

EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

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“A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.”

Rod Walford

I met my husband Terry during my sophomore year at college, but before I met him I knew a couple of things about him. I knew he could play the guitar and that he was one of two leaders at the Christian group I was attending. I knew that he was the roommate of the guy who had asked me out, and that he was going to teach the Bible study at the meeting that night. When the meeting was over I knew more about him. I knew that he was knowledgeable about what he was teaching, that he had the ability to make it interesting (he had everyone's attention), and that he had a great sense of humor (he kept everyone laughing).

While dating his roommate Mark I learned more, because our dates included Terry, since he had a car and Mark didn't. As we climbed over the Morehead hills Terry was the one who would treat me like a lady, helping me over the large rocks and once being shocked when Mark wanted us to climb straight up a rock face, protesting, "Brenda can't do that!" Being a tomboy I could have easily out-climbed either one of them, but I was surprised to find that I *liked* being treated like a lady. While shy in front of Mark, Terry and I couldn't stop talking, and I learned that he was passionate about God.

Mark soon dumped me and as I began dating Terry I learned more. Our first "date" was when he came over with a coat hanger to wire up my muffler, and that spoke volumes about the kind of person he was. I learned that he couldn't make gravy (we buried the gallon of paste in the backyard). While he'd get angry he was quick to get over it and say he was sorry. He was very competitive and I learned to never play Monopoly with him.

We got married, and I learned more. I learned that he's more a "starter" than a "maintainer," and that he's better at the big picture than the details. He's creative and does better as a leader than a follower, partly from personality and partly from his experience and discernment of people. He wants to hear what you have to say in three sentences or less, long, drawn-out stories drive him crazy.

I've learned who Terry is inside his head, his hopes and dreams, his hurts, his vulnerable places. I know his secrets, his regrets, and not only where life has brought him to but where life has brought him from. I know (most of the time) when to bring something up and when to let it go.

I can catch his eye across the room and know exactly what he's thinking. Merely seeing him I know his mood, how tired he is, and what he's feeling. He'll say something and I know where he's coming from, even if the comment is totally unrelated to the issue. We share inside jokes and cause our children to groan by saying the same thing at the same time.

I know Terry. We have a history together. We have memories together based on experience. Because of that experience I can trust him.

As a lover of Jesus, through His sacrifice for us, when we meet Him face to face it will be as His bride. While there are and have been many arranged marriages, it's very hard to wait until your wedding day to begin getting to know your new husband.

I refer here to knowing Jesus instead of "God" for a couple of reasons. Referring to God as "God" is a vague term, like calling you "human" instead of by your name, and He wants us to know Him more intimately than as a generic God. He has three different aspects or personalities that He uses to relate to us, and relating to Him as one big God emotionally keeps Him at a distance. We have a Daddy-God who longs to hold us in His lap, tickling and playing with us. We have Holy Spirit, our Tutor-God who lives in us and is here to not only show us lovely things but to be our Guide and Counselor. And we have a Bridegroom, Jesus, who, when we're ultimately set free from this human body, will throw His arms around us and welcome us into a place where we can finally SEE Him! And since we will be Jesus' bride, why wait until the wedding to start getting to know Him when he's desperate to know us now?

One morning, sitting in my overstuffed chair in my office eating breakfast, I pulled my pad of paper over and wrote a description of Jesus based only on my experience. Not what I'd learned from the Bible or at church or had been taught, and not what I *thought* I knew about Jesus, but only the things that I had personally experienced. For example, we all know from Sunday School that Jesus

loves us. But I couldn't write "He loves me" unless I had experienced *feeling* that love. I was astounded by all that I had experienced without realizing it!

Your experiential knowledge of a person comes from being together. So think back through your personal experiences with Jesus and list what you've learned. It doesn't matter how long or short your list is because as your relationship grows (and as you journal so you can remember) so will your list. Each person's list will be unique to them and their relationship with God, because our relationship with Jesus is individual.

I've included my list below as an example. I would suggest that before you read my list you create your own. There are no rules, no one's list will look the same, so there's no right or wrong, Jesus relates to each of us according to who we are and where we are in our relationship with Him. And the more we spend time hanging out with Him the more detailed our list will become. As you think of something look carefully at it to see whether it's actually out of personal experience.

So get your cup of coffee, tea, or chocolate, sit down in your favorite chair, and have a great time remembering how wonderful Jesus is!

My list:

- You love me.
- When you throw back your head and laugh, I love it. You're almost always laughing.
- You have a huge sense of humor. You're so funny! You keep me laughing.
- Your arms are so strong and powerful, when I need to be held you hold me tight and close, you're so comforting.
- Your hands are tender, yet strong: to dance, to hold, to express yourself.
- You exude strength, yet you can be so gentle.
- When you look at me I melt.
- You take my desires, dreams, and wishes, and make them real, living them with me.
- You're everything I need before I ask.
- You're beautiful, radiant, and vivaciously alive.
- You're attentive.
- You treat me like a lady.
- You make me feel special.

- You hold me when I hurt.
- You cry with me.
- You love time alone with me.
- You love sharing hearts, dreams, and chit-chat.
- You communicate so much without words.
- You're better than chocolate.
- You shield and protect me.
- You serve, provide, are vulnerable, and trust me.
- You long to be face to face even more than I do.
- You want me to drop my masks and fears and be real with you.
- You love the beach.
- Your grin, laugh, eyes, and arms speak volumes.
- You take me places I've never been.
- You're playful and full of fun. You have a silly side.
- Your compassion for people is enormous, beyond comprehension, and when you share your heart with me I cry.
- Your position of authority is such that we can go anywhere anytime—no doors are closed.
- You're sensitive to my needs and desires.
- What I think matters a lot to you.
- You love to show me new sights and experiences and to see my delight in them.
- You show me things about myself in a way that makes me laugh but want to change.
- You're extremely proud of and fascinated by creation.
- You have a thing about hair.
- You care so much more about people's hearts than about rules and doctrine.
- You meet me where I am emotionally but also push me to go further than my comfort zone. You won't let me play it safe for long.
- You're very sensitive to my feelings, careful not to embarrass me or point out something that would embarrass me.
- You're very romantic, enjoying cards, flowers, and candles.
- You love to dance.
- You're sweeter than honey and more delicious than wine.
- You are altogether lovely.