

20 Things You Should Know About Your Spouse

No human being has the potential to make a greater impact on the quality of your life than your husband or wife. Years ago, I heard the advice, "Study your spouse." That certainly applies before you say "I do." It also applies throughout your life together.

Whether you're married now or considering marriage, here are some important things to know about your spouse.

1. **What makes him/her happy?** Notice what makes your (potential) spouse light up, smile, come alive. Is it good food? A certain kind of music? A favorite pet? Accomplishing a task? Being creative? Watching the stars, enjoying a group of friends or reading a good book? This isn't a value judgement. Knowing what makes him/her happy will help you know what to invest in for your life together.
2. **What makes him/her upset?** Likewise, notice what drains your (potential) spouse. Perhaps it's time pressure, a cluttered environment, political differences, not feeling heard, criticism from others, uncertainty and so on. What upsets them now is very likely to continue to upset them in the future.
3. **Is he/she able to appreciate another person's perspective?** Is your (potential) spouse able to invest in seeking to understand the other person? The ability to see things from someone else's point of view will determine whether your (potential) spouse will understand you and others in the future.
4. **How does he/she respond when corrected?** Almost any negative behavior or character trait can be overcome if a person is interested in learning. If he/she becomes defensive, watch out. If he/she can evaluate and learn

from appropriate feedback, any obstacle can be overcome.

5. **How introverted or extroverted is he/she?** There is no ideal degree of introversion/extroversion to support a successful marriage. Understanding this dimension of your (potential) spouse's personality, however, will tell you a lot about what your future life is likely to be like.
6. **How does he/she respond when stressed?** Does he/she withdraw, brood and act miserable? Does he/she get angry and blame anyone and everyone else? Does he/she buckle down and work harder, trying to figure things out? Does he/she enlist help? Coping styles make a difference in what it will be like to live with your (potential) spouse.
7. **What is he/she afraid of?** Every human being has fears. Your (potential) spouse may be afraid of failure, not having enough money, appearing ignorant, being alone, not being able to perform in some way, disappointing someone in particular and so on.
8. **What does success look like for him/her?** That might be making money, developing a business, having their creative products (writing/music/art) widely known, having happy children, reaching a career goal, seeing other people helped and so on.
9. **How committed is he/she to physical health?** What importance does your (potential) spouse place on physical lifestyle and health? Are they concerned with healthy eating, physical activity and more? Or are they struggling with substance abuse/misuse or other bad habits?
10. **How does he/she communicate?** Does your (potential) spouse tend to do all the talking and expect you and others to listen? Do they always talk about themselves? Do they ask questions? Do they process information verbally or have to think things through first before discussing?
11. **What is important to him/her about money?** Saving,

spending and giving are ways a person expresses what's important to them. What do your (potential) spouse's money habits say about their values, their self-discipline and so forth?

12. **What old baggage is he/she carrying?** We all come through life with wounds, baggage and traumas large and/or small. How aware is your (potential) spouse of the old "stuff" they are challenged with? How invested is he/she in overcoming those challenges?
13. **Is he/she a self-starter?** Some people come "batteries included." Your (potential) spouse's ability to take initiative and make things happen in small and large ways is not necessarily a good or "bad" thing, but it will certainly impact what your life together looks like.
14. **Can he/she accept personal responsibility?** The ability and predisposition to accept responsibility for one's own actions, thoughts, feelings and behavior can improve with maturity, but it's an absolute necessity for any kind of happy life together. Blaming others always leads to destruction.
15. **Who and what are the greatest influences on him/her?** The media your (potential) spouse consumes, the people they hang out with, the leaders they follow—those can predict a great deal about the direction their character will move toward.
16. **How has he/she dealt with their family of origin?** Healthy or unhealthy, your (potential) spouse is shaped by the family they grew up in. Have they thoughtfully evaluated the positive and negative things they received from their family? Are they intentionally making changes where necessary?
17. **What is his/her perspective on religion?** Church experiences, family experiences and so on color a person's religious views in many ways. Your (prospective) spouse's perspective on church can change, but it will color much of your life together.

18. **How invested is he/she in relationship with God?** Religious behaviors are one thing; one's personal relationship with God is another thing entirely. Besides outward behaviors, what evidence do you see that your (potential) spouse knows Jesus personally and has an individual relationship with God?
19. **Is he/she able to engage in and interested in spiritual growth?** God loves us too much to allow us to remain unchanged. Is your (potential) spouse demonstrating willingness to allow God to work in his/her life to make them become increasingly more like Jesus?
20. **Is he/she invested in making other people's lives better?** Through career choice, volunteer work or other ways, how much is your (potential) spouse making life "all about me"? Are they able to invest in making other people's lives better in some way? Can they be unselfish?

Married Now, or Hoping to be Married?

If you're married, you may know many of these things about your spouse already. Some you may not have fully appreciated. Thinking some of these things through may help you understand your spouse better and be better able to be the person God needs you to be to them in this season.

If you're not married yet, these are only some of the questions you need to think through about your potential spouse. Understanding these dimensions of who your potential spouse is will tell you a lot about what your future life with them will be like. Don't get married intending to change them! Prayerfully and thoughtfully consider what these characteristics in your potential spouse will mean for your life going forward.

Your Turn: *If you're married, was there anything that you wish you knew about your spouse before you said "I do"? If you're considering marriage, how many of these 20 items do you still*

need to discover about your potential spouse? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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