

And Then There Were Two *Proverbs 31 Woman Magazine*

For the past fifteen years, on February 14th, I have served up a dinner of pink creamed potatoes, heart-shaped hamburgers, heart-shaped biscuits, red-velvet cupcakes with white icing, and pink lemonade. Red Mylar balloons danced from the kitchen chairs and dinner was served on Valentine plates with red napkins. Of course, the entire meal was sprinkled with lots of love.

But something happened in 2003 that caused a shift in this Jaynes family tradition. My son, Steven, went away to college. Somehow, pink tinted creamed potatoes and heart-shaped hamburgers didn't hold the same magic, and twenty-four cupcakes seemed a bit much for just the two of us. As the day approached, Steve and I made a decision to start a new tradition – a romantic dinner out.

Because Valentines Day fell on a Friday last year, Steve and I decided to celebrate on Thursday to avoid the crowds. I can safely say we avoided the crowds. When we arrived at the candle lit cozy restaurant, we were the only two customers there. Empty nest...empty house...empty restaurant. "Boy, you know how to make a girl feel special," I teased Steve. "You reserved the entire restaurant for me."

Of course it was only a fluke, but then again, I think God was giving us a special Valentines gift of our own. Throughout the entire evening, we had to place to ourselves. For several hours, waiters and waitresses gave their entire attention to one couple adjusting to a meal without pick creamed potatoes and red velvet cupcakes. Steve and I held hands over a white table cloth, looked into each other's eyes, and talked without worrying the people at the next table would hear. Steve said a longer than usual blessing – and we had a great time.

Thinking back on our first Valentines Day as empty nesters, I am so grateful for our relationship. Sure, I missed the Valentines Day hubbub around my house, but we still had the day sprinkled with love. Through my ministry with women, I see so many couples who are investing most of their time in their children. Schedules revolve around soccer practice, ballgames, and school activities. Romance is placed on the back burner and the marriage relationship is placed on hold for a more convenient time. Then one day, when the kids are gone, the couple glances up from the cereal bowl one morning and says, "Who are you?"

I've noticed an unfortunate shift in our culture over recent years. Fifty years ago, during the time of June Cleaver and Father Knows Best, a woman who did not work outside the home was called a "housewife." But now that same woman is called a "stay-at-home mom." That sounds like positive transition to some. After all, who wants to be married to their house? But, I think it is a sad commentary on the importance of marriage in our society. It shows that our focus has gone from the marriage unit being the focal point of the family to the children as being the core. When that is the case, what happens when the children grow up and have lives of their own?

Sharon Jaynes

Bringing God's Truth
To Today's Women

Don't get me wrong. I love being a mother – *Being a Great Mom* was my first published book. Motherhood is one of the most important roles we will ever fill. We have the responsibility of shaping and molding the children who will one day define who we are as a community and a nation. However, as a wife, my first priority must always be to love, honor and cherish my husband – putting my relationship with Steve second only to my relationship with God. That is the best gift I can give my child!

When I was a child, my parents didn't get along very well. I can still remember how I longed to have parents that loved each other, who hugged and kissed in front of me, and who enjoyed each other's company. Instead, their rocky relationship left me feeling our home was on shaky ground never quite sure of my footing.

The Seven Principles of the Proverbs 31 Woman are very key to becoming all that God intends for us to become. And the order of God first, husband second, and children third is key to a well ordered life...not just for a period of time, but for "as long as we both shall live."

My prayer for you, dear friend, is that when all your children have grown and gone their separate ways, even though your "nest" maybe empty, your home will still be full of love for your husband with deposits of treasured memories in every nook and cranny of your life. Don't wait until the kids are gone to try and catch up for the missed years. Make each day count. Right now, your marriage is becoming what it is going to be.

Yes, Valentines Day was different last year. No pink potatoes or heart shaped hamburgers. Instead we enjoyed a main course of special memories, a side of future hopes and dreams, and a rich dessert of intimate moments topped with a promise of more to come. And then there were two...