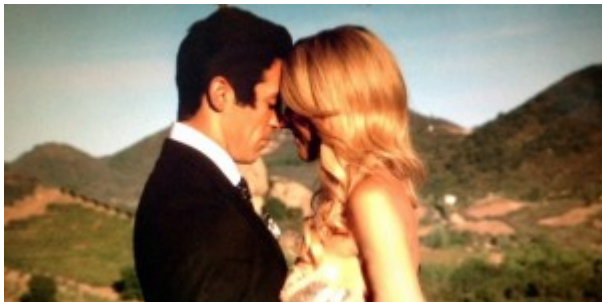


'Ready for Love' Exclusive: Winner Angela Zatopek Shares Her Emotional Journey



By Angela Zatopek

Yesterday was quite an emotional day for me. As I watched the finale with loved ones, I relived the love I found last summer with Ben and the amazing moment we shared at the vineyard. Thinking back to the beginning, I realized that we came a long way given the circumstances of “group dating.” Now, I find myself in the final two.

Throughout the season I cannot help but question the way certain things were edited, leaving key parts out that were important steps to what took us to the vineyard on that day. As I wrote in the last blog, I was so unsure if it was to be me or Allie, but no matter what the outcome I knew I had learned so many life lessons.

Related Link: [Ready for Love, Episode 8; Home in Houston](#)

After going to Dallas, I got to see his world and meet some of his friends to get a look at what life would be like together. It was so ironic, because he actually lives two miles from some of my best college girlfriends near Uptown Dallas. Going

there I was so tempted to sneak away and see them because I had missed all of my friends so much after being away filming!

During the hometown date in Dallas, it was also my birthday so I was really excited to spend it there with him. We spent the day going around town, I met some of his friends and then we took a stroll by the lake. What I was shocked about was the skeet shooting scene?? That actually took place in Houston. It was something that I thought of for us to do...had to show him my true Texan side! Luckily, Ben and I were spot on that day and had so much fun. I realized in Dallas that I had fallen hard for him. After filming ended that day, we actually went out for my birthday. It was great going out on the town together while not being filmed. We got to be real. At this point, I felt pretty confident in our connection but I also knew Allie was going to be seeing him the next day.

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A side note not many people know (don't be mad at me producers!!!)—but after I was dropped off at the Hotel I was definitely not ready to end my birthday celebration. After spending my summer cooped up in a house for 10 weeks, I got back to my room and thought “freedom!” The hotel was completely empty, I couldn't sleep and was in celebration mode for my birthday, so what did I do? I snuck down to the lobby and played pool with the security guard on the night shift named Randall until 3 am! HA HA! It was probably the most hilarious and random birthday I have had so far, but I won't ever forget it.

On a more serious note, moving along to what everyone has been asking me about...The Finale. Not only is my birthday a cherished memory, but so is how Ben and I ended our journey filming 'Ready For Love.' I have never been so blunt to say “I love you” in an unsure situation but figured the time was right when I first saw him in the garden. When he took me away in the helicopter, I had no idea where we were going since I

was blindfolded. I was completely shocked when we landed and I saw the vineyard, which we called "our spot." When Ben got on one knee, I was absolutely blown away with tears streaming down my face. I thought to myself "this is a crazy thing, but I don't care, there is no handbook on love!" He told me he had another surprise for me and turned me around where I saw both my family and his running at us. Words cannot describe the feeling I had at that moment...Happiness, joy, love, you name it, I was on cloud 9. I had all of the people I cared for most in the world all in one place, and I was loving how our families were so supportive of it.

Related Link: [Ready for Love, Episode 6: Finding Love in Paradise](#)

After the show wrapped it was as if we were thrown back into 'real' reality, but could not tell anyone. We had fake names for one another in our phones, just in case friends were next to us, I had crazy colored wigs (I will never have jet black hair by the way), and the list goes on with what we did to hide our romance. We were on such a high after the show, that to be back in reality with our old lives while completely living a new one at the same time was an interesting adjustment.

The first few months were bearable, however we needed to be together to really build a foundation. It wasn't something we could do with 11 other women in the picture. It was frustrating that we couldn't really be in each other's lives like a normal couple. It saddens me, that he doesn't even know most of my friends or family, yet he was my fiancé at one point? We have been together most of the time since filming wrapped in August, but decided about halfway through the show airing that there were a lot of hardships being apart/in hiding for so long and that maybe it was best if we went separate ways.

I am not sure what the future holds, but I wouldn't take back

the adventure I went on by putting my heart out on the line last summer. I learned so much about myself, love, what I want in life/a partner and also gained amazing friendships with cast and production. I see it as my "Ready For Love" family. I will forever cherish the memories I made cooped up in that house with all the girls, the fascinating people I got to know from all different backgrounds and most of all having a taste of what the love will feel like when I do finally find my "prince charming" as I said in the garden to Ben.

Related Link: [Ready for Love, Episode 5; Drama in Vegas](#)

I can't help but go back to my faith when it comes to hardship, which is exactly why I want to preserve my heart 100% completely for the day I walk down the aisle. Love is a magical thing we all strive to find, even if it doesn't last a lifetime like we all can hope for...it makes us better for when we do meet that special one. Reflecting back on this entire process, I cannot dismiss the impact this has had on me. I was so inspired on the show when a little girl ran up to me in the audience telling me how much she looked up to my message. I was absolutely humbled and thought "I am just a normal girl!", but then thought of how awesome it would be to create something that would be a legacy of my story and journey of where I am today.

I am currently creating and soon launching OneLove Collection, a faith inspired jewelry line for women and men. OneLove Collection will have a variety of necklaces, bracelets and rings, over time. I am not a jeweler by trade, but I feel very called to do this and also offer young trendy jewelry for people of faith! These pieces can have multifaceted meanings whether it be purity, commitment to your significant other, or a reminder of God's love. I also am finishing a book about my upbringing, dating experiences, 'Ready For Love', and what God can promise for a relationship when you put him as your first, "OneLove." I can't help but infuse my quirky humor and include a chapter of some hilarious dating stories I have to share.

I am so blessed and humbled by this entire experience and although my journey on 'Ready For Love' ended last night, my journey in life continues where I hope to make a positive difference in whatever God calls me to do. Thank you for reading this and stay tuned for more to come. ☐

Blessings,

Angela

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