

DAN AUGSBURGER

THE GOD-ARRANGED MARRIAGE

- 1 **1. In the God-arranged Marriage God chooses your partner**
2 **for you!**
- 3 • a. You don't waste your time trying potential partners
4 ahead of time.
- 5 • b. Don't waste time with someone God never had in
6 mind for you.
- 7 • c. Don't waste emotional resources on someone who
8 isn't for you.
- 9 • d. To protect yourself from temptation.
- 10 • e. Godly courting is God's plan.
- 11 **2. Four things to consider with godly counselors**
- 12 **a. Does God want you to be married?**
- 13 • i Marriage is something that will influence and affect
14 your life both in this world and in the world to come.
15 A sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this
16 direction without the knowledge that God approves his
17 course. He will not want to choose for himself, but
18 will feel that God must choose for him. We are not to
19 please ourselves, for Christ pleased not Himself. I
20 would not be understood to mean that anyone is to
21 marry one whom he does not love. This would be sin.
22 But fancy and the emotional nature must not be
23 allowed to lead on to ruin. God requires the whole
24 heart, the supreme affections. {AH 43.3}
- 25 **b. Are you prepared to be married?**
- 26 **i Are you old enough?**
- 27 • (1) Attachments formed in childhood have often
28 resulted in very wretched unions or in disgraceful
29 separations. Early connections, if formed without
30 the consent of parents, have seldom proved happy.
31 The young affections should be restrained until the
32 period arrives when sufficient age and experience

33 will make it honorable and safe to unfetter them.
34 Those who will not be restrained will be in danger
35 of dragging out an unhappy existence. {AH 79.3}
36 A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the
37 fitness of a person as young as himself to be his
38 companion for life. {AH 79.4}

- 39 • (2) Man isn't an adult until 22-24; woman 21-23

40 **ii Is there appropriate spiritual knowledge**

- 41 • (1) Knowledge of word.
42 • (2) Knowledge of SOP
43 • (3) Can you prevail in prayer?

44 **iii Has a complete surrender been made to God**

- 45 • (1) Died to self and come to point of only wanting
46 what God wants.
47 • (2) Accepted the narrow way.
48 • (3) You can't be ready if you haven't made such a
49 surrender!

50 **iv Is there spiritual and personal maturity?**

- 51 • (1) Have you put away childish attitudes.
52 (2) Are you ready to take adult responsibilities?
53 • (a) Has been pointed out that the teen years are
54 when young people want to have adult privileges
55 without any of the responsibilities
56 • (b) When a young man is allowed adult
57 privileges, he has little to no incentive to prepare
58 for marriage.
59 (3) Is there mature judgment?
60 • (a) Young people are sent to school by their
61 parents to obtain an education, not to flirt with
62 the opposite sex. The good of society, as well as
63 the highest interest of the students, demands that
64 they shall not attempt to select a life partner
65 while their own character is yet undeveloped,
66 their judgment immature, and while they are at
67 the same time deprived of parental care and
68 guidance. {FE 62.2}
69 (4) Are you willing to listen to counsel from
70 others?
71 • (a) Unwillingness is a huge red flag.
72 • (5) Are you willing to submit to those in authority?

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v Has there been the practical preparation?

- (1) Before assuming the responsibilities involved in marriage, young men and young women should have such an experience in practical life as will prepare them for its duties and its burdens. {LYL 19.1}

Since both men and women have a part in homemaking, boys as well as girls should gain a knowledge of household duties. To make a bed and put a room in order, to wash dishes, to prepare a meal, to wash and repair his own clothing, is a training that need not make any boy less manly; it will make him happier and more useful. {LYL 19.2}

vi Is schooling completed?

- (1) The infatuation on the part of both young men and women in thus placing the affections upon each other during school days shows a lack of good judgment. As in your own case, blind impulse controls reason and judgment. Under this bewitching delusion the momentous responsibility felt by every sincere Christian is laid aside, spirituality dies, and the judgment and eternity lose their awful significance. {5T 110.1}

vii Is there financial preparation?

- (1) In early times custom required the bridegroom, before the ratification of a marriage engagement, to pay a sum of money or its equivalent in other property, according to his circumstances, to the father of his wife. This was regarded as a safeguard to the marriage relation. Fathers did not think it safe to trust the happiness of their daughters to men who had not made provision for the support of a family. If they had not sufficient thrift and energy to manage business and acquire cattle or lands, it was feared that their life would prove worthless. But provision was made to test those who had nothing to pay for a wife. They were permitted to labor for the father whose daughter they loved, the length of time being regulated by the value of the dowry required. When the suitor was faithful in his services, and

115 proved in other respects worthy, he obtained the
116 daughter as his wife; and generally the dowry
117 which the father had received was given her at her
118 marriage. . . . {AH 92.1}

119 **c. Is this the time that God is wanting you to be**
120 **married.**

121 i Are you willing to accept God's timing?

- 122 • (1) The good of society, as well as the highest
123 interest of the students, demands that they shall not
124 attempt to select a life partner while their own
125 character is yet undeveloped, their judgment
126 immature, and while they are at the same time
127 deprived of parental care and guidance. {FE 62.2}

128 ii Is it the right time so far as your education goes?

- 129 • (1) Before persons are admitted to our mission
130 training-schools, let there be a written agreement
131 that after receiving their education they will give
132 themselves to the work for a specified time. This is
133 the only way our missions can be made what they
134 should be. Let those who connect themselves with
135 the missions be straightforward, and take hold of
136 the work in a business-like manner. Those who are
137 controlled by a sense of duty, who daily seek
138 wisdom and help from God, will act intelligently,
139 not from selfish motives, but from the love of
140 Christ and the truth. Such will not hesitate to give
141 themselves unreservedly, soul, body, and spirit, to
142 the work. They will study, work, and pray for its
143 advancement. I repeat, Do not enter into a
144 marriage engagement unless there are good and
145 sufficient reasons for this step,--unless the work of
146 God can be better advanced thereby. For Christ's
147 sake deny inclination, lift the cross, and do the
148 work for which you are educating yourselves.
149 {PH048 28.3}

150 **d. Are you aware of your calling?**

151 i Hard to seek a partner when you are not sure how
152 God has called you.

153 **3. Some quotes from Ellen White**

154 **a. For Him**

- 155 • i Pr. 31

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- ii Here are things which should be considered: Will the one you marry bring happiness to your home? Is [she] an economist, or will she, if married, not only use all her own earnings, but all of yours to gratify a vanity, a love of appearance? Are her principles correct in this direction? Has she anything now to depend upon? . . . I know that to the mind of a man infatuated with love and thoughts of marriage these questions will be brushed away as though they were of no consequence. But these things should be duly considered, for they have a bearing upon your future life. . . . {AH 46.2}

In your choice of a wife study her character. Will she be one who will be patient and painstaking? Or will she cease to care for your mother and father at the very time when they need a strong son to lean upon? And will she withdraw him from their society to carry out her plans and to suit her own pleasure, and leave the father and mother who, instead of gaining an affectionate daughter, will have lost a son? {AH 46.3}

b. For both of them

- i Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny. The step you are about to take is one of the most important in your life, and should not be taken hastily. While you may love, do not love blindly. {AH 45.1}

Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy or inharmonious and wretched. Let the questions be raised, Will this union help me heavenward? Will it increase my love for God? And will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in this life? If these reflections present no drawback, then in the fear of God move forward. {AH 45.2}

Most men and women have acted in entering the marriage relation as though the only question for them to settle was whether they loved each other. But they should realize that a responsibility rests upon them in the marriage relation farther than this. They should consider whether their offspring will possess physical health and mental and moral strength. But few have moved with high motives and with elevated

198 considerations which they could not lightly throw off-
199 -that society had claims upon them, that the weight of
200 their family's influence would tell in the upward or
201 downward scale. {AH 45.3}

202 4. Dan's List (With Practical Additions)

203 a. The First three must be yes, otherwise don't even 204 consider courting!

- 205 • a. **Are you of sufficient physical and emotional**
206 **maturity to make such a decision.** An 18 year old,
207 for example, is going to change quite a bit in the next
208 four years and doesn't even know what he or she will
209 be like at the age of 22. What seemed perfect at 18,
210 may seem awful four years later. It is best if a
211 considerable portion of your university experience has
212 been completed before you get into serious
213 discussions with a person of the opposite sex about
214 marriage, for the university experience will greatly
215 broaden your views of life and greatly augment your
216 intellectual and emotional maturity. As a result it is
217 only later that you can properly evaluate a potential
218 marriage partner. For some people it may need to be
219 even later. When in doubt it is always better to delay.
- 220 • b. **Are you of sufficient spiritual maturity to make**
221 **a decision.** If you have not fully surrendered your life
222 to God, you probably won't ask God to lead you in
223 this, or at the very least you will evaluate on the basis
224 of human criteria instead of using Biblical criteria. If
225 you have not surrendered your life to God, you are
226 NOT ready to consider the "marriage" decision.
- 227 • c. **Do you know God's purpose for your life? Do**
228 **you know what kind of work He is calling you to?**
229 Until you can answer this question, it is will be very
230 hard to know WHO God may be calling you to marry.
231 Someone has said there are two great questions in life:
232 (1). Where you want to go in life (for the Christian,
233 this would be God's calling in your life), and (2). Who
234 do you want to go there with (note the right person
235 will be an individual who is wanting, or at least
236 sincerely willing, to go on the same journey you feel
237 called to). IF you can answer the "where" question,
238 the "who" question is far easier to answer. Too many
239 people answer the "who" question before they answer

240 the "where" question. This can cause much frustration
241 and sadness later. In my own mind, the great purpose
242 in life is to know Jesus, to surrender to Him, and to
243 devote one's life to serving Him. Many attend church,
244 but they haven't seen that their lives belong to God.
245 For the person who recognizes that he or she belongs
246 to God, it is important to marry someone who
247 similarly recognizes God's ownership.

248 **2. The next three should also be "yes," otherwise don't**
249 **go forward.**

- 250 • a. **To what degree will this union help you**
251 **heavenward?**
- 252 • b. **To what degree will it increase your love for**
253 **God?**
- 254 • c. **To what degree will it enlarge your sphere of**
255 **usefulness in this life?**

256 **3. Then continue forward**

- 257 • a. **To what degree do you feel that God has**
258 **specifically led the two of you together to serve**
259 **Him unitedly in your marriage.** In this respect what
260 Muller says about knowing God's will is very
261 important. What specific things can you point to that
262 clearly demonstrate that God has chosen a particular
263 person for you? God is the BEST matchmaker. Hold
264 out for His choice!
- 265 • b. **Are you both Christians?** Don't even consider
266 marriage with someone who is not a Christian. You
267 may not care today, but you will eventually in most
268 cases, and the saddest people I know are the ones who
269 didn't care ahead of time, but later changed their
270 mind, and found themselves in very unhappy
271 marriages. The person should also be a member of
272 your own denomination. If not, have them study what
273 you believe BEFORE you get married. A prior strong
274 relationship with the Lord and with the church is a
275 major strength for the future relationship.
- 276 • c. **How close are you in lifestyle?** The way you spend
277 your time and money are important to consider.
278 Granted marriage was given to help overcome
279 selfishness, however trend lines in this regard are
280 worth considering.
- 281 • d. **Can the person admit when they have made**

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mistakes and ask forgiveness. One would assume that Christians could easily say “I am sorry,” and “forgive me,” words which are magical in a relationship, but the reality is otherwise. It is hard being married to someone who cannot—or will not—ask forgiveness. Asking forgiveness is often learned through example at home growing up. A deficit in this area will bring significant challenges to your marriage.

- e. **Are there similar energy levels.** Some people are like the energy bunny, others need quite a bit of rest. Both groups include fine people, but significant differences in energy can challenge the relationship. Ambitions should also be similar, or at least compatible.
- f. **What are the family dynamics on each side?** Can the families celebrate the union? If the family refuses to celebrate the union, are there valid reasons for refusing? What were the values of the respective families? Those values will often significantly impact the relationship in the future. What were the communication styles in the respective families? Do they communicate? Can they express affection? These styles definitely continue into the next relationship. None are necessarily bad, though there are exceptions such as abusive communication styles. Some people refer to the different languages of love and how each person communicates and responds to love in different ways—for example one person verbally expresses love, while another expresses love in giving gifts. Such differences are worth knowing about ahead of time. Reading a good book on the subject would be good. One should also consider how the respective families resolved their differences? Families tend to develop their own ways—patterns—of resolving differences. Some don’t address problems, preferring silence—which can get old over time. Some are very verbal when they are working things out, but resolved whatever is going on and forget about what was said. It has been suggested we all have two communication modes: the one we have when we are on our best behavior, and a backup mode that comes out when we feel threatened or upset, which isn't that pleasant, and

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can be similar to what we learned growing up. You should also consider the kind of respect shown to the mom and to the dad. This is an important one, because if the guy didn't see his mom being respected and valued, he may not show respect to his spouse. The same is true for the wife relative to her respect for her father. Challenges mentioned are not unchangeable life sentences, but they should not be minimized either. In some ways you ARE marrying each other's family and are bringing the relational styles of your respective families to the marriage. Serious issues should result in serious counseling ahead of time.

- **g. How optimistic is the person?** Optimism and hopefulness comes more easily to some than others. However, in my opinion, it is also a decision, and we can develop a more optimistic frame of mind by saying “yes” and “thank you” to God more often, which of course helps us develop a more confident belief that He is somehow working for good in ALL situations.
- **h. Can the respective parties make room for differing opinions and different rates of spiritual growth?** Some individuals see every decision as a “yes” or “no” kind of decision—some would use the term “black and white”, regardless of what others say. Life isn't always so simple and appropriate open-mindedness can make for a happier marriage.
- **i. Minimize the wonderful things ahead of time; maximize the little things.** I am not negating the good things that attracted you, but they tend to be forgotten later and the little “We can change that later” things become all important. Don't assume you can change each other AFTER the marriage.
- **j. Common interests are often cited as important ingredients of a happy marriage.** The more things you enjoy in common, the more things you will enjoy doing together. The more time you spend together, the closer you will feel to each other. These commonalities will also help you weather relational storms.
- **k. To what degree are former associations having to change. Friendships** are voluntary and are a good

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indicator of compatibility. Having to change your friends to maintain the relationship can be an important negative indicator of compatibility since friendships are voluntary and you usually spend time with people you are compatible with.

- l. **A suspicious, critical, spirit is also to be watched out for—everyone struggles with this some, but some people have more of a problem with this than others, and it can make for future unhappiness.** Are there good reasons for the suspicions? Was this mode of thinking learned at home? Do the suspicions indicate an underlying insecurity? If it was a part of the home growing up, it may well continue into the new home. We are advised that this kind of spirit will destroy the spirituality of a church; it will also mar—perhaps even destroy—the happiness of your home. Life is too short to go through life being suspicious of everyone. If you want to experiment with this, spend a week criticizing each other and being suspicious of each another. Then spend a week affirming each other. See which mode results in a sense of feeling closer. Evaluate which mode results in a greater desire to love and cherish each other.
- m. **How free is communication?** Are your thoughts welcomed and seriously considered, or do you find your opinions being subordinated to the other? Do you find yourself “walking on egg shells” and avoiding certain subjects? This is a major red flag since it often gets worse after marriage. Open communication is an indicator of mutual respect.
- n. **Inordinate possessiveness can also be problematic.** Some people feel good about themselves and can give much in the relationship, for example, desiring the other person to succeed. Others are not as confident, and therefore struggle to allow the other person to have a “healthy” degree of freedom, in fact, sometimes finding it impossible to allow any freedom. This is a serious red flag problem and I urge you to get counseling for this—if this is a serious issue, you should get out of the relationship as quickly as possible!
- o. **Are you able to study the Bible and pray together?** This isn’t the easiest thing to do.

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- **p. What are other people who know you both saying?** The heart is deceptive above all things, and love can cause one to be blind. Asking the opinions of others is always a good idea. Many mistakes are made as a result of not seeking counsel from the godly people God has placed in our lives. Ask your parents what they think, but remember that non Christian parents cannot be looked to for godly counsel in the same way Christian parents can be looked to. Ask spiritually mature people what they think? Ask your friends who know you? Most of all ask God. Don't minimize what is said, but also make sure you let God have the last word.

423 **5. The courtship pathway**

424 **a. Elder Frazee's pathway**

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- i Does God want you to marry?
 - ii Are you prepared to be married?
 - iii Is this the right time to be married?
 - iv Do your counselors agree?
 - v Who does God want you to marry?
 - vi Does her counselor agree?
 - vi If her parents are believers, do they agree?
 - vi Does she agree?
 - vii Set up accountability!

434 **b. Remember...**

435 **i A wife is a gift from God!**

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- i Pr. 19:14 A wife is to be sought from God.
 - **ii Seek to know and do God's will!**
 - (1) Choose to have no will of your own. Luke 9:23
 - (2) Make sure every step is supported by Scripture. Isa. 8:20
 - (3) Look for God's providential Leadings. Prov. 3:5,6
 - (4) Don't rush ahead of God's peace. Col. 3:16
 - (5) Look for confirmation from Godly counselors. Prov. 11:14

446 **iii There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.**

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- (1) When so much misery results from marriage, why will not the youth be wise? Why will they

449 continue to feel that they do not need the counsel
450 of older and more experienced persons? {AH
451 72.1}

- 452 • (2) If you are blessed with God-fearing parents,
453 seek counsel of them. Open to them your hopes
454 and plans; learn the lessons which their life
455 experiences have taught. {AH 73.2}

456 vi Pray

- 457 • (1) If men and women are in the habit of praying
458 twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they
459 should pray four times a day when such a step is
460 anticipated. {AH 71.1}

461 **6. Don't be afraid to break up if it isn't working out.**

- 462 • 1. Even if an engagement has been entered into without
463 a full understanding of the character of the one with
464 whom you intend to unite, do not think that the
465 engagement makes it a positive necessity for you to take
466 upon yourself the marriage vow and link yourself for life
467 to one whom you cannot love and respect. Be very
468 careful how you enter into conditional engagements; but
469 better, far better, break the engagement before marriage
470 than separate afterward, as many do. {AH 48.2}

471 You may say, "But I have given my promise, and shall I
472 now retract it?" I answer, If you have made a promise
473 contrary to the Scriptures, by all means retract it without
474 delay, and in humility before God repent of the
475 infatuation that led you to make so rash a pledge. Far
476 better take back such a promise, in the fear of God, than
477 keep it, and thereby dishonor your Maker. {AH 48.3}

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