

The Perfect Dinner

Years ago, when my husband, Terry, and I were dating, I set about to fix what I called the “perfect dinner” for Valentine’s Day. On the menu were Terry’s favorites: baked pasta with marinara sauce smothered in cheese, salad and buttery garlic bread. *How difficult was that?* In a word, highly!

You see I was a woman with an unsavory “kitchen past” and a long list of disasters to prove it. My most recent one was when my popovers (containing too much baking soda) exploded like hand grenades in the oven!

“Well, never mind,” I told myself, as I braved the kitchen to fix the perfect dinner. Terry didn’t need to know about my hidden disasters, just tonight’s grand performance of undaunted love revealed perfectly on a red linen tablecloth.

I began chopping the lettuce and slicing the Italian bread, making sure to slather it generously with homemade garlic butter. No disasters yet. *Perfecto!* Filled with sudden confidence, I began to sing in a bold falsetto voice. Throwing my pasta into the pot, I phoned Terry to give a progress report. “Prepare for a surprise!” I trumpeted. Terry announced that he’d rush through traffic and be there in 30 minutes flat. *Bravissimo! The Culinary Diva was on a roll (no pun intended)—look out!*

After minutes on the phone with Terry, I returned to the pasta pot and stared inside. No water! No pasta noodles! Just

congealed white
goop! “Uh-oh!” All singing stopped.

With no time to spare, I moved from diva mode to disaster mode. *What to do?* Carusos—the small mom-and-pop Italian takeout store on the corner. Disaster averted.

In 25 minutes the doorbell rang. As I opened it, I felt my cheeks flush. Facing me were two men: the deliveryman (arriving late) holding a steaming Carusos delivery box and Terry (arriving early) holding flowers and sporting a grin that told me he saw right through all the pretense.

I fought the urge to slam the door and announce, “Sandra doesn’t live here!” Sheepishly, I invited them in—both, by now, were grinning and chuckling.

Since that night, my beloved Terry and I have celebrated more than 30 Valentine’s Days—some fancy, others simple. On Valentine’s Day, we usually recount the memory of the “perfect dinner.” We often reflect on how, with the passage of time, we have gained some wisdom and perspective on what true love is. It is *not* a grand performance, a parade or a charade. Rather, it is mutual respect for each other and unconditionally giving kindness and caring (see 1 Cor. 13:4).

You and I might feel at times that we fall short or fail in our attempts to express love smoothly and eloquently, but God’s Word assures us that true love itself never fails (see 1 Cor. 13:8). After 32

years of
marriage, Terry and I have discovered that true love is not
something conjured
up by any one man-made event. It is a good and perfect gift
coming from above
(see James 1:17), a gift from God—who *is*
love (see 1 John 4:8).

In this season when thoughts turn to hearts and flowers and
presenting things “just so” for our loved ones, let’s remember
that the Lord,
the only perfect One, expressed His unconditional and undying
love for us when
He went to the cross.

We don’t have to perform or try to be perfect to express or
receive His love. We can receive His unconditional *agape* love
just as we are and, as His ambassadors, embody
His love and spread it to others (see 2 Cor. 5:20). Our God
has taken us beyond
the short moment of one day’s celebration—into an eternity of
rejoicing.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 2/14/2012

This week thank the
Lord that He loves you unconditionally and because of that
love you can love
others without expecting anything in return. Thank Him that
His love sustains and satisfies your deepest
need for acceptance and approval.
Ask him to give you opportunities to share His love with
others who
desperately need it. Pray that
God’s love would permeate all of us so we could stand in unity
against
unrighteousness and work harmoniously toward bringing
righteous change to our

nation and the nations of the world.

1 Cor. 13; 2 Cor. 5:20

To enrich your prayer

life and learn how to strategically pray with power by using appropriate

scriptures, we recommend the following sources by Apostle John Eckhardt: Prayers that Rout Demons, Prayers that Bring Healing, Prayers that Release Heaven on Earth and Prayers that Break

Curses. To order any or all of these [click here](#).