're professionals with years working in the entertainment business, and we know that the key to any good movie is tension. It doesn't matter if you're waiting for two characters to share their first kiss or holding your breath while the heroine tries to escape from the serial killer. No matter the genre of film, what moves the story is the tension between what the main character wants and the obstacles he or she must overcome to get it.

The Wait works the same way. It takes the tension that exists between instant and delayed gratification and turns it into energy. In the Bible, giving in to the temptations of instant gratification inevitably leads to ruin. (See Eden, Garden of.) Delayed gratification, on the other hand, leads to fidelity and reward. (See the story of Joseph.) Waiting for what you want floods your life with potential energy.

DELAYED GRATIFICATION AND MARSHMALLOWS

One memorable piece of evidence for the benefits of delayed gratification comes from what's become known as the famous Stanford marshmallow experiment. In the 1960s, a Stanford University professor named Walter Mischel started experimenting with hundreds of children around four and five years old to see how long they could delay their own gratification.

In the experiment, a researcher brought each child into a private room one at a time and sat down across a table from him or her. On the table he placed a marshmallow. Then he told each child that he would leave the room for fifteen minutes. If the child did not eat the marshmallow during the time that the researcher was gone, he or she would get a second marshmallow when the researcher came back. If the child ate the marshmallow, he or she wouldn't get any more.

As you might expect, most of the kids ate their marshmallows. A few didn't. But the interesting part of the study came as the researchers followed the kids over the next forty years as they grew into adults. What the study showed was that the kids who were able to delay gratification were more successful in almost every area of life: reduced rates of obesity, better social skills, higher SAT scores, you name it. They were simply better at life than the kids who gave in to instant gratification.

If you've never been disciplined enough to deny yourself short-term pleasure in favor of the big picture, The Wait is your chance to develop this skill as an adult, something most people cannot do. Doing so can increase your chances of being successful in the parts of your life that matter most, from your career to your relationships.

BEING SELECTIVE MAKES YOU MORE DESIRABLE

Another big plus to delaying gratification and reining in your dating life is that the less available you are, the more fascinating you become. We live in a culture where most people hurl themselves blindly into the path of every possible relationship. In that world, who's most interesting and desirable? The person who has the confidence not to date every warm body that comes along but instead is selective. Just as tension powers the action in the movies, it will do the same for you.

You may be dating and deciding to wait for the first time. You may be single and already waiting (on purpose or because you have no other choice) but becoming discouraged. Either way, have hope. The Wait will work for you. Ultimately, if your desire to please God is greater than your desire to please yourself (and even the person you may be dating), then God will bring you boundless blessings. Tether your will to wait to your desire to please God, and He will bless you and honor your commitment in ways that will surprise you and improve your life.

THE WAIT AND . . . CAREER

Your career is another area where you might be chomping at the bit to get going, get climbing that ladder, and get the corner office, but you have only so much control. There are politics, the realities of advancement within an organization, and issues of training and education to deal with. Plus, it's hard to know what you should really do with your life.

Waiting can be a great career strategy, because believe it or not God honors your sacrifice. And let's face it, the decision to deny yourself and not have sex is a sacrifice. The two of us have witnessed firsthand how God has blessed our careers because we chose to honor him in our relationship. As you practice The Wait, you can see a great acceleration and advancement in your purpose and career.

THE WAIT: A POWERFUL PRACTICE FOR FINDING THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE AND THE LIFE YOU LOVE BY DEVON FRANKLIN, MEAGAN GOOD PDF

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THE WAIT: A POWERFUL PRACTICE FOR FINDING THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE AND THE LIFE YOU LOVE BY DEVON FRANKLIN, MEAGAN GOOD PDF

Hollywood power couple DeVon Franklin and Meagan Good candidly share about their courtship and marriage, and the key to their success—waiting.

President/CEO of Franklin Entertainment and former Sony Pictures executive DeVon Franklin and award-winning actress Meagan Good have learned sometimes all we can do is wait for “the one” to come into our lives. They spent years crossing paths but it wasn’t until they were thrown together while working on the film *Jumping the Broom* that their storybook romance began.

Faced with starting a new relationship and wanting to avoid potentially devastating relationship pitfalls, DeVon and Meagan chose to do something almost unheard of in today’s society—abstain from sex until they were married.

In *The Wait*, DeVon and Meagan share the life-changing message that waiting—rather than rushing a relationship—can help you find the person you’re meant to be with. Filled with candid his-and-hers accounts of the most important moments of their relationship, and practical advice on how waiting for everything—from dating to sex—can transform relationships, allowing you to find a deep connection based on patience, trust, and faith.

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Review

"The Wait is an easy read, filled with powerful gems for someone ready to begin living a life free of addictive behaviors that drain away self-awareness." (EBONY Magazine)

"Who we marry is the most important decision we make. *The Wait* is a must-read for any person considering marriage and seeking to discover the greatness life has to offer! DeVon and Meagan offer a transformative and honest blueprint to unlock your blessings. This book has changed my life...you can't afford to not read *The Wait*." (Charreah K. Jackson, ESSENCE Lifestyle & Relationships Editor)

About the Author

DeVon Franklin is a growing force in entertainment and media. Beliefnet named him one of the “Most

Influential Christians Under 40.” The bestselling author of *Produced By Faith* is also President & CEO of Franklin Entertainment, a preacher and motivational speaker. He most recently produced the Sony Pictures film, *Miracles From Heaven* starring Jennifer Garner. He’s a graduate of the University of Southern California. DeVon and Meagan married in the summer of 2012 and live in Los Angeles.

Meagan Good is an award-winning actress and producer. She’s top lined some of Hollywood’s biggest blockbusters including *Think Like A Man*, *Think Like a Man Too*, *Anchorman: The Legend Continues*, *Stomp The Yard* and the critically acclaimed *Eve’s Bayou*. She’s also cofounder of The Greater Good Foundation, a non-profit organization that advocates for the empowerment and enrichment of young women.

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The Wait — CHAPTER ONE — NO SEX? YOU CAN’T BE SERIOUS

Patience is not the ability to Wait,

but the ability to keep a good attitude while Waiting.

—JOYCE MEYERS

Just what is The Wait, exactly? The Wait is a conscious choice to pursue delayed gratification in the areas of life specifically related to relationships. It’s a decision to get your mind right, figure out who you want to be and what you want out of life, and use your time and energy to become the best version of yourself. Put simply:

To Wait is to delay the temptation for instant gratification in relationships in order to get what you really want in life and become the person you truly want to be.

That starts with saying no to sex. The Wait isn’t 100 percent about sex, but that’s where it begins. Sex is probably the most compelling aspect of human gratification. It’s such a powerful desire that outside of a proper healthy context it can cloud our judgment and cause us to make decisions that work against our own best self-interest. The untamed, untempered drive for sexual gratification has toppled empires, scuttled political careers, destroyed marriages, and squandered fortunes. Sex can be like a McLaren F1 race car: great in the right hands, but potentially disastrous when handled recklessly.

We’re willing to bet that you’ve experienced more of the latter. We know because we’ve done it. We’ve all made terrible decisions about who to flirt with, spend time with, commit to, and even sleep with that had nothing to do with our brains but everything to do with our bodies. Sex can become a gateway drug to all kinds of other choices intended to satisfy the need for quick pleasure: going out with that gorgeous girl even though you know she’s a hot mess, spending the weekend at that dude’s place even though you know you’re not the only one, or having just one more drink even though you know it will impair your judgment.

When we chase the high of instant gratification, we make choices that for many reasons are irresponsible and based on poor reasoning . . . or no reasoning at all. It takes time and self-control to take in information, let people reveal their true character, be consistent and disciplined, and give conflicts time to work themselves out. Delaying gratification means working at becoming more self-aware and humble enough to admit that our first impulses aren’t always smart ones.

Let’s be really, really clear on this:

One of the keys to practicing The Wait is giving up sex.

We know that for many Christians and non-Christians alike, the idea of giving up sex is too outrageous and impossible to consider. We get that. Yet based on our experience, we still believe that practicing The Wait until marriage will set you up for success and align you with God's perfect will for your life in all areas.

SEX, WAITING, AND RELATIONSHIPS

At its heart *The Wait* is a book about relationships, but there's no unwinding the connection between relationships and sexuality. Love and sex are the two sides of the same coin. When you have sex with someone outside of marriage, you're not just setting off a chain of chemical reactions in your brain that make you think they're a lot better for you than they probably are; you're giving them a part of your spirit.

When you have sex with someone, you really are leaving them a piece of yourself and taking a part of them with you . . . whether you want to or not. So each sex partner, good and bad, becomes a part of your future. Does this make you think twice about who you choose—and have chosen—to get into bed with?

Sex is an act of trust. It's about way more than physical attraction—yet when you think of it only as physical attraction you will see (or have already seen) that attraction lies and spellbinds. Strong relationships aren't built solely on physical or sexual attraction. They're built on good judgment. How many times have you become caught up with someone based mostly on sexual attraction? How have those relationships ended?

We don't have to ask if they've ended, because they don't last. They can't. Before too long, the hormonal haze clears and all that matters is character, integrity, intelligence, values, spirituality, and self-esteem. A person who doesn't have enough of those to suit you is a person you can't tolerate for long.

Delaying gratification and getting greater control over your behavior—so that you can break the patterns that keep sabotaging you—is the key to finally finding the life and the peace that you hunger for. It's the key to becoming who you've always aspired to be, an idea we'll unpack in chapter two. But it all starts with giving up sex.

THE PROBLEM WITH SEX

Sex, of course, is a topic overflowing with religious, cultural, political, and personal baggage. Much of our popular culture is built around sexual titillation. In our business, the making of movies and television, actors are often cast as much for their good looks as for their acting talents. You don't really think that all private detectives look like Denzel Washington, do you?

As a people, we're alternately conflicted, fascinated, and appalled by sex in all its forms. Lawmakers crusade against pornography while their constituents consume it in record amounts. Abstinence-only sex-education programs deny teens basic information on the assumption that it will make them promiscuous, while the data show that teens are less sexually active than they've been in decades. The most popular magazines seem to be about nothing but sex: how to get it, how to give it, where to have it, how to be better at it, how to know if your partner is having it with someone else, and so on. We're obsessed with sex, and at the same time we disapprove of our obsession. It's no wonder that sex ties us in knots.

An old saying goes, "Success makes us forgetful and stupid." Sex does the same thing. It makes us forget who we are and what we want. It makes us do things that we look at later and say, "What was I thinking?"

After we got married in 2012, we were asked to appear at numerous conferences and gatherings all around the country to share the story of our relationship and how God brought us together. Though we talked about personal growth and getting closer to God, the stories about us—online and off-line—mostly focused on one thing: waiting to have sex. No matter how deep our faith and how intense our devotion and duty to God, we're still human, and human beings tend to be like twelve-year-olds when it comes to the topic of sex. (LOL).

Sex is pleasurable. Sex between two people who love each other body and soul is transcendent. But more often than not, that's not the kind of sex most people are having. A good friend of ours once said to us, "I'm not getting married until I have what you guys have." That's flattering and humbling, but it's also a reflection on how hard it is to find compatibility.

The two of us are not anti-sex. To be anti-sex would pretty much be the same as being anti-God. God created sex and we fully advocate the joy of experiencing it the way He intended. What we do know is that we've seen and known a lot of people whose higher aspirations for love, family, and success have landed on the rocks because they put the pursuit of sex before anything else.

The question, "to have sex or not to have sex?" is at the heart of The Wait. That's not because the most popular question when we spoke at Morehouse College or at T. D. Jakes's MegaFest or on Jimmy Kimmel Live! was "How did you manage not to have sex?" It's because we saw the incredible and undeniable grace that came to our relationship when we decided to remain committed to celibacy before marriage.

WHY WE CHOSE TO BE CELIBATE

We both discovered independently that to be the people we truly wanted to be, we needed to take sex out of the equation.

DEVON: I had made a commitment of celibacy long before I met Meagan. When we got married, I had been celibate for over ten years. What motivated the commitment was the same thing that made me keep it. I was preaching about living a life that put the Lord first, and then I was going out and living a life that was the opposite of the discipline I was teaching. Trying to be two people started tearing me apart. The desire for peace and harmony within myself was a motivator to choose no sex.

I asked myself, "What if what I was doing with this other woman disqualified me for the full manifestation of the call that God has on my life? Would it be worth it?" Of course not! No sex is worth that! I could not reconcile the idea that at the end of my life God might say, "Here's what I had planned for you, but because you showed yourself unworthy, I couldn't do all I wanted to do in your life." I was not prepared to take that risk. Whatever my purpose is in this life, I didn't want anything to get in the way of that.

MEAGAN: I got saved when I was twelve and lost my virginity when I was nineteen. As a Christian, I felt a strong conviction about not having sex, but like most of us, I made excuses and swept those convictions under the rug. And in some relationships I tried hard to abstain; in others I just guiltily went with the flow because I had failed miserably, so what was the point. On some occasions I opted to not even acknowledge my reservations at all because the guilt was exhausting. I repeated the same painful patterns in my relationships over and over, but I didn't connect that to sex for a long time.

Finally, I knew I had to make a commitment to take sex off the table. I knew I couldn't do the same thing and expect a different result. I knew I was giving most of me but not all of me at this point. I already knew DeVon but didn't know he was my husband. By the time I began to entertain the thought of celibacy, my life was an emotional mess. Going celibate helped me clean it up in all areas (even areas where sex played no part). If I hadn't done that, I doubt we would have come together as husband and wife.

Later, when we got together and got the memo—the revelation that our relationship was going to happen and in fact was meant to be—we didn't want to do anything to sabotage it. Since we had both been celibate at this point, we agreed that we would remain celibate until after we married . . . if we married. So we took a calculated risk: we would forego physical pleasure so that we could really get to know each other's minds, hearts, and spirits and confirm that God was truly bringing us together.

Considering the potential payoff, it wasn't much of a risk. Sure, we were passing up sexual gratification. But by achieving real clarity we avoided making a life-altering mistake either way. Of course, things did work out. We fell in love with each other as whole people, and the promised payoff has been a life filled with not just joy but the peace that comes with knowing we're firmly in the center of God's purpose.

Now, we won't lie to you. It wasn't always easy. There were nights when things would get hot and heavy and Meagan would stop us and say, "I can't get down like this. I'm used to going all the way. So we need to cool off." And we would stop right there, say our good nights, and part for the evening. That happened plenty of times.

But when it dawned on us just how important celibacy was for our union, we both said, "Lord, delaying gratification is powerful!"

How powerful? We saw the many ways that God blessed us and continues to bless us with a relationship built on mutual respect and deep understanding of who we are. We didn't let sex distort our perceptions, cloud our judgment, or make us rationalize something we didn't like. We fell in love as centered, intelligent people and children of God long before we fell in love with each other's physicality or sensuality.

WHAT THE WAIT ISN'T

Despite all this, The Wait is anything but passive. You're not sitting on your hands and hoping that things will turn out all right. You're making deliberate, positive choices that change who you are and how your mind works. You're also taking the resources you've been spending to chase after sexual gratification and using them instead to improve yourself in body, mind, and spirit.

We call this "strategic patience." While you wait, you're not putting your life on hold or wasting time waiting for something to happen. Instead, you're taking all the time and attention that you've been projecting outward and turning it inward. That's one of the most positive, life-affirming choices a person can make. From this perspective, you can finally see that hurling yourself into the path of potentially romantic relationships hasn't brought you any closer to what you want. It's time to try a different approach: letting love and purpose manifest in your life as a result of you working on becoming the best version of yourself.

Practicing strategic patience means understanding the difference between the two types of waiting:

1. Waiting that you choose.
2. Waiting that you have no choice about.

There's a big difference between something you choose and something that's forced upon you. With the first, you're in control; with the second, you resent control being taken from you. The Wait is about changing your circumstance from the second type of waiting into the first. Instead of feeling resentful and angry when the pursuit of your desires hits a wall, think, "Okay, since I'm already waiting, I'm going to choose to use this time productively." Your circumstances haven't changed, but how you see them certainly has. Just like that you transform yourself from passive victim into active collaborator with God.

Other things The Wait is not:

- A punishment. God isn't making you spend time alone as payback for some previous sin.
- Forever. We understand that not having sex is hard and could make a month feel like a year. But tell us this: What's the longest time in recent years that you've gone without sex against your will—Days? Weeks?

Months? Years? Could you do that again, this time because you choose to?

- Putting your life on hold. Hardly. Now you have time and bandwidth to work on you. There are definitely times when fast, aggressive action is required to get what you want. You can still practice The Wait while you're actively going after all God has for you in life.
- Weird. We want to take the stigma away from waiting. What's bizarre about valuing yourself, your body, and your God over all else? Especially if you've already been through the pain of multiple bad breakups, there's nothing weird about waiting, no matter what anyone else says.

Most important, The Wait isn't powerless. Though you might not see it, God has His hand on your life during this time, rearranging the scenery in order to set you up for good things to come.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEING CELIBATE

If only those facts were enough to convince people about the power of celibacy, but they're not. When we talk about The Wait and suggest that people consider going without sex, we get stares of horror. Many people can't even fathom going without sex for three months, much less years. On the male side, a lot of men have bought into the false idea that says that being a man means chasing lots of women. In that scenario, a man's worth has nothing to do with his character, morals, or integrity. It becomes reduced to how many women he sleeps with.

As for women, our culture tells them that their sexuality is one of the most important things they have to offer and then shames them for displaying it. It's really not surprising that sex provokes insecurity and internal conflicts. The unchecked premarital pursuit of sex can debase and objectify us, drive us further away from God's plan for our life, and expose us to incurable STDs, unplanned pregnancies, and tons of emotional trauma. So why is it that more of us don't just stop?

Well, we like sex. We crave it. Our bodies are designed to want sex in the way an addict wants drugs. Faced with celibacy, we rationalize. We say, "I don't know how to be celibate." Or, "We weren't meant to abstain." The problem is that what we should do is not what we want to do. It's a perfect example of instant gratification at war with delayed gratification.

Are you staying in a relationship for the sex and telling yourself that the other person will change one of these days? Well, has he or she changed yet? Maybe you've wrecked relationships and friendships by sleeping with multiple partners, even after swearing that you wouldn't. Maybe you're tired of the empty feeling you get when you wake up next to someone you slept with because you were lonely or had too much to drink. Perhaps it feels like you're on a treadmill of discouraging, drama-filled relationships based on physical attraction and not much else.

Any of that sound familiar? Then, we think that you know exactly what to do. You may even be getting some pretty clear signals from God about trying celibacy, but you don't want to go there. You don't want the questions, the pressure from friends, and the rejection of potential partners uninterested in waiting for sex. You think you'll be shunned or treated like some sort of freak. But there's probably a lot you don't know about celibacy:

More people are practicing it than you might think. According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, about 3 percent of Americans currently remain celibate until their honeymoons. That might not seem like a lot, but that means that about 5 million couples married today fell in love, vowed to wait, and kept that commitment intact until after they were joined in holy matrimony. So it can be done.

Celibacy is about the mind as much as it is about the body. When we think about celibacy, we focus on the physical need to have sex. But being celibate isn't just about pushing down that hormonal need to engage in intercourse. It's about owning how you feel, even when those horny feelings are coming on. It's choosing to discipline the mind and think of the benefit you seek, something that is greater than the desire to give in.

You might have heard people say something like this when talking about weight loss: "You have to think like a healthy person." It means that losing weight isn't entirely about changing what you eat, but about understanding why you eat the way you do. If you overeat out of anxiety or loneliness and you can address those problems, you will change how you think about food and eat differently. Celibacy is the same. If you look at the reasons sex is important to you, you'll probably find that they are less important than having what you want in life and getting closer to God. That will change how you think about sex and make it easier to resist your physical urges.

The urges will still be there, make no mistake. They were there for us while we dated. We were tempted all the time. But our purpose was more important. Many of us don't even consider that the sexual aspect of a relationship could be optional. It doesn't occur to us. But what if it did? What if we made the conscious choice to make clarity and communication and closeness more important than sexual gratification?

That's what the two of us mean by celibacy being about the mind. Once you reframe sex as a choice, you can reframe celibacy as a commitment that will help you get the things you want. Your sexual urges lose their power over you. You gain power over them.

DEVON: When I made the commitment to celibacy, I got a lot of disbelieving comments from friends. You should have seen the open mouths when I told people that I had remained celibate for more than ten years before marrying Meagan! But my friends' shock passed, and some of them said that they admired what I was doing. They knew I loved the Lord and that I was making this commitment out of a desire to be closer to him. In the end, some of them even said I inspired them to try it themselves.

As a man, if you can be disciplined in your sexual life, there's nothing you can't do. The discipline that you create in that area of your life will be the same for the rest of your life. The Bible says, "Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you" (Matthew 6:4, NLT).

Celibacy isn't about shame or moral judgment. We'll say it again: we are not anti-sex. But some people are. They fear sex because it's a powerful motivator of behavior, and they judge those who have sex out of wedlock as morally inferior. Do not listen to those people when you're deciding whether or not to be celibate. Shame and the fear of being judged are the wrong reasons to practice The Wait. If you let yourself be shamed into it, you won't stick with it.

Sex isn't sinful. Sometimes people of faith have strange, outdated ideas about what sex is. Once again: sex itself is not sinful. Sex isn't wrong. God created the sexual act and the physical and emotional drives that make us want to have sex. Sex is an act of creation, even if it doesn't result in a child. It creates joy and intimacy between two people. God-ordained sex between two people who are committed to each other in marriage, who know each other fully and are giving of themselves to each other, body and spirit—that is sanctified.

SIGNS FROM GOD

God won't leave you guessing. He will send you signs that it's time to slow down, quiet your mind, and work on yourself while He labors on your behalf. But it's up to you to read the signs that it's time to wait.

They include:

- A breakup
- Physical or mental or emotional exhaustion
- Negative or hurtful people leaving your life
- The feeling of being lost or purposeless
- An opportunity to go on a long trip or retreat
- The awareness that you've been repeating the same relationship mistakes for years
- Persistent frustration and lack of peace

Not all of God's signs are enjoyable. Some are unpleasant or painful. But if that's what it takes to get your attention, it's worth it. Pay attention to the events and patterns in your life. Is God telling you to wait? If you haven't been listening, now is a good time to start. If not, you might squander time that you'll never get back.

DOES IT REALLY HAVE TO BE UNTIL MARRIAGE?

We faced a really tough question in writing this book:

Is *The Wait* only about waiting until marriage?

Yes. We do believe that most people's lives and relationships would be stronger and more joyful if they waited until marriage. On the other hand, many of the people reading this book, no matter how strong their faith, will probably have sex or continue to before marriage. To ignore that would not only be dismissive but could be viewed as borderline delusional. Just like you, we live in the real world where we try every day to live as spiritual beings dealing with the challenges of our flesh, so we do understand.

However, even with that understanding, we are confident that saving sex until after marriage will yield the best results, both for you as an individual and for you and your partner. That's what we did. We can speak to the blessings firsthand. We've seen God do amazing things in our lives that we believe are directly connected to putting him first in all areas of our life—including our sex life.

We get that some people's strong desire for sex and their differing perspectives on premarital sex might make them unlikely to wait until marriage. That said, we believe that to gain all the blessings connected to *The Wait*, celibacy should continue until you make that vow of lasting commitment. Not to say that God won't bless you if you choose to live differently, but since making our choice we've reaped the benefits of blessings that are nothing like we've ever received in our lives before.

Because we've written this book from that perspective, that's our focus. Plus, qualifying everything—different rules for people waiting for different lengths of time—would be confusing for you and us. So we're just going to talk about *The Wait* as we experienced it: no sex until marriage. We're not denying the real world; we're just reflecting on the way that the two of us navigated the real world and our own sexual desires to find real, deep, authentic love.

THE BLESSINGS OF WAITING

Despite all our reassurances and your best intentions, giving up sex can seem impossible. But believe us, it's

worth it. The things that happened in the months after our marriage were not things we could have planned or even thought we deserved. We prayed for things and envisioned exactly how they would happen, but it wasn't until we were together—with the richness and respect that we had built for each other—that miracles began to come to pass. God's grace has been overwhelming and life changing. Putting God first and making him the foundation of our union has been not only the best personal decision we've ever made but the best decision for our careers and lives.

DEVON: When you're disciplined, obedient, and faithful, God will bring you the full manifestation of what He has in mind for you. He'll bring you His plan A, the best destiny you could imagine. That's what I wanted for my life when I became celibate. I knew that if I had remained undisciplined and continued to make bad choices, God would still be a benevolent God. He would bring me something from plan B, plan C, or plan D, but that wasn't enough for me. I said, "Lord, I want it all." And when you look at my life since then in all its facets, from family to career, God has delivered above and beyond anything I could have hoped or asked for.

MEAGAN: Everything in my life has changed dramatically since I stopped picking and choosing which parts of the Bible I would follow. I stopped saying, "I'm going to do this by the book, but I'm going to do that over there the way I want to do it." When I stopped that and I focused on the hardest thing, which is sex, I literally watched everything in my life and career change.

Waiting for sex isn't easy, but no important thing is ever easy. It's a sacrifice, but a worthwhile one. We took some teasing about things like our clear skin and how wild our honeymoon must have been, but it was worth it. Finally enjoying sex with each other after our marriage was incredible, but it was also the consummation of something holy.

WISE WAITING

Influential philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas said, "A person is said to be patient . . . because he acts in a praiseworthy manner by enduring things which hurt him here and now and is not unduly saddened by them." We consider patience a virtue and impatience a vice, but why?

In part, it's because a patient disposition tends to give us a healthier perspective on the ups and downs of daily living. Because we're not expecting everything to come our way overnight, we keep the big picture in mind. We're less likely to become angry or depressed at life's trivial setbacks. The impatient person can't understand why everything isn't working out as planned and is more likely to react to a minor misfortune by becoming frustrated, giving up, or doing something foolish.

CELIBACY VERSUS ABSTINENCE

Before we move on, we need to draw a clear distinction between celibacy and abstinence. Most people think they're the same thing. They're not. Abstinence is simply refraining from sex; it's the absence of something with no greater meaning behind it. To us, Celibacy is refraining from sex because of a vow or faith; it's abstinence with a purpose. You might abstain from sex involuntarily, because you're not in a relationship. Celibacy is never involuntary. It's always the result of a conscious, deliberate choice. That's an important distinction.

In *The Wait* we're going to talk about celibacy because to us, celibacy is something you go into with your eyes open, fully expecting to gain something from the experience. It's about saying, "I'm becoming." On the other hand, in our culture abstinence is something grudging, something forced upon young people, for example, by well-meaning parents or well-meaning ministries. It's about saying, "You will not." But there's not always purpose or learning associated with it. That can be dangerous.

Consider the news story in the spring of 2015 about a small high school in Texas with an abstinence-only sex education program that experienced a widespread outbreak of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection. That's one tiny piece of proof that just saying no to sex or pretending the sex drive doesn't exist isn't an adequate defense against pregnancy, disease, or worse.

When we talk about celibacy, the last thing we're doing is telling you to ignore sex. Just the opposite. We're suggesting that you acknowledge its power and your own desire. That way, if you choose to go without sex, you'll do so with your eyes open, understanding the realities and risks of having sex and not having it. Celibacy and The Wait complement each other.

THE ENERGY TO CHANGE EVERYTHING

Despite all those positives, type-A personalities often see The Wait as disempowering or fatalistic. So many times we hear self-help tropes like, "Go for what you want in life" and "Successful people make things happen; unsuccessful people watch things happen." That sort of one-size-fits-all wisdom sounds enticing until you realize that it could possibly leave God completely out of the picture.

For some scriptural perspective, look at Isaiah 40:30–31 (NASB), which reads,

Though youths grow weary and tired,

And vigorous young men stumble badly,

Yet those who wait for the LORD

Will gain new strength;

They will mount up with wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

Yes, even those vigorous young men and women, so impatient and confident in their ability to choose the right person or right path, will stumble and wear out without God's guidance to give them strength.

Running through love's maze, chasing one bad relationship after another—it all discourages not just the body but also the spirit. The word discourage says it: a loss of courage. After a while, you don't have the fortitude to face another first date or relationship. It's exhausting.

On the other hand, showing some restraint and letting God reveal your next step is like plugging into an emotional and spiritual power plant. As the verse says, you can run and not get tired. You're not just free of the maze but free of the unspoken mandate that you must find your life's partner and life's purpose right now. You're on nobody's schedule but your own, and you have God to help you figure out what to do next.

In fact, the same engine that drives the best stories also gives The Wait its power. We're professionals with years working in the entertainment business, and we know that the key to any good movie is tension. It doesn't matter if you're waiting for two characters to share their first kiss or holding your breath while the heroine tries to escape from the serial killer. No matter the genre of film, what moves the story is the tension between what the main character wants and the obstacles he or she must overcome to get it.

The Wait works the same way. It takes the tension that exists between instant and delayed gratification and turns it into energy. In the Bible, giving in to the temptations of instant gratification inevitably leads to ruin. (See Eden, Garden of.) Delayed gratification, on the other hand, leads to fidelity and reward. (See the story of Joseph.) Waiting for what you want floods your life with potential energy.

DELAYED GRATIFICATION AND MARSHMALLOWS

One memorable piece of evidence for the benefits of delayed gratification comes from what's become known as the famous Stanford marshmallow experiment. In the 1960s, a Stanford University professor named Walter Mischel started experimenting with hundreds of children around four and five years old to see how long they could delay their own gratification.

In the experiment, a researcher brought each child into a private room one at a time and sat down across a table from him or her. On the table he placed a marshmallow. Then he told each child that he would leave the room for fifteen minutes. If the child did not eat the marshmallow during the time that the researcher was gone, he or she would get a second marshmallow when the researcher came back. If the child ate the marshmallow, he or she wouldn't get any more.

As you might expect, most of the kids ate their marshmallows. A few didn't. But the interesting part of the study came as the researchers followed the kids over the next forty years as they grew into adults. What the study showed was that the kids who were able to delay gratification were more successful in almost every area of life: reduced rates of obesity, better social skills, higher SAT scores, you name it. They were simply better at life than the kids who gave in to instant gratification.

If you've never been disciplined enough to deny yourself short-term pleasure in favor of the big picture, The Wait is your chance to develop this skill as an adult, something most people cannot do. Doing so can increase your chances of being successful in the parts of your life that matter most, from your career to your relationships.

BEING SELECTIVE MAKES YOU MORE DESIRABLE

Another big plus to delaying gratification and reining in your dating life is that the less available you are, the more fascinating you become. We live in a culture where most people hurl themselves blindly into the path of every possible relationship. In that world, who's most interesting and desirable? The person who has the confidence not to date every warm body that comes along but instead is selective. Just as tension powers the action in the movies, it will do the same for you.

You may be dating and deciding to wait for the first time. You may be single and already waiting (on purpose or because you have no other choice) but becoming discouraged. Either way, have hope. The Wait will work for you. Ultimately, if your desire to please God is greater than your desire to please yourself (and even the person you may be dating), then God will bring you boundless blessings. Tether your will to wait to your desire to please God, and He will bless you and honor your commitment in ways that will surprise you and improve your life.

THE WAIT AND . . . CAREER

Your career is another area where you might be chomping at the bit to get going, get climbing that ladder, and get the corner office, but you have only so much control. There are politics, the realities of advancement within an organization, and issues of training and education to deal with. Plus, it's hard to know what you should really do with your life.

Waiting can be a great career strategy, because believe it or not God honors your sacrifice. And let's face it, the decision to deny yourself and not have sex is a sacrifice. The two of us have witnessed firsthand how

God has blessed our careers because we chose to honor him in our relationship. As you practice The Wait, you can see a great acceleration and advancement in your purpose and career.

Most helpful customer reviews

212 of 220 people found the following review helpful.

Good Job Devon and Megan!

By Bianca Chene

It's hard for me to critique this book fairly. Mainly because there is a void in the market for resources related to topics such as celibacy and 'waiting' that's geared toward a young, urban demographic. I rated the book a 4 because it does meet that need. Young, urban believers of Christ who desire a deeper relationship with God and who desire a Godly marriage will find a lot of knowledge from this book. What this book does do a good job of is instructing the reader that you must develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with Christ not just for finding a mate, but for developing and enhancing oneself. The Wait does say, in a roundabout way, that cutting off the distraction of being in un-Godly relationships, friendships, careers, etc and really devoting oneself to truly learning and loving Christ and making Him the focal point of one's life is the way to true happiness and contentment which will then (hopefully) attract the mate that Christ desires for you. Definitely gives more context to Matthew 6:33-"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all of these things shall be added unto you." I appreciated the transparency of both Devon and Megan (didn't know that Megan was a smoker but sharing this added to her 'flawed human-ness' and how beautiful celebrities are broken and need to be healed). Unlike other Christian authors who have written about love, relationships, and their wait, Devon and Megan tells the reader that they were not void of sin, that they fell many times HOWEVER because of conviction, Christ led them on a beautiful (and arduous) journey of seeking Christ and trusting in his word. And I'm glad that this book had a unisex tone! Most books about marriage, love and sex in the context of Christianity are geared toward women. I hope that through promotion, men are led to read this book as well. Devon kept it all the way real with the men (the ladies too!). Some areas of the book kinda made me shrug and I did spot a few typos and grammatical errors (I'm not a journalism geek so if I can spot them they were apparent). The book is a good read for someone who has been toying with the idea of 'waiting', those who are just starting out on their journey and for those (like me) who have been 'in waiting' for some time and need encouragement to continue to be obedient to Christ and trust in His work and His plan. If you purchase this book, please share with other believers who are 'waiting'. There are some really good gems in this book that need to be shared!

176 of 187 people found the following review helpful.

What A Beautiful Testimony!!!! Must Have!!!

By Geri Cohen

We needed this book!!! I started my journey in Oct 2015 so I'm fairly new to being celibate. One day after an emotional rollercoaster with my ex lover of 3 1/2 years (yeah he wasn't even my man!!!) I decided I had enough. I had lost myself. I didn't even know who I was anymore. I knew that I needed God back in my life. I desperately wanted to fall back in love with myself. I cant lie...the first month was tough! I did a lot of reflecting. I answered most of the question that are in your book. I finally took responsibility for my part in my destruction and moved forward. I gave it to God. One day I was in my house and God touched my spirit. It was so random. He told me to record my celibacy journey. He told me that other women and men needed to witness someone going through this journey from the beginning. I listened to Him. I started a YouTube channel called Sista Celibacy a month after taking the vow. There are so many people out here embarking on the same journey I am. I get emails everyday from women and men explain why they chose celibacy. Its so empowering! I'm not a celebrity, but I am thankful for a couple like you who is not afraid to take this topic mainstream. God bless!!!

176 of 197 people found the following review helpful.

Honest review from a fan.

By sophia

I really like both of them as a couple and had high expectations for this book. It was a good book, but maybe not for me. I am already celibate and have been practicing from some time now due to religious reason. So for me, the book only covered the things I have already been though. Since I have been celibate for years. It did not really bring forth any new information for me personally. If you are thinking about celibacy, new to your spiritual walk, ready to take your spiritual walk to a new level, or want to know the benefits of "waiting" as it pertains to your spiritual life then this book is for you. But if you have already been practicing then not so much. Or even if you are a married couple and waiting for sex does not pertain to you, then this book is not for you.

What I would have like to see, was more personalized stories about the couples. I would have like to see how they dealt with their challenges of being celibate and how they felt God was working in their relationship. There were some personal aspects of the book that covered some of this. But those stories were far and few between. And very vague. They are both two attractive people and I wanted to know about their personal journey. I like reading stories over just advice. And that was really missing from this book After a while, the book started to seem redundant and repetitive. Like most of the information was being repeated but in a different way. I cannot reiterate that enough that I really would have just like to see a more of how "the wait" worked in their relationship. Through the hard times, what they did, what areas they struggled the most in. Instead they just kinda glossed over these areas. But if you are considering "waiting" it is a good read for you.

See all 641 customer reviews...

THE WAIT: A POWERFUL PRACTICE FOR FINDING THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE AND THE LIFE YOU LOVE BY DEVON FRANKLIN, MEAGAN GOOD PDF

Be the very first to obtain this publication now as well as obtain all reasons why you should read this *The Wait: A Powerful Practice For Finding The Love Of Your Life And The Life You Love* By DeVon Franklin, Meagan Good. The book *The Wait: A Powerful Practice For Finding The Love Of Your Life And The Life You Love* By DeVon Franklin, Meagan Good is not only for your obligations or need in your life. E-books will consistently be a good close friend in each time you check out. Now, let the others understand about this web page. You could take the advantages and also share it likewise for your close friends and also people around you. By through this, you can actually get the significance of this book **The Wait: A Powerful Practice For Finding The Love Of Your Life And The Life You Love** By DeVon Franklin, Meagan Good beneficially. What do you consider our idea below?

Review

"The Wait is an easy read, filled with powerful gems for someone ready to begin living a life free of addictive behaviors that drain away self-awareness." (EBONY Magazine)

"Who we marry is the most important decision we make. The Wait is a must-read for any person considering marriage and seeking to discover the greatness life has to offer! DeVon and Meagan offer a transformative and honest blueprint to unlock your blessings. This book has changed my life...you can't afford to not read *The Wait*." (Charreah K. Jackson, ESSENCE Lifestyle & Relationships Editor)

About the Author

DeVon Franklin is a growing force in entertainment and media. Beliefnet named him one of the "Most Influential Christians Under 40." The bestselling author of *Produced By Faith* is also President & CEO of Franklin Entertainment, a preacher and motivational speaker. He most recently produced the Sony Pictures film, *Miracles From Heaven* starring Jennifer Garner. He's a graduate of the University of Southern California. DeVon and Meagan married in the summer of 2012 and live in Los Angeles.

Meagan Good is an award-winning actress and producer. She's top lined some of Hollywood's biggest blockbusters including *Think Like A Man*, *Think Like a Man Too*, *Anchorman: The Legend Continues*, *Stomp The Yard* and the critically acclaimed *Eve's Bayou*. She's also cofounder of The Greater Good Foundation, a non-profit organization that advocates for the empowerment and enrichment of young women.

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The Wait — CHAPTER ONE — NO SEX? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS

Patience is not the ability to Wait,

but the ability to keep a good attitude while Waiting.

—JOYCE MEYERS

Just what is *The Wait*, exactly? *The Wait* is a conscious choice to pursue delayed gratification in the areas of life specifically related to relationships. It's a decision to get your mind right, figure out who you want to be

and what you want out of life, and use your time and energy to become the best version of yourself. Put simply:

To Wait is to delay the temptation for instant gratification in relationships in order to get what you really want in life and become the person you truly want to be.

That starts with saying no to sex. The Wait isn't 100 percent about sex, but that's where it begins. Sex is probably the most compelling aspect of human gratification. It's such a powerful desire that outside of a proper healthy context it can cloud our judgment and cause us to make decisions that work against our own best self-interest. The untamed, untempered drive for sexual gratification has toppled empires, scuttled political careers, destroyed marriages, and squandered fortunes. Sex can be like a McLaren F1 race car: great in the right hands, but potentially disastrous when handled recklessly.

We're willing to bet that you've experienced more of the latter. We know because we've done it. We've all made terrible decisions about who to flirt with, spend time with, commit to, and even sleep with that had nothing to do with our brains but everything to do with our bodies. Sex can become a gateway drug to all kinds of other choices intended to satisfy the need for quick pleasure: going out with that gorgeous girl even though you know she's a hot mess, spending the weekend at that dude's place even though you know you're not the only one, or having just one more drink even though you know it will impair your judgment.

When we chase the high of instant gratification, we make choices that for many reasons are irresponsible and based on poor reasoning . . . or no reasoning at all. It takes time and self-control to take in information, let people reveal their true character, be consistent and disciplined, and give conflicts time to work themselves out. Delaying gratification means working at becoming more self-aware and humble enough to admit that our first impulses aren't always smart ones.

Let's be really, really clear on this:

One of the keys to practicing The Wait is giving up sex.

We know that for many Christians and non-Christians alike, the idea of giving up sex is too outrageous and impossible to consider. We get that. Yet based on our experience, we still believe that practicing The Wait until marriage will set you up for success and align you with God's perfect will for your life in all areas.

SEX, WAITING, AND RELATIONSHIPS

At its heart The Wait is a book about relationships, but there's no unwinding the connection between relationships and sexuality. Love and sex are the two sides of the same coin. When you have sex with someone outside of marriage, you're not just setting off a chain of chemical reactions in your brain that make you think they're a lot better for you than they probably are; you're giving them a part of your spirit.

When you have sex with someone, you really are leaving them a piece of yourself and taking a part of them with you . . . whether you want to or not. So each sex partner, good and bad, becomes a part of your future. Does this make you think twice about who you choose—and have chosen—to get into bed with?

Sex is an act of trust. It's about way more than physical attraction—yet when you think of it only as physical attraction you will see (or have already seen) that attraction lies and spellbinds. Strong relationships aren't built solely on physical or sexual attraction. They're built on good judgment. How many times have you become caught up with someone based mostly on sexual attraction? How have those relationships ended?

We don't have to ask if they've ended, because they don't last. They can't. Before too long, the hormonal

haze clears and all that matters is character, integrity, intelligence, values, spirituality, and self-esteem. A person who doesn't have enough of those to suit you is a person you can't tolerate for long.

Delaying gratification and getting greater control over your behavior—so that you can break the patterns that keep sabotaging you—is the key to finally finding the life and the peace that you hunger for. It's the key to becoming who you've always aspired to be, an idea we'll unpack in chapter two. But it all starts with giving up sex.

THE PROBLEM WITH SEX

Sex, of course, is a topic overflowing with religious, cultural, political, and personal baggage. Much of our popular culture is built around sexual titillation. In our business, the making of movies and television, actors are often cast as much for their good looks as for their acting talents. You don't really think that all private detectives look like Denzel Washington, do you?

As a people, we're alternately conflicted, fascinated, and appalled by sex in all its forms. Lawmakers crusade against pornography while their constituents consume it in record amounts. Abstinence-only sex-education programs deny teens basic information on the assumption that it will make them promiscuous, while the data show that teens are less sexually active than they've been in decades. The most popular magazines seem to be about nothing but sex: how to get it, how to give it, where to have it, how to be better at it, how to know if your partner is having it with someone else, and so on. We're obsessed with sex, and at the same time we disapprove of our obsession. It's no wonder that sex ties us in knots.

An old saying goes, "Success makes us forgetful and stupid." Sex does the same thing. It makes us forget who we are and what we want. It makes us do things that we look at later and say, "What was I thinking?"

After we got married in 2012, we were asked to appear at numerous conferences and gatherings all around the country to share the story of our relationship and how God brought us together. Though we talked about personal growth and getting closer to God, the stories about us—online and off-line—mostly focused on one thing: waiting to have sex. No matter how deep our faith and how intense our devotion and duty to God, we're still human, and human beings tend to be like twelve-year-olds when it comes to the topic of sex. (LOL).

Sex is pleasurable. Sex between two people who love each other body and soul is transcendent. But more often than not, that's not the kind of sex most people are having. A good friend of ours once said to us, "I'm not getting married until I have what you guys have." That's flattering and humbling, but it's also a reflection on how hard it is to find compatibility.

The two of us are not anti-sex. To be anti-sex would pretty much be the same as being anti-God. God created sex and we fully advocate the joy of experiencing it the way He intended. What we do know is that we've seen and known a lot of people whose higher aspirations for love, family, and success have landed on the rocks because they put the pursuit of sex before anything else.

The question, "to have sex or not to have sex?" is at the heart of *The Wait*. That's not because the most popular question when we spoke at Morehouse College or at T. D. Jakes's MegaFest or on Jimmy Kimmel Live! was "How did you manage not to have sex?" It's because we saw the incredible and undeniable grace that came to our relationship when we decided to remain committed to celibacy before marriage.

WHY WE CHOSE TO BE CELIBATE

We both discovered independently that to be the people we truly wanted to be, we needed to take sex out of the equation.

DEVON: I had made a commitment of celibacy long before I met Meagan. When we got married, I had been celibate for over ten years. What motivated the commitment was the same thing that made me keep it. I was preaching about living a life that put the Lord first, and then I was going out and living a life that was the opposite of the discipline I was teaching. Trying to be two people started tearing me apart. The desire for peace and harmony within myself was a motivator to choose no sex.

I asked myself, “What if what I was doing with this other woman disqualified me for the full manifestation of the call that God has on my life? Would it be worth it?” Of course not! No sex is worth that! I could not reconcile the idea that at the end of my life God might say, “Here’s what I had planned for you, but because you showed yourself unworthy, I couldn’t do all I wanted to do in your life.” I was not prepared to take that risk. Whatever my purpose is in this life, I didn’t want anything to get in the way of that.

MEAGAN: I got saved when I was twelve and lost my virginity when I was nineteen. As a Christian, I felt a strong conviction about not having sex, but like most of us, I made excuses and swept those convictions under the rug. And in some relationships I tried hard to abstain; in others I just guiltily went with the flow because I had failed miserably, so what was the point. On some occasions I opted to not even acknowledge my reservations at all because the guilt was exhausting. I repeated the same painful patterns in my relationships over and over, but I didn’t connect that to sex for a long time.

Finally, I knew I had to make a commitment to take sex off the table. I knew I couldn’t do the same thing and expect a different result. I knew I was giving most of me but not all of me at this point. I already knew DeVon but didn’t know he was my husband. By the time I began to entertain the thought of celibacy, my life was an emotional mess. Going celibate helped me clean it up in all areas (even areas where sex played no part). If I hadn’t done that, I doubt we would have come together as husband and wife.

Later, when we got together and got the memo—the revelation that our relationship was going to happen and in fact was meant to be—we didn’t want to do anything to sabotage it. Since we had both been celibate at this point, we agreed that we would remain celibate until after we married . . . if we married. So we took a calculated risk: we would forego physical pleasure so that we could really get to know each other’s minds, hearts, and spirits and confirm that God was truly bringing us together.

Considering the potential payoff, it wasn’t much of a risk. Sure, we were passing up sexual gratification. But by achieving real clarity we avoided making a life-altering mistake either way. Of course, things did work out. We fell in love with each other as whole people, and the promised payoff has been a life filled with not just joy but the peace that comes with knowing we’re firmly in the center of God’s purpose.

Now, we won’t lie to you. It wasn’t always easy. There were nights when things would get hot and heavy and Meagan would stop us and say, “I can’t get down like this. I’m used to going all the way. So we need to cool off.” And we would stop right there, say our good nights, and part for the evening. That happened plenty of times.

But when it dawned on us just how important celibacy was for our union, we both said, “Lord, delaying gratification is powerful!”

How powerful? We saw the many ways that God blessed us and continues to bless us with a relationship built on mutual respect and deep understanding of who we are. We didn’t let sex distort our perceptions, cloud our judgment, or make us rationalize something we didn’t like. We fell in love as centered, intelligent people and children of God long before we fell in love with each other’s physicality or sensuality.

WHAT THE WAIT ISN’T

Despite all this, The Wait is anything but passive. You're not sitting on your hands and hoping that things will turn out all right. You're making deliberate, positive choices that change who you are and how your mind works. You're also taking the resources you've been spending to chase after sexual gratification and using them instead to improve yourself in body, mind, and spirit.

We call this "strategic patience." While you wait, you're not putting your life on hold or wasting time waiting for something to happen. Instead, you're taking all the time and attention that you've been projecting outward and turning it inward. That's one of the most positive, life-affirming choices a person can make. From this perspective, you can finally see that hurling yourself into the path of potentially romantic relationships hasn't brought you any closer to what you want. It's time to try a different approach: letting love and purpose manifest in your life as a result of you working on becoming the best version of yourself.

Practicing strategic patience means understanding the difference between the two types of waiting:

1. Waiting that you choose.
2. Waiting that you have no choice about.

There's a big difference between something you choose and something that's forced upon you. With the first, you're in control; with the second, you resent control being taken from you. The Wait is about changing your circumstance from the second type of waiting into the first. Instead of feeling resentful and angry when the pursuit of your desires hits a wall, think, "Okay, since I'm already waiting, I'm going to choose to use this time productively." Your circumstances haven't changed, but how you see them certainly has. Just like that you transform yourself from passive victim into active collaborator with God.

Other things The Wait is not:

- A punishment. God isn't making you spend time alone as payback for some previous sin.
- Forever. We understand that not having sex is hard and could make a month feel like a year. But tell us this: What's the longest time in recent years that you've gone without sex against your will—Days? Weeks? Months? Years? Could you do that again, this time because you choose to?
- Putting your life on hold. Hardly. Now you have time and bandwidth to work on you. There are definitely times when fast, aggressive action is required to get what you want. You can still practice The Wait while you're actively going after all God has for you in life.
- Weird. We want to take the stigma away from waiting. What's bizarre about valuing yourself, your body, and your God over all else? Especially if you've already been through the pain of multiple bad breakups, there's nothing weird about waiting, no matter what anyone else says.

Most important, The Wait isn't powerless. Though you might not see it, God has His hand on your life during this time, rearranging the scenery in order to set you up for good things to come.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEING CELIBATE

If only those facts were enough to convince people about the power of celibacy, but they're not. When we talk about The Wait and suggest that people consider going without sex, we get stares of horror. Many people can't even fathom going without sex for three months, much less years. On the male side, a lot of men have bought into the false idea that says that being a man means chasing lots of women. In that scenario, a man's worth has nothing to do with his character, morals, or integrity. It becomes reduced to how many

women he sleeps with.

As for women, our culture tells them that their sexuality is one of the most important things they have to offer and then shames them for displaying it. It's really not surprising that sex provokes insecurity and internal conflicts. The unchecked premarital pursuit of sex can debase and objectify us, drive us further away from God's plan for our life, and expose us to incurable STDs, unplanned pregnancies, and tons of emotional trauma. So why is it that more of us don't just stop?

Well, we like sex. We crave it. Our bodies are designed to want sex in the way an addict wants drugs. Faced with celibacy, we rationalize. We say, "I don't know how to be celibate." Or, "We weren't meant to abstain." The problem is that what we should do is not what we want to do. It's a perfect example of instant gratification at war with delayed gratification.

Are you staying in a relationship for the sex and telling yourself that the other person will change one of these days? Well, has he or she changed yet? Maybe you've wrecked relationships and friendships by sleeping with multiple partners, even after swearing that you wouldn't. Maybe you're tired of the empty feeling you get when you wake up next to someone you slept with because you were lonely or had too much to drink. Perhaps it feels like you're on a treadmill of discouraging, drama-filled relationships based on physical attraction and not much else.

Any of that sound familiar? Then, we think that you know exactly what to do. You may even be getting some pretty clear signals from God about trying celibacy, but you don't want to go there. You don't want the questions, the pressure from friends, and the rejection of potential partners uninterested in waiting for sex. You think you'll be shunned or treated like some sort of freak. But there's probably a lot you don't know about celibacy:

More people are practicing it than you might think. According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, about 3 percent of Americans currently remain celibate until their honeymoons. That might not seem like a lot, but that means that about 5 million couples married today fell in love, vowed to wait, and kept that commitment intact until after they were joined in holy matrimony. So it can be done.

Celibacy is about the mind as much as it is about the body. When we think about celibacy, we focus on the physical need to have sex. But being celibate isn't just about pushing down that hormonal need to engage in intercourse. It's about owning how you feel, even when those horny feelings are coming on. It's choosing to discipline the mind and think of the benefit you seek, something that is greater than the desire to give in.

You might have heard people say something like this when talking about weight loss: "You have to think like a healthy person." It means that losing weight isn't entirely about changing what you eat, but about understanding why you eat the way you do. If you overeat out of anxiety or loneliness and you can address those problems, you will change how you think about food and eat differently. Celibacy is the same. If you look at the reasons sex is important to you, you'll probably find that they are less important than having what you want in life and getting closer to God. That will change how you think about sex and make it easier to resist your physical urges.

The urges will still be there, make no mistake. They were there for us while we dated. We were tempted all the time. But our purpose was more important. Many of us don't even consider that the sexual aspect of a relationship could be optional. It doesn't occur to us. But what if it did? What if we made the conscious choice to make clarity and communication and closeness more important than sexual gratification?

That's what the two of us mean by celibacy being about the mind. Once you reframe sex as a choice, you can reframe celibacy as a commitment that will help you get the things you want. Your sexual urges lose their power over you. You gain power over them.

DEVON: When I made the commitment to celibacy, I got a lot of disbelieving comments from friends. You should have seen the open mouths when I told people that I had remained celibate for more than ten years before marrying Meagan! But my friends' shock passed, and some of them said that they admired what I was doing. They knew I loved the Lord and that I was making this commitment out of a desire to be closer to him. In the end, some of them even said I inspired them to try it themselves.

As a man, if you can be disciplined in your sexual life, there's nothing you can't do. The discipline that you create in that area of your life will be the same for the rest of your life. The Bible says, "Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you" (Matthew 6:4, NLT).

Celibacy isn't about shame or moral judgment. We'll say it again: we are not anti-sex. But some people are. They fear sex because it's a powerful motivator of behavior, and they judge those who have sex out of wedlock as morally inferior. Do not listen to those people when you're deciding whether or not to be celibate. Shame and the fear of being judged are the wrong reasons to practice The Wait. If you let yourself be shamed into it, you won't stick with it.

Sex isn't sinful. Sometimes people of faith have strange, outdated ideas about what sex is. Once again: sex itself is not sinful. Sex isn't wrong. God created the sexual act and the physical and emotional drives that make us want to have sex. Sex is an act of creation, even if it doesn't result in a child. It creates joy and intimacy between two people. God-ordained sex between two people who are committed to each other in marriage, who know each other fully and are giving of themselves to each other, body and spirit—that is sanctified.

SIGNS FROM GOD

God won't leave you guessing. He will send you signs that it's time to slow down, quiet your mind, and work on yourself while He labors on your behalf. But it's up to you to read the signs that it's time to wait. They include:

- A breakup
- Physical or mental or emotional exhaustion
- Negative or hurtful people leaving your life
- The feeling of being lost or purposeless
- An opportunity to go on a long trip or retreat
- The awareness that you've been repeating the same relationship mistakes for years
- Persistent frustration and lack of peace

Not all of God's signs are enjoyable. Some are unpleasant or painful. But if that's what it takes to get your attention, it's worth it. Pay attention to the events and patterns in your life. Is God telling you to wait? If you

haven't been listening, now is a good time to start. If not, you might squander time that you'll never get back.

DOES IT REALLY HAVE TO BE UNTIL MARRIAGE?

We faced a really tough question in writing this book:

Is *The Wait* only about waiting until marriage?

Yes. We do believe that most people's lives and relationships would be stronger and more joyful if they waited until marriage. On the other hand, many of the people reading this book, no matter how strong their faith, will probably have sex or continue to before marriage. To ignore that would not only be dismissive but could be viewed as borderline delusional. Just like you, we live in the real world where we try every day to live as spiritual beings dealing with the challenges of our flesh, so we do understand.

However, even with that understanding, we are confident that saving sex until after marriage will yield the best results, both for you as an individual and for you and your partner. That's what we did. We can speak to the blessings firsthand. We've seen God do amazing things in our lives that we believe are directly connected to putting him first in all areas of our life—including our sex life.

We get that some people's strong desire for sex and their differing perspectives on premarital sex might make them unlikely to wait until marriage. That said, we believe that to gain all the blessings connected to *The Wait*, celibacy should continue until you make that vow of lasting commitment. Not to say that God won't bless you if you choose to live differently, but since making our choice we've reaped the benefits of blessings that are nothing like we've ever received in our lives before.

Because we've written this book from that perspective, that's our focus. Plus, qualifying everything—different rules for people waiting for different lengths of time—would be confusing for you and us. So we're just going to talk about *The Wait* as we experienced it: no sex until marriage. We're not denying the real world; we're just reflecting on the way that the two of us navigated the real world and our own sexual desires to find real, deep, authentic love.

THE BLESSINGS OF WAITING

Despite all our reassurances and your best intentions, giving up sex can seem impossible. But believe us, it's worth it. The things that happened in the months after our marriage were not things we could have planned or even thought we deserved. We prayed for things and envisioned exactly how they would happen, but it wasn't until we were together—with the richness and respect that we had built for each other—that miracles began to come to pass. God's grace has been overwhelming and life changing. Putting God first and making him the foundation of our union has been not only the best personal decision we've ever made but the best decision for our careers and lives.

DEVON: When you're disciplined, obedient, and faithful, God will bring you the full manifestation of what He has in mind for you. He'll bring you His plan A, the best destiny you could imagine. That's what I wanted for my life when I became celibate. I knew that if I had remained undisciplined and continued to make bad choices, God would still be a benevolent God. He would bring me something from plan B, plan C, or plan D, but that wasn't enough for me. I said, "Lord, I want it all." And when you look at my life since then in all its facets, from family to career, God has delivered above and beyond anything I could have hoped or asked for.

MEAGAN: Everything in my life has changed dramatically since I stopped picking and choosing which parts of the Bible I would follow. I stopped saying, "I'm going to do this by the book, but I'm going to do that over there the way I want to do it." When I stopped that and I focused on the hardest thing, which is sex,

I literally watched everything in my life and career change.

Waiting for sex isn't easy, but no important thing is ever easy. It's a sacrifice, but a worthwhile one. We took some teasing about things like our clear skin and how wild our honeymoon must have been, but it was worth it. Finally enjoying sex with each other after our marriage was incredible, but it was also the consummation of something holy.

WISE WAITING

Influential philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas said, "A person is said to be patient . . . because he acts in a praiseworthy manner by enduring things which hurt him here and now and is not unduly saddened by them." We consider patience a virtue and impatience a vice, but why?

In part, it's because a patient disposition tends to give us a healthier perspective on the ups and downs of daily living. Because we're not expecting everything to come our way overnight, we keep the big picture in mind. We're less likely to become angry or depressed at life's trivial setbacks. The impatient person can't understand why everything isn't working out as planned and is more likely to react to a minor misfortune by becoming frustrated, giving up, or doing something foolish.

CELIBACY VERSUS ABSTINENCE

Before we move on, we need to draw a clear distinction between celibacy and abstinence. Most people think they're the same thing. They're not. Abstinence is simply refraining from sex; it's the absence of something with no greater meaning behind it. To us, Celibacy is refraining from sex because of a vow or faith; it's abstinence with a purpose. You might abstain from sex involuntarily, because you're not in a relationship. Celibacy is never involuntary. It's always the result of a conscious, deliberate choice. That's an important distinction.

In *The Wait* we're going to talk about celibacy because to us, celibacy is something you go into with your eyes open, fully expecting to gain something from the experience. It's about saying, "I'm becoming." On the other hand, in our culture abstinence is something grudging, something forced upon young people, for example, by well-meaning parents or well-meaning ministries. It's about saying, "You will not." But there's not always purpose or learning associated with it. That can be dangerous.

Consider the news story in the spring of 2015 about a small high school in Texas with an abstinence-only sex education program that experienced a widespread outbreak of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection. That's one tiny piece of proof that just saying no to sex or pretending the sex drive doesn't exist isn't an adequate defense against pregnancy, disease, or worse.

When we talk about celibacy, the last thing we're doing is telling you to ignore sex. Just the opposite. We're suggesting that you acknowledge its power and your own desire. That way, if you choose to go without sex, you'll do so with your eyes open, understanding the realities and risks of having sex and not having it. Celibacy and *The Wait* complement each other.

THE ENERGY TO CHANGE EVERYTHING

Despite all those positives, type-A personalities often see *The Wait* as disempowering or fatalistic. So many times we hear self-help tropes like, "Go for what you want in life" and "Successful people make things happen; unsuccessful people watch things happen." That sort of one-size-fits-all wisdom sounds enticing until you realize that it could possibly leave God completely out of the picture.

For some scriptural perspective, look at Isaiah 40:30–31 (NASB), which reads,

Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,
Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.

Yes, even those vigorous young men and women, so impatient and confident in their ability to choose the right person or right path, will stumble and wear out without God's guidance to give them strength.

Running through love's maze, chasing one bad relationship after another—it all discourages not just the body but also the spirit. The word discourage says it: a loss of courage. After a while, you don't have the fortitude to face another first date or relationship. It's exhausting.

On the other hand, showing some restraint and letting God reveal your next step is like plugging into an emotional and spiritual power plant. As the verse says, you can run and not get tired. You're not just free of the maze but free of the unspoken mandate that you must find your life's partner and life's purpose right now. You're on nobody's schedule but your own, and you have God to help you figure out what to do next.

In fact, the same engine that drives the best stories also gives *The Wait* its power. We're professionals with years working in the entertainment business, and we know that the key to any good movie is tension. It doesn't matter if you're waiting for two characters to share their first kiss or holding your breath while the heroine tries to escape from the serial killer. No matter the genre of film, what moves the story is the tension between what the main character wants and the obstacles he or she must overcome to get it.

The Wait works the same way. It takes the tension that exists between instant and delayed gratification and turns it into energy. In the Bible, giving in to the temptations of instant gratification inevitably leads to ruin. (See Eden, Garden of.) Delayed gratification, on the other hand, leads to fidelity and reward. (See the story of Joseph.) Waiting for what you want floods your life with potential energy.

DELAYED GRATIFICATION AND MARSHMALLOWS

One memorable piece of evidence for the benefits of delayed gratification comes from what's become known as the famous Stanford marshmallow experiment. In the 1960s, a Stanford University professor named Walter Mischel started experimenting with hundreds of children around four and five years old to see how long they could delay their own gratification.

In the experiment, a researcher brought each child into a private room one at a time and sat down across a table from him or her. On the table he placed a marshmallow. Then he told each child that he would leave the room for fifteen minutes. If the child did not eat the marshmallow during the time that the researcher was gone, he or she would get a second marshmallow when the researcher came back. If the child ate the marshmallow, he or she wouldn't get any more.

As you might expect, most of the kids ate their marshmallows. A few didn't. But the interesting part of the

study came as the researchers followed the kids over the next forty years as they grew into adults. What the study showed was that the kids who were able to delay gratification were more successful in almost every area of life: reduced rates of obesity, better social skills, higher SAT scores, you name it. They were simply better at life than the kids who gave in to instant gratification.

If you've never been disciplined enough to deny yourself short-term pleasure in favor of the big picture, The Wait is your chance to develop this skill as an adult, something most people cannot do. Doing so can increase your chances of being successful in the parts of your life that matter most, from your career to your relationships.

BEING SELECTIVE MAKES YOU MORE DESIRABLE

Another big plus to delaying gratification and reining in your dating life is that the less available you are, the more fascinating you become. We live in a culture where most people hurl themselves blindly into the path of every possible relationship. In that world, who's most interesting and desirable? The person who has the confidence not to date every warm body that comes along but instead is selective. Just as tension powers the action in the movies, it will do the same for you.

You may be dating and deciding to wait for the first time. You may be single and already waiting (on purpose or because you have no other choice) but becoming discouraged. Either way, have hope. The Wait will work for you. Ultimately, if your desire to please God is greater than your desire to please yourself (and even the person you may be dating), then God will bring you boundless blessings. Tether your will to wait to your desire to please God, and He will bless you and honor your commitment in ways that will surprise you and improve your life.

THE WAIT AND . . . CAREER

Your career is another area where you might be chomping at the bit to get going, get climbing that ladder, and get the corner office, but you have only so much control. There are politics, the realities of advancement within an organization, and issues of training and education to deal with. Plus, it's hard to know what you should really do with your life.

Waiting can be a great career strategy, because believe it or not God honors your sacrifice. And let's face it, the decision to deny yourself and not have sex is a sacrifice. The two of us have witnessed firsthand how God has blessed our careers because we chose to honor him in our relationship. As you practice The Wait, you can see a great acceleration and advancement in your purpose and career.

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