***The Guidelines for Selecting a Husband or Wife,

No. 2

M-3B***

We begin the second part of guidelines for selecting a husband or wife. These guidelines are intended to give Christians some stability in evaluating emotional attachments to one of the opposite sex relative to marriage. Again we urge you to learn these well so as to program your subconscious to give you some true guidance when you find yourself drawn to someone. Of course it is necessary to maintain a spiritual state in your own life so that God the Holy Spirit can give you positive responses to God's plan for you relative to the person he has selected for you in marriage.

The choice of a marriage partner involves more than the happiness of the two mates, and that's why it is so important to have some direction to making these choices. The whole family structure is based on the permanence of marriage. The choice is one, therefore, that is to be of a life-long duration. You do not marry with an attitude that you have a way out in divorce. This destroys the basis of the family institution. There are many young people who are marrying with this shopping-around attitude of returning the goods if they are not pleased. Once the choice is made, God says that we are to stick with it no matter what. Only unbelievers and carnal Christians who are disoriented to the principles of the Word of God will violate this rule of the permanency of marriage. When you approach the matter of getting married, establish the permanent feature of it in your mind so that you are approaching it with the realization that you're making a once-for-all decision and choice.

Now family stability is the strength of this nation and it is in grave danger today. Young people are marrying with the idea that they have a way out. The family is unstable as it has never been before. Individuals joined in marriage will determine the character of children yet unborn. When you're selecting a husband or a wife, you better keep in mind the children in your future because you are selecting their heritage at the same time. The heritage that you should deliver to them is that of a happy family legacy, not some disaster experience. The guidelines are very important. They help to direct in view of the permanence of marriage and in view of the influence that this bears upon children. Regarding the one that you select in marriage, the guidelines are very very valuable in helping to give you the best possible choice under the leadership of the Spirit of God.

**The Guidelines for Marriage**

Let's review what we have said thus far. We have said:

1. Do not marry an unbeliever.
2. Do not marry a spiritually immature person.
3. Do not marry in your teens.
4. Do not marry without your parents' approval.
5. Do not marry a person who is in serious conflict with his own parents.
6. Do not marry someone whose education is seriously inferior to yours.
7. Do not marry a jealous person.
8. Do not marry a person with a temper.
9. Do not marry a person who cheats.
10. Do not marry a person who smokes.
11. Do not marry a person who drinks.
12. Do not marry a person who uses foul language.

Now number 13:

1. **Debt**

Do not marry a person who goes easily into debt. Romans 13:8: "Owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loves another has fulfilled the law." "Owe no man anything." Now you may enter an installment plan with some limited reservations, and what you owe is the monthly payment, so that doesn't violate this Scripture. I'm talking about the credit card champ who reveals a lack of financial self-control. This is the character who gets his wife working immediately after marriage rather than living on a responsible economic level. Young people do not have to begin life on the economic level of their parents who have taken years to reach that level. The credit card champ is an erratic individual who's always off to new deals and new schemes, and constantly conning his wife with purported justifications for what he's doing. A man without sufficient income to care for a non-working wife is not ready for marriage. She is to be brought into his life as a homemaker, not as a partner on a work team.

You want to observe the woman who is a clothes horse and keeping-up-with-the-neighbors type of gal. She'll be a millstone around your neck. It would be good to observe a woman's industry and her thriftiness. This will be the pattern that she will set in marriage. On the other hand, beware of the stingy person. He conceals a materialistic obsession and a spirit of greed. He can create an equally miserable condition of life for you. So, do not marry a person who goes easily into debt. A great deal of marital problems stem from this factor alone.

1. **Gambling**

Do not marry a person who gambles. Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor working with his hands, the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs." Gambling is basically a way of stealing from someone else. I would warn you women to beware of the dashing Doc Holiday riverboat figure who is masking a compulsive neurotic personality. Don't pay any attention to the justification that he gambles only what he can afford to lose. Gambling, like alcohol, has a way of becoming an addiction which destroys the economic base of the home. A gambling devotee is usually irresponsible toward family needs, so the mate is strapped with a troublesome grown-up child, having to supplement the family income that the gambler is squandering. The habitual gambling is itself a sign of some character maladjustment. When you find someone who has a yen for gambling, take care. That Doc Holiday riverboat type may be the greatest tragedy in your life.

1. **Health**

Do not marry a person with a record of particularly exceptionally poor health. Proverbs 14:30: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones." "A sound heart is the life of the flesh." 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers." It would be wise for you to look into the family health patterns of a prospective mate. Observe their vitality, their obesity, and their diseases. Note the hypochondriac tendencies in an individual--the one who wants to play the frail cow or the puny bull role. Observe the attitudes toward the foods that they eat; their attitudes toward exercise; and, their attitudes toward vitamins. By all means beware of the TV dinner wife. This is the gal who invites you out to dinner and produces a TV dinner for you. That indicates something about patterns of eating that you may anticipate, and patterns of physical condition. The body is chemistry. If it receives the chemicals that it needs in adequate amounts, it has a lot better chance of functioning as God designed it to function.

Now if you want to see what your mate is going to look like in the years ahead, I would suggest that you take a look at the father and the mother. If you want to see what your future husband is going to look like, take a look at his father. If you want to see what this wife is potentially to develop into, take a look at her mother. Mr. Groovy now may have such habits that he will be Mr. Rickety for you in 10 years. So, avoid the person who has poor health habits and who signals a poor condition of physical health. This is a great drain and a great preoccupation in a marriage when there are major physical breakdowns that you constantly have to live with.

By the same token, avoid the person who has used drugs. Of course this is going to strike a vast number of young people. We are moving increasingly into a drug culture. Again we realize that, from the prophetic Word of God, this is the order of things. The book of the Revelation tells us that one of the things for which the people in the end times during the tribulation period will be condemned is because they would not repent of their "sorceries." In the Greek, it's "pharmakeia," and this is the word from which we get our English word "pharmacy." It has to do with drugs. So, what we find as part of the pattern of society in the end times is that it will be a drug culture. This is clearly portrayed in the Scriptures that in end times we will live in a drug culture. As we are approaching those times, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is natural that the domination of a drug culture will be set in motion now. Indeed it has in our day. I read recently that something like 40 million young people have been drug users. This is a fantastic number, and the article went on to say that it's going to grow larger all the time.

This is going to cause you some major difficulties when you come up against someone that you may be interested in but who has played around with drugs--marijuana and harder drugs. All of these things do permanent brain and genetic damage. Don't let anybody con you that marijuana is not addictive, so it's no problem to use something like that. Increasingly the studies that are being made now are revealing that it does do damage, and it does do permanent genetic and brain damage, and that it particularly passes it on to the children yet unborn. LSD is fraught with danger. We read recently of the man in prison who sat there and several days after he'd been on an LSD trip, suddenly was compelled to gouge his eyes out and to pull his eyeballs out until he was sightless. Now you may find reasons from our society to justify drug usage. Anybody who has been fool enough to play the drug role and to pick up this pattern from our society, by that token, is a problem when it comes to marriage. You want to be careful before you commit yourself to an ex-drug participant.

You also want to avoid too great a difference in the age span between the husband and wife. The man should be no more than 10 years senior to his wife. For a woman, if she's older than the man, she should be no more than three or four years older. This is the extent to which people generally have been able to operate successfully.

Marriage between different races of course creates serious problems. The marriage may be happy for the husband and wife on a mixed racial basis, but the children bear a stigma in our society. An unhappy and ostracized child will create tensions between the parents who didn't bother to think ahead to this condition that they would be forced to cope with. Each parent must to some degree, in a mixed marriage, simply live apart from that which is his own natural environment. It places a great strain and a great burden. There is serious doubt that this is in the plan of God.

1. **Neurotics**

Do not marry a neurotic. 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Proverbs 27:15: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." Do not marry a neurotic. Now, a Christian can be a neurotic. Temperamental, moody, weird ideas, and inferiority complex--all of these things can characterize a Christian. An emotionally unstable mate will deal constant misery to the family--a tyrant or a screamer. Now, if you like to live around screaming, just marry some neurotic and you'll have it.

It would be wise for you to note some telltale signs of a neurotic: excessive tension; inhibitions; fears; anxieties; talkativeness; bitterness of spirit; and, an unrealistic religious attitude. So, watch for mental quirks that may run in a family as you meet the family of a prospective mate. A well-balanced personality in parents is likely to be repeated in children, and vice versa. Family life is forced to conform to the instability of a neurotic mate. The neurotic, as a matter of fact, might even in time prove to be a sex pervert. There have been women with tremendous grief brought into their lives because they were willing to tolerate a neurotic who proved to be more of a neurotic on a physical level than they anticipated.

1. **Status**

Do not marry a status symbol. Proverbs 11:2: "When pride comes, then comes shame, but with the lowly is wisdom." Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 29:23: "A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit." 1 John 2:16: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world." Do not marry a status symbol. This is motivated by the cheap goal of being "in." For you to marry someone because of his social economic or professional status will turn sour in time. That good looking doll that gives you social class may also be too dumb to respond in love. Dismiss the notion that your single status is inferior to the married state, and that there is some status in being married. God is reserving you in your single status for a period of free, open, uninhibited service until His right time. So, don't apologize and don't feel intimidated because you are at a certain age level and you are still unmarried. Find satisfaction in what you bring to a mate, not in what you can receive from that person because of some status that accrues to you because of your marriage to that individual.

Also, do not marry either because you want the status of having children. Children don't give status to anybody. Children can be the greatest grief and the greatest non-status givers of anything.

1. **Image**

Do not marry an image. Proverbs 13:16: "Every prudent man deals with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly." Do not marry an image. Dreaming up an ideal mate and then imposing the image on someone who seems the nice type who will fit it is fraught with disaster. There may be qualities that you admired in your own parents. So, you dream about how you'd like to see these qualities in the person you marry. What this results in is your marrying a stranger whose real personality may later prove to be unbearable to you. You didn't really marry the real person. What you married was the image that you created. Note carefully the friends, the home, the family background, the interests, and the values of the person you intend to marry. Remember that the person who is courting you is going to be on his best behavior, and on ideal conditions to project a good image.

So take a look at his friends, his home, his family interests, and his values until you ferret out the real person, the real character behind the personality. Admit what's really there in a prospective mate, and don't plan to change it later. If you don't think you can live with it, forget it now. Do not be deceived by that pleasant appearance and manner which is a superficial put-on--the shallow glamor girl type or the suave man with phony social graces. Seek someone that you're perfectly at ease with in every way as she or he is found now, not on how you will revise them later. Do not marry an image. Deal, as Proverbs says, with knowledge. Deal with knowledge. A prudent man deals with knowledge. Deal with the facts as they are.

1. **Libido**

Do not marry on a wave of libido--this physical drive for physical attachment and for the satisfaction of sexual desires. Ephesians 2:3: "Among whom also we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." 2 Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts, but finally righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a true heart." 1 Peter 4:2: "That he no longer should live in the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Everybody goes through cycles of strong waves of sexual desire which propel them during those periods toward marriage. These are normal in God's creative order upon us. They come in cycles that hit at various stages of life. It's the icy fingers on the spine; the strangers in the night; or, the one enchanted evening type of experience.

Now the first wave hits in the middle of the teens. It comes at about age 16, and it's the most dangerous wave of all, especially for girls. This is the time that young teenage girls may decide to marry by physical animal instincts alone. They are oblivious to the requirement of soul compatibility--soul compatibility before there can be physical compatibility. They're not mature enough to understand the workings of their own soul. This is the stage that we describe as being boy-crazy or girl-crazy or puppy love. The second wave of libido is near the close of the teen years. It hits at about age 18 when we are still very deficient in emotional maturity and in good judgment. This is the wave on which most teen marriages get wiped out. The girl who married at 16 or 17 is usually wiped out at 18 or 19. Now the third wave hits in the early twenties, about 20 for women and about 21 or 22 in men. The best marriage choices are usually made after this wave has passed. It takes about three good waves of libido before you are ready for making a decision toward marriage. This is the time of life when concepts, ideals, and plans crystallize into permanent patterns. Your choices begin to settle down. Your attitudes, your tastes, begin to settle down. Before this, they're in a very fluctuating state.

I've noticed around here at Berean that our older teenage girls kind of smile, and my club leaders tell me they sort of laugh, at these waves of libido and being preoccupied in their teens with marrying somebody. They think that's almost ludicrous that anybody would consider that. That's because they have been so saturated with Bible doctrine around here that they have God's point of view, so that these movements within their own beings do not disorient them. They take it in stride. They find it difficult to think that other teens would not be able to take it in as good stride as they can. They find it hard to think that some girl would play the fool at 16 or 18 or 19 of getting married. But every now and then we have somebody in the orbit of our ministries here who does, and who proves to be a beautiful but sad test case for them. When young people are trained in the Word of God, they have a background by which they're able to cope with these waves of libido.

The early waves of libido magnify sex and they ignore social compatibility. Sex, I remind you again, is not love, but a basic manifestation of love which is an attitude of mind. Sexual love does not conquer all. However, I should also caution you not to marry someone that you are not drawn to physically and would not delight to give yourself to. There is a balance at both ends of the line. But just wait until you have settled down in these waves of physical desire. Wait until you come to what 1 Corinthians calls the burning stage where you have settled into an intense permanent long-range desire toward one particular individual. That's the sign that you are getting close to zeroing in on the right person. These waves come and go. The burning has a quality of constancy that is necessary for making the decisions toward marriage.

1. **Pressure**

Do not marry under pressure. Isaiah 26:3: "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you." An attitude of mind determines our peace. There is an attitude of mind required in making a decision for marriage in order that it should be made not under pressure but under a condition of peace. Philippians 4:6: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and, the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Proverbs 3:5-5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Do not marry under pressure.

To get away from some seemingly intolerable situation is a bad reason for marriage. Reject the idea that someone is ever your last chance. Instead, practice the Christian spiritual life technique of faith rest in the Lord, and wait for God to bring that person to you. You do not have to run around looking for a mate. You do not have to be obsessed with the idea that if you don't find someone soon you are doomed. Avoid rushing into a marriage for any reason, like the fact that someone is departing; going into the service; or, going off to college, and so you have to make the move now. The stresses of your environment are not solved by simply changing your environment. When you enter marriage, you pick up a whole new set of pressure points that come into your life. So, don't marry because you want to get away from some intolerable situation. That is a pressure in your life, but it will not be solved by marriage.

Also, the case of fornication or premarital pregnancy is not sufficient ground for marriage. Such a marriage is usually a lifetime of misery. This is a case of sin to be confessed, and whatever problems involved are to be resolved. But the solution for fornication or premarital pregnancy is not a shotgun wedding in Winchester Cathedral. That again is human viewpoint that unfortunately has permeated a lot of thinking of preachers who should know better.

For this reason of not marrying under pressure, you should make your engagement long enough to see your perspective mate under a variety of circumstances and a variety of pressures--to be able to note personal characteristics and habits. You want to be able to get back to the person's character, not just the personality. The personality is the image that he projects. The character is the real person. The character often has features that we don't want other people to see, that we don't want to display publicly. So, we put on some kind of a personality in order to keep our real characteristics under. Don't feel obliged, by any means, to go through with the marriage, if you hold any mental reservations about it. It is foolish pride to blunder on.

When two young people come to me to be married, and they're at the engagement stage, one of the first things I tell them is that nothing has been settled. They are moving in an agreed direction, but if they come to the point, as they begin to learn more about each other's souls at the engagement stage, that they discover that they cannot respond or be compatible at the point of their minds, their wills, or the emotions, that they should break off or at least delay the marriage.

You should also resist your well-meaning friends who might like to push you toward someone else and get things going faster than you intend. The matchmaker crowd is always around and they get their vicarious kicks. There is a certain type of personality I've observed even in Bible-oriented churches that get a lot of kicks out of teasing. They think it's a great riot to be making remarks about somebody liking somebody else and being sweet on somebody else. That's juvenile dunderheads stuff, and it can put great pressures on you, if you're not careful, to fulfill a role that you think everybody has concluded you should fulfill. So mind your own business and don't make cute jokes about two people being sweet on each other. If you want to help, then start praying for them.

And, watch out for eager mothers-in-law who are getting pushy, especially mothers who have had unfortunate choices in marriage of their own. So, they have lived through a lifetime of semi-misery, and so they decide that they're really going to get their daughters set up right. Well, they've got a strong motivation. I'll grant you that. With the hell-on-earth condition that they have gone through themselves, they know what they want in the way of something better for their daughters. So, they tend to get pushy and tend to start being predators who watch and look for some very fascinating and interesting personality that they may bring together with their daughters.

I sat during World War II in San Francisco on one of the San Francisco trolleys, and a lady looked over and saw that I was a lieutenant in the Marine Corps. She came over and sat down next to me and began chatting. Before the conversation was over, what she had in mind was she explained how her daughter was a singer in a nightclub and she was always interested in having her meet some nice young men. I seemed to qualify as a nice young man as she sat there on the trolley across looking at me, and then came and chatted a while. She wanted to know if we could get together. I thought I'd put her on a little bit, so I told her, "Well I am married, but I always like to meet friends." She didn't think that was a good idea, so she found another seat. It's fantastic when mothers get pushy.

Never use marriage as a means to resolve your problems either. Do you think you need a good mate to settle a person down. That's wrong. You won't find a good mate, let alone a right one, until you get settled down first and start acting and thinking straight. Do not marry under pressure.

1. **Divorce**

Finally, do not marry a divorced person except under certain conditions. Here a real major problem--people who have gone through a divorce condition. Here in our part of the country in Texas, we have a way of leading the nation, I observe, in divorces. It is very difficult, I think, sometimes to meet anybody in this part of the country who hasn't been divorced at least once. So here we have a major problem. Often these are people who were either not saved at the time or they were just church members in some non-teaching situations so they are ignorant of what God's principles were. So, here's a problem that they face. They were married, and they're now divorced, and they get interested in someone. The Word of God has certain guidelines for the divorced person and I think we should include those here.

Matthew 19:1-9: "And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished saying these things, He departed from Galilee and came into the borders of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him and He loved them. And the Pharisees came unto Him, testing Him, and saying to him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' And He answered and said unto them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female (one-for-one, a particular one for a particular one), and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife (they shall coalesce in soul, in spirit, and in body): and the two shall be one flesh? (And the only way they can be one flesh is in the act of sexual relations.) Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.' They said unto Him, 'Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?' And He said unto them, 'Moses because of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. (God's institution of marriage is permanency, not separation or an option for a way out.) And I say unto you whoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is put away does commit adultery."

Then Romans 7:1-3: "Know you not brethren, for I speak to them that know the law, how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives, for the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if while her husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulterous. But if her husband be dead, she is free from the law so that she is no adulterous though she be married to another man.

Then 1 Corinthians 7:10-11: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord: Let not the wife depart from her husband. But if she departs, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband; and, let not the husband put away his wife." Now while divorce is not permitted in the Word of God, it is a reality of life that people must face. So do not marry a divorced person except under the following conditions:

* 1. **Remarriage**

While the divorce was not on Scriptural grounds originally, the former mate has remarried. Once the former mate has remarried, even if the divorce was not on Scriptural ground, the marriage is at an end. It no longer exists. In that case, the individual is free before God to be guided very clearly and specifically by the Spirit of God when, and if, he should enter another marriage.

* 1. **Adultery**

The person was the innocent party in a persistent adultery case. Matthew 5:32: "But I say unto you that whoever shall put away his wife except for the cause of fornication causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her that is divorced commits adultery."

* 1. **Desertion**

Do not marry a divorced person except that the divorce was the result of being deserted by the mate--if the party was deserted by the opposite number. 1 Corinthians 7:15: "But if the unbelieving depart, let them depart; brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace." In that case the innocent party is again free to remarry. Now, if the ex-mate, after your divorce, proves to have been your right man or your right woman, then do not marry another, but rather seek reconciliation. 1 Corinthians 7:11: "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Let not the husband put away his wife." I've had people that I have had to warn who have divorced, not on proper grounds, that they should beware of entering into another marriage or dating or exposing themselves to anything except reconciliation. They didn't take it seriously declaring that they never intended to get married, and sure enough they did.

Now, if the ex-mate proves to have been the right one, don't seek someone else, but seek reconciliation while each is still unmarried. If the ex-mate was not the right one and you have divorced on legitimate grounds, there is still a right mate for you. But, if you have divorced, do not date for at least a year after the divorce. A woman is particularly vulnerable to making a wrong choice in the days following a divorce. Instead, spend a year building your spiritual maturity structure in your soul through the use of doctrine which you are able to grasp through God's system of perception. If you have children by the former marriage, the right mate will accept them. They will respond usually in turn to that person. Before marrying, make certain that your intended mate is not hung up on your former marriage. You come to that person as free from calluses on your soul as possible. And don't marry as a substitute for something like your loneliness or some other problem you want to remove.

**Widows**

Now there are special regulations governing widows. The Bible says that if you're an older widow married to your right man who is now deceased, it is best for you not to remarry. 1 Corinthians 7:8: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows it is good for them that they abide even as I." 1 Timothy 5:5: "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trust in God and continue in supplications and prayer day and night." If she has been married to her right man, and he is now deceased, she is to preoccupy herself with service and prayer. And you'll have to decide which stage this would apply to you.

If you are a young widow, the Bible says you can remarry. 1 Timothy 5:14: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the house, and give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (Romans 7:1-3). If you have been married to your right man, he is now dead, and you feel led to remarry, this indicates that God has another right man provided for you. Now the fact that young women are to seek remarriage in itself indicates that there is another right man in the providence of God for them. Carnal widows neglect doctrine, so they are prone to marry the wrong man. 1 Timothy 5:11: "But the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ (negative toward doctrine), they will marry; having condemnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And besides they learned to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." So young widows, while they are open for remarriage, if they are carnal, are prone to marry the wrong man.

So here are 21 points of guidelines for marriage. Program your subconscious with them. They have been tried; they've been tested; and, they will prove to stand you in good stead.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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