

# The Unforgettable Gift

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*Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “The only gift is a portion of thyself.” Charla Muller is not a philosopher or poet, but this local PR gal turned author put her own modern spin on this thought. After a year of giving of herself, her time and her attention—in an overachiever sort of way—she wrote a book that people from coast-to-coast are buzzing about.*

*365 Nights, A Memoir of Intimacy*, is about the gift of sex—scheduled sex, every day for a year—presented to her husband, Brad, on his fortieth birthday. Her hot-selling, G-rated book chronicles the year that changed her marriage. With sincerity, grace and southern humor, Muller holds a mirror up to marriages, like hers, that let intimacy fall to the bottom of the to-do list.

Since the book’s release, she’s been on a whirlwind tour signing books from Charleston, SC to Chatham, NJ; a press junket that included a visit to *The View*, a talk with Meredith Vieira on *The Today Show* and a plug in *People* magazine. Muller spoke with *Charlotte Living* about her surreal success and life after the fifth printing.

**Did you ever imagine there would be so much buzz about your book?** Never! It’s been a real surprise receiving letters and emails from places like India, Ireland and Germany. But what’s been quite gratifying is when people read the book and realize that it’s not a book about S-E-X, but a laugh-out-loud-funny book about marriage, kids and husbands, and the “stuff” we all bring to a marriage.

**What do you say to people who think, based on the title, that you wrote a book about sex?** I tell them I didn’t write a book about sex. I wrote a book about being married and how hard it is to stay connected after eight years, young kids, two careers and a house to keep clean and free of cat poop. And this book is about my effort to be part of a vibrant, flourishing marriage (which does include intimacy). And if they



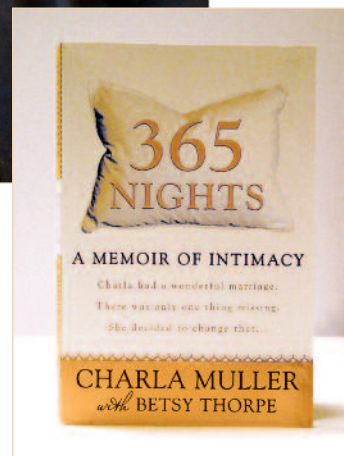
don’t see value or interest in those things, then that’s okay.

**What do you think resonates most with people who have read your book?** I’ve come to realize that it doesn’t matter where you live (like Australia, for example) or what you do for a living, if you’re in a committed marriage, you’re figuring this out. Intimacy in marriage is a common experience to us all and for people who

do read the book, they quickly connect with that premise. I’ve gotten emails from readers who have told me “you’re living my life!” or “I felt like we were having a glass of wine, chatting about my life when I read your book.” That’s been neat.

**How did you feel when you heard that another couple had written a similar book (*Just Do It*) and how did that impact your book launch?** While I haven’t read the other book, I understand it’s quite different from *365 Nights* and really for a different audience. I think that each book created momentum for the other, in a way. I’m learning that publishing is a crazy business, and sometimes we just have to roll with the tide.

**What is the funniest thing that’s happened to you while on your book tour?** I was at Barnes & Noble for a book signing and this Ob/Gyn came in and announced she couldn’t wait to meet me (she had seen me on *The Today Show*). She told me, “I’m buying copies of your book for the waiting room of my practice—if I get one question a day regarding marriage and intimacy, I get



ten! I could shave 15 minutes off every visit if I could simply get women to read your book first.” It was funny, but it really reinforced the fact that this is the

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topic that folks don't talk about. Apparently, *365 Nights* is now recommended reading at her practice.

**Tell me about behind the scenes on national television?** Everyone is really small! Meredith Vieira wears fabulous shoes, and Matt Lauer is every bit as cute in person. I sat in the make-up chair next to Whoopi Goldberg and chatted with Elizabeth Hasselback while she had giant Velcro rollers in her hair. All told, everyone was quite gracious and nice. The green room for *The View* is much swankier than *The Today Show* green room, by the way.

**How are Brad, and your parents, handling the limelight?** Brad has been a real trooper—we didn't know he would be such a large part of some of the national media (like *The Today Show*), and I think he's handled it really well. My parents have been quite supportive, too. They were nervous at first,

but after they read the galleys (the final copy of the book before it goes to print), they realized that I did what I said I was going to do—write a funny, insightful book that honors my marriage, my faith and my effort to stay connected with my spouse.

**What have you told your children about the book?** I'm really very comfortable with the book when it comes to my kids. For two reasons, really. The first is that I wrote a very modest, G-rated book that is funny and sweet. The second is that I've told them that mom wrote a book about how much she and dad love each other. That seems to work for now!

**Has anyone from your past reconnected with you as a result of your book/publicity that surprised you?** Well, I heard from my high school boyfriend, which was funny, as he's featured in the book, and

not always in the most glowing of terms! And lots of friends from my hometown of Asheville, which has been nice. It's been quite fun to reconnect with old friends from camp, church and school.

**What will you be doing to continue to support the book?** I'm doing lots of book club discussions and Bible study groups. I'm working on developing a couples Bible study guide to accompany the book. I'm finishing up a book tour with trips to NYC, DC, Baltimore and NJ. It's been great. We're on our fifth printing and doing well.

**What do you plan to give Brad for Christmas this year?** A vacation from national television appearances. \*

*For information about the book and to read Charla's ongoing Blogs, visit [www.charlamuller.com](http://www.charlamuller.com)*

