



How Do I Know if This Is Who God Wants Me to Marry?

■ by Laura Goossens, MSW, LCSW

Marriage is a big deal and should never be entered into lightly. When you get married, you are making a vow before God to never give up on each other no matter what comes your way. Last September, my husband and I celebrated our 9th anniversary of marriage. I decided to dust off the old wedding video to commemorate the occasion. I sat there watching us walk down the aisle and couldn't help but think about how naive we were that day and had no idea what we were getting into. In these past nine years, our love has been tested; there has been so much better and worse. We have been beaten down, frayed, and incredibly strengthened since that first hot September day when we entered into our marriage blissfully unaware of everything ahead.

Equally Yoked

You may have heard the phrase in the Bible about not being unequally yoked, but what does this actually mean? It means that God is commanding believers to marry other believers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14, it says, "Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?" Our purpose on earth is to give God glory, so how can we do that to the fullest if we enter into a lifelong commitment with someone who doesn't have that same purpose?

Another important part of marrying someone who is also a believer is that you will both have the same foundation in all the important decisions you will make together. If you are both living by the same biblical standards, it's much easier to be on the same page when you have to hold each other to them. There have been so many times in my marriage where an issue has come up, a decision had to be made, and we believed in the same truth to turn to when working through what direction we needed to go.

The Person You Can't Live Without

One of my favorite quotes on marriage is by James Dobson: "Don't marry the person you think you can live with; marry only the individual you think you can't live without." This might be bold to say, but I don't believe you should have any doubts when you are about to walk down the aisle. I am not saying you can't be nervous; nerves are a natural part of being in front of a big group of people, especially if you are someone who feels extra uncomfortable being at the center of attention. What I am proposing is that if you find someone you can't live without, entering into marriage isn't scary but just a natural part of your relationship process. If you can't live without someone, nothing scares you. You can get into fights, have disagreements, and know that, no matter what, you will never leave them.

The Person You Are Not Trying to Change

Dating is a season to be discerning. Sometimes we want to be in a relationship so much that we ignore significant red flags. No one is perfect, but you don't want to enter into a relationship with the idea that you are going to change the other person's behavior. If

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accepting them the way they are feels like settling for less, then this is not the person for you. If there are significant things that you feel they need to change, this isn't someone you should be working toward making a marriage commitment with.

Love Is a Choice, Not a Feeling

Another important thing to consider when you are deciding to marry someone is if you both see love as a choice and not a feeling. It's deciding to marry someone who doesn't see divorce as an option. Feelings will come and go and should never be a foundation for a marriage. Jesus tells us to build our house on the rock, a solid foundation of truth that can't be moved. Matthew 7:24-27 says, "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." I believe this passage also applies to the foundation of a marriage commitment. The floodwaters will come — believe me, they will come — but when you both believe in choosing to love each other no matter what comes your way, you will have a foundation that can't be shaken. There is nothing more reassuring than knowing that someone will see you through every high and low to come and will never give up. This is such a reflection of God's love for us.



Love is Self-Sacrifice

Finally, I believe it's important to marry someone who understands that love is self-sacrifice. Jesus is the ultimate example of this as he laid down his very life for us. John 15:13 says, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." Self-sacrifice might not actually mean that you die for your spouse in a literal way, but it will mean that you die to your pride, you die to your selfish desires, you die to a life of only thinking about yourself. If both of you believe in putting each other's needs above your own, both of you will be loved and taken care of. As humans, our nature is selfishness, so this will mean we will always have to be aware of the importance of believing in a self-sacrificial love and constantly battling our own human nature as we strive to do so.

If you are asking the question of "How do I know this is who God wants me to marry?", then I believe your heart is already in the right place. This question shows that you have a desire to please God and desire his will in your life instead of your own. It is natural for us to want companionship; we can even see this from the beginning of earth's creation. Tim Keller says, "Adam wasn't lonely because he was imperfect but because he was perfect. The ache for friends is not the result of sin" (<https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/1001163446568783872?lang=en>). Nevertheless, finding a spouse who will be a partner in your journey of trying to give God glory is so important so nothing holds us back or hinders us in this race God has set before us. ■

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