

# Guidelines For Selecting A Mate

**Introduction.** Nothing is quite as frustrating as talking to an 18 or 20 year-old child about his or her choice of a boyfriend or girlfriend, especially when that selection has been made for all the wrong reasons. Although feelings or “chemistry” can develop, feelings must not allow young people to completely ignore other important factors in picking a mate for life. Parents and older adults must not hesitate to issue a few warnings about the realities of what makes a good companion (Proverbs 12:15; Ephesians 6:1-4).

These five guidelines are not intended to discourage marriage until young people find the “perfect” husband or wife. All happily married couples can testify to the change and growth that have been necessary to the success of their relationship. These guidelines can at least help weed out those who are totally unacceptable for marriage.

## I. ***Pick A Mate Who Has Spiritual Goals And Values***

- A. God’s way and the ways of the world have always been in conflict. God insists that man live by principles of righteousness and the world follows the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life (Acts 10:35; 1 John 2:15-16). God demands that His people love the world, deny themselves and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). The man of the world is at liberty to follow his sensual desires.
- B. The difference creates practical, moral problems when one of the mates is a Christian. What kind of leisure will the two engage in? Will he be satisfied with a wife who will not put on a bikini and go to the beach with him on vacation? Will he be upset when she refuses to attend smutty movies? What kind of TV will he let the children watch and what kind of language will he use before them? Will he drink, keep liquor in the house, get violent when he has had one too many? Will he follow the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21)?
- C. It is not just a problem of morality. It is a problem of duties assigned by God. What about a man who does not accept his role as a husband and father to love and cherish his wife and children as his own body (Ephesians 5:28-29)? What about the woman who rejects the duties of subjection, motherhood and housekeeping (Ephesians 5:22-23; 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-4)?
- D. Couples must settle these important issues before marriage! The ways of the world have nothing good to offer marriage and young people had better believe it now before they take those vows. Couples who think marriage can survive the worldly values and goals of greed, lust, pleasure and power are ignoring both the wisdom of God and the experience of man.

## II. ***Pick A Mate Who Shows Signs Of Maturity***

- A. Marriage is not for children. That is why half of teenage marriages end in divorce. Children are usually selfish and seek what is in their best interest. This can be fatal to friendship with peers, but even more so to a permanent, intimate relationship like marriage.
- B. Couples must work out major problems before they wed. Partners who are unwilling to correct flagrant flaws before marriage are less likely to change afterwards. Sure there are exceptions, but do not count on it. Not only must you deal with issues of whether or not a mate is a Christian or if they are living faithfully, but there are also problems like drinking, gambling, obsession with sports, discourtesy, unkindness, temper tantrums, physical abuse, lying, etc. Major character defects easily degenerate into intolerable living conditions (1 Kings 19:1-2; 21:1-16).
- C. If successful marriages have one secret, it is the indispensable quality of unselfishness (Philippians 2:2-4). In some respects, adjustments and compromise are vital to happy marriages. What one mate refuses to correct, the other must accept. What one cannot accept, the other must correct. This kind of "give and take" is an integral of a happy existence (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). "Marry to make your mate happy" is a simple rule that responsible adults understand and young people should discuss before they wed (Matthew 23:11).

## III. ***Pick A Mate Who Can Offer More Than Physical Beauty***

- A. "Beauty is skin deep" is a fact that all humans rebel against. The fact that men of all ages are leaving their wives for young, beautiful women shows that it is not limited to youth. Think how vulnerable teens and young adults are to this false standard for choosing a companion (Proverbs 31:30).
- B. All people in their sober moments know that no direct relationship exists between physical attractiveness and qualities for a successful marriage. Love, care, personality, maturity, unselfishness, thoughtfulness are not determined by the degree of bodily beauty in which they are wrapped (1 Samuel 16:7).
- C. The fact is that handsome and beautiful prospects are often egotistical, self-centered people who think mostly of themselves. A physically attractive female may be more interested in how she appears in public, how she looks in her clothes and how her makeup enhances her beauty. As the warmth of a house at 20 degrees below zero is not based on the beauty of its architecture, so the warmth and intimacy of marriage does not rest on the great looks of the husband and the wife (Proverbs 6:25; 1 Peter 3:3-4).

D. Marriages are not surviving today because concern for the real person is absent between companions. The more husbands and wives care for the total being of one another, the more important each feels and the more energy and enthusiasm each contributes to the relationship. The sexual component is essential and vital to marriage, but only when it is perceived as one of many avenues of love can it be used properly to show tender affection for a mate to whom one is unselfishly dedicated.

#### IV. ***Pick A Mate Who Is A Good Friend***

- A. A man's best friend should be his wife, and a woman's best friend should be her husband (Proverbs 17:17). Young people can determine this in their dates by taking a good look at how they spend their time. Are they constantly wrapped up in one another's arms? Do they spend long hours sightseeing, visiting and sharing in sporting events? Lust and physical displays of affection, some very inappropriate, may be fun, but they are seldom a good gauge of each other's personalities. When that ardor cools after a few months of marriage, the couple may look at each other and decide they do not like one another!
- B. Communication will be vital for sharing each other's interests and for solving problems. Problems are not settled by ignoring them. They call for thought, discussion and mutually accepted solutions. Companions who will not express their feelings and discuss problems with one another in love are neglecting "aggravations" that will fester and erupt. A goal of courtship is to understand a prospective mate -- an excellent time for young folks to determine whether they can bare their hearts to one another.
- C. The key question for married couples is whether they are good friends, whether they enjoy one another's company, whether they are close companions (Proverbs 27:17). Something can be said for "chemistry," but the fact is that 99% of a couple's time together is consumed by matters other than a sexual relationship. It can be a long, boring life together if physical lust is the basis for the wedding. Give it some thought and make a commitment to someone who is fun and comfortable. Make certain those terms "boyfriend" and "girlfriend" have real meaning in those dating days (Acts 18:2, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19).

#### V. ***Pick A Mate Who Views Marriage As Permanent***

- A. A person who buys a car to last for 20 years treats it differently than if he plans to trade every two years. It is the same with the man or woman who marries a companion for life. Newlyweds who enter marriage with divorce as an option are not committed to the loving care

that preserves relationships unto death. Obstacles to them become stumblingblocks rather than building blocks.

- B. The qualities, on the other hand, that couples develop to withstand the storms of life become the bonding elements that seal and protect the marriage against deterioration. Talking about problems, adjusting habits in the interest of peace, sacrificing to meet a need and giving attention to the minor points are a few of those elements.
- C. What God joins together, man may not put asunder (Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39). Many prospective mates neither know nor believe that statement. More and more young people come from broken homes and have no greater respect for the permanency of marriage than their parents. Divorce tends to perpetuate itself in families. No longer can couples-to-be take for granted that their mate really means "unto death do us part." It is a topic that had better be discussed thoroughly before marriage.

**Conclusion.** The principles that we have examined in this lesson are not optional. They are the will and wisdom of God Almighty. They have been revealed from heaven for the happiness of the human family. At times they seem to be idealistic and beyond the reach of ordinary men, but God intends to make extraordinary men by the power of the gospel of Christ.

Men and women who will fill themselves with the dynamic energy of God's spiritual principles will find themselves unusually good husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and children. No one denies the challenge God's word proposes for the family, but neither must any one deny the power available to meet the challenge. Think of the blessings it yields -- the unspeakable joy and peace that fill the households of those who give and receive love after the likeness of Christ.