

Unreality Shows

In reality, faith plays a major role in sustaining marriages.

In the two-hour season finale of *The Bachelorette*, Trista had to make the agonizing choice of a lifelong mate. Would she give the final rose to the romantic firefighting poet Ryan, or would she choose wealthy financial analyst Charlie from Los Angeles?

Viewers held their breath as Trista turned down the opportunity for wealth and proclaimed her love for Ryan. Ryan dropped to his knees and asked her to marry him. Tears flowed. The two lovers were surrounded by glowing candles and enough flower petals to create a new perfume.

If you didn't follow Trista's dating escapades, perhaps you were one of the 35 million viewers who tuned in to the final episode of *Joe Millionaire*, the show about a construction worker who posed as a millionaire to see if women wanted him for his money or for himself. During the series, Evan wined and dined ladies in top-notch style. When he finally chose his potential mate from a cast of many, she had to decide if love covers a multitude of sins (his lying about his life).

"Reality" television has been the hot programming ticket for the last few TV seasons, and Americans are eating it up. But is there any true reality in it?

Of course not. First of all, dating with no financial constraints is fantasy for most people. Additionally, the stresses of everyday life are strangely absent in these shows. Family dysfunction never rears its ugly head. And, of course, the participants all date multiple people at one time with

cameras following their every move!

The most disturbing reality for me, however, is the total absence of religious faith. The implication is that faith doesn't matter and has little impact on a person's choice of a life partner. Either the producers purposely choose people who won't make faith an issue or the failure to incorporate faith into the selection process is a clear indication of the increasing secularization of our culture.

In reality, faith plays a major role in sustaining marriages. Faith matters—and it is a source of contention for couples who are unequally yoked or unprepared for dealing with religious differences. Religious and moral values should weigh heavily when choosing a partner.

Of course reality television offers its usual sexual messages too. The most obvious is that it is important to experiment sexually before marriage in order to make sure there is a physical connection.

Sex in these shows is confused with intimacy. Apparently it's not supposed to bother the contestants if the bachelor or bachelorette sleeps with several other potential mates before making a final choice.

You may consider these shows simply entertainment, but they do influence our views about love and romance. Here's what we should look for when choosing a mate:

Romantic love has three dimensions—commitment, intimacy and passion. Commitment involves the willingness to give to another and be faithful to the relationship.

Christians should look for more than commitment because holy marriage is based on covenant. Covenant is an unbreakable promise made for life. Look for someone who believes in covenant and will commit to a lasting relationship.

Intimacy refers to the ability to connect emotionally with another. Does your partner show evidence of this capacity?

Intimacy should grow progressively in a relationship. That intimacy should be spiritual, emotional, psychological and behavioral and takes time to develop. Look for intimacy with God as well.

Passion relates to attraction and sexual response. You should feel attracted to the person you marry. And sexual passion is desired.

But Christians must exercise self-control with regard to sexual exploration before marriage. If you have attraction, and other parts of the relationship are strong, then there should be no trouble with sexual passion when the right moment comes. And that moment, according to the Bible, is after marriage.

You can't make reality television truly real. But you can be certain your marriage gets big ratings by making shared faith a prerequisite for walking down the aisle.

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