**Article Summary:**

***Conscious Courtship: Finding Someone to Love for the Rest of Your Life***

***by Raymond Switzer***

1. **Make a list of important qualities we want in a partner, a list of traits we could not bear in a partner, narrow down the qualities we cannot compromise on under any circumstances.**

What is good for one person may not be at all good for another. Thus, we need to go inside and **reflect upon the qualities that are most important for us in a future partner**. It is good to be as conscious as possible in writing down the qualities and giving the reasons we believe these qualities are important. We should also write down **the traits we could not bear in a partner** and give reasons for these…The most important component of any such list is to have two or three essential qualities we are looking for. These are **qualities that we would** **not want to compromise** **under any circumstances**.

However, also keep in mind that if we develop too rigid an idea of the kind of person we want to marry, we may miss out on some very good potential partners.

1. **What are the essential similarities needed to creating a healthy marriage and the difference likely to cause problems?**

Research has found that **similarities are important**. If we are going to spend our life with someone and raise a family with that person, we should want to be with that kind of person. Differences between people, when they have to live together day after day, year after year, making crucial life decisions together, weathering the battles of life together, can become confounding sources of trouble. Just a seemingly small difference, such as what temperature to keep the house, can and has been the leading cause for couples to divorce (this shouldn't happen, but it does)! Imagine how more significant differences will be challenging to manage on a regular basis.

According to Neil Clark Warren, the essential similarities have to do with *intelligence, values, interests, culture, and expectations about roles*.

The **four differences likely to cause the most friction** in a marriage, in his view, have to do with *energy level, personal habits (smoking, cleanliness, punctuality), money, and verbal inclinations.* These are not rules, but these kinds of similarities can make marriages easier, while the difficulties can rob a couple of the comfort and ease most of us expect within the home.

1. **Cross-cultural marriage or marrying people from different educational, social-economic, or religious backgrounds:**

One difference that usually signals a whole range of differences is ethnicity. The difference between people of different cultural backgrounds is usually very significant along with a wide variety of measures…. We may want to challenge ourselves by finding somebody who is from a very different economic background, who is intellectually at a very different level, or who is from a different culture or race. Sometimes searching for these factors is motivated by romantic notions. But if we are going to marry someone from a different ethnic group or a different part of the world, **do we know them and their world well?**... We need to **go far beyond this superficial level** before we are ready to consider marrying someone from such a different background. But more likely is a tendency to harbour deep-seated prejudices towards people of very different backgrounds, prejudices which our liberal consciousness tends to deny. These issues should be explored and resolved before they become factored into a romance.

Encountering differences in the close quarters of marriage is difficult. Still, insofar as we are able to stretch ourselves and respectfully understand the wants of our partner, we grow spiritually and realize more and more of our human potential.

*Of all the similarities that are important, probably the most important is the need to share* ***similar values****.* Since religion usually has a lot to do with what is valued, most say it is important to find someone who shares your fundamental beliefs. This can be true, but not necessarily. Not everyone who identifies with a particular religion holds it to be equally significant in their lives – the depth of commitment of one may be very different from another.

Religion is also a life philosophy giving direction to our lives and setting priorities. In marriage, we want to be moving in the same direction. Religion influences our relation to the outside world in other significant ways. Thus, we will really need the capacity to explore this issue openly and deeply and come to an agreement.

1. **Important things to look for when observing a potential partner:**

…there are many things we can learn by taking our time and observing someone before getting involved with them. Looking at it the other way around, there are many things we will not 'see' in another person as soon as we get involved with them. Also, as soon as the other person senses there is an attraction, their behavior is likely to change.

*This kind of observation phase works best in group settings*. In groups, we can see how a person relates to others, how much their behavior is geared to gaining attention, how they communicate, how interested they are in people regardless of looks or status. If we have the opportunity to see a person around children, we can often get an idea of their abilities and interests in this area.

One area important to observe in another is *how they are with friends and what kind of friends they keep.* It is possible to learn a lot through observing friendship patterns and it is also possible to discreetly get to know the friends of the one you may be interested in, in order to get to know more about him or her. What the friends are like and how you feel about them may tell you something about the person. What his or her friends say about the friendship can also be revealing.

*We can gain even deeper impressions of people when we witness them in the context of service projects*… How steadfast is a person when the going gets tough? How well do they work with others? How do they deal with conflict? How able are they to contribute to problem-solving? *How well have they developed the art of consultation?* All of these are most helpful in learning about another person, and all of them can change as soon as an attraction is made known.