



Pursuing Marriage

Suppose you could choose ten qualities that your future spouse will have. Which would you choose? But wait—let's sweeten the deal. Not only do you get to select ten positive qualities this person will have, but you can also identify and eliminate ten deficits. Which twenty items would make your list?

Your "Top Ten" Lists

It is important that singles develop lists of the top ten positive qualities and the top ten negative qualities in a partner—the "must-have" and "can't-stand" lists. Becoming crystal clear about these characteristics will prepare you to be a highly efficient "mate shopper": a person who will know with confidence and clarity whether a potential partner is worth pursuing. If you think it's important to have a shopping list when you go to the grocery store, it's a thousand times more important to have a shopping list when you're looking for a partner.

So what should go on your list? That all depends on you. You've got to spend plenty of time pondering, contemplating, and soul-searching. After carefully sorting and sifting all your likes and dislikes, your preferences and aversions, write them all out. Make a long, detailed inventory—and then narrow it down through a process of elimination. Your goal is to end up with a total of twenty nonnegotiable items.

For instance, I know many people for whom spiritual pursuits are the most important part of their lives. They pray frequently, think a lot about their relationship with God, attend church and Bible classes regularly, and are convinced that the development of their spiritual life matters more than anything else. These people need to put SPIRITUAL PASSION at the top of their must-have list, in capital letters.

Why Limit the Lists?

Since I believe that there are hundreds of qualities you might wish for in a lifetime mate, I put a limit of

ten on your lists only for mathematical and practical reasons. Your "pool of candidates" is usually so limited that your chance of finding a person with every quality on a list of twenty-five or fifty items is very slim.

Here's what I mean: A woman's pool of possible spouses is comprised of single men she meets at work, church, the gym, her neighborhood, the softball team, and so on. So if a woman says she wants a partner with a college education, she immediately eliminates many of the men she knows. Likewise, if she wants a man free of all addictions and emotional hang-ups, she eliminates another sizable part of the population. Every criterion from her list shrinks her pool of eligible, qualified bachelors considerably. We would need a mathematician to calculate the total number of men required in the beginning pool for her to end up with a "Mr. Right" after applying ten rigorous must-haves and ten equally rigorous can't-stands.

Do You Really Need a "List?"

Some singles I work with absolutely refuse to build a shopping list. They say, "If I can't find a person who meets what I know to be necessary for me to be happy, then maybe I'll need to lower my standards." And here's what they never say, but what I'm convinced they mean: "I want to get married! I need to get married! Therefore, if I have to settle for less, so be it. After all, a less-than-ideal man (or woman) is better than no man at all." I argue against this theme with everything I have. I encourage people to figure out the kind of person they need in order to be really happy, and then to hold to these criteria to the very end. Otherwise, they could easily end up being part of the marital failure epidemic plaguing our nation.

Adapted from crosswalk.com



RELATED SCRIPTURE

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land (Psalm 68:6).

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).

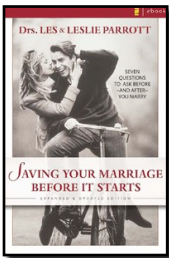
experience. Dr. Chapman even includes a thought-provoking appendix. By understanding and balancing the five key aspects of life, dating couples can experience a healthy dating relationship. A revealing learning exercise for dating couples is included at the end.

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Les and Leslie Parrott
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Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married

Gary Chapman
ISBN 978-0802481832

This is not a book simply to be read. It is a book to be experienced. The material lends itself to heart-felt discussions by dating or engaged couples. To jump-start the exchanges, each short chapter includes insightful "Talking it Over" questions and suggestions. And, the book includes information on interactive websites as well as books that will enhance the couples