

Early Warning Signs He Isn't God's Man for You

We first started to converse one day in the cafeteria lunch line—Bible college students from the same hometown. It was not a star-struck, “love at first sight,” enamored moment, à la Hollywood style. But over the weeks as we became friends, attraction was in action, and by the end of the semester, we were dating. Now the serious vetting could begin. For me (Mike), the question loomed: Is she the one?

My criterion was a woman with a heart for God who was willing to follow me anywhere. (At that time, I was planning to return to the mission field in Asia where I had just served for two years.) This was a portal through which a potential wife in my world must pass. While for me, this was a very narrow and specific criterion, a wider principle can be stated thusly:

Is the person you are considering as a lifelong partner a person of vision, and is that vision compatible with yours?

Beyond a particular ministry assignment, we are all called to the vision of becoming Christlike—to be “transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). This is “Vision 101” and serves as a foundation for all of life’s aspirations, whether in the home, church or workplace. What you do (assignment specifics and locations) may change over the seasons of a marriage, but who you are (the fruits of inner refinement) will always be at the forefront of God’s directives over your life.

It is imperative that you discover and weigh in your heart the spiritual history of your person of interest. Is he a person acquainted with restraint? “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). Does she display the self-discipline necessary to turn from lesser pleasures and follow

the supreme path of allegiance to Christ? Now is the time to evaluate before you choose; once married, you forfeit that luxury.

I once heard this illustration: When you stand before the entryway into marriage, there is a banner overhead that says, "Whosoever will." Naturally, we pray, proceed at a moderate pace, get counsel and pray some more; but on this side of the door, we get to choose whether he or she is the right one to marry. Once over the threshold, we turn and see a banner that reads, "Predestined and foreordained from the foundation of the world." God knew who your choice would be, and now it's a covenant pact for life.

In our premarital manual, *Vertical Marriage: A Godward Preparation for Life Together*, we recommend couples consider 15 potential caution flags. The need for caution may not necessarily mean that you shouldn't marry each other, but it may indicate the need to slow down the relationship.

Caution Flags

1. Uneasy gut feeling that something is wrong in our relationship.
2. Frequent arguments.
3. Jealousy or irrational anger when one of us interacts with someone of the opposite sex.
4. Apprehension discussing certain subjects because we are afraid of the reaction.
5. Extreme emotional expressions; unpredictable mood swings.
6. Controlling behavior—I feel like I'm being manipulated.
7. Feeling trapped—not wanting to hurt each other by even suggesting that marriage may not be for us.
8. Lack of respect—I'm constantly being criticized and treated with sarcasm.
9. Lack of personal responsibility—My fiancé struggles to hold down a job and pay bills.

10. Pride—He/she has difficulty admitting when wrong, thus we never fully resolve conflict.
11. Dependent on parents for emotional and financial security.
12. History of failed dating relationships.
13. Addictions—Do either of you struggle with alcohol, drugs or porn? If you struggled in the past, how long have you been free?
14. Selfishness—overly self-centered, always wants their own way, tends towards narcissism.
15. Bad habits—Yes, we all have some, but are there any major trouble spots? Are there any pet peeves that drive you crazy?

If one or more of these caution flags are evident in your current dating relationship, bring those concerns to your pastor or a mature married couple you trust.

God always brings couples together with refinement in mind. The “right” one for you is the one you can do pilgrimage with, holding core values of surrender and transformation central to your union, while you envision a God-glorifying life together.
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