He Said She Said: Should I Settle for Less?

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* 2014 5 May
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*EDITOR'S NOTE:* [*He Said-She Said*](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/singles/he-said-she-said/) *is a biweekly advice column for singles featuring a question from a Crosswalk.com reader with responses from a male and female point of view. If you've got a question about anything related to singleness or living the single life, please submit it to hesaid-shesaid@crosswalk.com (selected questions will be posted anonymously).*

QUESTION: If you desire your future spouse to have a specific trait (for example, eloquence) should you ever settle for someone who doesn't have the desired trait, simply because everyone says you're good together? Is it wrong to opt out of such a relationship?

HE SAID:

If you haven’t done so already, I would suggest you put together a list of all of those traits you want your future spouse to have or be. You may even reference an on-line dating service (eHarmony, Match, [Christian Singles](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/singles/), etc.) as a format to help with ideas.

When you have compiled your exhaustive list, put them in order of priority.

[https://googleads.g.doubleclick.net/aclk?sa=L&ai=BWJo4LP9\_VMC1G4W4hASVvYGYCtX507IFAAAAEAEg3Z69HTgAWO2qrYHLAWDJ7qeKpKTEEbIBEXd3dy5jcm9zc3dhbGsuY29tugEJZ2ZwX2ltYWdlyAEC2gFnaHR0cDovL3d3dy5jcm9zc3dhbGsuY29tL2ZhbWlseS9zaW5nbGVzL2hlLXNhaWQtc2hlLXNhaWQvaGUtc2FpZC1zaGUtc2FpZC1zaG91bGQtaS1zZXR0bGUtZm9yLWxlc3MuaHRtbJgCjiXAAgLgAgDqAjMvNjE3Ny9zbG0uY3Jvc3N3YWxrL2ZhbWlseS9zaW5nbGVzL2hlLXNhaWQtc2hlLXNhaWT4Av7RHpADpAOYA6QDqAMByAOdBOAEAZAGAaAGFA&num=0&cid=5Gi-fz-UDPxXdj5LSrkqZbIA&sig=AOD64\_3ni494cQhvNTJrhJ411mufZBI3ZQ&clien](https://googleads.g.doubleclick.net/aclk?sa=L&ai=BWJo4LP9_VMC1G4W4hASVvYGYCtX507IFAAAAEAEg3Z69HTgAWO2qrYHLAWDJ7qeKpKTEEbIBEXd3dy5jcm9zc3dhbGsuY29tugEJZ2ZwX2ltYWdlyAEC2gFnaHR0cDovL3d3dy5jcm9zc3dhbGsuY29tL2ZhbWlseS9zaW5nbGVzL2hlLXNhaWQtc2hlLXNhaWQvaGUtc2FpZC1zaGUtc2FpZC1zaG91bGQtaS1zZXR0bGUtZm9yLWxlc3MuaHRtbJgCjiXAAgLgAgDqAjMvNjE3Ny9zbG0uY3Jvc3N3YWxrL2ZhbWlseS9zaW5nbGVzL2hlLXNhaWQtc2hlLXNhaWT4Av7RHpADpAOYA6QDqAMByAOdBOAEAZAGAaAGFA&num=0&cid=5Gi-fz-UDPxXdj5LSrkqZbIA&sig=AOD64_3ni494cQhvNTJrhJ411mufZBI3ZQ&client=ca-pub-1879003945717164&adurl=http://www.salemoffers.com/campaign/free-magazine-cpl-jan2014-mobile/rc/swnbannersmobile)

Once your list is ranked, draw a line between the “non-negotiable”s and the “nice-to-have”s. All of those items above your line are those traits which your future spouse *needs* to have for you to consider a possibility. This will help you to clearly see what you have determined as a must-have.

Over the years, I have kept a wish list of material things I would like to eventually have. I mark the day I place it on the list and the date I purchase it (if and when I do). What I have found is, as time goes on, many of those items are never obtained (nor missed) because they just aren’t as important to me anymore as I thought they once were.

Having a list of specific requirements for a future spouse is important, whether written or just determined in your mind. However, I have discovered many of those traits I thought were non-negotiable in the past are not as much so as I get older. Over time, my list has been reduced to a number of specific value-oriented characteristics, while many others have dropped to a nice-to-have distinction.

This is not to say you should give up on your values, desires and ideals of whom you want to marry, but some may just be superficial longings, abilities not yet learned or opportunities not yet experienced.

I personally have tried to stay open-minded to see God’s desire (or not) for me rather than whom I judge would be best. Wisdom can come from many sources and may be from those closest to you who know you best, as things (and people) are oftentimes not what they immediately seem.

SHE SAID:

No matter who you meet in this life, whether they be a friend, work-mate, neighbor, or future  spouse, they will never have *everything* you desire in them. It comes down to what you can live with and what you can live without. For me if someone is overly messy, or likes to drive too close to others, or smacks their food, those could be deal breakers. I do not want to live the rest of my life cleaning up after someone else. I do not want to fear my life every time I get into the passenger seat. And let me just say, food-smacking is like nails going down a chalk-board (I have asked my niece and nephew for years to stop doing this, to no avail).

But at the same time, if my future mate is a bit rough around the edges in how he dresses, or in some of his comments, or if he might snore when he sleeps, I can extend grace. It really just comes down to what you are desiring in a mate. None of the things I have listed are sins, but they do affect compatibility. No matter who God chooses for you, you will have differences. You will have things you love about them and things that drive you nuts. Can prayer, suggestions, support, advice help to make changes. Sure? But do not marry someone thinking you are going to change them. They might be trying to get you to change, too, and I am sure you wouldn't like that!

Instead, ask them with a real heart about some of the things you don't like to see if they would change. Smacking their food, cleaning up after themselves, or driving slower are all possible things that anyone can change. The real key is: *if they don't change, can you still live with them?* Can you still love them in Christ? And bottom line, trust the Holy Spirit, and trust those wise friends and [family](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/) God has put around you.

*Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching* ([Proverbs 1:8](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=pr+1:8-8)).

*HE is …* [*Cliff Young*](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/singles/what-does-it-look-like-to-follow-jesus.html)*, a Crosswalk.com contributing writer and a veteran single of many decades. He has traveled the world in search of fresh experiences, serving opportunities, and the perfect woman (for him) and has found that his investments in God, career and youth ministry have paid off in priceless dividends.*

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*DISCLAIMER: We are not trained psychologists or licensed professionals. We're just average folk who understand what it's like to live the solo life in the twenty-first century. We believe that the Bible is our go-to guide for answers to all of life's questions, and it's where we'll go for guidance when responding to your questions. Also, it's important to note that we write our answers separately.*

*GOT A QUESTION? If you've got a question about anything related to singleness or living the single life, please submit it to hesaid-shesaid@crosswalk.com (selected questions will be posted anonymously). While we are unable to answer every inquiry, we do hope that this column will be an encouragement to you. Click here to visit the He Said-She Said* [*archives*](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/singles/he-said-she-said/)*.*