

One of the most important decisions you will make in your life is finding a marriage partner. God's plan for marriage is plainly spelled out by Jesus.

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Matthew 19:4-6).

Marriage is a lifetime commitment between a man and a woman. Are you ready to make this type of commitment to the one you are considering marrying? Let's consider some things that may help you to decide if you are.

Take A Piece Of Paper And Write A Description Of The Person You Want To Marry

In other words, what do you want your marriage to be like? Compare what you wrote to these examples:

- "I want someone who drinks and slaps me around when he is drunk."
- "I want someone that smokes and ruins his health and is a bad influence on our children."
- "My dream marriage is to be at home with my children playing in the yard and my husband hits me because he is angry with me."
- "My dream marriage is to have a wife that will not go to church services with me and curses and lies to me."

You probably did not write anything like this down, but many marriages are like these examples. Why? What changed? The

answer is, "*Nothing changed!*" The one they married acted like that when they were dating and it only got worse when they married. If you do not want a husband or wife that acts like these examples, do not date someone that acts that way. You will not change them by getting married to them. The time to "divorce" that person is before you marry them.

Many marriages fail because the couple did not adequately prepare for the marriage before they said, "I do." They may spend days or months preparing for the wedding ceremony, but little, if any, time preparing for the marriage. Thus the wedding goes wonderfully and the marriage fails. Let's consider next some things that may help in making proper preparation for marriage.

You Should Use The Dating Process To Determine If You, As A Couple, Are Compatible For A Lifetime Together

Before romance and emotions take over you need to take some time getting to really know each other. Use the dating process to build a relationship. You may find that "hunk" you are thinking about marrying is a bum or that "beauty queen" is really conceited. You may also find the he or she is just the right one to spend your life with.

While you are dating, respect each others feelings. Young ladies, if he does not respect your feelings now he will not respect your feelings if you are married to him. The same goes for young men. If she does not respect you while you are dating, she will not respect you if you marry her.

Take your time. Do not marry the wrong person. You deserve to have a good marriage to someone that will make you happy and stand beside you through good times and bad times. If you get in a hurry to marry, you are in danger of marrying

someone that will cause you sorrow and heartache.

Find out a lot about each other in the dating process before romance and emotions take over. You will discover that love becomes blind in dating, but it recovers its ability to see in marriage. Too many marriages are based on romance instead of commitment. Romance cannot provide stability for the marriage because romance is based on emotions, and emotions are always changing. Only with both partners committed to the marriage will the marriage succeed. So, is this really the person you want to spend the rest of your life with?

Ask Yourself These Five Questions To Determine If You Are Ready To Marry

(1) Can I give evidence that I have worked through my dependency on my parents? Pay close attention to what Jesus said in Matthew 19:5. "And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" Did you notice that He said, "leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife"? One of the biggest problems in marriage comes when either the husband or the wife has not *left* father and mother. You probably have been in your parents' home since the day you were born and they are the ones you depended on for your spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. They are your best friends. But when you get married you are to leave father and mother behind and now your spouse is your best friend. He or she is the one you will depend on for your needs now. Your parents will still be there for you, but your spouse is now the most important person to you on this earth. Are you ready to make that change?

(2) *What do I expect of my partner?*
This should be made clear in the dating process in every area that will affect you in your married life. Discuss how finances will be handled. How many children do you want to have and what kind of discipline will be used (God's way is the only way that profits the child and the parents)? Discuss personal preferences, cleanliness, and anything else that is important to a good marriage. If there are disagreements now they will only get worse after the wedding.

(3) *Am I able to give my word and keep it?* Jesus declared, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37). The preacher will say, "Do you _____ take this man/woman to be your lawfully wedded husband/wife for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health until death do you part?" If you say, "I do" are you lying or telling the truth? Are you committed to this marriage through the good and bad times or are you going to want out when he is worse than you thought or she spends all of your money or he has a terminal disease?

(4) *Have I learned how to forgive?* Paul wrote, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). This verse fits the husband and wife relationship as much as it does our relationships with others. If you cannot forgive someone now for things they do to you or say about you, you are not ready to marry. The marriage relationship will have many ups and downs, and if you have not learned how to forgive others your marriage will fail.

(5) *Will this person help me get to Heaven or hinder me?* Look closely at their spiritual life. Is he a **faithful** Christian?

You need to take time to get to know him before you walk down the aisle with him. She will either help you and your children go to heaven or she will hinder you and the children. And remember, we will not marry someone we do not date. If we only date Christians we will marry a Christian. If we date Christians and non-Christians we may marry a non-Christian. I am not saying it is a sin to marry a non-Christian, and many such situations have resulted in the conversion of the husband or wife and they are now working their way to heaven together. But studies have shown that over half of Christians that married non-Christians eventually became unfaithful to God. Is the one you are considering marrying worth the danger to your soul and to your children's souls? Marriages will last a lifetime when they are Christ-centered in all they do. A marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian cannot be Christ centered.

The marriage relationship can be wonderful for those that are prepared for marriage. When the husband has a genuine love for his wife he will praise her and seek to encourage her in every possible way. The wife will respond by showing love and respect for her husband and desire to meet his every need. There is no better relationship than a family working together to get to heaven. *Make sure you are ready to marry before you say "I do."*

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