

A Greater Purpose - The Marriage Decision

“...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”- Luke 22:42

What has God used to grow you in your life? It is a big question, and one that each person would answer differently. Many times when people look back, they can testify to the power of unanswered prayers in their lives. For individuals that are single, this may involve situations where they encountered the marriage decision.

Discerning whether or not to marry is a process of growth and surrender. It is a sacred time of communion with the Lord. This time can be sweet, but it can also be difficult. For those that are single and desire marriage, it can sometimes feel elusive. Why are my friends marrying and not I? Am I doing something wrong? Am I not desirable?

It can be especially painful for singles when people share their “recipe” for marriage. For example, a single person may be told that they just need to be content, then marriage will happen. While it is always a good idea to pursue *Philippians 4:11*, God’s timing may be different than expected and marriage may not come immediately upon contentment, but rather further down the road. For some that desire marriage, the event may never happen. It can be difficult to understand why, and can lead to self-doubt and discouragement.

Failure or Opportunity?

Sometimes without realizing it, people judge the strength of their faith by the “success” of the process. In the marriage decision, whether or not they become engaged becomes the metric. Failure for a marriage decision to go through signifies that I do not have enough faith or have not surrendered properly. However, by doing so, people can miss the greater work that God is doing. **For the process of surrendering singleness and marriage is not actually about the result, but is rather about the person you are becoming as you seek to understand God’s plan for your life.**

Consider the following: If a proposal results in a “no,” God has the power to work in this difficult situation and it is still an opportunity. The proposal may have challenged an individual to correct unhealthy habits in their life, spend more time in prayer and God’s Word, or begin working on past unaddressed, relational hurts. The person may gain more through this journey than had the original goal of marriage been met.

Unfortunately, it is not always easy to see the situation through this perspective. For some, a “no” can make them question themselves- “Did I hear God wrong?” They may begin to question their faith, become discouraged or distrustful of God, or perhaps become bitter towards friends who have gone through the process “successfully.”

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For Reflection

Whether or not marriage is in God's plan for your life on earth, here are some questions to consider as you contemplate this possibility:

1. **How is my relationship with the Lord?** Am I easily distractible (a spouse will only add to that distraction) or am I able to keep my relationship with Christ primary in my life? (*1 Cor. 7:32-33*)
2. **Am I ready and willing to work on myself?** Are there habits or things in my past that need to be addressed? (*Psalms 139: 23-24*). Sometimes people expect marriage to be the "magic bullet" to fix habits or provide healing that realistically might take years of hard work.
3. **How well do I submit to others?** How well do I love and esteem my brothers and sisters? (*Eph. 5:21-33*)
4. **What is this process revealing in me?** Am I able to trust God in this, releasing control of my future? (*Jer. 29:11*)
5. **How can I continue to live a meaningful life amid the uncertainty?** Some people like their lives extremely well ordered, and an unexpected proposal or response can interfere with their plans. Can I trust in the midst of this uncertainty, giving control to God? (*Prov. 3:5-6*)

God can use the earthly marriage decision making process to help us grow more like Him. This conforming into His image remains God's great desire for our lives. And we grow in sanctification, whether we become married or remain single, we prepare for a greater marriage that will someday happen - the marriage of the Lamb (*Rev. 22:17*).

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