

Love and Roses

I'd resigned myself to being single forever. So why was God prompting me to think about marriage now?

Fourteen years ago I was living with a roommate in an apartment close to where I worked and attended church.

I had come to the conclusion that god was going to be my only husband

for the rest of my life since there were no good men left in the

world. I was content with that, but I hadn't always been. For years

I'd harbored the dream of being swept off my feet by Prince Charming.

By the age of 28 I had seen lots of toads and not one prince.

One Sunday I was getting ready for church and decided to wear a new dress. I remember looking in the

mirror and saying, "Lord, I sure would like for my husband to see

me in this new dress." I'll never forget hearing the Holy Spirit's answer: "He will."

In reality, I hadn't given much thought to a husband in a long time. It was odd that I had even made that comment.

On a Mission

I walked into church that morning strutting like a rooster and looking around like a private detective.

Face it, I was a woman on a mission. You can just imagine how I

scanned that place when the preacher asked all the first-time

visitors to raise their hands.

A nice-looking man raised his hand.

When our pastor directed us to welcome the visitors, I knocked down

five people trying to get over to him and shake his hand. If I hadn't

worn a dress that day, I might have jumped the pews to get to him.

But the Holy Spirit said, "That's

not him." I was very disappointed. "Why not?" I asked. He didn't give me an answer.

After church, I talked with the visitor

and agreed with the Holy Spirit that he wasn't my type. *What was*

going on? I wondered.

I knew the Holy Spirit's voice, and I

knew He had told me that my future husband would see me in my new

dress. I considered keeping on the dress forever, but ultimately

decided to take it off after the evening service.

Then I went to lunch with a friend and

forgot about the whole situation. After we ate we walked around and

shopped and got back to church just in time for the evening service

to begin.

That's Him!

I had not even noticed if there were

any visitors until the preacher asked the first-time visitors to

raise their hands. I looked to the left and saw a very handsome man

holding up his hand. The Holy Spirit said, "That's him."

Nearly three years later, I found out

that the Holy Spirit had told this visitor I would be his wife.

If I had known that at the time, I
probably would have roped the poor guy the way a cowboy ropes
a calf
and made him elope with me!
Instead, we started out as friends—or
at least that's what I let him think—and remained so for about
a
year. During that time, Johnny told me he would never give a
woman a
dozen roses unless he was going to ask her to marry him. After
we
started dating, he would often bring me roses. I would count
them
when he wasn't looking, and sure enough, there were never more
than
11.

We broke up a dozen or more times
because he said we were getting too serious. I was about to
give up
after two years. I bought a mobile home and made up my mind to
stop
worrying about whether or not we would ever get married.
Five months after I started pulling
away, he asked me to dress up for my birthday because he
wanted to
take me someplace nice. I called my mother and told her I
thought
Johnny was going to ask me to marry him.
“But you've always told me you were
just friends,” my mother protested. I found out later that she
was
just teasing me; Johnny was right there at my parents' house,
asking for their blessing before he popped the question.

The 12th Rose

When Johnny came to pick me up on my
birthday, he handed me a box of long-stemmed roses and left

the room.

I removed the lid and started counting. There were only 11.
Johnny

came back and caught me counting.

"I told you I would never give anyone

12 roses unless I was going to ask her to marry me," he said.
I was

very embarrassed—and disappointed.

I couldn't understand it. If he loved
me, what was he waiting for?

When we finished eating, the waiters

and waitresses came out of the kitchen singing "Happy
Birthday"

and placed a ring box, a card and a rose—the 12th
rose—on the table in front of me.

I was so surprised I didn't know what
to say.

I opened the box, looked at the ring

and read the card. The card contained a simple question: "Will
you

spend all your tomorrows with me?" I was so caught off guard I
just

sat there.

Finally, he asked me, "Well, will

you?" I said yes. I was overwhelmed by how romantic he was and
thought I would cry.

But once I recovered, I wanted to know

when. As soon as we got in the car, I pulled out a calendar

and got him to commit to a date—one that was only two months
away.

I really scared him when I went out the very next day and
bought a

wedding dress! But I had waited two and a half years for this
man,

and I wasn't about to give him a chance to change his mind.

One

thing we both knew for certain at the time—and still keep before us—is that God put us together. He ordained our relationship from the beginning. I had learned to be content with my singleness, but I was thrilled when God unfolded an awesome plan for my life that included love, roses *and* Prince Charming.

Wanda Payne is an overcomer and founder of The Heart of Jesus Ministry, which uses humor to communicate the love of God to hurting women. She lives with her husband and son in Dallas, Georgia.