

Did I Still Love Him?

When faced with the idea of breaking off my engagement, I realized that doubts about my worth were getting in the way of my happiness.

Name withheld

Leaning against the front door, I gazed into the hall and couldn't believe what I was feeling. I had just said good-bye to Thomas, my fiancé, and sent him out into the evening snow to drive home. We had been engaged for only a couple of weeks and everything had gone so smoothly. Both of us had felt prompted that the Lord prepared us to meet and marry each other if we chose. So why was I feeling so confused?

My love for Thomas had suddenly and unexpectedly gone cold. When I looked at or thought of him, the romantic feelings that had been growing in me turned to those of a simple, cordial friendship. This change made no sense to me, but how could I marry someone I thought of as "just a friend"? That night I prayed earnestly for the Lord's help in knowing what I should do.



The next day as I read my scriptures, I continued to ponder my predicament. A memory came to mind of a time when Thomas told me I was beautiful. I had turned my head away and changed the subject. Later Thomas asked why I hadn't believed him. What I realized then was that over the years, I had somehow convinced myself that I wasn't attractive. After Thomas expressed his concern, I began trying to trust his sincerity; eventually I didn't have any trouble accepting his compliments.

As I considered my present circumstance, I realized that I was doing the same thing with Thomas's love for me. I didn't believe he could love me enough to marry me, so I was letting go of my feelings for him.

I puzzled over why I felt this way. I thought back to my life before I met Thomas. I had graduated from college and served a mission. I was never one of the girls who got asked out on dates much. In fact, most of my dating experiences had been group girl-ask-guy activities. It seemed that all my efforts to be the best person I could be spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially had brought me many friends and great career opportunities but hadn't brought me any closer to marriage. I felt discouraged and overlooked, even when I was trying to be grateful for everything that was so good in my life.

So, in social relationships my defense mechanisms kicked in. I taught myself to believe that I just wasn't lovable romantically. Romance was something I could never expect in life,



something impossible for me to have. I stopped hoping for it. I didn't feel that I was unsuited for marriage, but I was trying to save myself from the pain of failed hopes. I decided I would just develop and share my talents and get on with life as a single member of society. And then I met Thomas. He and I were instant best friends. But when romance came along with sincere friendship, I automatically

went back into "just friends" mode—my usual wall of protection against potential failed hopes. It was a wall that, apparently, had done more harm than good. Because I had difficulty believing Thomas could love me as he said he did, I couldn't risk hurting myself by loving him.

Once I understood this, I came to realize that I had to retrain myself to believe I was physically attractive, as my fiancé assured me I was. I also had to teach myself that I *could* have a sincere, loving relationship with a man and be married to him forever. I could quite naturally accept love from this man and give it in return.

I am grateful that Heavenly Father responded to my prayers by helping me understand what was keeping me from fuller happiness. I know that although we each may have different challenges, He will answer all of our prayers.

I also testify that He knows us each perfectly and individually. He knows all that is lovable and beautiful in us. The world teaches us to think we are unattractive, unacceptable, and unworthy of love if we don't meet the arbitrary standards it sets for us. Sometimes it's hard to turn away from such loud and convincing lies, but our Father in Heaven will always be there to remind us of our worth and of the value He sees in us. His standard, not the world's, is the true measure of our worth. The more we believe and accept the Lord's love, the more we will love Him and trust in Him.

Now Thomas and I are happily married. Since our engagement I have learned not to sacrifice hope in order to bury pain. The Lord is the one who can heal all pain, and as we trust Him, He reminds us that we have *everything* to hope for. ■

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CAST NOT AWAY THEREFORE YOUR CONFIDENCE

"Opposition turns up almost anyplace something good has happened. It can

happen when you are trying to get an education. It can hit you after your first month in your new mission field. It certainly happens in matters of love and marriage. . . . There are cautions and considerations to make, but once there has been genuine illumination, beware the temptation to retreat from a good thing. If it was right when you prayed about it and trusted it and lived for it, it is right now. Don't give up when the pressure mounts. . . . Face your doubts. Master your fears. 'Cast not away therefore your confidence.' Stay the course and see the beauty of life unfold for you."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence," Brigham Young University devotional address, March 2, 1999.