

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS
"Part XI: Renewing Household Marriages - Selecting The Right Partner"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The problem of selecting the *wrong* partner for marriage has become a regular tragedy of our Western culture. Consider:

(a) The May 12, 1997 Newsweek reported that Donald Trump is divorcing -- *again*. This time he's leaving Marla. He wants it *now* as he'll lose only between \$1 and \$5 million where if he waits until the prenuptial agreement expires in six months, he would have to give her half of his estate estimated between \$225 million and \$1.25 **billion!**

(b) But though divorce is so common, it is also often excruciating. A book by Anne Muggeridge, The Divorce Culture notes that "Forty-five percent of children born to married parents in the U.S. are likely to suffer some version of . . . divided loyalty" due to divorce. Muggeridge illustrates what a boy in Ontario faced while playing hockey. Since his father had launched a lawsuit forcing his son to identify himself on the ice only by his birth name, the 9-year-old sought to avoid being in contempt of court by tucking his jersey into his hockey pants so that his stepfather's last name would not appear.

(2) However, the efforts people are taking to find the right partner before marriage to avoid divorce are often painfully backfiring:

(a) Felicity Barringer of the New York Times wrote that researchers "who expected the widespread practice of 'trial marriage' to usher in an era of increased marital stability have been surprised by new studies . . . Americans who lived together before marriage separate and divorce in **significantly greater** numbers than couples who go **directly** to the altar." 38% of those living together before marriage split up where 27 % who abstained before marriage divorce according to a ten year study by two University of Wisconsin researchers.

(b) Brian Pappas, President of a match-making service, Together out of Farmington, has questionnaire that is given out to singles that reflect this problem. One of his questions reads: "Have you been meeting people, who in the beginning **seem** to be everything you want, then you discover within six months or a year, that they are a totally different person?"

Well, in view of the rampant, painful prevalence of divorce, and the difficulties people face in finding the right partner to marry, HOW DO YOU SELECT THE RIGHT PARTNER?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Can one somehow choose the RIGHT person to marry so that his marriage will LAST?! With the painful costs of DIVORCE being so HIGH and with so MANY people being afflicted by it, how can we START OUT well by obtaining the RIGHT spouse?!"

- I. **In forming the human institution of marriage, God exemplified the following process for success in SELECTING the RIGHT partner:**
 - A. **GOD** created Adam and his home and place of employment in Eden *before* creating Eve, then *motivated* him toward wanting marriage by *bringing* male and female animals to Adam to name so that **Adam** would *sense* his **own need** for a **wife**, Gen. 2:7-8, 15 with 2:18-20.
 - B. Then **GOD** created Eve and brought *her* to Adam to *name*, indicating his *sovereignty* of her coupled with **ADAM'S recognition** that she was the *fulfillment* of his partnership need, Gen. 2:21-22.
 - C. **ADAM** then *initiated* courtship, naming Eve in the *leadership* role to have Eve join him in marriage, Gen. 2:23-24.
- II. **We analyze this process to see how WE can gain the right spouse:**
 - A. Move One - Sense a need for marriage before proceeding in courtship.
 1. Step One - In the church era, *some* Christians have a gift from God to be *celibate* which gives them the opportunity to use their time and attentions more fully to serve the Lord. These should not **seek** marriage, but live in celibacy according to God's will, 1 Cor. 7:1, 7-8. Yet, if one feels lonely, abandoned or depressed due to a need for a spouse, according to 1 Cor. 7:2, 9, move to Item Two below!
 2. Step Two - Relate properly to **Christ** to follow His helpful **lead**.
 - a. It was **God** who (a) supplied a garden employment and (b) home for Adam to be able to provide for a family, and (c) arranged for Adam to **see** his need of a partner, and then (d) **created** Adam's wife and (e) **led** her (f) **to him**, Gen. 2:7-8, 15, 19-22.
 - b. Thus, **Christ** wants to set up **all** the factors a believer must have arranged **for** him to wed the **right** partner, Phil. 4:19.
 - c. Thus, (1) believe in Christ as Savior from sin to become a child of God (Jn. 3:16; 1:11-13) and be put into God's "much-more care" program (Rom. 8:32). (2) Then, clear up all rapport problems with God by confessing any sins that arise (1 Jn. 1:9) and (3) depend on His Spirit to control our desires (Ga. 5:16-23) and (4) obey His clear guidance in life thru Scripture, 1 Jn. 2:3ff.
 - B. Move Two - Discover the right partner under God's guidance:
 1. Step One - Heed Scripture on where to start looking for a spouse.
 - a. Stay within Biblical perimeters in seeking a partner: a believer, should marry *only* a **Christian** (2 Cor. 6:14), *only* one who is not divorced (Mk. 10:11-12; 1 Co. 7:10-11) and *only* one of the opposite gender,

Lev. 18:22 NIV. Since believers are to obey secular ordinances that are consistent with Scripture (1 Pet. 2:13-14a), the union must be monogamous (Gen. 2) and apart from close relatives (Lev. 18:6 NIV) according to secular laws.

- b. Look for Biblical qualifications in the respective partner-to-be: (a) a qualified man must be selflessly protective, nurturing and be a responsible provider for his partner (Ep. 5:22-33) and (b) a qualified woman must show self-management, kindness, submission to a partner and self-development, Pr. 31:10ff; Ep. 5.
2. Step Two - Seek advice from reputable people (parents, leaders, etc.) re: *specific* issues that arise (2 Tim. 3:14b; Prov. 6:20-24).
3. Step Three - Seek for clear *compatibility* with the viable candidate
 - a. Seek **personality** compatibility. Self-respect, self-reliance, responsibility and the ability for an outgoing love are all implied as being needed in one who will "leave his father and mother" to wed, Gen. 2:24 (Hendricks, Chr. Coun. Cont. Prblms, p. 247f).
 - b. Seek **social** and **cultural** harmony, Ibid.
 - c. Seek **economic** accord on the handling of finances, Ibid.
 - d. Seek agreement on **sex**: besides mutual attraction, there must be concord on the purposes and uses of sex **before** getting married.
 - e. Seek **spiritual** unity: having common theological beliefs, practices and **goals** are essential for a long-term marriage, Ibid.
- C. Move Three - **Head** toward **MARRIAGE** with the **RIGHT** partner:
 1. Step One - The **man** should be capable of supporting a wife and family **before seriously** courting, Gen. 2:7-8, 15, 18; Prov. 24:27.
 2. Step Two - The **MAN leads** in courting the **woman**, Gen. 2:22-24.
 3. Step Three - Both the man and woman become **independent** of **both** their parents in the courtship, Gen. 2:24a. This should be at **every** level -- financial, emotional, spiritual, geographical!
 4. Step Four - Expect a strong "**cleaving**" attachment to arise with the one we are serious about **OR** simply **call off the close relationship!** Be **courageous** to face and deal with this! (2:24b)
 5. Step Five - Once all signals are "go," the **MAN proposes!** (2:24)

Concluding Application: *Selecting the right partner is no problem if one (1) believes in Christ as Savior from sin and (2) fellowships with God as described above, for (3) he then comes under a divine "courting insurance coverage" to find and wed the right partner.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The day our son, Greg was born, a nurse who attended the first Church I pastored came on duty at the hospital and talked later that night with Nadine. Her name was Sherril.

Sherril found the whole event of Greg's birth a painful reminder of her own desire to marry and have her own children. She was getting on up into her late twenties, was set in her career as a nurse, but she desperately wanted her own family, her own children.

Nadine that night and I later in various sermon emphases encouraged her to look to the Lord for meeting the right partner.

Sherril eventually met a guy who really liked her and started to date him, only to find out that he had been divorced. Knowing from our teachings that the Lord did not condone such a union, she really struggled with what to do. Sherril knew that God didn't want her to marry a divorced man, but in turning him down, she might be turning down her last chance for fulfilling her dream of having a family.

Nevertheless, trusting in God's best for her, Sherril broke of the relationship with him.

Very shortly later, Sherril met Gary, and they both fell madly in love. Gary was "qualified", and they asked me to perform their wedding ceremony. That was the last wedding I performed for that Church group before moving on to the next pastorate.

Sherril has since had several children, and has stood as the "Exhibit A" in my ministry of the fact that **GOD** knows our needs and that **HE** can and will lead us to the right partner if we rely on Him.

Just as Adam and Eve needed God to provide the job, the home, the sense of need for a partner, let alone the partner and the introduction of each other to one another, so the believer today, more than ever in this imperfect world with its imperfect pool of prospective marital partners, needs the LORD'S oversight to meet and marry the right person.

Look to the Lord -- that is our only sure recourse for selecting the RIGHT person to marry!