

Mate Selection

‘Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion; ... it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage.

—President Spencer W. Kimball

Selected Teachings

Importance of Choosing Wisely

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children’s children down through the many generations” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 3).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry. ...

“... Marry the right person in the right place at the right time” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 118).

Background Factors

President David O. McKay

“In choosing a companion, it is necessary to study the disposition, the inheritance, and training of the one with whom you are contemplating making life’s journey” (*Gospel Ideals*, 459).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The difficulties and hazards of marriage are greatly increased where backgrounds are different” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 302).

The Right Person

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Be worthy of the mate you choose. Respect him or her. Give encouragement to him or her. Love your companion with all your heart. This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry.

“There is no substitute for marrying in the temple. It is the only place under the heavens where marriage can be solemnized for eternity. Don’t cheat yourself. Don’t cheat your companion. Don’t shortchange your lives. Marry the right person in the right place at the right time.

“Choose a companion of your own faith. You are much more likely to be happy. Choose a companion you can always honor, you can always respect, one who will complement you in your own life, one to whom you can give your entire heart, your entire love, your entire allegiance, your entire loyalty. ...

“... I could not wish for any of you more than I have had in my companionship with my beautiful wife.

“A good marriage requires time. It requires effort. You have to work at it. You have to cultivate it. You have to forgive and forget. You have to be absolutely loyal one to another. Most of you will marry and have children. They will become the source of your greatest pride and happiness. ...

“All of this can come to pass if you make this most important decision, one guided by prayer as well as instinct, of choosing a dear companion who will be yours through thick and thin forever, throughout all eternity” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2, 4).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“There is more to a foundation of eternal marriage than a pretty face or an attractive figure. There is more to consider than popularity or charisma. As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the essential attributes that bring happiness: a deep love of the Lord and of His commandments, a determination to live them, one that is kindly understanding, forgiving of others, and willing to give of self, with the desire to have a family crowned with beautiful children and a commitment to teach them the principles of truth in the home.

“An essential priority of a prospective wife is the desire to be a wife and mother. She should be developing the sacred qualities that God has given His daughters to excel as a wife and mother: patience, kindness, a love of children, and a desire to care for them rather than seeking professional pursuits. She should be acquiring a good education to prepare for the demands of motherhood.

“A prospective husband should also honor his priesthood and use it in service to others. Seek a man who accepts his role as provider of the necessities of life, has the capacity to do it, and is making concerted efforts to prepare himself to fulfill those responsibilities.

“I suggest that you not ignore many possible candidates who are still developing these attributes, seeking the one who is perfected in them. You will likely not find that perfect person, and if you did, there would certainly be no interest in you. These attributes are best polished together as husband and wife” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 31; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 26).

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Outer Appearance and Inner Beauty

President David O. McKay

“Yes, men are attracted by beauty, and thousands are ensnared by it. There are thousands of men who look for nothing else and who desire nothing else but to have their senses pleased or their passions gratified. These outward adornments will satisfy and only outward adornment will retain. When beauty fades, the passion seeks for gratification elsewhere. ‘Beauty is only skin-deep,’ and when outward adornment is all a girl possesses, the admiration she calls forth is even more shallow than her beauty. ...

“But there is a beauty every girl has—a gift from God, as pure as the sunlight, and as sacred as life. It is a beauty that all men love, a virtue that wins all men’s souls. That beauty is *chastity*. Chastity without skin beauty may enkindle the soul; skin beauty without chastity can kindle only the eye. Chastity enshrined in the mold of true womanhood will hold true love eternally” (*Gospel Ideals*, 450).

Counsel for Single Sisters

President Wilford Woodruff

“When the daughters of Zion are asked by the young men to join with them in marriage, instead of asking—‘Has this man a fine brick house, a span of fine horses and a fine carriage?’ they should ask—‘Is he a man of God? Has he the Spirit of God with him? Is he a Latter-day Saint? Does he pray? Has he got the Spirit upon him to qualify him to build up the kingdom?’ If he has that, never mind the carriage and brick house, take hold and unite yourselves together according to the law of God” (in *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 271).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Dear sisters, never lose sight of this sacred goal [of a temple marriage]. Prayerfully prepare for it and live for it. Be married the Lord’s way. Temple marriage is a

gospel ordinance of exaltation. Our Father in Heaven wants each of His daughters to have this eternal blessing

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cannot take you worthily to the temple. Make a decision now that this is the place where you will marry. To leave that decision until a romantic involvement develops is to take a risk the importance of which you cannot now fully calculate.

“And remember, you are not required to lower your standards in order to get a mate. Keep yourselves attractive, maintain high standards, maintain your self-respect. Do not engage in intimacies that bring heartache and sorrow. Place yourselves in a position to meet worthy men and be engaged in constructive activities.

“But also, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so concerned about his physical appearance and his bank account that you overlook his more important qualities. Of course, he should be attractive to you, and he should be able to financially provide for you. But, does he have a strong testimony? Does he live the principles of the gospel and magnify his priesthood? Is he active in his ward and stake? Does he love home and family, and will he be a faithful husband and a good father? *These* are qualities that really matter.

“And I would also caution you single sisters not to become so independent and self-reliant that you decide marriage isn’t worth it and you can do just as well on your own. Some of our sisters indicate that they do not want to consider marriage until *after* they have completed their degrees or pursued a career. This is not right. Certainly we want our single sisters to maximize their individual potential, to be well educated, and to do well at their present employment. You have much to contribute to society, to your community, and to your neighborhood. But we earnestly pray that our single sisters will desire honorable marriage in the temple to a worthy man and rear a righteous family, even though this may mean the sacrificing of degrees and careers. Our priorities are right when we realize there is no higher calling than to be an honorable wife and mother” (“To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96–97).

Counsel for Single Brethren

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Work hard educationally and in your vocation. Put your trust in the Lord, have faith, and it will work out. The Lord never gives a commandment without providing the means to accomplish it (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

“Also, do not be caught up in materialism, one of the real plagues of our generation—that is, acquiring things, fast-paced living, and securing career success in the single state.

“Honorable marriage is more important than wealth, position, and status. As husband and wife, you can achieve your life’s goals together. As you sacrifice for each other and your children, the Lord will bless you, and your commitment to the

Lord and your service in His kingdom will be enhanced” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

“Now, brethren, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so particular that you overlook her most important qualities of having a strong testimony, living the principles of the gospel, loving home, wanting to be a mother in Zion, and supporting you in your priesthood responsibilities.

“Of course, she should be attractive to you, but do not just date one girl after another for the sole pleasure of dating without seeking the Lord’s confirmation in your choice of your eternal companion.

“And one good yardstick as to whether a person might be the right one for you is this: in her presence, do you think your noblest thoughts, do you aspire to your finest deeds, do you wish you were better than you are?”

“God bless you single adult brethren of the Church. May your priorities be right. I have suggested some very important priorities this evening. May you seriously consider and ponder them” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I hope you will not put off marriage too long. I do not speak as much to the young women as to the young men whose prerogative and responsibility it is to take the lead in this matter. Don’t go on endlessly in a frivolous dating game. Look for a choice companion, one you can love, honor, and respect, and make a decision” (“Thou Shalt Not Covet,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 6).

The Role of Prayer and Personal Revelation

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“Use both agency and prayer. It is not, never has been, and never will be the design and purpose of the Lord—however much we seek him in prayer—to answer all our problems and concerns without struggle and effort on our part. This mortality is a probationary estate. In it we have our agency. We are being tested to see how we will respond in various situations; how we will decide issues; what course we will pursue while we are here walking, not by sight, but by faith. Hence, we are to solve our own problems and then to counsel with the Lord in prayer and receive a spiritual confirmation that our decisions are correct” (“Why the Lord Ordained Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“If a revelation is outside the limits of stewardship, you know it is not from the Lord, and you are not bound by it. I have heard of cases where a young man told a young woman she should marry him because he had received a revelation that she was to be his eternal companion. If this is a true revelation, it will be confirmed directly to the woman if she seeks to know. In the meantime, she is under no

obligation to heed it. She should seek her own guidance and make up her own mind. The man can receive revelation to guide his own actions, but he cannot properly receive revelation to direct hers. She is outside his stewardship. ...

“... When a choice will make a real difference in our lives—obvious or not—and when we are living in tune with the Spirit and seeking his guidance, we can be sure we will receive the guidance we need to attain our goal” (“Revelation,” 25–26).

“A desire to be led by the Lord is a strength, but it needs to be accompanied by an understanding that our Heavenly Father leaves many decisions for our personal choices. Personal decision making is one of the sources of the growth we are meant to experience in mortality. Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will soon find circumstances in which they pray for guidance and don’t receive it. For example, this is likely to occur in those numerous circumstances in which the choices are trivial or either choice is acceptable.

“We should study things out in our minds, using the reasoning powers our Creator has placed within us. Then we should pray for guidance and act upon it if we receive it. If we do not receive guidance, we should act upon our best judgment. Persons who persist in seeking revelatory guidance on subjects on which the Lord has not chosen to direct us may concoct an answer out of their own fantasy or bias, or they may even receive an answer through the medium of false revelation. Revelation from God is a sacred reality, but like other sacred things, it must be cherished and used properly so that a great strength does not become a disabling weakness” (“Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13–14).

Finding the Right One

President Spencer W. Kimball

“While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. ‘Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 4).

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith

“We have no scriptural justification, however, for the belief that we had the privilege of choosing our parents and our life companions in the spirit world. This belief has been advocated by some, and it is possible that in some instances it is true, but it would require too great a stretch of the imagination to believe it to be so in all, or even in the majority of cases. Most likely we came where those in authority decided to send us. Our agency may not have been exercised to the extent of making choice of parents and posterity” (*Way to Perfection*, 44).

Mission or Marriage?

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Now I wish to say something to bishops and stake presidents concerning missionary service. It is a sensitive matter. There seems to be growing in the Church an idea that all young women as well as all young men should go on missions. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot.

“I confess that I have two granddaughters on missions. They are bright and beautiful young women. They are working hard and accomplishing much good. Speaking with their bishops and their parents, they made their own decisions to go. They did not tell me until they turned in their papers. I had nothing to do with their decision to go.

“Now, having made that confession, I wish to say that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in saying to our young sisters that they are not under obligation to go on missions. I hope I can say what I have to say in a way that will not be offensive to anyone. Young women should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men. Some of them will very much wish to go. If so, they should counsel with their bishop as well as their parents. If the idea persists, the bishop will know what to do.

“I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 72–73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“It does not matter if it interrupts your schooling or delays your career or your marriage—or basketball. Unless you have a serious health problem, every Latter-day Saint young man should answer the call to serve a mission” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 42).

Church Bulletin

“There is increasing evidence that some young women are being strongly encouraged to serve full-time missions. Though capable and effective, young women do not have the same responsibility to serve full-time missions as do young men who hold the priesthood. We are grateful that some desire to serve as full-time missionaries, but they should not be made to feel obligated to do so. A young woman should not be recommended for a mission if it would interfere with a specific marriage proposal” (*Bulletin*, 1993, no. 2, p. 2).

Making the Decision at the Appropriate Time

President Harold B. Lee

“I am not trying to urge you younger men to marry too early. I think therein is one of the hazards of today’s living. We don’t want a young man to think of marriage

until he is able to take care of a family, to have an institution of his own, to be independent. He must make sure that he has found the girl of his choice, they have gone together long enough that they know each other, and that they know each other's faults and they still love each other. I have said to the mission presidents (some of whom have been reported to us as saying to missionaries, 'Now, if you are not married in six months, you are a failure as a missionary'), 'Don't you ever say that to one of your missionaries. Maybe in six months they will not have found a wife; and if they take you seriously, they may rush into a marriage that will be wrong for them.'

"Please don't misunderstand what we are saying; but, brethren, think more seriously about the obligations of marriage for those who bear the holy priesthood at a time when marriage should be the expectation of every man who understands the responsibility; for remember, brethren, that only those who enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in the temple for time and eternity, only those will have the exaltation in the celestial kingdom. That is what the Lord tells us" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 120; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 100).

Church Bulletin

"When full-time missionaries return home, they should be counseled concerning such matters as continuing their education or employment, strengthening family relationships, participating actively in the Church, paying tithes and offerings, and preparing for temple marriage. It is unwise, however, to 'recommend that missionaries be married within a specific time. The decision to marry is so important that it should be made only after the most prayerful and careful consideration by the individual.' (*Mission President's Handbook* [31153], 1990, p. 23)" (*Bulletin*, 1993, no. 1, 2).

Agency or Inspiration?