



Dr. Marcus H. Martins

## Waiting for Marriage and Deciding Who's "the One" Marcus H. Martins, Ph.D.

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One of my former missionaries once asked me the following:

"President, how did you know that Heavenly Father agreed with your marriage for eternity with Sister Martins? [It's been a while since I returned from the mission, but I still can't] feel anything for [someone]. ... Some people say I'm too picky and that I'm going to end up single forever. Others say that when I find the 'right' person I'll feel something ... I find this very confusing."

The following is a slightly edited version of my answers to him.

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The New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage (D&C 131:2) is one of the "next steps" for a faithful member of the Church who returns from a full-time mission. Establishing a family with an eternal companion is essential in God's plan for our exaltation. In other words, to receive the highest blessings, privileges, honors, and glories of the eternal priesthood one must fall in love with a special person to him/her (and vice versa) and be sealed to him/her in the House of the Lord.

Besides this, the other "steps" include obtaining formal education, finding a good honest source of income, seeking to have a successful professional life, and serving in the Church and in the community. That's a returned missionary's new "mission" in life. There is no specific deadline for these steps to take place, but it would be ideal that it doesn't take an excessively long time to these to happen. (I don't know what would be considered 'excessively long', and the Church has no official definition for it).

Why some people get married fast and others don't, is not up to me to answer because each person has his/her individual circumstances, challenges, etc. It is better to rely primarily on divine guidance, then on the wise counsel of parents, and finally your bishop or stake president. The less people you ask for an opinion, the less confused you will be. Focus on the words of those who have authority to speak in the name of the Lord to you—your parents and those who can use priesthood keys to bless you.

Since you asked me, in our case Sister Martins and I understood that the Lord was not against our marriage because he did not answer our prayers about it. Elder Richard Scott taught decades later (General Conference, April 2007), that when the Lord says nothing, we can understand that He trusts in our ability to make a decision, because He will have given us the wisdom and the necessary instruction to do something dignified and correct (Doctrine & Covenants 58:27-28).

Some leaders taught that the choice of a spouse is not necessarily a matter of revelation (see the Institute manual for Eternal Marriage, pages 188-197).

**Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

“... [Never] in my life did I ever ask the Lord whom I ought to marry. It never occurred to me to ask him. I went out and found the girl I wanted ... Now, if I’d done things perfectly, I’d have done some counseling with the Lord, which I didn’t do; but all I did was pray to the Lord and ask for some guidance and direction in connection with the decision that I’d reached.” (The New Era, “Agency or Inspiration,” Jan. 1975, p.40)

**Elder Boyd K. Packer**

“While I am sure some young couples have some special guidance in getting together, I do not believe in predestined love ...” (Eternal Love, p.11)

Let me share what I have taught to thousands of my students at BYU-Hawaii in the last 14 years. When you find a man/woman who meets these characteristics:

- 1) you can’t stop thinking about him/her
- 2) you want to have him/her at your side in all significant occasions for the rest of your life
- 3) you have tastes, preferences, and personal goals that are compatible or that complement his/hers
- 4) you don’t care to date any other man/woman besides him/her
- 5) you believe he/she would be an excellent father/mother to your future children
- 6) you think that without him/her at your side eternity would not be “celestial” for you



And, most importantly:

- 7) He/she feels the same way (items 1-6) about you ...

My list could be longer, but I don’t want to overly complicate something relatively simple.

If you find someone who meets these seven characteristics, you won’t need a revelation from on high to decide to marry this person—all you’ll need is the divine blessing that will be bestowed by priesthood authority in the sealing ordinance in the temple. When this becomes your case, you and your sweetheart can call the temple and set the date.

### **Looking For That “Special One”**

I have absolutely no doubt that the good Lord will bless those who are seeking an eternal companion with the righteous desires of their hearts ... plus “interest”. What I don’t know is when that blessed day will take place. In the meantime, let me offer a suggestion:

Instead of asking the Lord for some undefined and nonspecific potential spouse, start in the other direction and ask yourself: “Who would I want to have at my side as my eternal companion?” And I don’t mean “what kind of man” nor “what qualities I am looking for”; I mean that you identify the name of a specific person whom you would like to have at your side for all eternity. This is an application of a principle we learned through the Brother of Jared (Ether chapters 2 & 3). And as you think of names, “cast your net” wide ... don’t limit yourself because of age, geographical location, profession, or time of membership in the Church.

Once you determine who you would like to become your spouse, then you pray (1) for opportunities to meet him; (2) for the wisdom necessary to approach him in a “culturally proper” way; and (3) for his eyes to be “open”, so he can see your many qualities and eventually also see you as a “potential spouse”. Notice that if he will choose you or not is beyond the Lord’s control due to agency, but you will have made your best effort. This is just like to story of Ruth in the Old Testament.

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