



Excerpt from the book, **I Declare: 31 Promises To Speak Over Your Life**,
by Joel Osteen

Day Twelve

I DECLARE I am special and extraordinary. I am not average! I have been custom-made. I am one of a kind. Of all the things God created, what He is the most proud of is me. I am His masterpiece, his most prized possession. I will keep my head held high, knowing I am a child of the most high God, made in his very image. This is my declaration.

Psychologists say our self-worth is often based upon what we believe the most important people in our lives think of us. For children most likely that would be their parents. For adults, that could still be a parent, a spouse, a friend, or a mentor.

The problem with this philosophy is that people can disappoint us. They can say things or do things that bring heartache and pain. If we're receiving our value only from those who hurt us, we'll likely feel less and less valuable over time. Sooner or later they will say something that cuts like a knife, or they will show by their actions that we're not really that important.

The key to really understanding and maintaining a true sense of value is to let your Heavenly Father be the most the most important person in your life. Base your sense of value on what He says about you.

When you make mistakes some may criticize and make you feel guilty, like you're all washed up. But God says, "I have mercy for every mistake. Get up and go again. Your future is brighter than your past."

Others may make you feel like you're not talented, you're not attractive, or you don't have anything special to offer. But God says, "You're amazing. You're beautiful. You're one of a kind."

People may disappoint you and reject you, even say things that can wound your spirit. If you're receiving your value and your worth only from them, you'll go through life feeling inferior, insecure, with little self-worth. But if you will learn to receive your value from your Heavenly Father and listen to what He says about you, then you'll feel accepted, approved, redeemed, forgiven, confident, and secure. You will feel extremely valuable and that's exactly the way God wants you to be.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "You are God's masterpiece." Do you realize a masterpiece is not mass-produced? You didn't come off an assembly line. You're not average. You're not ordinary. You've been custom-made. You are one of a kind. God created you in His very own image. He looks past all those other things and He looks right at you and says, "There's my masterpiece. That's my son. That's my daughter. That's what brings the most joy to my heart."



Men Are Like Waffles

By Karen Card

Why is it so hard to figure out the opposite sex? Because our brains work differently. Men's brains are really good at focusing completely on just one thought and women's brains are really good at thinking many thoughts at the same time. This difference can make it hard to figure out what each other was thinking.

To illustrate this, picture a waffle. A waffle has many squares, each divided by walls high enough to hold syrup. This is an example of a man's brain. Each waffle square is a thought or idea. In order for a man to change from one idea to the next, he needs to get out of the square he is in and climb over the wall to get into the next idea.

Now picture a plate of spaghetti. This is an example of a woman's brain. Each spaghetti noodle is one thought or idea. However, each thought (noodle) is touching about seven other thoughts (noodles) at the same time. Women are regularly thinking at least seven thoughts at the same time. Understanding how our brains work differently will help improve our communication with the opposite sex.

Advice to Men

When she asks you to do a task, and then asks you to do 3 other tasks at the same time, remember that this is just how her brain works. Each thought is touching seven other thoughts.

Remind her that your brain works better when you can focus completely on one task at a time.

Advice to Women

Knowing how his brain is different should keep you from getting so mad at him when he is slow to change his attention from the TV or newspaper to you. Give him time to move into a new waffle square when you need him to change his focus or thoughts toward you.

Parenting Tip

Young Marriage Is Good

By Mark Gungor

"A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself from within." – Ariel Durant

There has been quite a lot of press recently voicing opposition to young people marrying. Many have decried the marriage of 18-25 year olds as a terrible idea since they are "too young". But it wasn't long ago that such marriages would not have been thought of as unusual.

"The traditional markers of manhood — leaving home, getting an education, starting a family and starting work — have moved downfield as the passage from adolescence to adulthood has evolved," says Michael Kimmel, author of *Guyland*. For instance, in 1960, almost 70 percent of men had reached these milestones by the age of 30; today, less than a third of males can say the same.

Even biology challenges us to rethink delayed marriage. According to U.S. researchers who analyzed census data and information from genealogical records, children born when their mothers were under 25 were almost twice as likely to live to their 100th birthday and beyond and University of Chicago husband and wife team Dr Leonid Gavrilov and Dr Natalia Gavrilova have shown that firstborn children live longer than their younger siblings. It appears the two are linked, with older children living longer because their mothers are younger when they have them.

Studies have also shown that it takes longer for older men to conceive. Starting in their 20s, men face steadily increasing chances of infertility, fathering an unsuccessful pregnancy, and passing on to their children a genetic mutation that causes dwarfism. "We [now] know the probability for certain types of DNA damage goes up with age, and we can give you a mathematical probability," said Andrew Wyrobek, a researcher at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California.

Indeed, those who marry younger and produce more children will be the ones who will dominate the US culture in the not-too-distant future. Dr. Arthur Brooks of Syracuse University writes:

Simply put, liberals have a big baby problem: They're not having enough of them, they haven't for a long time, and their pool of potential new voters is suffering as a result. According to the 2004 General Social Survey, if you picked 100 unrelated politically liberal adults at random, you would find that they had, between them, 147 children. If you picked 100 conservatives, you would find 208 kids. That's a 'fertility gap' of 41%... A state that was split 50-50 between left and right in 2004 will tilt right by 2012, 54% to 46%. By 2020, it will be certifiably right-wing, 59% to 41%. A state that is currently 55-45 in favor of liberals (like California) will be 54-46 in favor of conservatives by 2020—and all for no other reason than babies.

We know that sexual activity before marriage increases the likelihood of a divorce. We also know that couples who live together also have an even higher rate of divorce. But then we tell young people today that they should wait till they are almost 30 to marry — an age that will most likely guarantee they will have been already sexually active or even living with someone.

Even in the Christian community (a group who should know better) we push and encourage delayed marriage. Christian parents even threaten their young people with negative consequences if they marry young. "We won't pay for your education!" "You'll have to pay for your own wedding!" "We'll disown you!"

Mormons bring an interesting perspective to marriage. Only 6% of those who follow the demands surrounding a temple marriage end up in divorce. Six percent! But it's not just a question of getting married in a certain place. Leaders claim it's that the church requires the candidates for marriage to be people of character—people who stick to their commitments of love and of asking for help, if they need it. What is so striking is that many of these marriages happen between couples still in their teens!

Then there is a threat that almost no one seems to consider: the elimination of grandparents. The culture of divorce that has been ripping and tearing at our national family structure has, so far, failed to destroy us. Though the documentation of the damage divorce does to people and particularly their children is sufficiently solid,

American homes (though patched and sown together) have been able to hold together to some degree. This has been in large part due to the presence of grandparents. Those wonderful people who love their grandchildren unconditionally and whose age, wisdom and financial resources have played a key role — in some cases the key role — as stabilizers in those children's lives. Those who delay marriage (and subsequently child rearing) are denying themselves one of the greatest joys men and women have cherished for millennia: to participate in the lives of their grandchildren.

For centuries, men and women became grandparents when they were in their late 40's and early 50's — allowing them plenty of time to enjoy and participate in their grandchildren's lives. Then in their 70's and 80's they witnessed the arrival of their great-grandchildren. People who delay marriage and family today, however, do not realize how greatly they are cheating themselves by making it virtually impossible to experience their grandchildren. And for what? An extended adolescence? To drink more beer or to experiment with more sexual partners? To focus on their careers and a chance to make money more quickly than their parents did?

If Bobby and Suzie wait till almost 30 to marry and then 35 or greater to have children and their children do the same... well just do the math — they'll be 70 before their first grandchildren are even born. Depending on their health and longevity, they are at risk for not being able to enjoy those children's lives.

There is an even a greater tragedy that will occur than just people not being able to enjoy their grandchildren. As I already stated, grandparents have been the very glue that has helped struggling families stay together or to at least make their grandchildren feel safe should their parent's marriage fail.

But by delaying marriage and children today, we are participating in the foolish and systematic removal of grandparents altogether. When the kids of the next generation are 7, 10, or 12 years of age there won't be many grandparents to speak of. The final blow to the American family will be complete.

Sadly, many pastors and marriage proponents themselves are participating in the destruction of the very institution they seek to save by joining in this foolish call for delayed matrimony.

No matter what the statisticians say, marriages do not fail because of age, money or education — many of the underlying arguments for delaying marriage. Such thinking is utter nonsense. Marriages fail for one reason and one reason only: one or both people become selfish. To imply that young, poor or high-school graduates are incapable of real commitment is an insult. I find it curious that we have young, poor, high-school graduates fighting for our interests overseas with great commitment — some giving the very last measure of commitment by sacrificing their very lives for their fellow soldiers.

Someday historians will write of the end of Western civilization. I am sure that our propensity for selfishness and narcissistic behaviors is what they will point to as the reason for our demise.

Advocating for delayed marriage will be just one more reason we will succeed in destroying ourselves from within.

Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

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