

## Christian Growth Course - Unit 14

### Choosing the Right Mate

Introduction: No choice you make, apart from conversion to Christ, has more to do with your happiness and your destiny. Many lives with great potential have been neutralized by the wrong choice of a mate. Many others have been enriched and made much more productive by the right choice.

Surely God is concerned about a choice so important. He wants us to choose wisely, and he has given us principles to guide such a choice. He will also give personal wisdom and providential guidance. But God only guides those who are willing to think and judge and do what is best.

A Christian must not "run ahead of God," but seek God's will about marriage as he does about everything else. A person who seeks God's help and acts wisely can find a life partner who will help, not hinder, his or her service to God; who will share the same values and ministry. Prayer and wise judgment have everything to do with how happy and rewarding a marriage will be.

1. Every choice we make in life, including whether to marry and whom to marry, should be made to glorify God, to please him, and to serve the interests of his kingdom - 1 Corinthians 10:31; Matthew 22:37, 38; 6:33.
2. Pray for wisdom about marriage. God wants to guide you.
  - A. Consider whether it is God's will for you to marry at this time.
    - 1) Do you need to remain single, at least for now, so that you can give undivided attention to God's service? 1 Corinthians 7:32-35.
    - 2) Do you need to delay marriage in order to finish something important for your future, such as education?
    - 3) Are you mature enough for marriage? Are you ready financially?
  - B. God will give you wisdom and guidance in choosing the right mate - James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5, 6. God guided the way to the right wife for Isaac - Genesis 24.
3. Take enough time before marriage to be reasonably sure you are making the right choice. The immature, selfish person can't wait. The mature person can.
4. Marry a committed Christian who can fully share with you in God's service and your purpose for living.
  - A. The whole spirit of scripture shows that it is not God's will for a Christian to marry an unbeliever:
    - 1) Abraham insisted that Isaac should not marry a pagan Canaanite - Genesis 24:1-4.
    - 2) Isaac and Rebekah insisted the same concerning Jacob, and sent him to where he could find a wife who believed in God - Genesis 27:46; 28:1-3.

- 3) The Israelites were forbidden to marry pagan Canaanites lest they be led away from serving God - Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Ezra 9, 10.
  - 4) Christians are not to be "yoked together with unbelievers" - 2 Corinthians 6:14. This certainly includes marriage.
  - 5) A Christian widow, if she remarries, is only to remarry someone "who belongs to the Lord" - 1 Corinthians 7:39.
  - 6) If the apostle Paul and other apostles married, their wives would be believers - 1 Corinthians 9:5.
- B. A Christian should not date an unbeliever, because few people are strong enough to back up once they become emotionally involved. And emotional involvement happens before people realize it.
  - C. You should not date a person in order to convert him or her. Few Christians are strong enough to stay emotionally unentangled.
  - D. It is true that where Christians have married unbelievers, the unbeliever has sometimes been converted. There are examples of this in the church. But this does not present an accurate picture, because many Christians who married unbelievers and did not convert them are not in church to be counted any more.
  - E. Much conflict comes to a marriage when one mate is an unbeliever.
  - F. Where a Christian marries an outsider in order to try to save his soul, the Christian may greatly limit his or her own future effectiveness in saving many other souls who might have been reached.
5. Choose a mate on the basis of more than just physical attraction - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (RSV).
  6. Choose someone who according to God's law is free to marry (and be sure you yourself are free to marry) - Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:9; Mark 10:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11.
  7. Do not marry a person to change him or her.
    - A. If a person is not motivated enough to change wrong beliefs and behaviors while "madly in love" during courtship, he or she is not likely to change later on.
    - B. Even if changes are made during courtship, take time to be sure they were made for God's sake and are genuine, not just something temporary to please the other person during a time of infatuation.
    - C. The purpose of courtship and marriage is not evangelism or reformation. If you cannot accept the person as he or she is, and if you would not want the person to be the mother or father of your children as he or she is, do not marry the person! Once you enter the marriage covenant, God does not give you the freedom to change your mind.
  8. There are other indicators which will help you to choose the right person and avoid the wrong

ones.

- A. Attitude toward parents and relationship to them.
  - 1) The way a person submits (or fails to submit) to parental authority will indicate how well he or she can handle the mutual submission necessary in marriage. The way one respects his or her parents shows how one will respect his or her mate.
  - 2) A man will tend to treat his wife as he treated his mother; a woman will tend to treat her husband as she treated her father.
- B. The person's parents' approach to life:
  - 1) Housekeeping - sloppy or orderly
  - 2) The father's providing for the family
  - 3) Financial management or mis-management
  - 4) Courtesy or rudeness
  - 5) Good or bad ways of handling conflicts
  - 6) Problems with drink or drugs
  - 7) Ability or inability to show love
  - 8) Responsibility and maturity
  - 9) Divorce
  - 10)
- C. The person's attitude toward authority in general.
- D. The person's relationships with people:
  - 1) Ability or inability to trust people
  - 2) Ability or inability to communicate, to be open
  - 3) Ability or inability to reach out to others
  - 4) Shyness or self-confidence
- E. The person's self-esteem or lack of it. Signs of poor self-esteem:
  - 1) An abnormal need to be loved, and an inability to give love.
  - 2) Showing off
  - 3) Having to be the center of attention

- 4) Having alcohol or drug problems
  - 5) Having to be with the boyfriend or girlfriend every spare moment
- F. Emotional instability or stability; insecurity or security. Signs of problems:
- 1) Jealousy of boyfriend's or girlfriend's friends and of his or her other interests
  - 2) Having to be together all the time
  - 3) Alcohol or drug problems
  - 4) Inability to make decisions and be secure about them
  - 5) Frequent conflicts with people
  - 6) Serious mood swings
  - 7) Frequent anger without reasonable cause
  - 8) Sexual promiscuity
- G. Maturity or immaturity. Some signs of immaturity:
- 1) Impulsiveness
  - 2) Pouting
  - 3) Having to have everything one wants
  - 4) Financial irresponsibility
  - 5) Irresponsibility toward work or other duties and obligations
  - 6) Poor judgment
  - 7) Irregular church attendance
  - 8) Inconsideration of the feelings and needs of others
  - 9) Inability to finish what one starts
- H. Clear goals and ideals.
- I. Self-control and moral behavior before marriage.
- 1) A couple who have not been self-controlled before marriage may find it harder to trust each other after marriage.
  - 2) Guilt over immoral behavior leads to the habit of blaming each other later when problems arise, and may cause emotional problems.
  - 3) Shame clouds affection for each other and the joy of the relationship.

9. Choose a person who is compatible with you in as many areas as possible. A marriage will generally be stronger and happier the more you and your mate have in common. Some important areas of compatibility:
- A. Race and culture (It is not scripturally wrong to marry interracially, but heavier strains are put on the marriage and the children).
  - B. Economic level
  - C. Attitudes about sex
    - 1) Ideas on birth control and abortion
    - 2) A giving or a taking attitude
    - 3) What activities are pleasurable or acceptable?
  - D. Ideas about finances
    - 1) Who is to handle the finances?
    - 2) Will the wife work? How long?
    - 3) Accept help from parents? How much?
    - 4) Savings
    - 5) Church contributions
    - 6) Buying on credit
    - 7) Conservatism in spending
  - E. Ideas about children
    - 1) Have children or not?
    - 2) How many?
    - 3) When start; what spacing?
    - 4) Birth control acceptable? What methods acceptable?
    - 5) Mother at home, or child care?
    - 6) Child-rearing methods
    - 7) Important values to be instilled
    - 8) Family devotions? Religious training?
    - 9) Methods and strictness of discipline

- F. Religious beliefs
  - 1) Where attend church; whether to attend
  - 2) Contributions
  - 3) Time spent in church activities
  - 4) What will children be taught? Will infants be baptized?
- G. Personality (There are tests that help predict compatibility).
- H. Male and female roles
- I. Strong likes and dislikes
- J. Communication
- K. Career plans
- L. In-law relationships
  - 1) Will loyalty be greater to spouse or parents?
  - 2) Will you get along with in-laws?
  - 3) How close will you live to parents?
  - 4) Can you accept living far from them if necessary?
  - 5) How much time will you spend with parents?
- M. Methods of handling conflicts
- N. Politics
- O. Friends
- P. Social concern
- Q. Intellectual ability
- R. Strong interests

10. Some wisdom for courtship and engagement:

- A. Don't cut yourselves off from your other Christian friends because of your interest in each other.
- B. Don't smother each other. Give the other person room to still be a person and to follow some of his individual interests. There is room for this in a relationship which is healthy and secure.

- C. Serve God together. If a relationship with a particular person does not enhance but hinders what you have been doing in God's service, it is not the right relationship for you.
- D. Don't pursue a relationship with a person with whom you cannot pray and study the Bible and worship.
- E. Be careful of progressive intimacy. It is hard to back up. Unmarried people are not free in God's sight to take sexual liberties, even those less than intercourse. Choose the places where you will not be tempted; go in groups; limit time together if necessary, and talk about the problem openly together. Get counsel if necessary. Sometimes "going too far" damages or destroys a beautiful relationship; feelings change because of guilt and shame.
- F. If a person turns out not to be the right one for you, it is better to break an engagement than to go on. This is one understood purpose of an engagement, to be sure you are right for each other.

Conclusion: You lose nothing and you gain everything by following God's wisdom and asking his help when you choose a mate. He wants the best for you. He will honor you when you honor Him by putting his will first in this matter.

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