

## She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not

Choosing the “right” person for marriage – mate selection issues



**Thesis:** Choosing a marriage partner is one of the most significant decisions in life and because it is such the pressure is on to make sure that the right mate is chosen.

## Introduction

- I. Seriousness of marriage
  - A. Importance of decision
    1. Three major decisions
      - a. Salvation
      - b. Marriage
      - c. Career
    2. Affects of decisions
      - a. Eternity
      - b. Lifelong
      - c. Short or long term
  - B. Permanence of marriage
    1. One man one woman forever
      - a. Monogamy
      - b. Serial Monogomy
    2. Divorce
      - a. Statistics
        - i. Secular
        - ii. Christian
      - b. God's attitude
        - i. Enemy
        - ii. Not so from the beginning
  - C. Spiritual significance
    1. Picture of Christ/Church relationship
    2. Ordained of God
- II. Gift of Marriage

- A. Vs. gift of singleness
  - B. Reason for marriage
    - 1. Contemporary reasons
    - 2. Biblical
      - a. Companionship
      - b. Pleasure
      - c. Completeness
      - d. Fruitfulness
      - e. Protection
      - f. Illustration
  - C. Timing
    - 1. Season of singleness
    - 2. Prudence
- III. Considerations in mate selection
- A. Propinquity
    - 1. For the majority
    - 2. Email order brides
  - B. Shared faith
    - 1. Unequally yoked
    - 2. Doctrinal agreement
    - 3. Pray together and stay together
    - 4. Evangelism dating
  - C. Lord's Leading
    - 1. Necessity of test
    - 2. Knapp's' *Impressions*
    - 3. God's will
      - a. Chinese missionary
      - b. Rebekah's decision

D. Dating vs. courting

1. Dating defined
  - a. Rules of dating
  - b. Bachelor/Bachelorette phenomena
2. Courting defined
3. Courting defended
4. Samson and Philistine woman vs. Ruth and Boaz

E. Authority

1. Submission of potential mate
  - a. Treat mother/treat wife
  - b. Treat father/treat husband
2. Blessing
  - a. Isaac and Rebekah
  - b. Ruth and Boaz
  - c. Samson and Philistine wife

Conclusion



## **Introduction**

“She loves me! She loves me not.” All of us are familiar with the concept of a young man trying to determine if a young lady loves him or not by picking the petals off a daisy one at a time. If the whim of chance leaves him at “She loves me!” he will retain a glimmer of hope. If not, he'll get another daisy and try again. This is a process I like to refer to as Romantic Roulette.

However, selecting a mate for life is not a decision that can be arrived at through random selection. Choosing a marriage partner is one of the most significant decisions in life and because it is such the pressure is on to make sure that the right mate is chosen. This decision is complicated by the fact that there are over 6 billion people in the world to choose from.<sup>1</sup> I am going to give you some principles to assist you in making the right choice. This decision can be better made when the persons involved realize the seriousness of marriage, the gift of marriage, and several considerations that factor into choosing the right mate.

## **Seriousness of Marriage**

I believe that there are three major decisions in everyone's life. In order of importance they are: salvation, marriage, and career respectively.

Without a doubt, the decision to put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is the most important decision that a person can make. What makes this decision so important is that it has eternal consequences. If a person puts their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation the Bible makes it very clear that they will receive everlasting life (John 3:15-16, Romans 6:23). This is not a “fountain of youth” concept, but an externalities of the spirit and soul in heaven. Christ Jesus promised that he was going to prepare a place for us in heaven and that where he was we would be also (John 14:2-3). There is also a final redemption of the physical body that will occur in the

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<sup>1</sup> “World”, *CIA – The World Factbook*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/xx.html>, [Internet], February 1, 2006

last days at the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Though it has been corrupted through age and death will be glorified and made incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Conversely, those who do not put their faith in Christ are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). They are condemned already (John 3:18) to death and hell, which is the second death (Revelation 20:14 and 21:8). Hell is described as a place of eternal torment and pain that is to be avoided at all costs (Matthew 8:12 and Mark 9:43-48). Salvation is a decision for eternity. It is vital that this decision be made properly if other decisions are going to be made properly.

The second major decision of life is the decision to marry. This is a decision that will not last for eternity so it is not as vital as the decision of salvation, but it is a decision that will have life-long ramifications. This is the subject of our discussion, so we will talk about it in greater detail momentarily.

The third major decision that a person makes regards their career. This is not an eternal decision, nor is it necessarily a lifelong decision. Careers can and are being altered and changed constantly. Temporary employees are one of the fastest growing segments of the workforce and an average worker can change jobs as many as six or seven times and careers as many as three times<sup>2</sup>

Isn't it odd that people can go to college for years to help them decide about their career, find a church on nearly every corner to help people come to a decision regarding their eternity, and yet, where do they go for training and direction in how to make the vital decision of choosing the right mate for marriage? There is no obvious place that would leap to the average person's mind, although there is a multitude of research and data, as well as numerous professional fields available in this area. It appears that our culture has created an ambiance that a person can only make this decision on their own. I must ask, "Why?" Since marriage is such an extremely important

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2 Burkett, Larry and Ellis, Lee, *Finding the Career that Fits You*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, page 18

decision it should not be made based on the fate of the petals of a daisy. It must be made with a realization of its lifelong importance.

In order to make an informed decision about who they will marry, a person must come to grips with the permanence of marriage. In this day and age of rampant divorce, it is obvious that many are not of this opinion and the results have been heartbreak and confusion. However, the Bible makes it clear that marriage is a lifelong commitment to one person. *Proverbs 31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. Matthew 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* It is important that a person commit to being a “one-woman man” or a “one-man woman” before choosing their mate. The Advanced Training Institute of America says this in reference to this commitment:

After marriage, this commitment means we will no longer think about marriage to or intimacy with others. It means we will work together with our partner so nothing can damage the oneness of the marriage.<sup>3</sup>

This commitment coincides with the socially accepted practice of monogamy. The majority of world cultures agree that monogamy is the accepted and standard practice in controlling sexual relations.<sup>4</sup> By monogamy I am referring to one sexual partner for life through marriage. The Interpreters Bible Commentary states:

Since sex is of divine ordaining, it must be related religiously to life. As the slowly maturing experience of the people of Israel learned, and as the whole Bible expresses, the way in which this becomes possible is through monogamous marriage.<sup>5</sup>

The “one-woman man” or “one-man woman” commitment does not, however, coincide with the practice of serial monogamy in which a person has a series of partners, but only one at a time. This could be through marriage and divorce or simply an unmarried person establishing a relation-

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3 *Establishing Biblical Standards of Courtship*, Advanced Training Institute of America, Page 13

4 Brehm, Miler, Perlman and Campbell, *Intimate Relationships*, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2002, page 256

5 Pier, Russell K., *The Sin of Divorce*, Faith School of Theology, Charletson, ME, copyright pending, page 9

ship with one person, terminating it, and then moving on to another, etc.<sup>6</sup>

Choosing the right mate is not a matter of finding one of many, but the one for a lifetime. A heartfelt commitment to this goal should be made before choosing a mate.

But why encourage such a restricting commitment? Even if there is a Biblical basis for the decision, why push it? After all there is a “disposable spouse” mentality in America. A September 2004 report by Barna Research shows that 35% of all non-born again marriages end in divorce. This rate is identical for born again Christians. The spirit of the age is echoed in British author Angela Carter's words regarding marriage - “They call it 'serial monogamy'.”<sup>7</sup> Such cultural trends will require that the person preparing to choose the right mate come to a decision if divorce is an option.

The standard marriage vow repeated by the bride and groom at most weddings ends with the phrase, “...till death do us part.” This is the language of a covenant and according to Dr. Russell K. Pier in his book *The Sin of Divorce* implies:

This is not a covenant of works, based on promises of what each will do for the other but an unconditional covenant, loving, forgiving and restoring each other “until death do us part”.<sup>8</sup>

Divorce is the breaking of these vows and the undoing of the covenant. Yet, what is God's opinion of divorce? There is certainly a wide spectrum of opinions concerning divorce in the church. Some church leaders teach that it is a sin under any circumstance. Others are much more permissive in their perspective. Barna Research reports that 66% of Americans disagree that divorce is a sin. 52% of born again Christians do not believe that divorce is a sin compared to 74% of non born agians. So where should we stand on the issue of divorce?

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6 *MSN Encarta Standard*, “Dictionary”, [http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_1861718009/serial\\_monogamy.html](http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_1861718009/serial_monogamy.html), [Internet], January 28, 2006

7 *MSN Encarta Standard*, “Quotations”, [http://encarta.msn.com/quote\\_1861515451/Marriage\\_They\\_call\\_it\\_serial\\_monogamy.html](http://encarta.msn.com/quote_1861515451/Marriage_They_call_it_serial_monogamy.html), [Internet], January 28, 2006

8 Pier, Russell K., page 7

Malachi 2:16 states, “For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away:...” In this verse God expresses hatred toward divorce. It is seen as an enemy of the His divinely ordained institution of marriage. This statement is complicated by Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jeremiah 3:8, and Ezra 10:3 where it appears that the Scriptures make provision for divorce. Jesus addressed the passage in Deuteronomy and stated that its provisions were a result of the hardness of man's heart, but it was not God's design in the beginning (Matthew 19:4-8).

The debate over whether there is ever any Biblical allowance for divorce has raged and will continue to rage on until the Lord returns. However, before making the life altering choice of a mate for marriage, one should realize that divorce as an option is not part of God's original design and intent. You've got to be in it for the long haul and determine to stay by that person “..till death do us part”.

One other element to discuss in relation to the seriousness of the marriage choice is the explicit spiritual significance of marriage. In Ephesians chapter five the Apostle Paul paints a clear picture of the deep spiritual symbolism of marriage. The marriage relationship between a man and a woman is like the relationship between the Lord Jesus and His church. The husband and wife should treat each other in such a way that the world sees how Christ wants to relate to His people, the Church. Joshua Harris states it this way:

God intends to cultivate the same abundant, unconditional love between a husband and wife as he himself has for us. Marriage is a profound and marvelous mystery established by God for his glory. [*I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, page 181]

Marriage is also spiritual because it is the first institution ordained of God.<sup>9</sup> Before he established any governmental or spiritual institutions God birthed the family through a married couple. The married couple was God's design for the foundation of earthly society. Dwight Pentecost points out that, “Society is founded not on the individual but on the family. Lest there be a total

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9 Harris, Joshua, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, Multnomag Books, Sisters, Oregon, 1997, page 180

disruption of society, God protects marriage as a divine institution so that society may not give way to the corruption which inevitably must come and the dissolution that must result when the smallest unit in society is disrupted.”<sup>10</sup>

Marriage is a very serious matter. It is vital that this understanding be lodged within the mind of one who is about to decide one of the most important decisions of life. It is a very serious and permanent decision to be made and treated with great care.

### **The Gift of Marriage**

Perhaps part of the reason why marriage is to be viewed with such sobriety is that the Bible describes it as a gift of God. Solomon said that the man who finds a wife finds a good thing and is a recipient of God's favor in his life.<sup>11</sup> When God created Adam He did not think it was good for him to be alone so He created Eve to be his wife.<sup>12</sup> The first marriage was God's gift to mankind. Matthew Henry states in regard to the marriage of Adam and Eve:

Marriage is honourable, but this surely was the most honourable marriage that ever was, in which God himself had all along an immediate hand. Marriages (they say) are made in heaven: we are sure this was, for the man, the woman, the match, were all God's own work; he, by his power, made them both, and now, by his ordinance, made them one. This was a marriage made in perfect innocency, and so was never any marriage since....<sup>13</sup>

Not all marriages are made in heaven, but this one certainly was. It stands as a beacon to mankind that marriage is a gift of God.

The Apostle Paul alludes further to the fact that marriage and singleness are both gifts of God in 1 Corinthians 7:7. “For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.” John MacArthur comments on

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10 Pier, Russell K., page 11

11 Proverbs 18:22

12 Genesis 2:18-25

13 Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, [CD-ROM] (Lewisville, TX: Accelerated Christian Education, 2002)

this verse:

Now, the gift that God gives He gives to some. Look at verse 7: “ I would that all men were even as I myself, but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that.” He says - Look, I’m not going to argue with God’s gift,... I don’t want people who need to be married trying to live a celibate life, at least not traveling in my missionary team. That doesn’t help. I just know that God wants some people single, some people married, and if God wants you married then get married. You ought to have your own wife.<sup>14</sup>

God has ordained that some have the gift of singleness while others have the gift of marriage. It is incumbent upon each individual to discover their unique gifting of God. Before one attempts to choose the right mate, they must determine their gift from God.

Burkitt further elaborates on 1 Corinthians 7:7:

That Paul was unmarried is evident from 1Co 9:5. But he does not refer to this fact here. When he wishes that all men were like himself, he evidently does not intend that he would prefer that all should be unmarried, for this would be against the Divine institution, and against his own precepts elsewhere. But he would be glad if all men had control over their passions and propensities as he had; had the gift of continence, and could abstain from marriage when circumstances of trial, etc., would make it proper.<sup>15</sup>

Those who can stay single should, but there are reasons why a person should marry. The reasons referred to in this passage by Paul refer specifically to issues of sexual incontinence, however, there must be other factors that contribute to the distribution of the gift of marriage. Contemporary reasons for marriage include things like status and companionship and are usually self-centered.

The question begs itself, however. What are some Biblical reasons for marriage? The Institutes in Basic Life Principles lists six purposes and principles for marriage that I think will provide insight and be thought provoking for the one considering his gifting from God. The first is companionship, and this coincides with the principle of oneness between the husband and wife as first mentioned in Genesis 2:24. The second reason is pleasure, specifically sexual pleasure. The prin-

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14 MacArthur, John “Jesus’ Teaching on Divorce – Part 5”, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/2340.htm>, [Internet], January 30, 2006

15 Burkitt, William, *William Burkitt's Expository Notes on the New Testament*, [CD-ROM], (Lewisville, TX: Accelerated Christian Education, 2002)

ciple to be exercised in this purpose is self-control, for the sex is not uninhibited. Leviticus outlines some guidelines for sexual activity. Physical intimacy cannot be the only reason for marriage because it will not last. Third is completeness, which brings a greater spiritual power. Completeness eliminates the possibility of addition or subtraction. Fourth is fruitfulness, which is in accordance with the command of the Lord in Genesis 1:28 to multiply life on the earth. The fifth purpose is protection which is in accordance with the command of Malachi 2:15 to raise up a godly seed through which God will fulfill His purposes on the earth. The sixth and final reason given is that marriage is to serve as an illustration. I have already discussed the strong spiritual significance of marriage. The principle associated with this purpose is that of self-denial through the wife's submission and the husband's sacrifice.<sup>16</sup>

One final point to make in regard to the gift of marriage is that of timing. As I stopped to think about it, I realized that every single human on the face of the earth has been given the gift of singleness at some point or points in their life. This is an obvious rationalization. It is also an important awareness. If singleness, as marriage, is a gift of God, it must be valued in and of itself and capitalized upon in its proper season. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 7:32-33, “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.”

Joshua Harris, in his book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, comments on this verse as follows:

Paul doesn't say this to put marriage down. He says it to encourage us to view singleness as a gift. God doesn't use our singleness to punish us. He has created this season as an unparalleled opportunity for growth and service that we shouldn't take for granted or allow to slip by.

One person rightly stated, “Don't do something about your singlehood – do something *with* it!”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Research in Principles of Life – Advanced Seminar Textbook*, Institute in Basic Life Principles, Inc., Oak Brook, Illinois, 1986, pages 169-205

<sup>17</sup> Harris, Joshua, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, page 78

Paul further states in 1Corinthians 7:27, “Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.” I believe that the message Paul is trying to communicate to the church is that we need to be content in the gifting that God has given to us at this season of our lives. If a person is single, they should not be racing toward the altar. Rather, they should be using the season of singleness to do all they can for the Lord and to wisely prepare themselves should the Lord impart to them the gift of marriage.

Prudence is a very important element of timing and the gift of marriage. Proverbs 24:27 states, “Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.” I believe that this should be the motto of the single. The single should be establishing a base of living before they move into marriage. Such things as financial freedom and preparing for the responsibilities that come with marriage are acts of prudence that are being encouraged here.<sup>18</sup> Jesus alludes to this principle in Luke 14:28 when He says, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” Marriage is a very serious decision that is to be entered into with a tremendous amount of forethought, diligent preparation, and prudent foresight.

### **Considerations in Mate Selection**

Now, let's say that an individual realizes the significance and seriousness of marriage and has discerned that marriage is his gifting. Now all they need is the right mate. How do they go about choosing the right one so that they are not stuck with a “dud”? There are several considerations that need to be mentioned at this point.

One obvious consideration in choosing the right mate is that of propinquity – who is available in the area. The majority of people will marry someone with whom they are acquainted through

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<sup>18</sup> Establishing Biblical Standards of Courtship, page 16

their local settings. However, the advent of the Internet and email has lessened this restriction. The on line dating service of eHarmony® claims to have produced thousands of engagements and marriages through their scientific method of comparing levels of compatibility to narrow the field and find you a match.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the modern email order bride. While this may work for some, it certainly will not be the method of the majority.

The mate selection process for a Christian can be narrowed considerably by making a commitment to choose only those who are of like precious faith.<sup>20</sup> If Jesus Christ is not the Lord of both of the individuals involved in the process, the marriage will be unbalanced and is destined for conflict. I agree with Joshua Harris when he says that the soul's satisfaction must come from Christ or the individuals involved will put unrealistic demands on their spouse after marriage to play a role in their life that only Christ can.<sup>21</sup> The Apostle Paul commands Christians in 2 Corinthians 6:14 not to be “unequally yoked.” Burkitt has this to say about this passage in regards to marriage:

“And, as we must not join with idolaters in spiritual communion or religious worship, so should we have no communion with them in marriages; that having proved a dangerous snare to the souls of many, our divines have justly pronounced such marriages sinful.”

Only those who are Christians should be considered as potential mates.

In addition to saving faith, doctrinal agreement is important as well in the mate selection process. Amos 3:3 states, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” If there is not a consistency of doctrinal beliefs between partners it will create a wide variety of conflict. Typically, mate selection should be confined to those who would share doctrinal distinctives.

Shared faith is shown to be an important ingredient for the selection of the right mate by the

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19 “Why eHarmony”, *eHarmony*, <http://www.eharmony.com/singles/servlet/about/difference>, [Internet], January 31, 2006

20 2 Peter 1:1

21 Harris, Joshua, *Boy Meets Girl*, pages 197-198

results of a Gallup survey conducted for *Psychology Today*. The results of this survey indicated that the single ingredient that was the best predictor of being happy together in a marriage was joint prayer.<sup>22</sup> I think it is rather significant that a secular magazine would confirm the principles of Scripture in this area.

Ensuring that any individual chosen for a mate is of like precious faith is important. Samson made the mistake of trying “evangelism dating” in his wife selection when he married his first wife who was a pagan Philistine woman. It was not successful. Don't make that same mistake.

Perhaps the most important consideration in mate selection is the awareness of the Lord's leading. It probably won't be a booming thunder, fire from heaven, writing on the wall, or an audible voice when the Lord leads that person. The Lord's leading is not often obvious. It frequently comes in the form of an impression upon the spirit. The problem comes in discerning if the impression is from the Lord or a production of the hormones. If teenagers were to rely upon their impressions without any sort of litmus test then many would believe that the Lord wanted them to marry a different person every week. Obviously, this is not from the Lord. There must be some sort of standard by which to measure the impressions that a person receives.

Martin Wells Knapp's work entitled *Impressions* listed four questions that could be used to discern if an impression being received was from the Lord. I believe that they are a good place to start. First, "Is it Scriptural -- within the broad outlines of the will of God laid down in the Bible?" Second, "Is it Reasonable?" Third, "Is it morally Right?" Fourth, "Is it Providential?"<sup>23</sup> Add to these probing questions the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting and I am confident that an individual can be sure of the Lord's leading.

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22 Greeley, Andrew, *Faithful Attraction: Discovering Intimacy, Love and Fidelity in American Marriage*, New York, Tor Books, 1991

23 Purkiser, Westlake Taylor, “God's Spirit in Today's World”, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Kansas City, 1999, pages 26-27

In discerning the impressions that are received concerning mate selection it is imperative that the individual, "...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>24</sup> Even if it is not our first choice, God's will must be our choice. Elisabeth Elliot relates the love story of a Chinese missionary who loved a woman, but the woman loved his best friend. He buried his feelings for this woman for years and after serving in China for four years learned that she had broken her relationship with his friend and was coming to China as a missionary. Without having seen her for over four years he wrote her a letter asking her to marry him. Circumstances would not allow for any pre-engagement activities. After asking her to marry him, the missionary closed his letter as follows:

Before I close, let me ask you a question. Did you come to China because you loved the Chinese or because you were sure this was God's will for you? I know your answer – you came because you knew it was His will. Knowing this, you are confident that He will give you His love for the Chinese. Will you, dear, let me relate this same clear logic to your decision? If it is His will for you to be my wife, then will He not give you a love for me?...<sup>25</sup>

After much prayer, the woman accepted his proposal because she felt it to be God's will.

There is a similar story in the Bible. Rebekah was asked by a stranger if she would marry Isaac – a man she had never met and a man she knew nothing about. Her encounter at the well was a divine appointment and she and her entire family were aware of it. When she was asked if she would go with this stranger to marry another stranger her response was, "I will go."<sup>26</sup>

What possessed these woman to agree to these things. To dip into the unknown and agree to these marriages? It was their primary commitment to the will of God. Most people will not be called upon to do such a thing as these young woman were, but all Christians seeking to choose the right mate must be equally committed to fulfilling God's will in the person they choose to marry.

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24 Matthew 6:33

25 Elliot, Elisabeth, *Quest for Love*, Fleming H. Revell, Grand Rapids, 1996, page 94

26 Genesis 24:58

After an individual has search their surroundings, found a qualified potential mate, and discerned the leading of the Lord they will need to determine a method of initiating the relationship. There is currently a heated debate within the church over whether dating or courtship is the proper method of initiating a romantic relationship. Let's take a minute to examine each one.

Dating is having a special interest in a person of the opposite gender and cultivating that interest through thoughts, looks, notes, talks, or events.<sup>27</sup> Discover Channel Online listed the five rules of dating in an article entitled “Cars, Sex and the Birth of the Date”. They are: 1) Dating is a show. Be a star. 2) Looks aren't everything, but they make the phone ring. 3) You can get to first base a lot faster in a car. 4) You can pet. Just don't tell. 5) Love is a game. Have a plan.<sup>28</sup> These rules do not seem to be compatible with the purposes of marriage discussed earlier. This same article goes on further to state:

The point of this new “dating” wasn't necessarily marriage. It was to be popular, to stretch your options. Men used cars and, more than ever before, money to control the playing field. And women learned the power of beauty and sex appeal to play their side of the game.<sup>29</sup>

If the point of dating is not marriage, what is it? The rest of the article quoted makes it obvious that it is sexual gratification. The reality TV programs *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* epitomize this representation of dating - several men or women fighting and scheming to gain the affection of one. Such methodology is certainly not going to be very helpful to the person, especially a Christian, trying to select the right mate.

Courting, according to Joshua Harris, is not a set of rules, but that special season in a romance where a man and woman are seriously weighing the possibility of marriage.<sup>30</sup> Courtship

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<sup>27</sup> *Establishing Biblical Standards of Courtship*, page 6

<sup>28</sup> “Cars, Sex and the Birth of the Date”, *Discovery Channel Online*, <http://www.discovery.com/area/history/courtship/courtship1.html>, [Internet], October 23, 1998

<sup>29</sup> “Cars, Sex and the Birth of the Date”, *Discovery Channel Online*

<sup>30</sup> Harris, Joshua, *Boy Meets Girl*, Mulnomah Publishers, Inc., Sisters, Oregon, 2000, page 31

also involves the agreement of authority in the establishment and strengthening of the relationship with the goal of marriage in mind.<sup>31</sup> What makes courting different than dating? It's purpose. While the culture is engrossed with self-gratification through the dating process, those who are serious about the gift of marriage will resort to the purposed methodology of courtship.

There are examples of both dating and courting in the Bible. Samson played the dating game in Judges 14 which describes his relationship with his first wife. He saw a Philistine woman that he liked and wanted her. It's almost as if he were window shopping. There's no mention of love, just physical desire. Samson ignored the counsel of his parents which would have saved him from a lot of the heartache he later endured with this woman. Samson continued his dating practices which led to fornication in his life. He continued the practice of dating with Delilah which led to his demise. Ruth and Boaz are examples of a couple who utilized the purposeful method of courtship. The book of Ruth clearly displays the six purposes of marriage developed and displayed in the progression of Boaz and Ruth's relationship with each other.

I believe that authority figures need to play a significant role in the mate selection process. How a potential mates treats and responds to their authority will reveal much about their character. In order to realize this they must be viewed in their natural habitat around their family.<sup>32</sup> How a man treats his mother is a good measure of how he would treat his wife. How a woman treats her father is a good measure of how she will treat her husband.

It is interesting to note that Naomi was the instigator and encourager of the relationship between Boaz and Ruth. Isaac's father was so involved with his choice of a mate that they picked her out for him. Am I saying that parents need to do the choosing? Not necessarily. I am saying that according to God's standards, romance is not destroyed if mom and dad, or authority figures

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31 *Establishing Biblical Standards of Courtship*, page 8

32 *Establishing Biblical Standards of Courtship*, page 11

are involved. In fact it is enhanced. Things get really romantic in Ruth when she starts listening to her mother-in-law. Go ahead, listen to authority when they make a recommendation. If Ruth hadn't she probably would have missed out on a husband. If authority gives its blessing to the relationship the couple will receive a greater blessing. This was not the case with Samson who disregarded the opinion of his authority in his choice of a wife, and the relationship resulted in heartache, chaos, and death.

### **Conclusion**

The selection of a mate is indeed one of the most important decisions that an individual will ever make with lifelong ramifications. It should be made with a realization of its import and with the expectation that it is indeed a gift of God to be cherished for a lifetime. There are many considerations at hand in this selection process, but the significance of the choice demand detailed attention be payed to them.

I do not pretend to purport that choosing the right mate is an easy task. Speaking from my own experience it is an agonizing decision that requires all the things listed above. Yet, I can also say that, second to my decision for Christ, it has produced the most blessing in my life. Finding the right mate that the Lord has prepared is truly, as Solomon states, a “good thing”.

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