

Thinking of Marriage? How to Know if You've Found 'The One'

So you're looking for and praying for Mr. or Mrs. Right, your soulmate, the person God has uniquely created who will bring you joy, intimacy and fulfillment. And now your heart is beating a little faster. Your emotions are getting hooked. And you wonder, is this "the one"?

As an aside, the idea of there being "the one," that single girl or guy who will meet all your needs and bring you endless happiness, gets a lot of people in trouble. Believing that can leave you disappointed when you eventually get married and problems develop. You will marry a sinner; there are no other partners available. And there are many married people who would be very happy to give Mr. or Mrs. Right to you!

But seriously, discerning whether or not this person is someone God wants you to marry is a big decision. Next to deciding to follow Jesus, this may be the biggest decision of your life. How do you know?

Here are a few things to prayerfully consider, things I and others have learned through important experience.

1. Own your emotions, but don't follow them.

Being emotionally hooked is part of the fun. God created us with the ability to be physically and mentally attracted to someone. Chemistry between you is real.

It's also temporary. Your feelings *will* change!! Please believe that. If you marry this person, they will disappoint you, guaranteed. It may be in a day, or it may be ten years from now, but it will happen.

So, own your feelings, but don't follow them. Acknowledge and enjoy the fun feelings. But then pray, as I learned to do, something like this: "God, I acknowledge my feelings. My emotions are hooked! But I need to hear Your voice. As much as I humanly can, I put my emotions aside. Let me see Your perspective on this relationship and hear what You want me to do."

2. Believe the red flags.

An overbearing mother-in-law, a history of abuse, emotional immaturity, trouble with money, secrecy, anger, struggles with addiction—none of those will go away when you say, "I do." Almost always your girlfriend or boyfriend will be putting their best self forward during the dating/courting process. That's why it's important to know someone long enough for them to show you who they really are.

Seeing a "red flag" does not necessarily mean you are not to marry this person. But it does mean you must be able to wholeheartedly love and embrace the totality of who they are. Simply saying, "I'll do better once we're married" is absolutely not enough.

How your intended spouse handles their parents now tells you how they will handle them later; can you live with that for the next 50 years? The same goes for attitudes about sex, money, children, addictions and so on.

3. Don't marry hoping to change your spouse!

Your future spouse can change. Your spouse *will* change. But they will not change because you work hard to get them to change.

My husband smoked when we first got to know each other. He stopped smoking when we got married. But I had to make the decision about getting married *not* based on him stopping smoking. I had to decide to embrace and love him, smoker or

not. It's the same with any characteristics your intended spouse has now.

Your love and commitment may be the support your spouse needs to make changes they very much want to make, but that's on him or her, not you. And you need to decide whether you can truly love and live with them if they never change.

4, Stay on your knees.

Prayer to discern whether or not to marry this person is not a one-time thing. This kind of decision will take repeated prayer over a considerable period of time. Pray with tears before God for yourself, putting your emotions aside as best you can. Pray with others you trust in the body of Christ. Pray together with your intended spouse.

Don't simply pray for God to give you what you want! Pray for Him to show you His perspective—on your own heart, on your intended spouse and on your relationship. Pray that you grow to be the kind of spouse your intended husband or wife needs. Pray that He make His voice clear to you.

Look for the peace. "Let the peace of God, to which also you are called in one body, rule in your hearts. And be thankful" (Col. 3:15). If this relationship is of God, you will have true peace in your heart about it. And don't get married until you do!

5. Imagine the future.

Marriage is not a sprint; it's a marathon. Can you imagine growing old with this person? Do you want to grow old with them?

Imagine yourself a year from now, 10 years from now, 50 years from now. Knowing what you do about this person, warts and all, what do you imagine that future would look like if you were married to them? Is that a future you want?

And perhaps most importantly, is that a future God wants for you? Can you imagine yourself married to this person 10 years from now and standing together in God's presence?

Do You Want to Be Married?

Not every human being will get married. If you're still reading this, you probably very much want to get married. That's a normal desire.

But don't take a shortcut on the journey to discovering if this is the relationship God has designed for you. If it is, then the three of you together will be able to overcome any obstacles that arise. If it's not, it will only end in pain and destruction.

And don't marry someone you think you can live with. Only marry the person you are certain you cannot live without.

Your Turn: *If you're in a relationship now, how do you know if this is—or isn't—the relationship God wants for you? Leave a comment below.*

For more about love and relationships, check out the podcast below featuring Audrey and Jeremy Roloff, authors of A Love Letter Life!

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

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