

**Series: FIT TO BE TIED—February 24, 2008**

**LOOK FOR ROCKS BEFORE YOU DIVE!**

**I. INTRO**

A. How many of you have ever seen the movie, **Bambi**? There's this great scene in it when Bambi and all his friends—you know, the rabbit and the skunk, fall in love. You can tell because they start acting stupid. Wise old owl calls it being **twitterpated**.

1. And it's actually true. In the Fall, when deer—especially the bucks—get **twitterpated**—they start doing strange things—chasing each other all over the place. Having lived in Pennsylvania with a massive deer population—deer getting twitterpated translates into trying to cross highways when they shouldn't. Deer + twitterpated + cars = well, let's just say it's not pretty. When you're on love drugs, decision-making can be hazardous to your health!
2. Actually, kids pick up on this whole love theme quite well. When asked the question,  
***What do most people do on a date?***

Martin, age 10 said,

***“On the first date, they just tell each other lies. And that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date!”***

\*Another question,

***Is it better to be single or married?***

Anita, age 9 said,

***“It is better for girls to be single, but not for boys. Boys need somebody to clean up after them!”***

Will, age 7 said,

***“It gives me a headache to think about that stuff. I'm just a kid. I don't need that kind of trouble!”***

***\*How do people in love typically behave?***

Wendy, age 8 says,

***“When a person gets kissed for the first time, they fall down and don't get up for at least an hour!”***

\*Here's a really good question about the role of beauty and physical attraction when it comes to love.

***What should you look for?***

Christine, age 9, said,

***“Beauty is only skin deep, but how rich you are can last for a long time!”***

She must've been watching, ***Who Wants To Marry A Millionaire?***

\*How about this one:

***What are some surefire ways to make someone fall in love with you?***

Dell, age 6, said,

***“Tell them you own a whole bunch of candy stores!”***

Camille, age 9, said,

***“Shake your hips and hope for the best!”***

- B. The question I’d like to tackle this morning is one I think a lot of you might find helpful. It’s about the single most important decision you’ll ever make. **How do you choose a person you will spend the rest of your life with?**
1. Having worked with a lot of people—and married a lot of people—and counseled a lot of people in this area, I’ve seen people make really wise choices—great decisions. And I’ve also seen people too twitterpated to even know or understand what they were doing.
  2. In another life, I used to like to jump off of things—into **water**, of course. The scariest was a 40 foot cliff in upstate NY. One thing you **had** to do was to look for rocks **before** you jumped! Half-way down—too late! So—if you’re looking for--or think you might someday look for—a mate for life—look for rocks before you jump!

## II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- A. Any sports nuts here? I’m not—but I was reading about the top ten busts in NBA history when it comes to draft selections. Let me quote the article: “Picking Sam Bowie ahead of Michael Jordan (1984 draft selections) will notoriously go down in history as one of the biggest mistakes in the history of sports.”
- I’m a little on the thick side when it comes to this kind of stuff—but even **I** get this one! “We coulda had **Michael Jordan!**” A guy who scored more points in basketball history than any other player.
- Who gets chosen to run a company, lead a country, play on a team, play in a band is really, really important! The people who make these decisions don’t leave any stone unturned—and shouldn’t!
1. But those decisions pale in comparison with who you choose to marry. And the question is—how do keep from wasting your one and only draft pick? There are a **number** of books out there that I would recommend to **anyone** who’s even thinking in this direction. One of them has the same title as this series: ***Fit To Be Tied.***  
-The other one, written by a Christian psychologist, is ***Finding The Love of Your Life.*** I have copies of these books—and would be glad to lend them out.
  2. Paul, early Christian leader, wrote to a group of people who had come out of a screwed up culture—and were struggling with their sex drives and their marriages. Now, I know that we can **barely** relate to things like that—but I’m going to ask you to try **real hard!**

-In this chapter, Paul deals more specifically with the issues surrounding marriage than any other passage in the Bible. Marriage in that culture was influenced more by the decisions of parents than dating—so Paul doesn't really address *important* things like, "How do you know if you've met your true love?" or "Can she bake a cherry pie, Billy Boy, Billy Boy..."

-Listen to this statement:

**Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you.  
(1 Corinthians 7:17 NLT)**

You're probably thinking, "Yeah...so...your point *being?*" One of the things Paul is saying is, "Don't be so anxious to change your status or your situation that you *miss what you need to see!* A shorter title for the principle would be... *Time! Give it time. Take your time. Don't hurry!*

- a. Just in case we *don't* get it—Paul gives this principle three times. It's like he's saying, "Chill out! Don't rush! Don't think that the sooner you change your status the better. Anyone here who's made a really good decision—really fast? Anyone here who's made a really bad decision—really fast? -Giving a relationship *time*—time to understand who you are, time to see who the other person is—time to make a *great* decision is just incredibly wise! Now, there are some situations that may change that. Many of you know that my Dad was a pastor. An 85 year old woman in his church, Mrs. Ganoë, met up with a 90 year old childhood sweetheart about a year after her convalescent husband passed away. She came to my Dad, all excited and flustered. She said, "Oh Pastor Davis! Mr. Fisher asked me to marry him! Do you think we should wait? As only my Dad could, he chuckled and said, "Well, you'd better not wait *too* long!"
- b. One other major guideline in the decision to marry is whether or not the two of you synch up in terms of your faith—and the values you live by. Paul clearly says at the end of this passage in his instructions to widows wanting to re-marry:

**[S]he is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord.  
(1 Corinthians 7:39 NLT)**

-Some of you who are single may be thinking, "That is *so* unfair! He just limited the playing field by 90%!"

I'm going to talk about this a little later—but let me just say this: Choosing a partner is *the single most profound decision you will ever make in your life*—and this is not the place to flip God off and do your own thing!

- B. What I want to do is just go through a number of *don'ts* when it comes to choosing a partner. These are not original with me—they come from a book entitled, *Finding The Love of your Life*—written by Neil Warren, a Christian psychologist. What he has written is based on research, clinical experience, and what the Bible has to say on this issue.

1. The first don't is one I've already mentioned. Time.

***Don't get married when you're in a hurry; don't get married too quickly.***

I almost instinctively will refuse to marry a couple when they've only known each other or been dating a few months. I think to myself, "Why are you in such a hurry?"

You must have **no** idea what the words, **till death do us part** mean!"

-So, if you're in a hurry—let me **spell out** what **till death do us part** means! It means rings in the bathtub, bounced checks, mortgage payments, clothes that no longer fit, and job loss. It means saying **no** to what you want and **yes** to what someone else wants—fighting over whether you're going to watch **Oprah** or Action flicks.

-It means watching his hairline recede and his waistline advance—and watching the skin under her arm get flabby. It means helping a kid face math and ADHD; it means figuring out how to manage in-laws and out-laws. Are you ready to make this kind of decision after 3 or 4 months of dating? As the great theologian, McCauley Caulkin would say, "**I don't think so!**"

-If you don't honor the marriage commitment deeply enough to give the appropriate amount of time to know each other fully and deeply **before** you make it—you're not ready to get married! If you don't believe me on this—ask around. Talk to couples. See if you can find **one** couple who says, "Yeah, I think we took **way** too much time making this decision!" I **do** think you'd find regrets on the side if not taking long enough, though."

-What do you have to lose if you take your time making this decision? Postponing sex or a few months of togetherness? What do you have to lose if you don't take **enough** time? You could wreck your life.

2. The second **don't** is related to the first.

***Don't get married too young.***

Research shows that the divorce rate for those who get married at 21-22 is twice as high as the divorce rate for those who get married at the age of 24-25.

-Time, for the most part, means maturity. Maturity means knowing who you are; what your values are. Maturity means learning to think about someone besides yourself. Time and maturity gives you space to do the things you want to do, figure out who you are, and meet a variety of people. Don't hurry into marriage.

3. The third **don't** is,

***Don't get married to solve a problem.***

Marriage doesn't work well when it's used as a parachute out of a tough home or a tough situation.

Sometimes people get hurt badly in a relationship—and it's like they close their eyes and jump into the next one without ever really thinking through **why** they want to get married. Marriage won't heal you, end your aloneness or make you whole.

-Sometimes people want to get married quickly because they're afraid they might lose the person they love. Look at the screwed up logic in that: "I'm afraid that

deep down you may not love me and eventually want out of the relationship—so I'm going to marry you real quick before you change your mind so we can be chained together!" ***Don't do that to yourself!***

4. The fourth ***don't***:

***Don't get married when you're still tied to your parents.***

"You'll just ***love*** my Mommy and Daddy!" Their opinions are important as you choose a spouse, but ***you're*** the one who has to make a life with that person.

So ***you*** need to be the champion decision-maker. ***You*** are the one who has to understand in a deep, ***deep*** way who this person is that you're promising your future to—for better or for worse! Know why? Cause ***you*** will still be married to them when your parents are gone.

5. The fifth ***don't***:

***Don't marry someone when you're experience with them is narrow; when you're unfamiliar with the breadth of their life.***

With all due respect to ***e-harmony.com*** and the wide variety of cyber-link-ups: The internet is a great place to meet people—but ***it is a terrible place to get to know them.***

-The person you're in cyberspace may be everything they say they are—and more. Or the only link to who they claim to be might be their email address. Please listen to me—to go deep and make promises to a person in cyberspace is a set-up! Words are 10% of any communication—or ***less***. Getting to know someone means getting to know them in a whole variety of settings over time! -It's actually not just a cyberspace long-distance phenomenon.

This can happen at work or at a university campus when what a couple has seen of each other is the fixed up, jazzed up, spackled, pickled, deodorized version—and not a whole lot more! The solution? ***Time! Multiple experiences with each other in a lot of contexts that include a person's WHOLE life—not just the Reader's Digest version they've told you!***

-You need to not just be in love with someone; you need to be deeply, ***deeply*** familiar with them—and with their world; how they treat their parents; how they handle conflict; their work ethic; how long they've had their circle of friends; how they handle their finances; what their emotional world is like; and what they're like then they get really angry. You want to know that stuff!

6. Number six:

***Don't get married when your expectations of marriage are unrealistic.***

By the way, know what one killer expectation is? ***That if you're married, you'll never be lonely again.***

-These kinds of expectations tend to center the marriage around **you** and **your** needs.

Remember the #1 principle on relational intelligence? If you center **any** relationship around yourself, you'll kill it. Marriage is not about someone taking care of you; it's about **your** vow that you're prepared to love another imperfect person for the rest of your life—**even when it's tough!** Marriage does **not** solve problems. In fact, it tends to create more than it solves!

7. Seventh **don't**.

***Don't get married if you or the person you want to marry is unhealthy—or at an unhealthy stage of life.***

I'm not primarily talking about physical unhealthiness; I'm talking about being in a bad place emotionally or psychologically.

You can tell how healthy a person is by how they manage their anger; by whether or not they're struggling with an addiction—or by their character. Do they tell the truth and live the truth? Are they selfish, or jealous? The **right** question is, "Can I live with these qualities the rest of my life if this person **never** changes?"

-The biggest lie people—especially women—tell themselves is, "Oh, I can heal this person! I can help them change! I can make them whole!" The **truth** is that when you're married to someone—you're usually the **last** person who can help them with stuff like that. You're a partner, not a counselor or a rehab center.

8. Final **don't**.

***Don't marry someone who is too different from you.***

You've heard the saying, **Opposites attract?** It's quite interesting what research says about that.

The author of this book I mentioned, Neil Warren, says this: ***The research is quite clear—every similarity that a couple shares is like money in the bank.***

-Think about a dating situation. The conversation goes, "I like football on TV." "I hate it!" "I love to garden!" "I can't stand gardening—I want to live in an apartment!" "I like vacations to be about adventure." "I like vacations where I can fry on the beach all day and get skin cancer."

-Think about it this way. What are your best friends like? They're different—but there's enough connective tissue and common passions to give you something worth talking about, right? Marriage is teaming up with someone with whom you'll have to agree on a whole **variety** of things.

-Things like: When it comes to morals and spiritual truth--where's the center line down the highway? How will you spend money—and what will you spend it on? How will you use your free time? How will you raise your children?

And, especially, ***what's worth giving your one and only life for?*** What's worth dying for? What's worth saying yes to—and ***no*** to? Is there a God—and does He care about us? What does forgiveness look like? Where do you go and what do you do when life falls apart? Is that the Bible says actually true—or is it for morons?

-This is ***so*** important that I want to take the rest of our time and talk about the major areas where couples need to be compatible if their marriage is going to work.

### III. COMPATIBILITY 101

- A. Did anyone here watch any of the stuff about the building of the Airbus 380? This plane is amazing—massive! They had problems with its construction—and the time delays cost the company billions of dollars.

One of the problems was that different parts were being built in different places in Europe. Something was off—they couldn't connect the wiring of the front half with the wiring of the back half. Kind of a problem, I'd say. Small things like the rudders, the lights, and the oxygen don't work—which makes flight ***very*** uncomfortable!

-Turns out that the two places were built using different forms of measurement!

1. Now, that was a problem created with the ***same*** set of blueprints. Would anyone here volunteer for the maiden voyage of a plane built using two ***different*** sets of blueprints?

Like, part 747 and part Airbus 380. They're both jumbo jets; both have wings, a cockpit and four engines...Any volunteers?

-And yet...***and yet***—people will hook up—become one for ***life***—hand over their lives, their finances, their future, their kids to someone who's building a life from a ***totally*** different set of blueprints!

-I want to talk about four areas where the blueprints need to match up.

***\*Spiritual compatibility***

***\*Character compatibility***

***\*Communication compatibility***

***\*Chemical compatibility***

2. Remember what Paul said about spiritual compatibility? The principle for followers of Jesus is—***You're free to marry whoever you want, as long as they love the Lord***—i.e., share your faith.

-The immediate thought for many people who are dating—and maybe looking for a partner is that God is being unfair and prejudicial to put this kind of limitation on things. Why? What's the big deal here?

- a. Please understand—this is **not** about denominations or what you do with your weekends. This is about **where** you go for truth and what you believe about Jesus—and about eternity. It’s about what you treasure—and where you go for help.

-Jesus said this to a crowd one day:

**“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?” (Luke 9:23-25 NLT)**

-That’s pretty all-encompassing, wouldn’t you say? This isn’t about going to church or not going to church. Jesus’ challenge is to lay **everything** on the line.

To put Him first in everything. When you marry someone, you can’t do that with the expectation that they’ll be okay with being second to Jesus—and that they’ll eventually see things your way and change. That’s not fair!

- b. Jesus is not a nice accessory to life that you can choose or not choose. Jesus is not another ingredient in the stew of life—some like the stew with Him, some like the stew without Him. If Jesus is who He claims to be—He **IS** the plan! Following Jesus affects **everything!**
- When you’re mapping out a life of **oneness**, you’d better agree on the plan—and Jesus’ plan is **very** different than the one that gets blasted at us every day!
- c. Let me tell you what I see happen. When a couple is of marrying age—or in the marrying mood, their faith sometimes is not a big priority to them. That happens, I suppose, for a variety of reasons. I’ll tell you when a person’s faith **does** start to tug at their hearts. It’s when they have children. It’s clear, at that point, that you are facing the single biggest challenge of your life.

-You begin to think, “Wow! This child has a soul that will live forever. I love this child more than my own life! I want them to be loving, courageous, to know what to say no to, what to say yes to—I **want them to have a center line down their spiritual highway!**

-And that’s where two parents, wherever possible, need to join hands and agree what the family will stand for, what value system they’ll live by!

3. The second area where compatibility is critical is in the area of character. Lack of character can destroy a marriage **very** quickly. There are a **lot** of questions you need to be asking about a person—if you’re going to entrust your life, your future, your money, your home, your friends and your children to them—**till death parts you!**

-How do they treat their family—particularly their Mom or Dad? How do they treat the people at work—and what is their work ethic? Do they describe everyone they work with or for as jerks, idiots and imbeciles?

-What about their sense of responsibility? Do they follow through? Do they take what they do seriously—or just slop through it? Here's a big one: **Can they admit when they're wrong? Do they know how to humble themselves, make things right, apologize?** If they don't—go into a relationship like that with your eyes wide open—because that means you will **always** be wrong when you disagree with them!

-Are they honest? Do they keep their word? Do they tell you the truth—or are they into white lies.

-And what about their sexual attitudes? What's their track record? Do they flirt with others when they're with you? Are they pressuring you to go against your convictions when it comes to sexual purity? If they don't take what the Bible says about this seriously before marriage—what makes you think they'll take it seriously after marriage?

-Do they have a 'little' drinking problem? A 'little' stealing problem? A 'little' gambling problem? What are they like when someone lights their fuse—because, see, over a lifetime you can **bet** you—or your children will light their fuse. **A lot!** My point is—**this stuff doesn't get better; it gets worse!**

-And if you're already romantically involved with them, you don't **want** to see these things—cause you're in the marrying mood! For the first 6 months of a relationship, you're on love drugs! You're not thinking straight!

-Friends—please listen carefully to me. There is **no** way you can build a healthy marriage if you don't respect or trust the person you have joined your life with. And when it comes to respect and trust—character is huge!

4. A third critical area of compatibility is communication. This takes the ability to express yourself, to listen well, and to understand what the other person is trying to tell you—through verbal and non-verbal communication.
  - a. When Lori and I started dating, I was on the road with a band, and she was in college out in Saskatchewan. I almost died of glue poisoning from licking stamps and envelopes—and we dropped some **serious** change on phone bills. The CEO of Bell and I were on a first-name basis.
 

-If you would've asked me, "How well do you communicate?" I'd have said, "We're **really** good at it!" After I got married, I was humbled by how poorly I communicated, how poorly I listened and understood. I had to grow a lot in that area—and I **still** do!
  - b. Know what many times happens early on in a relationship? You're doing this dance with each other—trying to put your best foot forward—and not 'step in it too deep.' See, you've already planned a wedding of Steven Spielberg proportions! "What if they find out I'm flawed—and reject me?" Better now than later—if that's all it takes! And how effective is it, really, if you say, "Hey, you married me! I've got ya now!"
5. There's one final area of compatibility that you're gonna love. It's **chemistry!** You know what that is, don't you! It's when your heart beats fast, your mouth goes dry, your knees get weak—and you can't think of anything or anyone else! You say and do stupid things you've never said or done before in your life!

- a. That's a **good** thing—and the Bible talks very directly about it. If you want to really steam up your glasses, read Song of Solomon sometime. It doesn't sound like anything you'd think would be in the Bible. I mean, the guy describes his main squeeze, starting with her hair, her forehead, her eyes, her lips, her neck—and he just keeps a-headin' south!  
-God has created us to be strongly attracted to a person's face, build, form, face—and that's a good thing!
- b. I'll tell the down side of this. With the huge emphasis on sexual attractiveness in our culture, a **lot** of the energy can come from chemistry—without a whole lot else there. Someone said that God's joke on human's is that He gave us a brain—and sexual organs—and not enough blood to run both at the same time. Overstatement—but remember the issue of **twitterpation**? You can't build a marriage on that.
- c. In **fact**, the **time** factor really fits here. You need to know if what you're feeling in chemical compatibility or infatuation. They feel the same. Years ago Debbie Boone crooned the words, "How can it be wrong when it feels so right." She sold a **lot** of records—but that philosophy has ruined a **lot** of lives.  
-Just a note here. Some people get sexually involved before marriage, justifying it as, "finding out if they're sexually compatible." Remember what Brian Cunnington said a couple of months ago—who is a therapist? There **is** no such thing as sexual incompatibility.
- d. The question is—how do you know the difference between love drugs—and true chemistry; how do you know if a person's character is genuine? If you're spiritually compatible—and if you communicate well? A single word answer. Time. Time! It takes **time!**

- B. I want to close by simply urging you—no, **pleading** with you to take the time necessary to really, **really** get to know a person before you hook up with them for life. It's the only sure test, really.  
-You can fake authenticity for a while to get someone to like you. But time flushes that out.  
-Time reveals whether the chemistry is real—or whether it's love drugs. You **want** to know that.  
-Time reveals where a person is in their spiritual development; whether their love for Jesus is really about Him—or you!  
-And especially—**especially**—time, and only time reveals a person's character. Who they really are when no one is looking, when they're off stage, then the camera isn't running. And you **want** to know that stuff, right? **Right?**

#### IV. CLOSING

- A. I can think of a few different scenarios here as I close.
  1. For some of you—this has been painful. You're thinking, "I wish I'd have heard this before I married! I made the wrong choice!" I need to tell you, "No you didn't." Right now this person who shares your home is God's will for you—and He will give you all the help you need to preserve your home and build a strong relationship. See, God doesn't need a lot to work with. He is **always** in the

business of restoring and redeeming and renewing. You're no exception! So—don't lose hope!

2. There's a second group here—and you may be in pain too. You're dating someone—maybe seriously, and you **know** it's a mismatch. But you're afraid—afraid to break up. I would plead with you—look for rocks before you jump. Please! You'll save yourself a lot of pain.
- B. Finally—some of you are single. That is cool! Again, I've seen enough heartache to plead with you—give your relationships time. And don't try to be smarter than God on the issues of compatibility—particularly spiritual compatibility. It **matters!** Okay?