

UNCOMMON

learning about lasting love and overcoming life's obstacles together

MARRIAGE



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TONY & LAUREN DUNGY

WITH NATHAN WHITAKER

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Uncommon Marriage: Learning about Lasting Love and Overcoming Life's Obstacles Together

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Designed by Dean H. Renninger

Edited by Kimberly Miller

Published in association with the literary agency of Legacy, LLC, Winter Park, Florida 32789.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Dungy, Tony.

Uncommon marriage : learning about lasting love and overcoming life's obstacles together / Tony and Lauren Dungy, with Nathan Whitaker.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-4143-8369-9 (hc)

1. Marriage—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Dungy, Tony. I. Title.

BV835.D85 2014

248.4—dc23

2013038252

Printed in the United States of America

20 19 18 17 16 15 14
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

As we pulled into the school parking lot, I tried to let the moment sink in.

Our twelve-year-old son, Jordan, didn't pause to think about the significance of this day, however. As he glanced at his new school, nestled in a scenic woods setting, he was anxious for me to park so that we could walk back to the sixth grade pod and join the other students waiting on the back porch.

"Bye, Mom," he said before quickly giving me a kiss and taking off. As he disappeared around the corner, he yelled, "Love you!"

Jordan was ready for the start of sixth grade at Learning Gate Community School, itching to head inside for the latest adventure. He wasn't thinking about the doctors' prognosis that he might not live long enough to reach middle school. He wasn't counting the surgeries—more than thirty total—that he'd had since he was an infant. He wasn't fretting over the speech delay that still sometimes made finding just the right word difficult. Instead, he was eager to join the group of jumping and jostling classmates who were waiting for the bell to ring.

As Tony and I talked about Jordan's first day later on, we agreed that enrolling him in a mainstream classroom was an answer to twelve years of prayer. Who knew what more lay ahead for him?

Because of Tony's career in professional football, some aspects of our lives have been visible to the public. Yet it's largely the moments like this one—small but full of significance to us—that have defined our marriage. We believe it's because of our unwavering commitment to support each other and to live out certain principles that we have enjoyed a marriage spanning more than three decades—an uncommon feat in this day and age.

When Tony was coaching, we felt that one of our responsibilities was to model a strong and loving marriage to our players and staff. Now we feel ready to do that on a wider scale. That's not to say that we have it all figured out. We don't feel like experts, and the examples and principles we've tried to follow haven't resulted in a neat, tidy formula. In fact, we don't think that marriage can be captured through a formula or a "to do" list.

Relationships are challenging, especially because the miracle of two becoming one is such a mystery given each spouse's different personalities, desires, and passions. Some days, it seems like marriage is as much about hanging on for dear life, or just trying not to make things worse.

Before we tell our own story, we have to acknowledge that the longevity of our marriage is due, in no small part, to the examples our own parents gave us. Their examples were similar in important ways, like looking to the Bible for answers, but so different in the way those values were expressed in their daily lives. That has meant, at times, we have had to work through the

different examples and resulting expectations that we brought into marriage.

So often in life and in marriage, we've discovered, there isn't a clear path. After all, as the apostle James wrote, "How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow?" (James 4:14). Instead, we walk forward, hand-in-hand, and *make* a path.

Looking back, we can see where we've come from and the ways in which the Lord has been present, even in those moments when we didn't know just *where* we were headed ourselves:

- when an anticipated career advancement didn't pan out
- when our expectations, formed as we were growing up in two very different families, clashed
- when I first moved hundreds of miles from my family
- when Tony's job demanded long workdays and extended stretches of time on the road
- when I felt blindsided by a major decision Tony made
- when our kids received extra scrutiny because of who their dad was
- when a middle-of-the night phone call plunged us unexpectedly into the fog of grief
- when we felt called to expand our family through adoption . . . many times.

We could go on and on. The point is this: we are convinced that there is power in story. We hope that something in *our* story will connect with something in yours.

Maybe you'll uncover a specific takeaway for you or your spouse. Maybe something we've experienced will be a warning to you—*I'd better not do that!* Maybe you'll better understand

what happens when a biblical principle is lived out—or isn't. Maybe you'll simply experience renewed hope at the thought, *If they can make it work, so can we.*

Whether you are looking at the bleak remnants of a marriage that once seemed so promising, or at the fruit of a great marriage that has flourished, we hope the Lord will use this book to help and encourage you. If you feel that your marriage has hit rock bottom and you're not sure you can live another month, let alone another year, with your spouse, we strongly encourage you to get professional assistance as well. Some issues grow and fester over time, and you may need a pastor or other professional counselor to help you navigate them.

We have spoken with trusted friends and pastors numerous times in the past, both when life has been challenging and the going tough, as well as when times have been great and the wind at our back. In this book, we'll introduce you to a few of the couples who have mentored us along the way. Over the years, we've come to realize that working on our marriage relationship is always time well spent.

It is easy, as the late Stephen Covey pointed out, to let the urgent things of life crowd out the important things of life. There is a difference between the two. The good *can* be the enemy of the best. That is, there are wonderful opportunities in life, opportunities to do good with and for those around us. However, if we're not careful, those good opportunities can pile up and ultimately impinge on the truly critical priorities of our life.

Like our marriage.

We all must safeguard against that.

Tony's career has given us unique opportunities to be partners, both on and off the field. So when it came time to write

this book, we quickly fell into a comfortable rhythm. We also made some interesting discoveries.

First, just because we have intentionally supported and encouraged each other doesn't mean we have agreed about every decision or always understood what the other was thinking. Loving each other doesn't mean becoming carbon copies.

Second, those differences, as perplexing as they can be at times, have actually made our marriage stronger and better balanced.

Third, some of our painful memories have been dulled with time. As we tried to recollect those difficult moments, we were pleasantly surprised to recognize that some of them which had been forgiven have truly been forgotten as well, swept away by the sands of time and the gentle breath of the Lord's forgiveness.

We entered into the writing process with the knowledge that a handful of things need to remain simply between us, as husband and wife. We trust you understand and hope that you won't even notice the few times we've exercised that right.

Writing this book has been a walk down memory lane for us, a chance to pause and reflect, even as life surges on around us, to remember many of the shared experiences of our thirty-plus years together. This journey has been more fun than we even anticipated.

More than anything, it has been a reminder that we have been blessed by a gracious, loving God who has walked alongside us every step of this journey, as well as by wonderful parents who blazed a trail for us.

We pray you will feel the Lord's presence in your relationship as well.

*God Bless You,
Tony and Lauren Dungy*

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS



Lauren

I couldn't figure out why my pastor, John Guest, kept trying to track me down. My mom told me that he had called three times in the past week. I hadn't missed church in quite some time, so I knew he couldn't be worried about that.

I didn't have the heart to tell my mom that our pastor had also stopped by the house once when she wasn't there—and I didn't answer the door. I'd been home alone when he drove up, and I was sure he was there to talk with my mom or dad. Not only that, but our church, St. Stephen's Episcopal, was quite large and proper. It just didn't seem right to me—answering the door for our senior pastor when I was dressed casually in shorts.

“Please call him back, Lauren,” my mom said. “I'm sure it has something to do with the church and it must be urgent. Otherwise, he wouldn't keep calling.”

It was a busy time for me—I had recently finished my second year of teaching sixth grade and now was engrossed in my own summer school classes. Still, I realized my mom was right. I needed to get back to him.

So I called the church office right then. John and I had a brief conversation in which he did most of the talking. When he finished, I remember saying, “I’ll pray about it,” before hanging up the phone.

Turning to face my mom, I said, “You’ll never believe why he’s been trying to reach me. He wants to introduce me to a *guy*—some football player with the Steelers. He’s supposed to be a Christian, but you know I would never go out with an athlete.” The truth is, I was seeing someone at the time—well occasionally, anyway. But when John mentioned the Steelers, I think I stopped listening. I had no desire to meet a football player or a coach. “I’ll pray about it” was a polite way of saying “No, thank you.”

While I enjoyed playing sports—I bowled, swam, and played tennis and other sports growing up—I had no interest in fawning over an athlete. My brothers were all athletic, and I had watched all the girls at school trying to impress them. They were great guys, but I don’t know if those girls knew that. They seemed to be interested in them because of their status as athletes.

Not only that, but my primary focus in those days was my sixth-grade class at Edgeworth Elementary School. Teaching was the perfect career for me. I’d always loved working with children, developing young minds and helping them reach their potential. During junior high, my sister and I had even run an after-school program for neighborhood kids, helping them do crafts and other activities.

After earning my degree in elementary education from Duquesne University, I'd hoped to end up teaching seven- or eight-year-olds at an inner-city school similar to the one where I'd done my student teaching. God had other plans, however. When I graduated, I interviewed and was hired by the elementary school I'd attended, just down the street from my parents. I enjoyed being able to give back to Sewickley, a suburb northwest of Pittsburgh and the community that had given me so much growing up.

Though I'd expected to teach younger children, I loved sixth grade. My students were eager to learn and not yet struggling with so many of the issues that seem to crop up in middle school. Their parents valued education and were interested in and supportive of what was going on in my classroom.

At the end of each school day, I felt fortunate to be able to share the day's highlights with my own family. I was living at home with my parents; my siblings all lived in or near our family home too. Kevin, my oldest brother, was working and taking classes at the University of Pittsburgh. Averell, an executive with Equitable Gas, lived at home. My twin brother, Loren, was working as a store manager for Midas Muffler and living down the street. My younger sister, Taryn, was still doing her undergraduate work and attending Bates College in Maine. We were a tight-knit group.

My parents modeled very middle-class values. My dad, Leonard, was in real estate and was always looking at business opportunities. My mom, Doris, had stayed home for a while but then went back to work as a primary-care nurse practitioner. We kids knew our parents wanted us to work hard and help our household function smoothly. They expected us to do well

in school and pitch in by doing chores and, when we were old enough, holding down part-time jobs. Finally, they expected us to graduate from college, as both of them had. It was a pretty simple formula for my parents.

My brothers were totally into football. Like them, I loved cheering for the “Black and Gold” every Sunday they played at Three Rivers Stadium. Unlike Kevin, Averell, and Loren, I never focused on any of the individual players. When John mentioned “Tony Dungy,” that name didn’t mean anything to me.

After finally learning why John had been calling and then promising him to pray about it, I tried to avoid him. I honestly wasn’t interested in dating an athlete. His matchmaking didn’t seem very promising, especially when John said he’d met Tony only once at a father-son breakfast at our church. Tony had been filling in for a Steelers player, Ted Petersen, who’d been the scheduled speaker but had to cancel at the last minute.

That’s not to say I wasn’t interested in meeting my future husband. My friends were getting married, and I looked forward to joining the married ranks myself. At the same time, I wasn’t in too much of a hurry. I was going to wait on the Lord and make sure that it was His voice, not my own desires, that I was following. I was assured that He would answer my prayer in whatever timing He knew was best.

I didn’t want to settle.

Plus, I was staying busy, which helped my patience. I certainly didn’t anticipate that I would go off to college, return home, and find the answer at my church!

I may have had my doubts, but John wouldn’t let it go; he kept telling me that Tony loved the Lord, and John thought we had a lot in common. He was so determined and convinced

that God had ordained this relationship that he refused to give up until we had at least met once. I'm not sure I would have admitted it, but he'd piqued my interest enough that I eventually agreed to let him set up a time for me to meet Tony.

I was relieved when John suggested Tony come to my house, since I knew I'd have family around who could make excuses for me if I wasn't comfortable.

Tony arrived right on time that Friday morning. My dad had been coming down the hall when Tony arrived, and after greeting him, he began grilling Tony about the Steelers. My mom came out to meet Tony a few minutes later. Then my siblings began passing through as they were getting ready to go out for the day. By the time he'd been there about five minutes, Tony had met everyone. Tony says it was like a cartoon—one person would leave and another would show up—but he was simply seeing the normal bustle of our household.

I didn't say much at first, but I felt comfortable right away. Tony was smart and respectful, and he had gorgeous brown eyes. He was not at all how I'd pictured a professional football player and coach. He seemed like a nice person.

By the time the afternoon ended, I felt a bit sorry I'd put Pastor Guest off for so long. Then, just before he left, Tony told me, "Give me your number, and *maybe* I'll call you and we can play tennis sometime." I have to admit—I was a little put off by his attitude.

TONY

When I was saying good-bye to Lauren that day, she must have misheard me. What I actually told her was, "I'm headed to training camp and I'll be gone for the week, but if you wouldn't

mind giving me your number, I *will* call you, and *maybe* we can play tennis sometime.” She’d mentioned earlier that she enjoyed tennis, so I casually suggested we might do that when we got together next.

Lauren still disputes that, but I remember exactly what I said because I had been thinking about what I could say to leave her on the right note. I definitely wanted her to know I’d love to see her again and would call as soon as possible to set that up. When I drove away that afternoon, I thought things ended well, never suspecting she’d decided I must be one of those “players” who had a lot of girlfriends. Shows you the importance of communication in a relationship!

Except for that shaky ending, my experiences leading up to that first meeting were similar to Lauren’s. When John first told me I had to meet a certain young woman from his church, I wasn’t really interested. I’d only just met John the morning of the breakfast at his church. I had been looking for a girl like my mom—someone who was energetic, athletic, smart, and loved the Lord—and I wasn’t against getting help in the search. Just not from someone I didn’t even know. Not only that, but I was so quiet . . . what would I do if I didn’t like this girl? Worse yet, what if she didn’t like me?

By this point, I was only twenty-five, but my career playing in the NFL was already over. Back in 1978, I’d started my second year playing for the Steelers with high hopes, determined to make the transition from an obscure rookie to an established veteran. I led the team in interceptions that year—the same year we’d finished as the champions of Super Bowl XIII. Even so, I was just a backup player, not one of the stars. After that, I was

traded to the 49ers and the Giants before finally being cut in 1980.

Suddenly my career in pro football had ended, and I was trying to find out what the Lord had in store for me next. That's when Coach Noll called and offered me a position on his coaching staff. So here I was, back in Pittsburgh. The morning of that breakfast, I never would have suspected that God might be using a pastor I'd just met to bring me face-to-face with my future wife.

I wouldn't have arranged to meet Lauren if John hadn't been so insistent. I couldn't help but wonder, *This is a church with five thousand people. There are no single guys she could get attached to in this church?* But while Lauren tried to avoid Pastor Guest, I tried to appease him. "Maybe you could just give me her number," I finally suggested. I figured that would get him to quit calling me and make all this go away.

"I'm sorry, Tony," he said, "but she's not the type who'd take kindly to you calling her directly, and she definitely won't call you. I really need to do it this way."

Finally, in mid-July, I agreed to meet her. The Steelers were opening training camp that week, so I told John I could see her the morning before camp opened. He pitched the idea that we meet at her house, and she said that would be okay.

When I got to the Harrises' front door, I took a deep breath and then rang the bell. I had no idea what to expect. When Lauren opened the door, I was *stunned*. She was far more beautiful than I could have imagined from John's description. She was slim and athletic with medium-length hair. She wore a sundress and little makeup. All of a sudden, the meeting that I had been pushing back from so hard seemed like a really good idea.

If I'd expected a quiet, awkward morning, I quickly learned that wouldn't happen. Lauren's dad, Leonard, greeted me, shaking my hand and welcoming me to their home. Lauren led me into the kitchen so we could talk. Her mom, Doris, came in a few minutes later to say hello. She looked as if she could have been Lauren's older sister. I got to meet several of Lauren's siblings, too, and I noticed that everyone in her family seemed to do everything at a high speed and high volume, often talking at the same time.

In that way, they couldn't be more different from my family. My parents, Wilbur and CleoMae Dungy, still lived in Jackson, Michigan, where I'd grown up with my brother and two sisters. My mom wasn't particularly quiet—she was engaging—but she was more reserved than the Harrises. And my dad was really quiet. He was a listener who would take things in, especially in new situations, and you would have to work extremely hard to draw things out of him. My mom probably contributed about 75 percent of the conversation in our home, whereas in Lauren's home it was the reverse: her dad was the talkative one. Beyond that, while Lauren's parents have always been expressive, my parents often have asked our opinion before weighing in on a subject.

I'd grown up in a stable, quiet household. My mom was from Canada and was teaching there when my dad started dating her. He was out of the Air Force and living in the Detroit area, traveling across the border to see her. They were both educators and thoughtful, and their four children were all good students.

My older sister, Sherrie, lived in Jackson, and our set of twins, Linden and Lauren, were in college on opposite sides of Michigan—Linden at Grand Valley State and Lauren at Oakland

University. We were pretty spread out. On the other hand, Lauren's living arrangement was fairly common in the Pittsburgh area. Most of the communities had very close families, where people often stayed close to home after they left high school.

Though our families might have been different in some ways, both my family and hers clearly loved, respected, and supported one another. That made me feel right at home, and I was fascinated by everyone's energy. The Harrises were so friendly that I didn't even mind when Lauren's dad and brothers asked me all kinds of questions about the Steelers.

As the morning wound down, I told Lauren that I'd be leaving for training camp soon but that Coach Noll always gave us Sundays off. That is when I got into trouble. To this day, I know without a doubt that I told Lauren I would call her and maybe we could play tennis. Now I realize that if a person doesn't talk loudly in the Harris home, he might not be understood, let alone heard.

Though Lauren was upset at what she saw as my arrogant attitude, she gave me her number, and I did call her that week from the hall phone in the dorm at camp. I picked Lauren up the following Saturday night, and we went to the Red Bull Inn, a chain restaurant near her home, for a quiet dinner. We talked and got to know each other a little, away from her family this time.

That was the start of a routine that continued into the fall. I would go straight to Lauren's house after practice on Saturdays. We usually played tennis, went bowling, or just hung out. I'd pick her up again on Sunday mornings for church. After that, we'd go out to lunch.

I found out later that since I'm naturally quiet and don't talk a lot about my feelings, Lauren wasn't sure during those first

few months whether we were hanging out as friends—or as something more. I certainly thought we were dating. I was the first one off the practice field every Saturday, driving 85 mph on the Pennsylvania Turnpike to get to Sewickley and take her someplace. *Every Saturday!* To me, that was definitely dating, and I was loving it.

And to me, that was the perfect dating situation. Hanging out, having fun, talking with someone I liked. It was different than with any other girl I had ever met. It just felt natural.

We may not have openly discussed being serious or exclusive, but from the earliest days of our relationship, I was certain I had found my future wife. I knew I wanted her to meet my parents, so when they came to town for a game at the end of August, I took them to Lauren's house to meet her and her parents.

Considering how different our parents were, it's amazing how well they hit it off right from the start. They found plenty to discuss. Lauren's dad carried most of the conversation, but he and my dad talked a lot about sports and their time in the service during World War II. Our moms had a lot in common too. Both were proud of their families and talked about their children's accomplishments. Since my mom was a teacher and Lauren's was a nurse practitioner, they also swapped stories about their jobs in two different helping professions.

Lauren

Meeting Tony's parents was eye-opening in that his mom and dad were exact opposites from each other. His dad was very reserved—polite and more of a listener than a talker. His mom was bubbly and extremely outgoing. I could see the personality of a caring schoolteacher in her.

Though Tony's parents were extremely friendly, I couldn't tell if they liked me. Tony says he could tell they loved me from that first meeting, but they didn't share their feelings as readily as my family did, so I wasn't sure. But I definitely cared about how they felt about me.

That evening together confirmed what I'd begun to see: although Tony and I were raised with the same Christian guidelines, our family backgrounds were quite different. And that made our personalities and expectations—not to mention our childhood experiences—distinct.

For instance, I was surprised when Tony told me that, although his parents had always given him presents, he had never had a birthday party. When I was a young girl, birthdays meant celebrating with my family at Howard Johnson's over dinner and then digging into the complimentary slice of coconut birthday cake. We'd continue the celebration that weekend by inviting our friends and classmates to a festive themed party where we played games, ate lots of food, and had a wonderful time. So I couldn't believe that Tony had never experienced the fun of a birthday celebration. I decided right then to throw a surprise party for him.

For his twenty-sixth birthday in October, I invited some of his friends and former teammates, including the Shells and Stallworths, to my parents' home for a birthday celebration. The house was decked out with black and gold streamers and balloons. I'd planned the party around an Italian theme, so I served lasagna with Tony's favorite chocolate cake and ice cream.

That night Tony came in through my parents' kitchen door as he always did. He didn't suspect anything, so when everyone

jumped up and yelled “Surprise!” he was totally shocked. He’d just left John Stallworth and Donnie Shell at practice, and now they were right here with the rest of us, waiting for him.

I think Tony appreciated the party, not only because it was his first one but because of the fun and laughter that night. When Tony saw how much joy it brought to me and everyone else to plan his party, it made an impact. He realized that celebrations—and not just for birthdays—were important to me and all the Harrises. In fact, every holiday was a major production when I was growing up. Our house was full of people celebrating and having a good time of fellowship.

Not only did I work to invite Tony into my world, I wanted to know more about his. I started reading the sports section of the *Pittsburgh Press* daily so that I could get a better understanding of what was going on in the football world. The Steelers were important to him, so I read the paper to make sure we could talk about what was going on in his life. I couldn’t wait for Saturday to arrive so I could see Tony again. He was so down-to-earth and different from the other guys I spent time with.

Although we were spending a lot of free time together, as Tony mentioned, if somebody had asked if we were dating, I would have had to confess that I had no idea! About a month after his birthday party, Tony and I finally had the “talk.” We were sitting in my parents’ living room when Tony asked me where we stood—basically asking if we were exclusively seeing each other.

I asked, “Are we even dating?”

We finally got it straightened out that night. The answer to both questions was yes. We were dating, and we were exclusive.

I'm glad Tony was willing to broach the topic of our relationship when he did. One thing that attracted me to him was his consistency and steadfastness. Sometimes, though, he had difficulty showing emotion, which made it hard for me to know where we stood. As we edged toward marriage, I noticed Tony becoming more expressive. And he taught me an important lesson: not everyone finds it easy to reveal his or her deepest feelings.

Though I was more outgoing and social than Tony, even I was taken aback by the interest people had in professional athletes and coaches. Tony never appeared annoyed when we were interrupted by a fan, but I remember an early disagreement we had over this issue. We were at church when he got caught up in a conversation with someone who wanted to talk football. I was waiting for Tony in the parking lot by his car. The fan took advantage of the fact that Tony was too polite to walk away, and he kept talking. Eventually, I had to walk home because I couldn't find Tony.

I might not have been thrilled with the unexpected attention from sports fans, but by this point I had changed my mind about athletes. I realized I had been guilty of stereotyping them all as cocky and self-absorbed. Tony was so different from what I had imagined when John Guest first described him to me. I always knew that my knight in shining armor would be a stable, steady guy who loved the Lord; I never pictured anyone flashy. Tony fit every part of that role. I was quickly falling head over heels in love with him. He was definitely the type of guy whom I had dreamed about for so many years. I thought Tony and I were headed toward the altar, but he was still so guarded with his thoughts that I couldn't be sure.

TONY

John Guest had been right. He thought Lauren and I would hit it off, and we did. I like to think of it as divine intervention! She and I met in July but saw each other only on weekends until Labor Day. When training camp ended, we were able to spend much more time together.

Once I recognized that Lauren was the woman I'd been looking for, I knew I was on the path to marriage. So many people, especially today, live together before they're married, which seems like a mistake to me because the commitment isn't there. It takes commitment to make it through the tough times that come along when you're under the same roof with someone. Without the bond of marriage, it's too easy to just walk away.

As sure as I was that Lauren was the one I wanted to commit my life to, I have to admit that proposing to her was not my finest hour. The two of us were in her parents' family room when I began talking to her about the kind of woman I'd like to marry. I told her I was looking for a woman who loved the Lord, who wanted to use biblical principles to raise a family, and who was generous and caring. Lauren put on a good face, but she later told me that it wasn't at all clear to her at the time that I was talking about her. She thought I was asking for advice on how to find the right woman.

Of course, I had been describing Lauren as a way to lead into my proposal. After talking about the godly type of woman I was looking for, I told Lauren that she had all those qualities. Then I asked her to marry me.

Lauren said yes, despite my failure to be eloquent—or even to get down on one knee.

While I was still seated, I began fishing in my left front pocket for the ring I had bought her. Since I knew nothing about jewelry, I had gone to Don Duffy, a jeweler and the husband of one of Lauren's coworkers, and asked him to pick out a ring for me. Then I swore Don and his wife, Debbie, to secrecy until after I had asked Lauren.

We scheduled our wedding for summer 1982, eleven months after we met. During our engagement, we completed a premarital class through the church, which John required of any couple before he would marry them. Those sessions were extremely beneficial to us. Not only did we learn a lot about each other and the ways we would need to communicate, but the classes reinforced the fact that God's design was for marriage to be permanent. John emphasized that we would have to be totally committed to each other to make that happen.

Because our wedding would be in June, Lauren wouldn't have much time to finish wedding preparations after the school year ended, particularly since she loved her students and wouldn't shortchange them, even to plan her own wedding. But we knew if we pushed the ceremony back to July or August, we'd bump up against the Steelers' training camp and the beginning of a new school year. Lauren didn't want to return from her honeymoon and go right back to work or have me immediately head to training camp. She knew we needed some time as a married couple before resuming our busy work schedules.

Lauren

Thankfully, I didn't have to do all the preparation for the wedding myself. My mom acted as wedding planner and did a fabulous job. We enjoy a close mother-daughter relationship, so

she knew me and my tastes. Together we planned a beautiful, intimate, Christ-centered ceremony.

My mom was so organized and meticulous that she handled the details and kept me updated on the progress while I finished the school year. I still remember her box of three-by-five index cards with the names and numbers of all the service providers and participants. She used tabs to divide the cards into sections related to some aspect of the day, such as the ceremony, the dress, or the caterer. I didn't have a wedding consultant, per se, but with my mom around, I didn't need one.

Tony and I agreed that we wanted an elegant wedding, but we didn't want it to become large and unwieldy. We quickly realized that between all the people I grew up with in Sewickley, all my coworkers from school, and all of the Steelers players, coaches, and staff, we were going to have a megawedding unless we had clear guidelines on whom to invite. But there was no way to do that without hurting people's feelings, so we limited the invitations to family only.

Since even our closest friends hadn't been invited, we didn't talk about the wedding much with other people. We knew they would wonder why they hadn't gotten an invitation. Still, our family and friends were excited about our big day and blessed me with several bridal showers. My mom and sister threw a shower for close family and friends. The parents of my sixth graders organized a surprise celebration, and the teachers at school threw a lovely shower for me as well. Tony even came to that shower, and I was so pleased that he had taken the time to stop by the school. I wasn't quite as thrilled that he showed up wearing his favorite shiny, brown-and-white checkered polyester shirt.

Oh, no, he didn't, I thought. I just saw "the shirt" yesterday, and he is wearing it again today. Tony loved that shirt because it was reversible—brown and white or white and brown. To him, that meant two shirts for the price of one. I may not have been crazy about the shirt, but I knew it was just a sign of Tony's practical side, and I loved having him there for the party.

Before we knew it, it was June 19, our wedding day. We were married at St. Stephen's, with John Guest officiating. My twin brother, Loren, proudly drove me up the street in his sparkling navy blue Chrysler New Yorker with its powder blue interior. He had hand washed and detailed every inch of the car to make sure it was perfect just for us. The service was at one o'clock. It was so beautiful and so meaningful—everything I always imagined my wedding would be. I cried tears of joy as we exchanged our vows and thanked the Lord again for answering my prayers.

Afterward, we had a reception in the church's lower level, which included a catered five-course meal. My mom wanted to be sure that Tony's family, who'd come in from out of town, were well fed!

Tony and I had a wonderful time at the ceremony and reception, and we looked forward to leaving on our honeymoon. Tony had told me that he had always dreamed of a romantic honeymoon in Hawaii, and he had suggested spending our wedding night at the Pittsburgh Hilton and flying to Honolulu the next day. I loved the idea of honeymooning in beautiful Hawaii, but the Steel City didn't strike me as a romantic starting point for our marriage. I had visions of getting married and boarding a flight that day. So we decided to spend the first two days of our honeymoon in San Francisco and then fly to Hawaii.

Once the reception was over, Loren drove us to the Pittsburgh

airport. Earlier that day, my siblings had decorated his car with a “Just Married” sign and tin cans streaming from the back, just like in the movies. Talk about a different era—our entire family escorted us to the airport. We wouldn’t have had it any other way!

Since security screening wasn’t much of an issue back then, the Harrises and Dungys, still dressed in their wedding attire, waited at the gate to see us off on our flight. We were in high spirits when we boarded that plane. If we had known what a long day (and night) was ahead of us, we might not have been quite so lighthearted.

TONY

Thanks to careful planning by Lauren and her mom, the wedding had gone off without a hitch. When we left for San Francisco at five that afternoon, we had no reason to think the day wouldn’t continue to run smoothly. After all, I’d made our hotel reservation and even arranged to borrow a car from Paul Hofer, one of my former 49er teammates.

The trip to San Francisco was a long one, since we hadn’t been able to book a nonstop flight. Our plane finally touched down at about midnight. Paul and his wife met us at the airport and sent us on our way in their white convertible.

The first few minutes of the drive to our hotel were great. *How romantic*, I thought, *to cruise up the 101 Freeway in this sports car, the wind blowing through our hair.* But then Lauren told me she wasn’t feeling well, so I stopped at a convenience store to pick up some medicine. Despite our weariness, the evening still might have turned out fine if I had not broken the car key off in the door. I called Paul from a pay phone, asking him to bring us a spare key.

We finally arrived at the hotel at 1:00 a.m., fifteen hours (with the time change) after our wedding ceremony had begun. When we stepped off the elevator on the eleventh floor, we looked at each other and smiled; we had survived the trip. Seconds later, the power in the hotel went out. With no light to see by, Lauren and I felt our way down the hallway until we found our room. But the truth of it is, with the lights out and nowhere to go, we were able to have the romantic evening we'd been looking forward to anyway!

