

What to Look For In A Spouse (Or How To Be A Better One) – Various Scriptures

1 Jn 4:7-8; When I was trading bonds on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade in years past, we used to anticipate the release of a set of numbers every month . . .
Called **Leading Economic Indicators** – various pieces of data put out by an organization, that gave clues as to how the economy would fare in the near future

And though they weren't a crystal ball, if you missed them, or dismissed them – you could get yourself in a lot of trouble
Often by making trades and entering into agreements that ended up being losers*****

And the same is true of marriage; There are certain things in a spouse, certain qualities, certain *indicators* – you can't afford to miss; Or dismiss
Which unfortunately we often do, when our passion supersedes our forethought
When our heart supersedes our head
The result of which, is a loser – a loser marriage, that's all out of love

Better, to *identify* those leading indicators that make a good spouse, *cultivate* them in your own life, and then *look* for them in others; The first of which, is . . .

• Love

When it comes to finding that special someone, or being a better one yourself – look for love; Not a love for you, though that's important; But a love for the *Lord*
Before you ever “*fall* in love” with someone, or even entertain a *relationship* with them – you should make sure they love Jesus; Period

Or as Jesus himself said it, look for someone (**Mk 12:30**) who loves the Lord their God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind, and all their strength
Look for a love for the Lord

And if they don't have it – stop; Right there*****

B/c the Bible is clear that you shouldn't marry an unbeliever – you shouldn't be unequally yoked; Which means you shouldn't even date one
B/c the purpose of dating is to find a spouse; A spouse that loves the Lord

• And, others; Look for a love for *others*

Someone who takes seriously the command in 1 John 4:7-8; *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

Look for a love for others in a potential spouse, b/c if they don't have that – they don't know God, and you're asking for trouble
Why? B/c they lack the capacity to fully love *you*

• And then there's a love for *God's Word*

Like the Psalmist said in **Ps 119:97** – *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.* And **v167** – *My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.*
Look for that; Look for someone who loves God's Word, and shows it by studying it, and striving to keep it*****

And decide on these things ahead of time

Before you ever *think* of entering into a relationship
B/c if you wait until you're *in* a relationship, it may be too late; Your feelings of affection and physical desire will take over, and all rationale will be lost
Decide now, and don't waver

• Purity

Sexual purity; As far as you can tell – do they indulge in the passions of lust? Not do they struggle, not do they fight it, not do they fail sometimes . . .
But do they *indulge* as the norm? Do they *flee* youthful lusts, or entertain them?

Paul says in **1 Thess 4:3-5** – *This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; A very broad term . . .*
That includes *all* kinds of sexual acts outside of marriage, not just sex
And *that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God* [those who are unsaved]

That's God's design for purity, and the very quality you should look for in a spouse*****
B/c if you marry someone who's *failing* in that respect, you marry the trouble that comes with it; And if you're having sex with them before marriage . . .
You're part of that trouble; Part of the failure; And more is on the way
Show me someone who's failing in the area of purity before marriage, and I'll show you someone who most likely fails after marriage
With much of it centered on pornography – the great scourge of our age

- And one of the great lies from the pit of hell itself, is that you can *compartmentalize* it
That you can keep indulgence in pornography and self-gratification, separate from the rest of your life; That what *happens* on the screen, *stays* on the screen
It doesn't affect your girlfriend; It doesn't affect your wife; It doesn't affect your family; And you couldn't be more wrong (**Video – Just 1 Click Away; 2:58**)

You can't compartmentalize a lack of purity; Sin doesn't work that way; It affects every area of life, including your marriage

• Which is why we need accountability

With 1 billion pornographic websites out there; And 2.5 billion pornographic emails circulated every day – with 47% received by students under the age of 18 . . .
And the average age of first exposure 9 years old – we need accountability

That means no computers in bedrooms; And no TV by yourself
That means checking your student's Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and text messages and photo streams – anytime, and all the time
And their *friend's* Facebook and Instagram and Twitter
Want to know what your son or daughter is doing? Or going to do? Look at their friends

You should know every single social media account and password that they have; Every one of them; “Oh I don't want to do that,” you say; “I might offend them”
“And they need their privacy;” Like a hole in the head

It's not your job to be their best friend, it's your job to parent them; And if you parent them well, they'll *be* your best friend

In the meantime, it's your responsibility to protect them; Often from themselves
To flee youthful lusts, and help them *cultivate* purity

Be the parent; So when the time comes to look for a spouse, they're a spouse worth looking for

And if you're already a spouse, you should submit yourself to this *same* level of scrutiny and accountability

There's too much at stake to risk it; And you can't compartmentalize

3rd, look for . . .

- **Integrity**

Ps 15; Integrity is being of the same quality throughout; What you see is what you get

Like a well-built car – it doesn't just look shiny on the outside, it's well made on the inside; Or a support beam like the ones overhead

They consist of structural steel that's consistent in its strength; The inside is just like the outside, and the middle is just like the ends

So I could say – “That beam has integrity”

And the same is true of *people* of integrity – what you see is who they are, through and through; They're the same when people are watching, and when they're not
No facades, no double life, and no double-speak; That's a person with integrity

- Or as King David said it in Ps 15 . . .

[1] *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?* [IOW God, who's the person who's going to reap the blessings of your provision and protection?] [2] *He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart;* [3] *who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend;* [4] *in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change;* [5] *who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.*

Among other things, there are at least 4 characteristics of a person of integrity here

1. They walk blamelessly (2)

They conduct their life above reproach; They live in such a way that they can't legitimately be accused of wrongdoing

2. They do what is right (2)

Political expediency or pragmatism or upward mobility or maintaining the status quo have absolutely no bearing on their actions or words; They do what's right; Period
That's a person of integrity

3. They're genuine

They speak *truth in their heart*, v2

IOW what they *think* is based on the truth, and what they say is true to their heart

There's no dichotomy, no contradiction, and no rationalizing

They're genuine through and through

4. They keep their word

Or as v4b says – they swear *to their own hurt and do not change*

They keep their word, even when it hurts; Even when it costs them more money; Or more time, or effort, or pain than they bargained for

Beware of someone who's quick to break commitments, and jump from one thing to another; B/c when you get married, chances are it won't stop

You want someone who keeps their word to their family, their friends, their employer, and their church; B/c that's the kind of person who will keep their word to *you* . . .

To have and to hold, for better or for worse, 'til death do you part

- 4 characteristics of a person of integrity

And when you're looking for them, don't rush it; Determining genuine integrity takes time; *And* close proximity

There's nothing wrong with finding your spouse over the internet; But you need to be *near* them, long before you tie the knot

Living in the same town, over a long period of time

B/c integrity can only be seen close up

4th, look for . . .

- **Kindness**

Someone who's gentle; Tenderhearted; Sympathetic; Thoughtful

Or as the Apostle Paul said it in **Eph 4:31-32** – *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice* [or hatred]. [32] *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Look for someone who demonstrates the latter qualities, instead of the former

Someone who's kind instead of hateful; Someone who's tender instead of bitter

Someone who's forgiving instead of slanderous*****

- If you find someone who *slanders with their tongue*, as Ps 15:3 says it . . .

That is, their normal M.O. is to be critical and destructive of others; Or they more often tear down than build up; Or love to hear criticism, and join in . . .

If you find someone like that, stay away; Because you're next

Instead, look for kindness, and compassion, and meekness, and gentleness

And when you find it, pursue it; Pursue *them*

- **Humility**

Humility, b/c that's what the Lord looks for

In **Micah** chapter 6 the prophet asks a question; He says – [6] *“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?*

IOW how should I present myself before the Lord? How should I conduct my life?

And then he answers his question in **v8**, saying – *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:6-8)

Justice, kindness, and humility – that's what the *Lord* expects; That's what *he's* looking for; So why would *you* settle for anything less?*****

- Especially when it comes to humility; B/c humility is prerequisite for *anything* good

It's prerequisite or necessary for *salvation* – you can't be saved unless you humble yourself, admit your sin, and ask for help
It's prerequisite for *leading* – b/c nobody likes to follow someone who's proud
It's necessary for *following* – b/c if you're not humble, you won't; you won't follow

And likewise, it's necessary for *marriage* – where you'll wrong or offend your spouse, and have to *humble* yourself to apologize
Or in the normal course of life, humble yourself to serve
Or humble yourself to defer to them; It's prerequisite
So cultivate it yourself, and look for it in others

And then last, look for . . .

- **Diligence**

As in a good work ethic; Are they industrious? Or do they tend toward laziness? Do they do whatever it *takes* to get a job done, and do it right?
Or only the minimum in order to get by?

Prov 6:6-11 – *Go to the ant, O sluggard* [O lazy one]; *consider her ways, and be wise.* [7] *Without having any chief, officer, or ruler* [that is, with no boss or manager holding her accountable and spurring her on], [8] *she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.*
IOW she makes hay while the sun shines; Instead of procrastinating, she gets her work done; ASAP

Have you ever watched ants for any length of time? They never stop moving
And Solomon, one of the wisest men ever to live, says consider them, and be wise
Do what they do; Live like they live

- And then he gets in the face of those who are lazy, and says – [9] *How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*
Growing up, I remember the days when my brothers were teenagers, and used to sleep in on Saturdays; Which I didn't understand b/c I was 6 and 8 years behind them . . .
And couldn't imagine sleeping that long; Until I became a teenager myself

And the thing of it is, Mom and Dad couldn't imagine it either; And they'd go done, stand in the doorway of their bedroom, and say – “Get up!”
And then start listing off the growing number of chores they had to get done

And every now and then they'd send me down to get 'em up
Which usually didn't go over very well b/c I was *obnoxiously* relentless; In fact, on one occasion threw water in my brother's face; Once

Why all the fuss? Why did my Mom and Dad care? B/c v10 says . . .
[10] *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, [11] and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.*
It will sneak up on you, and be inescapable

- You don't want to be married to someone like that
You want someone who's a self-starter; Someone who goes the extra mile; Someone who works as unto the Lord

Otherwise, their problems will be your problems, just like with purity
Look for diligence (**Summary**)
And humility, kindness, integrity, purity, and love; Leading indicators

- And lest you get the wrong impression – you're not looking for perfection, but potential; Otherwise you'll never be married
Rather, look for growth, and a *desire* to grow; Look for progress, and a desire for *more*
And chances are, you'll find a spouse worth marrying, and a marriage worth having

Pray – Lord, would you open our eyes to these things, these qualities – starting with ourselves; Show us where we're lacking; Show us our growth areas; And for those looking for a spouse, give them wisdom and discernment beyond themselves; And divine appointments with those looking for the same; Resulting in marriages that glorify you, and satisfy them