

COMPATIBILITY IN MARRIAGE – PART 3

Hebrews 13:4 ... Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Our final segment on compatibility in marriage is on arranged marriages in which parents or tribal elders are responsible for bringing what they consider are compatible couples to the marital altar. This, contrasts with the modern idea of boy meets girl, falls in love (often just infatuation), and then marries outside the influence of their parents. The Bible speaks of arranged marriages, but mostly in terms of the culture and traditions of ancient times, not explicit Biblical instruction.

Organizations that track arranged marriages, show us that more than half (53%) of all marriages in the world are arranged. One troubling statistic, is that 46% of girls in Southern Asia (which includes the Philippines) are “forced” into marriage before age 18. Most interesting is that about half of non-arranged marriages end in divorce, separation, or annulment, but only 6% of arranged marriages fail.

Why are arranged marriages apparently stronger? Experts generally attribute it to the maturity of the parents compared to the immaturity of their children. Parents have lived longer, observed successful marriages longer, know their own children well, and have learned the hard way what it takes for two people – a boy and a girl – to get along and treat one another respectfully. They also know that love will develop over time, but that compatibility may not. Young people, however, tend to be attracted to one another based upon lust – their physical appearance – and develop a relationship based on dreams, sex, and fun. When challenges come, those attributes will not serve them well and the stress of the difficulties they will face, can destroy their relationship.

Unfortunately, not all arranged marriages are designed for the best interests of the couple. In some people groups, marriages are arranged even before the birth of their children on the basis of profit. Boys and girls are still sold into marriage in parts of the Philippines which, essentially, is slavery. I doubt that young people reading this will immediately turnover their spouse selection to their parents. However, there is much Biblical instruction relating to how we honor and respect our parents, making it wise for young people to trust the judgment of their parents (or other trusted mature adults) on matters of love and marriage. Above all, remember that marriage is sacred, as shown in today’s verse.

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