

# Marriageable

By: Anonymous

## 1. Get tight with Jesus

You need to get serious about your faith. It needs to infect your life, transform your heart, and be the catalyst for every one of your decisions. Your relationship with Christ is bigger and better than any of your other relationships. He's number one.

Here's what it's not. It's not merely knowing a bunch of Bible stories. It's not having grown up in church or youth group or gone to a Christian school. It's not having Christian parents. It's not being American, or retweeting John Piper or Francis Chan every few days. Put Jesus first, and keep Him there. Put your future spouse firmly in second place. You'll be glad you did. And you'll have the best foundation for maturity there is.

## 2. Commit to a local church

You may think that loving Jesus is enough. It's not. The Bible calls us to be part of a local church. A physical church with real people. The New Testament church kept lists of its people. It cared for its people. It broke bread together, shared things in common, and provided encouragement and correction. It also provided a space for the mandates of corporate worship and observance of the sacraments.

Commitment to a local church provides accountability. Put simply, you need someone up in your business. This is why when I say "commit," I don't mean "sit in the back of a megachurch with your double-walled coffee mug and take in the show." I mean "get known by some people who won't forget you." If your church offers membership, join. Put yourself under the authority of godly elders, pastors, and leaders.

Listen to the Word preached. Join a Sunday school class or small group. Begin tithing. Start serving. Become a contributor, not a consumer. You'll strengthen a muscle of selflessness you never knew you had. Get a mentor. Find an older person of the same sex, and ask him or her to lunch or coffee. Be proactive. Build a relationship that is mutually beneficial by being both encouraging and stretching.

## 3. Take responsibility

This is where you start mastering life skills and learning what it's like to be in the real world. It's everything from getting and keeping a job to managing your money, learning how to keep a household running, making responsible decisions, and taking care of the things and people entrusted to you. It's also learning how to budget your time and talents. It's knowing when to work and when to play. It's knowing that work is good and should be done to the glory of God. It's knowing that play is also good and is to be used for refreshment and renewal, not escapism or idleness.

Train your character. You may be chomping at the bit for a promotion, but in the meantime you're stealing from the office supply cabinet. Reevaluate your decisions in light of how you want to honor God and others. Ask someone to keep you honest. There's value in accepting challenges, taking risks, and doing hard things. Push yourself, and allow others to push you too. Sometimes the easy road is the right road, but sometimes it's just easy. Know the difference.

#### **4. Lead where you are.**

You may be young. You may be on the bottom rung at work. You may not have a job at all. It doesn't matter. You're still a leader. You're in charge of yourself. That's a start. But there's more. You are needed. Everyone (certainly every Christian) is called to serve where we are and lead if given the opportunity. It may be in a role with a big title, or it may be in a small but pivotal movement where character is needed. In both circumstances, you're on display.

Don't be afraid to be an example, regardless of your age. Remember the words of Paul to Timothy: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Finally, remember that active leadership now prepares you for leadership of a family in the future. You're in training; get as much experience under your belt as you can.

#### **5. Love the people you've got.**

I'll never forget the girl who stood in front of me, beaming, and announced that she couldn't wait to get married someday. "I need to find a husband so I can get away from my family," she said. Look, I know family is hard, and you can't really trade in the family you were born into, but using marriage as an escape plan is hardly the solution. First, it's our call to live at peace with everyone. Intentional strife, hatred, and discord are not allowed. Second, you'll only take your poor relationship skills into marriage. No husband is amazing enough to please you all the time. If your current family bugs you, I guarantee your future husband will too.

And it's not just family. A great indicator of maturity is how you relate to everyone in your current sphere: family, friends, neighbors, coworkers—even your enemies. Growing healthy relationships is learning how to communicate, how to do conflict well, how to apologize and forgive, and how to own up to your mistakes. It's establishing healthy boundaries and knowing when to say no. Above all, it's putting others above yourself as Jesus did.

Of course, this doesn't mean remaining in a toxic or abusive situation. In some cases, leaving a relationship for a time (or even forever) may be the healthiest choice. Just make sure you're doing it with a desire for what's best for all parties and not out of hatred or a determination to hurt, retaliate, or make someone pay. Forgiving someone, while not necessarily forgetting or excusing behavior, is always the first step toward freedom. And it's a sure sign of relational maturity.

#### **6. Actively pursue marriage OR the next stage of life**

We should always be growing and looking ahead. Where is God calling us? For those of you truly called to singleness, or celibate service, it may be a new ministry opportunity or friendship. For most who are reading this article, it will be marriage. How do you begin? First, you cultivate a love for marriage by understanding God's purpose for it. Then you champion God's view of marriage and your role in it.

You decide right now that marriage—and everything leading up to it—is to be approached with biblical intention. You resolve to keep God at the center of every decision you make from here on out. You allow Him to shake up your plans and expectations. And you remain teachable. You will no doubt realize you have some things that need to change. We all do. We're all carrying baggage that was either placed on us by the generations before us or picked up of our own free will. Now's the time to dump it.

Now's also the time to identify addictions, outrageous debt and spending pitfalls, past or present abuse, bad family patterns, and anything else that's holding you back from spiritual, emotional, and relational health. Get counseling if you need it. I'm a big fan of Christian counseling that is no-nonsense, targeted, compassionate, Jesus-centered, and has a goal.

I remember going on some dates with a guy a few years back. After an evening of Frisbee golf, he turned to me and said, "This has been great, but I'll be honest with you. Dating you has made me realize I need counseling."

At first I was offended, but not for long. I let that guy go to get the help he needed. I was saved from a bad relationship (or worse, a bad marriage). For all I know, that guy probably worked out his stuff and is now married and trucking along just fine. I'm glad I could be a part of that, even though it earned me a weird breakup. The point is, God won't keep us where we are. And we should be ecstatic about that.