

The 3 Fundamentals for Finding Your Future Mate

Discovering that “significant other” with whom to “live happily ever after” seems to be getting increasingly difficult for more and more people. Online dating, superficial relating and internet mating have multitudes frustrated, fearful and flipping the panic button as the clock keeps ticking.

A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Arming Women for the Dating Battlefield” underscored how today’s permissive pop culture would howl laughing at a 1995 bestseller, *The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*. Some rules: “Let him take the lead” and “Don’t rush into sex.”

Yet as we survey the scene, we are shaken by statistics: Over 110 million Americans have sexually transmitted diseases, 43% of marriages end in divorce, and 61 million babies have been aborted (half females never having their “choice”).

While millions substitute living together (lifestyle fornication) for marriage or trivialize this sacred institution and divorce, Netflix recently dared to release *Marriage Story* starring Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver, portraying the realities of matrimony plus the devastation when marriage ends. Ben Affleck whose new movie is *the Way Back* just revealed in *Parade* magazine that his recent divorce from Jennifer Garner is the most “painful” thing he’s ever gone through.

In real life, Mrs. Johansen, the highest-paid actress in the world, is 35 and giving marriage a third try with a *Saturday Night Live* comedian. Affleck battles alcoholism and depression.

After Madonna’s two divorces, people seeing her with her new boyfriend wonder if she will try again. The 61-year-old diva

previously said, "I'd rather get run over by a train than marry again."

To intentionally position yourself for success and not take on a truckload of trauma, dare to be different, build on the foundational principles from Part 1 of this series and embrace these three fundamentals to find your mate.

1. Clean Your House

Encountering the coronavirus, authorities strongly advise cleanliness to avoid contamination. To prevent gut-wrenching consequences in pursuit of your life partner, you've got to be clean before your Creator.

Whether you're a teen, 20, 30, 40, 50 or even a 60-year-old sharing the dream of not flying solo, rest in the reality that God loves you and always gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him. But in all fairness He intends *you* to be the best.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). Also, to know God's choice, you have to hear His voice! This means you've got to get sin out of your life. "Abstain from all appearances of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes" (Ps. 101:3a).

20-Point Personal Inventory

—Habitually complaining, being negative and living in self-pity?

—Compromising sexually (not just fornication but foreplay and fondling)?

—Fantasizing with "articles of affection" from past relationships (gifts, photos and letters)?

—Going to movies, concerts, clubs, bars or bachelorette parties with profanity, sensuality, drunkenness or drugs?

- Viewing shows or movies featuring nudity, adultery, homosexuality lesbianism or graphic violence such as *Game of Thrones*?
- Being dishonest with finances, IRS or on your job?
- Being lazy, procrastinating and blame shifting with regularity?
- Dressing immodestly and deliberately in sensual ways?
- Indulging in masturbation, gluttony, drunkenness, watching pornography?
- Excusing or renaming sin as “dysfunction,” “dark season” or “harmless habits?”
- Engaging in and rationalizing “missionary dating” with attractive but “unequally yoked” or off-limits non-Christians (“just hanging out,” “nothing serious,” “gonna change him,” “I just gave him my phone number”)?
- Refusing to take personal responsibility for sinful conduct by playing the “victim”?
- Resisting correction, reacting defensively and emotionally withdrawing?
- Excusing jealousy, envy or unforgiveness?
- Sulking when plans change?
- Refusing to reconcile with parents, siblings or former friends?
- Gossiping, spreading “bad reports” or criticizing authorities?
- Flirting with marrieds or non-Christians in person or online?
- Withholding giving and/or serving in your church?

–Basically living a self-centered life?

It's time to sweep out the sin so you can position yourself for the favor of God!

2. Commit to Stay Committed

Society was once very supportive of marriage. Today, movies mock it, promote promiscuity and present "no-fault divorce." "Love" is based on sexual attraction and emotion, and when they wane or conflict comes, the marriage must be "broken," so it's time to bail. Couples cite "irreconcilable differences" for divorce, but God made us male and female; we *are* irreconcilably different!

The only kind of love that sustains a marriage is covenantal *agape* love: an unselfish choice for the greatest good of another. Discover qualities of this God kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

I have a friend whose beautiful wife became totally incapacitated through an unexpected disease, yet Mark lovingly cared for her for decades, not because of emotion but a decision: *agape* love. Isn't this what we solemnly pledge in our marriage vows to love our spouse "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, in health, till death do us part?" versus "I'm outta here?"

The time to cultivate this love is now, for you'll soon face the inevitable "B's" of life beyond romance: babies; bear-like snoring; body changes; bad attitudes; bothersome habits; bad hair days; bathroom annoyances; baldness; bulges; budget crises; business failures; bad bosses; bedroom conflicts; belligerent relative; bills; bad breath; broken appliances; beauty fading; body odor; bad neighbors; barely there libido; backtalking teens; bodily ailments; basic personality differences and ... maybe it's best not to go on!

A shipbuilder was recognized for his excellence with building

his craft. Asked the secret of his longstanding business success, he replied, "I always build for the storm." Since pressure reveals the person, seize the opportunity to prepare now by proactively practicing agape love each day with people, parents, siblings and friends.

3. Make God Your Matchmaker

Finally, you must definitively put marriage "on the altar" as Abraham did with Isaac and trust God to guide you. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (, KJV). "A man's heart devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Prov. 16:9, MEV).

Steer clear of manipulation. There is no perfect marrying age, magic formula or fast way through the maze to find your life partner. Discard any phantom hero or heroine notions based on fairy tales instead of real life. There is an element of mystery and dependency on God. Stay at peace in the adventure, reminding yourself regularly that the initiative rests with your heavenly Father, who loves you incredibly.

Genesis 2:22b tells us that God "brought her to the man." Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6b). And if you're a man, follow His promptings, for "Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor of the Lord" (Prov. 18:22).

In the meantime, those who are single are to "serve the Lord without distraction" (1 Cor. 7:35b) and when the time comes to marry do so but "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39b). God prohibits being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14b). This is *not* a suggestion but a command.

God will test you in developing your character along the way, but His timing is always the best. Stay ready, for God loves to surprise His sons and daughters with a "suddenly" (Mal. 3:1; Acts 2:2).

I talked to a happily married couple last week who shared with me that when the man was in his 40s, an outstanding Christian woman moved from another state. She walked into a room, saw him, and God whispered to her heart, "He's the one."

My beautiful relative was in her late 30s, living in Virginia when providentially, she was led to a job in Alaska, met a man who'd previously lived in Virginia, yet they'd never intersected. They met at church and eventually married.

I needed a ride to the airport when my driver suddenly bowed out. At the last minute, I called a young woman I'd known in friendship for years. Being a servant, she agreed, and along the way, God "woke" me from my sleep like Adam. I noticed her in a new way, and a few months later requested her hand in marriage, now 44 years ago!

Unless God gives you a unique calling to singleness (–12) or in a time of extreme "distress" (1 Cor. 7:25), "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). Delight yourself in God, and you'll get desires from God! "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be given to you" (Matt. 6:33).

A lady who married in her 40s once told me, "It's better to be single in the will of God and experience some loneliness than marry out of the will of God and experience a lifetime of chaos."

In our 40-plus years of ministry, we've shared close friendship with about 130 couples. There have been only two divorces. Adversities, deaths, miscarriages and unbelievable stories were part of their journeys, but these Christ-centered couples who'd prepared for marriage, not just a wedding, had made vows based on covenant not merely convenience and intentionally cultivated supportive relationships in a church community have experienced the promised "days of heaven on the

earth" (Deut. 11:21b).

We'll all tell you it hasn't been easy. The faith walk isn't a cake walk. But we've chosen to obey God and live for His glory, thereby reaping the blessings.

Here's God's deal: "For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).