Love, Marriage, and Sex
Owen Weber 1989

What Does the Bible Teach About Love, Marriage, and Sex?
This analysis of loeve, marriage, and sex has a two-fold objective:
1.To teach what the Bible says about these subjects; and, 2.To provide Biblical guidelines for selecting a prospective mate.

Love

[1]Of course, the two marriage partners are to love each other. The Bible teaches that this love is three-fold. They must love each other in the sense of maintaining a godly mental attitude toward each other which is free of any bitterness or ill will. They must also love each other in the sense of liking each other as friends, and enjoying each other's company. Finally, they are to love each other physically, or sexually.

Friendship

The first step toward love is becoming friends. However, marriage partners must be much more than friends, and they must do more than just "fall in love." We have all had friends from whom we have been separated. We find that after a period of absence, our friendship turns to forgetfulness. However when we love someone, our love does not lessen with absence. When we are away from that person, even for an extended period of time, we still love them, miss them, and long to be with them. It is easier to understand grief in this light. Even when a person dies, our love for them remains, and it pains us that we cannot enjoy that person's company.

True love, as it is described in Philippians 1:9-12, is enduring, kind, faithful, and hopeful. It is never jealous, conceited, unmannerly, irritable, self-seeking, demanding its rights, it never takes pleasure in injustice, and it never fades.

Yes, real love is durable. Perhaps one of the major causes of failed relationship is the speed and extent of involvement before love has time to gel. Too often, a couple "falls in love" too quickly and emotionally. The circumstances can be deceptive, although they seem perfect. A couple can seem to fall in love on a moonlit night when, in reality, they don't even like each other. Later, when the relationship cools off, they discover that they would not make good marriage partners. Too often, they go ahead and get married based upon a temporary emotional high, when their relationship has not proven itself with the test of time. It takes more than just common interests to insure a good marriage relationship. For one, it takes diligent prayer, which young people and their parents should begin early, perhaps even before the children even have interests in the opposite sex. Potential marriage partners should first establish their relationship spiritually, before they start a physical relationship. Thus follow the principles of chastity before marriage, and physical faithfulness after marriage.

Marriage

God instituted the divine institution of marriage when he brought Eve to Adam. From this we can conclude that marriage is a control placed upon the use of sex. Adultery and fornication are acts of illicit sex among partners who are not married to each other, and these acts are strictly forbidden in the Bible (Exodus 20:14, 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Even mental adultery, or impure sexual thoughts, are forbidden (Matthew 5:27-28). Adultery is the only grounds for divorce (Matthew 5:32), and marriage is otherwise to bound the two partners until death.

God began marriage in Genesis 2:18, to give Adam companionship, and to keep him from being lonely. The woman is to be a help to her husband, and the imcomplete and lonely man is made complete through marriage. By Genesis 2:14, it is obvious that when two partners marry, they must leave their parents and assume total responsibilities for their own lives and actions, and for their own new family unit. There is to be no dependence upon parents, once the partners are married.

Sex

Sexual problems plague relationships both before and after marriage. In a society that puts so much emphasis on outward sexual expression, it's no wonder that sex is a major contributor to relationships gone bad. Too often, these failures get their roots from partners who confuse sex with love.

The Purpose of Sex

Let's begin with a biblical look at the purpose of sex. The original purpose of sex, as seen from the Garden of Eden, was for recreation, or companionship. This is the primary purpose of sex, it's why God created sex. Adam needed companionship, and God gave him Eve. Of course, procreation is another purpose of sex, by which we are given children to rear. However, before the fall of Adam and Eve, they had no children, and procreation was not a feature of their sexual expression. Had the fall never

[1] C:\My Documents\bible\SchoolOfLocalChurch\Lessons\7FamilyMatters\Articles\LoveMarriageSex.doc

occurred, Adam and Eve could have simply lived together in God's garden forever. After the fall however, procreation was created by God and it was made created as another purpose of sex.

Sexual Stimuli

This brings us to an interesting facet of the way God created men and women. He gave us certain stimuli to assist us in our physical relationship with the opposite sex. He gave us hand holding as an initial and readily available means of beginning a physical report. However, and interesting thing happens when a couple gets used to holding hands. Just as with the initial desire to hold hands, when this becomes a familiar practice, it loses the thrill that it gave at first, and we feel new stimuli driving us toward a new desire. The law of diminishing returns takes over, and we are no longer satisfied with hand-holding. Well, God gave us kissing, which we usually see as the next stage, when our initial touching became the stimuli for more physical contact. Then comes the stages of embracing, fondling, and sexual intercourse. God made us such that each stage is a stimuli to move us to the next stage. God never intended for kissing to stop with kissing! We also know that this is not only true during a single sexual episode, but also throughout the lifetime of the relationship. God made us able to maintain a spirit of adventure in our physical relationships by continually seeking and finding pleasing sexual situations with our marriage partner.

Dating

We need to consider God's physical design of our sexual stimuli when we consider dating. Just as in marriage, when a dating couple starts holding hands, it's not too long before they are are not satisfied with this level of sexual contact, and they proceed through the same stages of sexual involvement which God meant to be practiced only withing the control of marriage. Just as we have already said, "God never meant for kissing to stop with kissing!" For those trying to stay true to their commitment of chastity, they find that their desires are properly stimulated but not properly fulfilled. A sufficient stimulus without ultimate satsifaction produces frustrations toward the partner. These frustrations can even be recalled after marriage, thus creating long term resentment. Although the practice of complete chastity before marriage is outdated in our culture, it seems to be the only way of staying true to God's word and avoiding frustrations. Once the slightest physical involvement is begun, it is guaranteed to bring either frustration or a deeper level of involvement.

We would do well to remember that love develops into sex, not sex into love. People do not need "experience" in sex in order to make their marriage fulfilling. They will learn what they need to know from each other, and they will even love learning it! A good guideline for daters is to remember that you are probably dating someone else's future spouse, and you should want to treat them with the same respect that you hope someone else is treating your future spouse.

Parents should realize that solo dating without supervision is an adult game. Participants must be capable of the responsibility to place limitations on their physical relationships before marriage. Without the proper maturity, young teenagers can not be expected to have this level of responsibility. They hardly even know their new adolescent bodies yet, and much less do they realize their new responsibilities. Ecclesiastes 3:5 says there is a time to refrain from embracing, and this time includes when young teenagers are dating!

In The Home Schooling Father, Michael P. Farris suggests three principles for courtship:

1.Courtship should wait until one is prepared for marriage.
1.Young Men
1.A man is not ready for marriage until he is ready to work and take care of his family's finances (Proverbs 24:27, 1 Timothy 5:8). 2.A man is not ready for marriage until he is able to maintain a home. 3.A man is not ready for marriage until he is ready to be a father (Psalms 127:3).
2.Young Women
1.A woman should be prepared to teach her children. 2.A woman should be prepared to be a homemaker. 3.A woman should be prepared to be a mother.

2.Any prospect for courtship should meet the spiritual standards established together with one's parent's. 3.Any prospect for courtship should be a person who is personally interesting and attractive to me (the easiest of the three).

One for One!

The Bible teaches that there is one and only one particular marriage partner for everyone. Just as God brought Eve to Adam in Genesis 2:21-25, He will bring the right marriage partner to each of us. Adam was incomplete, and his right partner made him complete, and they were joined into one single flesh. God did not bring Adam multiple wives, but only one. Monogomy is still God's rule for us (1 Corinthians 7:2). Neither did Adam have to roam the hills looking for the right companion, but he just practiced faith rest, and accepted his right woman as a grace gift when God brought her to him. God has designed the particular soul, spirit, and body of each particular man, for the particular soul, spirit, and body of a particualar woman, just as he designed Eve for Adam. (Ephesians 5:31-31).

Also, God's order for the family is that the husband be the spiritual leader of the family, and that he rule over the wife (Genesis 3:16). He is to be a guide and teacher for his wife (Ephesians 5:25). Wives, in turn, are to respond to their husbands spiritually, mentally, and physically (Ephesians 5:22). They are to respect their husband's responsibility, and submit to it by lining up under his authority.

Jeremiah 31:22 speaks of the woman as being a "new thing" that God created that would "encompass" the man. Eve was a "new thing" in that the other animals in the garden were created on a lower level, and those animals did not have particular mates with which to exclusively share their lives. Eve was new in the sense that she would belong to her particular man, Adam, for her whole life. She would be faithful to him, unlike the animals who have no respect for a one-for-one physical relationship which would last a lifetime. Eve was the right woman for Adam, not just the right species.

Furthermore, each woman is to "encompass" her man in the the physical sense. God is telling us that he designed our bodies specifically for our right partner alone. He made us to be a close, exact, and unique fit physically. This is talking about sexual intercourse where the woman physically encompasses and surrounds the man, thus allowing maximum sexual fulfillment for each partner by this custom-made design.

Suggestions

When it comes time to decide whether a particular person of the opposite sex is the correct choice for a marriage partner, the decision should be taken very seriously. We should ask God in prayer, and He will guide us. We should also take the time to ask ourselves plenty of serious questions about the person with whom we are about to commit to spend the rest of our lives. The following points are Biblical guidelines for selecting a marriage partner.

Believers

The first criterium for picking a marriage partner is found in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, where we learn that Christians are not to marry unbelievers. The three-fold expressions of love can only be achieved by Christians, through Christ, so we can be sure that any unbeliever who falls in love is only expressing a temporary emotional attraction. This suggests an interesting point about the dating period. How will we know whether our partner is a believer or not, unless we ask them. This implies that spiritual beliefs MUST be discussed, preferably even before a date occurs. Though this is not usually the first thing on the mind of a teenager, it is necessary in order to follow God's guidelines for relationships. Unless you can be satisfied that your potential partner is a believer capable of true love, you should look elsewhere.

One myth that hurts many relationships concerns those partners who are indifferent in their spiritual attitude. Quite often, since the person seems like a nice, good, moral person, the believing partner will presume that they will be able to lead their lost partner into spiritual truth, after they start dating, or after they are married. This is a false assumption. The Bible supports no doctrine of dating evangelism. Though the Christian can be a positive influence on the life of the unbelieving partner, there are no assurances of their future spiritual direction. They must still be converted through the working of the Holy Spirit, like anyone else. Therefore, since Christians are to marry only believers, they should also date only believers, since each date should be considered a potential marriage partner.

Spiritual Maturity

Not only should a marriage partner be a believer, but they should be developing their spiritual maturity through regular Bible study and prayer. The spirtual maturity of the marriage partners should be compatible, and the man should have the potential of taking the responsibility as spiritual leader of the family (Ephesians 5:21). Quite often, this guideline will limit the choice of a marriage partner to those who share the same doctrinal beliefs. Because of this, we should be careful when entering marriages between two people who have had different spiritual background such as being reared in different denominations, and especially Protestant-Catholic differences.

A mate should be selected based upon spiritual maturity as described in the Bible. The following are some questions that will prove helpful in selecting a mate:

1.Does this person's life reflect the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)?
1.Love 2.Joy 3.Peace 4.Patience 5.Kindness 6.Goodness 7.Faithfulness 8.Gentleness 9.Self-control
2.Does this person practive daily Bible study and prayer (Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 4:4-9)? 3.Is this person humble (Philippians 2:3, 2 Corinthians 12:7)? 4.Is this person quiet (Proverbs 10:19, 17:27-28, 29:11, Luke 9:5, 1 Timothy 2:2, 6:4-5, 2 Timothy 2:16, Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 3:4, James 1:19)? 5.Is this person a hard worker (1 Thessalonians 4:11)? 6.Does this person listen to Godly counsel (Proverbs 12:15)? 7.Can this person overlook an insult (Proverbs 12:16)? 8.Does this person exhibit determination (Philippians 3:14)? 9.Does this person like children (Psalms 127:3)? 10.Does this person attend church regularly (Hebrews 10:25)?
11.Does this person's life reflect a freedom from worldly wickedness (Romans 2:29-32, James 1:19)?
1.Depravity (a delight in evil) 2.Greed 3.Envy 4.Jealousy 5.Hate 6.Strife 7.Deceit 8.Malice 9.Holding grudges 10.Gossip 11.Slander 12.A hate for God 13.Insolence 14.Arrogance and boasting 15.Obedience to parents 16.Senseless 17.Heartless 18.Ruthless
12.Is there even a hint of sexual immorality in this person)Matthew 5:28, 1 Corinthians 6:18)? 13.Is this person easily angered (1 Timothy 2:2)? 14.Is this person too competitive (Romans 14:10, 15:7, Galatians 5:26)? 15.Does this person complain habitually (Philippians 2:14)? 16.Does this person worry habitually (Exodus 14:14, Philippians 4:4-9)? 17.Will this man provide for my family (1 Timothy 5:8)?
or

Will this woman be a wife and mother of Godly character (Proverbs 31)?

Many of these topics will be covered in further detail in the following paragraphs. Please note that although only one person (Jesus Christ) ever lived a perfect life, the answers to the above questions will be quite valuable in evaluating a prospecive mate, as well as examining one's own life.

Teenagers

More often than not, teenagers lack the maturity, spiritual and otherwise, to enter marriage and live up to its demanding responsibilities. There are fantastic changes in our outlook, attitude, and desires between the ages of 16 and 18, and again between 18 and the early twenties. If you are past you mid-twenties, do you recall any serious changes in your attitudes between the time you graduated high school and the time you graduated college? Of particular concern during these years is the libido, or sex drive, which is strong enough to sometimes force irrational decisions in order that the demands of the libido be met. Ecclesiastes 3:1-5 teaches that there is an appropriate time for everything, and the statistics show that the teenage years are not usually the time for marriage, although some teenagers are successful by the grace of God. Statistics tell us that 50% of those who marry in their teens are divorced before the end of five years!

A Case History

The following testimonial is from a girl who chose to marry at age 18:

"We met at this part time job I had. He was 23 and head of the department. All the girls, even the engaged ones, used to coo over him and say, 'Oh, he's nice.' One day he asked me out. Three weeks later he asked me to marry him. Me! I never had any responsibility at home. Mother washed my clothes, ironed my clothes, laid out my clothes, even bought my clothes, still does. To this day, I don't do anything. The day after the wedding, I knew it was a mistake. As time went by, it only got worse. Nothing was the way it was supposed to be. He wouldn't give me money. He pushed me from one dingy furnished room to another. And there were so many bills.

"I never knew what it was like. You know, you live with your family, they pay for everything. Then suddendly you're faced with bills. You're on your back, and they're getting court orders. It was just too much. It was all so different from the way I pictured it. I don't know exactly how it is supposed to be, but more fun, different. And he seemed so different before I married him. This man on the outside, so big and good-looking and nice, but so afraid on the inside, so chicken. Afraid of his mother, his father, afraid of everything, he was a baby, really a child, and he called ME immature!

"The worst thing that happened to me was I learned to hate. I never hated anyone before. I don't even like the word. But I hate that man. And somehow with all the troubles I've been through, I'm empty. Everything is gone out of me. Next time, I'll look for someone more mature."

This girl's experience is common. Failed marriages are a part of our country's recent heritage. Financial problems, sexual problems, and incompatibility are all doing their share to help fill the divorce courts. Let's take a look at the Bible doctrines of love, marriage, and sex to discover God's standards and perhaps some reasons why relationships fail.

Parental Approval

Parents are great assets when it comes to deciding about a marriage partner. A couple should always have the approval of both sets of parents before marriage. (Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1-3). Our parents know us, probably better than anyone else. They have lived close to us all our lives. They can offer valuable insights and advice, based upon their knowledge of us and upon their own experiences. Young people usually lack the experience required to make major decisions. It is truly a danger sign for a young person to marry when he is in serious conflict with his parents.

Education

It is probably a good principle to marry someone with a similar level of education (Proverbs 16:16,23). This guideline would then imply that one's basic education be completed before marriage. Education is responsible for many of the changes in attitudes in young people, and if it is incomplete, we may be sure that some changes in attitudes are forthcoming. Furthermore, a lack of a high school diploma should give us a warning sign about a potential marriage partner, since it may indicate serious character deficiencies such as irresponsibility, or maybe an I.Q. level that would not be compatible with ours.

The Don'ts

So far, we have discussed what should be expected of a marriage partner. Now lets look at some of the things that should signals of concern about potential marriage partners. These are things that we don't want in marriage partners. Theses deficiences should be mastered before marriage, because they are often the causes of failed marriages.

Jealousy

A healthy mental attitude is a must for a marriage partner, and one of the things that will certainly disturb mental health is jealousy (Proverbs 6:34, Song of Solomon 8:6). A jealous partner will deny the privacy of his mat. He is actually a neurotic who will be constantly wanting attention. He will be obsessed with his own ego, and he will be a taker instead of a giver. Don't marry a jealous person.

Temper

"Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife" (Proverbs 21:9). Proverbs gives many warnings about the problems created by a person with a quick temper (Proverbs 15:18, Proverbs 21:19, Proverbs 22:14). This will cause the other partner to live in fear because this angry person will be constantly demanding his rights.

Honesty

One of the first signs to be noticed in any person is their honesty, which is a required trait for any marriage partner (Proverbs 29:24, Romans 12:17, 2 Corinthians 8:21). If a person is prone to cheating or other deceptions, he will not make an adequate marriage partner. The other partner will never be able to trust this person, and the distrust created will act as a corrosive element to the marriage.

Smoking

By 1 Corinthians 6:19, it would be a good idea to choose a marriage partner who takes care of his body. In view of current medical findings, one would have to question the good judgment and self control of a person who smokes. Not only can smoking cut your life short, and thereby prematurely end your marital responsibilities, but medical science has also shown its negative affect on other family members, and even unborn children. Furthermore, smoking can be a sign of immaturity, especially when the smoker began his habit under the peer pressure of smoking friends.

If you marry a smoker, be prepared for your spouse's smoking to control the patterns of both your lives, such as having to take ash trays everywhere you go, and deciding not to enjoy certain activities where smoking is banned. Another major problem is how to dissuade your children from smoking. The solution often includes discrediting the smoking parent, and even then, the children are more likely to become smokers if their parents smoke.

Drinking

The health-risk argument against smoking also applies against drinking. Not only is alcohol a major cause of premature deaths due to accidents and liver disease, but untold thousands suffer various forms of heart disease and other physical ailments toward which alcohol has been a major contributor. In addition to this, alcohol lends the immediate hazard of impairment of mental capacities, and this is condemned by the Bible (Proverbs 20:1, Proverbs 23:20, Romans 13:13, Isaiah 5:22). How can your marriage partner meet his responsibilty of growing in mental and spiritual maturity if he habitually impairs his mental capacities?

Drugs

It would also be wise to avoid potential partners who use drugs, or even who have used drugs in the past. Science is telling us more and more of the permanent brain and genetic damage due to drug use.

Pride

The Bible has much to say against pride (Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 16:18, Proverbs 19:23, 1 John 2:16). The proud person loves status symbols, and may even want to marry one. His ego is what he is really interested in elevating, not his marriage. This person may aspire toward some image, either for himself or his spouse (Proverbs 13:16). He may also mask his true personality so that his ego won't be threatened. This is another reason for allowing a lengthy period of courtship before marriage. We need to get to know our partners and observe them over a period of time, instead of planning to change them after we're married. Popularity and social status should not be a factor in choosing a marriage partner.

Sex

As mentioned above, God designed marriage to include sexual fulfilment, but we must avoid a partner who wants to marry only for sex (Ephesians 2:3, 2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Peter 4:2).

Divorcees

In general, a Christian will not want to marry a person who has been divorced, since this is a clear indication that they did not know how to choose a mate. However, once their former mate has remarried, the old marriage is ended (Matthew 5:42) and it is not against Biblical standards for them to remarry. Also, in the case of desertion, they are also free to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Other Potential Problems

Ephesians 4:29 and James 3:9-10 tell us not to associate with those who use profanity. Certainly if we're not to be with them, we certainly wouldn't want them as marraige partners.

Romans 13:8 warns against those who go easily into debt. In a marriage, this can quickly force the wife into the working environment, even against the will of both partners. God intends for us to be thrifty, though not stingy. As marriage partners however, we must avoid the urge to keep up with the Jones;s.

Avoid a marriage partner who is an habitual gambler (Ephesians 4:28). Otherwise, you will suffer undue mental stress and always lack the secure peace of mind that God intends for your marriage.

We should think twice before marrying someone who seems to always suffer from very poor health, or someone with poor health habits (Proverbs 14:30, 3 John 3). Marriage is meant to last a lifetime, and a partner who dies young due to his neglect of his body is shirking his responsibilities to his wife and family. The potential marriage partner should be consious of his proper exercise and diet. One indicator of the expected health patterns of a partner is to look at their parents. Many times, we will follow the practices developed in us by our parents, and we will even look like our parents in many ways.

Avoid the neurotic who constantly suffers from excessive tension (2 Timothy 1:7, Proverbs 27:15). The person who is always anxious, talkative, or bitter may have an unrealistic attitude toward spiritual maturity.

It may also be a good idea to avoid serious differences in the age or background of your potential marriage partner. The most serious problem created by mixed marriages is probably that the children can be ostricized even when the parents are perfectly content.

Conclusions

God has designed a particular marriage partner for each of us. We are to practice faith rest, and simply watch for the time when God will unite us with that person, then thank Him for his grace gift. We will be a perfect match for that person, spiritually, mentally, and physically. We will share mutual enthusiasm with that particular person, and we will love them and relate to them in an attitude of gladly-given (grace) expression.

Return to the Christian Data Resources Home Page