

CHAPTER 19

HOW TO KNOW YOU'VE CHOSEN THE RIGHT MATE FOR MARRIAGE

I. Choosing a mate in Ancient Israel was not as difficult as today because THE PARENTS DID THE CHOOSING!

- A. However, the selection was generally agreed upon by both children and parents.
 - 1. The father did not arbitrarily decide who his children should marry without their involvement or consent as in the movie "*Fiddler On The Roof*".
 - 2. Parents and children alike mutually discussed the pros and cons of a prospective mate before reaching a decision.
 - 3. There were a few orthodox tribes such as with some Mennonites today who selected mates for their children while the mother was still pregnant. It was a multiple family agreement.
- B. Why were the parents intrinsically involved?
 - 1. Because the families were closely knit and the parents held a position of high esteem in the home.
 - 2. The children placed great value on the wisdom, insight and counsel of Mom and Dad.
 - 3. They had unquestioned trust in their parents judgment to lead them to the best possible choice.
- C. Another factor: The selection of a mate in Ancient Israel was less complicated than in this modern age.
 - 1. The general lifestyle of most people was simple — mostly agrarian.
 - 2. Their standards and values, expectations and philosophies were similar.
 - 3. Their emotional, mental and physical needs were not as complex or varied.
 - 4. Greater emphasis was placed on preparing youngsters for marriage, starting at a young age, than we see today.
 - 5. Choosing a mate was simpler because parents understood the uniqueness of their children and knew what to look

II. Today's Problem Explored

- A. Choosing the ideal mate is more sophisticated and difficult in today's world for the following reasons:
 - 1. The market is bigger.
 - a. There is a far wider selection of personalities to choose from because social contacts are greater.
 - b. High school, college, modern transportation and communication provide young people with innumerable social outlets.
 - c. In olden times, people lived farther apart geographically, thus limiting their chances of exploring the field,
 - (1) Young eligibles may have had only 5-10 choices.
 - (2) Today the prospects may be 10-100 times higher.
 - d. Narrowing the field to the best choice obviously poses a more perplexing problem.
 - 2. Influences outside the home alienate kids from parental guidance.
 - a. School activities, private parties, etc., are drawing kids away from family social life at a younger age.
 - b. In many cases, both Mom and Dad are working, leaving youngsters to shift for themselves and leaving the training to others.
 - c. Because of peer pressure and changing social customs, kids are looking more to each other for solace, comfort, advice and counsel, rather than seeking help from parents.
 - d. The generation gap starts at a much younger age and carries through the critical adolescent years either because parents are detached from children, don't care, or are ignorant of changing values in society.

- e. Young men and women are leaving home at a much younger age to enter college, embark on a career, or to assume their own private lifestyle because it's the 'in' thing to do.
 - f. Any one of these points, or a combination of several, can make choosing a mate more overwhelming
3. The poor example of Mom and Dad.
- a. If the parents' marriage has been shakey (bickering, nagging, accusing and fighting) the children will have no solid foundation on how to select a mate or on which to build a future marriage.
 - b. If, on the other hand, there has been a proper example of love, respect and a spirit of cooperation, fellows and girls will be much better equipped to assume the role of a marriage partner.
4. Young men and women today generally have not been taught how to choose a mate.
- a. Not only have Mom and Dad been negligent in this area, but the schools, colleges and universities haven't imparted these values either.
 - b. Left to their own devices, many people marry today with little background or understanding of what it takes to produce a happy married life.
- B. Two modern outlooks toward marriage today.
1. Except for the deeply religious people who believe marriage is for life, more and more men and women are marrying on a trial basis.
- a. Once the excitement of sex and romance wears off, and the pleasure of living together disappears, "I can always try out somebody new" — they reason.
 - b. The idea of a contractual marriage is becoming more popular.
 - (1) A contractual marriage involves a man and woman signing a contract to live together under certain conditions for a specified period of time.
 - (2) Rules on how to spend money and other domestic regulations are carefully drawn up.
 - c. Another factor which degrades the sanctity of marriage is the laxity and freedom the courts allow in granting divorce.
2. The other camp disallows marriage and encourages living together with no permanent commitments.
- a. A fellow and girl may decide to move into the same apartment and equally share expenses. Both can enjoy free sex and the privileges of married life with no obligations attached.
 - b. This practice is becoming common in all age brackets and is particularly evidenced on today's college campuses.
 - c. There is an apartment complex in the Hollywood area that caters only to single people. No married couples are allowed.
3. People today sometimes marry for entirely wrong reasons.
- a. This includes some people even in God's Church.
 - b. They marry solely to fill a need without first determining if they truly are in love.
 - c. What are these needs or reasons?
 - (1) To escape a bad home situation.
 - (a) Overly strict father.
 - (b) Lack of affection.
 - (c) Large family — deprived of physical needs.
 - (d) Broken home
 - (2) Sexual needs.
 - (3) Loneliness.
 - (4) Man needs a housekeeper.
 - (5) For security.
 - (6) Peer pressure — friends are tying the knot.
 - (7) Fear of growing old and being overlooked.
 - (8) Wanting to identify with the adult status-quo society.
 - (9) Bored with present life.
 - (10) Fed up with roommates moving in-and-out, and the whole insecurity involved in single life.

- (11) Never planned any goals that would preempt or postpone marriage (a function more of nothing to stop me than I really want this).
- (12) For the family status and maturity attached to it in the employment world.
- (13) Woman is tired of providing for herself.
- (14) "I may not get another chance."
- (15) I've been praying for a husband — this must be him.
- (16) Widow left without a provider.
- (17) Widower left without a companion — may have children.
- d. Marrying someone without first getting to know him or her can spell disaster downstream.
 - (1) Keep a lid on emotions (or lusts).
 - (2) Don't accept the first person who seems right and shows an interest in you.
 - (3) Spend sufficient time getting to know the individual before plunging into what's probably the most important physical decision you'll ever make.

III. The Analogy of a Beauty Contest

- A. The process of selecting the right mate for marriage can be compared to a Miss USA pageant or Mr. America contest.
- B. There are numerous contestants to choose from — the challenge is narrowing the field to the most compatible choice.

IV. General Principles to Keep in Mind While Dating

- A. *Date widely to experience a wide range of personalities*
 - 1. Lay a foundation — explore as much of the market as possible.
 - 2. Don't limit yourself to the first few people who come into your life.
 - 3. Study the reasons why you can interface with some people and can't with others.
 - 4. Nail down the personality and character traits that you are attracted to.
 - 5. If you rush marriage without this vital knowledge, you may regret it later in life.
- B. *Don't get involved too young.*
 - 1. Experience the rich opportunities youth has to offer
 - 2. Don't give up your freedom until you've matured and are fully prepared to settle down.
 - a. This applies to going steady.
 - b. Or, having an understanding.
 - 3. Burn out of your system the exciting adventures youth cries out for.
 - a. Parties, fun, challenges.
 - b. School, travel and exploration.
 - 4. Marriage is an adult decision. Kids haven't been on their own long enough to have the knowledge, wisdom and experience to face the demands, adjustments and sacrifices of married life.
- C. *Don't confuse love with physical attraction and sex appeal.*
 - 1. Bodily stimulation or eye appeal is not the way to measure true love.
 - 2. Feelings, heart palpitations and bodily lusts are powerful stimulants, but they can be misleading. Unless mature, they usually prevent one from being objective.
- D. *Don't let infatuation or emotions sway you into making a premature decision.*
 - 1. What is infatuation? How can you recognize it?
 - a. Infatuation is a starry-eyed experience — a romantic daydream — that stirs up the emotions and causes one to think, "This feeling has to be love". Don't try to convince me otherwise. It's heavenly, divine — it'll go on forever.
 - b. However, those who are older and wiser will tell you that this 'experience' will generally fade with time.
 - c. Emotional flutterings can be very tricky unless one is mature enough to understand the true meaning of love.
 - d. Marriage in essence is more mental than emotional.
 - e. It should be based on a foundation of facts, knowledge and a depth of experience.
 - f. It's a mental decision — well thought-out and studied over a period of time (weeks, months).

E. *Concentrate on preparing yourself*

1. Don't just "happen" into marriage without giving thought to the physical and spiritual implications involved
2. Study your role — know what's expected and required.
3. Start collecting information on the subject.
4. Spiritual preparation.
 - a. Read the Bible and let God define your role.
 - b. Seek good counsel from those you respect and place confidence in.
 - c. Carefully select the best books on the market.
 - d. Make this one of your first goals in preparing for marriage.
5. Physical preparation.

MEN:

- a. Have a career nailed down.
- b. Money in the bank (hopefully).
- c. Try to have all big debts paid off.
- d. Avoid if at all possible having to borrow money to pay for wedding expenses.
- e. It's wiser and more expedient to start out as a success in life than to marry first and hope things will pan out.

WOMEN:

- a. Start building a hope chest,
- b. Learn the art of homemaking.
- c. Try to be financially solvent and avoid bequeathing to your husband heavy financial burdens.
- d. Acquaint yourself with the rules of etiquette, entertaining and social awareness.
- e. Prepare for motherhood.

F. *From your dating experiences, start forming a concept of the person you'd like to marry.*

1. Create a flexible mental picture of the kind of personality, character, and standards you hope to find in a mate.
 - a. It's wise to seek counsel from parents, friends, ministers, etc., in your search for answers.
 - b. Remember, however, that the final decision is yours.
2. Determine what qualities you will not compromise on.
 - a. Lack of conversion.
 - b. Vulgarity — crassness.
 - c. Laziness — irresponsibility.
3. Traits you would like to see, but are not indispensable
 - a. Beauty — handsomeness.
 - b. Similar cultural interests.
 - c. Financial status.
4. Keep an open mind — relationships do grow and develop over a period of time.
5. Get to know a person well before you cross him off your list.

V. How To Narrow The Field Down to the Finalists.

A. Keep in mind there are many people you could marry and be happy with.

1. There probably isn't that one perfect human being on earth who could satisfy all the requirements.
2. The task is to begin a process of selection based on the soundest facts, advice, and experience you have available.
3. We are assuming, of course, that those you are interested in have expressed a similar interest in you.

B. The procedure.

1. Pray that God will lead you to the right person.

- a. In virtually every case of young couples from AC who are enjoying a successful marriage, they have stated that they first sought God's guidance through prayer.
- b. If one in God's Church decides he can go it alone without God's help, he stands a greater risk of crashing on the rocks when conditions get shakey

- c. God promises, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6), and "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4)
- d. Clearly, your chances of finding the ideal mate are many times greater by looking to God in faith.
2. Look for one who is physically attractive to you.
- a. There should be a spark (a strong physical appeal) that ignites a relationship. However, it's different from the 'puppy love' or infatuation discussed earlier.
- b. We call this body chemistry, physical magnetism, or sex appeal.
- (1) It's a mature attraction that mutually draws two people close together and causes them to want express warmth, gentleness, and tenderness to each other.
 - (2) Even if all other qualities exist, but this characteristic is missing, an attitude of familiarity and contempt can emerge later.
 - (3) This is not meant to say you can never learn to love someone who's not physically appealing to you; you can grow to love people for other qualities or reasons, as in the case of older people.
 - (4) However, if there's any physical weakness or repulsive feature that bothers you, bugs you, irritates you, or drives you to distraction, you should settle the matter honestly in your mind before saying "I do."
 - (a) Long nose
 - (b) Bald head
 - (c) Figure
 - (d) Birthmark
 - (e) Tendency to be overweight
 - (f) Bad breath
 - (g) Snapping knuckles
 - (h) Piercing, strident voice
 - (i) Etc.
3. Personality.
- a. After having dated widely among the "50 or so contestants" you should begin to sense which personalities harmonize with yours.
- b. Be aware of these points:
- (1) Common interests.
 - (a) Do you have the same likes and dislikes?
 - (b) The more you have in common, the more material you'll have for conversation.
 - (c) Do you enjoy doing the same kinds of things?
 1. Recreation
 2. Exercise
 3. Music
 - (2) Rapport
 - (a) Do you feel relaxed and comfortable around each other?
 1. Laugh and talk sincerely
 2. No pretense
 - (b) Do you see eye-to-eye on most things?
 - (c) What is the after-effect of seeing each other?
 1. Depressed
 2. Uplifted
 3. Upset
 4. Happy
 - (d) How well does he or she react or interface with other people?
 - (3) Dominance or leadership
 - (a) Is the man the leader he should be?
 1. Not domineering — gruff, demanding, austere.
 2. The woman wants to be put in her place when done the right way.
 - a. She is frustrated if she doesn't have a head to look up to.
 - b. She will not respect the man she can twist around her little finger.

(4) Submission

- (a) Is she humbly submissive?
- (b) Not a groveling door mat.
- (c) A gracious, kind, respectful, well lady?
- (d) One when shows submission through a genuine spirit of service and sacrifice.

(5) Peculiarities

- (a) what are they?
- (b) Are there things about his/her personality that really turn you off?
 - 1. Stares before responding to a question.
 - 2. Extremely shy and withdrawn.
 - 3. Uncouth manners while eating.
 - 4. Talks your head off.
- (c) It is not Christian to totally shun such people.
- (d) But neither is it wise to marry a person you may even like whose idiosyncrasies you hope to transform after you re married.

4. Temperament

- a. Is the person high strung, irritable, negative, pessimistic, critical?
- b. Does he/she overly react to minor irritations and blow a fuse when things go wrong?
- c. Does the person pout, sulk, or fly off the handle when provoked or insulted?
- d. Is he/she even-tempered, emotionally well-balanced?
 - (1) Does the person quickly regain self-composure and bounce back?
 - (2) Look for trends and consistent patterns.
- e. There'll be fireworks in your marriage if temperaments don't mix.

5. Values and Likemindedness

- a. These are the principles and standards that have been instilled in you through upbringing.
- b. Do you share similar convictions? Do you really see things alike?
- c. Examples:
 - (1) She may be a sloppy housekeeper — he's picky and fastidious.
 - (2) He may have liberal views on sex — she's more reserved.
 - (3) One believes in parental discipline — the other is mild, easy-going and believes in using the paddle as a last resort.
 - (4) One is a spendthrift — the other a tight-wad
 - (5) One is industrious — the other indifferent or lazy
- d. If your spirits don't blend or if there are wide gaps and contrasts in your values, making a go of marriage will be a strain.

6. Intellectual compatibility

- a. Are you mentally stimulating to each other,
- b. Is she smarter than you (higher IQ) — the intellectual type who likes to study, gather information and attend lectures?
 - (1) The man will generally feel inferior and may resort to putting her down in order to override his inadequacy,
 - (2) He will probably start to domineer, thus causing friction.
- c. Is he the intellectual type, while you're more practical minded? Or is he idealistic and philosophical, while your interests are more domestics
- d. Explore each other's minds to be sure you are mentally suited.
 - (1) This is one reason why dates should be more than fun and frolic, giggles and laughter.
 - (2) A good date will encourage mental stimulation.

7. Maturity

- a. This is that quality of intellect that differentiates between what's important and unimportant — essential and non-essential. It's the mark of a sound, stable mind whose outlook is realistic, practical and objective.
- b. A mature mind sees the big picture — the overview. An immature mind sees only the small points — is prejudiced biased, and intolerant,
- c. A mature mind sees long-range — has set clear goals. An immature mind is shortsighted and lives for the present.

- d. It has to do with emotional maturity
- e. Maturity=unselfishness; immaturity=selfishness.
- f. A mature person has grown wise through the school of hard knocks — he also has learned from the experiences of others.
- g. Look for the person who's maturity level matches yours.

8. Communication

- a. Can you freely talk about any subject without fear of rejection?
- b. Are you both an open book?
- c. Do you find each other stimulating and exciting?
- d. Do you listen attentively to each other and draw the best out?
- e. Can you disagree without insulting the other?
- f. Can you talk for hours and hours without running out of something to say?
- g. Do you really try to see and understand the other's point of view?
- h. Little talk before marriage = no talk after marriage.

9. Heredity physical and mental health

- a. Are there any serious deficiencies in these areas?
 - (1) Epilepsy
 - (2) Emotional disturbances
 - (3) Physical deformities
 - (4) Frailties
 - (5) Inherent diseases
 - (a) Diabetes
 - (b) Etc.
- b. Does the person have a history of drug abuse or alcoholism?
- c. All these points should be carefully weighed in the balance before getting too emotionally carried away.

10. Conversion

- a. Even though one may meet all the foregoing requirements, if he or she is not converted your marriage could be hindered.
 - (1) Walking with God will enable one who's deeply converted to surmount almost any problem that may arise in marriage.
 - (2) If either partner is a spiritual drag, the chances of a smooth-sailing relationship will be greatly diminished.

VI. How to know if you've made the right choice

- A. Assume that you've narrowed the field to one person.
- B. Both of you seem to be ideally suited — having met all the foregoing qualifications.
- C. How can you be sure if you're making the right decision?
- D. The final checklist
 - 1. Get to know the person as your closest friend.
 - a. This can be accomplished only through spending time together and becoming part of each other's life.
 - b. Don't put on a facade — no fronts, no airs, no false impressions — be yourself.
 - c. You will come to understand the emotional, mental and spiritual makeup of your prospective mate only by seeing him/her in all manner of situations.
 - (1) How does he react in a traffic jam?
 - (2) How does he handle failure and disappointment?
 - (3) How does she respond to situations when called on to sacrifice?
 - (4) Does she honor your decisions?
 - (5) Do you mutually work together to understand each other's needs and viewpoints?
 - (6) Is he or she selfish? Headstrong? Intolerant of your views? Inconsiderate?
 - d. Talk, talk, talk until you completely know each other inside and out.
 - (1) The two main sources of knowing what another is like is through observing his example and listening to him talk.
 - (2) The Bible says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

- (3) Listen and learn. When one feels confident in your presence, he will empty his soul.
 - (4) You can tell how deep he runs, the quality of character, and whether or not he fears God.
 - (5) Is he or she full of empty mouthings and "blather"?
 - (6) Is there substance in his heart or only shadow?
 - (7) Time will tell.
- e. Many married couples have said that in the end, came to marry their closest friend.
2. Meet the family.
- a. Do they like you?
 - b. Do you like them?
 - c. Do your standards, principles, philosophies, outlooks harmonize?
 - d. Is the family stable?
 - e. What attitude does your prospective mate express toward his parents?
 - f. Remember that the general disposition and temperament of the parents will generally be passed on to the children.
 - g. Discreetly do your homework and get all the background that you can.
 - (1) Much of this can be acquired through observation.
3. In your heart, do you believe the person is prepared for marriage?
- a. Does this individual truly desire to play the part of husband or wife?
 - b. Is he or she ready to assume the responsibilities of parenthood?
 - c. Are both of you willing to forego your independence and personal rights and submit to each other?
 - d. When getting down to the wire you may discover in some cases it's still too soon — you both may need a little more time to mature.
 - e. Chances of this type problem surfacing is very unlikely at this stage of the game.
4. Does the prospective mate truly accept you for what you are, the way you are?
- a. It is disastrous, if not fraudulent, to marry another human being with the intent of remaking, remodeling, or overhauling his personality and character.
 - b. If after you have progressed this far there are things that still bug you, embarrass you or upset you about each other, you'd be wise to reconsider.
 - c. If the many good qualities that have attracted you to each other do not overshadow the minor differences, the relationship is not based on love.
 - d. True love is total acceptance — regardless of the other's faults.
 - e. This is not to say that two married people should not help each other to grow and to smooth out the rough edges.
5. Can you communicate beyond mere talk?
- a. There will always be people you can converse with on any subject. Your views, opinions and ideas click.
 - b. The communication we're talking about here goes far deeper.
 - c. This type of communication has to do with sharing, caring, feeling, being deeply concerned about the other's welfare.
 - d. It has to do with finding out the needs of the other and making compromises and adjustments in your own life in order to make him or her happy.
 - e. It involves reaching mutual decisions — working your heart out to please the other.
6. Know beyond question the person truly loves you.
- a. He/she will be highly sensitized to your needs — will sense when things aren't going right, when you're disappointed or frustrated.
 - b. He will work toward helping you reach your dreams; will encourage you, stand behind you, defend you; will think nothing of putting your interests first.
 - c. A demonstration of this love will not be erratic with wide breaks and gaps; but will be consistent over the long haul.
7. How to know your love is real.
- a. Respect is the key
 - (1) There are many kinds, or definitions of love
 - (a) Kindness

- (b) Compassion
 - (c) Empathy
 - (d) Romantic
 - (2) All are necessary for a stable, lasting marriage — but none sufficient by themselves.
 - (a) These types of love (especially the "romantic") may wane with familiarity, weight change, baldness, wrinkles, etc.
 - (b) The necessary ingredient that will really secure your marriage is respect.
 - (c) Do you AWE him?
 - 1. (Eph. 5:33) 'and the wife see that she reverence her husband.'
 - 2. (I Pet. 3:6) "... Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord "....
 - 3. Do you love and respect him so much that there is nothing (except sin) you wouldn't do for him?
 - (d) Do you HONOR her with the respect you would show a queen?
 - 1. (Eph. 5:25) 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.'
 - 2. Is she super special — not just because of sex or beauty, but because of character?
 - (e) Consider these questions:
 - 1. Do you really think highly of his her innate qualities?
 - 2. Their ability to make good decisions?
 - 3. Their common sense? — Do you have a certain confidence they won't do something foolish?
 - 4. Do they disrespect or compromise with Church government?
 - 5. Do they uphold God's standards of conduct?
 - 6. What about self-control? Does he she lose his temper easily?
 - 7. Is there stability and strength — or are they flighty or over-emotional?
 - 8. How do they react under stress or in an emergency?
 - 9. Do you approve of the way they handle financial matters?
 - 10. How do they react to frustration and disappointment?
 - 11. Do you feel really secure with this person?
 - b. If you have a positive reaction to all these questions, then you possess the necessary respect to surmount any obstacles that may arise in marriage.
8. TOTAL COMMITMENT — the supreme test of true love.
- a. At conversion we submitted our wills, surrendered our lives, gave our all to God.
 - (1) There were no reservations — no qualifying conditions — no strings attached.
 - (2) We counted the cost and completely thought the decision through.
 - b. On the human plane, marriage should be viewed in the same light.
 - (1) It's a total commitment for life.
 - (2) Both parties have weighed the facts and have agreed to accept each other, work together, grow together, share together until death.
 - c. This is what God means when He says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) (Also Matt. 19:5 and Mark 10:7.)
 - d. Marriage is a uniting of minds, hearts, emotions, thoughts, hopes, plans, dreams, and spirits.
 - e. It can be compared to working with two soft clumps of clay — until they blend into one.
 - f. Have you submitted your wills to each other?
 - (1) Are you truly willing to share everything together?
 - (a) Your innermost thoughts. (c) Your body.
 - (b) Your time. (d) Your income.
 - (2) Can you be servants to each other?
 - (a) In principle this means do more giving than receiving.
 - (b) It means sharing responsibilities
 - 1. Are you willing to do his dirty laundry?

2. Are you willing to help with housework if your wife works or gets sick?
 - (c) Do you prefer the other over yourself?
- g. Are you willing to lay your life down?
 - (1) Jacob worked 14 years in order to marry the wife of his dreams.
 - (2) Christ is going to marry His bride — the Church.
 - (a) While on earth, He gave His life as a prospective bridegroom.
 - (b) But in a sense, He is now laying His life down for her every day — by protecting her, defending her, providing her every need.
 - (c) Read Eph. 5:22-33.
 - (d) Are you willing to go this far?
- h. Marriage is a permanent decision.
 - (1) It's for life.
 - (2) And what God joins together, let no man put asunder — including you who take each other as husband and wife.

ONE FINAL NOTE:

Finding a mate should not be a scientific, legalistic exercise where you go down a list of minute points, checking off every tiny detail.

The important thing is to grow in the knowledge of what marriage entails. Prepare yourself. When you've had sufficient exposure to a variety of personalities, form in your mind an overall, general picture to marry. Keep an open mind. Pray for guidance.

Relax and don't try too hard. If you embark on a program of trying to find Mr. or Miss Perfect you can become more confused than ever. No such creature exists.

This lecture is designed to give you a concept of what steps to take in preparing for marriage. Put them to use and then ask God to help you make the right choice.

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