

# Marriage may be right for some, but not for me

I realize the faux holiday of love is over, but my week leading up to Valentine's Day gave me a lot to process and I have a platform, so why not share my thoughts?

To start the week, I purchased the books "Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage" and "Staying True," the memoir of Jenny Sanford, the soon-to-be ex-wife of adulterous South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford.

I culminated the week by observing the married couples standing together during the annual Valentine's Day weekend renewing of vows ceremony at my church.

And in between Monday and Sunday, I heard discussions on the radio about the book "The Denzel Effect: Why Black Women Can't Find a Good Black Man," about online dating and about falling and staying in love.



**MARIAM WILLIAMS**

It really was a lot to process.

On Sunday, I listened intently to the words in the "Dearly Beloved" introduction. I lingered on the part that says that marriage is not "to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly — but reverently, discreetly, advisedly and solemnly," and let out a hearty and informed, "Amen," in response.

I've been described as wife material, except for my cynicism and commitment phobia. I'm a pragmatist, and while some say I often see the negative possibilities, I say I see the realistic

ones. Like a big spender and a big saver not getting along so well after a few months, or like a young man who knows he can get just about any woman he wants not really wanting to stop going after any woman he wants. Or like passion fading in the routine practice of life, or kids complicating things, or people discovering that there are six billion people in the world and being tied to one isn't always fun.

My desire for marriage has fluctuated over the years. I see my pastor and his wife clearly still crazy about each other after some 25 years together — him cheering for her whenever another minister recognizes her from the pulpit, them sometimes reaching over their respective pews to hold hands in prayer — and I think, "I want that."

And other times, I ask myself, "What's the point?"

I see the point marriage used to have: an arrangement that bound families and land, that produced

children to work the land or to own or hire workers and that kept the family name and wealth alive. The arrangement gave the children a stable environment to be raised in and allowed women an escape from poverty.

I see the practical benefits of marriage, especially for women. We still earn less than men earn, and if we can't work during pregnancy or during the first few weeks of an infant's life, someone else can earn the money.

Men who are otherwise incapable of domesticity and who don't want to be sued for sleeping with their housekeeper can find a wife to fill the traditional homemaker role.

It's the practicality of falling in love and believing you can stay that way forever that I question, and the use of marriage as a marker of success to which I object.

Marriage wins you points. It makes you look like an adult. It makes you look chosen and worthy. You could be an astronaut with an M.D./Ph.D. and

be the favorite aunt or uncle among your nieces and nephews, but if you're unmarried, you haven't fully arrived. There's something wrong with you.

You're not normal for being a man who still chases skirts after age 25; you should use marriage to calm yourself down and look responsible. Women aren't prioritizing their values properly if their career comes first. As Princess Tiana proved in Disney's "feminist" fairy tale, "The Princess and the Frog," all your success is nothing unless you have someone to share it with.

Not to undermine the value of strong and lasting interpersonal relationships or even the benefits of regular sex. It's just that I reverently and solemnly consider why I would enter into such a union and how it could last. ♣

*Mariam Williams is a Louisville native who writes about the random thoughts that hold her attention for two minutes or more.*