Dating & Falling in Love

By Scott & Shannon Peck
SCOTT: Welcome to all the love you could ever want! Our subject is Dating and Falling in Love. We're going to discuss the different stages that take place in dating and falling in love. The first stage is: preparing to meet the lovemate of your dreams.

Shannon, what are your thoughts on the biggest problems people have, even before they meet a lovemate?

SHANNON: I think one of the biggest mistakes is starting from a sense of desperation. And we're all familiar with that inner dialogue. It says, “I'm running out of time, and I'm not getting any younger. I've got to find the lovemate of my dreams and soon!”
We need not to be desperate.

SCOTT: What can we do?

SHANNON: I think we need a mindset to offset the desperation, the mindset of wholeness. And in our book, "Liberating Your Magnificence," we have an entire chapter on this. It's really helpful. What we need to do is take the stand that our desire to love and be loved is a legitimate desire. This is not fluff, this is our life. Experiencing all the love you could ever want is something that you already deserve. You don't have to qualify for it, you're already pre-qualified.

SCOTT: It's so valuable to keep reminding ourselves, this is our spiritual right to be loved. And so, that's really part of our wholeness, just to have that image of ourselves.

SHANNON: It certainly is. It is also to know that you already include this relationship. This is major. You may ask, “But how can this be when I haven’t even met my love mate?”

We begin with the spiritual fact that precludes the meeting of your lovemate. The spiritual fact is that if it’s a right idea, then you include it. Why? Because you include everything that God, which is divine Love, includes. Love includes itself. This is the description of who you truly are as well. You, as Love’s expression, include all of love. Isn't
that wonderful? This is a spiritual law you can turn to for finding the love mate of your dreams.

SCOTT: Also, in preparing to move forward to meet the lovemate of your dreams, it's so critical to remember, keep love as the focus, rather than the lovemate. The point is, we're going deeper into love itself, and it is primarily love that you want. And so, we're really first saying, "Let's fall in love with love. This is the love that you deserve even before you even meet your lovemate."

SHANNON: This is such a key issue, Scott. And this issue of focusing on love and not the lovemate not only takes the heat off, but it gets us in the direction of where we most need to focus.

SCOTT: Somebody might be saying, "Well, wait a second. I really want a lovemate, and turning to Love just takes me off course from finding my true mate." No, that actually puts you right on course because getting deeper into Love is moving you closer to the real lovemate that you deserve.

Shannon, how do we open ourselves to meeting the lovemate of our dreams?

SHANNON: Well that's a good question because opening up means danger. It means that we might be rejected. We might fall flat
on our face and lose out once again. And “Will it be worth the risk?” We ask ourselves. Think of yourself as an explorer during this time. You need courage to explore the unknown. There may be many relationships that you'll be discovering and things you'll be learning about yourself and ways that you're interacting which is all part of your personal growth in love on your adventure.

SCOTT: I've certainly learned a lot about that myself in my life. You know, sometimes we're rejected in love. And we think there's somebody we're attracted to and they're not attracted to us, and it's so valuable just to be able to say, "Then I'm going to move on," and not take it personally. Just say, “Next!”

SHANNON: Yes. That "next" is a very important point.

SCOTT: It's not really love if we aren't loved for who we are. We don't want somebody to be attracted to us if in fact they don't love us.

SHANNON: And you know, maybe they're looking for someone just like their mom or just like their dad, and maybe you're not just like their mom and dad, and you'd have to change in order to be filling that slot for them as a lovemate. That's not really what we're looking for in the love we deserve.

SCOTT: And keep in mind that as you get closer to the heart of love, and to who you are and you're spiritual right to be loved, this is
going to do the attracting. This centeredness in love is powerfully attractive! It doesn’t come off as needy. It comes off as someone who is selective, trusting Love, composed, and knowing their worthiness to be loved.

SHANNON: Exactly. Scott, where can we go to find the lovemate of our dreams? Where is that person?

SCOTT: That’s the question on everybody’s mind at this stage, because it seems so hard in this world to know where to go. Do you go to a church group, a bar? Do you go to parties, join an online dating service? Where the heck do you go? And again, here is the thought: You want to meet people who have the same values as you do. So what are your mutual values?

I remember when after my divorce, I thought, "Well, I’ll probably never meet another person." Plus, I felt so unworthy. I was informally playing a little polo at that time with some delightful friends, and I started dating. But I realized after a while that these aren’t the women that I would want to marry. That’s not a mutually held value system here. We had fun playing polo, but I realized I’ve got a mission in life. And I need to be true to it. The woman I date or marry needs to be on the same page of values as me.

I realized right then that I needed to go to places where I’d be likely to meet people who have the same values as myself.
SHANNON: You and I met because of our mutually held values. We met at a conference we were participating in for teenagers.

SCOTT: Well, it's so interesting too, because I didn't go to that conference to meet you, even though that was the most outstanding result of the conference. I was really asked a year earlier, "Scott, would you be on a planning committee for this conference to help teenage youth in Los Angeles?" And we planned for a whole year. I think the key was that I followed my passion. I got deeply, deeply close to my life message, and that brought me into alignment, the place where you were.

SHANNON: That's how it was for me as well. I didn't attend the conference in order to meet someone. I was committed to help the teens have the best possible experience.

I've really been surprised in my healing practice through the years, of the number of people, women especially, who hide their spirituality from their love mate. It's mostly from fear of rejection. It's going to come up sooner or later. It may as well come up immediately because it is who you are. This is what you are most seeking to know if it will be cherished, and if this is the very thing that the love mate find most attractive about you.

SCOTT: Oh, what a mistake that is when people hide who they are from the person they are dating. Because really, if you're not
loved for who you are, then this is not going to be rich with love at the critical place of intimacy and sharing dreams. So expose who you are. And if somebody doesn't like that, then that's the wrong person for you. Another critical point I'd like to make here, is that when you get in touch with your life purpose and stay focused on activities and people that move you along the path of your destiny, then really this may not be divine Love's moment for you to find the lovemate of your dreams. You may be developing the skills and the talents you need to really raise you to the person who is most suited for you. So let's follow our life passion first.

SHANNON: Yes, and I would like to say that I think we need to practice loving our future lovemate now. Without even having his or her name or identity right now, begin loving them, who they are. Support them through your prayer. Send them love. And send them blessings and light for their progress, their health, and their happiness. Practice honoring their life work now and early on in dating.

I was able to support you in your life work, Scott. In fact, I would say that my greatest attraction to you early on was the fact of destiny. You and I were both so connected with our life purposes. And we have that tremendous point in common. It creates an incredible bond of unity.
SCOTT: I feel like I spent years and years and years preparing to love you, even during the times that I was married to the wrong person, and was wishing that I had a true lovemate. So all of that time was preparing to love you. And here it's taking place. I wish I had had known that then. I would have saved a lot of suffering.

SHANNON: The second stage of dating and falling in love is getting to know each other. And I think the biggest mistake we make is pushing to know, "Is this the one?" rather than letting friendship develop. Budding relationships need to be totally free of that kind of pressure.

SCOTT: It's so important. Think of it this way. If it's meant to be love, nothing can stop it. And if it's meant to be a friendship, then enjoy that friendship. Take the pressure off and just be friends. Love yourself enough to be yourself. Don't try to impress your date. Be yourself. You want to be known and loved for who you are. Shannon, when we first starting dating I loved so much that you didn't play any games.

SHANNON: I love that too. It meant a lot to me. In fact, Scott, remember early on when we started dating we made an agreement?

SCOTT: I sure do, that we would be honest and open, no matter what, because we know that was so important to the kind of love that we both wanted.
SHANNON: In fact what happened, I remember one night early on when we started dating, you asked me a question. It was late in the night and everything was quiet. We'd had a long discussion. And you said, "Shannon, what do you really want in your life right now?" And I remember thinking in my heart I wanted to get married again, but I would rather die than tell you. And so I think I just said, "I don't know."

SCOTT: But I knew. I was listening to your inner heart, and I knew that wasn't an honest answer. I knew there was more.

SHANNON: I remember that you reminded me; "Shannon, remember we had that agreement, and we want to honor that agreement of being completely open and honest?" And I thought, "All right, I'm going to have the courage here to tell him what's really on my mind." I felt that I was putting our relationship on the line by saying those words, but I didn't feel desperate about getting a lovemate or getting married again. And I very openly said; "Okay, what I really want is to get married again." And I really watched you then to see, "Is he going to grab his coat and leave?"

SCOTT: I just felt happy that you were being honest. I didn't feel any pressure. Really, I think being honest took away the pressure.
And the other thing that we did that was so valuable is we asked so many probing questions. Questions like, “What are you thinking?” and, “What would you most like to say or share right now?

We sat by the fireplace, took walks on the beach, and spoke deeply and freely from our hearts as we explored getting to know each other. It was so satisfying. We both practiced good listening skills.

Here's another question you can ask when you're dating someone that is so powerful. “What are the two words that best describe who you are?” For example, right now Shannon, what are the two words that best describe who you are to the whole universe?

SHANNON: Wow, I think right now the two words that would describe me are “Love and healing.” What about you, Scott?

SCOTT: Well, my two words would be “Compassion, and empathy.” This is a great exercise because you can go on and on, and say, "Well, what are two more?" And you begin to get to know each other at deeper levels.

SHANNON: It's very revealing. I feel another thing we did in these fireside discussions was a lot of acknowledging. As we went along we had deep discussions about our values, about who we are, what's important to each of us. Even if we went to a movie, we came
back to my place and discussed the movie, "What did you feel about it? What did you most like about it?" This is a wonderful way to acknowledge someone.

In our acknowledgments, we were learning many things about each other that we really liked. We became very good at bringing each other out and emphasizing positive acknowledgment. And let me tell you, it felt great to be acknowledged.

SCOTT: Here's another very potent question. On a date or anytime you can ask, "What's going on in your heart right now?" That may seem like a very forward question to ask somebody, but it's a loving question that says, "I want to know who you are." The third stage of dating and falling in love is to relish the courtship.

SHANNON: You know, one of the things that would get in the way of happy times together is the pressure, pressing to know, "Is this the one?" That pressure harasses the relationship. And the relationship feels it. It adds stress and tension to push towards a conclusion, when it is forced before it becomes revealed in a natural way. It also is not healthy.

I think of a new relationship much like a spring garden, where everything's been planted and it needs time in the sun. It needs time to drink in the water. It needs time to take in the fresh air, and to gain the
nutrients from the soil. Just like budding gardens, relationships need time to grow in a natural way and protection from stress.

SCOTT: We want to look back on our dating as the most wonderful experience of our lives, not as a struggle or emotionally painful. I think one of the keys, Shannon, that certainly occurred in our relationship, in our dating, was to go at the pace of the slowest person. This is unselfish. This is really wanting what's best for each other.

SHANNON: This is so key, because I think again, this would add pressure. And Scott, you were an angel in our relationship because you were the faster one, and I was the slower one. How in the world did you handle it?

SCOTT: Well, it wasn't too hard. I knew I loved you right from the beginning. And I thought, "Well, I want what's best for you." And I realized you needed time. You weren't sure quite what was going to unfold in our relationship. I just enjoyed the friendship. I realized I would hang in there for eternity, waiting to help you see, to find out, "Is this right for both of us?" But I didn't want you to feel pressured because that really wouldn't be who I was, or the love that we both deserved.

SHANNON: I really felt you holding the space for me while I contained our relationship fully, and more fully. And I never felt pressure from you, such as, "Well, I'm
waiting. I'm waiting to know!" You never pressed me. I really admired that so much.

SCOTT: And I didn't feel like I was being strung along. That's a concern that people have sometimes. I was in touch because of our decision to be honest and open. I knew what was going on in your thoughts, and I honored and accepted that.

SHANNON: I thought it was very unusual too, your attitude of willingness to hang in there without knowing, and without being guaranteed of any result of the outcome. You had to handle face the fear of losing me. It must have been hard for you.

SCOTT: Well, this is the idea of being best friends. Today we're still best friends. And if you look at the best relationships on the planet earth, at the heart of these relationships is great friendship. And it's got to begin at the start of a relationship.

SHANNON: That was beautiful unconditional love on your part. And how you handled that still remains with deep appreciation in my heart.

SCOTT: One of the things we did that made it so enjoyable is that we were our own entertainment company. We didn't spend a lot of money going out on expensive dinners and high end entertainment. I really appreciated that. Again, we weren't trying to impress. We went to movies. We had
fireplace talks. We had simple meals. We took walks on the beach and in parks and stayed in nature. We'd go for an outing to have ice cream, and we'd laughed and laughed and laughed. I loved our playfulness.

SHANNON: It’s true. You know, we did a movie a week. That was our deal. And remember running up and down the stairs in Santa Monica in Los Angeles as we chased each other towards the movie theatre?

SCOTT: We were chasing like little kids playing.

SHANNON: We would park on the third or fourth floor of this parking structure, and then we'd have to walk down the stairs because we didn't like the elevator. And we started walking down the stairs and the next thing I knew, I was running, and you were chasing me. We did that every week to every movie and coming back from every movie, back to the parking lot.

SCOTT: Well, isn't it interesting looking back? These were a thousand and one ways you were saying to me, "I love you, Scott," even though you weren't able to think or even say those words. We were having love.

SHANNON: There was so much laughter and love and giving and sharing at such light and deep levels, that when we look back on our dear courtship, it's the happiest memories.
We’ve laughed and shared the happiness over and over again.

SCOTT: I know, we did silly things too. I remember pulling up in front of your house for a date, and I had told my secretary to call you. I called on the car phone and sent a fax to you, and I could see you through the window going to the fax machine, that said, "Hi, someone who loves you is at the front door."

SHANNON: I couldn't believe it. It was so cute! I read the fax and ran to the door. And there you were!

SCOTT: One of the things that makes love work at this stage of dating and falling in love and in relishing the courtship is that there was no inconsistency in our love. There was a constant flow of harmony and love. It was always sweet. And we were really getting to know each other in this constant ocean of love.

SHANNON: Neither one of us had mood swings. That had been a problem in a previous relationship. I was relieved that that never even came up in our relationship. We protected our garden and allowed our relationship to bloom and grow in a natural, healthy way.

SCOTT: Today we’re so happily married, and when we look back to our period of dating, it was just such a wonderful time. You deserve
to look back on your love life and this dating period as being ecstatic, just a lovely time. So you don't try to force that to an early conclusion. You try to let it be. Let it be all that love wants it to be for you.

The fourth stage of dating and falling in love is putting love on the line. We want to be able to reveal our deepest self. Because remember, we want to be loved for who we truly are.

SHANNON: You know, we also want to be able to reveal how we truly feel inside. People hide their feelings.

SCOTT: If we play games now at the early stage of dating, it'll probably go on forever. We have to be willing to put our relationship on the line with honesty. Shannon, I remember you were still living in the house that you and your former husband, even though you're divorced, were living in. And it was a pretty expansive home, 3,000 square feet, with lots of fancy surroundings. And early on in our dating I was thinking privately to myself, “I can't support this lifestyle. This is too much for me.” I remember having the courage to say to you, “Shannon, I'm really enjoying getting to know you, but I have got to tell you, I couldn't possibly support this kind of lifestyle.” And I thought, “That could be the end of our relationship.” And your answer changed everything.
SHANNON: You know, I remember the way you phrased it: "How important is this lifestyle to you, Shannon?" You seemed really curious.

SCOTT: Yeah, and you said, "Scott, the most important thing to me is being truly in love. And whenever that happens to me, I would be happy to live in a log cabin."

SHANNON: Exactly.

SCOTT: That made me feel so good. And just to go on with this, because sometimes men, for example, are still climbing out of that old view of themselves as having to be the provider. But I wasn't really happy in my job when I was dating you. And I thought, "If I'm honest and I tell her I'm unhappy in my career or that I'm in a career transition, she'll think I'm not stable and I must not be good enough for her." And I had a lot of things wrapped up in my ego and pride and my self-worth.

Nevertheless, I was honest with you about what was going on in my life. And I really didn't know how you were going to respond. It was scary for me because I felt like I could lose you by sharing this information. I kept having to ask myself, "Well, if I lose her because of this, then what have I lost?"

I don't want Shannon to love me without knowing who I am. So it's really putting
everything on the line. Do you remember that?

SHANNON: Well, it's funny to hear you say this, because to me it wasn't putting anything on the line. I just heard you say you weren't happy with your job, and I thought, "Oh, okay, well, we'll fix that. You'll find something else. You're very talented and filled with skills, and you're so lovable. Who wouldn't want wonderful you!" I didn't think it was a problem at all.

SCOTT: So really, it's a win-win to be honest and open, because either somebody's going to love you more, or you're both going to realize, "This isn't the right relationship." And that's a win too.

SHANNON: Another way I felt that you were brave for putting yourself on the line, Scott, is you revealed your feelings towards me very freely and openly. You were transparent, even though I wasn't fully reciprocating at that time. And I remember early in our dating that we were nearing Thanksgiving holiday. You said that you had plans, but you wished that you were free to be with me. And it really made me feel loved and important to you. It really felt wonderful.

SCOTT: It was an awkward time, because I wanted to spend the holiday with you and I didn't know if my plans were certain. I also thought we loved each other, but it wasn't yet quite clear.
SHANNON: Well, I appreciated the fact that you didn't hide your feelings, and you really modeled that for me, because I was more inclined to hide my feelings. I had more feelings I was trying to sort out and deal with at that time.

Another way of putting the relationship on the line is with sex. We really don't want to let sex drive the relationship because we want intimacy and love and our values, and who we truly are to drive the relationship. When I have sex early on, it really changes the dynamics of the relationship. Like it or not, everything does change after sex. Women want commitment. We look at it differently. We look at ourselves differently in the relationship, and it's felt in the partnership. The dynamics change. So let genuine intimacy, not sex, govern the relationship.

Scott, I remember the winter of our love, it was before Christmas, and you and I had had the discussion about sex a number of times, and you'd listen so beautifully. I felt respected by you that I really didn't want to go into a sexual relationship at this point. I'm wasn't committed. I couldn't enter that phase unless I was fully committed. You were so respectful and you understood. And it wasn't just words. I was amazed. You really didn't press at all. You were actually protecting my right not to be pressured or influenced to have sex. I just loved you for it. And something you did in line with this that really made a huge impression on me that
caused me to fall in love with you even more, was on that Christmas eve, you sent a courier to my door with a cassette tape of you telling me how you felt about the subject. It was about a good 45 minute-long tape cassette. I still have the tape. Do you remember what you said on that tape?

SCOTT: I sure do. It cost me over a hundred dollars to have it delivered, because it was Christmas Eve. In our dating, we were really intimate and close with each other, and I think we were rapidly approaching the issue of marriage and commitment, as we felt so close to each other. But you were really concerned about the issue of losing your independence, and that whole issue of your own identity. I was very sensitive to that and empathetic about it. It came up on this issue of, "When do we make love? I mean, there's just so much love flowing here!"

I decided that because I wanted to honor your womanhood and to honor your independence, that I wanted to express this more in depth in a tape so you could listen to it more than once. I don't remember all the things I said, but it was about 45 minutes, mostly just speaking directly to you about the subject so you would feel assured there was no pressure.

I knew you were going to be driving to a friend's house for this holiday, and I wanted the tape to arrive for your drive. I wanted you to know that this was really an issue of
equality. It was really an issue of honoring who you were, and that our relationship, I felt, would be eternal. I really loved you and wanted you to feel relaxed and happy and free and loving yourself with all of your dignity and self respect. I said that in as many ways as I could so that you wouldn't feel any sense of pressure. I felt so much love in my heart. I wanted to be closer to you, really in all ways - spiritually and as a couple. But I realized that the best way to get closer to you was to honor our friendship, and to let it keep growing so that this was going at the pace of the slowest person.

SHANNON: I cannot tell you how deeply that impressed me and how much I loved you for it. And it's the first time I ever felt so tremendously honored in my womanhood. No man that I've ever dated has ever honored me so greatly.

SCOTT: Well, really let's be honest about this whole issue. Whenever you have sex when you're dating, this changes the equation from friendship to a whole new thing. And really, the issues here are not, "Is having sex enjoyable?" For some, the issue may be, "Is this a moral issue?" The real question is, "Is it good for the relationship? Is it good for your dignity, for your self-respect?" We want to be true to ourselves. We want to look back without any regrets. We just want to have a sense of freedom. Freedom and love really should be synonymous. We want to be able to feel honored and respected by each other.
So really the ultimate love is not sex, the ultimate love is honoring each other.

The 5th stage of dating and falling in love is taking each other higher. It's so easy to make the mistake of taking each other for granted, rather than taking each other higher. I remember when we started dating each other, we would get out those yellow ledger pads, and you'd be saying things and I'd be writing down what you said, and you'd be writing down things, because we really honored and respected what we were learning from each other. We were inspired and wanted to know what was in each other's hearts.

SHANNON: Scott, who ever heard of going on a date and taking notes on everything each other is saying? It was hilarious.

SCOTT: That's what happened, and we did laugh about it, but we were really going into the substance of who each of us was. As we went deeper into love, it revealed more of who each of us was.

SHANNON: One of the ways our relationship went higher for me was my shields finally came down. I was so afraid to love again, so afraid of possible loss. Did I dare do it again? There was so much resistance in me to love again. Yet, at the same time there was also great motivation to go for it. This explains the slower speed I was taking in our relationship. What finally melted the
resistance and took us higher in the relationship was,

1. You didn't pressure me for anything.

2. I felt your unconditional love. I felt it in my bones. Regardless of anything, you just continued to love me freely without stress and without pressure. It was wonderful. It really allowed me to develop, and to have space for me to explore what I was feeling for you.

3. We spent quality time getting to know each other at a very deep level. We had so much acknowledging, praising, listening and opportunity for each of us to feel understood.

4. We played a lot. We were like dolphins, just playing and laughing. Golly, we still do. We laugh every day, really hard. And we tease a lot without belittling. All of those things made me feel emotionally safe at all times.

SCOTT: And this playfulness also is part of taking each other higher, experiencing the safety of love. I remember a time that you took me very high when we were dating. And you asked me a simple question to get to know me better. "Scott, what do you want to do with the rest of your life?"

I felt torn because I thought," I've been very successful occupationally. I've been a
reporter, a national advertising manager, creator of a world-wide video conference, and a developer of empowering workshops, but because of my previous divorce I feel like a failure inside. I feel too old for my dreams, as though it's too late."

But, rather than telling you all this, I said, "I don’t know."

SHANNON: I surely didn’t look at you in that way.

SCOTT: Well, the good news is men like me are learning to share feelings openly. After I said that, you looked right at me as if you understood the inner thoughts, and you said, "Scott, let's affirm right now that you have the right to know your inner passion, and to express it completely." Well, you were living in Los Angeles, and when I drove home that evening to San Diego, I felt so loved and so cherished, that I actually got out a yellow pad at home and for the first time in 10 years, I began to think, "What do I want to do with the rest of my life?" And all my dreams came spilling out. And I thought, "I have a lot to say about love." And, laughed, thinking, "Well, why is that? Because all I have to show for it is a failed marriage, even though my professional life is a very loving one, and empowering of others."

When we came back to our next date, you said again, "Scott, what do you want to do with the rest of your life?" I could tell that
since you were smiling you knew something had happened. As a spiritual healer, you know the power of unconditional love and how it opens up people. This is something that each of us can do. Listen to unconditional love.

I said, "I want to write a book on love." And you said, "Well, why don't you write it? I felt I couldn't do it. It wouldn't be authentic if I wasn't experiencing love. I didn't want to write about something that I hadn't proven in my own life. You looked at me with encouragement and said, "Well, what's it going to take for you to write this book?" And I said, "Shannon, I would have to be married to you for three years in order to write this book." I said that out of the honesty of my heart.

Not only did that lead to our marriage, but it lead to the book, "The Love You Deserve." And this is the power of taking each other higher. Today we're co-authors. Shannon is a phenomenal writer, even though I helped her move higher in that area.

SHANNON: And thanks to you I am a co-author, because I had been wanting to write for years. I had been so frustrated. Because of you, I finally began writing. I had content, but I didn't have a clue on how to organize it. And Scott, you took me higher. You take me higher every day.
SCOTT: What could be better in dating and falling in love than taking each other higher?

The sixth stage in dating and falling in love is assessing equality in your relationship. It's so easy to make the mistake of one person becoming subordinate to the other. And equality or inequality begins at the first moment in a relationship.

We don't want to compromise love standards. There needs to be equality. You deserve to be honored, cherished, esteemed and empowered in your entire relationship with your lovemate. That's what equality feels like.

SHANNON: Yes, and not belittled. Certainly we don't want to give away control of our lives to another person. It really boils down to each person's fundamental view of love itself. We live out our highest sense of love. Some people's sense of love is a strange one. What they call love is actually possession, or controlling another with domination. This is not love. It gets confusing to call this love because it isn't love at all. There is no equality. Equality says, "I'm just as supportive of you as you are to me." And it shows up in small ways as well as big ways. Each one is equally important.

SCOTT: It shows up in small ways. A couple of the small ways, for example, is who drives? Oftentimes it's customary for the man to do all the driving. Well, that's not equality. The
issue isn't whether Shannon drives more or I drive more. The issue is, “Do we give each other the opportunity?” Do we say, “Sweetie, would you like to drive?” It turns out, and we laugh about it, Shannon drives more than me. But at least we talk about it.

SHANNON: At least we talk about it.

SCOTT: You know, we laugh about this. We live by the beach. So when we go to one of the beach restaurants looking out on the beautiful ocean, we fight for the worst seat. Even when we go with friends, they laugh at us because we each want the other to have the best view.

SHANNON: We really do.

SCOTT: And I watch couples coming into restaurants, and I see so often that there's not even thought given to it. Frequently, it's the women who is seated in the most subordinate position, just from custom, but not always. And that's the thing that we do that I think is small but it makes a difference. Now also there's some big equality areas, too.

SHANNON: Yes, big areas such as equality in sex, money, and dreams cherished.

SCOTT: Well, those are huge areas, and so often that's where relationships fall apart. Let's take the area of sex. Whose needs are more important in love making, which is obviously even more than sex. It's your whole
relationship. But in true love making, which includes sex, each person's needs are just as important. And the only way you can know that is by asking each other what your needs are.

SHANNON: Yes, you can't assume anything, because it's not your body.

SCOTT: And how often would you like to make love? In what ways? All those things are issues of equality. It's critical that you each know what's in the other's heart. This is where honesty comes into play, and equality.

SHANNON: And on the subject of money, when I dated, I always announced to my date as graciously as I could, that I liked to pay for half of the date. I wanted it friendship based that would express itself equally. When friends go out they split the ticket. For example, I might go on a date and go to a movie, and my date will pay for the movie, and I'd go after the popcorn and cokes. It really made me feel equal as a woman. Afterwards, I didn't owe the date something in return.

SCOTT: It took a lot of pressure off me too, as the man. I enjoyed that. It was a surprise and it felt good.

SHANNON: I also as part of my dignity, like to earn money. And whether I earn half the amount or more or less, I still want to
contribute largely to the marriage, to the budget. It's important to me.

SCOTT: That's the third area of equality, the third big area, is the occupational area. Whose occupation is most important? Really it's a question of cherishing each other's dreams. Your dreams were just as important to me, and that's the way it needs to be for equality. Whether you're a man or a woman, your love mate's dreams need to be just as important to you as yours, and yours to be just as important as your love mate. This is worth a lot of discussion.

SHANNON: Yes, equality is really simple. It says, "I am just as important as you are. My life, my needs, my dreams, are just as important as yours."

SCOTT: Go for the gold. You want the very best, the ultimate relationship, with all the love you could ever want. I remember -- I was in love with Shannon, and I so much wanted to be married to her, and we were getting closer and closer. But she wasn't as in love with me at that moment, or at least it wasn't as apparent to her that she was.

And I remember, we had an honest discussion. It really has to do with equality. Because I told her -- well, first of all, I realized, "If she doesn't love me as much as I love her, then this isn't going to be the right relationship for me." It was painful to think that way. I didn't want that to be the
outcome. But I had already been in a marriage of inequality, and I just didn’t want that again. I remember telling Shannon, I said, "Shannon, if our being in love with each other isn’t the right thing for you, then I don’t want that, as much as I love you. Because I really deserve to be loved as much as the love I give."

SHANNON: And you know the results of that, Scott. My love for you increased. It just soared as a result. I thought, "Wow, what a thinker! What a standard! What respect I have for you!" I so admired you for that.

SCOTT: Talk about putting the relationship on the line. I didn’t want to lose you but I had to be true to my soul. Shannon, so many people who are really in love oftentimes don’t have equality. But how do we know when someone is being treated with equality, because their relationship feels so good in other ways? Listening deep within your heart, you will hear the honest voice saying to you, "I am honored, cherished, empowered, and esteemed, or I’m not." And you have to be honest with yourself.

SHANNON: Exactly. Equality means that you are receiving the same amount of love as you are giving. And so is your lovemate.

SCOTT: The seventh stage of dating and falling in love is planning for a life of love with your lovemate. Isn’t this a wonderful thought?
SHANNON: Yes, it’s the happiest thought.

SCOTT: The biggest mistake people make is not discussing those key issues that divide them when not discussed. Again, let’s take money. As we drew nearer and decided we would marry, we had talks about how much money I was making and how much money you were making. We discussed our resources. Those were happy discussions. That’s so valuable. So many marriages end up in hard times because that information is not shared and it’s even hidden.

SHANNON: We had such thorough discussions of it, that it was very empowering to the relationship, because we knew where we stood. We even did budgets, remember Scott?

SCOTT: I sure do.

SHANNON: Before we even got married. Creating a budget helped me to see where both our spending priorities laid. I could see how you approached money and spending. It was very important to me that I be able to live with either no or little debt.

SCOTT: As a man, I wished I had more money to reveal. But when the truth was out, I felt like we were a team, rather than it being my responsibility. This really honors women producing money as well.
SHANNON: Another key issue, Scott, is children. That discussion needs to come up about the time you think you might be falling in love. Is this a relationship that wants to have children and an extended sense of family? Because that could be a deal-breaker. The time to find out is early on.

SCOTT: It sure can.

SHANNON: Or a deal-maker.

SCOTT: In this case we talked about your daughter who became my inherited daughter. And that was a whole discussion that brought us together. I wanted us to be as a family.

Another discussion on equality is, whose occupation is more important? Is there a way to approach it so each person's occupation is honored, and they have the opportunity to go forward?

SHANNON: It meant so much to me, Scott. We both had a small amount of debt going into the marriage. And I remember the night of that discussion. You said, "You know, Shannon, think of each of us, with all of our talents and gifts, being the resource." These words shifted me from the doubt that perhaps we're ready to marry. From that moment, I felt we were going to have exactly what we needed for the rest of our lives. I saw us as a team.
SCOTT: All our open discussions made us realize we were ready to take this step.

SHANNON: Planning for a life of love is a sacred event. When Scott and I were falling in love I prayed about our relationship on a regular basis. I regarded our relationship with sacredness, and asked for divine guidance for us both.

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