

SESSION THREE: HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR LIFE-PARTNER?

Joke: At a party, one woman said to another, 'Aren't you wearing your wedding ring on the wrong finger?' The other replied, 'Yes, I am, I married the wrong man.'

Three Myths Regarding Marriage:

- i. Marriage is not a deliverance from *sexual temptations*. Sex is enjoyed in marriage, but self-control is still required to fight against sexual temptations.
- ii. Marriage is not a cure for your *need to be loved*. Marriage is a commitment to love.
- iii. Marriage is not a fulfillment of *personal expectations*. Marriage is a commitment to give preference to your partner's reasonable interests and serve him/her.

Willard F. Harley: Marriage is a permanent (as long as you both shall live) and sexually exclusive (forsaking all others) relationship of extraordinary care (love, comfort, honor, and keep, etc.) between a man (to be your husband) and a woman (to be your wife).

Gary Chapman: People do not get married planning to divorce. Divorce is the result of a lack of preparation for marriage and the failure to learn the skills of working together as teammates in an intimate relationship . . . It is my conviction that many of these struggles (in marriage) could have been avoided had the couple taken time to prepare more thoroughly for marriage.

Note: When it comes to marriage, many of us think only about tying the knot and going for honeymoon. After marriage comes the responsibility of cultivating intimate relationship, managing house chores, having children, busy work schedules, coping with conflicts and so on. So, how are we prepared to handle them?

In "*Top Ten Mistakes to a Miserable Marriage*", Robin Maxson says, "Choose your spouse with your heart, not your head."

WISE STEPS IN CHOOSING LIFE-PARTNER

A) ESSENTIAL THINGS TO CONSIDER IN CHOOSING YOUR LIFE-PARTNER:

I) Make sure you have trusted in Christ for salvation.

The most important decision in life is not your marriage and career; it is your eternal destiny.

This doesn't mean you have to trust in Christ for marriage rather than for your salvation.

Walter Trobisch: "The most important decision in your life is the decision to follow Jesus Christ. The second most important decision is your choice of a marriage partner."

2) Make sure she or he is a believer.

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 7:39**, “she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord”. [ESV]
- ❖ **2 Corinthians 6:14**, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

Note: A person from Christian background without born-again experience is still an unbeliever.

3) Pray for God’s wisdom to make a wise choice in choosing your life partner.

- ❖ **James 1:5**, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” [ESV]
 - Pray for right thinking in the Spirit, not carnal thinking [like physical body, money...etc]
 - Pray for patience.
 - Pray for careful examination and guidance to make a right choice.

4) Examine a person’s testimony. [Use Godly Reason more than Strong Feelings]

- ❖ **Ruth 3:10-11**, "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of *noble character*." [NIV]
 - “all the people of my town know that you are a *virtuous woman*.” [NKJV]
 - “for all my people in the city know that you are a *woman of excellence*.” [NASB]
 - “for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a *worthy woman*.” [ESV]

Note: Examine a person’s current testimony, not past about which he/she might have repented.

Note: Don’t expect an angelic testimony. Basic good testimony is enough as character keeps growing.

5) Seek the counsel of godly people (parents, church elders....etc)

- ❖ **Proverb 11:14**, “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.” [ESV]

Temptation: Want to make independent choice because of the possibility to hear “No”.

Caution: Beware of carnal counseling; seek mature advices.

6) Agreement to central doctrines and sound teaching of the Holy Bible

1. Divine inspiration and ultimate authority of the Holy Bible.
2. Trinity –Father, Son and the Holy Spirit [one God manifested as three persons]
3. One Savior and Lord Jesus Christ [Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Second Coming]
4. Salvation by grace alone
5. Seriousness of sin [sexual immorality, lying, anger, hatred]
6. Judgment and Eternity
7. Significance of church fellowship
8. Necessity of Spiritual Disciplines for Spiritual Growth [Prayer, Meditation on Word, Evangelism, Serving...etc]

7) Biblical standards to build a godly family

1. Having Christ the central person/Lord of married life.
2. Headship of husband [Responsible and Loving]
3. Submission of wife to husband
4. Permanency of marriage [no way for divorce, except in the case of adultery]
5. Family devotions
6. Godly upbringing of Children
7. Serving together God's people through hospitality and loving service.

B) SIGNIFICANT THINGS TO DISCUSS IN COURTSHIP: [BETTER TO DISCUSS THESE THINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING]

1. Is the man capable of providing [basic necessities] for his family?
2. Is it okay for husband and wife to work together?
3. Who and how the finance will be handled?
 - a. Husband should basically handle the finance with wife's help. Or it could be together with husband's consent.

- b. How much money to family expenditure, savings, offering [church...etc], giving or lending to friends or relatives?
4. What about sharing house chores?
5. Any history of serious medical problems? [Cancer, Diabetes...etc] Getting basic medical check-up is a good idea.
6. Do you consider yourself sexually potent?
7. What about in-laws interference? Who will be the head of the family? Nuclear family or extended family?
8. What are the expectations about dress code?
9. What about key goals? (if spouse wants to be a missionary someday, move to a different country or profession....etc)
10. When are you planning to have children and how many? View about abortion and adoption?
11. Any addictions? [given to pornography, television, drinking...etc]
12. What about trusting your partner?
 - a. Do you have any problem if your partner generally talks to the opposite sex (within proper limits)?
 - b. Would you be curious to know everything with whom your spouse relates?
13. How to handle conflicts in marriage? This is quite important.
14. What is our belief about getting help from friends and counselors when interpersonal problems are not handled by ourselves?
15. Any concerns, insecurities or fears about proceeding toward this marriage? Thoroughly discuss your expectations and concerns. *Remember, marriage is essentially your decision, not your parents, your peers, your pastors, although the counsel of the latter is helpful.*

Note: Ask the above questions with prayer and wisdom. Don't just pray and depend on inner feelings for decision making.

Note: These questions are to educate the person, not to give up on the person who doesn't have these qualities [except he/she is stubbornly unwilling to learn and change].

C) PROTECTIVE STEPS IN COURTSHIP:

1. Come under accountability structure (family, elders of the church). Inform your accountable partner where you are meeting and how often to avoid pitfalls.
2. Don't meet too often or communicate too much. Ingrid Trobisch, "Waiting will be easier if you don't see each other daily."
3. Don't have physical contacts.
4. Don't meet in isolated places.
5. Don't fall into too much public exposure until marriage [roaming, facebook, parties]
6. Encourage conversation that helps you prepare well for marriage.
7. Prepare yourself by reading good books on marriage and share with each other. [Write exams for education, have orientation when you get into a job, but get into marriage without any preparation]

❖ Marriage Books Available in OM:

1. 10 Principles for a Happy Marriage by *Selwyn Hughes*
2. Gospel-Centered Marriage by *Tim Chester*
3. Answers for Your Marriage by *Bruce and Carol Britten*
4. The Marriage You've Always Wanted by *Gary Chapman*
5. This Momentary Marriage by *John Piper*
6. Resolving Conflict in Marriage by *Darrell L. Hines*
7. Boundaries in Marriage by *Henry Cloud and John Townsend*

Exhortation: Don't focus on the following to make a decision for marriage.

1. Caste [Gal. 3:26-28]
2. Dowry [Exo. 20:17]
3. External credentials [high education, too beautiful, lucrative profession] [Pro. 31:30]