

Excerpts from “40 Questions Before A First Date”

....An easy choice is not always the right choice. If you expect marriage in the future, you need to figure out if he or she knows how to conduct themselves in a relationship on that level. No one should settle. At a certain age in life some things are not mistakes but reflections of the person's character. If I asked the right questions and did not ignore what I observed, I would not have stayed in that relationship. As a matter of fact I ended the relationship after about six months but got swept back in before seeing if he had truly changed.

For the most part at this age in life, a person is settled in his/her ways. I'm not saying they can't change, but if you are right-handed, you are not likely to voluntarily start learning to write with your left hand at age 40. If you lose the use of your right hand, then you are forced to use the left hand. Then again, if you have someone else who is willing to be your “right-hand man” and love you unconditionally, why change? If someone else is going to do it for you, why expend your energy? Even love with good intentions can be toxic. But for some it is easier to remain handicapped than to adjust and become better. That is why some people jump from relationship to relationship because it is easier to change who they date than it is to change from within. T.D. Jakes once said, “Your talents will get you in the room, but your character will keep you there! Do you have the integrity to stay in the room?” In the context of dating, whatever initially attracts two people is not enough to hold the relationship together, there has to be more depth to stay together.

3. What are three of the most important lessons you have learned from previous relationships? How will you navigate future relationships differently as a result?

Context: I went on somewhat of a blind date. Typically I don't do blind dates because they always seem to go wrong. I only decided to do so because I had been single for over a year. I wanted to get back on the scene and see what would happen. We went to a restaurant that was also a hookah lounge (I do not suggest this for a first date). The food was great, but he should have asked if I smoked, or more important, if I had allergies. That evening could have gone very wrong if I did.

My date was divorced. I asked him what he had learned from the experience and he said he did not learn anything. I repeated the question a different way and shared that

there is always a lesson even when things go your way. He restated, "Nothing." I didn't ask anything else.

In my mind I thought, *You can fall off a stationary bike and will have learned what not to do again.* If the person you are speaking with gives one word answers, you can follow up with questions like, Are you at peace with your previous relationships? You should also be curious to know if he/she speaks in a respectful manner about his or her ex. Are they co-parenting well and without strife? Are they still friends? If someone has nothing but negative feelings toward someone they once loved, I have to wonder if they are still grieving or upset with the last love.

Your three most important lessons learned from prior relationships:
