

A 14-DAY
*Romance
Challenge*

SHARON JAYNES



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Welcome to the 14-Day Romance Challenge!

Have you ever wondered what your husband longs for in the woman of his dreams? Chances are he won't tell you, but he told me. Well, maybe not *your* husband, but hundreds of men just like him did. And he wants a little romance.

I remember my wedding day. I bet you remember yours too. Before I walked into that sanctuary, I looked in the mirror in the bride's room and thought about all the women who had walked the aisle before me—women so full of promise and hope. I pondered what could possibly go wrong that so many marriages end in divorce. Over the years—36 of them at the time of this writing—I have discovered the answer to that question. A lot can go wrong.

I don't have a big, bad personal story of how God took a terrible, tumultuous marriage and miraculously transformed it into a storybook romance filled with white-knight rescues, relentless romance, and rides into the sunset leaving all danger and darkness behind. Although our marriage has been all that at one time or another, it's no fairy tale.

Our marriage is a daily journal, one page after another, one

day after another. Some entries are smudged with tears; others are dog-eared as favorites. Some days are marred by unsuccessful erasures that couldn't quite rub away the words said; others are finger-worn by the reading of precious events time and time again.

One of the dangers of a good marriage is that we can take it for granted. We get up in the morning, make breakfast, go to work, run errands, come home, eat dinner, deal with kids, watch TV, go to bed, and get up the next day to do it all over again. On the weekends we manage the bigger chores, go to kids' activities, watch more TV, go to church, and, well, you get the picture. Life falls into a rhythm and routine, and marriage can become mundane, lacking enthusiasm, excitement, and zeal.

None of us got married so we could have a long list of chores. Most likely you got married because you were madly in love and couldn't imagine life without your man! You got married because you were passionately, sexually, and romantically stirred beyond belief. You couldn't wait to tie the knot and crawl into bed every night with this incredible person God had miraculously brought into your life. Maybe you still feel that way. But maybe you could use a little reminder—a re-stoking of that passion.

For most of us, life is just daily. However, the accumulation of small struggles can nibble like termites to undermine the foundation of what appears to be a healthy structure as surely as the unexpected, earth-shaking rumble of sudden disaster. And routine, even good routine, can rob us of the joy of marriage if we let it.

That's where the 14-Day Romance Challenge comes in. We're going to shake it up a bit! And spice it up a lot!

You are about to embark on an exciting journey of romancing your husband...and it's going to be fun! Before I wrote the book *Becoming the Woman of His Dreams: Seven Qualities Every Man Longs For*, I interviewed hundreds of men to find out what they longed for in a wife. The woman of a man's dreams

- ♥ **p**rays for him
- ♥ **r**espects him
- ♥ **a**dmires him
- ♥ **i**nitiates intimate friendship
- ♥ **s**afeguards their marriage
- ♥ **e**ncourages him
- ♥ **s**exually fulfills him

The first letter from each of those words spells PRAISES, which points to the words of a husband praising his wife in the book of Proverbs: "Her husband...praises her, 'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all'" (Proverbs 31:28-29).

But in this 14-day challenge, we're focusing on just *one* aspect of what your man longs for. Snuggled into his desire to be admired is his secret longing to be romanced. Yes, your husband longs to be romanced by the woman of his dreams.

Each day you'll read a short capsule of encouragement and

a few snippets from *Becoming the Woman of His Dreams*. Then you'll review five Romance Challenge Ideas. Some of the challenges are simpler than others. Some are spicier than others. They range from mildly warm to hot and spicy. You get to pick the challenge that's right for you, depending on how high you want the flames to burn.

I've also included some responses from the men who completed my survey for *Becoming the Woman of His Dreams*. You'll see those in a section titled Here's What the Guys Said. I think you'll find their honest responses eye-opening, heart-tugging, and yes, challenging.

In addition, you'll see some responses from women who went through the challenge. I hope these will encourage you to keep moving forward and not give up!

If you're familiar with my blog at www.sharonjaynes.com, you know I love locking arms with other women. I hope you do too. So why not invite a few girlfriends to join you in the 14-Day Romance Challenge?

Here's a note you can copy and paste to invite your married friends, coworkers, or family members to join you. (Oh, the stories you will tell!)

Hi, friend! Could your marriage use a little spicing up in the romance department? If so, I'd like to invite you to join me in taking the 14-Day Romance Challenge with bestselling author Sharon Jaynes. Just click on www.romancechallenge.com and read more about the challenge, along with some comments from

women who've given it a try. If you join me in the 14-Day Romance Challenge, let me know! I'd love to compare notes and see the difference it made in your marriage.

I'd love to pray for you as you take me up on this challenge to romance your husband. Send me an email at Sharon@sharonjaynes.com and let me know you've started. I'll begin praying for you as you honor God by loving your man well.

Be blessed!

Sharon

DAY 1

Romance—It's Not Just for Us Girls

If there's one thing I know about us girls, it's that we like romance! We love romance novels, romance comedies, romance tragedies, and romance, romance, romance. Most gals would much rather take in a romantic movie than an action film. And what woman doesn't dream about her husband romancing her the way he did when they were dating? But guess what, that man of yours longs for romance too.

One night Steve and I were planning a romantic evening at home alone. We borrowed a movie from our friends Gene and Sheri. *A Vow to Remember* promised to be a real tearjerker. The couple on the DVD case appeared lost in each other as their arms intertwined in a lovers' embrace. The back cover boasted, "Capture your mind, your heart and your soul... Paints a compelling picture of forever love."

The lights were dim, the candles were lit, and the mood was set. However, when Steve placed the movie in the DVD player, we were not greeted with strains of a melodious theme song or misty-eyed romance. Oh no. It was Arnold Schwarzenegger with machine gun at the ready! Our romantic evening was

rudely interrupted by *Terminator*. Gene had placed the wrong movie in the case!

Perhaps romance in your marriage has a greater resemblance to *Terminator* than *A Vow to Remember*. If so, I'm so glad you've accepted the 14-Day Romance Challenge!

Willard Harley, author of *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-Proof Marriage*, notes that one way to affair-proof a marriage is for a husband and wife to become aware of each other's needs and learn to meet them.¹ On the surface, that seems obvious, but in reality, most couples don't realize what each other's needs truly are.

Harley lists the woman's five basic needs in marriage as:

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Honesty and Openness
4. Financial Support
5. Family Commitment

He lists the man's five basic needs in marriage as:

1. Sexual Fulfillment
2. Recreational Companionship
3. An Attractive Spouse
4. Domestic Support
5. Admiration²

When a wife doesn't feel cherished, she's not as interested in having sex with her husband. When a husband doesn't have sex, he doesn't feel like showing affection to his wife. Okay. So that's a problem. Someone has to make the first move. It could be you.

So for us gals, affection is paramount. For the guys, sex is key. How do we reconcile the two? Harley explains:

When it comes to sex and affection, you can't have one without the other.³

The typical wife doesn't understand her husband's deep need for sex any more than the typical husband understands his wife's deep need for affection.⁴

Harley notes that most men will tell you that they wish their wives were more sexual, and most women would say that they wish their husbands were more affectionate and romantic. Many men feel sexually cheated by their wives and many women feel emotionally cheated by their husbands.

When a wife doesn't feel cherished, she's not as interested in having sex with her husband. When a husband doesn't have sex, he doesn't feel like showing affection to his wife. Okay. So that's a problem. Someone has to make the first move. It could be you.

Jesus said, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you," (Matthew 7:12). We call that the

Golden Rule. Isn't it interesting that a wedding ring is often called a band of gold? Whether a wedding ring is gold, platinum, silver, or bronze, the Golden Rule certainly applies in a marriage relationship.

We should never *give* with the ulterior motive of *receiving*. James warns that even our prayers can go unanswered when we pray with wrong motives (James 4:3). But the truth is, most of the time when we romance our husbands they become more romantic in return. The Golden Rule for romance could be, *Express your love to your husband in the same way you want him to express his love to you*. Sticky notes of love on his bathroom mirror, romantic texts in the middle of the day, and declarations of how proud you are of him are actually showing him ways to love you in return.

When a wife ignores her man's sexual needs, it's a slap in the face that says, "I don't care about you or our marriage." Some might say, "Well, the same goes for him! If he doesn't show me more affection, I'm not going to feel like having more sex! It's his fault we're in this mess!"

But friend, this little book isn't about what he needs to do. It's about what you can do. It's about how to minister to your husband. Is that an odd way to think about it? Is that a new thought for you?

Consider this: God fashioned your husband to be a sexual, visual, tactile human being. When you meet his needs, you are ministering to him in a way only you can. God planned it that way.

We need to erase the line separating the sexual and the sacred and realize that being intimate with our husband is an opportunity to glorify God.

In my book *A Sudden Glory: God's Lavish Response to Your Ache for Something More*, I wrote about how we tend to separate our spiritual lives and our secular lives. But the Bible never separates the two. As we live and move and have our being in Christ (Acts 17:28), all of life becomes an act of worship. Doing laundry to the glory of God. Singing praises to the glory of God. Frying bacon to the glory of God. Reading our Bibles to the glory of God.

We need to erase the line separating the secular and the sacred and realize that all of life is an opportunity to glorify God. Let me go one step further: we need to erase the line separating the sexual and the sacred and realize that even being intimate with our husband is an opportunity to glorify God. When you love your husband well, you are glorifying God in one of the most wonderful ways imaginable.

We all have needs, but God never intended for any human relationship to meet all those needs. Only God can do that. However, when it comes to romance, God has placed you as the sole proprietor of fulfilling that need in your man's life. And isn't that the way you want it to be? A wife doesn't want her man looking at any address other than hers for that particular need to be met...and exceedingly so.

Going back to Harley's five needs for every man and five

needs for every woman in marriage, where does romance fit in? Obviously it fits in with the woman's need for affection and the man's need for sexual fulfillment. Not so obviously, romance touches on each of the other four needs of your man as well.

- ♥ Romance is stirred by recreational companionship—having fun together creates romantic ties and lasting memories. It stirs up endorphins and a sense of well-being.
- ♥ Romance is stoked when a wife takes interest in her appearance for the purpose of wooing her man—he is attracted to her, and he is proud to call her his.
- ♥ Romance is stimulated when a wife takes steps to create a warm, orderly environment. He enjoys being home and appreciates the way his wife provides a place to rest, rejuvenate, and recreate.
- ♥ Romance is stepped up when a wife admires her husband. Oh my, there's nothing more romantic to a man than feeling that his wife admires him, is proud of him, and thinks he's the most amazing man on earth.

When we think of the romantic things, we think of events that occur because someone made a choice to love.

Many people believe affairs are birthed from unmet needs. And while that subject is beyond the scope of the 14-Day Romance Challenge, let me assure you that when you make time to keep your marriage a priority, you are not only taking steps to keep it strong; you are taking steps to affair-proof your marriage.

If you're a little anxious about how your husband will respond to your efforts, consider a few responses from women who have already completed the challenge:

Thank you so much for this challenge. It was what I needed in more ways than one. I realized by doing just the little things how excited I was to do them and how excited my husband was to receive them. After the first two days, he asked me what was going on, and I told him to enjoy the next twelve! I told him I was doing this for him and did not expect anything in return. Ended up I received flowers, notes, and more hugs and kisses! This has been a HUGE spark to our 28-year marriage! It was fun to plan what to do each day and sneak around hiding things, putting notes in his car, and hiding something very fun in his gym bag! I shared this with some other girls, and they started doing the same thing! I even shared this with my daughter, and she did it for her husband.

And don't be surprised if you see some changes in your own heart. Here's what another woman, who had also been

married 28 years, said about an unexpected result of the challenge:

I feel I benefited just as much if not more from the challenge than my husband. We have been married 28 years and are still very much in love. But things can become routine. It did my heart and soul good to see my husband so happy with me. His usual reaction was a huge smile and a question: “What did I do to deserve this?”

In his book *The Romance Factor*, Alan Loy McGinnis notes,

Being an artist at romance does not require so much a sentimental and emotional nature as it requires a thoughtful nature. When we think of the romantic things, we think of events that occur because someone made a choice to love. A man stops off at a florist and brings his wife a single rose in the evening, a girl makes her lover a lemon pie with just the degree of tartness he likes, a wife makes arrangements for her husband to take the caribou-hunting trip he thought he'd never afford—these are not the goo of sweet emotion. They are the stuff that comes from resolution and determination, and they are strong mortar.”⁵

So let's get started with that strong mortar!

Romance Challenge Ideas

- ♥ Put a chocolate kiss in his briefcase, lunch bag, or on the dashboard of his car, with a note that says, “I love you!”
- ♥ Write “I love you” on his bathroom mirror with soap or lipstick.
- ♥ Send him a romantic card to his workplace via snail mail.
- ♥ Kiss him passionately before he leaves in the morning and tell him you’re going to miss him. Kiss him passionately when he comes home in the evening and tell him you’re glad he’s home.
- ♥ Draw a bath, light candles, and invite him to join you. Lather him up with soap and draw a big heart on his chest. Lie in each other’s arms and soak in the love.

Here’s What the Guys Said

I wish my wife understood how important it is for a man to feel like he has made the mark. —Bart

The woman of my dreams is pretty (not beautiful). She has fun pampering me and is always affectionate.

—Herman

The woman of my dreams understands how fragile a man's ego is. —Paul

I wish my wife understood how important being appreciated is. —Curt