

Marriage Material

Introduction. Because most of life is about decisions, careful evaluation in a number of areas will save you a lifetime of frustration. Right now, you might think she's pretty, or playful, or nice to you. It's not enough. One pregnancy for her or middle age for him can alter a figure, responsibilities at home for her or at work for him can reveal laziness, and a disagreement about money can turn both against each other. Parents and older adults must not hesitate to issue warnings about the realities of what makes a good companion (Proverbs 12:15; Ephesians 6:1-4). Churches have many men and women who are hampered in their abilities and success because they were distracted by a good-looking face that now seems to bring more trouble than bliss.

What I will go over today is 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. But this advice can at least help weed out those who are unacceptable for a relationship of that magnitude.

I. Pick A Mate Who Has Spiritual Goals And Values

- A. God's way and the world's ways 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 reject the world, deny themselves, and follow Christ (Luke 9:23).
- B. The difference creates practical, moral problems when one of the two 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 go to inappropriate movies? What kind of TV will he let the children watch and what kind of language will he use in front of them? Will he drink, keep beer, wine, and liquor in the house, get violent when he has had one too many? Will he gamble away the family's hard-earned money?
- C. But is not just a problem of the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21). 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 keeping the home (Ephesians 5:22-23; 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-4)?
- D. Moreover, find someone who will pray for you (James 5:16) and encourage you (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Find someone who will inspire you to become a better person (Luke 10:42). The ways of the world have nothing good to offer marriage, and young couples had better accept it now before they take their vows. Couples who think marriage can survive the worldly values and goals of greed, 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 almost half of teenage marriages end in divorce. Children are usually selfish and seek what is in their best interest. This

can be fatal in friendships 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 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 part 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 older men 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 sound moments know that no direct relationship exists between physical attractiveness and qualities for a successful marriage. Love, care, personality, maturity, unselfishness, and thoughtfulness are not determined by the degree of physical beauty a person possesses (1 Samuel 16:7).
- C. Unfortunately, handsome and beautiful prospects are often egotistical, self-centered people who think mostly of themselves. 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, and the better people they become. The physical component is essential to marriage, but it can only be used properly when it is perceived as one of many avenues of love.

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? Again, physical attraction may be fun, but it is usually not a good gauge of personality. When that passion cools after a few months of marriage, the couple may wonder what attracted them to each another.

- B. Communication is 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. A goal of courtship is to understand a prospective mate — an excellent time for young couples to determine whether they can bare their hearts to one another. Companions who will not express their feelings and discuss problems with one another in love are neglecting “aggravations” that will fester and erupt.
- C. Something can be said for “chemistry,” but 99% of a couple's time together is consumed by something other than physical intimacy. It can be a long, boring life if physical lust is the basis for marriage. Give it some thought and commit to someone who is fun and comfortable, and who respects you for more than what you are physically. Make certain those terms “boyfriend” and “girlfriend” have real meaning to you (Acts 18:2, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). “In sickness and in health, for better or for worse” plays out a lot better when you are married to your best friend (Proverbs 27:17).

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 all the way to death. Obstacles to them become stumblingblocks rather than building blocks.
- B. The qualities, on the other hand, that couples develop to withstand problems become the bonding elements that protect the marriage against deterioration. Talking about problems, adjusting habits in the interest of peace, sacrificing to meet a need, and giving attention to minor issues are a few of those elements.
- C. What God joins together, man may not separate (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. These principles 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 and women, but God intends to make extraordinary men and women 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 be exceptional husbands and fathers, wives and mothers. 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.