



"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Corinthians 6:14).

Seeking a Life's Companion

Lesson Subject: Believers should seek Christian companionship in all areas of life, especially in home relationships.

L46. Date: July 1982. **Text:** Genesis 24:14; 28:1, 2; II Corinthians 6:11-18.
Topic: Marriage.

Whom you marry is probably more important than if you marry. The choice of a marriage partner will bless or curse your life as long as you live. Marriages may be "made in heaven," as some say, but they are worked out here on the earth in day to day living. There are certain biblical and practical principles which can help in selecting a marriage partner and maintaining a Christian home.

This lesson commentary is written for adults, most of whom have already married. But the principles which are given below can be used to help some young person make the choice of the right partner.

A study of this subject can help one who is already married to be the kind of partner he or she should be.

I. MARRY IN YOUR OWN RACE

There is no verse of scripture which commands. "Thou shalt not marry one of another race." But it is a wise principle to follow. Greater unity is enjoyed when both parties are from the same racial, cultural, and religious background.

There is a Bible example for that principle. When a wife was to be chosen for Isaac (and for his son Jacob years later), care was taken to select a woman from the same family line (Genesis 24:1-4; 28:1, 2). That was a

wise thing to do.

Interracial marriage creates problems for partners. But in a special way it creates problems for the children who belong to neither race. It is wise to marry in your own race.

II. MARRY IN YOUR OWN RELIGION

There is a sharp warning and solemn command in the Bible: "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*" (II Corinthians 6:14). There is such a spiritual separation between a Christian and a non-Christian that it is like mixing righteousness with unrighteousness, light with darkness, Christ and Satan. It must not be! The Christian must marry a Christian.

It seems that segregation in the Old Testament was based on religious grounds more than on racial grounds (Ezra 9:1 — 10:14). The New Testament carries much the same idea (I Corinthians 7:12-16).

The principle for a Christian must be: "Lead your prospective marriage partner to Christ or do not marry that person." It might cause temporary sorrow, but not so much as the grief that will follow if one marries outside the will of God.

What if one is already married to a non-Christian? Do not let the Christian leave (I Corinthians 7:12-14). Let the Christian set his goal in life to lead the unsaved partner to faith in Jesus Christ (I Peter 3:1-7). It can be done!

III. MARRY IN YOUR OWN FAITH

That does not mean one must marry a person who is a member of the same congregation, who worships in the same building. It means one should marry in his denomination. One who is a member of a Baptist church should marry a Baptist. That way there will be no conflict of religious conviction between the two.

To be married to a person who shares the same doctrinal conviction will give freedom to serve and glorify God through the church (Ephesians 3:21). When two persons of different denominations marry, conflict results. Often one will leave his church to attend the other, and be unhappy over it. It is not uncommon for both to leave their church for a third, and for neither to be happy. Far too often, both drop out of active church attendance and the family suffers as a result. How much better it is to marry one with your

doctrinal convictions.

Even in a small congregation, God will bring Christians together if they truly seek His will in marriage.

IV. MARRY BECAUSE OF TRUE LOVE

Happy marriages are built on true and mature love. How different that is from much of the modern concept of love. Much that is called love today is mere lust, some is selfish desire for personal joy, and some is true commitment to the well-being of the partner.

How can one identify true and mature love? Mature love seeks to enrich one's partner, not to exploit him or her. The love which seeks to get satisfaction rather than give happiness is immature and not a basis for marriage.

Love needs time to mature and develop. "I want it now" is a sign of immaturity. A little child finds it difficult to wait until dinner is cooked, because he wants immediate satisfaction of his hunger. A grown man who is immature in his love finds it difficult to be patient, understanding, and longsuffering in dealing with his wife. Beware of love at first sight. Take a second look before making a commitment!

The person who expects sexual favors before marriage is indicating immature and selfish love. Remember the principle: Mature love seeks to enrich, not to exploit, to give joy rather than to seek satisfaction. In view of that principle, how mature is your love to your partner in marriage'?

V. MARRY A PERSON WHO WILL MAINTAIN A CHRISTIAN HOME

A. Each partner must be willing and able to fill his place in the marriage for the home to be happy. The husband is to be head of the home (Ephesians 5:23-30). The wife is to be submissive to the headship of her husband (Ephesians 5:22; I Peter 3:1-7). The children are to be subject to both parents and trained in the things of God (Ephesians 6:1-4; Titus 2:4ff.).

A man should not marry until he is willing and able to be the head of the home. A woman should not marry until she is willing and able to submit to her husband. Neither of them should marry until both are mature enough to train children in the things of God. It is serious business to be married.

B. Christ must be recognized as Head of the home. Time must be given to Bible reading — privately and in a family circle. Prayer must be said at the table and in family worship periods. The will of God must be considered in every decision which the family makes.

The life of the Christian will be incomplete and unhappy if God is left out. That will change his relationship with members of the family, and the problem will grow and grow. The devil will have been given room to work and he will be busy. Take care that you maintain a Christian home.

VI. MARRY A PERSON WHO IS COMMITTED FOR LIFE

Do not enter marriage with the thought that divorce is any possible alternative for you (Matthew 19:3-8; Romans 7:1-3). Burn your bridges behind you. Resolve not to divorce under any circumstance. That will cause you to work through your problems rather than run from them.

Know that divorce will be a problem for you, even if both partners agree to it. God can and will forgive any sin involved in divorce, but the scars will still remain.

Show the Spirit of Christ in dealing with your marriage partner by bearing wrong, suffering for the other's healing, and by trusting God to work things out (I Peter 2:21.24; Ephesians 4:32). You can be a witness for Christ in your problems.

VII. MARRY A PERSON YOU LIKE AS WELL AS LOVE

You marry a whole person: body, mind, and emotion. You marry one who has personal discipline or lack of it, who has emotional maturity or lack of it. Consider the person's educational level, his ambitions, and his personal habits. A thing which is a bother today can become a burden later.

You marry a person with whom you have to live the rest of your life. If you do not have much in common, your marriage will be under great strain when the children are grown and gone. A husband and wife must be friends as well as lovers. They must like to be together and enjoy sharing the life of the other. Otherwise, the marriage will become a burden.

VIII. MARRY A PERSON WHO UNDERSTANDS FINANCES

The husband must be willing and able to make a living for the family. *“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he*

hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5:8). "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thessalonians 3:10).

The wife must have wisdom in making purchases and be willing to wait for some things she would like to purchase. Her new husband cannot provide for her as her father could. She must learn patience.

Both must give God first place in their financial plans. There should be a family budget. God should be honored by having first place in that budget by offerings designated to Him. Care must be taken that they do not fall into the "debt trap" which has wrecked so many marriages.

Surveys reveal that one home in five is in serious trouble financially today. That accounts for 40 percent of the desertions, 45 percent of the cruelty, and 70 percent of the worries in homes today. Money must be controlled, or it will control.

IX, MARRY A PERSON WHO SHARES YOUR CONCERN FOR CHILDREN

How many children do you want? What about birth control through family planning? Can the children be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6)? Do you have the emotional and spiritual maturity to rear a child, particularly if it is handicapped physically or mentally? Can you receive a child without feelings of jealousy or neglect? Marriage usually results in children, so those questions must be answered clearly and distinctly.

X. MARRY THE PERSON GOD HAS FOR YOU TO MARRY

Marriage must be "*in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 7:39). There is a person whom God will approve of your marrying. The devil has someone he wants you to marry. Be careful which one gets you married to the partner of his choice.

Make your marriage an object of sincere prayer. (1) Ask God whom you should marry. (2) Ask God when you should marry. (3) Ask God if you should marry. Do not make all the plans and then ask God to approve what you did without consulting Him. Pray before any plans are made, and let Him lead you.

Do not marry until you know that everything about your marriage is approved of God. It may bring temporary heartbreak, but it will produce ultimate joy.

Testify of Christ in your marriage plans. (1) Have an honorable

engagement: do not let it be too short, and take no unseemly liberties during that time. (2) Have a Christian wedding with a Christian minister reading the vows. Have the wedding in a church, if possible. Use Christian songs rather than secular songs. (3) Dedicate your home and yourselves to God. Your very wedding service can testify to your faith in Christ.

The home is under attack these days. The devil is out to destroy your marriage. But God is available to give you help and make your marriage a success. Keep your attention directed to Him.

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
(Psalm 127:1).

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the choice of a marriage partner so important?
2. Why should one marry in his own race?
3. Why should one marry in his-own denomination?
4. How can one know whether he is truly in love?
5. What is the man's place in a Christian home?
6. What is the woman's place in a Christian home?
7. How can one make sure his marriage does not break up?
8. What is the duty of husband and wife regarding finances?
9. How can one determine whom God has for him to marry?
10. How can this study help you to have a better marriage?