



## **Believing in Magic: My Story of Love, Overcoming Adversity, and Keeping the Faith**

*Cookie Johnson , Denene Millner (With)*

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In her new memoir, *Cookie Johnson*, wife of NBA legend *Earvin “Magic” Johnson*, shares details of her marriage, motherhood, faith, and how an HIV diagnosis twenty-five years ago changed the course of their lives forever.

On November 7, 1991, basketball icon *Earvin “Magic” Johnson* stunned the world with the news that he was HIV-positive. For the millions who watched, his announcement became a pivotal moment not only for the nation, but his family and wife. Twenty-five years later, *Cookie Johnson* shares her story and the emotional journey that started on that day—from life as a pregnant and joyous newlywed to one filled with the fear that her husband would die, she and her baby would be infected with the virus, and their family would be shunned. *Believing in Magic* is the story of her marriage to *Earvin* nearly four decades of loving each other, losing their way, and eventually finding a path they never imagined.

November 7, 2016 will mark a quarter-century since the announcement and *Cookie’s* survival and triumph as a wife, mother, and God-fearing woman.

*Cookie* has never shared her full account of the reasons that she stayed and her life with *Earvin “Magic” Johnson*. *Believing in Magic* is her story.

## **Believing in Magic: My Story of Love, Overcoming Adversity, and Keeping the Faith Details**

Date : Published September 20th 2016 by Howard Books

ISBN : 9781501125157

Author : *Cookie Johnson , Denene Millner (With)*

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction

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## **From Reader Review Believing in Magic: My Story of Love, Overcoming Adversity, and Keeping the Faith for online ebook**

### **Monique says**

Not what I expected...while I wanted to know the inside story I feel that this was a surface story without giving the full 411. We all have those friends that stay with their man regardless of how or why they stray...Cookie seems like that friend. Marriage is hard and I can't imagine what it's like being a woman married to a celebrity.

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### **Cecile says**

I had to put this book down. Couldn't take it.

I don't get how people do what they want to do or not do anyway and attribute it to God. How do they know? God taps them on the shoulder or something? Has anyone reported God telling them to do a series of specific tasks with which to solve a problem that was really different from what they typically do? Such as leave this dude? God didn't give this good woman a man with strong morals. Is that so she could write this book? Did God want her to write a book? How does she know this?

Anyway, the other struggle I had with the sentiments of this book is the whole let the man be the head of the family thing. A man who made a series of decisions which humiliated and endangered the health of the woman he loved? The man who couldn't keep his pants on? Really? God says to let someone be the head of the family when maybe they don't have all the chops to do so? Just because of the type of gonads they possess? Sounds like a bunch of human males made that interpretation of the Bible when they were translating very ambiguous Aramaic and Hebrew back a few centuries ago.

This is why I prefer studying religious history over what some biased (mostly male) human reverend has to say about the English translation of the Bible.

My husband is agnostic, relies on himself, values being responsible, true to his word, and has been a solid husband for over 30 years. We are partners in life and rely on the strengths that each of us has.

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### **Licha says**

This book had me angry from the very start. I was so disgusted by Magic Johnson. What a jerk. I don't necessarily think Cookie intended for him to come across as such. It's evident this woman loves Magic. It practically oozes off the pages when she describes the doggish behavior he has demonstrated toward her throughout their relationship and she can still justify, excuse and explain it all off. More power to her, but I seriously wanted to shake her by the shoulders and ask her to take the veil off her eyes and to learn to love herself just a little. Realize your worth as a woman outside of how this man defines you and shapes you as a woman. This will probably go in for a long rant. This book was such a quick, easy read. I couldn't put it down, but I also couldn't help getting so riled up at every chapter. Be prepared as I let it all out.

--Magic tells her he is HIV positive and he'll understand if she wants to leave him. Cookie doesn't get mad that he may have passed on a deadly virus to her and her unborn son (she was pregnant when she found out), especially when the virus was more than likely contracted throughout all the years he's been cheating on her with countless women. What she gets upset about is that he would question her loyalty to stand by his side. She is so angry she slaps him.

--She is so overly grateful at small gestures he does for her, such as buying her flowers or taking her to a nice restaurant. Didn't she realize he was probably showing grander gestures to his groupies? She was so hungry for his love that she accepted whatever he would throw her way.

--The stupid explanations he would give her after doing some questionable behavior made me more upset at her than him for falling for them. At one point he tells her she is not allowed to wait for him after his games. Cookie gets curious and insecure and decides to go anyway. He "teaches her a lesson" by ignoring her presence. He later tells her that he was doing this so she could become secure in herself and learn to accept that his fan base was just that and not women throwing themselves at him and it was all in preparation for their future life together in the spotlight. She melts at the thought that he sees her in his future rather than question that he might be trying to hide all the women that he is surrounded by.

Cookie makes excuse after excuse for his behavior. He doesn't even need to come up with explanations because she makes them for him. How humiliating that he puts her through "tests" to see if she can hang in his world. She's so focused on being a part of his life that she forgets about Cookie the woman. And it doesn't help when all the women in her life encourage her to stand by her man and give him his space or follow his lead.

This is a man who breaks up with her at random moments when she least expects them. He breaks off their wedding three times (I couldn't keep track of all the breakups). Why did she keep taking him back into her life? He breaks off one wedding because she gives him an ultimatum about an annual bikini party he throws at his house. The other basketball wives encourage her to force Magic to cancel the party. They all hate this party because they know what goes on. When Cookie keeps pushing Magic to cancel it and then tells him to pick her or the party, he doesn't think twice and tells her goodbye. Immediately she starts blaming herself and wishing she hadn't pushed. !?!? The wedding is off again per Magic because he will not have Cookie cramping his swagger. When he comes to his senses (he comes to his senses every time he finds out Cookie has started to date other men), he still has the nerve to tell her to be on time for the wedding or else he won't marry her. Cookie takes all the blame for this request because she knows she is always tardy to everything, so instead of standing firm and not allowing him to manipulate her this way she is there two hours early O\_o and sweating bullets as the clock is ticking by hoping he won't dump her at the altar. (So once again, Cookie has passed yet another test Magic has put her through.)

The chapters on her son and realizing he was gay and the chapter on adopting her daughter Elisa were a relief from all that "magic" we kept reading about and I was glad to get a little glimpse of the woman she is outside of being Magic's wife. (I mean, he's even on the cover off her book. Why? I was so tired of looking at his mug.) I did enjoy reading about her faith and how it has kept her going, even if I don't agree with the choices she made.

The book only touches the surface of what it's like to live with a man who is HIV positive. It seemed like the aim of this book was to educate but I don't think she truly did much of that or even enlighten what daily life is like living with a partner who has HIV. She finds out two months into their wedding that he has HIV. Did she get angry? Did she slap him? What was the reaction? I got only that she was shocked but then forgave him almost immediately (or so it seemed). She didn't berate him for his irresponsible sexual behavior, for

putting her life at risk and her son's as well. It was like they just fell into a normal routine. I felt it was important that she should have brought up how their intimate life is with this disease that potentially affects her. What about the mundane things such as sharing plates, cups, etc.? This was during a time that people did not have much information and there was a social stigma. She had to have questions, doubts and fears herself about living with this man. Even kissing him had to have crossed her mind. But she doesn't touch upon any of these things, so for me the book failed to educate the reader about this kind of stuff.

As angry as I felt reading this book, I really enjoyed reading Cookie's life. Magic should realize the woman he has at his side and be grateful that she has stood by him and kiss the floor she walks on. Ugh, just thinking about him makes me mad. Unbelievably, the man doesn't learn (and neither does she, really—every time that man tells her "Listen, we need to talk", I'd run for the hills if I were her.) After twelve years or so of marriage, he again tries to break up. \*smh\* She begs him to stay, he manipulates as he always does. Through their friends' interventions Magic realizes he needs Cookie back in his life so he brainwashes her into taking him back again. What do you say to a person who continues to want to keep seeing through the dark lens of love?

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### **Winter Sophia Rose says**

Strength, Inspiring, Touching & Heartfelt! A Great Read! I Loved It!

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### **Lauren says**

I enjoyed this book but I can't get over how corny the cover of it is. Magic Johnson's smile, the giant cross...ugg. But I saw Cookie on The View and wanted to try this out - she seemed like a warm and kind person. Plus I grew up in the 90's and only had cursory knowledge of the "dream team" and Magic Johnson. I thought - why not? :0)

I read this book quickly and it was overall enjoyable; however, some approaches that the couple took with each other (i.e. the cold shoulder, making up/breaking up/making up) made me want to smack my head while reading about them. (Um...why don't you just talk it out? How can you put up with that guy?) There was also a lot about this book that was said about faith and God, which was encouraging, but a TON of stuff in that realm that could have been discussed better as well. Such as...the Christian faith but also sleeping together before marriage...? Magic coming to terms with his promiscuity...? Obviously from the book, this stuff happened, but what does the author think about it as she has processed that over the years? What advice would she give others about this? There was a lot of trite "God has a plan" stuff, but I was hoping for more.

It was also interesting to read about the adoption of their daughter and how they didn't tell her until she was five. I guess things were different "back then" in the 90's, but it was a bit galling to read as an adoptive parent myself. Things like this made me shake my head while reading the book and be so happy that communication around adoption has changed in many ways.

I wish there was a little more about HIV, AIDS and treatment developments since the '90's. Like...how is Magic Johnson still alive? What are his symptoms today? I know little to nothing about HIV, and I feel the author missed a chance to educate her readers in a big way. Whoops.

I'm glad I read this book. And I'm glad I'm finished it. :0)

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### **Firah says**

A very good book. Cookie revealed the struggles of relationships, marriage, and family issues. She showed how challenging it is to be a famous couple and still remain "normal". There was no sugarcoating her feelings and thoughts about her husband's health scare, her son's life, and her daughter's hurdles. Cookie also knew that she is an individual and must focus on her own dreams to grow and be happy. After reading this book, I have more respect for her and her husband. Fame and money added to their lives. It did not change in a negative way who they are inside.

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### **Marilyn Diamond says**

Cookie's honesty, compassion and dedication to God and her husband are extra ordinary. Not too many women would go through all of this to get to true love and passion. To meet and fall in love in college and then have two attempts down the aisle only to get married, pregnant and have your life turned completely upside down because of a deathly diagnosis. She is good and I commend Earvin Magic Johnson for standing by and going to get his woman. Every married woman needs to read a page out of this book withstanding the fame and all that the trappings bring. This is a true story of courage and love in one person your soul mate. Riveting, exciting, page-turner.

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### **Heather says**

We all have had that friend. You know the one. She's the one with the loser boyfriend who she insists is just the sweetest and kindest person ever to exist but he just doesn't show that side of himself in public. If you just knew him like she does, you'd understand.

This is what the first half of this book felt like to me. I felt like I needed to stage an intervention even though it all happened years ago.

While they were dating, Magic:

Publicly shunned her and then asked her if she learned her lesson when she didn't follow his orders  
Got upset when his friends teased him for calling her on an out of town trip so he broke up with her because

she was "too controlling."

Dated other women when they were supposed to be exclusively dating and then had the nerve to get mad at her for calling him out on it

Saw her with her new boyfriend during a 2 year breakup and then going out of his way to publicly humiliate the new boyfriend.

Repeatedly broke up with her for long periods and returned only when he found out she was dating someone else

Let her know that he had impregnated another woman during one of their breakups by bringing the now 3 year old offspring to a family party and introducing them to each other in front of his whole family

Proposed and then called off the wedding - TWICE

And just like your friend who keeps getting back with her jerk of a boyfriend, she keeps making excuses for him.

Now, I give her credit for not moving to LA with him and living the lifestyle of a basketball girlfriend. He wasn't going to make a commitment so she stayed in Toledo and worked on her career. Good for her!

Eventually she did move because she felt that she had to prove to him that she could fit into his world. She kept a job in her field though to maintain her independence. Soon she had to choose between her career and the NBA finals. She quit her job to stand by her man and what did he do? Dumped her again.

This book is advertised as the story of a long and successful marriage in the public eye. It doesn't read that way at all. To me it reads like a woman trying too hard to convince you that everything is ok.

I found the second half of the book more interesting mostly because Magic almost entirely disappears from the story once they got married. She tells the story of raising her son, who she was pregnant with at the time of Magic's HIV diagnosis. She talks of coming to terms with the fact that their son was absolutely not athletic and over time realizing that he was gay. She talks about the adoption of their daughter and the affect that adoption had on the life of her child. She touches on the work they do in HIV education. She does not discuss what it is like to have an HIV positive partner.

This is also advertised as a story of faith. She talks about getting through the hard times when Magic would run off again by reading the Bible and discovering what God wanted her to do. Amazingly, God always wanted her to do exactly what she wanted to do. He would always lead her back to her emotionally abusive boyfriend. Wow, thanks for looking out for me God!

First come first served and if you want to throw in a few dollars for shipping that would be great but not

required.

This review was originally posted on Based On A True Story

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### **Thomas Rush says**

As a child growing up in Asheboro, NC, I was fortunate to grow up in the presence of a father and a brother who both loved sports. I am sure their influence played a big part in how I came to love sports as well. For reasons I cannot fully explain, I was focused on Basketball as my sport of choice. Being who I am, I combined my love of sports with reading, and early in my life I got my mother to purchase me a subscription to Sports Illustrated, which was really my 1970's equivalent to ESPN.

I loved the magazine because of its professional and polished writing, and because it allowed me to go inside the World of my favorite players, to learn so much more about them that others did not know. It went deep into their lives as regular human beings, giving out the most subtle and nuanced of details. It really was a rich storehouse of information, information that was esoteric in its very nature, because technology was rather primitive at the time, and we did not have the internet, nor the proliferation of cable TV, to disseminate information widely in the way that we do now. This meant that anyone who read, such as myself, had a decided advantage over other sports fans who did not. Reading, for me, gave me a much more comprehensive understanding of what was going on in the World of sports, particularly the Basketball sphere, than any other source.

Being literate, combined with Basketball, allowed me to use Basketball as a paradigm, a symbol for Life. I came to understand that I had "favorite" individual players, for very different reasons, though some of the reasons overlapped. For example, David Thompson of NC State, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar were my early Basketball heroes, David for college ball and Kareem for professional. David is a more intense reminder of everything positive about my adolescence, in part because his timing matched my teenage years combined with the fact that he is a North Carolina, regional folk hero. Kareem came to represent not only an early love of Basketball, but a perfect lesson of great work ethic, consistency and greatness over a long career. I read everything that I could get my hands on about both of them, and my knowledge pertaining to them was crazy. I could have immediately told you their birth dates at the age of 12. I can compartmentalize Thompson and Jabbar, keeping them in their separate boxes of why I am enriched in enjoying their Basketball skills.

Despite my early love of David and Kareem, however, I ultimately settled on Earvin "Magic" Johnson as my all-time, favorite professional player.

Magic brought a new energy to the game. I distinctly remember the Sports Illustrated cover shot of him in a tuxedo, and the accompanying article, titled "He's Gone To The Head Of His Class." The piece highlighted a great class of college sophomore players, Albert King, Gene Banks, Jeff Lamp and others, but Magic was said to be clearly at the head of that class. His game was based on a "pass-first" mentality, instead of scoring, which meant that he understood that The Game was not about him, that it took a team to win. That was what he was all about. Winning. I instantly became a fan after reading that article, and began to cover his college career closely. I remember the joy I had the night his Michigan State team beat Larry Bird's Indiana State for the NCAA Championship. I looked forward to him going pro immediately after that. And due to the lay-out of that 1979 NBA draft, where was Magic going? He was going to play with another favorite of mine, Kareem, with the Lakers.

For the next 13 years, I was an avid Magic Johnson fan, observing his all-around game about as comprehensively as anyone. Over time, I came to see that most of Earvin's gifts were mental, spiritual, and emotional, over and above the physical, though he was physically gifted as well. His Basketball intelligence made it like he was a coach on the floor. He seemed to know, in advance, where every single player on his team needed to be. He directed an offense more smoothly than any player I've ever seen. He seemed to have

an internal radar, one that allowed him to detect what his team needed early within a game, and once discovered, he delivered what was needed. If his team needed 40 points from him, that's what it got. If his team needed twenty-five assists, that's what it got. If it needed 20 rebounds, that's what it got. He did what he did with reckless abandon, his enthusiasm for the game flowing from his every pore, while, at times, he would beam his megawatt smile. It was quite simply refreshing to see someone who genuinely enjoyed playing the game. Ultimately, more than any other professional athlete that I've ever seen in my long obsession of sports, Magic only cared about ONE thing---that at the end of the game, his team had more points than his opponents. That's ALL he cared about, which made him the perfect team player, in a team sport .

Now, knowing all that I knew about Magic, I had always wondered if his team-first mentality carried over into his marriage. I never knew that I would have the opportunity to find out. But, there I was strolling through my nearest Barnes & Noble's bookstore, just browsing, when I came across the cover that you see at the head of this article. I went, "Oh wow! Cookie Johnson has a book. Let me take a look at this." I grabbed the book and sat down in the store's cafe, thinking that I would just read a couple of pages. I lost all track of time as I became lost in Cookie's book. Before I knew it, I had read the first 64 pages of it. The book was given more power because of the background knowledge of Magic's history that I brought to the table, but it also gave me the absolute honor of getting to know Mrs. Cookie Johnson.

I felt privileged in reading Cookie's book for so many reasons, having her lay all of her past out for all to see. I thought back to the early 1990's when I first saw pictures of Cookie in magazines and on TV, as she was identified as Johnson's partner. At first glance, my male vantage point made it easy to see why Magic had been attracted to her, because she was quite simply, beautiful. Cookie's beauty did not immediately quench my curiosity, as I wondered if there was more to her, as questions of her intelligence, character, emotions, morals, ideas about family stirred in my head. I just wondered "who" the overall person was that was now known as Magic's wife.

One question that seemed to be answered right away came from contemplating the Earvin/Cookie marriage. Cookie talked about how she was born in her native Alabama and how her parents had moved with her brother and sister at an early age to Detroit, as part of the Great Migration. She talked of the religious background in Alabama and how that still plays a part of her religious faith. I meshed Cookie saying that with knowing that both of Magic's parents are Southerners, with his father from Mississippi and his mother from North Carolina. I thought that their mutual, humble Southern roots had a lot to do with them coming together.

As I proceeded through the book, the one thing that kept appealing to me was Cookie's sense of normalcy. I was not picking up on any sense of pretense nor affectation. She seemed totally straight-forward and direct, laying out her teen years and her eventual landing on the Michigan State campus, a fact that caused a former boyfriend to complain that she was going to meet Magic Johnson and become involved with him. Cookie laughed it off, because she truly had no idea who Magic Johnson was.

Cookie found out right away upon her arrival to Michigan State University. It seems her new roommate was totally enamored with Magic, and had every intention of becoming his girlfriend. Cookie had no such thoughts, even after several brief run-ins with him, with friends. She was shocked, when leaving a campus party that Earvin asked her for her phone number, right before they were set to leave for their respective homes at the end of the semester. Magic promised to call her as soon as they returned from Winter break. Cookie wrestled with how to tell her roommate her news, but found a diplomatic way to do it, and to her surprise, her roommate took it well.

Cookie was shocked when her dorm-room phone rang almost immediately after entering, after turning the key to open her door, even before she had time to properly place her luggage, upon her return at the beginning of the semester. Magic was on the other end of the phone. To this day, Cookie has no idea how Magic knew to call her with such prompt timing.

Cookie lays out the couple's Michigan State years, talking about the indifference she felt coming from White counselors and professors, and just making her way through college life. There was the typical

boyfriend/girlfriend things going on with Cookie and Magic. Eventually, the couple broke up, with Cookie remaining at Michigan State for the entire four years to graduate, while Earvin left school early to pursue his professional basketball career in Los Angeles. Her time at Michigan State gave her time to reflect, just as careful study of the eventual couple lends itself to reflection.

When I think of Magic, I have come to respect him for a plethora of reasons, many of them not really basketball-related. I love the fact that he is very close to his parents and his siblings, the fact that he is family oriented. Given that his parents are from Mississippi and North Carolina, as a North Carolinian myself, I can relate to the Black Southern vibe that I feel emanating from him and his family. I love the fact that he is socially conscious and is particularly interested in seeing African-Americans achieve in the business sector, as he himself leads the way, specifically by both putting his businesses in the community and by hiring folks from the community. I combine all of this with my love of him as an ultimate team guy in basketball.

Now, having said all of this, this book puts me in the mind-set of Cookie Johnson, and allows me to see the World through her eyes. In some sense, this gives me a perspective of a personally selfish side of Magic, from an angle I had never had clear vision upon before. I am not particularly joyful to know this side of him. There are several things to make me think this way. There is the incident in college when Cookie finds pictures of Earvin with another woman. This was at a time when they were a celebrity couple, in the eyes of nearly everyone on campus. When Magic was confronted by Cookie about the woman, he very forcefully, and vehemently insisted on not answering her question, making the argument that Cookie will not control him. This is the first of several break-ups, when Cookie puts her foot down, informing Magic that he will not be dating both the other woman AND Cookie.

The second selfish and insensitive occurrence, from my perspective, comes during the couple's visit to the home of Magic's parents several years later, and Magic leaves for a little bit, only to return later with an unidentified 3 year old child. Both Cookie and Magic's family are shocked to learn that the child is Magic's son, Andre, by a relationship that Magic had during one of his breaks with Cookie. It is not so much the fact of the child, as it was the fact that Magic had not mentioned anything to Cookie, beforehand, about the child. It just seems common decency to have done so.

Just as it was difficult to learn of Magic's child for Cookie, one can only imagine how difficult it was for her emotionally, when on two distinct and separate occasions, Magic "called off" their engagement at the last minute, both times just simply saying stoically and coldly, "I can't do it." Both times, Cookie had been in the midst of very extensive wedding plans, informing all of her friends, acquaintances and co-workers. Everyone in her World knew that she was just about to marry Magic Johnson. It had to have been emotionally shattering to face the people in her World, after her disappointments. Her private struggles were equally despondent. These events had to have been monumental "Egg-All-Over-Your-Face" scenarios.

Cookie survived her rough patches by relying on her faith, through Bible study and prayer, returning to her solid relationship with God. In case anyone truly misses the main purpose of this book, I would point out that Cookie's reliance on God and her faith in Him, for the whole of her life, is the one central idea she would want any careful reader to walk away with, and to model. She says that her friendship with Mrs. Angie Aguirre, the wife of basketball star, and friend of Magic's, Mark Aguirre, helped her to make it through. Angie encouraged Cookie to put her whole being into her faith, Bible study, and prayer and Cookie says it was these things that helped her to keep her sanity.

Ultimately, Cookie's faith and persistence led to her and Earvin finally getting married after 12 years of on-and-off again, but it was early in their marriage when Magic came home to inform her, along with his agent, that he was HIV-positive. She slapped him upside his head when he said he'd understand if she chose to leave him. She told him that when she said "Til death do us part," that she had meant those words, and that she wasn't about to leave him now in his time of need. Cookie's response to Magic's HIV status, helps to highlight one of the most amazing things about her.

The fact that Cookie was choosing to stay with an HIV-positive husband shows clearly, that she is no "gold digger." However, there were things that had happened before Magic's announcement that had made this clear. Cookie had moved back into her mother's home, after college graduation, even though Magic had

invited her to stay with him in L.A., where he said, "I will take care of you." One senses that she did not move to L.A. then because she did not feel comfortable with their relationship status, that there wasn't a solid enough monogamous commitment to it. A number of years later, when Cookie did move to L.A. to give the relationship a shot, she had her own job and maintained her own apartment, still driving around town in her gold Honda. It is eye-opening to realize that Cookie's true financial elevation did not occur until she officially became Cookie Johnson, which is another indication that she was not parasiting off of Magic and is no gold digger. Any woman who stays with an HIV-positive man for love has been nullified from the "gold-digger" label.

Ultimately, this book is a clear indication that Cookie Johnson takes seriously the character of love that God truly is, since she is such a representation of it. There is no doubt in this book that Cookie Johnson loves Earvin Johnson. No doubt. She is 100% committed to him. But, there is also no doubt that she loves her children as well, fighting for his lifetime to "steer" their son E.J. into being a heterosexual male. Though she fought for him to be "straight" for years, her ultimate love for her child was to finally accept him for who he was, which was to accept that he is "gay." Many may disagree with this assertion, but for ANY parent to accept her child for who or what he/she really is, is the ultimate definition of parental love. What was more amazing was when Magic came around to holding the same position that Cookie had in reference to E.J., unconditional love and acceptance for who he is. I have no doubt that Magic's shift to this position has a lot to do with both Cookie's influence, and love. She also shows the same level of heightened love for the couple's adopted daughter, Elisa. One sign of this was Cookie's acceptance of, and encouragement for Elisa to seek out her birth family and to get to know them. Cookie and Magic were both secure enough, and loved their child enough, to allow this.

In conclusion, what has this book by Cookie Johnson ultimately shown? It shows an extremely solid woman of character, secure enough within herself to have stood up to Earvin "Magic" Johnson at times when she had to, for her self-respect. It shows a woman with a bountiful store of love for the people in her life, her family, Magic's family, her husband and her children. It shows a woman who appreciated the efforts of others, like Michael Jordan and Larry Bird, to accept an HIV-positive teammate on "The Dream Team," helping to bring him back into the fold as "just one of the boys" in sincere camaraderie. Most of all, it shows a woman in love with God and her faith. The Bible says that God is love. No matter how far and wide Magic Johnson searched, I am convinced that he would have never found a woman who would have loved him more than Cookie Johnson. In her, he found what she says so many times in this book, "the love of his life." Most men would kill to have a Cookie Johnson, in the full flower of who she is, in their life. Magic Johnson has this. Cookie Johnson is just a solid, solid person of character. And I am quite simply overjoyed, that a person I have profound regard and respect for, Magic Johnson, has Mrs. Cookie Johnson as his wife. It is quite possible that this is so because the couple has managed to "Believe In Magic."

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### **Sandy says**

This is the saddest "inspirational" book I have ever read! It is also a horrible example of what God wants for His children. Sadly, Ms. Johnson is under the impression that God wanted her to grovel for the attention of a womanizer, adult-er, skeeming, self absorbed man. Ms. Johnson attempted to write this book to convince herself that she did the right thing, and that Magic is an awesome man. Magic is a wolf in sheep's clothing, and Ms. Johnson really needs to stop making excuses for this man. I pray that other young ladies that are contemplating remaining in emotional abusive relationships do not use Ms. Johnson book for guidance, because it is a false testimony of God's truth. Ms. Johnson you sound like a sweet lady, but something is not right here. Good luck.

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### **Cherryl Northcutt Valdez says**

This was an amazing story. Cookie was so open and honest about the behind closed doors of her life, marriage, family and faith.

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### **Michelle says**

For the first time Cookie Johnson shares her long awaited memoir: "Believing in Magic: Overcoming Adversity, and Keeping the Faith" of her 12 year courtship, 25 year marriage, and remarkable life with celebrity NBA retired athlete Earvin "Magic" Johnson. In 1991, Magic informed his fans and shocked the public world wide with the announcement he was HIV positive. At the time this seemed like a death sentence, with much stigma and misinformation, less was known about HIV. The couple had only been married for about 6 weeks, and Cookie was determined to remain true to her faith in God, and by her new husband's side.

An ambitious and determined Detroit high school student, Cookie wasn't going to let her mother's limited income, or a discouraging boyfriend stand in her way of attaining a college education. It was at Michigan State University, in the late 1970's that Cookie caught the eye of the popular basketball player. Aware of his fame (especially with the ladies) Cookie maintained her independence and graduated with a degree in Fashion Design in 1981. Despite his serious relationships with other women, he kept tabs on her and appeared mysteriously when she began relationships with other suitors, which never went to a serious level.

Their relationship had several ups and downs before Cookie would understand Earvin enough to marry, and support him as he battled the virus. HIV education was a top priority for the newly formed Magic Johnson Foundation. The AZT treatments exhausted him, as the couple prepared to welcome their new son, both Cookie and their baby were HIV negative. Cookie also shared behind the scenes of celebrity, the tight knit support of the other NBA wives and how they survive their unique challenges. Other family matters concern her son E.J who wasn't at all athletic, and as a small child/youth preferred playing with dolls and dressing up as a girl. The couple adopted their newborn daughter Elissa, all their children were encouraged to develop at their own speed and have their own interests. In this inspirational read, Cookie writes briefly about her spirituality without preaching or commenting on religious practice. Great family photos included. ~ With thanks to the Seattle Public Library.

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### **Donna Hines says**

This is the first book I can say that made me shake my head from start to almost finish. I cannot believe as a victim of domestic violence (myself) that Cookie could nor would lower her standards to believe that this type of disrespect, poor treatment, lack of remorse, lack of affection, lack of togetherness, no support, no foundation of a relationship was allowed to continue. I'm not quite sure how this marriage has survived as long as it has I believe 25yrs was noted with all this back and forth, infidelity, lies, manipulation, deception, demands, selfishness, obnoxiousness, coldness, distance.

Look I understand women are raised to be nurturers. We are raised to be empathetic. We are raised to love unconditionally and certainly standing by our man and our children is part of this motto we all hold dear.

However, I don't think those who went before us meant this to our detriment, for our own selfish gains, or for others benefits.

Sadly I disliked this book yet when I watched Cookie and Magic and their children on Steve Harvey this month I had high hopes for her book and truly wanted to believe in the Magic.

Magic is just that Magic..There was plenty of smoke, fog, mirrors, charm, deception, mistrust, deceit, manipulation, abuse, verbal spats, emotional turmoil for a decade or more here. The infidelity, the lying, the cheating, the harshness of words, the constant banter and derogatory negativity and tone that Magic displayed was shocking.

While I believe women should support their man I don't believe we should lose ourselves in that process by which we have no identity. I think Cookie tried to make the readers believe all is good, god is good, faith can lift you up but not once did I hear the word love used as an action. Love was spoken but not shown throughout the entire book in my opinion.

As a domestic violence advocate I understand living in denial. I understand feeling taken and the guilt and shame that this involves within the target and in this case the victim. I don't blame victims but in this situation there were plenty of warning signs yet cookie proceeded to push for marriage to a man who was clearly self absorbed , self centered, seen as king of his court, and wanted to be superior among others. He didn't support Cookie, he jeopardized her health and that of their child while pregnant, he consistently thought of himself and his needs.

It appears this relationship was one of convenience and show. The glitz, the glam, the hype but very little behind the scenes. Heck I should know mine lasted 13 yrs this way...yet behind closed doors we were truly miserable .

It was admitted he rarely spoke to her, confided in her, discussed important things with her. He didn't help her raise the family and put work above family needs. He didn't speak out of love but more out of anger even more shocking when the son revealed his sexual identity. Magic wanted things his way or no way and that type of person is toxic for any relationship.

I also noticed some common warning signs that included him telling Cookie how to act, how to behave, how to dress right up to the end of this book. Yet all the while Cookie noting she wanted to be independent, not dependent upon Magic for anything, and wanted her own life to fall back upon should things not work out between them.

Look when you quit your job, lose your career, give up your life for that of a man that's a warning sign that things aren't good no matter how much god is involved or how much faith you have.

The one seeking to keep the marriage going was Cookie while Magic appeared to throw scraps to see what more he could get away with. There was no boundaries nor remorse shown here.

I believe she was afraid to speak out against Magic and still may be. His stature, his demeanor, his wealth, his power, his control, his public persona is all keeping her from speaking her truths.

While I read what Cookie wrote I didn't believe it for a second because actions speak louder than words.

Words written must be put into action for them to be effective and to create change. The one who needs change must be willing to accept accountability, responsibility, and show a sense of remorse. I see none of this here.

I seen demands being made to get rid of prior boyfriends/girlfriends. I seen cancelled engagements I suppose 3 times the charm. I seen constant phone calls and almost stalking behavior being exhibited here. In the early stages she appeared too afraid to be seen with anyone but Magic even though he continued his charm and romance on other women. She appeared very cautious to even attempt to date anyone else because he'd always note " oh you need to get rid of him and she would laugh at this? Really?

Friends would note how they were entangled and too absorbed in each other without the freedom to pursue other ventures noting " you can't stay away from each other" . When he cancelled the 2nd proposal Magic requested the ring back and she refused stating she wanted to stay engaged. OMG!! Silence treatments than began between them. No calls, nothing to show interest in each other. "The only thing that mattered to him was destroying his opponent and winning and he followed a strict code of rules and rituals to up his chances"

was noted . My word...

He was very clear as to the order of things. He wouldn't allow her to come to his games nor stay afterward yet she's in love? He had no room for anyone else as she tried to fit into his life and be molded to accommodate his needs.

What the heck happened to Cookie and her needs and that of their children? HELLO? Who jokes about marriage? Is it not a serious commitment and I use commitment here loosely as I see this relationship didn't have much commitment on his part.

The words I seen repeated was love and money yet it appears while Cookie wanted to believe them both she sacrificed herself for them. I suppose the definition of love needs to be defined because for me love doesn't hurt. Cookie said " I wasn't going to let him get away with breaking another engagement" . In my opinion forced marriages are not an option. She then continues, " I forced him back into his routine the one that included me ... Please tell me this isn't so...Since when does a women lose herself to this level???

It seems if he messed up and hurt her deeply he would show up with a Porsche , designer attire, money, or expensive gifts and all would be forgiven...but love can't be bought.

She noted Not once did he invite her to support him from college to Lakers career. Yet she's in love ? How? With what?

She noted when he finally did let her attend she noted Wow, This is intense when she went to playoff game. After 12 yrs of dating, engaged, and making plans she decided to quit her job and was fired. A job she worked so hard to get noting she didn't want to be dependent on him. This created many hardships for those she left behind.

When she made ultimatums and tried to create boundaries he would ignore them and state I'm having the party and we don't have to get married in reference to his bachelor gig.

He seemed to call all the shots and she just went happily along without a voice.

He warned her not to be late for the wedding yet they noted love was in control of their marriage along with God.

I had to follow my husbands lead w/o discussion. She didn't allow herself to cry and didn't discuss how she felt internally through repressing it all and dutifully being the good housewife, kept woman, business partner for Magic and her family.

When he was diagnosed with Aids she immediately took control hired a holistic chef? Yet when she raised her kids alone she mentioned she was exhausted and would bump into walls because he slept while she stayed up all night.

I wish I knew what Magic did for her besides offer her the rich and famous. There seems to be very little reciprocation for this unhealthy relationship. He appears as a disciplinarian as noted in the book, yet I'd beg to take it further as dictator. No play time with kids. No talking. No romance or sex. He was angered upon initially learning of son's sexuality being gay. No support provided till he was told to be more forgiving and or understanding. Talks became explosive throughout the marriage. No shows at home. Gone for hours on end with other women. Ignoring kids, wife, family yet this is love?

How?

He would tell her to just go sit down?

In my opinion and from what I seen recently on tv Cookie seems to be like many abused women loving, nurturing, kind , caring, considerate, beautiful and intelligent.

I just wish she went her own way and didn't settle for less.

This is a huge lesson for other women to watch for the signs and not deny them in trying to convince yourself this is a normal healthy loving relationship. Based on what we are told here, and what I lived, it doesn't appear normal and in fact it appears if Cookie repeats the word love to convince herself that that is what she possesses but love never hurts, love is not selfish, love is kind.

I wish them well in their marriage but this book is a huge red flag warning signs of what not to do and how not to act in a relationship and certainly not marriage with kids.

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### **Reading in Black & White says**

Initial thoughts: I was interested in reading Cookie's story because she's actually married to a legend unlike the women in those stupid tv shows. Her story is surprisingly more relatable than folks might think which makes it a very quick read. I do feel as if the book lacked some depth and that's probably because her husband is still in the public eye, but I do applaud Cookie's effort to share her story. A full and detailed review will be posted closer to the publication date.

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### **Deedee Henson says**

A heart wrenching story of faith and love. I got a newfound respect for this lady.

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