

Twelve Guidelines for Choosing a Life's Partner

Introduction:

- Today all over the world the enemy is attacking the institution of marriage in fierce and subtle ways – this is affecting Christian as well as non-Christian marriages resulting in the breakdown of a significant number of marriages
- We need to understand the serious nature of the conflict and to reinforce our defences against the lies that Satan is spreading, standing on the truth that God has revealed in His Word
- If we are not on guard and if we do not have a clear and firm grasp of the fundamental truths, our marriages will begin to suffer serious rifts if not cave in under the attacks of the evil one
- The time to prepare for marriage is not when you are just about to get married – rather it is now – even years before you make the decision – allow the Spirit of God to begin to shape your thinking on this topic – it is the second most important decision you will make in your entire lives and therefore a decision that needs to be considered with the utmost seriousness as it will affect the remainder of your life – if you marry “well,” you will bring “heaven” down to earth; if you make a foolish choice, you may bring yourself down into the pits of a “hellish” life – therefore, take these matters to heart

TWELVE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES:

- 1) Set your heart on growing in intimacy with Jesus (Phil.3:10; Heb.12:1-2; 2 Peter 3:18) – this is not to say that a love relationship with another human being is of little significance in God’s eyes – rather it is an acknowledgement of God’s greatest commandment to love Him first and foremost, above all others, with all our hearts, minds, soul and strength – when we put first things first, then we bring order and harmony into our lives rather than confusion and conflict of interests – when we set our hearts and minds on knowing Christ above all others, then we discover that God blesses us in our human relationships and uses them for His glory
- 2) Put your trust in God (Psalm 37:3-6; Prov.3:5-6) – do not think negative thoughts about God as if He is against marriage and will try and stop you finding a life’s partner or make it very difficult for you – commit this most important aspect of your

life into God's loving hands – know that He is your loving Shepherd and wants to guide you and provide this need in your life in the most satisfying and fulfilling way – see Psalm 23:1-3; 73:23-24; Ex.15:13 – you express your trust in God by praying to Him, asking for His help, direction and overruling in the whole matter of marriage, whether you are a young man or woman – my own testimony; Frieda's testimony

- 3) Study the Scriptures about God's will and standards concerning marriage (2 Tim.2:15; 3:14-16) – prepare your mind and heart by understanding God's ways and standards, eg faithfulness for life, boundaries for our sexuality – lay a strong foundation of truth for the future – note in particular the references in God's Word concerning choosing a life's partner (see OT & NT Scriptures), and what God says about "roles" of husband & wife – believe and accept His standards as the way of love and blessing for your life – set your heart to follow His way – stay alert to Satan's subtle ways to weaken such standards in your mind through interaction with people with differing and lesser standards – choose purity and guard against the corrupting influences of the world – to fall into Satan's evil traps will effect your future marriage in negative ways
- 4) Think through and set the direction of your life (John 4:34; I Cor.9:16, 24-27; Acts 20:24; 2 Tim.3:10) – as you pursue what you believe to be God's calling upon your life, make sure that you look for and find a mate who will share your goals and vision, a person of like mind, spirit and direction in life (a most fundamental issue in setting the stage for a lasting and harmonious relationship) – cf. "equally yoked" = a team of two cattle yoked to a plough
- 5) Learn to understand some of the differences between people:
 - a) personality (preferences, eg extrovert/introvert),
 - b) temperament (4 temperaments),
 - c) cultural differences,
 - d) differences related to contrasting family traditions,
 - e) different values related to socio-economic factors,
 - f) significant differences in fundamental beliefs and convictions (eg different religious or denominational backgrounds) etc.

N.B. Know that the greater the number of significant differences between a man and a woman, the more difficult and complex the adjustments they will encounter should they marry – consider also other neutral factors such as age – consider taking a personality or temperament test

- 6) Learn to know, accept and love the person God has created in YOU (Psalm 139:13-16; Eph.2:10) – a unique and precious individual of great worth – a “man” (leader, initiator) and a “woman” (a true woman, feminine etc.) – discover and learn to appreciate and value who you are according to God’s design, both your strengths and weaknesses – at the same time, learn to value others for their uniqueness and God-given distinctives
- 7) Recognise and seek godly help for any “issues” within your life that potentially will seriously affect the development of a romantic relationship:
- a) past abuse, eg incest or sexual abuse;
 - b) any history of immorality;
 - c) past involvement in the occult;
 - d) addictions;
 - e) personality weaknesses, eg strong and abnormal fears, perfectionism;
 - f) deep-rooted spiritual issues that will harm a relationship, eg anger/rage,
 - g) past experiences, eg a disappointing or failed relationship in the past or the pain experienced through the divorce of your parents

N.B. It is imperative that you recognise the need to get help – know that you can find help and healing through Christ even though your journey towards true healing and recovery may be long and at times distressing and painful – the decisive factor will often be your willingness to forgive yourself or another person who is close to you

- 8) Observe and learn from good marriages, both marriages of God’s people in your Christian community and also from the past (through reading biographies and autobiographies) – note the positives and also the negatives from their example
- 9) Learn to relate effectively and positively with people of the opposite sex – this will help strengthen and develop your ability to be confident, at ease and natural with people – develop good conversational skills – overcome your shyness, your fears of failure or rejection, and any insecurities by taking little steps of faith (= risk):
- a) Take part in activities where you can meet other Christian people of your age (not just making it a behind the scenes spiritual exercise)
 - b) Don’t over-spiritualise your inner urges or desires as if your desire for an intimate relationship with someone of the opposite sex is in conflict with your relationship with God – accept how God has created you with this strong desire to enjoy such a love relationship with someone of the opposite sex when we reach a certain age – do not act out of fear of failure or rejection but rather keep talking about your feelings and desires with your heavenly Father

- 10) Share your journey with a trusted and mature Christian friend – remember that God has placed you within His body so that you can benefit from the maturity and counsel of other fellow-travellers – understand that when you seek such help, you are not expecting this person to make the decision or choice for you but rather to stand alongside you in the process, to support you with their prayers and encouragement, and to offer you any wisdom and advice they believe would help you in making the decision – bring any counsel before the Lord as He is your Lord and the One to whom you must submit all such matters – seek to listen carefully for any promptings of God’s Spirit in your mind and heart
- 11) Wait patiently for God’s time – God’s timing is always perfect, never late, always on time – put off anxiety, and put on trust in His sovereign control of all the circumstances of your life – determine NEVER to take this most important matter into your own hands thinking that since God doesn’t seem to be as active as I would like, I need to take over – guard against taking a step out of sheer frustration, impatience or anger
- 12) Step out in faith in forming a relationship with the person you feel drawn to by the Lord (which if you are a young woman will mean responding to the initiatives and approach of a young man) – trust in God to guard and guide and confirm His will in the matter – remember that God loves you and wants the very best for your life, so you can throw off fear even if the first approach or relationship may not work out as you had expected

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