

Did You Marry the Wrong Guy?

Five years after our wedding, I wondered, "Who is this person, and what has he done with my real husband?"

Lord, I'm sorry! I married the wrong man. Please forgive me," I cried out in agonizing prayer after my husband, Jerome, had belittled me when I poured out my heart to him about the things I was learning.

God was moving powerfully in my life by opening up the Word of God to me and revealing fresh truths, but my husband barely read the Bible. When he managed to carve out some time to read it, he fell asleep. After five years of marriage, it seemed apparent that I had made a dreadful mistake.

Yet I was so certain in the beginning that God had ordained our relationship. Jerome and I met in 1985 on a mission trip to Boston. He was sent from his church in Missouri and I from mine in Hawaii.

After I moved to Florida in 1987, we met again through a mutual friend. I had no idea that seven years later I would be walking down the aisle with him! We ran into each other periodically at church conferences in the following years, but it wasn't until 1992 that the fireworks went off.

I was working for a Christian publishing company at the time and had been sent to a pastors conference on the company's behalf when I spotted him. I recognized Jerome as he was walking out of the auditorium.

Excited to see someone I knew, I ran up to him and hugged him. "Jerome, how are you doing?" I asked.

There was a flicker of recognition. Then he stepped back. "Hi, do I know you?" he replied. The friend who was with him kept muttering under his breath, "You're the woman in the dream."

I hit Jerome on the shoulder and said, "Florida, Romeo Bagunu." His eyes lit up. "Leilani! Of course I remember you."

Wide-eyed, his friend exclaimed loudly, "You're the woman in the dream!"

"Excuse me?" I said.

Jerome stepped in front of his friend. "Don't listen to him," he told me.

Confused, I turned to Jerome and asked, "What's he talking about?" A few days later I found out that Jerome had had a dream about a woman with long black hair who was going to be his wife. His friend was amazed that he was meeting the woman in the dream the very next day.

The last day of the conference we declared our love for each other. We knew that God had brought us together. Jerome had not been on a date in 13 years because he believed that if he sought the kingdom first, the Lord would bring him a wife.

Three weeks later he proposed to me in a beautiful rose garden in Missouri. Three months later I packed up everything I could fit into my little compact car and drove to a town in a state I had never visited.

We married on the first day of spring with snow on the ground. But now, five years and two children later, it was clear I had married the wrong person.

What was I to do? I was aware that God hates divorce, and Jerome hadn't done anything to merit separation. He worked hard and helped take care of our children, clean the house, cook and do laundry. He had all the qualities most married women wish their husbands possessed!

But we were extremely different. Jerome didn't like going to the beach or traveling. I loved to travel. His favorite restaurant was a diner. I preferred ethnic or gourmet

restaurants. His favorite store was Wal-Mart, and mine was Pier One.

It seemed we had a vast chasm between us. Why hadn't I noticed these differences during our engagement?

Now I repented and prayed for God to move. I stayed up late at night praying for wisdom and insight.

After a month of crying into the carpet every night, a flash of insight hit me: I had a hidden agenda when I got married! Since I had been involved in ministry, writing and publishing, I assumed my future husband would be called to full-time ministry as well.

Jerome previously had served in full-time ministry but at this time was working in a sales position. Though he was very involved in the church as a lay leader, I was disappointed. I had thought I was marrying a future church-planter or pastor. Many years later, I realized he had no intention of going into full-time ministry.

That night the Lord revealed the agenda in my heart that was a stumbling block to our becoming one. He assured me that I had married the right person. I just needed to get rid of the agenda and become the right person for him.

The Lord made it clear that my attitude toward Jerome would either facilitate the move of God in our marriage or shut it out. I decided to give up my hidden agenda and concentrate on being the right mate for him. As I shifted my focus from Jerome's becoming what I thought God had called him to be to my becoming who God wanted me to be, my husband and I have become best friends.

He's blossoming into a man of conviction and courage, and I'm learning how to honor, love and serve him as unto the Lord. Last week he preached to a neighbor of ours about the kingdom

of God. I applauded him inwardly as he took a stand for righteousness.

You may be thinking, as I did, that you've married the wrong person. But if your spouse has the character traits of a man of God and is simply not doing what you think he should be doing, you could have a hidden agenda.

Get rid of the agenda so you can enjoy your husband. Focus on becoming who God created you to be for him. One day you'll discover you both married the right person!

Read a companion devotional.

Leilani Haywood is a Kansas City, award-winning writer and columnist. She has been published in the Kansas City Star, Metro Voice and other publications. When she's not updating her status on Facebook or Twitter, she's driving her four kids to school or their next rehearsal. Follow her on Twitter @leilanihaywood.