

# OpenTheo

## Commitment Issues: Searching for Love with Purpose

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### **Knight & Rose Show** - Wintery Knight and Desert Rose

Wintery Knight and Desert Rose discuss how to find a partner to marry. We talk about God's design for marriage, and contrast that with society's view of marriage. We talk about how to measure a person's suitability for marriage. We contrast our strategies with a half-dozen rival strategies, using peer-reviewed research. We talk about compatibility and common areas of tension. And we recommend our favorite book about marriage.

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## **Transcript**

Welcome to the Knight and Rose Show, where we discuss practical ways of living out an authentic, Christian worldview. Today's topic is Commitment Issues, Searching for Love with Purpose. I'm Wintery Knight.

And I'm Desert Rose. Welcome, Rose. So in today's podcast, we're going to be discussing best practices for finding a mate for marriage.

Specifically, we're going to talk about what abilities are important for lifelong married love, and how to evaluate a marriage candidate for those abilities. We'll be discussing why this topic matters, reasons for marrying, and what to look for in a spouse. So let's start with, why is this topic important? Yeah, that's a great question.

So first of all, the marriage rate is dropping precipitously. So there are a lot of reasons for this. There's no fault divorce, which is making people nervous, understandably, about entering into marriage.

There's the punitive divorce courts, which make it very risky to marry. People are delaying marriage for selfish ambition, putting their careers ahead of family. There is male disengagement in education and career.

A lot of reasons for that that we'll probably talk about some other time. There's the fact that purchasing power is lower for younger people than it was for their parents. Children are feeling the effects of divorce in single parenthood.

All of these are contributing to the marriage rate dropping. And another reason this topic is important is that children need married parents. I think we talked about this in our last episode on What is Marriage? episode 28.

Societies that destroy marriage begin to crumble and see devastating effects. So this is an incredibly important topic. Okay.

So why do people get married? Well, there are three things that lead most people to get married today. There's romantic attraction, there's sexual chemistry, and there's relational compatibility. So let me talk about some insights from this outstanding book on dating and marriage called *The Sacred Search* by Gary Chapman.

Yeah, that's my favorite book on relationships and marriage. It's excellent. Yeah.

So romantic attraction and sexual chemistry cannot be sustained over the long haul. Marriage author Gary Chapman talks about how infatuation lasts only about 18 months. And I want to read a couple of quotes from him with regard to romantic attraction and relational compatibility.

So he says, "Women are more likely to experience romantic love with dominant men." In other words, aggressive, extremely confident, take charge, and physically imposing. Even though dominant men typically demonstrate less ability to provide the kind of companionship, relational skills, and emotional attachment that women ultimately desire in a lifelong mate." It looks like according to Chapman, women are really looking for something different during dating than they are after marriage, which is a concern, of course. I just saw something about this.

They were saying something like, "The most unstable man you can marry is a Navy

SEAL." Nothing against Navy SEALs. They're great for defending the country, but they're maybe not the greatest for relationships. That's kind of what we're talking about is these men who are amazing at being dominant and that sort of thing, but may not be what you're looking for long term.

The other quote I want to read is about relational compatibility. He says, "Relational compatibility while dating tells you how well you'll get along when you're on vacation. It doesn't predict how well you'll handle managing a house, balancing careers, raising kids, or the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities that make up most of married life." That's a great quote.

Even dating itself is like, "You entertain me, I'll entertain you." And then you do that for a long enough time and you think you've prepared for marriage, but marriage isn't entertainment. So many conservative Christian men today believe that the highest value a woman can have is her youth and beauty. And in order to attract those women, they prioritize improving their own physical appearance.

Does that work? No, it doesn't. I've known a lot of men actually who have shared with me in their 30s and 40s about regrets that they've had. I'm thinking of one pastor friend in particular right now, but there have been several men I've talked to.

So this pastor, when he was young and handsome, he chose the most beautiful, thinnest young woman he could find. That was his priority. And then a few years into the marriage, he started complaining that he couldn't get his wife to partner in ministry with him or engage in apologetics and theology, worldview discussions, mentoring younger couples together and things like that.

And so I know that he's really lonely. He regrets that he didn't marry someone who could be a true partner in advancing the kingdom. And I feel for him, it's got to be a tremendously tough position to be in, but that's what he was prioritizing when he was young and foolish.

Yeah, this is actually a really popular opinion among even conservative men today. They're saying the right way to find a high value woman, by which they mean a good looking woman, is to hit the gym and build up a bunch of muscles. And for this guy, I want to say this, if that's the only problem he has, he's actually lucky.

He's doing a lot better than a lot of men who make the same mistake. A lot of men take the plan that he took and they find out that their wife now wants them to attend same sex weddings and vote Democrat. Some of them even get dragged into the church for church discipline or even a divorce court.

Consequences of doing this can be very high, very severe. Yeah. I'm thinking of a phrase that I use a lot with regard to the church, but it applies here.

It is that what you win them with is what you win them to. So if you win a woman with your physical appearance, then you didn't win her because of your ability at moral and spiritual things. She chose your appearance for selfish reasons.

This is not about kingdom, purpose, or focus. She's probably looking for validation or to impress her friends or something. Exactly.

Yeah. And I think it goes both ways. So some women think that if they can just attract a man with their appearance, then later after he's committed and they're married, then she can get him to act morally and to be some great spiritual leader in their marriage.

But that just does not tend to work out that way. There are women out there who are sexually attracted to moral character and spiritual leadership, righteousness and shared purpose. And these are the women who men should really focus on if you ask me.

Yeah. It's easier to get a woman who likes leadership to go to the gym with you or to put on makeup for a special date. It's harder to take a woman who has focused on her appearance before you married her and then change her after you married her into this wonderful wife and mother who respects moral and spiritual leadership.

Yeah. The wedding is not going to change a person's character. So if a person is making decisions and choosing actions on the basis of their feelings and their intuition before the wedding, they're going to do that after the wedding too.

And this is such a disaster. Likewise, if you are minimizing and justifying bad behaviors in a marriage candidate, the wedding is not going to make these bad behaviors disappear. They're actually going to become more difficult, more annoying, a source of even greater frustration after you're married.

Yeah, that definitely makes sense. Okay. So liking someone's appearance, liking how fun a person is, liking the feelings that another person causes, these are all bad reasons to get married.

So what are some good reasons to get married? Well, there are two reasons that I think are absolutely critical. And the first is a common purpose. It's really important to have a shared mission that is kingdom focused.

In fact, we talked a lot about that in episode seven. This is absolutely critical. We'll talk a little bit more about that.

But the other is character growth. So it's really important to look for someone who will inspire us toward righteousness, who will confront us when we go astray, who will forgive us when we mess up, who will offer wisdom when we're unsure how to proceed. It's really important to find someone and to be someone who is committed to one another's sanctification rather than prioritizing ease and instant gratification.

And we actually see both of these components, shared purpose and character growth. And one of my favorite passages that we've talked about before in the episode on wisdom, Making Wise Decisions, episode 24. And the verse says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." So it's saying, "Seek first the kingdom of God so that we have a shared purpose, a kingdom focus, and his righteousness so that we have character growth." And then all the other things, if you're focused on those two things, you don't really need to worry about the other things because those will be added unto you as well.

What verse is that again? Matthew 6.33. Okay. So, in the Sermon on the Mount. So when we prioritize shared mission and character growth instead of romantic infatuation, we are cultivating long-term affection.

And this type of affection that results from shared experiences and mutual growth actually grows deeper with age in contrast to the romantic infatuation that we mentioned earlier tends to last about 18 months. 18 months. And that figure comes from The Sacred Search, that book by Gary Chapman.

Right. He's talking about like those in love feelings that, you know, are that initial craziness that you have from this new relationship. Right.

So you definitely don't want to be making any decisions while you're still under the influence of that, I think. Yes. Does that seem reasonable? Yes, absolutely.

Under the influence of infatuation. I love it. Yes.

Okay. So whenever, I don't know about you, but whenever I lay out criteria for the marriage-related character traits and how to evaluate marriage candidates to see if they have these marriage-related character traits, one of the responses I very commonly get is, well, what if we're not sexually compatible? So how would you respond to that? Yeah, I have a few thoughts. I hear that as well.

And here's my response. So first of all, if you don't think that you can enjoy sex with someone, then you shouldn't marry them. If you find someone repulsive and hideous, or you just you really don't think that's sustainable or possible, you shouldn't marry them.

However, the bigger point that I want to make here is that sexual intimacy is actually developed and sustained and even improved when there is a shared mission, when there is kindness and mutual edification, encouragement, things like excellent communication, when the relationship is really strong. Those are the things that actually ought to come first. And then the sexual attraction, the sexual intimacy follows.

We flipped this completely upside down today in our culture. It's really weird. The most common way of developing attraction is based on looks, when really what you should be looking for, I'm going to speak as a man, you should just disregard everyone who likes

your looks, all the women who like your looks, and instead look for a woman who is sexually attracted to being built up for kingdom work and who does kingdom work with you, like, you know, four to six hours at the baby ending clinic doing sidewalk counseling, 10 to 12 hours organizing an apologetics debate at the university, you know, inviting planning an outing where you invite all your coworkers to a restaurant and discuss Christianity with them.

These kinds of long term plans that take effort and produce results. There are women out there who are very attracted to this for whatever reason, they've had life experiences that make them love moral and spiritual leadership. And these are the only women in my view that are safe for you to chase after.

And you can certainly pick one that you're attracted to physically from out of those. But that's the first cut. Absolutely.

Yes. And and if there are people out there going, is that really realistic? I'll just speak as a woman and say, yes, yes, yes, these women exist. So don't sell yourself short.

Yeah. And I'm not going to the divorce court. So I am only interested in those women.

Exactly. Yeah. So I want to make a couple comments about what a Christian relationship is not about.

For one thing, it's not about validating yourself, making yourself feel better or look better or showing off to your friends. That sort of priority is going to, you know, might make you feel great in the dating process on the wedding day, maybe even during the very early years of your relationship. But ultimately, that is a disaster waiting to happen.

It's not about giving yourself a confidence boost or making yourself look good. Okay. So you think that character matters most? Absolutely.

Yeah. Character, character above beauty, status, position, wealth, anything like that. So yeah, why don't we actually talk about some character traits that we'd recommend people look for.

Okay. And as we talk about these, I would encourage people to think about questions you could ask someone to help you evaluate their character. So I think the very first one, most important of all, is their commitment to Christ.

It's really important that you be equally yoked and that both people be mature followers of Jesus. So this doesn't mean someone, you know, who looks cute and carries a Bible around. Like, to steal a phrase I've heard others use, a Barbie with a Bible.

I got that from my friend. She was disgusted that men were chasing the Barbies with Bibles and not her. Right, right.

Yeah. You want to look for someone who pursues Christ on his or her own, who prays on their own, reads the Bible, applies Scripture to their life, talks about what they're learning, and acts on those beliefs. You also want to look for someone who formulates and executes effective plans for the kingdom.

Someone who mentors other Christians long-term to successful outcomes. These are the types of things you can look for to see if someone is a committed follower of Jesus. Yeah, what's an example of an effective plan for the kingdom, just so people know what you're talking about? Well, let's see.

Well, right off the top of my head, I think about our creation of this podcast. You know, I had it on my Trello card that I wanted to do a podcast at some point. You were looking over my goals and thoughts for kingdom ministry, and that was something that you had thought about as well.

And so you actually created a whole other card for what it would take in order to actually see the podcast come to fruition. You laid out the steps and assigned steps to me and steps to you and checked in with me regularly to see how I was doing on mine. And you completed your tasks, and so we made it happen.

So you really were able to execute that plan, which was actually just an idea on a card was as far as I had taken it, but you took it to fruition. Yeah, definitely. One other thing I would say is important to look for is there are going to be times in your married relationship where you don't like what your spouse believes, and it's not going to be something that you've discussed.

So I think if you have checked her over, checked him over for a method that is a way of persuading your spouse, then that would be helpful. So for example, let's say that I had a wrong belief about recycling. Okay, I just changed my belief on recycling recently, I was entirely against it.

And then I looked into a bunch of articles about it. And what it turned out was they said recycling boxes is actually a good idea. So I decided to start recycling boxes.

So I called waste management and I got a recycling box sent to my house and I put all the boxes in it. The point being that true, like evidence causes my beliefs about what's true to change. And then my actions change.

And whoever marries me knows that that's available. They're saying, okay, so I don't have to, you know, give him tit for tat or anything like that. I can just convince him and he may, you know, he may need a little kindness in order to be willing to look over this information, but he does respond to evidence.

And so that's a mechanism that you have available to you for persuasion. It's not going to be a yelling contest. It's going to be an evidence contest.

And that's, that's one you can win. Yeah, yeah. Great example.

So another character trait I look for is someone who practices self sacrificial love for others, for their family, for their friends, their neighbors, men in their lives, maybe nieces and nephews, for example. And this is really in contrast to the attitude of what are you going to do for me? People who are always asking, what are you going to do for me and not self sacrificially loving others? You know, that should be a red flag. And actually I have a great example of this.

Just yesterday, my cousin who lives about an hour away, drove here after a long day and brought his tools with him and everything because he, his wife had told him that my dishwasher and my toilet were broken. The toilet was keeping me up because it was running all night long and I'm hosting Thanksgiving. And so, you know, the dishwasher needs to work if I'm going to have a bunch of people over.

And he sacrificed his Sunday and came over and spent hours fixing my dishwasher and my toilet. They were completely fixed by about 7.30 at night. And then he insisted on buying me dinner.

I thought, you know, obviously I should buy him dinner to say thank you. But he wouldn't let me. Absolutely.

His wife was very clever to pick him. Yes, absolutely. These are two of my favorite people and they've been mentors to me for many years.

Nice. So yeah, along those lines, you want to look for someone who is a giver. It's really important that you be a giver and that you find a giver.

A lot of people just kind of settle into a pattern of one person's the giver and the other is the taker. This is not a good long-term solution. You need two generous givers who don't keep score.

Yeah. One thing I've noticed that is a really good marriage character trait is the ability to take responsibility for your own bad choices. And I, this is one that I, we had a recent post about no fault divorce and there was a great big conversation in the comments between people who are like, there's no responsibility for initiating divorce.

And then one of my friends, my two cents was responding and saying, no, there really is responsibility for this. So I actually mentored a young woman a while back and the first thing she said to me when I was suggested to her as a potential mentor, was she said, my problem is I keep getting into these relationships with bad guys and they hurt me. I don't know how to pick men.

And you see, I can work with someone who says, I don't know how to do this. And then another woman I actually went on a date with, she was divorced. And I said, so how did,



you know, you have to ask about this.

You have to go, how did this happen? I said, did you ask him, you know, about apologetics? Did you ask him about politics? Did you ask him, you know, about church attendance? And did you ask him about all of his beliefs? And she said, no, she just kept saying this over and over. He was the pastor's kid. And she didn't ask him any of these questions.

And then I said, so you're saying he was the pastor's kid. So that means you didn't do anything wrong, right? And she said, no, there's no way I didn't do anything wrong. She said, there's no way to tell if a man is bad or good.

And so you can't work with that. Yeah, exactly. You don't again, like a person's title or status or whatever, you know, does not determine or tell you about their character.

Right. Yeah. Another character trait that is important is that the person does the right thing, even when it goes against their own self-interest and popular opinion.

We've seen the cultural tides sway dramatically over the last five years or so. And people who were doing the right thing, walking with Christ, making good decisions, things like that, when it was popular and they were praised for it, a lot of them are not doing that anymore because it's not popular. You cannot take that risk.

You need someone who has demonstrated that they're willing to experience some rejection to do the right thing. Yes, this is really important. Yeah.

So another thing I would say is you need to look for someone who has control over their emotions. You do not want someone in your house living with you for life who starts screeching and yelling when something doesn't go their way or when they disagree with something or, you know, experiencing paralyzing despair when something's hard or losing their cool with anger when, you know, when they don't get their way or things like that. It is.

It is. And you really need to look for people who exemplify the fruit of the spirit. Yeah.

One of the things about women that men should understand is that you're bigger than they are typically. And so you have to be self-controlled because it feels very scary for women to be exposed to someone who's stronger to them, who's yelling and out of control. Yeah.

You can't do that. You got to get that under control. Absolutely.

Yeah. Good point. So I want to read a quote from Gary Chapman again.

So he says in his book, *The Sacred Search*, "Most married women desire their men to be godly, to have a good sense of humor, to be an involved dad, to have a strong work

ethic. And yet those four qualities often take a backseat with single women. What so many single women want is a guy who makes their hearts race, their palms sweat and their sexual chemistry boil." So.

Good qualities for like a vacation, not good qualities for a marriage. Right. Exactly.

All right. So we've listed out a bunch of marriage character traits that are important. And I think now we should move on to how to evaluate a person for their strength in these different areas.

Yeah. So we're not talking about giving someone a quiz, and grading them and then walking out on the date, you know, if they get a low grade or something like that. Yeah.

There are different ways to assess character. Some are a lot weaker than others. So let me just really briefly talk about some levels of demonstrated ability from weak to strong.

This is going to apply to all of the suggested tests. This is if you get a response that's weak, that means that they don't know how to do it. And if you get a response that's strong, and you're going to tell us what counts as weak and strong, then they do know how to do it.

Yeah. So go ahead and tell us how to tell. So the weakest step I would say is passive listening.

If someone just passively listens to what you say and doesn't object, that does not demonstrate that they have this sort of character or ability that you're looking for. The next step would be active listening. So engaged listening, responding with phrases that show that they understand that they're following you, that they're engaged questions, things like that.

The third would be learning from lectures or debates. If someone is listening to debates or lectures on their own and learning from them and sharing that with you, that is indicative of a greater level of demonstrated ability. Yeah.

Above that would be learning from nonfiction books, whether you're reading them, listening to them, however, whatever your learning style is, learning from excellent, well-researched books. That the reading books takes more time and effort, no question. Right.

Above that, I would say writing opinion articles. You're not just taking information in, but you're actually putting it on paper or on the computer, making a case, thinking through what you have learned and sharing it in an organized, concise way with others. Even above that I would say writing articles that are supported by evidence as opposed to just spouting out your opinion.

But actually, you probably had to do research to find that evidence and then now you're writing about it. This is a strong conviction. Yeah.

And then probably the top way that I like to look for is that they're having frequent conversations with people who disagree with them, that they're able to make a case for their convictions. Yeah. Cause some divisions with your peer group and maybe even above that would be actions, you know, like taking action to donate to charities or be a poll worker or, yeah, like sidewalk counseling, you know, actually taking your time.

Remember the Kevin story from that episode that we did a while back about how he had his pro-life adventure. Anyway, that kind of stuff is what we're looking for. Yeah, exactly.

You gave me an example of what you, you know, what you think is a good, a sign that the person does have this character trait or a sign that they don't. Well, the first one that comes to mind is a couple who I was friends with. The woman was a Christian and she was dating this really handsome guy.

And so, you know, as a Christian, she wanted to make sure that he was a Christian. So she invited him to go to church with her and he said, yes. And he went and he sat through the service and sat through several services with her.

And she asked him while they were dating if she could pray before the meal. And he was like, sure. So this is an example of the passive listening, right? He's not really doing anything.

He's except showing up and, you know, kind of looking at her, doing what she wants, going where she wants without really any engagement. She would talk about morality and theology and he would just kind of nod and go, uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay.

So then after the marriage, a few years into it or so, he told her that he really didn't believe in God at all and that he was, you know, fine with her believing in that. But that's not where he was at. They did no ministry of any sort together.

They had no shared purpose. He ended up cheating on her. He actually paid for a mistress to have an abortion.

Yeah. Wow. Yeah.

And no surprise, he divorced her and then their kids had trouble with drugs and unstable relationships, divorces of their own, even jail time and mental health issues. But, you know, I, obviously this is, I mean, this is a tragedy for so many reasons, but I have to say that her evaluation was all but useless. Oh yeah.

I mean, she was young and she didn't know any better. But look, when you ask someone to go to church with you or to let you pray or to, to, to, you know, to go, uh-huh, uh-huh,

when you're talking about something, if you're young and gorgeous and they're basically just looking at you and making grunting noises, this is not indicative of excellent character or commitment to the things that you care about. Yeah.

Marriage is too scary. Like, especially, sorry, but for men, like right now with the divorce rate and the divorce court, you've got to insist on strong evidence of demonstrated ability in character areas. And yeah, I think for women too, it's scary to be fair.

Yeah. I can, I can see situations on both sides where it's like, Oh my God, what have I done? You know, getting in with this person. Okay.

So, um, we're going to talk about some ideas for exploring character, the values, uh, the demonstrated ability of a marriage candidate shortly. But I just want to say that it's always a good idea to ask a person about their previous relationships and why they ended when you're talking to them. Keep in mind that it's a red flag when someone makes themselves appear to be a victim of one of their previous members.

And they say, I didn't do anything wrong. It was this other person. They manipulated me, you know, it was a big surprise.

So they may think that by playing the victim, they're making themselves more attractive to you, but it's actually false. Uh, what they're doing is they're saying, I'm not good at being ruled by my evaluation of a marriage candidate. I go with my feelings and I get burned.

So they're saying, I'm no good at this. I don't have the patience for this. I don't have the depth for this.

And if they are saying, no, I picked a good person, but if so fell apart because I wasn't good for them, you know, that's also a problem. So just be aware when people try to make themselves into victims by pointing to their previous partners, that this is actually not a good sign, not taking responsibility and kind of blaming other people, shifting the blame. That's a red flag for you.

So go ahead and tell us some ideas for exploring character, unless you want to say something about that. Well, I was just going to say, yeah, it's a very different thing to hear someone say that, you know, yeah, I was young and foolish and I, you know, or there were some red flags, but I just didn't take them as seriously as I should have. That's, that's taking responsibility.

That's right. Right. Yeah.

So yeah. So some other ideas for exploring character and values and ability. I would say, observe how the person reacts in stressful situations.

I think this is really important. You know, we talked about how dating is, it's helpful for understanding, for knowing how you're going to get along on vacation, but it's not all that helpful for knowing how a person is going to react. What if they lose their job or if the house floods or if they're in a car accident or if the children don't perfectly obey them or the children are screaming all night.

Even having children. Right. Exactly.

Exactly. So even if you have to kind of in some way sort of manufacture a stressful situation, I do think that it's really important to hold off on the lifelong commitment until you've seen them in some sort of stressful situation. You know, if you spend enough time together, there are going to be times where there's a plumbing emergency or you scratch, you know, the other person's car by accident and you're going to be able to observe them in a stressful situation.

That's an accident and so on. So, so I've actually got one of these. Whenever I go out on a date with a woman, one of the questions I like to ask is who are your role models? And I asked for a male one and a female one.

And if they give me, you know, kind of dumb answers like a comedian or an actor or a musician, then, you know, that's a bad sign. And, but if they say something like, Oh, I like William Lane Craig and Marsha Blackburn, I go, okay, great. Those are, those are people I look up to as well.

So what kind of process would you have for raising children like that? And you might think that's an unfair question, but there are women out there who have been waiting for that question their entire lives and they will talk for 45 minutes about how they want to be a mother and what their plan is to make effective, influential children. Another one that I think is important is to observe how they handle conflict. Is it healthy? Like, do they talk through their differences or do they become angry and lash out? Do they avoid you and hide and play passive aggressive games? Do they shift the blame to you anytime there's something to work through and talk through? Do they just acquiesce to whatever you say, but then harbor deep bitterness? I mean, that's, that's a problem.

Definitely. Going along with that. I like to ask about controversial Bible doctrines because right now today, everybody is looking at the Bible and thinking this has to work for me.

And so I'll say something like, what do you think about hell? Is it a real place? Is it eternal punishment, you know, or, or is it just, are you an annihilationist? Where do you stand on that? Or the doctrine of divorce is another one that's controversial. Yeah, good idea. Absolutely.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, these are things that hopefully are coming up in conversations.

If you have good communication, you have a good dating relationship. But another idea

is to introduce your partner to your parents, to your pastor, to your friends, to mentors and get their feedback. Ask them, you know, what do you think about this person? Do you think they're a good fit for me? Why, why not? What have you noticed? Because when people are outside of the intimacy of the dating relationship, they tend to have a clearer, more objective viewpoint to offer.

Yeah, definitely. Another one that I like is just to see how they handle their pets or even children, you know, if they have worked with children before, just see whether they're committed to relationships with people who don't have anything to offer them, but who are kind of dependent on them, you know, a sick relative or a young child who is struggling with something. And just see whether there's any progress there, whether the nurturing produces any good outcomes.

Yeah, that's a great point. I think something that I alluded to, but I think is really important, worth mentioning clearly is, is evaluating their communication. You know, can they carry a conversation? Do they interact with you or do they just passively sit back silently and expect you to do all of the hard work of sharing? Especially for like cooperative tasks, you know, communication is key.

Yeah, exactly. And for people who are like, well, but I'm not, I'm not good at that. And I'm an introvert.

I'll say this communication, excellent communication skills can be learned. So I've actually taken a course on communicating well, or probably a few actually, but one that comes to mind immediately. So this can be learned if you're not a good communicator, look into it and learn how to communicate well.

Yeah. Another one that I like to ask about is just to see how transparent they are with their money and how they manage money. So I'll say, do you have any student loan debt? Do you have any credit card debt? Do you have any auto loan debt? How do you dispose of your paycheck? You know, how does, where does the money go? How are you doing in terms of retirement? And these are questions that people who are good at this, they want to answer this question.

It's unpleasant for some people, but other people are like, Oh, I'm going to look good when I give you my answer. So it's not off the table. Yeah.

Yeah. I think it's such an important topic. And I, and also I think there are ways of asking about these things that so that it doesn't seem like a quiz.

Show her yours first and say, this is how this is, you know, I max out my 401k. This is, you know, whatever. And then it's welcoming the other person to step forward and say, here's where I stand.

Yeah. So, um, another is, uh, look at their relationships with their friends. Uh, are they

good to their friends? What kind of commitment do they have to their friends? Do they just blow their friends off regularly? Do they just take and take, um, or are they, um, you know, mentoring others and, and acting as good friends to them, loving them well.

Definitely. Along with, uh, what I just said about the money management, I think it's good to look at someone's work history. You can just see what kind of education they have.

Do they have a degree in accounting or do they have a degree in grievance studies? Um, do they have a, you know, are they a trained electrician or are they still acting like a waitress or a pizza delivery person into their thirties? You know, where's the willingness to take on challenges because you're going to see challenges in a marriage and somebody who always does the easiest thing possible is not safe for you. Yeah. So speaking of that, um, I think it's really important to look for evidence that they finish hard things that don't feel good.

You know, things like, um, you know, you can ask about what was the hardest thing you experienced at the university and how, you know, how did that go? What happened? What was the outcome of that? Do they just quit everything as soon as it doesn't feel good or do they persevere and grow in, in their character? Yeah. Take a look at their resume, see if there's gaps, see if they're short-term jobs. Yeah.

All right. Um, I think we can probably, uh, uh, stop there and let's talk about some of the views of candidate selection or partner selection that are out in the culture, uh, ones that we don't like. So give us one of those.

All right. That's great. Yeah.

Unwise views of mate selection are ubiquitous right now. So one of them is the, uh, manifesting or soulmate view, right? So I've been hearing this word a lot lately and this is the view that there's only one right choice for marriage and God or the universe or whatever has this only one person who could possibly be your person. And you have to read the signs and listen to your feelings and your intuition, uh, to figure out the secret of who that person is.

Is that biblical? This is not a biblical view at all. No, each person can choose whom to marry, uh, or not, not to marry at all. Uh, Paul in first Corinthians seven, the whole, the whole chapter I think is really important, but in the context of, um, uh, a woman who loses her husband because he dies, uh, Paul says, uh, she's free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

So he's not saying there's one right person out there. You have to go read the signs and find that person. He's saying you can marry anyone you wish, but there is one criterion that is critical.

He must belong to the Lord. That is the very first priority, spiritual compatibility. Then under that umbrella, uh, we can look for things like common interests and sexual attraction and things like that.

Yes. Yeah, exactly. So throughout scripture, we see that decisions ought to be made using wisdom, not destiny as our guide.

I really think that this mystical view is usually just an excuse for laziness, but, um, avoid responsibility for your own choices. Right. Yeah.

But having to evaluate someone like to say, do they even have the ability to marry properly? Exactly. But even when their, their motives are pure, it's immature, it's foolish. And it again is not biblical.

Okay. I've got one of these. So, uh, I see this everywhere.

People say, Oh, I'll just marry this person. And then I can change the parts of them that I don't like later. So it's a disaster.

So it is possible to change people, but it's much easier to do before you marry them. And you do that the way that you change behaviors, you know, at work or something like that, you, you're convincing, you give people experiences that cause them to have to change their mind about things. It's easier to do once you're already married, you don't have the same leverage to tell a person, okay, it, you know, I'm going to be moving on to a different person.

It's like the, the freedom to not buy a car, you know, once you buy the car, you don't go back to the salesperson and say, I need you to change the car. It doesn't work like that. Right.

Exactly. Yeah. Another one is the view that, uh, marriage is all about my comfort, my happiness, my immediate gratification.

So marriage in reality, not in fantasy land, but in reality will not make you happy all the time. And especially when, when you have children, there are going to be times that are just hard. There are going to be times when you just want to hide or, or, or quit or that sort of thing.

But if you, if you invest the time and you sacrifice, you give and you put your spouse's needs above your own and you choose a partner who does the same thing, then you will cultivate a long-term affection that only gets better over time. Yeah, definitely. Here's one more.

So there's a view out there that I can just sit back and wait on God will bring the right person into my life. Um, so you don't have to do anything. So I would say that's, that's



not a, that's not a good view.

That's likely to produce results. My advice is to hang out where the type of people you'd like to marry hang out like pro-life groups or Rasha Christie group on campus and work on your ability to understand what the opposite sex is looking for, for marriage and develop your ability to perform, uh, your marriage roles. Um, so that you have like a strong, you know, portfolio to present to them and say, this is, this is what I'm offering.

Yeah, I'll give another problematic view and that is, or behavior really. And that is rushing into premarital sex. Premarital sex usually interferes with a person's will and ability to evaluate and reject bad candidates.

And statistically you have a risk of lower marital quality and higher instability if you engage in premarital sex. So this is not just a matter of being good or being bad. This is your marriage quality that's on the line.

Right. Let me read from a couple of papers to substantiate that. Here's the first one from the journal of family psychology.

It's entitled compatibility or restraint, the effects of sexual timing on marriage relationships. And it says this, we found that the longer a dating couple waits to have sex, the better their relationship is after marriage. In fact, couples who wait until marriage to have sex report higher relationship satisfaction, 20% higher, better communication patterns, 12% better, less consideration of divorce, 22% lower and better sexual quality, 15% better than those who started having sex early in their dating.

For couples in between those that became sexually involved later in their dating, but prior to marriage, the benefits were about half as strong. So if you're looking for marriage quality and you're thinking that you need to get involved sexually in order to do that, you just shot yourself in the foot according to the research. Yep.

Yeah. So important. I really don't think that most people know this.

I don't think that most people share this with their children. I think people are more in the habit of just saying, well, you don't want to be one of those kinds of people, one of those girls or whatever. Yeah.

You can't complain about these things like, like a communication and a sexual quality and relationship satisfaction and, and a threat of divorce. You can't complain about that if you've been sexually active and the person you choose has been sexually active. And like I said, the more partners, the worse it gets.

A few partners, you know, that's bad, not too bad. You start getting into 10 plus. It's a problem.

Here's a paper that actually mentions that this one is called counterintuitive trends in the link between premarital sex and marital stability. And it says this consistent with prior research, those with fewer sex partners were less likely to divorce women who married as virgins had the lowest divorce rates by far 6%. Well, premarital sex with one partner substantially increases the odds of divorce 21%.

One partner, 21% from 6. Yeah. From 6 to 21 from one, one premarital sexual partner. Yeah.

Well, right. And it also says the highest five year divorce rates of all are associated with having 10 or more premarital sex partners, 33%. Okay.

So the point about this, that's important is on the one hand, you have people saying, I don't want to get divorced. I don't want to get divorced. And then they say, I say, well, how are you going to do that? And they go, well, I'm going to try the persons out with premarital sex.

I'm going to try them out. And then I'm going to try them out with cohabitation. And you got to look at the data and you got to be guided by the data.

Exactly. Yeah. And I think, you know, men do tend to get punished more in divorce court.

And so I really think that men should make sure that the relationship does not become sexual before completing the evaluation and the commitment. I mean, both people are responsible, but I really think as the spiritual leaders and as the people who have the most to lose, they really need to be diligent about this. Yeah, I agree completely.

If you have the most to lose, then you take the lead. One last one. So this attitude of don't judge.

So this, this is a something that's raised a lot in relationships where judging is seen as a, you know, a terrible thing. So to me, it's a red flag if the person doesn't want to be evaluated for marriage roles, if you can't have a serious conversation with a person that you're considering for marriage about what it's going to look like because they're expecting you to be entertaining because they want relationships to be free and easy, you know, then that's a, that's a red flag. So you want to pick a spouse who's comfortable from, from their previous education and career, they're comfortable with responsibilities, expectations, and obligations.

Somebody who has a demonstrated ability to do hard things that produce results. Yeah, absolutely. We've talked a lot about non-negotiables character, kingdom focused mission, things like that.

But before we close, I want to talk about some compatibility issues. So these are not on the same level as character and purpose, but they can have very serious implications for

contentment and marriage. So what I want to mention is what do you do with your free time and recreation? Like what, what are your expectations? How will you spend your evenings? Is travel really important to you? Or do you like to be at home and not want to spend any money on travel? What hobbies do you enjoy? Do you envision doing these hobbies together with your spouse or do you envision doing them alone or with other friends? You know, what, what to the best of your ability, what are your expectations in the area of free time? Mm hmm.

Another good one is what country are you going to live in? What state are you going to live in? What city are you, do you like big cities, small cities? Do you want to live downtown or do you want to live in the suburbs or a rural area? It's good to have conversations about that. And when you're negotiating, you know, typically you talk about what you want, about you don't dig in your heels on a policy and say, it's got to be like this. So yeah, yeah.

And if you do have any deal breakers, like I, you know, I refuse to go to move to Africa or for example, or whatever, you know, that's important to make that known. The other person may, you know, have hopes of being a missionary overseas someday. It's important to talk about those possibilities.

I think also family is important to talk about, you know, how often do you anticipate seeing your extended family? How involved will they be in your lives? Your spouse's parents, you know, keep in mind are going to be the grandparents to your children. And to what degree do you want them to be involved? And to what degree are they able to invoke wisdom and great modeling of a good and healthy life and that sort of thing? Or do you just both agree that, you know, your, your families are far away, they're in another country or, you know, or they're, they're alcoholics or something like that. And you just don't expect to see them very often.

These things, whatever the case is, you need to talk about it. One more is obviously talking about the number of kids, whether there'll be kids, how the kids are going to be disciplined, how the kids are going to be educated and how much exposure the kids are going to have to smartphones and social media, which has become very important now with rapid onset generative dysphoria. Absolutely.

Yeah. And if you disagree about that issue, that's a good time to test them on the, you know, can you change their mind with evidence that we talked about earlier? Yeah. Because there are plenty of studies coming out now and I would just add one more, which is a church, you know, what kind of church are you looking for? What type of liturgy, theological persuasion, even as it's worth talking about music or denominational differences.

Yeah. I think basically if a man and a woman have had bad experiences or heard about bad experiences with marriage, one of the best things you can do is be patient during

this process of evaluating the other person. This is the way to reduce fear, uncertainty and doubt that blocks a commitment.

The more time you take to have these conversations, the more you're going to realize whether this is going to be a good choice for you. Yeah, absolutely. So we're just about out of time, but do you mind if I just close with a thought or two and maybe a quote? No, go ahead.

Yeah. So I just want to encourage people that if you do the hard work of finding an excellent marriage partner upfront, you're far more likely to be happy in the long term. But if you focus on short term ease and comfort and tingles, then you're more likely to be unhappy in the long term.

You really have to think about which is more important. And I think the answer is obvious and you should expect your partner to put significant effort into evaluating you for marriage as well. This is not just about you being evaluated.

This is about seeing how your partner enters into big commitments and big decisions as well. So I want to read this final quote from Gary Chapman. He writes, "If someone is willing to marry you without doing the hard work of determining whether you're suitable to be his or her spouse and the parent of your future kids, what makes you think this person will do the hard work of building a satisfying, bad honoring marriage, the way someone chooses to get married is a good indicator of the way he or she will stay married after the wedding takes place in order to make the marriage grow." So my exhortation is do the hard work.

This is the second most important decision of your life after the decision about whether or not to follow Jesus. This is a lifetime commitment and you cannot afford to get this one wrong. Yeah, excellent.

So that's a good place for us to end. If you enjoyed today's episode, please share it with your friends. Leave us a five star review on Apple or Spotify.

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