



SO  
YOU'RE  
IN LOVE,  
NOW WHAT?

20 Q&A to Help You Make  
the Marriage Decision

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# 1

## What are some of the major decisions you must make?

It is remarkable, and somewhat overwhelming, to consider all of the major decisions in life that could be made before a faithful Latter-day Saint reaches the age of twenty-five. The first major decisions seem to come between the ages of seventeen and eighteen. Some of those decisions include:

- Will I attend college?
- Where will I attend college?
- Will I serve a mission?
- When should I submit my mission papers?

After one returns home from their mission, other major decisions include:

- What should I major in?
- Whom should I date?
- Whom should I marry? When will we marry? In which temple should our marriage take place?
- Where will we live once we are married?
- Should we both work and attend school once we are married?
- When should we begin to start our family?
- Where should I work? Should we both work?

As individuals conclude their undergraduate schooling, other decisions to consider include:

- Should I (we) attend graduate school?
- How will we pay for graduate school? Should we take out student loans?
- What should I study in graduate school?
- Where will we live while in graduate school?

Then of course, after graduate school, there are other monumental decisions, such as:

- What job offer should we accept? What if we do not have a job offer?
- How many more children should we have?

- How will we pay off our student loans?
- Should we buy a home?
- Where would we like to settle down and live more permanently?

It is amazing that most of these monumental decisions occur within such a short time span. President Thomas S. Monson stated, “I cannot stress too strongly that decisions determine destiny. You can’t make eternal decisions without eternal consequences.”<sup>9</sup> The decisions that we make can drastically affect both the course and the outcome of our lives. Small decisions can transition into significant consequences.

In our families, and in certain Church settings, perhaps we could do more to prepare young single adults to successfully navigate their way through these life-changing decisions. I remember the hours of thought, deliberation, exploration, and prayer that went into deciding upon my career. I spent many hours talking to professionals and friends about potential jobs. Of course, there were other serious decisions that we struggled to resolve. I remember spending many hours with Janie, trying to decide what course of action we would follow pertaining career, graduate school, children, and where to live. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this process were spiritual interventions we employed, such as fasting, prayer, and attending the temple.

I remember one day praying on the backside of the Hill Cumorah for answers regarding my career path. Before you think that I made a pilgrimage to Palmyra to receive such an answer, I should clarify that along with Janie and her family, we were there as participants in the Hill Cumorah Pageant. I had some extra time one afternoon, so I hiked around the back of the hill, away from the noise of all who were there, and poured my heart out in prayer. I returned to Janie with great confidence in what I should do professionally. I have never regretted that decision to work in the field of religious education. It was amazing how once that decision was made, everything seemed to fall into place.

A couple of months after that prayer, I was offered a job to work as a full-time seminary teacher in Mesa, Arizona. Our next big decision centered on where we would live. We did not have many choices in those days. It would have been “Apartment #1” or “Apartment #2.” I vividly remember sitting with Janie in a Dairy Queen in Mesa and making a pros and cons list for each apartment. After weighing out the options over dip cones, we chose Apartment #1, and that seemed to make all the difference. Even though we moved out of that apartment three months later into our first house, living in that apartment helped us to understand the geographic area where we wanted to live. About a year after that experience, we faced our next major decisions with graduate school. Later, we had to decide on the number of children we should have, if my career path would suit us in the long term, and where we would live permanently and ultimately raise our family. Undoubtedly, it sometimes seems that life consists of one major decision after the other.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, there are bigger decisions in life other than where to live or what job opportunities to accept. I believe the marriage decision is perhaps the most crucial decision of all. Whom you marry affects everything you will ultimately do. It will influence your happiness. It will affect how you serve in the Church and build the kingdom. It will affect how your children turn out. It could even affect your career. Years ago, President Spencer W. Kimball declared, "Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children's children down through many generations."<sup>11</sup>

Recently I met with one of my students who wanted to ask me a question. He said, "Dr. Ogletree, my dad said that I have permission to ask you this question for him. He is not sure what to do because my mother will *not* let him serve in the Church. He is active and faithful, and at this stage in his life, many of his friends serve in the Young Men's Program, some serve in bishoprics, and others in elders quorum presidencies. But my mom will not let my dad serve in the Church, and he's really sad about it."

I felt sad for the father who wanted desperately to serve in the Church and help build the kingdom. After all, he had made covenants that he would put the Lord first in his life and serve Him faithfully. I explained to my student that this situation was certainly a difficult one, and I recommended to him that his parents should at least visit with their bishop about the matter, or perhaps even consider marriage counseling. Serving in the Church can bring love, life, unity, and energy to a marriage.

Because the marriage decision is so crucial, every Latter-day Saint should consult with the Lord and receive His guidance. The Holy Ghost can give you assurance and provide peace in the midst of difficult decisions. Many years ago, Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught a principle that I completely believe:

Now, I tell you that you can make every decision in your life correctly if you can learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. . . . Study your problems and prayerfully make a decision. Then take that decision and say to him, in a simple, honest supplication, "Father, I want to make the right decision. I want to do the right thing. This is what I think I should do: let me know if it is the right course." Doing this, you can get the burning in your bosom, if your decision is right. If you do not get the burning, then change your decision and submit a new one. When you learn to walk by the Spirit, you never need to make a mistake.<sup>12</sup>

A significant key to receiving revelation is worthiness. If an individual keeps the commandments and repents daily, they can enjoy the constant influence of the Holy Ghost. If that individual seeks the Spirit, they will receive the guidance the Lord has promised. With the Lord's guidance, we never need to make a mistake. The Lord loves us, and He wants to reveal His will to us. He wants to direct our

lives and help us with such large decisions that affect eternity. Stay close to the Lord, and He will stay close to you. He will direct you into places and situations where you and your loved ones can thrive. Because the marriage decision is so crucial, I have no doubt that He will help you get it right.

### Thought Questions

1. What is the biggest decision you have had to make in your life? How did you go about deciding what to do?
2. What guidance have you felt from the Lord in your decision-making?

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9. Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny,” *Brigham Young University Speeches*, 6 November 2005; <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/thomas-s-monson/decisions-determine-destiny/>
  10. See Mark D. Ogletree, *Preparing for Your Celestial Marriage* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2017), 6–7.
  11. Spencer W. Kimball, “Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, March 1977, 3.
  12. Elder Marion G. Romney, *Conference Report*, October 1961, 60–61.

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