

LESSON 3 Choosing a Companion

How is a young man to know when he has found the right girl for his bride? How does a young woman choose the one with whom to spend the remainder of her life? God himself, who understands better than any other the importance of choosing the right companion, has promised, “The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs” (Isaiah 58:11).

Prayer and an honest look at what the Bible has to say about marriage have saved many young people from making unhappy choices. In this lesson we will discover the importance of considering the other person’s attitudes toward life, and his or her traits and patterns of behavior. Valuable lessons will also be learned from marriages which are built on divine principles and those which are not. God knows who is “right” for each of His children, and will not fail to direct those who sincerely want His will in this important decision.

The Plan

- A. Importance of the Choice
- B. God's Leading and Standards
- C. Personal Qualities
- D. Circumstances
- E. Mutual Love and Acceptance
- F. Assurance of God's Will

The Goals

- 1. Give two reasons why the choice of a marriage partner is vital.
- 2. List ways in which God leads us in the choice of a life companion.
- 3. Identify the personal qualities a husband or wife should have.
- 4. Examine the kinds of assistance that God will provide for believers seeking a marriage partner.
- 5. Identify key qualities that distinguish true love from emotional or physical attraction.

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE CHOICE

Goal 1. Give two reasons why the choice of a marriage partner is vital.

The choice of the person who is to be your partner for life is extremely important. It is important because of the influence your partner will have on your life. The person you marry will help shape your life. He or she may turn the course of your life either toward righteousness and heaven or toward sin and hell. The daily influence of your companion will either help you reach your goal of eternal happiness or will pull you away from God, who is the only source of true joy.

Secondly, this choice is important because it is for life. Christians do not get married with the idea that they can always get a divorce if they cannot get along together. If you have a bicycle or a car that you do not like, you can sell it and get another one. But

you cannot do that with a wife or husband. The Bible teaches that marriage is for life. Mark writes, “What God has joined together, let man not separate” (Mark 10:9). Later the apostle Paul noted:

By law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. (Romans 7:2)

Nor is there any such thing as trial marriage for Christians; that is, living together for a while to see how they get along before actually getting married. According to God’s standards this is wrong—immoral.

Since the choice of your companion for life is so important, it should not be made hurriedly. Fortunately, God’s Word gives basic principles to follow in making the choice so that the marriage will be happy.

Application

1 Give two reasons that the choice of a husband or wife is so important.

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2 Where can you find the basic principles to follow in the choice of a life partner?

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B. GOD’S LEADING AND STANDARDS

God’s Willingness to Lead

Goal 2. List ways in which God leads us in the choice of a life companion.

If you are a child of God, you may be sure that your Father wants you to have the companion who will be the best for you.

God made Eve to be just the companion that Adam needed. God knows you and your need too. He knows you better than

you know yourself and knows exactly the person that would make the best partner for you. He loves you and wants to help you.

Application

Be sure to ask God to lead you very definitely to the person of His choice. Pray about it and be willing to follow the leading of the Lord. “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault” (James 1:5).

3 What should you do before choosing a life partner?

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HOW GOD LEADS

How does God let a person know whom he or she should marry? God usually leads His children in this matter through a combination of ways. A Christian should look for God’s leading in all of these ways.

First, one who chooses a life partner should be sure that it is according to the principles found in the Bible. A second consideration is this: Do the personal qualities of the couple make them suited for each other? Thirdly, circumstances should work together to make the marriage possible. There should be mutual love and acceptance of each other. And finally, there should be an assurance of God’s will.

Application

4 Memorize the five ways God uses to direct you in the choice of a life partner; then write them in your notebook.

BIBLICAL STANDARDS

First and most important is the way in which God leads you through His Word. In the Bible He gives some rules to follow. You can be sure that His leading will not be contrary to His Word. Two of these rules for Christians are to (1) marry a Christian and (2) be sure both potential spouses agree.

Marry a Christian

Those who have already formed their homes have moral obligations to their companions, Christian or non-Christian. But if you are single and a Christian, you can be sure that God does not want you to marry an unbeliever. The apostle Paul instructs,

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

We read in the Bible about two promising young men who made the mistake of marrying wives who did not believe in the One True God. They were Samson and Solomon. Samson was attracted to a young woman who was not of his spiritual belief. His parents advised him to marry one of his own people, but he would not listen to them. His first marriage was a terrible failure from the very start. But still he would not follow God's standards. His second serious involvement with an unbeliever led to personal tragedy and death.

King Solomon, too, was led away from God by an unbeliever, Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 3:1). And from this crucial mistake he was led to take many heathen wives and to support idolatry, a move that brought God's judgment upon his kingdom (1 Kings 11:1–11).

So, be careful in your friendships. There is always an attraction between sexes. Do not let this lead you into courtship with an unsaved person. Choose your close friends among Christians. Do not let Satan sidetrack you from God's will and ruin your life by getting you bound in marriage to an unbeliever.

Application

5 Circle the letter in front of the names of the two young men in the Bible who met tragedy by marrying women who did not serve God.

- a)** Abraham
- b)** Solomon
- c)** Noah
- d)** Samson

6 Memorize 2 Corinthians 6:14; then have someone listen to you to see if you recite it correctly.

7 What is the message of 2 Corinthians 6:14 to a Christian?

Potential Spouses Must Agree

While it is important to marry a Christian, there are also other things to consider. The Bible teaches that you cannot have a happy home unless you agree on certain things.

Disagreements over religion can make a home very unhappy. You and your companion should agree on the place that God will have in your life, how you will serve Him, what church you will attend, and what religious training you will give your children. Doctrinal differences sometimes divide a home. For each to go to a different church is a poor way to start a home.

No two persons will agree perfectly on everything; you should not expect that. But husband and wife should agree on basic principles.

Do you and the person that you hope to marry agree on biblical standards for your home, on how to discipline children, on the responsibilities of husband and wife, on how to handle your money? If not, you may be headed for trouble.

These lessons will help you have a happier home, as both of you study God's instructions and agree on the standards He gives in His Word.

Application

- 8** In your notebook, name at least four things about which you and the person you marry should agree.
- 9** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** If a husband and wife are Christians, we can assume that they will have a happy home.
 - b)** A man and woman who plan to establish a Christian home should agree on basic principles.
 - c)** It is possible for a husband and wife who are Christians to agree perfectly on all matters.
 - d)** It is important that a husband and wife agree on biblical standards for their home.
- 10** What do you think is the best time for a couple wishing to establish a home to learn whether or not they agree on basic principles?
- a)** In the first year of marriage
 - b)** After their engagement
 - c)** Before their engagement
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C. PERSONAL QUALITIES

Importance of Qualities

Goal 3. Identify the personal qualities a husband or wife should have.

What are the qualities that you would like to find in the person you marry? Some young men want their future wife to be beautiful, talented, and wealthy. But while some of these things may be desirable, none of them guarantees a successful marriage. In fact, a young lady who is beautiful may be proud and vain because of her beauty. She may even use her beauty to attract men after she is married. And a girl from a wealthy family may expect her young husband, who is just getting started in his work, to provide many things he cannot afford.

Beauty, education, and a good social position can be assets, but there are other more important qualities such as character, similar interests, good habits, and good health.

Application

11 Name two qualities which do not necessarily make the marriage a happy one.



Personal Character

What kind of person do you want to live with all the rest of your life—pleasant or complaining? Friendly or quarrelsome? Patient or easily upset? Kind or domineering? Generous or selfish? Trustful or suspicious?

Are you looking for someone with a good reputation or a questionable one? Always honest or someone who would deceive you? Hard-working or lazy? Persevering or easily discouraged?

Character is formed and developed all through childhood. So the home of the person you are interested in may give you an idea of what he or she is like. The popular sayings are often true: “Like father-like son.” “Like mother-like daughter.” The child often follows the example of his father or mother.

However, God’s grace can always help a Christian change his ways even though he has had very poor home training. And there are some people from wonderful homes who have refused to follow their parents’ good example. So, the home may help you to look out for certain qualities, but do not base your judgment of the person’s character entirely on the family that he or she comes from.

Application

12 In your notebook, make a list of the qualities you would like your husband or wife to have.

13 Now, check yourself by the list you have made. Write “good” for the qualities that describe you, and “weak” for those you need to develop.



Pray that God will help you to develop the qualities that are essential for a good husband or wife.

Good Habits

Habits are hard to break. If a person has habits that annoy you now, do not think that things will be better after you are married. Do not think that you will be able to make your husband or wife over into your own patterns of behavior.

True love will make husband and wife try to adjust to each other and overlook things that are not really important. And in things that are important they should help one another. But do not go blindly into marriage without even thinking what kind of habits your companion has. They can show you a great deal about his or her character and about what you can expect in the future.

Is he or she clean or dirty, courteous or sometimes insulting? Does he or she talk all the time or listen with interest to what others have to say? How does he or she treat his or her brothers, sisters, and parents? Does the potential spouse take seriously responsibilities to God and the church?

Application

Use your notebook for the following exercises.

14 Make a list of good habits that you would like to find in a life companion.

15 List some habits that you think would keep your marriage from being happy.



Similar Interests and Personalities

Would you like to live all your life with someone who is not the least interested in those things that are most important to you? Husbands and wives who are interested in the same things have much more in common and are likely to have a happier home.

Sometimes opposite characteristics are good if they complement each other. For example, someone who talks a lot might be happier with a quiet person who is a good listener. An

idealistic, creative, but impractical person needs the balance of someone who is practical.

However, if husband and wife are of extremely different temperaments or personalities, they may have a hard time getting along with each other. If a young man is ambitious, hardworking, and active, he probably would not have much patience with a slow, unintelligent, lazy wife.

Eve was created to be a help suitable for Adam. God wants your companion to be suited for you, cut out for you. You should be enough alike that you will get along well together, and different enough so that you will have a well-balanced home.

Application

Use your notebook for these exercises.

16 Make a list of activities that interest you. Your companion may not be particularly interested in many of them, but if he or she opposes them, this could be a cause of friction.

17 List some things that you would like to talk about. Would the person you are going to marry talk with you about these subjects?



Good Health

Many countries require a medical examination and health certificate before marriage. This is to protect you from entering into marriage with someone who may have unknown or unrevealed health problems.

This does not mean that a person has to have perfect health to get married. Many with physical needs are great husbands, wives, and parents. Good health is not the most important quality to look for, but it should be considered. If you plan to have children, ask yourself if your future wife or husband will be a good mother or a good father.

Application

18 Why is the physical and mental health of your life companion important?

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D. CIRCUMSTANCES

Goal 4. Examine the kinds of assistance that God will provide for believers seeking a marriage partner.

We have mentioned that God often leads through circumstances. We see this illustrated in several love stories in the Bible.

For example, Ruth left her family and home in order to serve the one true God. She went to glean grain in the harvest fields of Bethlehem and *happened* to go to the field of Boaz. God had led her. Boaz met her and could see in her all the qualities that he wanted in a wife. There were some obstacles to their marriage, but God worked everything out. Everyone cooperated and they were able to get married (Ruth 1–4).

One of the circumstances that God used to lead Ruth was the advice of older, more experienced people. She respected the advice of Naomi and acted accordingly. God often uses the advice of parents, pastors, and older Christians to help young people know His will.

The romance of Isaac and Rebecca was very different from that of Boaz and Ruth. They did not see each other before Rebecca arrived for the wedding. Abraham had sent his servant to look for a wife for his son Isaac. The servant prayed for God to lead him, and you may be sure that Abraham and Isaac were praying the same thing.

God answered prayer and brought Rebecca to the place where the servant was praying. As he got acquainted with her and her family, the servant could see that Rebecca had the qualities that would make her a good wife for Isaac. The whole family knew that God was leading and agreed to let Rebecca marry Isaac.

They asked her if she wanted to go with the servant and become Isaac's wife. She agreed and made the long journey to his home. They loved each other and had a happy marriage (Genesis 24).

In those homes where the parents make the choice and the arrangements for the wedding, they should pray and ask God to lead them. The same God who worked through circumstances and brought Isaac and Rebecca together still answers prayer today.

Application

19 Name two couples in the Bible whom God brought together by circumstances.

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E. MUTUAL LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE

Goal 5. Identify key qualities that distinguish true love from emotional or physical attraction.

No marriage can be happy without true love between husband and wife. Mutual love gives two persons a sense of belonging to each other. It makes them want to please each other, helping them make whatever adjustments are necessary. Love binds them together more strongly than anything else can.

Love is much more than sex or physical attraction. True love includes respect, honor, appreciation, and consideration for each other. Do not mistake mere physical attraction for love. If you are not sure of your feeling, pray about it. Talk with your parents or older Christians about it.

What if the marriage is arranged by the families, like that of Rebecca and Isaac? There cannot be deep mutual love before there is an opportunity to know each other. But at least both should be willing to accept each other before they marry. Love can and must be cultivated. God, who is the source of all true love, will give you love for the person He wants you to marry, and He will give that person love for you.

So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?” “I will go,” she said. . . . Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her. (Genesis 24:58, 67)

Of course, we are talking about marrying according to God’s standards. If you are a Christian, you should not marry someone who is not a Christian even if you do feel attracted to each other.

Application

20 What qualities make up the love that is the basis for marriage?

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If you are considering marrying a certain person, check your feelings by the list you made. Is this what you feel? Does the person seem to feel the same toward you?

Pray that you will not be deceived by an attraction that is not true love. Ask God for His guidance in this important time in your life.

F. ASSURANCE OF GOD’S WILL

God’s leading does not usually come through a special revelation, but rather through the combination of ways that we have mentioned: biblical standards, the right qualities, circumstances, mutual love and acceptance, and the assurance of God’s will.

This assurance may come as a feeling of peace about the matter when you pray about it, a deep belief that it is God’s will. This should not be one-sided; both the man and the woman should pray about it and have this assurance.

God’s leading may be over a period of time. The assurance may come before or after He has led in the other ways. Or it may come sooner to one than to another. Do not be in too much of a hurry. Test your feeling by the other ways that God uses to lead you.

Do not worry if you do not find anyone who has *all* the personal qualities that you are looking for. You may lack a few of the points on the other person's list too. Whoever has to make the choice should look for the qualities that are most important for a happy Christian home. And in the meantime, you should be cultivating these same qualities in your character.

May God bless and lead you in the ways that He sees best to the person of His choice for you.

Application

21 God's leading in the choice of a life companion usually comes through a

- a)** combination of ways.
- b)** special revelation.



Check Your Answers

11 (Any two)

Beauty, education, social position

1 Because of the influence your partner will have on your life; the choice is for life.

12 Your answer

2 In God's Word.

13 Your answer

3 Pray and ask God to lead you.

14 Your answer

4 Check your answer with the lesson.

15 Your answer

5 b) Solomon

d) Samson

16 Your answer

6 Memorize 2 Corinthians 6:14; then recite it to someone.

17 Your answer

7 A Christian should marry a Christian.

18 For the happiness of the home and the sake of the children.

8 Check your answer with the lesson.

19 Boaz and Ruth, Isaac and Rebecca

9 Statements b) and d) are true.

20 Respect, honor, appreciation, consideration

10 c) Before their engagement, so that the disagreements may be resolved or the relationship terminated.

21 a) combination of ways

