

**GHarmony: Sex, Singleness, and Marriage**  
**“How do I know if he or she is the one?” (Ephesians 5:25-33; Genesis 2:18)**  
**August 16, 2009 by Kevin Haah**



**I. Introduction**

**Skit**

We are bombarded with all kinds of stuff from our culture and friends who tell us what we should be looking for in a mate. I want us to see what the Scripture tells us about what we should be looking for in a mate. That's why today's topic is "How do I know if he or she is the one?" This is going to close out our series GHarmony.

The Scripture teaches some basic things about who we should marry but doesn't give us a comprehensive list. But, the Scripture gives us a lot of insight into marriage. So, I think the best way to approach the issue of who we should marry is to see it in the context of what marriage is FOR. So, we are going to turn some of things we talked about last Sunday into tests.

We talked about three purposes of marriage:

We said that the first purpose of marriage is gospel reenactment. The Scripture teaches us that the relationship between a husband and a wife ought to be like the relationship between Christ and us. In the relationship between Christ and us, we are sinful and messed up, yet, Christ died for us to reconcile us to a relationship with God so that we can be a better person. In the same way, we are called to realize each other's sinfulness, forgive one another, sacrificially love one another and serve one another, and help each other grow together in the Lord. In other words, the purpose of marriage is to help each other become a better person through self-sacrificial love and service.

We also said last week that the second purpose of marriage is deep oneness and friendship. God created Eve for Adam so that they will become one-flesh, meaning deeply connected in everyway—intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, economically, socially, and physically. It's about becoming each other's best friend.

We also said that the third purpose of marriage is to be on mission of God together. You have to remember, marriage is not an end in itself. Just because you get married does not mean that God's mission for and the call in our lives are no longer effective. You are now one person and you seek to be on mission and do his will in your life. The primary mission in our lives is to love God together, love other people together, and share the good news of Jesus Christ together.

Now with that said, let's turn them into tests.

## II. Criteria to Determine Whether He or She is the One

### 1. Is He or She a Christian?

If you are going to do marriage as gospel reenactment, how are you going to do it with someone who does not accept the gospel? How are you going to simulate the relationship between Christ and us if one side of the relationship does not acknowledge it? It's hard enough to do this even when two people are committed to doing it. It is very difficult to do it when one side is not convinced that that's what they want to make the marriage about.

And if marriage is about becoming deeply one in every way—intellectually, spiritually, directionally, emotionally, socially, and physically, how are you going to do it with someone who does not share the same reality that you live in? It's not that we have 4 out of 5 things where we can be one. Your spiritual oneness is the foundation for all other oneness. Your relationship with God affects everything about you because it should be the most important thing in your life. God is not some sort of tool for our purpose. He deserves for us to submit everything to Him for His Glory and Purpose. If you marry someone who is not a Christian, either God is NOT the most important person in your life or you don't expect your spouse to be your best friend, be your true soulmate, someone who is going to be deeply one with you. You can't have it both ways.

If the key motivation is what Jesus has done for you, how can you have a deep friend who doesn't understand that? If you feel like you love someone but that person doesn't really understand you, how can that person be your best friend?

Why couldn't a non-Christian understand you well? You ask. He's so understanding! It's true that there are plenty of people who are very understanding and have great intuition. But, you are looking at reality in a different way. If you went to a party and saw 10 people in the room but he only saw 5, the other person might be understanding to you, warm, and empathetic and know that you sincerely feel that way, but ultimately he couldn't understand you, he would be just understanding to you. As a Christian, you see a lot of reality that a person does not see at all. Christianity is not about dos' and don'ts. The gospel is at the core of what we believe. We believe in a personal God who came down to earth, we believe in heaven and hell, we believe in the Kingdom of God. We have fundamentally different views of reality.

You're saying, BUT we get along so well. He or she is sooo my best friend. I never met anyone who understood me like he or she does. It might seem like that now, but it's going to become more and more difficult unless you drift further and further away from God. When you get married, it's like you are planting a seed. Some seeds don't look that different in the beginning, but the differences become more pronounced later. The differences become bigger and bigger later.

And if marriage is about being on the mission of God together, how are you going to do it with someone who does not even acknowledge that mission?

I sometimes see people who are very faithful to God and the church getting a little nervous about marriage—will anyone want to marry me?—and they jump into marriage even though he or she is not a Christian, and I see people drifting away from God. And the mission of God? That's not even on their radar.

That why Apostle Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." Yoke is the stuff that you put on bulls to work the bull. It's about working for the Kingdom of God. Get yoked with someone who has the passion to work together with you for the purposes beyond yourselves, for the purposes of the Kingdom of God.

Now, I know some of you are saying: Man! That really narrows my possibilities! It narrows your possibilities terribly. But, what it's actually doing is to deepen your understanding of marriage terribly. It's going to force you to be deeper in whom you are going to seek. The superficial things don't matter as much. It doesn't matter whether you can have dance the night away. It forces you to go beyond the superficial, which is something you should have done in the first place.

## **2. Do you influence each other for the better? Does he or she make you a better person? Do you make him or her a better person?**

I love that line in the movie, *As Good as It Gets*, when Jack Nicholson's character who is a selfish obsessive compulsive guy says: "You make me want to be a better man."

If marriage is about gospel reenactment, where you help each other become a better person through self-sacrificial love and service, it has major repercussions on who you look for. It doesn't mean you look for Prince Charming or Princess Aurora (in *Sleeping Beauty*). It doesn't mean you look for a person who is all put together, whose character is impeccable, who is so selfless, etc. etc. I think it is great if you can find someone who is a person of character—

don't get me wrong. But, if you think your mate is perfect or near perfect, you are being set up for a major disappointment. What is more important is the trajectory of how you influence each other in your relationship. Does the relationship help you, encourage you, and spur you on to be a better person? Are you closer in your relationship with God as a result of this relationship? Can you say: "You make me want to be a better person."

In some of your relationships, you know you are in an unhealthy relationship where you destroy each other. If you take your blinders off, you will see the relationship for what it is. Sometimes, both of you are great people, but together, you bring out the worse in each other. I know every close relationship has the potential to bring out the worst and the best, but if you see that this relationship is always bringing out the worst in you and you are bringing the worst in your girlfriend, it's a major red flag.

I am telling you that marriage has the power to multiply that a thousand times. If you are facing issues or conflicts/disagreements, and conflicts and disagreements will intensify when you are married. If you are not able to solve problems together in a constructive way or if you don't see that you guys are learning to solve problems together in a constructive way, that might be a sign. It could be that you both need to learn or it could be that you are not compatible with each other. You might end up destroying one another than building one another.

Now, it is about each other. It's not about just one side helping another side. Both must benefit from the relationship. In marriage, you are called to self-sacrificial love and service to one another, but before you get married, if there is self-sacrificial love on one side only, it's a red flag. I don't ask couples who are dating to sacrifice themselves in the relationship when the other person is not. I might question their relationship. But, I do tell married couples to hold up their covenant and love and sacrifice for the other person.

### **3. Can he or she become deeply one with you? Can he be each other's best friend?**

Marriage is deep oneness and friendship. Marriage is not all about romantic love. Seriously! There is no question that most of us start marriage with the ideas of romantic love lasting forever. This sense of heart beating faster when you see each other, finding each other absolutely beautiful forever. If you think you are going to sustain endless love in the romantic sense and that is your expectation towards marriage, I want to wake you up. That just ain't going to happen. But, it doesn't mean there is no love. There are several words for love in Greek.

One is *eros*—that is romantic love. Then there is *philos*—which is friendship love. There is *storge*—which is affection like to your family member. Then, there is agape, which means self-sacrificial love. That's the word used in John 3:16. That's the word used in Ephesians when it says that husbands ought to love (agape) he wife as Christ loved (agape) the church. The biblical focus on love relationship is agape, *philos* and *storge*. It is not on *eros*. I think *eros* should follow *agape*, *philos*, and *storge*. Not lead it. Emotions must be something that follow because you can't rely on emotion. It will come and go and you can't blame it. If you focus on serving and loving one another, if you focus on your friendship, and as you develop storage affection, you will develop *eros*, and *eros* will follow, but if you try to lead your marriage with *eros*, it'll be a rocky ride.

So, what does this mean? Don't look for *eros* love, look for someone who you can be best friends with. Look. This is what most singles do. When you walk into a room with a bunch of single people, the first thing you do is to discount people purely based on superficial criteria like how they look. There could be 10 people in the room, and you just discounted 8 people. Then, you try to get to know 2 and see if they might be interested in your. After doing this several times, you find one person who is interested in going out with you. Then, you try to see if you can be their friend. No, the person who could have been your best friend might be among the 8 that you discounted in the beginning. If you know what to look for, you might have a lot better chance of meeting your best friend.

If you are in a relationship and you don't find that you guys are friends on the way to become best friends, that's a red flag. I think this is one of the reasons you shouldn't get physical. If you get physical, and yes, when it is a novelty, there is a lot of excitement. You get consumed by that excitement. You mistaken romantic love spoken during love-making with actual friendship. That's not friendship. Friendship is deeper than getting physical. You talk. You encourage each other. You like talking to each other. There are mutual interests. You share values. Friendship is a beautiful thing.

Look around you. The best mates are your friends.

#### **4. Are you on mission of God together? Can you picture that, at least?**

I think it is important that you are headed in same direction. You are looking at something beyond yourselves. I know sometimes the fun of getting to know each other takes you out of your mission, but you are not always going to just look at each other. You are not

each other's savior. You are not each other's God. You must hold hands and look toward Jesus and the mission he has given us. The question is: do you see yourselves empowered for this mission because you are together or less so. That's a big issue. I am not saying that you have to have the same vision, same mission, same direction on everything. It could be that one of you feel strongly about inner city mission and the other just loves the city. The question is not whether you are on the same mission but whether you can be on the same mission.

How about if one person is in ministry or is a missionary? I heard someone say, "you are not marrying the church or my ministry, you are marrying me." But, both of you have to consider where you are going. Your ministry is a part of the whole package. If there is no possibility that you will be able to be on mission together, you have to reconsider. It's a part of solving problems together.

Some of you are asking, what is more important? The mission or the marriage. It's a trick question. God says marriage is an unbreakable covenant. So, he's not going to call one out of the marriage to obey him. It's got to be a very usual situation for that to happen. You have to consider where God is leading you TOGETHER with your spouse because that is God's will. So, marriage and mission must go together. But, your marriage must serve the mission.

##### **5. Is there a growing affection for each other?**

I think affection is important. God's not going to ask you to marry someone you have no affection for. But I don't think it should lead the way. If being in love leads the way, it has a tendency to blind you. If the emotional love can sustain itself through life, I think this would be the most important criterion. However, emotions come and go. It really does. But, the foundation that helps you to become a better person, deep oneness kind of friendship, and being on mission—these are things that generate affection. They are the fuels for love. If you have love—a lot of crazy emotions, but you don't have the fuel, you'll be running on fumes after awhile.

I think what this culture calls love is essentially either erotic emotion or mere infatuation. You feel your heart pumping, goose-bumps, nervousness, passion, longing to see and feel. But, there is no foundation to sustain that emotion. External beauty is fading. You can't bank on that. Watch out! I know you feel like you'll feel like that for the rest of your life! I am telling you the reality that only if you have the other things we talked about can that be true.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

I want to address some of the concerns you might have as a result of what I said.

1. If you are married and you are here thinking to yourself, I didn't think I have any of these things in my marriage. I don't think I married the right person. I married an unbeliever. Or, I married someone who will never be my best friend. I married someone who will never be in mission with me. Here's what the Scripture teaches: In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, it says that if you are married to an unbeliever and he or she is willing to live with you, stay together; but if he or she leaves, let him or she leave. But you are called to stay and love. 1 Peter 3 says to wives who have unbelieving husbands to act as Christ did to die for us and suffer for us so that "they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives" demonstrating agape Christ-like love to him. You pray, you love, you sacrifice, and you serve. When you are so close, it is hard to share God's love in words. It must be demonstrated in deed.

I know people who prayed for their husband for years, and later in his life, he gave his life to Christ! One guy said he was "1 Peter 3" to Christ. He was prayed and loved and served to Christ. My uncle was not a Christian virtually all of his life. He was often drunk and at times even abusive. My aunt prayed for him, loved and served for decades. Later, he ended up becoming a Christian, a leader of the church, and an incredibly loving person. I was so shocked by his transformation. Their marriage was stronger than ever and it's like they have a whole new marriage! So, be encouraged and pray!

If you are going out with someone who is not a Christian, pray. Pray really hard, and put everything on the line. Maybe things will change. Maybe not. Don't do these forced baptisms. If the person is not truly believing, it's just taking a bath. It doesn't really mean anything. If things don't change, you got to be willing to move on.