

DATING & MARRIAGE “ONLY IN THE LORD”

Choosing a Partner for Life

Dating & Marriage – “only in the Lord” Choosing a Partner for Life

1. The Purpose of God in Marriage
2. Dating: “For you are a holy people”
3. “Snares and traps”
4. “Unless Yahweh builds the house...”

Acknowledgement to brother Ron Cowie (OWBS 2016)



Why talk about dating & marriage?

- If time goes on, most will marry
- We need to make well informed decisions that will greatly affect our futures
- Bad decisions can adversely affect our life
- Making a decision about God, salvation and **baptism must be our first priority.**

However...

- The choice of a partner to share our life with is the second most important decision we may make
...therefore, need to shape your ideals



Canadian Marriage & Divorce statistics

20% common-law, >40% to eventually divorce

- "In 2011, about four-fifths (80.1%) of individuals in couples were married spouses and the remaining **one-fifth (19.9%) were common-law partners.**"
- "**43.1% of marriages** entered in 2008 **are expected to end in divorce** before the 50th year of marriage."
- The Vanier Institute of the Family (VI, December 2013) state that an estimated **41% of marriages in Canada will end** by their 30th wedding anniversary.
- Statistics Canada describes **an average marriage as lasting 13.7 years.**



Divorce Statistics in Canada: A Snapshot

What Causes Divorce?

"There are a variety of factors that contribute to the rise of divorce rates.

- **Marriage has become more of an individual choice, than a religious one,** and some believe that this has made it more acceptable for couples to end a marriage than endure until death (Cherlin, 2004).
- Liberalization of divorce laws in the 1960's and 1980's has made it **easier to get divorced**. This may have made divorce more socially accepted overall.
- **People may have developed a lower threshold of tolerance** when their marriage does not meet their expectations (Amato, 1999). Thus, they see divorce as a life change that can better support their happiness in the long run."

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The Purpose of God in Marriage

- Gen. 2:18, 22 – **"I will make for him a helper, as his counterpart..."** And Yahweh God builded the rib which he had taken from the man, into a woman, and **brought her in unto the man**" (Roth.)
- 1Pet. 3:7 – *To assist each other toward the Kingdom as* **"heirs together"** (4789) of the grace of life". 4789 from 4862 and 2818.
- C/p **"heirs (2818) of the kingdom"** which he hath promised to them that love him" Jam. 2:5. Also Rom. 8:17 etc.

The Purpose of God in Marriage

- **Mal. 2:14-15** – “the wife of your youth... **she is your companion** and your wife **by covenant**. But did He not make them one... And why one? **He seeks godly offspring.**” (NKJV)
 - *New generations of believers keeping God’s truth.*
- **V. 16** – “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce...” (NKJV)
 - *God intends that marriage is a life long commitment.*
Also Matt. 19:6-8.
 - *So, choose wisely!*



Mutual submission “in the fear of God” A wife to submit to husband’s leadership

- **Eph. 5:21-24** – “Submitting yourselves one to another **in the fear of God**. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, **as unto the Lord**... Therefore as the ecclesia **is subject unto Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”
 - *How will this work without “the fear of God,” or if both partners are not committed to serving the Lord?*
 - *As unto the Lord, not as he deserves it!*
 - *This is the opposite of humanism and equality of the sexes.*



Mutual submission "in the fear of God"

A husband to provide spiritual leadership

- Eph. 5:25-33 – "Husbands, love your wives, **even as Christ** also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it **with the washing of water by the word...**"
- *A man who has developed this kind of Christ-likeness, having washed his own mind with the word, will still struggle to live up to this great responsibility.*
- *The natural man is incapable of providing this kind of spiritual leadership for his wife.*



Biblical Roles for Young Women & Men

- Titus 2:4-5 – Young women, **"keepers of their own houses**, good, **subject to their own husbands**, that the word of God may not be evil spoken of." YLT
- Titus 2:6-8 – "Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be **a model of good works**, and **in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech** that cannot be condemned..." ESV



"Her children arise up, and call her blessed" – Proverbs 31

- Prov. 31:26 – "She openeth her mouth **with wisdom**; and in her tongue is **the law of kindness.**"
 - *The consequence of the washing of God's word (Eph. 5:25-27).*
- V. 27-29 – "She looketh well to the ways of her household... **Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.**"
 - *The children reflect the instruction they have received from their mother (c/p v.1 – "the prophecy that his mother taught him"). Her all important work.*
 - *The husband recognizes the eternal value in his wife's work and praises her.*
- V. 30 – "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But **a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.**" (NKJV)
 - *Her feature which is given the greatest importance bringing praise.*



DATING: "FOR YOU ARE A HOLY PEOPLE"

"Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD." (Prov. 19:14)

Dating – “a prudent wife is from Yahweh”

- Gen. 2:22 – “And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, **and brought her unto the man.**”
 - *God provided Eve for Adam, she was brought to him.*
- Prov. 31:10-11 – “Who can find a virtuous woman?” Also ch. 12:4.
 - *What are we looking for? Where is such a woman to be found?*
- Prov. 19:14 – “...a prudent wife is **from the LORD.**”
 - *A prudent wife, a virtuous woman, when found is of Yahweh.*
- Prov. 18:22 – “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and **obtaineth favour of the LORD.**”
 - *This necessitates that she be of a Godly character.*
 - *This kind of woman will not be found from the world, among the Canaanites: Esau, Gen. 26:34-35; Samson, Jud. 14...*

The Daughters of Zelophehad

- Num. 36:6 – “Let them marry to whom they think best; **only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry.**”
 - *They made this choice because they were focused on their future inheritance, not on living in the moment.*
 - *Do we share this recognition of the value of our inheritance?*

"...to whom she will; only in the Lord."

- **1Cor. 7:39,40** – "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, **she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.** But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment..."
 - *Free to remarry, but only to someone "in the Lord."*
 - *Advises to remain a widow.*
- Deut. 25:5 – "...the wife of the dead **shall not marry without unto a stranger...**"
 - *Example: Ruth*
- *So, most importantly, we must choose someone within the Truth.*

The way to select the right partner

- Work out your own ideals
- Realise this is very serious commitment
- Watch out for blind romance or infatuation



Choosing well

Work out your ideals – seek advice

- Helping each other to the Kingdom
- Sharing love, happiness and growth
- Raising a Godly family of your own
- Jointly supporting God's ecclesia
- Mission work?
- **Prov. 21: 25** – “The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor.”
- Watch out for shallow values: good looks, mere animal attraction
- **Prov. 31:3** – “**Do not give your strength to women,** Nor your ways to that which destroys kings.”
- Avoid: life of party types, cool dudes, marrying into right family, laziness, bad habits, addictions (even to technology)...

Life choices

Work out your priorities

- Baptism should be first priority
- Decide on level of education / career path
- Marriage brings many responsibilities
- Discuss with your prospective partner the things you may do together as a couple
- Timing for having children God willing

Get to know your chosen partner well

- Watch behaviour, attitudes and speech
- What you see is unlikely to improve later
- Are they committed to serve the ecclesia?
- Place high value on prayerfulness, integrity, self discipline, truthfulness, good manners, respect for parents and honesty.
- Observe spending habits, leisure interests, friends
- Check the opinions of trusted elders – and listen!
- Give yourself time to really know the person
- **BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF**
- Love can be blind – but marriage is a real eye opener.

Choosing well

Good Communication skills are absolutely vital

- Can you talk freely about your faith?
- Can you share your ideals and dreams?
- Do you share your experiences easily?
- Are both parties contributing meaningfully to the communication?
- Are you both good listeners?
- Can you resolve conflict reasonably, without spite and bullying?

Choosing well

Work out issues before you commit permanently

- Are you agreed on your spiritual goals?
- Is your partner a committed ecclesial worker?
- Can you pray together as a couple? (1Pet. 3:7)
- Do you agree on having children?
- Do you want a family as soon as possible, or to do other things first?
- What ecclesia would you join?
- How would you manage finances?

With perfect modesty

Whatsoever things are pure... think on these things

- Young men, treat girls with purity **as you would want your sister treated.**
- **1 Tim 5:1-2** – “Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, **with all purity.**”
- Weymouth: “and the younger women as sisters, **with perfect modesty.**”
- NLT: “Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity **as you would your own sisters.**”
- **Rom. 13:14** – “make no provision”. **1Cor. 6:18** – “**Flee fornication.**”
 - *Agree on boundaries & strategies to avoid fornication. Pray together for strength.*
 - *Do not seek to be alone, and therefore likely to fall into temptation. Stay with the group.*
 - *Focus on the spiritual side of your relationship.*

"SNARES AND TRAPS"

Joshua 23:12-13

"Snares and traps"

- Deut. 7:3,4 – "...neither shalt thou make marriages with them... **For they will turn away thy son from following me,** that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."
- V. 16,25,26 – "...for that will be **a snare unto thee.**" *Will you be agreed on the standards in your home?*
- V. 6 – "For **you are a holy people** to the LORD your God..." – *will our decision assist or hinder God's work with us?*
- Josh. 23:12-13 – "...they shall be **snares and traps unto you,** and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, **until ye perish** from off this good land..."

Foreign women caused even him to sin.

- **Ezra 9:2,12** – “For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and their sons, so that **the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands**. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost **in this trespass...** Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons...”
- **Neh. 13:23-27** NAS – “Do we then hear about you that you have committed all **this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?**” C/p ch. 10:30.
 - *The consequence was that their children did not know the truth.*

Is love enough?



Common errors that are made...

- **Hasty decisions to marry** without knowing the partner well enough
- **Fooling ourselves** that we like someone **just because they like us** and show interest in us
- Confusing love with **blind infatuation or lust**
- Decisions are often made **too young**
- Marrying to **meet someone else's expectations** (e.g. parents or peer group)
- Being in love with just **a big wedding day**
- Thinking that personality problems, bad habits and behaviour **will improve after marriage** – *girls especially think they will change him*

Common problems that emerge...

- One is a control freak... controls the money, limits your freedom and uses anger or violence
- One is a spender, one likes to save
- Inability to communicate and discuss feelings
- Disloyalty – placing old friends above partner
- In-laws that interfere and manipulate
- Once free of parental expectations some become spiritually lazy

Perhaps the most important thing , even more so than choosing the right partner, is first ensuring that you are a suitable partner...

"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was."

James 1:23-24 NKJV



UNLESS YAHWEH BUILDS THE HOUSE

Psalms 127 & 128



Strengthening family around the Word

"The Brotherhood's urgent need is **to strengthen its family ties around the Word of the living God**. When the blessings of the faithful man were described by the Psalmist the central picture was **a family grouped around a common table** (Psalm 128:3). The father had brought in from the field the labour of his hands, abundantly blessed of Yahweh (v.2). His faithful and fruitful wife was 'by the sides of his house' (v.3), a keeper of the home (Tit. 2:5), one in whom 'the heart of her husband could safely trust' (Prov. 31:11). This family was totally independent of the philosophies of the heathen world and **every influence was Israelitish and directed by the parents**. In the picture presented, the children are intriguingly spoken of as 'olive plants round about thy table'. Olive shoots spring up **around the parent tree...**



Strengthening family around the Word

"...The Psalmist's family was **attached to Zion**, no doubt attending the annual feasts that confirmed their fellowship in the congregation of Israel (v.5). Likewise **faith-building activities**, such as Bible schools, special efforts and study days, **will be strongly supported by those who are anxious to build their families in the Truth.**"

Graham Pearce, *Milestones to the Kingdom* 1984, pages 56,57.



"As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man;
so are children of the youth." Psa. 127:4

- Teach and demonstrate **the love of the Bible** to our children
- **Set example of what is important**, ensuring family is at ecclesial activities
 - *Be careful not to send the message that something else is more important*
- **Encourage friendships with likeminded children and families** and be prepared to travel if needed
- Ensure get to select **study days / weekends, Bible schools**, etc.
 - *Important way to help young people develop Godly friendships*
- Focus on the big picture, what is eternal: "I have no greater joy than to hear that **my children walk in truth.**" ³John v.4



Draw around the Word, building faith and love

"How shall we deliver ourselves from the rushing tide of the nations going headlong to destruction? **Draw ourselves with our children around the Word of God and make its lessons live.** Teach them what to look for and **the significance of the times** in which our lives are cast. **Let us be about our ecclesial affairs, building faith and love** in all the members of our meetings and boldly exhorting against the brash and profane manners of the rising generation. **We must not conform.** We must resist every step which seeks under all the plausible human wisdom to change the standards of our behavior and decorum. The ways thereof are the ways of death."

Graham Pearce, *Milestones to the Kingdom* 1982, pages 68-69.

