

2 Qualities to Look for in a Man

I have a theory about why many Christian women who married a “godly man” they met at Super Big Megachurch or Joe Christian College wake up one day actually married to a man with classic unhealthy, socially destructive self-absorption. Exciting churches and colleges are a draw to men with the seeds of such issues already growing in their hearts. (We all have those seeds based on our fallen nature, but based on their upbringing or other factors, some people are primed for full-blown issues in the future.)

At my Christian college, we called them the Big Men on Campus. They were the clear leaders on campus—groomed by older faculty, involved in most everything, people surrounding them and following them, with many young Christian women longing to be their wives.

Throughout my years in ministry, I have noted regularly that some Christians have a poor ability to distinguish between spiritual gifts and talents. Someone may be a motivating public speaker or incredible musician, and we think they are therefore especially gifted by the Holy Spirit for a great public ministry. No, those are *talents*. And they do not correspond one-to-one with true gifts of the Spirit for long-term, fruitful ministry.

Furthermore, the gifts of the Spirit work in conjunction with the fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps someone has the gift of prophecy or teaching, which is generally a publicly used gift. Uncoupled with the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control), they easily become egomaniacs set up for public destruction of others who get in their way.

Some men are gifted by the Spirit and then mistake the results of their giftedness (such as big numbers in their ministry) as

fruit of the Spirit. But that's not how the Bible talks about spiritual fruit at all. The fruit of a gifted man who leans into the Holy Spirit is growth—not in numbers in his ministry, but in his love for others, his peace when things go wrong, his patience with those who disagree with him, his kindness to all and his gentleness (or strength under control) when he is tempted to be harsh.

It would be very bad on my part if I didn't say I know a number of those former Big Men on Campus who went on to humbly minister in churches in the middle of nowhere, and some that went on to minister in very public ministries without feeding their self-absorption in unhealthy ways. Often I note that God brought a serious trial into their lives to change their direction. Cancer. Personal failure in their family. Death of a loved one. Humiliating conflict in ministry. Loss of a child.

Suffering has an amazing way of destroying our naive notions of ministry and, more importantly, our naive notions of how we are going to do ministry right. They failed. They suffered. And then they emerged as humble servant leaders dependent on the Holy Spirit, ready to truly love and shepherd those God has called them to love and shepherd.

My advice to any woman who wants to marry a godly man is this:

You may be naturally attracted to the showman in your church or college. And he may be a great guy. But the things that will indicate his best character traits are his humility and ability to serve. Is he kind when no one is looking? Is he patient with those smaller or weaker than him? Would he rather die than work behind the scenes in the nursery? Have you ever known him to clean the bathroom at church when no one is looking? Is he gentle with you?

Furthermore, I strongly encourage you to consider and value the men with the gifts of serving, giving or mercy. Few notice these men. Some with an improper understanding of spiritual gifts, talents and fruits may dismiss such men as being poor Christians for only serving in the background. But those

behind-the-scenes places in a church or school can hold the deepest treasures, in terms of men who will love and serve their wife and family faithfully.

I thank God regularly for all the men at my Christian college He kept me from for whom I had misguided desires. Then, one day, a quiet kid fixed my computer, and I fell in love. As Garth Brooks says, thank God for unanswered prayers.

*Adapted from **Wendy Alsup's** blog, . Wendy has authored three books, including The Gospel-Centered Woman. She is also a wife, mom and college math teacher who loves ministering to women.*