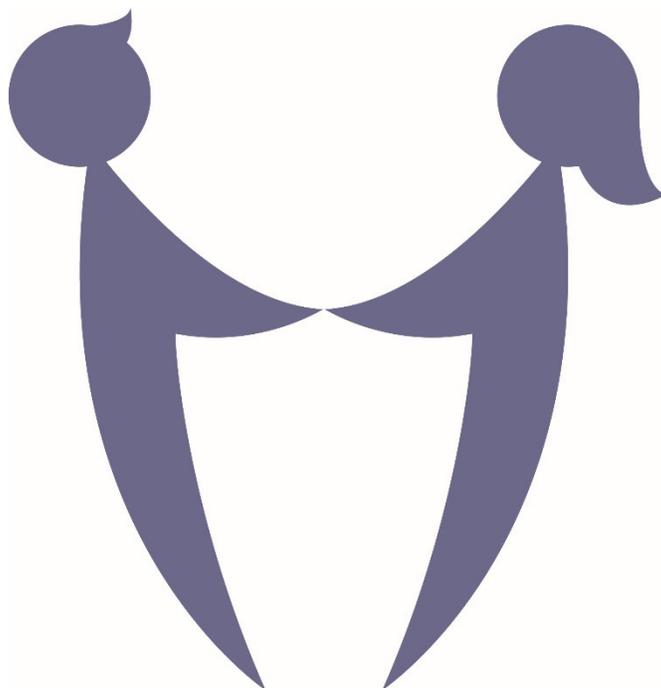


More Than a Love Letter

By Kit Coons



More Than a Love Letter

I'm the kind of person who likes to give the perfect gift. I always want each gift to be as unique as the person who receives it. So when my husband's fiftieth birthday was approaching, I found myself praying weeks ahead of time for inspiration. I just wasn't sure what to get him.

Drew loves history, so I thought a book might be nice. Thick warm socks are always a favorite. (I know socks don't sound very exciting, but my husband loves them.) Those ideas weren't bad for a normal birthday. However, for his fiftieth I wanted to do something memorable that would last well beyond his birthday—a gift that would tell him how much I loved him and how thankful I am for his influence in my life.

I started thinking of something that would be meaningful to me. Drew knows that I love his written words. Words have such power. They can calm a heart, share truth, or cut like a knife. They can brighten your day or haunt you with their bitterness.

I appreciate having his special words of love for me recorded in "black and white." That's probably why I'm always so excited to get a card or note from him. I treasure each one because they are tangible reminders of the love that sustains us on our journey together. Words don't cost anything. And yet when used the right way words are priceless, truly a gift of the heart ... and perfect for this occasion!

A Statement of Love

My idea was to create a collection of words that would tell the story of our 25 years together. Much more than a romantic love letter, this "Statement of Love" would describe why I loved my husband, detailing the character qualities that make him a man of honor and esteeming him for the choices he has made in life. I

wanted this statement to recall the good things we have shared as well as the challenges that have brought depth to our marriage.

I spent weeks working on it. Once the writing was completed I had my "Statement of Love" printed, matted, and framed and gave it to my husband for his birthday. To say he was overwhelmed would be an understatement. "This is my best present ever," Drew said with tears in his eyes.

A couple of years later, when I turned 50, I received my "best present ever". Even though I had written a "Statement of Love" for my Drew, I didn't have any idea he would write one for me. When Drew handed me the frame I was speechless. His "Statement of Love" contained words of love for me, but more importantly it explained why he loved me. It was the story of our lives together told from his perspective.

Now, both "Statements of Love" are displayed in our foyer, hanging on either side of a picture of my husband and me in our first year of marriage. It's the first thing you see when you walk into our home. These statements are filled with words of intimate understanding, encouragement, and an appreciation for all God has done in bringing us together.

Unfortunately, in our busy day-to-day lives we don't often stop to tell each other all that is in our hearts, but our "Statements of Love" are readily available for us to read. Often after we've had an argument we meet each other at the frames. We stand together, reading our "Statements of Love," and instantly our perspectives change and our commitment to each other strengthens.

Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." Our "Statements of Love" are a testimony of our unity—two people becoming one. They are black and white documents of the miracle of marriage—a unique gift from God.

Writing Your Own Statement of Love

I would like to encourage you to write a statement of love to your spouse. Choose a special occasion to give it as a gift, and then start working on it. Don't wait until the last minute—take your time, and make it special. Before you begin, ask yourself a few questions:

1. What characteristics do I love about my spouse?
2. What special memories do we have together?
3. What challenges have we gone through together?
4. How has my spouse changed me for the better?

This is not the time to be critical or sarcastic. This is your chance to pour out your heart. As you write, don't worry about editing. Just put everything down, and then start rearranging. Soon, you'll have a lovely document of love for the one you love most.

Tribute to Drew

To the man I married. Well actually to the man, the man I married, has become. Where do I begin? I do remember the first time I saw you, you know. And as the story goes the Lord did put you in my heart from the very beginning. Back then I didn't realize what a tremendous gift He was giving me. However, I did know He was giving me all I had requested of Him in a husband. You were older than I was, had a graduate degree, "a professional engineer", were gracious and chivalrous; a true Southern gentleman and looked like you were a model for GQ magazine. After my initial "surface" requirements were met I began to see the more important things like your heart for the Lord and your desire to serve Him fully with your life. There was so much for me to discover about this man that would become my best friend.

When I think of the people that influenced you as a child I can see why you are the man you are. Your Dad, even though you only knew him for 10 years, left you with “a man is as good as his word” and weekly date nights with your Mom. He wanted you close by and took you with him hunting and fishing. He treated you like the little man you were. He died too soon, but he left you with a picture of a man of integrity to build your character on. Your Mom then took over the job of molding your life by herself. Your independence and your love of animals came from her. Also your love of reading, nature and all the warm, carefree memories of the camp are special gifts she gave you. And then there is General Robert E Lee. Not that you knew him of course, but, he modeled the honor of a Southern man. Leadership, courage, honesty, sacrifice; all qualities you eagerly adopted as part of your heritage as a Southern gentleman.

From the very beginning you wanted us to work as a team. Before we were even married you asked my opinion about giving more money than I had ever seen, to the Jesus Film. Money you had earned, that I had no part in, and yet you included me. That was one of the first qualities I discovered, your generosity. From school children to worldwide ministries, your desire to give has always been a joy to others.

Not long after that I began to realize your compassionate heart. Remember discussing “Hinds Feet On High Places?” You still maintain to this day that you are “hard as nails” but the many who have been on the receiving end of your compassion know better. Their hearts have been touched because your heart is readily available to others.

There are many other qualities that I admire in you. Your creativity, that makes me look like I’m not creative at all compared to you. Your entrepreneurial spirit and original thinking, just because something hasn’t been done before

doesn't stop you. You have a sense about you that you can do anything and that's pretty much true from what I've seen. You've used that "I can do it" spirit along with your vision and leadership skills to inflame the hearts of many men and women to make their lives count for Christ. The reason they believe you is because you truly believe they also can do anything, as they trust our great God. Your nurturing qualities that cause you to plant trees, grow roses, and invest in the lives of young couples. Your faithfulness, your intuition, your servant heart towards me, the list goes on and on.

Drew you are a man who has committed his life to "doing the right thing whether anyone follows or not." Because you are a man of integrity, "my dinosaur", I will always follow you. For I know the man that no one else does and he is worthy of all my respect.

"Yes, my beloved is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend. Oh daughters of Jerusalem."
Song of Songs 5:16

Tribute to Kit

About this time 24 years ago I met Kit Quady the one I had heard so much about. She indeed was a beauty and exotic in a northern sort of manner. Obviously aloof, she didn't seem to care much for me in our oft-repeated story. But, God worked it out and gave me a life partner. Kit was worth waiting for all the years of bachelorhood that seemed so long. When Kit won the culturalization award in Africa, I knew she could adapt to South Carolina. And indeed she won their hearts. The best thing I bring to any group is Kit. Everybody likes and respects her for her sincerity and concern for each individual. And to any group she brings a spiritual wisdom

and maturity that enriches those around her. All occasions are more fun for everyone with Kit's delightful good nature.

Kit's foremost quality is perhaps loyalty. Early in our relationship she was faced with a critical choice of loyalty, being forced to choose between her commitment to Yemi her Campus Crusade Director and her desire to build a relationship with me. She chose to side with me, emotionally and actively. We left staff to pursue a future that although familiar to me was a total unknown to Kit. "Your people shall be my people" she quoted Ruth. Our lives together have required many such choices and always she has chosen me as her highest heart commitment after God. This very biblical concept of oneness in Christ is one of the key ingredients God has used to cause our love to strengthen and endure.

In that unity, we have shared many hardships. Infertility, cancer, job problems, depression, injury and death have darkened our lives. There are the undoubtedly many more hardships to come, as together we head toward the finish line. "Tough as a hickory nut", I've called my teammate Kit. She has faced a bear, ridden trains through Bulgaria, waded swamps in the dark, and helped me to beat better tennis teams. Indeed she has a hobbit like enduring quality that can bear up in the most difficult situations. The quality is grounded in a love of simple things like tea, and treats, and old movies on TV. But, the quality is magnified in a simple trust in her God and in her husband.

But, there have been many more good times than hardships. Remember when we saw the bear catch a fish? Dined on a reef in Fiji? Walked the China wall? Cris-crossed Europe on the trains? The joy of Kit's companionship has made the hard times bearable. Without Kit, the good time would have been merely bearable. And there are still more good times to anticipate as we gain control of our lives, rejoice in the service of our Lord, and capitalize on the opportunities that service gives to us.

Kit is truly a class package without being ostentatious. You can't buy that type of class. She can make things so nice with so little. Our home is and has always been a tribute to her good taste and creativity, a reflection of herself. And what a gifted hostess she is! Every person through our door is treated as though they individually were special and among the most important persons in our lives. From the butter curls to the poppy seed bread, every occasion is special and a lasting memory for those who grace our home.

Most importantly, we've been together to the front lines for Jesus Christ. Kit has been a good helper in all that God has put before us. "Do what is in your heart" she quoted Jonathan's shield bearer. Who would have imagined that we would have had such opportunities that are unavailable to most people including many who are honestly better Christians than we. How many times in how many places have we stood together to present and to represent God's biblical plan for marriage? How many lives have been changed? The challenges seem to grow harder and harder. Honestly, this is a struggle I grow weary of. Jesus is welcome to blow the trumpet and to return any time. Only Kit's unflagging partnership allows me to go on. God is thereby honoring her faith in all we are privileged to do. Together let us go forward and finish the course.

"Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all." Proverbs 31:29