



BOAZ ADHENGO

MATCHMAKING

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the
wellspring of life" Proverbs 4:23.



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"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5: 8

Chapter One

Marriage Market

Historically, matchmaking has long claimed a commercial niche in the marriage market. Today, a modern phone line, or advertisement might bring partners together. The resurrection of marriage intermediaries in the contemporary life indicates a significant development in the social institutions that facilitate marriage and structure the content of social relations.

The increased use of social interaction tools can be seen as part of a larger economic shift toward a service economy that merge business with courtship hence the unique intersection. Social scientists have long seen mate selection as occurring in marriage market where both economic and interpersonal assets are exchanged. Commercial dating services by making these assets explicit, further emphasize the relevance of market theory. Therefore, by looking at the functions of market, we can better understand the role of social introduction services in the courtship process. Market intermediaries are individuals, organizations, or platforms that facilitate transactions between two or more parties, performing “*work that otherwise would be performed by the provider or consumer of a good*”.

In a marriage market, individuals had a range of potential partners to choose from and it is this competition that led to the sorting of individuals by different traits, including physical assets, human capital, and biological and psychological characteristics. The gains from marriage and the market forces of competition were instrumental in determining which traits are subject to positive (*matching of likes*) or negative (*matching of unlikes*) sorting; the ultimate work for market brokers/intermediaries.

Marriage intermediaries - often referred to as matchmakers - are individuals, organizations, or platforms that bring two parties together for the formation of marriage. Matchmakers thereby act as market intermediaries, performing “work that otherwise would be performed by the provider or consumer of the good.” Typically, market intermediaries assist with or execute one or more of three essential market functions: searching, matching, and transaction. In the marriage market, the intermediary can perform these functions by acquiring information about who is eligible as a potential mate (*searching*), using information about potential mates to determine which mates make a good match

(*matching*), and facilitating a process of interaction and relationship formation (*transaction/interaction*). By performing one or more of these functions, a market intermediary can reduce search costs, advance the connection process, or assist in finding better matches.

In the modern system of love marriages, young people choose their own spouse based on mutual compatibility, romantic love, and affection. On the contrary, as based on traditional marriage markets, parents and extended families would exert significant control and influence over the choice of a mate for the prospective bride or groom in arranged marriages; simply put, there are two modes of mate selection in societies including self-choice marriages or “love” matches and arranged marriages; both of which vary with respect to the locus of culture.

Before the 19th century, marriage was first and foremost a business transaction. Its purpose was to consolidate wealth and augment political power (*for upper classes*) or to acquire new labour for the family enterprise and obtain some form of social security and medical care (*for*

peasants and farmers). Due to the economic and political importance of marriages, matchmaking was seen as a crucial matter for the whole family and not to be left to potential partners and their personal preferences. The use of an intermediary to bring together potential spouses was commonly used. Apart from facilitating the search and matching process, marriage intermediaries also played an important role in the transaction itself, by, for example, taking part in the property negotiations of a marriage contract.

Jewish Traditions

One of the longest traditions of matchmaking is practiced in Jewish communities. The matchmaker, known as the *shadkhan*, was the head of the community's school. The school was an important establishment for preserving Judaism after the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD and therefore played a crucial role in the life of the community. The head of school was a respected member of the community and his opinion was of great weight. Not only did he have expertise in Jewish traditions but he also possessed knowledge

about community members and families and was thus well suited to represent the parties involved in the marriage arrangement. Alongside the head of school, Rabbis also assisted in arranging marriages as they were similarly well-respected and viewed as the religious authorities of the communities. Traditionally, the father was the initiator of the matchmaking process: he was the one requesting the services of a *shadkhan* and consenting to the formation of marriage. Moreover, the fathers of the newlywed couple would usually make a donation to the school or synagogue in return for matchmaking services.

Over the course of time, the *shadkhan* became more professionalized and the matchmaker began traveling around offering his or her services in exchange for a commission of about two or three percent of the dowry when the marriage formation was successful. But with the development of career matchmakers, the *shadkhan* also gained the reputation of being overly concerned with making profit and deceiving their customers by overselling the attributes of a potential spouse.

Islamic Traditions

In many Muslim countries, strict laws govern the formation of marriages. It is traditional Muslim practice to prohibit women and men to meet before the marriage is arranged. A matchmaker was therefore an important part of the marriage arrangement and still assists in the marriage foundations in some Muslim societies today, e.g. in rural Egypt. Here, the search process is typically initiated by the groom and his family. A female relative of the groom often acts a matchmaker and approaches the father of the prospective bride to initiate the transaction. The fathers of both families will then have a meeting to evaluate the proposal, assessing the other's social and economic background and financial standing. It is only then that the couple will meet for the first time while the family is present. Up to this day, matchmakers still arrange marriages in Morocco, particularly in areas with strong Islamic traditions where men and women rarely interact before marriage. The mother of the groom searches for a suitable bride for her son - a healthy, respectful and obedient young woman - and thereby acts as an intermediary for the matching process. An

official matchmaker will then visit the family of the prospective bride to assess the girl's qualities, her financial background and the family's attitude towards the match. In Morocco, the role of official matchmakers is often performed by *sharifas*, women from holy lineages of high social status, who have the authority to assist in the marriage negotiations. While female matchmakers, i.e. the mother and *sharifas*, play crucial roles in searching, matching, and transaction, the male leaders of the family approve the property transfers and finalize the agreement.

Chapter Two

The Love Marriage

The idea of a love-based, companionate marriage emerged in 19th century Europe, paralleling the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment, which questioned the authoritative structure of society and opposed the notion that a marriage partner was to be chosen by parents or society. Nevertheless, marriage remained an economic unit often entered into because of societal or economic pressure, especially considering the economic dependency of women, their legal subordination, and the unreliability of birth control which preserved many aspects of traditional marriage. It was only in the 1970s that such constraints gradually diminished in most of Europe and the United States and marriage could be a “personal relationship between two freely consenting adults”.

The transformation of marriage into a love relationship also reshaped the role of marriage intermediaries. Traditionally, a matchmaker was a facilitator of a business contract, bringing together more than just two individuals, but often whole families or dynasties. With the evolution of the love marriage, a matchmaking intermediary came to facilitate a “*love match*,”

rather than a relatively straightforward economic one. While some argue that matchmaking is now outdated and often linked to the notion of denying individuals the free choice over their marriage partners, market intermediaries still play an important role in facilitating modern, love-based marriages. Hitherto, the decision to marry is no longer purely driven by economic necessity but has been replaced by the expectation of emotional and intellectual gratification in a relationship. Singles therefore exhibit greater selectivity in their search for a partner and for that reason request services of marriage intermediaries towards finding their perfect match.

With the proliferation of computers and the Internet, new forms of marriage and dating market intermediaries have emerged. Most prominently, a vast number of commercial online dating websites, such as *Match*, *eHarmony*, and *OkCupid*, now assist a great number of eligible individuals in their search for a partner. Such matchmaking intermediaries typically perform two or all three market functions of formal marriage intermediaries. Firstly, they provide users access to a large pool

of potential romantic partners thereby increasing the likelihood of finding a match (*searching*). Secondly, online dating platforms offer different forms of computer mediated communication (CMC) through which users can interact with potential partners before meeting them face-to-face (*interaction, searching*). Thirdly, dating websites offer computer-based matching, i.e. the use of a “*mathematical algorithm to select potential partners for users*” (matching).

Perhaps we ask, how do computer-based marriage intermediaries change the matchmaking process and romantic outcomes? With respect to searching, online dating platforms have the potential to connect its users to two billion people, providing access to an unprecedentedly large pool of potential partners. This increases the likelihood of finding a partner and reduces search costs, especially for those who are constrained by work demands. However, the large pool of potential partners can also lead to worse decision-making and choice overload, “*in which individuals avoid making any decision,*” decreasing the user’s readiness to commit to

one of the potential partners in the online pool. Moreover, several studies show that a larger choice set in dating partners leads to less cognitively demanding, and thus less elaborate, comparison and decision strategies, which potentially decreases the quality of mating decisions. Some online dating intermediaries therefore deliberately limit the number of singles that users have access to.

Computer-mediated communication can also decrease search cost and expedite the connection process as it allows users to evaluate the compatibility with other users before meeting face-to-face. However, attractiveness and long-term compatibility cannot be determined purely by algorithms.

Concerning the quality of the matches generated by mathematical algorithms, evidence suggests that they can be of limited value when looking at long-term relationship success. Most matching algorithms are based on personality variables of users, e.g. their interest, hobbies, cultural beliefs. More so, such compatibility matching is limited for two reasons: Firstly, it relies on self-reported data,

which is problematic when users portray a distorted image of themselves, either intentionally to increase the likelihood of an attractive match or unintentionally. Secondly, personality variables do not necessarily predict long-term relationship success. In fact, it is difficult to predict long-term compatibility of two partners without having data on their face-to-face interaction. This is because relationship satisfaction and longevity is explained in great part by the quality of interaction between partners - i.e. how a couple communicates and resolves conflicts, how partners support each other and how they interpret each other's behaviour. Furthermore, how a relationship develops is highly dependent on circumstances surrounding the couple, such as their social and family network, and further exacerbated by external stressors such as a job loss or sudden illness. While algorithms could measure some of these factors, e.g. a person's financial background, future external influences cannot be predicted in advance.

Matches in Heaven

Of all of God's creation, people reflect God's image most. It should be no surprise, then, that when our hearts ache for God but go without finding him, they quickly attach themselves to people because they are literally the next best thing to God himself. The strongest lure away from God is the love of man, especially romantic love. There are only two restrictions on romantic relationships in the Bible. One, if you are married, to only be in romantic relationship with your spouse. Two, if you are single, to only pursue a romantic relationships with another Christian who would make a good, godly spouse (*1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14*).

To find a Christian spouse, you first need to put God first in your life. If you are anxious and stressed about your marital future, a time of reflection and separation from dating will do your heart good. What's essential is that we are walking with God in our search for a Christian spouse. Don't just do what's natural. Be honest with yourself. If you're a bit shy and get nervous about dating, take the plunge and go to

a single's ministry or signup for a safe Christian online dating service. And if you're always dating, take a step back so you can put God first.

Finding someone to marry seems like a mysterious process. And in some ways it really is. The path to meeting your future spouse will be full of twists and turns. If you are called to marriage, however, God knows just how he is going to bring your future husband or wife into your life.

If you are a Christian, you want to be married, and you know marriage is a good gift from God, it's hard to not feel like you are doing something wrong if you are still not married. But that's not always the case. Just because you are not married doesn't mean you are failing. It could just mean it's not your time yet. It's impossible to know all the reasons why God makes some wait until their forty to find a spouse and he allows others to get married at nineteen. The best answer is that it's just not the right time for some.

What's often forgotten is that singleness is not a biblical curse. Singleness is actually a high calling in the Bible. God instructs us that singles are often better equipped to serve him (*1 Corinthians 7:32-35*). Therefore, one reason you might not be married yet is because God's plan of service for you in this season can be better accomplished in singleness. Perhaps when God's call on you will be better accomplished as a married person, he will bless you with a spouse.

While it's sometimes true that the reason you're not married is simply that it's not your time, this is not the case for everyone. Marriage is a blessing from God (*along with singleness*), and nothing blocks God's blessings like unrepentant sin (*Galatians 6:7-9*). God often withholds blessings when we are living in sin because he loves us so much. To bless us while we are in rebellion is to passively support our sinfulness. God will do what's best for us, and he knows it's always best that we repent of sin and turn to him. Therefore, to accomplish our everlasting joy in him, he will often supernaturally work against our superficial happiness rooted in idolatry and worldliness.

Living in sin is a major reason why many are not married because it causes Christian singles to live in a state of paralysis. You feel guilty and unworthy, so you date people who don't passionately love Jesus because you think someone who did love Jesus could never love someone like you. But since you are a Christian, you know it's wrong to marry someone who places Jesus so low on their priority list. Thus you get stuck in a cycle of feeling too unworthy to date a good Christian, but since you love Jesus, your standards are too high to marry someone who doesn't passionately love Jesus.

The true blessing of a Christian marriage is that it helps you glorify, serve, and love God better (*unless you have the gift of singleness*). If you're asking God for a spouse and your motivation is not rooted in pleasing God, then you're asking God for a secondary gift. God wants to give you the best. So he often waits to bless us with a spouse until we are ready to use our marriage in service to him rather than using God to serve our future marriage.

Putting forth effort to find a spouse is not sinful. There is nothing wrong with pursuing marriage. Certainly we all need to walk with God and obey his personal leading in our lives. If you've turned the idea of marriage into an idol, a short time of repentance will be healthy. But if God designed you for marriage, which he has for most Christians, you must remember that God expects you to pursue the good things he has designed you to need. If you are thirsty and all you do is pray for water, you are missing the point. Get up and get a drink. God blesses us with good things, but he also expects us to reach out and take hold of those good things. And marriage is a very good thing.

Idolizing marriage or allowing your desire to find a spouse overtake your desire to love God is sinful. But you can love God completely and still desire your circumstances to change. Christianity does emphasize the need to be content with every situation. Christians are told to work towards change while also being joyful in Christ even if change doesn't happen. No matter what is happening in life, we must find total contentment in Christ.

Stop feeling guilty about wanting to change your status from a state of being single into a spousal relationship. Marriage won't solve all your problems if your heart is not right with God, but it's possible to still feel lonely in your Christian singleness even if your heart is right with God. God said it was not good for Adam and Eve to be alone (*Genesis 2:18*). He made men and women to be in relationship with one another. We must never be overwhelmed by loneliness. We must always seek God to fill us completely. But it is healthy to feel lonely when you lack good human relationships because God made us to need these.

The greatest biblical benefit of singleness is that it provides a season of life that will give you the best opportunity to focus on God (*1 Corinthians 7:32-35*). It's never going to be easier to set aside time to spend with Jesus than it is during your season of singleness. None of this means that marriage should cause us to pursue Jesus less (*1 Corinthians 7:29*). It just means that it will be easier (*time wise*) to pursue Jesus when you don't have other huge relational commitments. Your years of Christian

singleness will not be wasted if you use this time to pursue Jesus intimately.

Christian singleness can be lonely. You may not feel lonely every moment, every day, or even every week, but most Christian singles really struggle in this area.

What compounds this problem is that some Christians feel ashamed for feeling lonely. *“Shouldn’t Christ be enough? Am I trying to find my value through relationships? Am I a jealous, shallow person for feeling like it’s a jab every time I see a new engagement announcement scroll by in my social media feed? Is my loneliness a sign of weakness?”*

Loneliness is not a sin. God didn’t design every Christian to be married, but He did design every Christian to live in community with other Christians. Even if you feel called to a life of singleness, it is normal to struggle with loneliness. And if you know you want to be married one day, there is nothing wrong with you if you feel lonely during your season of singleness (*Genesis 2:18*).

If you're walking with God, it's actually possible to feel lonelier because of your lack of good human relationships. Why? Because when we are right with God, our inner being is purified and thus it's most natural, original cravings are free to be unleashed. A heart fully alive feels everything more passionately – *pleasure and pain* – because it is alive. A dead heart feels less in general. The healthier you are with Christ, the more your heart will feel things. It's sometimes painful to be so alive in a world with so many problems. But the solution is not to kill our hearts so we feel less. The solution is to keep coming alive, keep pursuing Christ, and keep pursuing good, no matter how painful it might be. The pain should motivate us to seek the pleasure for which we were made and are currently lacking.

Growing Generations

Most women hope to marry, but for many, it's not happening like they thought it would. It seems too far away, or too unlikely, given the men they know and those they're meeting. Some wonder if their standards are too high. Others suspect all the good men are already

taken. It's not enough to just coast along; counting on today's dating culture, and our culture's definition of marriage, to deliver a God honouring and timely marriage to a good man. If you hope to marry well, you need to do more - *and less* - than what the culture says.

The problem of delayed marriage has a lot to do with men who won't take initiative. Women want to be pursued and men are charged by God to be the pursuers. Proverbs 18:22 says, "*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord.*" Finds. That's an active verb. It instructs the man who wants God's blessing to get out there and look. To the men we say, "*Get going, it's time you accept the challenge to pursue marriage.*" And to the women, "*stop glorifying the single years as a Super-Holy season of just you and Jesus.*" Yes, being single does provide the chance to be uniquely intimate with Jesus. Enjoy that. But don't over-emphasize it. Why? Because it gives guys permission to kick back and let you. If they think you're perfectly happy as a single, why wouldn't they let you stay that way? Especially when so many of them are shy to chaos.

Women have an important ability to help them move toward marriage. How? By esteeming it. By not being embarrassed about wanting it. By going after it - *up to a point*. You can nurture men toward marriage by helping them see that it contains a lot of what they're looking for, even if they don't yet know it. Marriage holds the possibility of partnership, adventure, creativity, challenge and many more of the things we long for, but try to obtain with inferior pursuits.

The first step in the process of moving toward marriage is to evaluate your spirituality. One of our guiding principles is that we are trying to be (*or prepare to be*) a godly spouse even as we try to find a godly spouse. All singles who profess Christ and aspire to marriage - *even as a possibility* - have this responsibility (*even outside this area of life, we should all be trying to grow in Christ*). Are you a Christian? If you're already sure of that basic answer, are you a growing and mature Christian? Are you generally humble and teachable, and do you respect authority? As a practical matter, are you responsible and holy in the way you possess your own spirit, mind and body?

As you begin to seriously consider marriage generally or a particular relationship, your first step should be to soberly reflect, before God, on your own spiritual walk and maturity in Christ. If you aspire to be a godly wife someday, what have you done and what are you doing to prepare for that ministry?

Single men and women are failing each other. Uncommitted intimate friendships may satiate immediate needs, but they lead to frustration and heartache. Not to mention, for singles ready for marriage, these “friendships” waste time and energy. A woman is responsible to be wise with her heart. Solomon said, “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*” (Proverbs 4:23). If a woman feels her heart longing for a man who’s not pursuing her, indulging those feelings is unwise. Song of Songs puts it this way: “*Do not awaken love before it so desires.*” As a generation of women drunk on chick flicks, we want romance to happen so badly we allow ourselves to fantasize about relationships that have no founding.

When you do have a strong friendship connection with a man, is there anything you

can do to nudge it along short of asking him to be your boyfriend?

While women should do what they can to meet *worth-men* of marriage; where they should not assert is in initiating and pursuing. Like any dance well-executed, one partner leads and the other follows. If you've ever tried to dance with a man and you both try to lead, you know how quickly you both stumble. Once you've met a man you'd like to date, then it's time to exercise kindness, put your best foot forward in friendship, pray like crazy and maintain good boundaries. The best way to motivate a male friend to "*make things official*" is to back off from spending so much time with him. If everyone thinks you're dating, then you're probably acting like you are. But by giving him so much access to your time, affection and intimate friendship - without requiring any commitment on his part - you're removing all the incentives for him to be forthright about his intentions.

It's the guy who's supposed to do the asking. By giving him less attention you may actually create the circumstances that will embolden him

to act honourably toward you. If he doesn't, you've saved yourself from any more wasted time with a guy whose behaviour reveals he's not interested in moving your friendship toward marriage.

Men need the motivation that the promise of sex provides, and women need the security of marriage to fully embrace sex. *“Not having sex before marriage is a way of insisting that the most interesting part of your life will take place after marriage”*.

Men don't see marriage, or anticipate it, the way women do. When the benefits of marriage are doled out prematurely, from the man's perspective, all that remains are the responsibilities. You're thinking, marriage will be all this, plus - plus we can set up a home, plus we can have babies together, plus we can grow old together, and more. He's thinking, marriage will be all this, minus - minus my freedoms, minus my financial independence, minus my old friends, etc.

Living a life of purity is a tremendous challenge in the midst of our hypersexualized culture. But

it's nowhere as challenging as trying to manage all the seen and unseen consequences that come when we reject God's design. Worse still is trying to grow a good marriage in a garden filled with the weeds you've planted. It's well worth the effort to stay pure, or if you've already fallen, to repent, receive forgiveness, and be pure again.

A holy man is a spiritual force, a "*God oasis*" in a world that needs spiritually strong people. When the winds of turmoil hit, such men are shelters. When the storms of life unleash their fury, such saints provide a refuge. When people are thirsty to be valued for who they are and for what God made them to be, holy men are like streams of water in the desert. By their words, actions, and eyes, they affirm what God values most in a woman's worth. When the heat of temptation is tearing this world apart, godly men become like the shadow of a great rock.

Evil has a disintegrating power in our lives. It corrupts us. It affects the way we see, hear, feel, and think. According to 2 Peter 1:4, when we give ourselves over to evil, we begin to spiritually disintegrate. To look at, or think

about, or treat, any woman to whom you are not married, in a sexual manner, corrupts you. It has a disintegrating influence in your life; it blinds you to who that woman really is, and it will negatively affect your ability to relate to her in a holy and healthy manner.

But the more I give way to lust, the less I will see of God; the disintegrating power of evil will draw me away from the noble and corrupt my perception. I will become, ironically, “*blinded by sight.*”

Chapter Three

Balancing Beauty

Knowing that men have to fight their sin nature (*Job 31:1*) is not justification for women to neglect their outward appearance. Being overweight and unattractive does little to attract a man's attention and ultimately, his affection. It's true there are men for whom externals mean nothing. But most men do want to marry a woman they find attractive. And it's not just that they want someone pleasant to look at. How you care for your externals sends powerful messages to men about your stewardship of what God's given you. The principles of stewardship and modesty are universal and apply equally to women who emphasize their looks too much, as well as those who emphasize them too little. Many Christian women struggle with the problem of overemphasis on beauty. But others fall into the category of "*mismanagement*" or neglect. The former needs to pay more attention to their modesty, and the latter need encouragement to be good stewards.

The goal should be appropriate attention to your looks as opposed to our culture's current obsession with them. That includes daily exercise for health and well-being, not hours of

compulsive training at the gym. It also means giving your body good fuel, so it has the best shot at running well for a long time. If you fill it with junk, it won't. Consume the food and drink your body was designed for (*whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein, plenty of water*) and steer clear of those things that leave it sluggish and diseased (*refined sugars, hydrogenated oils, white flour - basically pre-packaged junk food*). The human body is like a high performance vehicle; you're a Ferrari, not a Yugo. You need to treat yourself accordingly.

When you do, you not only model stewardship, you also show that what matters to men matters to you. And often, that communicates a respect that's the most attractive thing of all. A quick rule of thumb is that what's modest is that which conceals, and what's feminine is that which adds to a woman's beauty. This includes not only her clothes, hair and makeup but also her heart - this is the second and more complex aspect of your femininity. 1 Peter 3:3-5 says, "*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the*

unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful."

We must not indulge our desire to stir up a fleshly reaction in men. It's tempting to want to do things that get us noticed. But it's sin on our part to be soliciting notice for the wrong reasons. And ultimately, any relationship that would come out of such notice would be corrupted from the start.

The physical attraction between men and women causes them to establish a family and invest themselves in its development. It encourages them to work and save and toil to ensure the survival of their families. Their sexual energy provides the impetus for the raising of healthy children and for the transfer of values from one generation to the next. Sexual drives urge a man to work when he would rather play. They cause a woman to save when she would rather spend. In short, the sexual aspect of our nature - *when released exclusively within the family* - produces stability

and responsibility that would not otherwise occur. When a nation is composed of millions of devoted, responsible family units, the entire society is stable, responsible and resilient.

If sexual energy within the family is the key to a healthy society, then its release outside those boundaries is potentially catastrophic. The very force that binds a people together then becomes the agent for its own destruction.

Putting our sexuality under Christ's lordship is a lifelong discipline, whether single or married. I know that I have struggled with purity issues just as much outside of relationships as in them; the impurity just manifests itself in different ways. As my friend says: "*Being in a relationship just brings to the surface sin and impurity that was already lurking beneath the surface.*"

Loose sexual boundaries in a dating or even engagement relationship will carry over into to marriage. Adultery, pornography, abuse and all types of sexual dysfunction plague Christian marriages and families. And these are simply behaviours that overflow from a heart where

sexuality has not been brought under Christ's control; a heart where gratification trumps God's way. Sex is about giving sacrificially to another person within a covenant relationship, not taking whatever you can get away with. If you lack a vision for marriage, you're setting yourself up for lax sexual standards, relationships without momentum, and heartache. If you don't have a deliberate goal in mind - either single service or Christian marriage between two chaste believers - it's pretty easy to fall prey to sexual temptation. And many are falling.

The hope of marriage is an antidote to promiscuity. If you believe in Christian marriage and are purposefully working toward it, it's a lot easier to set physical boundaries and character expectations in dating. Not only do those boundaries help you obey God's command to save sex for marriage, they increase the likelihood that the men you're spending time with will be good candidates for marriage.

Finding the Spouse

Our culture has embraced a rather absurd notion that there is just one human person who can “*complete us.*” This is a disastrous *mindset* with which to approach a lifelong marital decision. The notion of a soul mate has inspired countless movies, novels, and even top 40 songs on the billboard charts.

A culture suspicious of God nevertheless has brazenly embraced some sort of forceful and intelligent destiny that brings two lovelorn souls together! The real danger in this line of thinking is that many people mistake a storm of emotion as the identifying mark of their soul mate.

Proverbs says, “*A wife of noble character, who can find?*” (31:10). This passage has been hilariously misunderstood as being directed toward women, but the verse you’ve just read makes it clear that Proverbs 31 was written mostly for young, single men, telling them, “*This is what you want to look for in a wife.*” And the top thing to consider is this: “*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised*” (Proverbs

31:30). The Bible is telling young men to search for a woman of character; looks won't last, but character never leaves.

The “*good*” guys are hoping to find a girl who's authentic - *the real deal* - who's not hiding behind what she thinks people want to see. If she talks a good Christian line, but seems concerned more with how people perceive her rather than being comfortable with who she is, that's a turn-off. Guys see that as an attempt to compensate for what she lacks. A woman who is firmly secure in who she is - *honest about her weaknesses and humble about her strengths* - is a woman who is hard to resist. Develop an authentic, adventuresome and risky faith, one willing to follow God wherever He leads.

Marriage is a union not only of a boy and a girl, but of their families as well. Not leaving such crucial matters to chance, all family members participate in finding the most suitable spouse for the son or daughter and thereafter commit hearts and minds to assist in times of need. Marriage is a sacred covenant which all relatives take up the responsibility to care for

and protect. It is one of the most sacred events of life.

I tell young ladies, if you are planning on getting married, do not do what the average mother might tell you, *“Get the husband under your thumb right at the beginning. Otherwise you might have a terrible time, because it’s harder to do it later on.”* Don’t do that. Go into your marriage for better or for worse and live up to your vow. Be to your husband like melted butter is on toast; it is absorbed. Be one. You will have a very happy old age.

I tell young men, *“Gentlemen, if you are thinking about getting married, do not marry a young lady who won’t be one with you in your religion, who will not be willing to stay at home and take care of and raise your family, one who doesn’t respect you as a man and starts, right off the bat, by telling you what to do. Don’t do that, because if you do you will be miserable and you will lose your manhood and be nothing but a puppet on the strings of your wife. And you will both be unhappy, but she especially, in older age. Rather, choose a girl who will blend with you for better or for worse. And whether*

you are successful or not, she will be happy to eat what you eat and go where you go. A Roman ideal pronounced by the bride at weddings was ‘Where you are, there I will be.’ It might be difficult in the beginning years, but it will be much better later.”

Mentorship Portfolios

In every Christian, whether they would admit it or not, there is a desire to have a strong, wise mentor who is willing to invest in them. Few, however, find a wiser Christian mentor who is willing to help guide them through life, relationships, and ministry as a good mentor should. There are few things as helpful during your season of singleness than a good mentor who has been in your shoes before. He can explain what he did in similar circumstances. She can lovingly correct you when she sees you making mistakes.

Typically, the types of older Christian men and women we would want to be mentored by are active, busy Christians who are showing they have great direction and purpose in life. Christian CEOs, great coaches, pastors, or

admirable parents, if they are any good at what they are doing, should be busy running their companies, studying their sports, shepherding their flocks, and attending to their families, all for the glory of God. Christian mentors like these don't have time for people who are going to distract them from their primary goals.

But, usually, Christian mentors do have time to train people to accomplish similar goals which they hold. Goal driven people are typically willing to allow others to walk beside them if that person will actually help them in their life's passion and work.

A great Christian mom is much more likely to take a young wife under her tutelage if the younger woman will come over during the day and help the older woman clean the house, allowing them time to talk as they fold the mounds of laundry the older woman needs to get done before the kids come home from school.

A great pastor will be much more willing to mentor a young man if that young man is

willing to meet and help him manage the church youth ministry once a week.

Goal driven people have internal radar that steers them as far away as possible from individuals who will be dramatic, distracting, and difficult to work with. Anything or anyone that will hinder their goals simply gets avoided like the plague.

Successful, busy people simply avoid VDPs (*very draining people*). You may think a Christian should just be willing to help anyone who needs help. But God gifts each Christian differently. Thankfully there are those who have the gift of compassion and can mentor anyone, no matter how much time and emotional energy it might take. But if you want a highly successful and accomplished Christian to be your mentor, you just can't be a VDP.



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