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# so you want to get married?

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What if you could find the perfect mate, someone you could live with the rest of your life, who would meet all your longings and expectations? What would that kind of match be worth to you? I think you'll agree it would be priceless! That's exactly what this book is about . . . finding *your* million dollar mate.

Marriage is a big deal to anyone looking for that special someone with whom to spend the rest of his or her life. Everywhere I go it's on people's minds.

During a recent visit to Chicago I struck up a chat with a taxicab driver. I said, “Where are you from?”

“Pakistan,” he answered.

Fascinated, I ventured a few questions to get him to open up. “How can you stand this weather in Chicago?” I asked casually.

“I hate it. I absolutely hate it,” he retorted. “I’ve been here fourteen years, but I’m moving to California to get away from it.” At that point he grew animated and said, “But first I’m going back to Pakistan to get married.” After congratulating him, I asked him to tell me about his bride-to-be. He replied, “I don’t know her. We’ve never met. Our marriage has been arranged.”

My interest level intensified as I urged him to explain. He gladly continued, his eyes darting in and out of view in the rearview mirror as he navigated the congested Chicago streets. “No, I’ve never met her,” he said, grinning. “I’ll go home and give her an engagement ring, but we’re

not going to rush into it. After we get engaged we'll spend time getting to know each other."

"When you say you're not going to rush into it, how long will you actually be together before you get married?"

"Well, we're going to give it at least two months. That should be plenty of time."

Wow! An arranged marriage and only two months of dating! That's how they do it in Pakistan.

Obviously the methods for finding a mate are as numerous as there are cultures and lands.

And options abound for anyone who chooses to begin the mate quest. People can search on-line, go to a match-making party, or try their hand with a tarot-card reader. I recently read about dating nightclubs designed to allow singles to meet several eligible people in one night. When the bell rings each person moves around the room and strikes up a conversation with someone of interest. Conversations are timed. After twelve minutes another

bell sounds and each person shuffles to the next person. Each time the people are hoping to learn as much as they can about whatever person they happen to be talking to. And in twelve minutes the expectation is that they will be able to size that person up, get a read on the chemistry between the two of them, and by the end of the evening, narrow the choice. The results are tabulated and matches are made. Imagine that. I call it icebreaker dating!

Even reality TV has cashed in on the business. Since so many people dream about finding that special someone, reality dating shows have struck instant gold.

The world has grown obsessed with reality dating. First on the scene was *The Bachelor*, then *The Bachelorette*. Following that, *Joe Millionaire*. And soon after, *Married by America* and *For Love or Money*, and, of course, *Cupid*. By the time this book is printed, there'll be many more. The wildest of all is *Mr. Personality*! Producers drape masks over the faces of a group of guys, half of them decent

looking, the other less than handsome, parade them in front of an eligible woman, and say, “OK, you pick, but you’ll never know what they look like until you’ve made your decision.” Now that’s what I call a blind date!

### UNREAL EXPECTATIONS of a REALITY CULTURE

Sadly, there’s nothing *real* about reality TV. Especially in the dating craze. A journalist writing for the *Christian Science Monitor* interviewed a group of singles as they watched back-to-back episodes of these wild dating games. The article chronicles their reactions and reveals the unreality of reality TV:

*While the unscripted TV craze now includes everything from celebrity “moles” in Hawaii to Allen Funt [Candid Camera] versions of high school reunions, dating remains a popular topic for the genre. This week two new shows debuted to predictably high ratings for a culture always fascinated by the spousal quest. . . . “How can you say these shows are about*

*relationships?” asks 15-year-old Whitney Williams, sitting cross-legged on the rug and leaning forward attentively. “All they’re doing is lying to each other. Relationships are supposed to be based on trust.”*

*The idea of finding the perfect mate on television is met with a snort of derision from 23-year-old Melissa de la Rama. But then, she adds, maybe they’re just looking for love. “I guess I don’t blame them for looking for love in a weird place.”<sup>1</sup>*

I’m with her. I don’t blame these young people for looking for love. We all desire that, don’t we? Yet the results are coming in on the staying power of these matches made in TV land, and the news looks grim. Total devastation. Reality dating wreaks havoc, especially in the lives of those not chosen. Under the lights and cameras of that world of make believe, excited contestants make it so far only to be eliminated. The consolation prize? More pain, hurt, and rejection while the world watches from its living room. You can get *that* anywhere.

Most leave having never even gotten to the proposal. They simply weren't chosen by someone they'd just met. Losers end up feeling, well, like *losers*! Distraught over a breakup before a get-together ever took place. The expectations left the planet and went into orbit.

But are these "reality" shows really so far removed from real life? Rates for divorce and desertion climb painfully higher each year. The statistics startle even the most progressive soul. According to recent research, higher than 50 percent of marriages will end in divorce. How's that for *reality*?

Yet, despite such ominous projections, millions of people continue to search for that perfect someone to grow old with. In fact, if you're single and looking for a mate, either for the first time or once again, you are among

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HOW'S THAT FOR REALITY?



approximately eighty million eligible singles in the U.S. alone! A recent census showed that out of all the householders accounted for in America, nearly half are unmarried adults. Many have never been married—about fifteen million people between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four—and over twenty million of the single adults in the U.S. are single again following a divorce.<sup>2</sup> No wonder reality dating shows hit prime time with a bang!

### IS THERE REALLY A PERFECT MATE FOR ME?

With so many options for finding that perfect someone and no shortage of eligible singles, why are the odds stacked so high against marriage? *I'm convinced there's something fundamentally wrong with the search process.*

Finding the right mate is a wonderful goal and a powerful desire in just about every person's life. Different cultures approach it in different ways. But whether it's Pakistan or Paducah, finding the right mate is serious business.

If you have any interest in marriage, the big questions you're likely asking are, *Who will it be? How will I find that person? And how do I know when I do?* Perhaps the most important question of all: *How do I keep from becoming another bleak statistic?*

I believe there *is* a way to find lasting fulfillment in marriage—to find that match truly made in heaven. But you likely won't find him or her on a game show or in some trendy, smoke-filled piano bar or even on the Internet. Finding the mate who's best for you is about deciding what matters most. That requires honest reflection about what drives you in life and determining your overarching purpose for living.

## LOOKING BACK

The mere fact you've picked up this book and started reading tells me you're wondering about marriage . . . or you care deeply about someone else who is wondering about getting married.

Quite likely, you're single, have done some dating either in high school or in college or both, and now you're standing in the real world wondering if Mr. Right or Ms. Right truly exists. It may be that you're single again after a divorce or following the death of your spouse—in either case you're no doubt still wrestling with many tender and often conflicting emotions vying for control.

Whatever your situation I want you to know you're OK. No matter where you are in your process, what you're feeling as you read is perfectly normal. Being single does not make you a stranger in the land.

In fact, now would be an appropriate place for me to make some clarifying comments about being single.

I don't want you to believe that since I'm writing a book about finding your million dollar mate that marriage is for everybody. I don't believe that at all. But I am convinced that both being single and being married are gifts from God. If you subscribe to the notion, as I do, that there exists for you a divine design, then that design includes either the gift of marriage or the gift of singleness. Each gift comes with its own set of wonderful blessings and challenges. And if God's plan for you is to be single then He promises to provide you with everything you need to accept and even embrace that plan as part of His calling on your life.

Everything about the culture in which you and I live contradicts that perspective. And that's precisely why I felt compelled to write this book. But as we will soon see, culture is not a reliable guide as to what is best for you or for your life.

What I want to do in the pages that follow is help

guide you through the maze—to navigate the tossing sea of questions and emotions and help you land safely on the other side.

I've been there . . . right where you are. And in my nearly three decades of working and counseling with couples, I've journeyed nearly every path with people like you. So let's explore together and see what we discover!

But before we go there, take some time to reflect on what you've read. A section that I will call "Think About It" will end each chapter. This brief section will help you reflect on what you've read and prepare you to go on to the next chapter.

**THINK ABOUT IT**

*How are you feeling? Choose the emotion that best fits:*

**Skeptical**

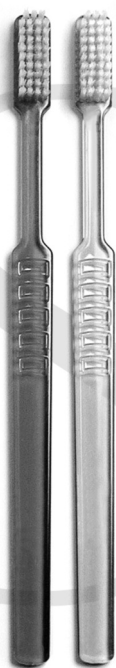
**Curious**

**Anxious**

**Can't wait to turn the page!**

*What are the reasons you decided to read this book?*

*How often do you think about marriage these days? Do you think there really is someone just right for you with whom you could spend the rest of your life? Why or why not?*



*“Riches and honor are with me,  
enduring wealth and righteousness.  
My fruit is better than gold . . . and  
my yield better than choicest silver.”*