

Spotting The Danger Signs On Your Way To The Altar

By Byron and Carla Weathersbee

Even though you're "in love," you can't afford to ignore incompetent, irresponsible, and dependent behavior in your potential mate.

Choosing the right marriage partner is one of the most critical decisions you will ever make. Unfortunately, our current culture attempts to make it seem as easy as point n' click. Often-times, media and the church present a very superficial and even highly dysfunctional view of relationships and marriage. Character flaws like incompetence, irresponsibility, and unhealthy dependency are not only tolerated, but also presented as normal and even amusing.

One of the most accepted concepts about marriage is that you search for a person to "complete you." While that may sound romantic on the surface, it supports the mistaken idea that we have a part missing until we find a spouse - that the real mission in life is to find another human being to make up for some aspect of ourselves that is lacking. It takes time to know who you are, and most people in our culture are still figuring out who they are, at least into their early twenties. Unfortunately, our culture extends this process into our late twenties or early thirties.

Many of the problems in relationships stem from one or both persons expecting their mate to provide them with the love, acceptance, or approval they longed for as a child. Not only is it impossible for your mate to complete you, but placing that type of burden and pressure on another person can create an awful lot of stress in your relationship; and that stress gives birth to a myriad of other problems. Nothing normal or amusing about that!

Rite of Passage

Our long-time buddy Walker Moore is a youth culture expert with 30 years of experience. He has latched onto something by studying the "ancient paths" (Jeremiah 6:16) instilled deep within us by our Creator. As he researched and observed our culture, he discovered that we've lost the tools to help individuals move from childhood to adulthood by becoming capable, responsible, and self-reliant. In recent times, we seem to have replaced that passage with what we call "going through adolescence." Young people find themselves in adult situations without the ability to effectively navigate through life's choices and freedoms. As we see on the news each day many people never grow up but are stuck in early adolescent behaviors and thought patterns, creating untold grief for their mates, families, and society at large.

The Search for Identity

All of us are indeed searching for completion. We continue to look for that idyllic circumstance that Adam and Eve originally

enjoyed before their act of disobedience; a life of security, significance, belonging and satisfaction; a life of knowing who you are and who you belong to and being able to share in a loving, open, and intimate way.

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That sense of completion is not found in what you do, what you have, or through your marriage partner, but in God's love, the love that brings true completion. You will not know who you are until you know *whose* you are; until you know your God and what He has done for you. Only in Him will you find that significance and security.

Do you believe your identity is grounded in your God or in your partner? Where you have placed your identity will greatly affect your ability to experience healthy intimacy with other people. Unless you receive God's provision for your unfulfilled needs; until you examine who you are and become peaceful with what you see, it will be very difficult for you to be open and honest, to share a real intimate relationship with your marriage partner...and that is what God calls us to do!

Take an Honest Look

Marriage is not a sit-com; it is not a movie or a novel or a pop song. It involves real life and real people. If you are considering marriage to a person who is clearly not mature, that is exhibiting childish traits that create uproar and concern, please don't look the other way!

Simply being "in love" and having a great time together is not a sufficient resume for marriage. Marriage is a serious step, a lifetime commitment under God and cannot be entered into lightly. Don't rush. Take a good, hard, honest look at your own readiness and the readiness of your potential mate before making a final decision.

Remember your true identity is in Christ and becoming the capable, responsible, self-reliant adult God designed you to be. You need to be willing to do the hard work of surrender and allow God to fully love you, to experience His healing in any area of your life where you were wounded, and rely on His leading in the choosing of your marriage partner. When you take the time to honor those steps, your "I do" can last a lifetime!

Byron and Carla Weathersbee co-founded Legacy Family Ministries (www.legacyfamily.org) in 1995 to prepare pre-engaged and engaged couples for marriage. In their new book *Before Forever*, available at www.theleadingedgepublishing.com, the authors offer inspirational and practical advice for making perhaps the most important decision of your life. The Weathersbees have counseled hundreds of couples over the years with incredible results!

