There are examples of notoriously rebellious individuals in the church who, after settling down, turn over a new leaf and become model Christians. There are also believers who serve the Lord with great fervor while they are single, but sadly, after marriage they gradually withdraw themselves from church activity to lead a private and exclusive family life.

The Bible tells us, “He who finds a wife [husband] finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord” (Prov 18:22). The latter scenario is probably not the good thing favored by God.

Married couples spend so much time together that in many aspects they start to think, talk, and act alike. Our spouse will undoubtedly be the most influential person in our life, and our commitment should be made with careful consideration.

“WHY SHOULD I MARRY A BELIEVER?”

We pursue marriage because of love. To willingly give up our desires, habits, and viewpoints in order to make someone else happy is a selfless and honorable expression of that love. However, we should be clear on one thing that should never be given up even for our beloved and that is our relationship with God.

There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and
spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world how she may please her husband (1 Cor 7:32-36)

Is it possible for us to be married and still serve the Lord without distraction? A significant factor is whether we marry someone in the same faith and if our spouse understands and loves God above all else.

If we consider God as first priority and our spouse does not, there will be a conflict of interest. On one hand, we want to please God and build an intimate relationship with Him, but on the other hand, we want to please the person whom we feel we cannot live without.

Marriage would not be such a struggle if our spouse had the same faith and love for God, for pleasing our spouse would mean pleasing God. There is less conflict and need for compromise when both put Christ first.

We won t have to coax our spouse into attending church services or bicker about financial decisions, because we both know that our lives and possessions are in the Lord s hands. We understand that Jesus is the foundation of our lives and share the goal of living a godly lifestyle and teaching our children likewise.

Because our spouse also loves God above all else, they support our desire to serve Christ and His church. In turn, our Father will bless us and be pleased with a union that glorifies His name.

Priscilla and Aquila are a model couple who lived a simple life as tent-makers but served God faithfully even with their humble lifestyle. They grew together in the knowledge of God s grace and truth, opened their hearts and homes to God s people, and refreshed fellow workers in Christ (Acts 18).

God gave each of us a helper, not so that we should rely on Him less and depart from His body, but that we may support one another, growing in faith, and forming a threefold cord that is not easily broken God, husband, and wife.

“MAYBE THIS IS GOD’S SPECIAL WILL FOR ME?”

Despite all the encouragement to marry in Christ, many of us are still tempted to look outside the flock. Some of us are struggling at the start of a relationship with an unbeliever and others are already deeply involved. With our hearts already bound to them, we pray that they too can come to believe in Christ.

We once may have been established in the Lord and determined to wait patiently on Him, to not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14), and to keep our minds and bodies pure.

But now, torn between the desire to please God and the desire to keep company with an unbeliever, a shadow of doubt is cast upon those biblical principles that were once so firmly rooted in our hearts and minds. Emotions overshadow our understanding of the truth, and biblically defined marital boundaries now become a blur. Finally, we pose the question, Maybe this is God s special will for me? Perhaps it is my particular commission to marry and convert this person?

Scouring the church for examples to justify our resolution, we disregard all the unsuccessful marriages with Gentiles but cling with all hope to the few with happy endings discounting their long and painful beginnings. The statistics count against us, the truth of the Bible cuts our heart, the Holy Spirit prompts our conscience, fellow brothers and sisters lament for us, and our parents plead and fast and pray for us all to no avail.

The level of our biblical conviction and spiritual confusion is relative to our proximity to Christ. The closer we draw to God, the closer He will draw to us (Jas 4:8), and the more we will be able to discern the truth. Conversely, the further we are from God, the more vulnerable we are to Satan, who is the author of doubt and confusion.

Our relationship with God is established on the covenant that we shall love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind (Mt 22:37). How can someone understand the mystery of love without first understanding God, the source of love? In addition, how can someone practice true love if Christ does not live in them? (1 Jn 4:8)

A person who does not know Jesus cannot make Him the highest priority. A person who does not know what it means to utter Hallelujah cannot pray with us in the Spirit. A person who does not fear God will not place equal importance in keeping His commandments.

We can plead with them to have faith in Jesus, but if they do not believe, where will the faith come from? It is hard enough for us to stand firm in Christ on our own imagine how difficult it would be if our spouse were draining our spirit.

“But I CAN’T FIND ANYONE IN CHURCH”

Search from the book of the Lord, and read:

Not one of these shall fail; not one shall lack her mate.

For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them. (Is 34:16)

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah describes how God willed for the land of Edom to be populated and taken over by wild beasts. God spoke and His Spirit assembled the animals together. According to His good will, none of them would lack a mate; they would produce offspring and overcome the
land He purposed for them.

It is also God s will for this earth to be populated by His children, that we should multiply and produce godly offspring, to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, and eventually inherit His heavenly kingdom.

God does not will for any of His children to falter, neither does He expect anyone to endure alone. Our Almighty Father has someone especially prepared for each of us, a perfect rib to be molded into each body, balanced and complementary so that one s lack will be supplied by the other s abundance.

The promised Holy Spirit will be granted to each one of us, and it is this same Spirit that will work to gather us to our mate. So it is not in vain that we are encouraged to pray for this matter with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our eyes can only see what is external and our senses fool us, but God s Spirit searches all things to the inner depths of the heart (1 Cor 2:10).

We cannot find our spiritual partner by relying on our sight. We need to humbly ask God to close our fleshly eyes and open our spiritual eyes, so that His will and not our own may be done.

Finally, we have to wait. Many of us have an earnest desire to marry within the Lord but grow impatient and anxious with time, taking matters into our own hands. Waiting is not merely the passing of time but also a true test of patience, trust, and belief in Christ.

**“WHAT DO I DO WHILE I’M WAITING?”**

The Bible warns us, The time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none (1 Cor 8:29). We do not know whether we will live or die tomorrow, so let us focus on living today and doing good work worthy of the Lord s calling.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. (Eccl 9:10)

We should take advantage of this limited time we have to be without care (1 Cor 7:32) and serve the Lord without distraction (1 Cor 7:35).

Responsibilities change with age. Working professionals can no longer dedicate summer vacations to holy work and attending spiritual seminars. The married can t simply leave their spouses to assist in seminars or missionary trips. Parents cannot easily leave their children and assist in church work. Now is the time to equip ourselves in Christ and to offer our best sacrifice to Him. Before bringing a third party into the picture, let s make sure our relationship with God is fully established.

As we wait patiently on the Lord, we should be careful not to take this matter into our own hands. In an attempt to find the right one, many young people are now dating and becoming involved in relationships. Whether or not they are Christians, this is a dangerous chemistry experiment as young people are getting too involved too soon.

There is an old adage that says, You can t continue to walk along the shoreline without getting your feet wet. You may start out wanting only to test the waters, but soon you become submerged in the tide. Are we stronger than Samson, greater than King David, or wiser than King Solomon? These great men were brought down in the time of temptation. The best bet is to walk a safe distance from the coastline.

In a discussion forum, someone raised the question, How do I know if this person is truly the one God wills for me to marry? Someone wisely responded, It is more important for us to be God s will than to know God s will.

Each day we should focus on being who God wants us to be, doing what is right in His eyes, and keeping ourselves holy. We must remain obedient to His commandments and pursue love, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. As we continue to grow in the understanding of His knowledge and truth, the mystery of His will shall be made known to us, in His time.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP**

Marriage, like our biological family, is only a worldly relationship. Marriage does not exist in heaven (Mt 22:30), nor is it a pre-requisite to enter God s kingdom. Our relationship with God is the most crucial relationship in life more important than our relationship with our spouse, our friends, or our family.

No one denies that loneliness is a kind of suffering, and those who have yet to find their soul mate will feel this at times. Some people bear the suffering gracefully by taking refuge in God s love, while others grow desperate and forsake His commandments. Some feel it is better to marry an unbeliever than to burn with passion, but others believe that it is better to draw close to God and wait for His time than to be burnt by passion.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jas 1:12)

Let us pray that our love for God will be greater than any fear of loneliness or suffering and that our faith in Him will not turn cold with the passing of time. The temporary feeling of loneliness cannot be compared to eternal separation from God. Nothing in this world, including marriage, is worth jeopardizing our relationship with Christ.