

How to Choose Your Life Partner

Peter, Brian, and Katie, we realize that we have not discussed dating, courtship, or marriage with you in a long time. We have seen each of you struggle with guy/girl relationships at school, and we believe it is our privilege and responsibility to provide you counsel. We've done some research and a lot of praying, and we think this document will provide a basis for open discussion. We've also listed at the end a number of questions to which we can all provide these principles and come up with day-to-day, "How do I handle ____ situation." The information below is from a number of sources, and it represents what we believe is appropriate counsel in seeking a life partner.

Each of you has passed through adolescent life in a growing understanding of and fellowship with members of the opposite gender, so there won't be any difficulty in moving on to the next step in the serious game of choosing the life partner. When you meet someone who attracts you more than the others, you will feel compelled to select this one friend from among all the others; that friendship, that "being in love", can lead to courtship. You may feel now, or sometime in the near future, that your heart has already chosen your destined mate. This is natural, but it is not the whole story. We want to look at this in more detail.

Courtship, dating, engagement, and marriage are considered and talked about as "great fun." There is no human experience more exhilarating to mind and body than falling in love. But what we want to, in fact, we need to, point out is that choosing your life partner is much more than "great fun"; it is one of the most serious issues of your life. During these critical months and years **you are choosing your life-partner**, and therefore, **you are choosing your destiny**. You yourself are choosing your own happiness or misery. You are choosing whether the rest of your life is to be lived in the heaven of perpetual 'keeping in love' or, may be, in the hell of disharmony and perpetual friction. Other people are not choosing for you. You would be indignant if they (or we) attempted to. You insist that this is **your choice**, and so it is.

How important, therefore, that you choose your life partner wisely! How important that you are careful yourself and that you get careful and prayerful advice from us and from friendly elders! We believe that this is the greatest benefit of courtship; it is a time and an experience in which **you choose, and you choose wisely**.

Of course, you can't choose wisely without knowing fairly intimately the one you are considering. That is why courtship is good and necessary. There must be a special relationship between the two of you that makes possible private talks and sharing together of interests and activities. You can "go places" together. You can visit each other's homes and get to know each other's families. You can worship together. You can do Christian service together. In all these experiences you can observe each other in different circumstances and notice each other's reactions. It is a good thing for this experience of courtship to take a long time so that by the time your choice is made you are quite sure that **you have chosen wisely**.

Here are four guiding principles to help you to choose your life partner:

(1) Choose a committed Christian

“Can two walk together except they be agreed?” An unequal yoke is bound to chafe. Do not think that “being in love” is enough and that after marriage you can win your partner to discipleship. It may not, probably won’t, be so. Besides, Christian marriage is a sacrament made before God. You must both start from the same place, so that the two can be one in Christ.

Be careful of those who have grown up in “liberal” church-going homes where some of the conservative values you have been taught may not be shared. You don’t have to accept all our values. It is your responsibility as Christian adults to know what you believe, why you believe it, and how those beliefs play out in real life.

(2) Choose a “kindred spirit”

It is not enough that your special friend is a committed Christian. He or she must have a personality that harmonizes with your own. The word to describe this essential element in life partnership is *affinity*, and it means “relationship by spiritual attraction.”

Negatively, it means that the one must be free from anything that would offend the other's tastes. Positively, it means that the mind, intellect, speech, habits, and tastes of the one are pleasing to the other. Especially must this be true of mind and soul; “my soul seems knit to thine.”

Do not look for someone exactly like you. You want them to complement your weaknesses. Be careful if they share all your strengths AND many of your weaknesses.

(3) Look for Character

A sad story:

Mrs. Smith is a white-haired widow who lives in a little cottage in our village. I was surprised when I found that she was not much more than fifty. Her face is calm now but deeply lined with the marks of past sorrow. She sat rocking herself in her chair as she told me the most hair-raising story of an unhappy married life. Her husband was unspeakably cruel. “How came you to marry him?” I asked her. “Oh, he was such a fine young man,” she said, “his voice was deep and vibrant, and as we walked along the country roads he quoted miles of poetry. My courtship was like a beautiful dream. I was enchanted. It was after we married I noticed defects in his character. We were kindred spirits, but that wasn't enough. I should have looked for character.”

Take warning then, and look for character. Does she (or he) always keep her (his) appointment? What sort of excuses does she (he) make if she (he) doesn't? What are her (his) habits like? Does she (he) always tell you the exact truth? Is she (he) fickle in her (his) affections? Does she ignore her dad? Does he want his mother to wait on him hand and foot? Is she (he) vain? Is she (he) sarcastic? Is she (he) lazy?

“You want me to marry an angel,” you might be thinking. Well, that's not a bad ideal! The trouble is that love is blind, and we always think she (or he) is an angel when we are considering life partners. It is wise to make quite sure of her (or his) character before marriage, and while it is foolish to expect perfection, it is very wise to put high value on character. She (or he) needs to do the same “character evaluation” on you before she (or he) agrees to courtship with you.

(4) Look for Accomplishments

We're not talking about those abilities that need academic training, but about the sort of things that any wise mother will teach her daughter, or a wise father will pass along to his sons. What has she (or he) done with life? Where is she (or he) going? Do I want to go there, too?

Heed this familiar warning: “Can she cook, and can she sew, Billy boy?”

Your mom puts it this way, “Can he lead, make you secure that you are the only one in his life, change the spark plugs, fix the plumbing, make a good living, and teach our future sons to be godly men, Greta-girl?”

God will guide those who seek His leading. But even so, He will do it through your own wits and through the wise advice of your parents and Christian friends. If you are under submission to your parents, if you are in fellowship with God, and if you prayerfully follow the five guiding principles, you will not make a mistake. (We promise!)

1. Dating is defrauding. Don't “date” her (or him) unless you are ready to pursue courtship with her (or him).
2. Courtship is designed to lead to marriage. Courtship takes time. Courtship is a joint project between the man and woman, **all the parents, and all the siblings.**
3. Engagement is a serious contract. Engagements should be of short duration.
4. Marriage is for life.
5. Divorce is not an option.

How Do I Select My Life Partner?

Several scriptures highlight the problems that occur when a man recklessly chooses a woman as a wife. When a man is quick in making a decision after his desires, he shows that his understanding of marriage is shallow. He is not thinking of preserving or establishing some heritage; instead, he is thinking about fulfilling his desires. The godly man must wait upon God for the wife God has for him.

“Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the *sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.* Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ ” (Genesis 6:1-3, NASB).

Their decisions for choosing their wives were faulty for several reasons.

- **The sons of God were markedly different than the sons of man.**
Up to this point there was a special distinction between the men who sought after God and those ones who had forgotten God. The godly men were known by their commitment to God. The other men should have paid more attention to their heritage and preserved their distinct vision. Without a vision of godliness, they got lost in other things that they saw, and they turned out to look (and act) like everyone else.
- **These God men "saw that the daughters of men were beautiful."**
They were not careful enough to govern what they saw. Once we notice "beauty," we deliberate on it, and our minds are influenced.
- **"They took wives for themselves."**
Once beauty became their focal point, then their decisions of life were made upon it. They lost the ability to think reasonably and to reflect. Their flesh seized control, and they never got it back. We are not saying that a beautiful wife is bad! Sarah was beautiful. The issue is that beauty controlled the men. The way the women talked, looked, and walked simply enticed the men's attention. Reason and God's guidance took a far second place to the women's beauty. Women became too compelling for the men to think otherwise.
- **They became indiscriminate in their choices.**
"Whomever they chose." This is a clear statement that the men of God took wives who did not share similar values. Genesis goes on to describe the headlong fall of the society after this point. Not much dirt is needed to make the clean dirty. This is true with holiness, too. It stands as the highest priority to train our sons and our daughter to spiritually judge things rather than to physically pursue or to emotionally "feel" things.
- **The LORD responded to this right away.**
He did not have to wait for a generation to prove His thesis. Once the godly seed is lost among the ungodly, then there is no godly seed left. God had no choice but to shorten life expectancy in order to preserve man; otherwise, the ungodliness would soon destroy the world.

These are the "heritage issues" we believe are involved:

- A godly person must marry a godly person.
- Godliness must be protected.
- A church must carry on discipline.
- A family must have rules.
- A government must have laws to preserve itself.
- If what distinguishes God's people is lost even for just one generation, then it is gone.

What kind of wife am I looking for?

A man must think concretely, *"Is this the woman I want to sacrificially devote myself to all my life?"* He should not marry a woman unless he is willing to bind himself to her. Once married, then he must remain dedicated to loving her no matter how bad she is. Here is a list to help you avoid getting married to the wrong person. The phrase on the right side amplifies the thought on the left.

# Only marry a woman if your parents approve.	# (because) your parents' decision is scriptural dictate.
# Learn to love the qualities that God loves.	# (because) you will choose what you like.
# Get out of any pornography and lust.	# (because) pornography makes the physical compelling.
# Stop watching the standard movies and programs.	# (because) you must stop being trained by the wrong thing.
# Pray regularly for God's provision.	# (because) God's pick is more important than your own.
# Pay attention to character quality rather than beauty.	# (because) her character shapes the quality of relationship.
# Observe the way she responds (attitude) to her parents, especially her father.	# (because) her relationship with her parents reflects how she will respond to her husband.
# Grow in your own character so she will like you!	# (because) you must ask yourself, Are you what this woman deserves and likes?

Use any pre-courtship, pre-engagement, and pre-marriage time you still have to train yourself in self-control, obedience to parents (Yes, there it is, again!), and focus on service to others.

A quick word to our single woman (and men)

One of women's greatest fears is the lack of security. When the husband is committed to his wife with constant love, she feels secure, and she has no fear of abandonment. A single woman needs to think quite carefully about the man that she will in the future train herself to respond to (interesting phrase!). She should ask, "How mature is he? How much does he care about God's ways? Does he lead a spiritual life? Does he respect his parents? Do I like his leadership?" What she sees now is a very clear indication of what he will become.

In summary

We, your dad and mom, need to do everything we can possible do to live godly lives before you and to instill a great vision for passing on godliness to you, our children. Peter and Brian, we want to continue to train you in areas of self-control so that you will have control over lust. We don't want you to fall in with the world, and we want you to be the men your wives have waited for. Katie, we want to protect you and prepare you for a wonderful marriage. We want you to be his helpmeet, the one he could not live without

By God's grace we will all stand strong and together raise a new generation of godly men and women. We commit to stand with you in this.

How to Become “Mr. (or Miss) Right”

Becoming “Mr. (or Miss) Right” is the most important thing you can ever do to prepare for courtship, engagement, and marriage.

Finding “Miss (or Mr.) Right” is not your job. God will bring her (or him) along in God’s perfect timing. **(Do you believe this????)**

Instead of concentrating on finding your perfect partner, focus, instead, on becoming her (or his) perfect partner. Consider the following areas:

What qualities do you possess that would be attractive to a godly woman (or man)?

What weaknesses do you have that are not so attractive to a godly woman (or man)?

What qualities do you possess that are pleasing in God’s sight? _____

What areas of your life do you have that are not pleasing to Him? _____

Where do you need to improve to become the man (or woman) God wants you to be?

Each of us, as Christians, should become more Christ-like, because that's what God wants us to be.

Carefully consider:

- Do you strive to please God with your whole heart?
- Do you desire to serve Him with such a passion that nothing else that His place in your life?
- Do you strive to live in such a way that you honor God by what you do and say?
- Are you on fire for God – or are you lukewarm ready to be spit out?
- Do you know the importance of prayer?
- Do you put that “knowledge” into practice?
- Do you have a critical spirit?
- Do you speak truth?
- Do you speak truth in love?
- Are you a servant?
- Do you demonstrate love ... to everyone?
- Do you have a burden for the souls of others?
- Are you a man (or woman) of honor?
- Are you content to be where God has placed you?
- Are you a good listener?
- Do you communicate well?
- Do you lead without being a dictator?
- Do you sacrifice real sacrificial love for others?
- How do you treat your mother (father)? Consider that you will treat your wife (husband) the same way. So will your mate.
- Are you a faithful man (woman)?
- Are you the “cream of the crop” she (he) deserves?

Don't settle for anything less than God's best. **Be picky.** This decision impacts the rest of your life – and the lives of your children, your grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren.

Spiritually speaking, you and your partner **MUST AGREE** upon:

- Salvation – “Born again, blood bought, Spirit taught, eternally saved by grace through faith alone”
- The reason for marriage - **Marry only if you can each serve God better together** than if you both remain single or if you marry others.
- Children - **They are your heritage** and the only eternal thing you will leave behind.

Consider the qualifications for elder from I Timothy 3:2-7. These qualifications are for men, of course, but they are good directives for godly Christians. You should become:

- Blameless (or, without rebuke)
- A “one-woman-man” (or a “one-man-woman”)
- Alert (vigilant, discerning)
- Sober-minded
- Good-mannered
- Hospitable (ready and able to invest in the lives of others)
- Able to teach (know what you believe and know how to teach others)
- Not given to wine (or power, or pot, or sex, or anything else that is wrong)
- Not violent
- Not greedy for money
- Gentle
- Not prone to argue
- Not covetous (content with what God has given you)
- A good manager of your “household” (your car, your room, your finances, your possessions)
- A mature believer
- Worthy of a good reputation

When the time comes for you to discuss serious life issues with your one special friend and **look at courtship**, consider these issues. Do you agree about:

- God – How important is He to you?
- The Bible – Is it infallible? Is it relevant?
- Jesus – Who is He? What does it matter? What is your relationship to Him?
- The Holy Spirit – What are His roles in your life?
- Salvation – Is it only through grace by faith? Can you lose it?
- Children – What does it mean to raise up godly seed? How many?
- Birth control
- Abortion – What about a fetus with genetic challenges?
- Holidays – How will you celebrate each? With whom? What are your family traditions?
- Television
- Movies
- Baptism
- Retirement
- Church attendance
- Alcohol use
- Type of home
- Giving
- Prayer
- Bible reading
- Child training
- Child birth
- Education for your children
- Wife working outside your home
- Debt
- Doctrinal issues – sovereignty, salvation, communion ...
- Adoption
- In-laws
- Roles of parents after your marriage
- Savings
- Vacations
- Care for elderly parents
- Responsibilities to siblings
- Moving
- Living internationally
- Hobbies – consider time and money
- Friendships
- Club memberships
- Dress standards
- Music
- Books

- Divorce

You can afford to be cautious. Don't rush this process. Stay close to us. Seek godly counsel. Spend time in the Word. Take as much time as you need to make these important decisions. If she (he) is the one, she (or he) will still be there after you consider all the issues.

Now, let's talk about specific issues:

- I need a "date" for the party/dance/ball, etc.
- I've been told that he/she likes me and wants to go out on a date with me.
- I think I've found Mr./Miss Right, but I'm only 22 (or 21 or 19).
- I won't ever meet the right person, or all the good ones will be gone by then.
- Do I really have to wait until I am 25?
- How do all these things fit with the "5 P's" you've taught us?
- How do I handle the guy/girl who always seems to want to be with/around me?
- How do I avoid pairing off when I go on activities, bus trips, van rides, trips, movies...?