

10 Steps to Finding Your Life Partner

This year, five young friends of mine are getting married: Anibál met his future wife at his church in California, Vitaliy met his fiancée at Christ for the Nations Institute, KC found David on the mission field, Ben met Tiffany while studying at Regent University, and Doug—who has been waiting the longest for his bride—got engaged to Danya last week on his 32nd birthday.

But I have many other friends, some young and some not so young, who are still waiting for the big introduction. For whatever reason, marriage hasn't happened for them. Single Christians are often told that all they must do is "wait on God" for a mate. But I believe that phrase is both overused and abused. In many cases, a single person doesn't need to wait on God; the Lord may actually be waiting on you to take some action.

If you want to be married, here are some simple steps that might help move you farther along in the process:

1. Make sure Jesus is on the throne of your life. You can never go wrong when you put God first. Matthew 6:33 says: "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Marriage is a need, and God is very eager to meet it. And since it is probably the biggest decision you will ever make, why trust your own instincts to choose the right person? God is the best matchmaker. Ask Him to guide you.

2. Make spiritual growth your priority. A marriage is strong when both the husband and the wife are strong Christians. If either is immature spiritually, problems will multiply. That's why you should spend your single years becoming a mature

disciple. Paul told the Corinthians that single believers should pursue “undistracted devotion to the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:35). Get involved in a church, study God’s Word and become a passionate worshipper.

3. Make a list of your relationship preferences. It’s OK to desire certain qualities in a spouse. Maybe you prefer a girl who is short, a guy who is older than you or someone who has a certain educational background. Psalm 37:4 says: “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Just check your motives and make sure your desires are not selfish or unrealistic.

4. Get rid of your false expectations and fantasies. Many singles have totally unrealistic ideas about what marriage and romance are all about. Some girls have been conditioned by Disney cartoons to expect a guy to sweep them off their feet and take them to his fairy tale castle. That’s not going to happen. Neither will you ever feel the level of heartthrob described in romance novels. Pornography has also ruined romance for people; some guys who are addicted to porn can’t even experience normal arousal without it. Come down to earth and get real. Marriage will never resemble your perfect dream world.

5. Set your moral standards high and never sell out. Every unmarried Christian needs a list of non-negotiables. Never compromise your sexual purity. If a sweet-talking guy from your church’s worship team tries to lure you into a one-night stand, refuse his charm. If you feel attracted to a girl and then realize she flirts with every guy and doesn’t share your values, back off. And never, ever date a nonbeliever with the intention of converting them. “Missionary dating” rarely has a good outcome.

6. Get busy with your life and career. The worst thing any single can do is sit around waiting for a mate. Moping is not attractive—it’s pitiful. Don’t be desperate. God loves you

just the way you are, and you don't need a husband or wife to make you valuable. Live your life. Finish your education, achieve your professional goals and get involved in ministry. It's more likely you will find your mate while pursuing your dreams than while sitting in a corner mourning your singleness. (And remember: Love does not pay the bills. You need a job to be married!)

7. Seek emotional healing. I know singles who jump from one dysfunctional dating relationship to the next and never realize they have serious issues to address. Don't wait until you are married to realize you have addictions, bitterness or unresolved pain. If you don't get rid of your drama now, your marriage will be filled with drama. Seek prayer ministry at your church or find a counselor.

8. Take care of yourself physically. You don't have to be a cover girl or a GQ stud to find a mate. We come in all shapes and sizes, and your spouse is going to love you *and* all your imperfections. But making yourself more attractive doesn't hurt! If you always look like you just got out of bed, ask some honest friends to give you a makeover. If you need to lose weight, stop making excuses and start a sensible food plan and exercise routine.

9. Develop an active social life. Some Christian guys I know are afraid to ask a girl out for coffee, yet they play video games all day while complaining about loneliness. Hello? You will never find a mate in a vacuum. You have to break out of your shell and make yourself available. You don't have to pair up when you gather with a group of singles for fellowship. Many dating relationships start as innocent friendships—and then a romantic spark turns into a flame.

10. Find a married mentor to help you prepare. You don't have to navigate the journey from dating to marriage all by yourself. Seek out a trusted older friend to help you. Ask questions. Share your fears. Marriage is a huge decision, but

a mentor can give you the courage to embrace your future. And they will be cheering the loudest at your wedding because they've played a small part in God's miracle. {eoa}