

Lifelong Partnerships Begin With Friendship

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Jermaine Hamwright's book, *Get the .: 5 Secrets to a Healthy Christian Relationship from a Guy's-Eye View*.

Friendship First

"Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses."—Ann Landers

The Friendship Factor

Let's get something straight. I don't believe your partner has to be your best friend, at least not right from the start – it may take years before you regard your life partner as your best friend. But your significant other does have to be your friend.

There's no getting around it. If the friendship factor is missing, love and honesty are absent too (and we've already learned how important those attributes are). You simply can't open up to someone you don't consider a true friend.

In the absence of friendship, your relationship becomes more of a business arrangement than an open, genuine bond between two people who care about each other and want to be together. What do friends do? They hang out together and have fun. They watch out for each other. They value their friendship and work to keep it going strong.

Real friends like each other. If you don't even like the person you're with, how can you ever hope to love them? So

make sure your partner is also your friend.

The Job Search vs. the Search for a Soul Mate

I want you to reflect for a moment on your most recent job-hunting adventure. In particular, revisit the interview process. Who could forget the adrenalin-rushing, heart-pumping experience of being interviewed? No doubt you prepared well for your meeting, knowing that what you said and how you presented yourself made all the difference.

You didn't show up in flip-flops and a T-shirt, nor did you arrive without a clue about the employer. On the contrary, you dressed your absolute best to look the part, and you did your homework, learning all about the company and the position. When you spoke, you delivered the right amount of confidence – not too smug, and definitely not indecisive.

You were selective about the information you shared, making sure to shine the best light possible on your accomplishments.

In your eagerness to get the job, you didn't reveal all. I'm not saying that you lied, but I'm sure you played up your strengths and decided to keep a few things hidden. We all do that, to a degree, in an attempt to keep the upper hand. While some people might never employ these eager-to-please job-hunting tactics, it's human nature to want to sound better than our résumé puts forth.

Let's say that a guy named Alan is in the middle of an interview. When the interviewer asks, "When can you start?" he replies without hesitating, "Tomorrow!"

Why did he say that? He hasn't even quit his current job yet. His answer is enthusiastic but entirely unrealistic. Since Alan believes this is what the employer wants to hear, he takes a chance and bends the truth, figuring the company won't bring anyone on board for at least another week anyway.

In another office, where interviews are also taking place, the hiring manager wants to know that Cheryl is familiar with a certain computer application. She answers, "Absolutely!" In reality, though, Cheryl's only heard of the application. She's never used it directly. Once again, in her eagerness to get the position, she stretches the truth and says whatever the employer wants to hear. She figures she can always learn how to use the application if and when it becomes necessary.

Neither of these candidates wants to admit any inadequacies—including, in Alan's case, lack of availability. Alan and Cheryl turned to stretching the truth out of good old-fashioned fear. Both are afraid that if the prospective employer finds out the truth, they'll lose their respective jobs to other more knowledgeable candidates.

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That All-Important First Impression

The scenarios described above are not universal in the world of business, but they have certainly occurred, especially in more cutthroat industries. Like I said, it's human nature to want to convince the hiring party that we're right for the position. In our eagerness to get that job offer, we may cover up some things. We won't say, "I really don't plan to do any overtime."

We won't reveal that getting up to speed will require a significant learning curve. We won't say, "I'm not a morning person, so don't expect much out of me until after 10 a.m." And we're certainly not going to point out that the interviewer is wearing non-matching socks.

Why? Because in a job interview, we want so badly to tell the interviewer what he or she wants to hear. Similarly, the interviewer might fail to ask the right questions and may only be interested in what we can do for the company. Either we get the job and learn quickly enough to stay on board, or we can't

keep up and are soon replaced by someone else.

Take Matt and Jane, for instance. They've been dating for a while; however, both of them have been misrepresenting themselves to the other. They like each other a great deal, and both have already decided, "This is 'The One' for me." In an attempt to "get" the other person, each one is creating a false façade and hiding behind a mask, too afraid to reveal the true Matt or the true Jane.

Matt wants very badly to be the one Jane picks. He constantly tells her things about himself – some true, others exaggerated and others completely fabricated—to impress. Jane has already decided that he's the one for her. But she still puts him to the test, always asking in one form or another, "What do you have to offer?"

Matt starts to suspect that Jane doubts his ability to deliver what she needs, so he works harder to present himself in the image she wants. The demands increase, the deceit escalates and, in the end, the pressure's too much. The relationship stops being fun. Matt feels he can never meet her expectations.

Jane feels she doesn't know the real him. Both tire of the games and go their separate ways. Had these two began their journey with honesty and friendship, instead of one-upmanship, they might still be together.

First impressions are important, but not in lieu of relationship-building honesty.