



The Most Important Decision

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Introduction

The decision of marriage is the most important decision in youth's life. It is a decision taken to share the most intimate parts of one's being (emotions, body, spirituality, social life, fun, finance, legal issues, time, home and others) with someone else... Young people struggle in making that decision.

Samson, a judge in Israel, known for his wisdom and power, who was moved by the spirit of God (Judges 13:25), struggled in making this decision too. In the process of choosing his life partner, Samson made three mistakes. One of them was the mistake of marrying outside his faith. His parents asked him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your kinsmen, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" (Judges 14:3) However, he did not listen to the counsel of his parents and made his decision based on physical attraction "but Samson said to his father, 'get her for me; for she pleases me well'" (Judges 14:3). Making wrong choices caused Samson to suffer the rest of his life.



The Wedding Feast at Cana

Wedding of Cana

What are the prerequisites for a successful marriage?

+ Maturity

Maturity is a prerequisite for marriage, lack of which will endanger the quality of one's decisions. Maturity is a general term that encompasses different levels of maturity. Spiritual maturity which means walking by the spirit and not gratifying the desires of the flesh (Gal 5: 16), protects the decision from being fleshly driven. Financial and intellectual maturity prepares us to be responsible in marriage. Physical and psychological maturity is important in adapting and preserving harmony within marriage.

Social maturity facilitates the inclusion of the new family in society.

+ Seeking the will of God

Seeking the will of God is another important aspect of reaching a correct marriage decision. Without asking the will of God, the person will be in a great loss "house and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Proverbs 19:14). Praying fervently, studying the scripture, seeking spiritual direction, and using



reason and intellect make the will of God known to us.

+ Examining the motives

Examining the motives for marriage is extremely important. One common motive among youth is to obtain autonomy and prove individuality. Rebellion against one's own family to protect personal independence cannot be a motive for a successful marriage. Mature discussion with family members, parents in particular, is a part of knowing the will of God. Another common motive among youth is to escape difficult home environment. Marriage to escape from an abusive father or family problems cannot be a reason for successful marriage. A lot of young people marry very young before they have reached a reasonable maturity level just to escape from their family lives. Unfortunately, most of the time they escape to an unsuccessful and unhappy marriage life.

+ Loneliness

Loneliness is yet another cause for taking a hasty marriage decision. Some youth suffer from loneliness in their lives, thinking that marriage will remove that problem; they just go ahead and decide to get married. In reality, many couples suffer from loneliness even after marriage. A solution to loneliness is best sought in developing good social skills that will help deal with loneliness rather than throwing this responsibility on the shoulder of the future spouse.

+ Sexually immoral drives

Sexually immoral drives are another motive for jumping into immature marriage. A lot of youngsters believe that marriage will help them

conduct a pure life. Sadly enough, such individuals end up having outside marriage affairs thus cheating on their spouses. The only solution to break this bondage is to obtain healing from sexual immorality by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill the heart and sanctify the soul.

Is there a scale upon which marriage decisions are based?

Sometimes youth get deluded by the items on the scale upon which they base their choices. Examples of such items are physical beauty, compassion, social pressure, self-pity, family traditions, moral rectification, and earthly transactions, to name a few.

Physical Beauty:

Individuals, who are attracted to the beauty of the flesh, take this as a strong reason for marriage. Beauty might make one admire the other but not necessarily satisfy their needs.



A lot of individuals who are married to very beautiful wives suffer from unmet psychological and emotional needs "charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

Compassion driven Marriages:

Some people decide to marry out of compassion. They believe that the best way to help someone



who has suffered in her life is to marry her. It should be remembered that marriage is unity between two souls in the Lord and not a service offered by one person to another. Many marriages suffer from lack of unity because of this reason.

Social Pressure:

Social pressure, either direct or indirect, whether from the family or friends, have led many to marry without discerning. Most of the time such marriages end in separation or divorce. An advice to the youth is not to allow themselves to be pressured into a relationship to which they will not be able to be committed the rest of their life. After all, which is better, to remain unmarried or to marry just any person because of social pressure? Another kind of pressure that brings about an unsuccessful marriage is that enforced by a controlling person on a compliant one. The compliant that does not know nor have learnt how to say "no" at the right time, will yield to the manipulation of the controlling person, thus accepting to enter into an unpromising marriage relationship. Such marriages will ultimately suffer from unbalanced power in the relationship.

Self Pity:

After breaking up with a friend or engagement, many individuals rush to get married to prove to

the ex-friend that they are loveable and wanted. The danger here rests in the fact that the decision to marry has been focused on the ex-friend not the current spouse. Later on in marriage, they will discover that they had been deluded into that marriage for the sake of relaying a message to the previous friend.

Family Traditions:

Sometimes family traditions play a decisive role in marriage decision. Many families dictate their choices and preferences to their children for many personal, egoistic reasons (for example marrying relatives to keep the inheritance of the family within the family). Such marriages based on materialistic selfish desires will bring about unsuccessful results alienated from any spiritual foundation.

Moral Rectification:

Sometimes individuals get involved in sinful, unlawful relationship before marriage. As a result of such an immoral relationship, they become morally and socially forced to commit themselves into marriage bondage to rectify a mistake of pregnancy. Most of the time immaturity, age and unpreparedness for a life-long-marriage bondage form a real threat to the stability of their marital life. Youth should be wise enough not to be involved in such destructive relationships, which will ruin the rest of their lives.





Earthly Transactions:

Some people perceive marriage as a deal from which to draw personal profit such as marrying for the sake of getting the Green Card, or marrying into a rich family or a family of a certain social status. Compatibility between couples is important but not to the extent of turning the marriage into a trade deal.

The Influence of Media on Marriage choices:

The media often introduces romance as a requirement for marriage. The distinction between Christian love and romance should be clear in our mind. While Christian love is the foundation for successful marriage, immature romantic emotions aren't. Romance is often unrealistic, leading couples to live in an imaginative dream world that will ultimately vanish once they awake to

the reality and challenges of life. Romance blinds couples to the major pitfalls and shortcomings in each other; thus endangering the longevity and happiness of their marriage. Romance eliminates the past or the future from the evaluation scale. It robs the person from his wisdom to consider the essential needs and foundations of marriage. Romance wastes the time of the couples distracting them and distorting the priority of transparency for the sake of discussing and working out many differences between them.

In conclusion, a spiritually mature person who seeks the will of God from the depth of his heart, consults his parents and spiritual father; who examines his motives thoroughly, and uses a wise measuring scale of qualities and attributes will definitely be guided by the Holy Spirit in choosing the person with whom he will share his world the rest of his life.

Perseverance in prayer cleanses the intellect, illumines it, and fills it with the light of truth. The virtues, led by compassion, give the intellect peace and light. The cleansing of the intellect is not a dialectical, discursive and theoretical activity, but an act of grace through experience and is ethical in every respect. The intellect is purified by fasting, vigils, silence, prayer, and other ascetic practices.

St. Isaac the Syrian .

