

# Walking in Love Before You Fall in Love

## I. Introduction

*I call upon you, therefore, brethren, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies a sacrifice—living, sanctified, acceptable to God—your intelligent service; and be not conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, for your proving what is the will of God—the good, and acceptable, and perfect.* Romans 12:1,2 (Young's Literal Translation)

From the very beginning of the church Paul recognized the struggle between the prevailing beliefs and practices of the present day culture and the ways of the Kingdom of God. Romans 12.2 lays out that “renewing the mind” transforms and enables us to prove the will of God.

### A. Be not conformed to this culture

#### **4964 suschematizo { soos-khay-mat-id'-zo} Conformed**

from 4862 and a derivative of 4976; v

AV - conform to 1, fashion (one's) self according to 1; 2

to conform one's self (i.e. one's mind and character) to another's pattern, (fashion one's self according to)

### B. Be transformed

#### **3339 metamorphoo { met-am-or-fo'-o} Transformed**

from 3326 and 3445; TDNT - 4:755,607; v

AV - transfigure 2, transform 1, change 1; 4

to change into another form, to transform, to transfigure

### C. Renew your mind to the Word of God so that transformation occurs.

#### **342 anakainosis { an-ak-ah'-ee-no-sis} Renewing**

from 341; TDNT - 3:453,388; n f

AV - renewing 2; 2

a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better

**2 Peter 1:2-4** Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, <sup>3</sup>as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, <sup>4</sup>by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. (NKJV)

## Largel group discussion

1. List characteristics of love as defined by our culture vs. a biblical view.

2. What do you think makes it difficult to change from the culture view of love to the biblical view?

## Love: A Biblical View

**1 Corinthians 13: 4-8** The love is long-suffering, it is kind, the love doth not envy, the love doth not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, <sup>5</sup>doth not act unseemly, doth not seek its own things, is not provoked, doth not impute evil, <sup>6</sup>rejoiceth not over the unrighteousness, and rejoiceth with the truth; <sup>7</sup>all things it beareth, all it believeth, all it hopeth, all it endureth <sup>8</sup>The love doth never fail. (Youngs Literal Translation)

**1 Corinthians 13: 4-8** Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first", doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowers of truth, puts up with anything, trust God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end. (The Message)

**1 Peter 4:8,9** And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." <sup>9</sup>Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. (NKJV)

**Proverbs 17:9** He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends. (NKJV)

**Proverbs 10:12** Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. (NKJV)

**1 John 3:16-18** By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup>But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup>My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (NKJV)

## II. Covenant

### -Definition of Covenant

*The International Inductive Study Bible* defines *Beriyth*, the Hebrew word for covenant as a solemn, binding agreement made by passing through pieces of flesh. *Diatheke*, the Greek word for covenant, means a testament or an agreement. It expresses the thought of a bond between two unequal partners.

The partners walking among the pieces of flesh symbolized faithfulness to the agreement. If the faithfulness were broken, death would result, the same fate as the animals. Therefore, a covenant is a pledge to death. Often, God is believed to witness the making of the covenant and be involved in the enforcement of the blessings and curses.

**Malachi 2:13-15** And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive *it* with goodwill from your hands.

*Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.*

*But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 1*

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<sup>1</sup>*The Holy Bible, New King James Version, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.*

A transformation occurs in which the two become one. Priorities change; the common good precedes individual needs/goals. This is one of the major differences between covenants and contracts. Contracts still focus on individual goals. They convey the idea of "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Covenants have been widely used in Africa, Asia, and Latin-American cultures. Contracts became popular in Greco-Roman, European, and Western cultures.

### **- Purpose of Covenant agreements**

(Outline developed by Kenneth Copeland)

1. To bind two or more families together.
2. To unite in both strengths and weaknesses.
3. To establish traits, such as loyalty, friendship, lovingkindness, faithfulness, and protection that endure forever. They are distinctive aspects of the relationship that are not affected by feelings.

### **-Covenant Practices**

1. Come to terms of the agreement
  - Promises
  - Blessing
  - Curse
2. Representatives and site chosen
3. Covenant ritual
4. Animals slaughtered
5. Coats exchanged
6. Weapons exchange
7. Walk of blood
  - Terms stated
  - Blessing stated
  - Curses stated
8. Cut made and scar reinforced
9. Covenant meal
10. Name changed
11. Memorial established

### **-Covenant Examples**

1. **Kay Arthur in her book, Our Covenant God, gives the following description of a covenant ceremony between two men:**

The animals had been slain-cut in half down the spine. Their bright blood stained the stones, the dirt, the grass, ying with sprinklets of wildflowers in their display of color. A covenant was being cut.

The two men stood opposite one another. Each removed his own robes and handed them to the other, then clothed himself in his covenant brother's garment

*I am putting on you...and you me. We are one.*

Picking up their weapons from the ground, each handed the other his sword, his bow. By this action they understood...

*Your enemies are now mine... and mine yours*

Then they handed each other their belts

*When you are weak, my strength will be there for you*

In a figure-eight path, both walked through the pieces of flesh lying opposite one another it was a walk of death.

*I am dying to my independent living... and to my rights*

They swore by an oath as they pointed first to heaven-

*God, do so to me .*

And then to the slain animals.

*If I break this covenant!*

Then each made a cut on his wrist, and with a handclasp the two men mingled their blood

*It is agreed: We-once two-have now become one.*

In turn each recited what he owned and what he owed; from this day forward they would share all their resources

*What is mine is yours... what is yours is mine.*

Each reach down and scooped up dirt mingled with small stones and rubbed this abrasive into the cut in his wrist

*Wherever I am, when I lift my hand and see the scar, I will remember I have a covenant partner.*

They exchanged new names

*Because the covenant I have a new identity*

They sat down to partake of a covenant meal. One broke bread and placed it in his covenant partner's mouth; then the other did the same

*You are eating me, and I you*

Finally a memorial was set up-a pile of stones, a planted tree, a written contract-as a testimony of the covenant they had made

*Now I call you Friend-my Friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

**2. The Bible gives a powerful example of the covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites.** God had forbidden Israel to cut covenants with the foreign nations surrounding Canaan. Without seeking God's guidance, Joshua entered into a covenant with the Gibeonites after they deceived him into believing they lived very far away. When surrounding nations attacked the Gibeonites, Israel was bound by covenant to protect them. God also backed up the covenant by fighting for Israel even when they had entered into this covenant without His approval. This covenant affected Israel several generations later when during David's reign there was a famine in Israel. As David prayed God revealed to him the famine was the curse of the covenant. Saul broke the covenant with the Gibeonites when he killed some of their people. The famine was stopped by David giving over Saul's relatives to die as punishment for the deaths of the Gibeonites.

**Deuteronomy 7: 1-5** "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, <sup>2</sup>and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. <sup>3</sup>Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. <sup>4</sup>For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. <sup>5</sup>But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

**Joshua 9:3-20** But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, <sup>4</sup>they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, <sup>5</sup>old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy. <sup>6</sup>And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us." <sup>7</sup>Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?" <sup>8</sup>But they said to Joshua, "We *are* your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who *are* you, and where do you come from?" <sup>9</sup>So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, <sup>10</sup>and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* beyond the Jordan—to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. <sup>11</sup>Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "We *are* your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us." ' <sup>12</sup>This bread of ours we took hot *for* our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. <sup>13</sup>And these wineskins which we filled *were* new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey." <sup>14</sup>Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD. <sup>15</sup>So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them. <sup>16</sup>And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. <sup>17</sup>Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. <sup>18</sup>But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. <sup>19</sup>Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel, now therefore, we may not touch them. <sup>20</sup>"This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."

**Joshua 10-5-11** Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it <sup>6</sup>And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, “Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us.” <sup>7</sup>So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. <sup>8</sup>And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you.” <sup>9</sup>Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup>So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. <sup>11</sup>And it happened, as they fled before Israel *and* were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. *There were* more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.

**2 Samuel 21:1-6** Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, “*It is* because of Saul and *his* bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.” <sup>2</sup>So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah. <sup>3</sup>Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?” <sup>4</sup>And the Gibeonites said to him, “We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us.” So he said, “Whatever you say, I will do for you.” <sup>5</sup>Then they answered the king, “As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, <sup>6</sup>“let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD chose.” And the king said, “I will give *them*.”<sup>2</sup>

**Small Group discussion**

**Jesus represented all of mankind in cutting a new covenant in His blood with His Father God. When we received Jesus as our Savior, we entered into the covenant that Jesus cut with God. Jesus did all the work. We receive all the benefits. Jesus initiated by drawing us by His love. We respond by loving and giving our lives to Him. The fruit of our love for Jesus is obedience.**

**1. Fill in the blanks identifying the covenant practices in the New Covenant. For example, covenant representative-Jesus; covenant site-Calvary.**

Covenant Practices

1. Terms of the agreement
  - a Promises
  - b Blessing
  - c Curse
  
2. Representative-Jesus
 

Site-Calvary

3. Covenant ritual
4. Animals slaughtered
5. Coats exchanged represent identity
6. Weapons exchanged represent strength
7. Walk of Blood
8. Cut made and scar reinforced
9. Covenant meal
10. Name changed
11. Memorial established

**Since we have entered a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we have become apart of a “set apart” group of people, called the Body of Christ.**

- 2. How does the concept of covenant affect our intimacy with God?**
- 3. How does the concept of covenant affect our relationships with one another in the Body of Christ?**
- 4. Share your opinions on how having a covenant with God affects dating and marriage?**

**Large Group discussion**

**Discuss the above questions.**

#### IV. Walking in Wisdom in Relationships

**-Discern the character of your friends.** Trustworthiness is related to words and actions being consistent. The Book of Proverbs gives us qualities and characteristics of people who exhibit both positive and negative attributes. The following is just a sample. How many more can you find?

Shuns evil counsel	Proverbs 1:10
Trusts in the Lord	Proverbs 3:5
An excellent wife is a crown to her husband...	Proverbs 12:4
Greedy for gain troubles his own home	Proverbs 15:27
When a man's ways please the Lord...	Proverbs 16:7
Slow to anger	Proverbs 16:32
Forgiving transgressions	Proverbs 17:9
Man who has friends must himself be friendly	Proverbs 18:24
Better (alone), than dwell w/ a contentious woman	Proverbs 21:19
Make no friendship with an angry man...	Proverbs 22:24
Do not associate with those given to change...	Proverbs 24:21
Confidence in an unfaithful man...	Proverbs 25:19
A man without self-control...	Proverbs 25:28
An open rebuke is better than love concealed	Proverbs 27:5
A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself...	Proverbs 27:12
A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man...	Proverbs 29:11
The fear of man brings a snare...	Proverbs 29:25

**-Discuss with your friends their relationships with God.** Try to discern their sincerity in putting God first in their lives and their desire to grow in their relationship with God. Seek to grow together spiritually.

**Romans 1:11-12** for I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, that ye may be established;<sup>12</sup> and that is, that I may be comforted together among you, through the faith in one another, both yours and mine

**Hebrews 10:24-25** and may we consider one another to provoke to love and to good works,<sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as a custom of certain is, but exhorting, and so much the more as ye see the day coming nigh

**-Be careful about the kinds of personal information you share & how quickly how you share it** Emotional bonds or soul ties are developed as people communicate with one another. You need to **trust** the character of your friends before you give them your heart. An irresponsible, self-centered person may be careless with the information you give them.

**Proverbs 4: 20** My son, to my words give attention, To my sayings incline thine ear,<sup>21</sup> Let them not turn aside from thine eyes, Preserve them in the midst of thy heart <sup>22</sup>For life they *are* to those finding them, And to all their flesh healing <sup>23</sup>**Above every charge keep thy heart, For out of it *are* the outgoings of life.**

**-Be yourself with your friends.** Wearing masks with people is not allowing people to know the real you. Acceptance is experienced when you are yourself with people and experience that they like and love you.

**-Accept people, but not sin.** When friends are practicing sin, Satan can use them to influence us to sin. Sin interferes with true intimacy with God because it leads to bondage. Sin is deceitful and hardens the heart toward God. Jesus has set us free from sin so we would not experience its consequences.

**Galatians 6:1** Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also. (Amplified Bible)

**1 Corinthians 15:33** Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." (NKJV)

**1 Corinthians 6: 12** All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (NKJV)

**Romans 6:7-22** <sup>7</sup>For he who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup>knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. <sup>10</sup>For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup>Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup>And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. <sup>15</sup>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading to death*, or of obedience *leading to righteousness*? <sup>17</sup>But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. <sup>18</sup>And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup>I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness. <sup>20</sup>For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. <sup>22</sup>But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life

**-Conflict that is resolved can strengthen relationships. Be committed to forgive and ask forgiveness, receive healing from the Lord for hurts, and reestablishing trust through dependable behavior. Be at peace with all as much as possible.**

**Proverbs 27:17** As iron sharpens iron so a friend sharpens the countenance of his friend (Amplified Bible).

### Small Group Discussion

1. In the Body of Christ, what are the barriers to experiencing the love, security, loyalty, faithfulness, and fellowship that the covenant is intended to establish for believers?
2. What suggestions can you give for working through these barriers and experiencing the intent of covenant?

### Large Group Discussion

### Individual Discussion

1. What are you looking for in a mate?
2. Name five characteristics that you will not compromise on when looking for a mate.
3. When dating someone, name two characteristics that would lead you to break-up when you recognized them.
4. For what reasons do people stay in relationships too long when they realize that the relationship is not leading to marriage?
5. How do you determine that it is God's will for you to date or break-up with someone?
6. How will you determine if it is God's will for you to marry the person you are dating?

### Large Group Discussion

**Discuss the above questions.**

#### **VI. Looking For A Marriage Partner**

Walking in love in relationships within the Body of Christ is an initial preparation for the covenant of marriage. Although the Bible does not address the current trend in dating, it clearly provides principles for godly relationships and marriage.

**-The primary focus of everything we do, including dating and marriage should be to please the Lord.** Continually ask the Lord to purify your hearts and provide direction for who and how you date. Often the primary motivation for dating is for pleasure and other emotional needs. When people marry solely for the purpose of meeting their own needs, then when they do not perceive their needs being met they are ready for divorce.

**1 Thess. 4: 3** For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated (separated and set apart for pure and holy living): that you should abstain and shrink from all sexual vice.

**Col. 3: 17** And whatever you do [no matter what it is] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in [dependence upon] His Person giving praise to God the Father through Him.

**Matthew 6:33** But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

**-Not only do we suggest dating Christians, but we also believe dating Christians who are about the same maturity in their faith as you are.** Within Christianity there are several variations on some doctrines of faith. These differences may produce conflict within marriages especially when children are involved. It is important to discuss these differences and how you may negotiate these differences in your family life.

**2 Cor. 6:14** Become not yoked with others—unbelievers, for what partaking *is there* to righteousness and lawlessness? <sup>15</sup>and what fellowship to light with darkness? and what concord to Christ with Belial? or what part to a believer with an unbeliever?

**-Be a person of integrity and look for integrity in the person with whom you are dating.** With the influence of postmodern thought upon the church, some do not believe in absolute truth. Rather moral relativism focuses on what seems good to a person in a given situation and satisfying one's desires. Stealing may be rationalized as acceptable because the person was hungry and without money. This undermines the concept of integrity in relationships. The Holy Spirit empowers us to walk in truth regardless of circumstances if we yield to Him. Date people who believe in God's power helping them to be exhibit the character of Jesus in their lives.

**- Developing knowledge of one another is essential.** You need to be focused in determining your capacity to be compatible. Spend hours talking getting to know and enjoy each other. It is not enough to build a relationship on enjoyable personalities and good looks. Research has determined at least 29 areas to consider when selecting a marriage partner. There are many books available, such as Neil Clark Warren's books, Finding The Love Of Your Life and How to Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing in Two Dates or Less. Determine if you have similar expectations and visions about marriage and each other.

At the 2001 American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. Neil Clark Warren presented the research he used in developing his new mate selection service, **Eharmony.com**. We have included the results of this important research for your information. Consider using this information for observation in dating relationships and for developing conversational topics to grow in your knowledge of one another.

### **The Radical Importance of Mate Selection - Dr. Neil Clark Warren**

Selecting a marriage partner is the MOST important marital decision any person will ever make. When this decision is made well, with full regard for its complexity, marriages end up being satisfying a high percentage of the time. But when it is made too quickly, at too young an age, with too little information, even by well meaning persons, the marriage will be tested - early and frequently.

His research indicates that seventy-five percent of all marriages that end in separation, divorce, or unhappiness were in trouble the day they began. The two people involved simply married the wrong marriage partners. He asks, "Could they have done better? Without question!" Dr. Warren's research indicates that at least **29 dimensions** are involved in a successful match. They have been categorized into three groups: Screening Dimensions; Dimensions Representing Relatively Permanent Characteristics; and Necessary Skills for the Building of Great Marriages.

There has been little attention focused on the complex task of choosing a marriage partner. The empirical research on the subject is vastly inadequate. Federal and state legislation has been directed at premarital counseling and marriage mentoring.

Unfortunately, as well meaning as these programs are, neither of them stands much chance of reversing the marital deterioration epidemic. If a man and woman get married, but they are poorly matched across a wide range of critical dimensions, their mismatched marriage can seldom be corrected by mobilizing their willpower and teaching them a few skills. The marriage may endure, but their lack of compatibility is likely to result in a low level of fulfillment for both partners.

The purpose of this research is to help you develop an understanding of the 29 factors they found to be most important in bringing about, or assessing, a match between two single persons.

### **Group Number One – Screening Dimensions**

- (1) Good Character** - No marriage will ever thrive if even one person is not of "good character."  
Character, as used here, relates to one's integrity; it has to do, primarily, with honesty. A "character disorder," for instance, refers to the tendency of a person to "lie, cheat, and steal" in an effort to gain personal advantage. The first matter that needs to be determined is whether both persons are of "good character."
- (2) Quality of Self Conception** - All emotional health begins with a well developed self-concept. In a marriage, if both persons know themselves well as individuals, even in their deep places, and if each of them takes ownership of all the parts of themselves, their individual "self strength" will provide a strong foundation for building a life together in partnership under even difficult circumstances.
- (3) Absence of Emotional Red Flags** - No addictions, no neuroses, no thought disorders, no affect disorders, no anger management problems, and no energy concerns. The presence of any ONE of these "pathological conditions" can jeopardize marital success. No marriage should ever be initiated until all of these red flags have been fully dealt with. To expect that the marriage will cause a person to e.g., "get over their drinking problem," is an expectation long on fantasy and short on reality.
- (4) Differences in Age** - Americans make more of a point about the need for age similarity than do Europeans and Asians. Our research indicates that, in North American culture, age often plays an important role, overall, in healthy marriage. Sometimes, when there are large differences in age, the consequent problems do not become obvious until later in life - especially when the older person suffers health problems (e.g., memory loss and/or physical infirmities). In our eharmony matching model, women are matched with men between 91.9% and 133.3% of their age, and men are matched with women between 75% and 110% of their age.
- (5) Differences in Height** - While it can easily be argued that differences in height should be irrelevant, that they are of no practical importance, the fact is that a majority of men prefer to be taller than the women they date, while a majority of women want to be matched with men taller than they are. However, because a strong minority does not wish the matching process to be constricted by this variable, we leave this matter up to individuals to negotiate between themselves. If it is crucial to a given person, they are encouraged to ask this question early in the communication process.
- (6) Smoking** - The question of smoking has become major for a vast majority of persons in our society. We never match a smoker with a nonsmoker if the nonsmoker registers a strong negative opinion on the subject. I strongly suspect that this issue may show a lesser importance for people outside of North America.
- (7) Drinking** - There is far more leniency among singles in North America about choosing a marriage partner who drinks alcohol - compared to choosing a marriage partner who smokes. However, a sufficiently large percentage of singles have a strong preference in one or the other direction on this issue, and I always encourage "mate selectors" to carefully consider this matter if it is important to them.
- (8) Ethnicity/Race** - No dimension has changed as dramatically as this one during the past few years. For instance, in 1992, when I wrote *Finding the Love of Your Life*, I discussed the significantly higher divorce rate for interracial marriages. This higher rate was usually due to dissimilarities in traditions and customs for people coming from differing racial or ethnic backgrounds. Now, however, in a time when neighborhoods are significantly more integrated, as well as schools, churches, and employment, these dissimilarities are dissolving. Many single persons are realizing that differences in ethnicity and race are not nearly as crucial to their contemplated marital partnership as they once thought.

- (9) **Anger Management** - More marriages break up every year because two people do not know how to manage their anger in relation to each other than because of any other single reason. Since literally everybody has anger, and since it can so easily be mismanaged in an intimate relationship, careful attention should be paid to the level of mastery each person has over this area. If either partner has any history of anger mismanagement (explosiveness, somatization, turning it on their own psyche, or underhandedness), this will cause major problems in the marital relationship.
- (10) **Obstreperousness** -- One quality that can destroy a marriage is a critical attitude. If this attitude is largely independent of the other person's actions, it can become a constant source of marital stress. One quality that should be looked at for both potential partners, prior to marriage, is the tendency to find fault, to attribute blame, to make the other person wrong, and to need to portray oneself as always "right."

**GROUP NUMBER TWO –  
DIMENSIONS REPRESENTING RELATIVELY PERMANENT CHARACTERISTICS**

- (11) **Intellect** - There is a considerable body of clinical and empirical data that indicates the importance of intellectual equality in a marital partnership. There is no evidence that two people do better in marriage if they are extremely bright, but there is evidence that they need to be at a similar intellectual level, whatever that level may be. Technically, there is a general rule that there should be no more than one standard deviation of difference in the intelligence level of the two persons.
- (12) **Energy** - Marriages tend to be more successful when the energy levels of the two persons are similar. If one person is highly energized and the other person is considerably lower on energy, there is bound to be difficulty. Although the amount of energy a person has is often indicative of emotional health, two people with relatively low energy can form a positive relationship if both of them are quite accepting of the other's deficit.
- (13) **Spirituality** - Perhaps no dimension is more in need of matching for any couple than this one. However, it is at the same time one of the most complex dimensions. First, the specific faith of each person should be the same, and, in the case of Christianity, this includes Catholic versus Protestant, denominational preference, degree of involvement, etc. Furthermore, it is good to attain "belief alignment" on the role of the church, the nature of God, the place of prayer, the function of Biblical authority, and in relation to theological matters like the specific importance of Jesus. If the two persons have no spiritual faith, even this needs careful matching.
- (14) **Education** - As important as intelligence is, our research indicates that for a large sub-sample, more women than men, a generally equal amount of education for each partner is a critical factor. For instance, women who have finished college or graduate work often prefer to be matched with men who have accomplished at a similar level. There are many marriages that work well without educational equality, but if education has received heavy stress during a person's growing-up years, this dimension must be given attention.
- (15) **Appearance** - In the culture at large this is, without any question, the most frequently monitored dimension. We have determined that it is not possible to match for chemical attraction, but matching on the dimension of simple appearance is more possible. Most persons are comfortable being matched with partners within the same "grade level" on appearance. For instance, when persons are rated on a seven-point scale on appearance, and when they are matched with persons receiving their same rating - or even at one point above or below - they are generally satisfied. It should be noted that spouses who are in love with each other typically rate their partners as two to three scale points higher on appearance than a jury of objective observers rate them.

- 16) Sense of Humor** - Beyond the fact that "sense of humor" contributes significantly to a person's overall attractiveness, it is a key dimension in the building of a marital bond over the course of a marriage. Laughter is highly therapeutic in every intimate relationship, and there is evidence that marriages in which there is little laughter tend to suffer considerably more during trying times. Having "sense of humor" in common does not require that both people be able to generate humor equally. One person may do this unusually well, while the other person serves as an appreciative audience. Research indicates that the key criterion in this regard is for both persons to experience the freeing, lightening, and enlightening effects of shared laughter. There is a strong correlation between "happy" partners and partners who are thought to have a highly developed sense of humor.
- (17) Ambition** - Our research indicates that two well-matched partners need to have a similar amount of life ambition. When they do, and assuming they are equally ready to back their ambition with a commensurate amount of hard work, they will have a common quality that will contribute substantially to the harmonizing of their relationship. On the negative side, if there is a large discrepancy between the amount of ambition the two partners have, there will be considerable stress between them. One person will be intent on pursuing advancement, and the other person will resent the amount of time and energy this requires.
- (18) Passion** - Interpersonal chemistry is assessable by the individuals involved in a pairing, and only by them, but the degree of "passion" that a person possesses can be measured. The passion we are talking about here is sexual passion, and our goal is to match two persons who have relatively similar levels of sexual passion.
- (19) Artistic Interest and Ability**- Some people are incredibly skillful as artists. They may play an instrument, write music or poetry, paint, sculpt, sing, or do any one of several things. Other people cannot perform, but they have a strong interest in observing, listening, reading, and feeling. If one of these "artistically inclined" persons is matched with someone who has none of these skills or interests, they are like two strangers with little "soul" compatibility. Most people with strong artistic feelings and interests simply must be paired with partners who have some of the same. Otherwise, their marriage seldom works.
- (20) Kindness** - In seventeen cross-cultural studies, both men and women rated kindness as the second most important quality to look for in a mate. When a prospective marriage partner has a well-developed capacity to treat other people with kindness, whether it is kindness for their partner, their children, their friends, or even for strangers, this quality will always enrich and deepen the marital relationship. Although kind people can often maintain their kindness over time without reciprocation from their mate, the truly great marriages are those in which kindness is matched by kindness.
- (21) Fertility** - In those same seventeen studies, the number one quality cited by men in choosing a partner is "fertility." It seems to be the characteristic of women to which men of all ages attend most intensively, even for those who do not wish to have additional children. At its deepest level, this quality may refer to the healthiness and vitality of the woman. It may be that men, in their focus on fertility, are interested in women who can be most fully involved in the marital relationship over time. If this *is* the case, the matter of physical and psychological health can and should be examined in the matching of two persons.
- (22) Security** - The number one quality attended to by women in all seventeen of the studies was security. For well over 100 years, our society has focused on the importance of a man being able to work at a level that will provide sufficient income for him and his family. If women are to bear children, as well as provide the preponderance of their early care, they need a partner who can make their economic existence secure. On the other hand, at a time in our societal development when the distribution of work in a marital relationship is more fluid, the matter of security may be looked at from more angles. What we know for sure, however, is that no marriage can thrive if economic security is not established.

## GROUP NUMBER THREE - NECESSARY SKILLS FOR THE BUILDING OF GREAT MARRIAGES

- (23) **Communication** - Two life partners need to have a similar level of interest in communicating with one another and a similar *ability* to communicate. While this may be a dimension which can be altered over time (largely because men in our culture receive so little early encouragement and training in the area of communication), the matter of how much and how well two people communicate is currently one of the two or three most frequent complaints when marriages get into trouble. The fact is that the vast majority of women want more communication than their male counter parts, and they are also better able to communicate well. When one partner is not interested in or good at communication, and especially when the opposite partner is very interested in it and good at it, the marriage will both tend to stagnate and prove frustrating for both of them.
- (24) **Conflict Resolution** - Both partners need to be good at conflict resolution for a marriage to both survive and thrive. There *will* be conflict in every relationship, and if it is not promptly resolved, the relationship will suffer. Conflict resolution is an example of a premarital variable that is both an attitude and a skill. If one's attitude is positive about the need for conflict resolution, and if he or she is willing to work at it, the skill can be developed relatively easily. But if one or both persons seem unwilling to compromise, to talk things through, to entertain each other's positions, their relationship will suffer greater and greater strain over time.
- (25) **Sociability** - The degree to which two people both desire interpersonal relationships, and excel at them, needs to be similar for their relationship to thrive. For instance, some persons demonstrate high attraction to other people, while others prefer to spend significantly more time alone or in just the primary relationship. Over time, this variable will be tested over and over. It is a matter about which premarital matching needs to be carefully concerned.
- (26) **Adaptability** - When all is said and done, this *may be* the most important dimension of all. In a society in which change is so prominent, in which there is growing differentiation and individuation, the need for adaptability is crucial. If every other dimension were perfectly, or almost perfectly, matched for two people, we could accept a low adaptability score. But where there is some difference between them, it is to adaptability that we look to see if change can occur over time.
- (27) **Industry** - This dimension has to do with one's orientation toward work. If one person is a "hard worker" and another person is a "shirker," there will likely be feelings of resentment and guilt. For instance, if the woman gets up earlier, works more intensely during the day, and still has work to do at night, while the man gets up later, works only moderately hard, and stops in the late afternoon for a round of golf, this will put considerable strain on the relationship. When one party complains about the other being "lazy," and the "lazy" partner complains about the other as a "workaholic" or "obsessive," you likely have a mismatch going on the dimension of industry.
- (28) **Curiosity** - This dimension was a latecomer to our list of critical matching qualities. It has to do with a need for stimulation, along with a personal strategy to pursue additional information through inquisitiveness. If one partner is "chronically satisfied" with relatively limited information about anything, while the other partner has a pressing "need to know more," this will typically pull them in two very different directions. Curiosity is not always healthy (e.g., "curiosity killed the cat"), but the degree of health represented by curiosity is beside the point. In a marital match we are looking for two partners who "harmonize," who relate easily to one another's style. While complementarity can occur in relation to some of these discrepancies, our research indicates that similarity on dimensions like curiosity leads to greater marital satisfaction over time.

**(29) The Place of Children** - The parenting of children requires a deep and lasting commitment. The urge to do this, or not do it, usually emerges from a central and highly personal inner place. It is absolutely crucial for matching partners to have this dimension well discussed and decided prior to any serious dating relationship, let alone a committed marriage. If one person has a strong desire to be a parent and the other has none, the match will likely be a poor one, however well the other dimensions are harmonized. In this day of so many second and third pairings, the question of whether one party is willing and eager to share in the parenting task, perhaps as a stepparent, is equally critical. The corresponding matter of how much authority the new parent will have is a vital factor as well.

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**-Often people ask themselves if they are “in love” or if there is “chemistry.”** Although these factors are very significant, you need to date and marry someone you truly admire, respect, and honor. Women need to respect and affirm their husband’s identity. Men need to be affirmed for their achievements and accomplishments and appreciated for their efforts.

**-Although it is important for men and women to have a giving, servant’s heart, it is essential for men to have servant leadership qualities like Jesus.** Husbands are not to force their wives to submit. When husbands cherish their wives, women have little difficulty submitting in a marriage when needed. Cherishing means that a woman perceives that she is a precious treasure and a beautiful gift from God. John Elredge commented in his book, Wild at Heart that women need to feel they are “captivating.”

**Eph. 5:21-28** Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). Wives, be subject (the submissive and adapt yourselves) to your own husbands as [a service] to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, Himself the Savior of His body. . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. . . . Even so husbands should love their wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

**-Date and marry someone with whom you can agree.** Agreement is important in prayer and decision-making. We have settled for negotiation and compromise in relationships, but how much stronger if couples actually experience agreement in how their approach life’s decisions. Although there will always be differences because people are individuals, having shared world views, values, and beliefs strengthens a couple’s ability to stand together.

**Amos 3:3** Do two walk together except they make an appointment and have agreed?

**Matt. 18:19** Again I tell you, if two of you on earth agree (harmonize together, make a symphony together) about whatever [anything and everything] they may ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by My Father in heaven.

**-Consider marrying someone with whom you can develop a shared vision for your marriage.** This keeps you both focused on working together as a team toward the same goal.

**Proverbs 29:18** Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish.

**-Be open to wise counsel (parents or mature Christian adults) to point out areas of concern they may have as to the potential for marriage.** You also need to seek wisdom from God for confirmation of this counsel.

**Proverbs 20:18** Plans are established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war.

**-Pay attention to how you deal with offenses and conflict when dating.** Marital researcher, John Gottman has identified four destructive behaviors in relationships that he calls the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.

**Warning: DO NOT PROCEED ONTO MARRIAGE** if these characteristics are present while dating.

### *The Four Horsemen*

Criticism-attacking the person's personality or character rather than a specific behavior usually with blame.

Contempt- intending to insult and psychologically abuse your partner.

Defensiveness-tends to escalate a conflict rather than resolve anything

Stonewalling- conveys disapproval, withdrawal and disengagement from any meaningful interaction.

**Proverbs 21: 23** He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from troubles

**Proverbs 17: 21** Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it [for death or life].

**Matt. 12:35, 36** The good man from his inner good treasure flings forth good things, and the evil man out of inner evil storehouse flings forth evil things

**Matt. 15: 18** But whatever comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this is what makes a man unclean and defile [him]

**-Seek humility in the relationship.** In any relationship we need to focus on the mercy of God toward us. We need to look to ourselves, looking first to see if we have sinned rather than focusing on the other's sin. When we sin, we need to confess our sin to God and to the person we offended. Repentance focuses on a change of heart. The fruit of repentance is a changed mind-set and corresponding behavior.

**-Additionally, we need to work on not being easily offended and to forgive quickly when we are.** If we can look past our own pain momentarily, it may help to try to understand what motivated the other person's actions. Often people may act offensively due to their own pain or misunderstanding. God in His mercy, He has forgiven us and remembers our sin no more. Although we are not God, He can give us the grace not to recall the sins of others.

**Proverbs 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, and haughty spirit before a fall

**Proverbs 17:9** He who covers and forgives an offense seeks love, but he who repeats or harps on a matter separates even close friends.

**Proverbs 19:11** The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression

**Matthew 7: 3-5** "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?" "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

**Matthew 18:15-35** (vs. 21, 22) Then Peter came up to Him and said, Lord, how many times may my brother sin against me and I forgive him and let it go? [As many as] up to seven times? Jesus answered him, I tell you, not up to seven times, but seventy times seven!

**Closure:** Gottman has determined that a marriage needs at least five times as many positive as negative moments together if your marriage is to be stable. The overall attitude of a marriage is significant. Developing an attitude of gratitude changes everyone's perspective of life.

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus [the Revealer and Mediator of that will](Amplified Version)

### Small Group Discussion

1. What do you think about the guidelines given for mate selection?
2. What do you think about Christians only dating and marrying Christians?
3. How does your covenant with God prepare you for your covenant in marriage?

### Large Group Discussion

Discuss the above questions.

What about this seminar was the most helpful?

What do you want to apply to your own life?

All scripture has been copied from the Young's Literal Translation unless otherwise noted.

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# **“Walking In Love Before You Fall In Love”**

## **Understanding What & Whose We Are - Spirit, Soul & Body**

### **Introductory Question**

If you died tonight, what reason would you give God that would allow you to enter Heaven?

### **I Thessalonians 5:23**

**Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **Hebrews 4:12**

**For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

**Spirit** – That which is made in the image of God (Gen. 2:7) He created Adam from the dust of the earth, fashioning his flesh and soul. Then God “breathed” into Adam and he became a living being.

**Soul** – The part of you that contains/includes your mind, will and emotions. It operates according to what you feel and what you think.

**Body** – This is the part of you that you can see. It allows you to experience the natural world through your five physical senses. Touch, taste, hear, see and smell.

### **John 3:6**

**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

- We can do a diagnostic inventory of our fleshly body to determine whether we're in pain, or if we're cold, or hungry or hot, or thirsty.
- We can access our emotions to determine if we're happy, sad, depressed, angry, etc
- We can't in a physical or natural way “feel” or “see” our spirit. There is no physical way to contact or access our spirit. The only way to discern that which is spirit is through the Word of God.

### **Large Group Discussion**

Where are you experiencing the love of God?

### **John 6:63**

**It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.**

- The spirit is the part of us that is changed when we are “born again”.
- The spirit is the part of us that communicates with God.
- The spirit is the part of us that contains all the life and the power of God.

If we want to know the truth about our spirit, what it has become, what it possesses, what it is able to accomplish, how it operates, we **MUST** go to the Word of God. Because they (the words spoken by Jesus) are Spirit.

### **John 4:24**

**God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**

### **Large Group Discussion**

>Describe who you are in the flesh versus who you are in the Spirit. Which one of these never changes?

### **I Corinthians 1:30**

**But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption...**

### **I Corinthians 2: 9-14**

**“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him” - (quoting Isaiah 64:4) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

### **II Corinthians 5:17**

**Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (species); old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.**

**Romans 8:9**

**But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**

**James 1:23-25**

**For is 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. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

**I Peter 1:23**

**Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the Word of God, which lives and abides forever...**

**James 2:26**

**For as the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also.**

**Ephesians 1:18-19**

**[T]he eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.**

**The Simple Truth About Spirit, Soul and Body**

- Our body goes with whatever is strongest (it follows the crowd)
- Our soul must be disciplined to come into line with our new spirit. It must become obedient to the Word of God. Our soul must think like God thinks.

**Romans 8: 5-8**

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity (hostile) against God; for it is not subject to the law of god, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

- Our spirit was made brand new, made incorruptible, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is righteous, it is holy, it is **always for God** Our spirit is inhabited by the Kingdom of God.

**Luke 17:20-21**

**Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, *“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, See here! Or See there! For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”***

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Walking in Love

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