

GOLD COSTS MORE THAN MONEY

The Wedding Rings

Listen to this conversation between Danny and Yasmin. What are they talking about, and why?

Danny: Yasmin - Don't forget tomorrow!

Yasmin: Tomorrow? Why? What's on?

Danny: Don't tell me you've forgotten! We're going to choose our wedding rings tomorrow, remember?

Yasmin: Oh, yes, the wedding rings. Look Danny, I wanted to talk to you about the rings.

Danny: Oh, you sound serious all of a sudden. What's wrong? Have you changed your mind? Don't you love me any more?

Yasmin: No, I haven't changed my mind. It's about our rings.

Danny: What about them?

Yasmin: Well, our wedding rings are forever, yes?

Danny: Yes, well, I certainly hope so.

Yasmin: And they are a symbol of our love? Yes?

Danny: Yes of course they are - but what's your point? I mean, why are you going on about the rings?

Yasmin: Danny, have you ever thought about the backstory to our wedding rings?

Danny: The backstory? You mean, like who designed them?

Yasmin: No, no, not the designer. I mean about where they came from - the gold. Where that came from?

Danny: Oh I get it - you mean the source, the supply chain?

Yasmin: Exactly. Anyway, do you remember that book I was reading, the one about gold mines? Danny, it was really upsetting and I can't stop thinking about it. It described where a lot of gold comes from - from illegal mines, and from mines where people are forced to work for practically nothing.

Danny: Ok, but what's your point?

Yasmin: Wait - let me finish. Look, our wedding rings are a symbol of love, and if the gold in my ring comes from one of those mines then I don't want to buy it. I don't want to wear it. I want nothing to do with it! I don't want to wear the blood and pain and suffering of someone else on my hand for the rest of my life.

Danny: Oh come on Yasmin, I think you're overreacting. I mean that's a bit dramatic!

Yasmin: Dramatic? No, there's nothing 'dramatic' about slavery. There's nothing 'dramatic' about poisons like cyanide and mercury, which they use in many of those mines. There's nothing 'dramatic' about kids, even tiny kids aged 9 or 10 working, for year after year, in a gold mine - only to die when they are 20 because their lungs are so full of dust and disease.

Danny: Hey! I worked when I was a kid. I helped my parents in their store after school.

Yasmin: That's completely different, Dan. Being forced to work in a mine for 12 hours a day is not an 'after school' job. It's nothing like that.

Danny: Anyway, why are you suddenly talking about slavery? I mean this is the 21st century. Slavery doesn't exist anymore. It was abolished centuries ago.

Yasmin: No, you're wrong Danny. There are millions of people working as slaves today - including in gold mines. Here, look at this article right here. And this photo....

Danny: Oh my goodness! This is horrific. Seriously? Look at all the people. I can't believe this. Is this real?

Yasmin: Yes, and I do not want that in our rings. Do you remember I told you about the jewellery store that knows the source of their gold? I mean this store only sells ethical gold and silver.

Danny: But Yasmin, that other store is miles away. We have to spend an hour driving there and an hour back. Can't we just go a store in town – it's so much more convenient.

Yasmin: Convenient? Well, I don't think slavery is very 'convenient'.

Danny: But those ethical rings cost more, don't they?

Yasmin: Yes, of course they are a bit more expensive – and think about why?

Danny: What do you mean?

Yasmin: Hello? They are a bit more expensive because the workers in the mines are getting paid. How would you like it if you worked 12 hours a day, year after year, and you didn't get paid? Or if you did, it was hardly anything.

Danny: Okay, okay - I get your point. But Yasmin, do you think you can change the world?

Yasmin: One ring at time – maybe.

Danny: This really means a lot to you, doesn't it?

Yasmin: Yes, it does. I've been thinking about it ever since I read that book.

Danny: Ok, fair enough. You have a good point – let's do it. And this photo is horrific. Okay! Yes, let's get those rings you're talking about. So, wait a minute.

Yasmin: What?

Danny: So you're saying the jewellery store that we'll go to – that store sells rings made from the ethical gold, right?

Yasim: Yes?

Danny: So what about every other piece of gold jewellery that we see in shops. How do we know that there isn't slavery in all that gold?

Yasmin: Exactly – we don't. You won't believe this, but one day I went into a very exclusive store and I spoke to the store owner about this - and guess what he said.

Danny: What?

Yasmin: He smiled at me and said, 'Look, to be honest, we are in the business of making money. We design and sell gold jewellery to make a profit, simple as that. It's too bad about the slavery, but that's not our problem – we don't care. That's not something we are worried about.'

Danny: What did you say?

Yasmin: Well, at first I was a bit shocked. But then I said, 'Well, maybe you should care. You know, it's just a matter of time that more and more customers will get educated. Sooner or later, customers will learn about the source of their gold jewellery – and think about it. Given the choice - will customers, just like me, be happy to pay a little more for a ring that is ethical, or will they buy a ring from your store, a ring that is dripping in blood?'

Danny: What? You said that?

Yasmin: Then I smiled, said 'Good Morning' and left. He was speechless. Oh and Dan, every smart electronic device we own also has gold and other minerals – like that mobile phone you're holding right now!

Danny: What? Why don't we know about this?

Yasmin: Well, now we do know. The question is, what are we going to do about it?