

It Matters Whom You Marry

My husband and I were once with a youth group. There were three kids sitting across from us at a meal: two guys and a girl. The one guy was a computer geek with glasses. The other one was a college student with slightly cooler hair and no glasses. The girl was obviously with him. But while the computer geek was busy serving everyone at the meal, clearing plates and garbage, the college student got angry with the girl for a small accident and poured red juice over her leather jacket and white shirt. She picked the wrong guy, and the juice didn't seem to change her mind. She is in for some grief if that relationship continues and especially if it leads to marriage.

So to all the young, unmarried Christian girls out there, listen up: who you marry matters. You might think that the way he treats you isn't so bad. It's not going to get better after the wedding. You might think that he'll change. It's possible, but most don't. You might think that you'll be able to minister to him and help him. Possibly, but if you can't now, you won't then, and you will be at risk yourself. A husband should lead and cherish you, not need your counsel for basic personality or behavior issues.

Unless someone married is very frank with you, you can't understand how much a husband will impact your entire life. Next to salvation there is no other long term event that will change so many areas of your life so deeply. Here are just some of the ways that marriage will impact every aspect of living.

1. It will impact you spiritually.

If the guy is not a believer, you can stop right there. You have no business yoking a redeemed soul with an unregenerate one, even if he seems open to change. Christ has bought you with a price and it is not an option to give away that blood bought heart to someone who doesn't know and love your Lord. It will cripple your spiritual development, open up a host of temptations, stifle your prayer life, make regular church going difficult, and cause massive parenting conflict if you have children.

If the guy is a believer, is he a strong one? Will he lead you in prayer, Bible reading, family devotions, and public worship? Or will you be on your own? Is he going to make spiritual growth a priority or do other things come first? Is he going to ask you how it's going with your soul so he can help you grow in holiness and love for Christ, or will he leave that to your pastor? Is he going to lead the children in this, or will you have to spearhead that? In church, is he going to help the kids sit well, pray, find the hymn, or will you be the one pointing out what is happening next and helping the family keep up? Many women have married spiritually immature men, thinking that it wasn't a big issue, or that the man would change, and they were wrong. They bear the scars.

The health of your eternity is at stake. Think carefully.

2. It will impact you emotionally.

Is the guy you're thinking of going to encourage you, love you, be kind to you, and seek to understand you, or will he want to go out with the guys when you're having a hard night? Will he listen when you are struggling with something or will he be preoccupied with a video game? Is he going to be annoyed when you cry or will he get you Kleenex and give you a hug? Is he going to going to understand that you are

probably more tender than he is, more sensitive to issues and comments, or is he regularly going to run rough shod over your feelings? One woman was struggling to breastfeed her new baby, believing that that was the best thing for her, but it was very difficult. Instead of giving support and encouragement, the husband would make moaning sounds whenever he saw his wife working at it. We have to get rid of princess complexes, but we do have emotional needs. Any guy who is uncaring about your feelings and self esteem is selfish and should be left alone.

Be careful – a husband can cripple or foster emotional health.

3. It will impact you physically.

Is the guy you're with going to provide for your basic needs? Will he be able to shelter, clothe and feed you? At one point in our marriage, I was worried that there was no employment opportunity. My husband assured me that he would work at McDonalds, dig ditches, clean up roadkill – whatever it took to provide for the family, regardless of his gifts and training. That's the kind of attitude you want. A man who doesn't provide for his household is worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8). You might have to help ease the financial burden, but unless your husband is disabled or there is another unusual circumstance, you shouldn't have to carry it yourself.

Will the man you are with care for your body or abuse it? If he gives you little smacks, kicks, etc. when you're dating, get away. It's almost guaranteed that he will abuse you after marriage, and stats show that's especially true when you are pregnant. Is he going to care for and protect your body or will he hurt it? There are women in churches across America who thought it was no big deal to have little (sort of friendly) punches or slaps from their boyfriends, but who are covering up the bruises from their husbands.

Will the man you are with care for you sexually? Is he going to honour the marriage bed in physical and mental faithfulness to you or will he flirt, feed his porn addiction, or even leave you for another woman? You can't always predict these issues, but if the seeds or practices are already there, watch out. I recently saw a newly married couple and the husband was flirting openly with another woman. Unless something drastic happens, that marriage is headed for disaster.

Is he going to be tender and gentle to you in bed? An unbelieving co-worker once told my sister that after her first sexual encounter, she had trouble walking for a few days because her boyfriend was so rough. In other words, he wasn't selfless enough to care for the body of the woman he said he loved.

Watch out. Your body needs care and protection.

4. It will impact you mentally.

Is the man that you're thinking of going to be a source of worry or will he help you deal with your worries? Is he going to encourage your intellectual development, or will he neglect it? Is he going to value your opinions and listen to what you are thinking, or will he disregard your thoughts? Is he going to help you manage stress so that your mind is not burdened that way, or is he going to let you struggle through issues alone? Is he going to care for you and be thoughtful of you if you are experiencing mental strain, or will he ignore it? I know of a woman who could handle pregnancy and child birth very well physically but postpartum depression took a huge toll on her mind. The husband

overlooked it, continuing to have more children, until his wife ended up in a mental institution.

You might think that the intellectual or mental side of a marriage is small. It's bigger than you think. Consider it seriously.

5. It will impact you relationally.

How's your relationship with your mother? Your dad? Do you love them? Does your boyfriend? Fast forward ten years: you tell your husband that your mother is coming for the weekend. Is he excited? Disappointed? Angry? Making snide jokes with his friends? Of course, a husband should come first in your priority of relationships, as you both leave father and mother and cleave to one another. But parents are still a big part of the picture. Whatever negative feelings he has about your parents now will probably be amplified after marriage. Your marriage will either strengthen or damage – even destroy – your relationship with your parents. The people who know you best and love you most right now could be cut out of the picture by a husband who hates them.

It's the same with sisters and friends. Will they be welcomed, at reasonable times, in your home? Will the guy who you're with encourage healthy relationships with other women, or will he be jealous of normal, biblical friendships? Will he help you mentor younger women and be thankful when older women mentor you, or will he belittle that?

Don't sacrifice many good relationships for the sake of one guy who can't value the people who love you.

So how will your boyfriend do after the vows? Because this is just a sampling of the ways that a husband can bless or curse his wife. The effects are far reaching, long lasting, and either wonderful or difficult. True, there are no perfect men out there. But there are great ones. And it's better to be single for life than to marry someone who will make your life a burden. Singleness can be great. Marriage to the wrong person is a nightmare. I've been in a church parking lot where the pastor had to call the police to protect a wife from a husband who was trying to stop her from worshiping and being with her family. It's ugly. Don't be so desperate to get married that your marriage is a grief. If you are in an unhappy marriage, there are ways to get help. But if you're not married, don't put yourself in that situation. Don't marry someone whose leadership you can't follow. Don't marry someone who is not seeking to love you as Christ loved the church. Marry someone who knows and demonstrates the love of Christ.