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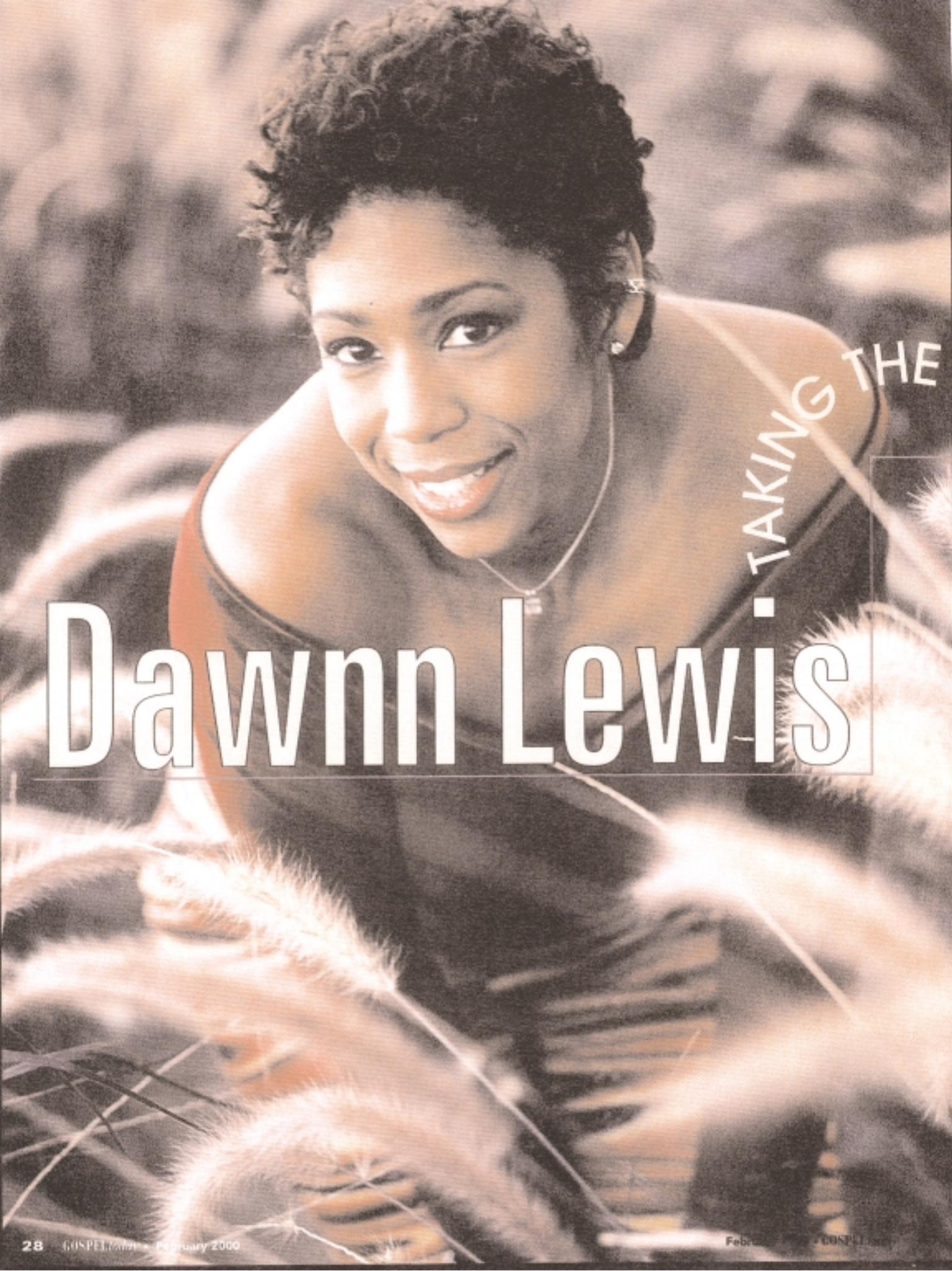
DAWNN LEWIS

SEX & THE SINGLE WOMAN

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TAKING THE

Dawnn Lewis



HIGH ROAD.....

BY TERESA HARRIS

Remember Dawnn Lewis? She was known as “Jalessa Vinson” on *A Different World*, then as “Robin” on *Hangin’ With Mr. Cooper*. You might recall having seen her in the movie, *I’m Gonna Get You Sucka*. Well, at “30-something,” she’s living in a “different” world in the midst of the Hollywood hubbub and hype—and, she’s doing **JUST FINE.**



Although you might ask, "Where's she been?" Lewis is doing great! Since the sit-com, "Different World" stopped airing, she hasn't missed a beat. Her music and acting talents have kept her churning. "I write music. I sing music. I do voices for cartoons (animations)," she says. Indeed, Lewis' credits in the entertainment arena are too numerous to mention. And this month, she'll star in "The Tenth Kingdom" for Hallmark and NBC—a movie about nine magical kingdoms filled with trolls, fairies and elves.

"I play a 6'1" troll princess with two brothers," she explains. "We are sent through a magical mirror to bring back the prince—who has been turned into a dog. When we go through the magical mirror to chase this dog, we end up in New York City; that becomes the magical tenth kingdom."

As a saved, single, successful sister, Lewis has—as many have—had her struggles with reconciling her Christianity and her sexuality. Ironically, one of her favorite quotations, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression," doesn't fit her testimony in one area of life—God has given her a second relationship, and a second virginity. This time, she's determined to do it His way.

Here's her story:

I was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. My family is Seventh Adventist. I was raised in the church. I did my first vocal concert at P.S. 304—the school my mother worked at—when I was four. As a teen, I became disillusioned with the church, because the things I was learning didn't match up with the way the people behaved. The Bible teaches about fellowship, love, patience, forgiveness, and tolerance. But in the church, you find people caught [up] in, "Did she wear that last week?" or what pew they sit in. Those kind of things hurt me. I wanted to believe in the love and the positivity I was learning in the Bible.

Through high school and college I really didn't go to church. I believed in the Bible and tried to be the best person I could be. I read my Bible every now and then. I would go to church with friends—just to be in the building. Church was in me—in what I had learned and experienced—but not so much in the organized church environment. I came to L.A. in '87. I had just graduated from college, had done a Broadway show, released my first single, done two television pilots—and then I got *Different World*.

Just as I moved from New York to Los Angeles, I got into a relationship. We spent four years "long distance," and then he moved to L.A. and we were together for three years; and then we ended up separating. But one of the good things from that relationship that held it together and made it possible for us to stay together four years, was my commitment to the Lord. Whether we were together or not, when I would go home to visit, we would do devotions together. We would pray together on the phone, he would either call me (from New York) before he'd go to work and before we went to bed at night. He was not a Christian, but he was willing to learn and expose himself, because it was so important to me. Ultimately, that was one of the main problems—he did not have his own walk with God. You can only do something for someone else for so long.

One of the things I learned in this business is that you have to have your own personal convictions. That's what keeps you going. That's where your sense of "self"—of who you are and Whose you are—comes from. It's not from who you know, how much money you have, what job you have or where you live. It's from who you are as a child of God.

My walk with God is too important to me, to be with somebody who puts their fleshly desires and wants before what they're supposed to be for the Lord.

The Lord says, "do not be unequally yoked." He says, "you can not walk together in opposition. Two must join together and agree." You have to want to walk with the Lord because *you* want to walk with the Lord. Not because that's what your girlfriend does or your boyfriend does or everyone around you does.

I think people confuse dating with sex. I was part of that walk for a while. The two are exclusive of each other. It took me about three years to get involved in a relationship again. [In the first relationship] I had learned how to be a friend and how to communicate. There were so many positive things. But I knew that relationship was not going to be blessed to go forward. That was one of the hardest things that I had to admit. I didn't come to that conclusion until we were out shopping for engagement rings. And [the Lord] said to me, "You know what? For you to say 'yes' to this means that this is O.K. with you for the rest of your life."

I had to truly give it to God in prayer. I told him, "O.K. Lord,



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you’ve shown me some positive things about being with a man; you’ve shown me some negative things about being with a man; you’ve shown me some things that I can not settle for anything less than. And one of them is a man who walks with You.”

I pray for discernment, patience and honesty in dating.

The Lord wants us to get to know people as people—as friends. Not on the third time you go out with him, because you have dinner, you end up in bed. Sex confuses things. If that’s what you lead into a relationship with; odds are, you’re going to end up getting confused.

Three years later, I ended up running into a friend that I had grown up with. We had never even looked at each other. We got together. We met at a restaurant after church. We talked about blessings and what the pastor had been talking about in church. We had honest communication. He called me and asked me to go to church with him. He would call me and share scriptures. Without imposing or insisting on a relationship—I got to know him and talk with him. Things began to reveal themselves.

So, one day I had a break in a rehearsal, and he and I did devotions together. Afterward, we both started to cry. We asked each other, “Why are you crying?” He said he had been praying to the Lord—and this is before we started dating—to introduce him to a woman that he could sit and talk to the Lord about, and get to know. That was where it started.

After that, I went back to the Lord and asked, “Lord, who is

this man that You have brought into my life that I have known most of my life?” For both of us, it became apparent that God had taken us through what He had taken us through—to prepare us to meet each other.

One thing that I learned is that the Lord does not speak to you without speaking to the other person. God will let both of you know—but it will be in His time. We have to learn to stay in our season, and that’s really hard.

For myself and the man I’m involved with, we chose the “high road.” We decided that if we are listening to God’s voice, we’re going to do it God’s way and sex is not a part of it. Abstinence is key. We decided that when God brings us together as man and wife, we’ll have the rest of our lives to do all that.

We hold hands and kiss and hug, but we share joy in laughter, conversation and just the energy of being in each other’s presence.

Sometimes it’s not so easy. But you carry on. The object is to get to the other side. Sometimes we say to God, “I want this relationship, I want this man, Lord; I want to be a good wife, Lord.” And He says, “O.K. You’re going to have to work on this, and work on that, but if you hang with Me, I will make you a beautiful vessel.”

You’ve got to go through the fire. *What do you want?* You’ve got to decide. Do you want the high road or the low road? I have committed myself to walking on the high road. Anything that’s going to truly be blessed by God will not be easy, but it’ll be worth it. ✝

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