

Anabaptist Mate Selection and Matchmaking

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1 Introduction

Finding a life partner, a soulmate to walk the journey of faith with, is a moment of profound significance in Anabaptist communities. This process isn't merely a personal endeavor but an act deeply rooted in our faith, community values, and Biblical teachings. The Bible, our ultimate guide, sheds light on the virtues and discernment needed in the process of mate selection, emphasizing the importance of choosing a partner who not only complements us but also strengthens our bond with God.

2 Biblical Foundations

Value of a Righteous Partner: - Proverbs 31:10 - "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies." This not only speaks to the value of a righteous woman but underscores the importance of character in mate selection.

Seeking Godly Offspring: - Malachi 2:15 - "Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring." The purpose of seeking a mate isn't just companionship, but to build a family that honors God.

Guarding the Heart: - Proverbs 4:23 - "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." In the search for a mate, it's crucial to protect oneself from temptations and hasty decisions, ensuring that choices align with God's plan.

3 Seeking Wisdom and Discernment from God

Meditation and Prayer: Intentional time set aside for prayer and meditation is instrumental in tuning our hearts to the voice of the Holy

Spirit. Just as we turn to the Bible for guidance on life's questions, so too should we turn to God in prayer, asking for wisdom in selecting a life partner.

- *Scriptural Reference: James 1:5* - "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

Listening for the Holy Spirit: When we immerse ourselves in quiet reflection and open our hearts in prayer, we provide space for the Holy Spirit to speak. Writing down impressions, feelings, or specific traits that come to mind can be a way of recording what you feel the Spirit might be revealing to you about your future spouse.

- *Scriptural Reference: John 14:26* - "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Verifying with Prophecy: Much like how Old Testament prophecies pointed towards the coming of Christ, and His life fulfilled them, so too can prophecies or impressions from the Holy Spirit provide guiding signs in our search for a mate. When we believe we've received insight or prophecy regarding our future partner, it's essential to test and verify these insights with the Word of God and the reality in front of us. Such as by writing down your impressions, and later revisiting them when a potential partner arises.

- *Scriptural Reference: Isaiah 53:3-7* - This scripture is a prophecy about Christ's suffering, which He later fulfilled, affirming Him as the Messiah.
- *1 Thessalonians 5:20-21* - "Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good."

Implication: God is deeply interested in every facet of our lives, including our choice of a life partner. By actively seeking His will and listening for His guidance, we align our desires with His, paving the way for a blessed union.

4 Inheritance of Traits in Children

Intelligence is primarily inherited from the mother. Science has brought forward evidence that supports the matrilineal inheritance of intelligence. Yet, we don't need to look far to find Biblical testimony to the power and wisdom of women, which they have passed on to their offspring.

*(<https://anabaptist.ca> <https://1being.org>
<https://lyis.ca> <https://distributist.org>)

Emotional temperament is largely influenced by the father. The Bible offers insights into how the characters and temperaments of fathers can shape the destinies and behaviors of their children.

Biblical examples:

Wisdom Transferred: From Hannah's Song to Samuel's Reign: Through her poetic song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, Hannah showcases not just her deep faith but also a remarkable intelligence in understanding the divine. This blend of wisdom and devotion, evident in her words, was the legacy inherited by Samuel, cementing his status as a luminary in Old Testament wisdom.

Isaac's Gentleness Reflecting Abraham's Character: Isaac, known for his pacifist nature and his willingness to be sacrificed by Abraham in Genesis 22, inherited Abraham's deep faith and gentle demeanor. Abraham's patience and unwavering trust in God also influenced Isaac's emotional temperament.

Timothy's Faith from his Mother and Grandmother: Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 1:5 how Timothy's sincere faith first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, indicating a matrilineal transmission of faith, a form of intellectual and spiritual legacy.

Implication: As God created all things, including the laws of genetics, our understanding from science merely reaffirms the truths within the Bible. When seeking a life partner, it is wise to consider these inheritances: seek a wife of compatible intelligence, recognizing the maternal influence on intellect, and choose a husband whose temperament aligns with the desired emotional character for future children.

5 Cousin Marriages

Historical and Biblical Perspectives: Throughout history and in biblical times, cousin marriages were common and often seen as beneficial for consolidating family wealth, property, and other assets.

- *Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 29)* - While Jacob's love for Rachel is a well-known tale, it's noteworthy to mention that Rachel was Jacob's first cousin, their fathers being brothers. Their union was socially accepted and blessed with children, reinforcing the acceptance of such relationships in biblical times.

Potential Benefits and Challenges:

Cousin marriages, particularly those between distant cousins, have historically been associated

with consolidating family ties, preserving cultural and familial traditions, and even producing stronger offspring in some instances. However, close cousin marriages carry potential genetic risks.

Medical and Social Considerations:

Modern medical research provides insight into the potential challenges and benefits of cousin marriages.

- The offspring of two first cousins have a heightened risk. Specifically, there is a one in four chance of a child being born with serious conditions like cystic fibrosis.
- Marriages between second cousins once removed have observed infant mortality rates of about 5%.
- Based on Icelandic studies, third cousins are seen as optimal for breeding, resulting in more offspring and grandchildren than other cousin relationships, making them the proverbial "kissing cousins".
- When the relationship is more distant, beyond eighth cousins, it becomes practically exogamous. For women born between 1800-1824, those with third-cousin mates had an average of 4.04 children and 9.17 grandchildren. In contrast, those related as eighth cousins or more distantly had 3.34 children and 7.31 grandchildren. The pattern holds even for women born between 1925-1949, indicating the relative genetic advantages of marrying third cousins. ¹

6 Endogamous vs. Exogamous Relationships

Value of Endogamy in the Anabaptist Community: Marrying within the Anabaptist community strengthens cultural bonds and ensures the continuation and preservation of spiritual heritage and traditions. Endogamy plays a pivotal role in fostering community ties, ensuring that faith and cultural practices are passed down through generations.

Biblical Examples of Endogamy: The Bible contains numerous instances where individuals were encouraged or chose to marry within their own tribe or community.

- *The Tribe of Levi (Numbers 36:6-9)* - The daughters of Zelophehad were commanded to marry within their father's tribal clan, ensuring that their inheritance remained within their tribe.

¹Third Cousins Have Greatest Number Of Offspring, Data From Iceland Shows <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080207140855.htm>

- *Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24:3-4)* - Abraham insisted that a wife for his son Isaac be found from among his own people rather than the Canaanites, emphasizing the importance of endogamous marriages.

Exogamous Marriages - Value and Challenges: Marrying outside the Anabaptist community or faith can bring a diversity of perspectives, enriching the community's fabric. However, it may also pose challenges in terms of cultural and religious adaptation. One of the significant benefits of exogamous marriages is the diversification of the gene pool, which can be especially valuable in communities where founder effect genetic issues are prevalent.

- *Ruth and Boaz (Book of Ruth)* - Ruth, a Moabitess, married Boaz from Judah. Her commitment to Naomi and the God of Israel is a celebrated example of the potential blessings that can emerge from exogamous unions. However, such relationships might require understanding, patience, and a deep commitment to faith to bridge cultural and spiritual gaps.

7 Arranged Marriage and Its Role

Historical and Biblical Instances of Arranged Marriages: From ancient times, arranged marriages have been common, especially in religious communities. In the Bible, examples like Isaac and Rebekah highlight the practice.

- *Scriptural Reference: Genesis 24* - Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac from his relatives, leading to the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

Suitable Age for Matchmaking: It's vital to recognize that potential spouses should be introduced only after reaching a certain maturity level, both physically and mentally. In Jewish tradition, this is marked by the Bar Mitzvah (for boys) and Bat Mitzvah (for girls), indicating the transition into adulthood. In broader terms, this often aligns with reaching puberty.

- *Scriptural Reference: Luke 2:42-43* "When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it." - This account of Jesus discussing scripture with the teachers in the Temple at age 12 suggests the significance of this age in terms of religious maturity.

Rumspringa and Mate Selection: In the Amish tradition, Rumspringa is a rite of passage during which teenagers experience the outside world. This period can also be a time for them to reflect on their future, including the kind of spouse they wish to have. It emphasizes the balance between community traditions and personal choice.

The Role of Parents and Elders in Matchmaking: While the choice of partner is deeply personal, parents and elders play a crucial role in guiding young adults, sharing wisdom, and offering potential matches based on compatibility and family values.

- *Scriptural Reference: 1 Corinthians 7:36-38* - This passage touches upon a father's authority and decision regarding his virgin daughter's marriage.

Balancing Parental Guidance and Individual Choice: Arranged marriages emphasize compatibility and shared values. However, it's essential to find a balance where the individual's feelings and choices are respected and considered.

- *Scriptural Reference: Song of Solomon* - This poetic book celebrates love, desire, and romantic relationship, indicating that individual feelings have a place in marital decisions.

Advantages and Potential Challenges: Arranged marriages can offer stability and align with shared values, but it's crucial to ensure mutual respect, understanding, and love within these unions.

- *Scriptural Reference: Proverbs 18:22* - "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." This emphasizes the positive value of marriage, whether arranged or love-based, when aligned with God's will.

Seeking Divine Guidance Through Stars: As the stars heralded the birth of Jesus, so too can they offer insights into marital compatibility. Astrological signs, often seen as divine guidance, can be considered when choosing a life partner.

- *Scriptural Reference: Genesis 1:14* - "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years.'"
 - *Scriptural Reference: Matthew 2:2* - "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." The Magi, or Wise Men, followed the star to find the

location of Jesus' birth, showcasing how celestial events pointed to significant happenings on Earth.

Many, while acknowledging the importance of stars in biblical narratives, believe in astrological compatibility as an additional tool to understand potential marital alignments. While the Bible doesn't explicitly endorse astrological compatibility in mate selection, the recurrent theme of stars as guiding symbols makes this an area of personal discernment for believers.

8 Love Marriages in Anabaptist Communities

The Significance of Mutual Love and Understanding: In any union, mutual love and understanding form the cornerstone. These elements foster a strong foundation, ensuring that couples are aligned in their values, beliefs, and aspirations, thus fostering harmony and contentment.

Biblical Instances: The Bible contains various instances of couples who came together based on love and divine orchestration.

- *Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24)* - Rebekah was chosen for Isaac due to the divine guidance given to Abraham's servant. The narrative showcases the importance of faith in God's providence and the role of elders in decision-making. Yet, upon meeting, there was mutual affection and consent between Isaac and Rebekah, highlighting the significance of individual choice and attraction.
- *Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 29)* - Jacob's love for Rachel was profound; he worked for seven years to marry her, and when deceived into marrying her sister, he worked another seven years for Rachel. Their story underscores the depth of love and the lengths one might go for the beloved.

The Role of Discernment and Prayer in Choosing a Partner: In both arranged and love marriages, discernment and prayer are paramount. By seeking God's guidance, individuals can gain clarity and confirmation in their choices. This helps ensure that the relationship is not solely based on fleeting emotions but is aligned with God's will and purpose.

- *Proverbs 3:5-6* - "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your

own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

9 The Role of the Church in Matchmaking

Guidance from Church Leaders: Church leaders can provide valuable guidance in the mate selection process, emphasizing spiritual compatibility, character alignment, and shared life goals. Additionally, they maintain available for reference genealogical information, ensuring the health and well-being of the congregation.

Significance of Shared Faith and Values: A mutual faith foundation fortifies the marital bond. Shared beliefs, rituals, and values form a cohesive base, promoting mutual respect and collaboration. The church's emphasis on these shared tenets ensures couples are connected in love and faith.

- *2 Corinthians 6:14* - "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Pre-marital Counseling and Support: Offering pre-marital counseling, the church assists couples in understanding potential marital challenges. This guidance aids in setting mutual expectations, while also strengthening their spiritual foundation for the journey ahead.

- *Ephesians 5:31-32* - "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church." Illustrating the connection of marriage and the church.

10 Conclusion

The journey towards a fruitful marriage in Anabaptist communities is not just an individual quest, but a shared venture. Faith is the foundation, upon which trust, love, and community guidance build the pillars of a lasting union. Moreover, an understanding of genetic influences can further ensure a prosperous future for the family. Above all, always prioritize seeking God's will in every decision related to marriage, trusting that God's plans are always for the best.