

Word From Bro. John Duncan

***"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."
Proverbs 31:10***

I appreciate now more than ever how my wife committed herself to the Lord before we were married.

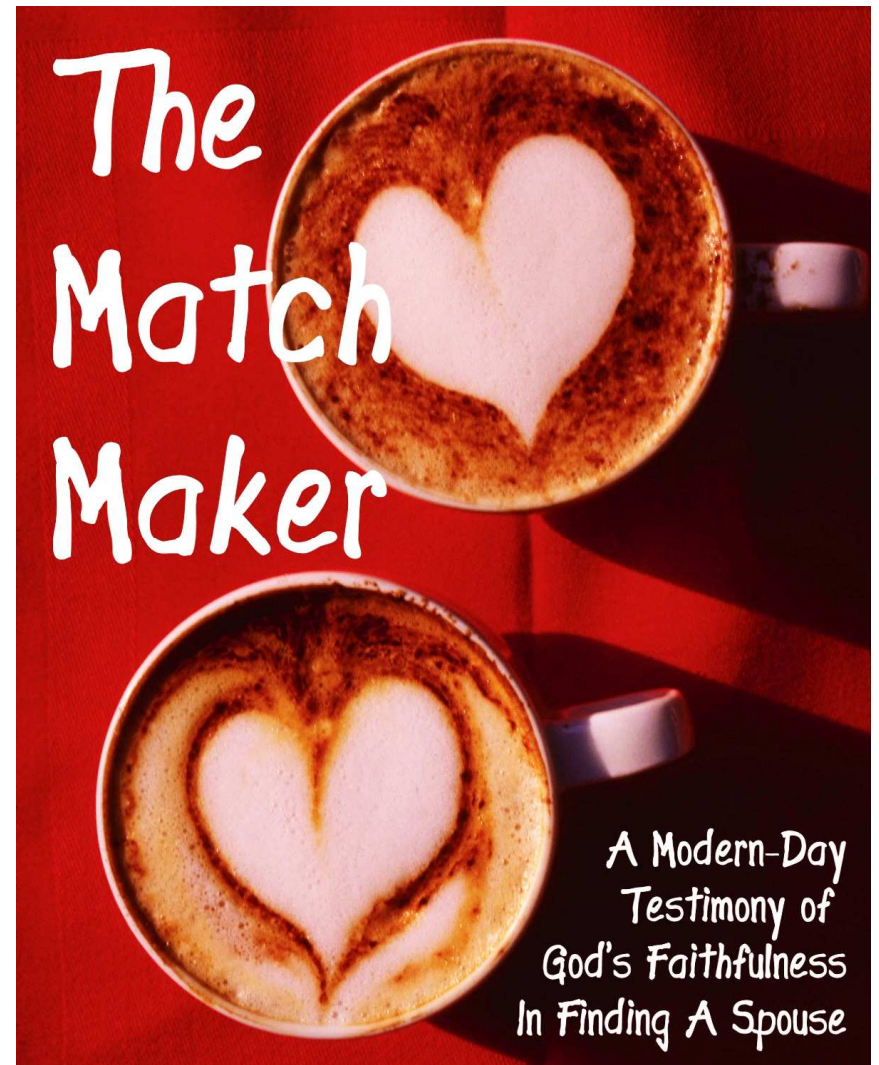
When I met Sis. Ellen she struck me as the most spiritually mature young lady that I had ever met. She was not "boycrazy," but a solid, focused Christian. I was most impressed with the power of her prayer life, but she also was a very bold witness for God. Sis. Ellen would not tell me but I would find out about her shutting herself away in her apartment for 14 days at a time to pray and fast, to do nothing but seek God during her vacation. This attracted me as a man of God. I thought she was physically beautiful, but I knew that I needed somebody who was primarily spiritually strong because of what God had for me to do. I saw that marrying her would be a great, incredibly powerful enhancement of who I could be as a man of God. There were other girls that were not attractive to me because they were "boycrazy" and spiritual milk toast.

My wife did not have to go through a spiritual boot camp to learn how to pray after we went on the mission field. My wife learned to pray, fast and live a godly life without me, so now I can trust her and have complete confidence in her even when I'm gone. Sometimes I go overseas without her and I do not worry one bit about her spiritual state or her faithfulness to me.

Since we've gotten married, we have lived what some would consider a real walk of faith and self sacrifice but my wife hasn't complained about our living circumstances. We had a nice 3 bedroom home but we left all to live in a 19 foot RV when we went out full time. This was a God-given dream of mine but not usually the ideal situation most women would want to get into.

It's been a joy living with someone that I know the Lord has prepared to labor with me. She is just perfect for me, and the Lord knows best for you. If you will let God have you totally He will show you His plan for your life. Trust in God.

Brother John.



"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer. 29:11)

The Match Maker

***"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."
(Jer 29:11)***

It was a warm, beautiful day in São Paulo, Brazil, on March 16, 1996. The place was beautifully decorated. The music, the flowers, and the food were just perfect. Our families and friends were together for this important event. We gazed at each other as we said, "I do."

I smile as I think of one of the most wonderful blessings that God has given me: the blessing of marriage. Just recently, as I thought of the blessing my husband, Bro. John, has been to me, the Lord took me back to a Friday night in 1991... That was the night I became faithful to my husband-to-be, not having met him yet. This faithfulness was not only physical, but also a faithfulness in heart and in eyes.

Laying Isaac on the Altar

I had only been saved for a little while when the Lord dealt with me. *"Ellen, will you put your dating life on the altar?"* This question haunted me for a little while, for I knew that He was asking me to trust Him with the question of marriage. Nevertheless, I had never heard of anyone doing such and did not know exactly how to go about doing it. Besides, all the other Christians I knew dated... However, I knew that God wanted to take me to a deeper walk with Him.

Certain verses started to get my attention as I sought the Lord. Verses such as, *"...But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Mat. 6:33), *"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Col. 3:2) *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."* (Prov. 3:5-6) Besides, "dating" is just not found anywhere in the Scriptures.

Finally, after much prayer, I made a covenant with the Lord, wrote it on paper, signed it, and prayed over it with my pastor's wife. In this covenant I told the Lord that I would trust Him with my future mate, and that whatever time I would be spending with a boyfriend, I'd

Young people, as you read this, please don't think our story is odd. There are at least 8 other couples we personally know (in the U.S.) that gave up the "dating game" and are now happily married, serving the Lord. All of these couples are involved in the ministry today. The one thing that they all have in common is that God went the extra mile in every case, giving each a wonderful testimony of His faithfulness. Wouldn't you like to have a testimony to tell your children and grandchildren?

In countries like the Ukraine, the young men and the young women do not hang out together alone. The men sit on one side of the church, while the women sit on the other. Flirting is just not something they do. When a young man is old enough to be married, he prays about who to marry. When he has an answer, this young man will take it to his pastor / parents. They will then pray. If they feel like it's from the Lord, they go to the girl's parents and they will all pray. If they still feel like it is of the Lord, they will finally tell the girl and ask her to pray about it. If she feels like it is God's will, then they will marry. The result of this: not one baby born out of wedlock and not one divorce in all the churches that we have worked with.

Please do not settle for second best in this matter. You would be better off being alone than with the wrong crowd. Please be patient, for in His time He will bring His will to pass in your life.

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Isaiah 30:21

If this booklet has been a blessing to you, please let us know!

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I can look back during my single years and say that I have no regrets. I may now have less time to spend with God (as the Bible says in 1 Cor 7), but God has multiplied our efforts because we are in His will. One of my prayers was that if we could each reach 5 for God by ourselves, that God would let us reach 15+ when put together, thus multiplying our efforts. I have found my life to be more fruitful to the Lord after marriage than before.

How foolish the modern thought that "You Can Be Happy Though Married." Neither singleness nor marriage are necessary to happiness, but rather a contentment to be what God wants us to be and a commitment to give Him our whole being for His glory in whatever state we are.

God Is the Best Match Maker

If there is a "perfect marriage," I can testify that we have one (that does not mean that we don't have different opinions. After all, we need others to keep us accountable and help us to see a different perspective). We are happily married, love each other more today than when we uttered "I do" and work together better than ever. I could never have picked someone better for me than Bro. John. I appreciate him so much. Only God knew my spiritual make-up and could have so perfectly arranged my marriage. The Bible says, "*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart*" (Psa. 37:4) We also have another advantage - we will never be able to say that we have married the wrong person, because of the way that God orchestrated it all.

Trust God

Some people say, "there are no eligible godly men where I live." So? Is anything too hard for the Lord? I am from Brazil, Bro. John is from Marietta, Georgia, and we met in Alabama. We were married at 27 and 25 years-old. (If I had to wait longer I'd be happily serving the Lord until His perfect timing for a perfect union). A friend of ours was 26 when she met her husband. There were no young, godly men in her little town in Mississippi. However, she went to California, where she met a 30 year-old Associate Pastor from Virginia. This couple married with a wonderful testimony of never being alone, hugging, kissing, or even holding hands before marriage (do you ever wonder why the pastor says, "**NOW** you may kiss the bride?").

spend with God in prayer and in the Word instead. ***It would not have been enough for me to just give up dating, but it was imperative to replace that void with the Lord.*** I also told Him that if it was not His will that I'd ever marry, that I'd be willing to serve Him in whatever way He wanted, even if He wanted to send me as a single missionary to a hut in the middle of Africa, to be killed in a muslim country, or to just be a janitor in my local church. The only thing I asked of Him was that if it was His will that I ever married, He would let me know when my husband came.

The Lord Is My Shepherd: I Shall Not Want!

For the next 3½ years I had what was like honeymoon with the Lord as I delighted myself in Him. He kept pouring more and more of His presence in my life, teaching me out of the Scriptures, and visiting me in my devotions. I spent *all my free time* with the Lord. Words cannot describe the way I felt as God fulfilled all my longings to be married, "*For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name.*" (Isa 54:5). At one point, I was so satisfied that I even thought that maybe God wanted me to remain single. As time progressed though, He revealed to me that I would marry one day and that He was grooming me to be a helpmeet suitable for some godly man.

Young lady, *What kind of man are you looking for in a husband? Are you looking for a godly man? And what kind of woman will a godly man be looking for in a wife? Of course, he will be looking for a godly woman!* That is why it is so important for young people to completely consecrate themselves to the Lord while they are single. If they sow into the Spirit, one day they will be able to give their spouses a godly mate to share their lives with. A mate who will know how to get a hold of God in time of need, one who has the Word hid in his / her heart, and one who will not be tossed to and fro like the waves of the sea. Young lady, if you do not give yourself unreservedly to God, that godly young man may not recognize you when he comes!

Learning to Hear His Voice

*We do not win the world by becoming more like the world. We win them by **getting so close to Jesus** that He tells us what to say. Likewise, we do not find out who our spouses are by dating one here, another one there, trying this one, and trying that one. We find out who our spouses are by **getting so close to Jesus** that we learn to*

hear His voice accurately. The "dating game" leads to *disappointment, confusion, hurt, and embarrassment*. Some people marry and have hurts from past relationships that interfere with their service to God. I also know young people who played the "dating game" and who are now in the ministry, serving the Lord with all their hearts. However, it is always awkward when a certain evangelist comes to minister because he used to be the pastor's wife's boyfriend! This embarrassing situation could have been avoided if, instead of trying the "dating game," the young people had gotten down on their knees and prayed for guidance and direction from the Lord. The Bible says that "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*" (John 10:27). **God wants you to marry the right person even more than you want it yourself!**

Someone told us that a certain young lady married a young man who seemed to be a great guy but later turned out to be in awful sins, leading to a divorce. The comment was, "if she had dated him longer and spent more time with him, she would have found that he was not a good fellow!" However, we know that there have been marriages where a partner hid his / her sins for *many* years before the spouse ever found out about it! The solution is, that if she had spent more time with God (*not with the young man*) asking for direction, **God would have told her not to do it!** See, a sinner can fool everyone, but he can not fool God, and God will give us wisdom if we ask of Him (Jam 1:5). This is a promise. Oh, young people, how important it is for us to hear from God on this issue! Marriage **is** for a *lifetime* and once you exchange your marriage vows "until death do us part," **that is the right person for you**.

Yes, God can work beautifully with couples who get saved after they are married, but why take the chance of missing God? **Many lives and ministries have been destroyed or handicapped because of a bad marriage!** *Please seek the Lord and don't trust in your feelings!*

Lord, Teach Me to Number My Days

Think about the young men and women that spend hundreds of hours with each other, just to end with a breakup. Precious time has been wasted that will never come back. What if they had spent those hundreds of hours with the Lord, instead of spending them with someone that they are not even going to marry? Would that not have been more beneficial to their souls?

It disturbs me to see young people disregard their parents' and pastor's warnings -- especially if they are Christian parents! *The 5th Commandment is to honor our parents*. If either John's parents or mine had a problem with our relationship, we would have at least postponed the marriage until God either changed their hearts or ours. See, God has given us to our parents for guidance and nourishment. It was my parents, though they are lost, who took care of me when I could not take care of myself. They fed me and invested their time, money, and love in my life. Though they were not perfect, yet I know that they loved me and God could speak through them (He spoke through a donkey). I only knew that it was RIGHT to have my dad walk me down the aisle and give me away to my husband, who would now be my spiritual head. I also know that God could deal with my parents' hearts, but it would be a miracle.

One godly woman told me of how that when any young man would call to talk to her, she would say, "please talk to my dad." Also, when a young man wrote her a love letter, she handed it to her parents before ever opening the envelope. She wanted her parents to tell her what they thought of the young man first. Today, she is happily married to a pastor with no regrets. Oh, how I wish there were more young people like that!

When we called my parents and John asked my dad for my hand in marriage, all my dad (who is an Agnostic) could say was, "Ellen, this is the LORD, daughter. This is God's will for you. I want you to know that you have, not only our permission, but you have our full blessings as you marry this young man and serve God together." God was giving us green lights all the way - no red flags at all!

A Single Life of No Regrets

Some young people may stay single. We know people who have remained single for God and have accomplished many things that they never could have if they had a family, especially in the foreign mission field. If you do stay single, use your singleness for the glory of God! Others may not have the "gift" of being a celibate. These will find their fruitful ministry in marriage in a way that they never would had they stayed single. You just need to get down on your knees, pray, and ask the Lord what He would have for your life. We have all been single at one point in our lives, and whether this is a temporary or a permanent state, take advantage of your singleness and run for God!

Soon I was asking, "Lord, is he the one? Could John be my husband-to-be?"

Thunder, Fire, Earthquake... And A Still, Small Voice

Some strange things started happening. For example, we had many people, both strangers and ministers that we respected, telling us (separately) that they thought we made a good team and saying that we should get married. Some of them were quite bold. However, neither John knew this was happening to me nor did I know that it was happening to him too! After a few months praying and watching all of this happen, it became clear to me that (yes!) he was my husband-to-be! Now I had to wait until God revealed it to John (waiting was the hard part), as I had no idea that God was working in his heart already. Praise God, He was honoring our covenant, when I asked Him to let me know when my husband came around!

Bro. John started to call me more often to ask me about the Bible Studies and we started spending more and more time on the telephone, even though we only lived a couple of blocks away. This is a wonderful way to get to know someone -- with a long phone line in between you. During this time he let me know of his interest.

After much prayer and some struggle to find God's perfect will, on January 23, 1996, Bro. John took me to "the bench" where he preached in the open-air on campus. There on the bench with emotion, we prayed together. He got down on one knee and asked me to marry him. I was more than ready and said a resounding "yes!"

Honor Your Father and Mother

John's parents, aunts, and uncles had already met me before our engagement and were excited about our marriage. Our last test was to tell my parents. They are not Christians. What would they think if they found out that I was marrying a minister? This meant that their hope of ever having me come back to my home (in Brazil) would be extinguished. They had so carefully fixed my room while I was gone to college. They would never be able to be close to the grandchildren. They were not "gaining" a son, but they were truly "losing" their baby daughter. I asked the Lord that if it was His will, that He would speak to my lost parents and that they would give us their blessing.

I have heard it said that dating makes you mature and causes you to grow as a person. For example, that it will help you be more patient, more selfless, more understanding, etc. The only problem with this thought is that Jesus did not need to date around to grow as a person, did He? No, He spent time with the Father. Why don't we just do the same? It is by spending time with the Father that we are filled with His presence and the fruits of the Holy Spirit... "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22-23)

During those 3½ years that I spent with the Lord in such a special way, Psalm 32:8 came alive to me: "*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee **with mine eye.***" Silly me, I just imagined a bouncing eyeball leading me by the hand. I asked, "Lord, how can You guide me with Your eye? Why is it not Your hand, or Your Word? This does not make sense. Why is it Your eye?" The Lord reminded me about when I was a little girl. All my dad had to do to make me obey was to "look" at me in a certain way. My dad was guiding me with his eye. In the same way, the Lord can guide us with His eye -- **the only "catch" is, that for you to know what He is saying with His eye, you must be beholding His face.** The Lord was telling me that as I served Him with all my heart and sought His face (not His hand), when my husband came, He would guide me with His eye saying, "look over there, Ellen - there's your husband!"

Adorned on the Inside

I was also very careful in all manner of conversation around the opposite sex. I am sometimes disturbed at the boldness of some young ladies towards the young men these days. The Bible is clear that the man is to be the head of the household, and, as the leader, he should be the first one to show interest. The Bible says that "*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing*" (Prov. 18:22), **NOT** "whoso findeth a husband." Also, the word "shamefacedness" (1 Tim 2:9) means "to be bashful in the presence of the opposite sex." The godly virgins in the Bible were adorned with a meek and quiet spirit. "*And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel... And the servant had said, It is my master: **therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.***" (Gen. 24:64-65)

I wanted to be faithful to my husband-to-be before I ever met him. At times I would pray for him, for God's will to come to pass in his life,

and that God would keep him pure and holy, drawing him closer to the Lord. On a few occasions I wrote him letters addressed "To My Husband-to-be" where I shared all the things God had been doing in my life (I later gave Bro. John all those letters after our engagement). By the grace of God, I never became interested in anyone during that period of time because God had not showed him to me yet. I never let my eyes wander or my imaginations fly. See, I wanted to give my husband-to-be someone **pure not only physically, but pure in motives, in consecration to God, and in eyes.**

God is Faithful

In 1994 we were in a transitional time in our campus ministry at Auburn University, Alabama. Our Campus Pastor had just left and we were in need of a new pastor. As I was praying one afternoon, the name "John Duncan" came to my mind. I had never met "John Duncan" before but he had led devotions in a retreat I attended a couple of years back. I was somewhat puzzled by this unusual event because I did not remember him, but God brought his name of my remembrance. I felt like I must pray for John Duncan, that God would give him direction in life and open up doors of ministry for him.

Two weeks after this incident, a sister greeted me on campus and wanted to give me some good news. She said, "Ellen, have you heard? We have a new campus pastor!" I said, "Praise the Lord, that's great! What's his name?" She replied, "His name is John Duncan!" I screamed in excitement, "What??? Are you serious? I can't believe it - I prayed for this man 2 weeks ago!"

At this point I did not know anything about Bro. John. He could have been a married man with kids, etc. I only assumed that it was a confirmation from God that "John Duncan" was indeed to be our pastor and was overjoyed that I heard from the Lord in prayer. Oh, how I wanted to be sensitive to His voice!

After a couple of weeks, Bro. John showed up on campus hauling everything he owned in his little Honda Civic. He was a godly man, 3 years older than me, and single. However, I would not even entertain the idea of a romance because: 1) God had not told me that he was the one yet and 2) Bro. John was my pastor. I did not want to get my heart involved first and later try to hear from God.

Much Carefulness is Needed

The Bible says, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" (Prov. 4:23) **One mistake people make is to get emotionally involved too soon.** This makes it hard to hear from God. I have met many people who made an infatuated decision and came to be sorry for the rest of their lives. God tried to tell them again and again that they were not to marry someone, but because they wanted it so much, they **were blinded and deaf to their parents' warnings, their pastor's warnings, their friends' warnings, and shipwrecked their lives.** The Bible says that the children of Israel "*lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.*" The scary part is that God "**...gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.**" (Psa 106:14-15) Oh, one should never come to God with a made-up mind, especially on this issue!!!

Running For God With All Our Might

I watched as Bro. John started to raise up a powerful group of young men on campus, who would do anything for the Lord. However, the girls' side of the fellowship was lacking because of his inability to minister to the women. So Bro. John called me one day on the phone and asked me to lead a Bible Study with the young ladies on campus. Pretty soon, I was naturally doing for the girls the same things that he was doing for the young men.

Here I must recount the best nugget of wisdom that came from a pastor's wife to John before we ever met. She told him, "Son, you just run for God. **Run for God with all your might** and do not worry about who you will marry. Just keep your eyes on Jesus. One day you will look next to you and you will find someone running alongside of you. That will be your wife." This word was coming to pass in our lives without our awareness.

As time went on, I started to notice that many of my prayers on Bro. John's behalf were answered immediately (God was trying to get my attention). I'd be praying for God to bless his finances not knowing the need and God would answer. I'd be praying for his health not knowing that he had been sick. Also, everything we laid our hands to do was blessed. We had opposite personalities and gifts, so we complemented each other very well. I started to notice how we worked well together.