

Anxiously Engaged

Supplemental Lesson

Getting a Spiritual Confirmation of the Decision to Marry

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: *“The most important decision of life is the decision concerning your [marital] companion. Choose prayerfully.”*¹ How do we choose prayerfully? How do we know that the Lord has approved our choice to marry? This can feel overwhelming. It’s such an important decision with such eternal consequences. Over the years, I have gathered wisdom on this issue from several leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is my list of guidelines; I don’t claim it is perfect. But I hope it can help you when you are facing this decision. As you will see, it first involves the right kind of preparation. Then I share thoughts about receiving spiritual confirmation.

- **Become a “right/righteous” person.**

Focus on making yourself a great marital partner in the future. The Family Proclamation says: “Successful marriages . . . are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”² These are great principles to work on to prepare yourself for marriage. In addition, are there personality issues that you could improve? Do you need to work on some emotional health issues to be a better marital partner? Do you need to work on your communication skills? Good preparation for marriage is an ongoing process of becoming a better person. (And, of course, it continues for a lifetime.)

- **Date “right/righteous” (good) people.**

Date those you sense are, like yourself, trying to become great marital partners.

- **Build on attraction but assess similarity.**

Yes, attraction is fun and important, but you can be attracted to a lot of different people. In addition to the spark, assess similarity in goals, values, aspirations, etc. Similarity is a much stronger foundation on which to build a healthy, happy, long-lasting marriage.

In addition, Elder Dallin H. Oaks gave the following advice:

*“If you wish to marry well, inquire well. Associations through ‘hanging out’ or exchanging information on the Internet are not a sufficient basis for marriage. There should be dating, followed by careful and thoughtful and thorough courtship. There should be ample opportunities to experience the prospective spouse’s behavior in a variety of circumstances. Fiancés should learn everything they can about the families with whom they will soon be joined in marriage.”*³

- **Seek spiritual confirmation of your choice to marry.**

Following are my thoughts – borrowing heavily from Church leaders – about how to do this effectively:



1. Continually pray for the Lord's guidance.

During dating and courtship, you should pray continually for the Lord's guidance and blessings. Seeking a confirmation of a choice to marry is best thought of as a culmination of a process of spiritual guidance, not a one-time inquiry.

2. Study it out in your mind [\(D&C 9:8\)](#).

Do the hard work of preparing to receive the Lord's guidance. We are not to be commanded in all things [\(D&C 58:26\)](#) so we need to make our own decision. Make sure your brain is fully engaged in this decision-making process, even when your heart and hormones are pushing you along. The Lord has told us that impressions that come to both our mind and our heart by the Holy Ghost is the spirit of revelation [\(D&C 8:2-3\)](#). Also, consider consulting with wise people who love you, such as your parents or maybe a married couple that you admire. Local church leaders will not tell you whether to marry someone or not, but they may be a valuable sounding board. Don't rush the decision; give it the time it needs for your thoughts to solidify.



3. Pray in faith for confirmation of your decision.

When your mind and heart are one and you feel comfortable about your decision, bring it before the Lord in (ongoing) prayer. Remember that the Lord wants to grant your righteous desires [\(Alma 29:4\)](#). Trust that God will answer your prayers in His own time(s) and way(s). But be patient and open to softer and more natural answers rather than dramatic ones.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed this specific issue:



“My personal experience and my observations of the Brethren as they guide and direct the Church and solve problems has taught me that the answers come often-times over an extended period of time with almost a natural solution whereby people take actions on the feelings of their hearts—which bring them peace and comfort—rather than through dramatic revelation. . . . Too often we want to be given answers to questions and problems that, if they were given in the manner we ask for them, would take away our agency and the blessings that come from reaching out to the Lord for answers and direction. Some think it would be nice to have spiritual fortune cookies we could open to find the answers to life’s challenges. Wouldn’t it be nice to have a labeled jar we could reach into for our answers? But that is not the way it was meant to be.”⁴

4. Act on your decision in faith.

Have faith that the Lord will confirm your decision in time or caution you in other directions with a “stupor of thought.” But what if you don’t feel like you have received a strong answer and you need to make a decision?

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave this advice:

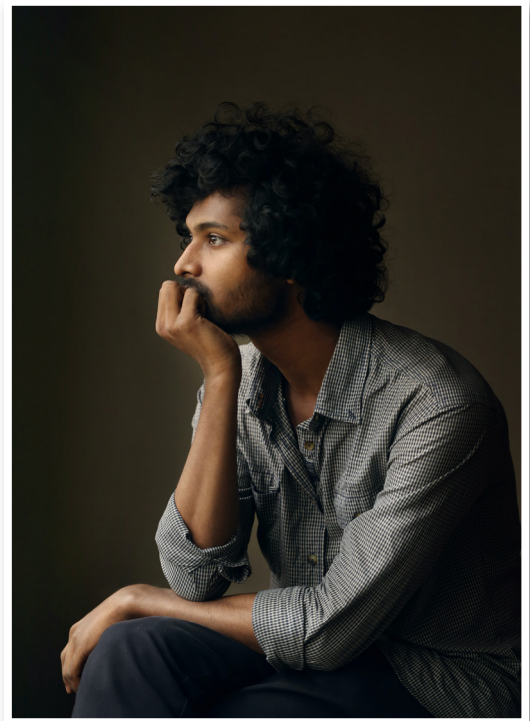
“Remember, the requisites [for spiritual confirmation] are living the commandments and making sure what you propose to do is consistent with the Savior’s teachings. Then, if you don’t receive an answer and can’t wait longer, proceed. Again, the Lord won’t let you make a mistake. If in trust you have selected the wrong path, He will let you know by the impressions that come before it is too late. But you must be attentive, looking for that direction. If you’ve chosen the right thing to do, that feeling of peace will come as you carry it out, when He confirms your correct choice. If not, you will be warned before it is too late. I promise you that. I testify that these principles are true. Even when the decisions are the most vital in life, that is the process as I have come to understand it.”⁵

5. Have confidence in personal revelation.

It is common to experience some doubts, especially for such a big decision. But what is the difference between a stupor of thought and just cold feet?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave this advice:

“I believe that in our own individual ways, God takes us to the grove or the mountain or the temple and there shows us the wonder of what his plan is for us. . . . I also believe that the adversary and his pinched, calculating little minions try to oppose such experiences and then try to darken them after the fact. But that is not the way of the gospel. That is not the way of a Latter-day Saint who claims as the fundamental fact of the Restoration the spirit of revelation. Fighting through darkness and despair and pleading for the light is what opened this dispensation. It is what keeps it going, and it is what will keep you going. With Paul, I say to all: ‘Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise’ ([Hebrews 10: 35-36](#)).”⁶



And if you marry, keep this confidence when things get hard, as they inevitably do at times for almost all married couples. Rather than doubt your decision to marry, cast your mind upon the night when the Lord spoke peace to you concerning the matter ([D&C 6:22-23](#)) and cleave to your marital covenants.

Are there circumstances when you need to decide to break off the engagement? Yes. We can be wrong about our decision, especially when we learn new things about our partners (and ourselves) that change the decision-making calculus. And people can change showing their truer colors. Remember that an engagement is a commitment to preparing for a marriage; it is not an iron-clad promise to marry. But be careful in these decisions, too. Follow these same guidelines for deciding to marry if you are faced with a decision to break off the engagement.

6. Seek your own witness.

Do not rely just on your partner's witness. Spiritual confirmation must come to both. And it is certainly possible that one partner could get a "green light" and another could get a "red/yellow light." For a number of reasons, a marriage to someone may be good for one partner but not right for the other. Get your own personal confirmation. And don't pressure your partner about it.

- **Commit yourself to the hard but joyous work of marriage.**

Remember that the Lord's approval of your marriage choice by His Spirit is an approval and a blessing. But it is not a magic power that assures marital success. You still have to do the work to build and maintain a successful marriage, before and after the wedding. And make sure you put more time and energy into preparing for your marriage than you do for preparing for your wedding.

Activity 1: Assess Your Process

If you are taking this lesson with a partner you are thinking seriously about marrying, discuss the six points for receiving a spiritual confirmation and how you are doing on them. If you are already engaged, there are still several relevant points to consider. If you are taking this lesson by yourself, write down your responses.

Endnotes

- 1 [BYU Commencement Address, Gordon B. Hinckley, 1995](#)
- 2 [The Family: A Proclamation to the World, 1995](#)
- 3 ["Divorce," Dallin H. Oaks, 2007](#)
- 4 ["Gifts of the Spirit," Robert D. Hales, 1993](#)
- 5 ["The Transforming Power of Faith and Character," Richard G. Scott, 2010](#)
- 6 ["Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence," Jeffrey R. Holland, 1999](#)