

Does My Perfect Soulmate Exist?

On Sunday, we explored the concept of “soulmates” in the context of Genesis 2 and two recent best-selling books: one by Ada Calhoun, “Wedding Toasts I’ll Never Give,” and another by Bruce Feiler, “The First Love Story.”

1. Warm up question. Tell us at least one characteristic that would be essential for someone to be your perfect soulmate.
2. Jeff shared the story of how Jennifer and Andrea met. It was at a party. When Andrea walked through the door, and Jennifer first saw her, she heard God’s Spirit say, “This one is mine.” That marked the beginning of their now 20-year relationship.
 - a. One definition of a “soulmate” is someone God has put together in such a way that he/she is exquisitely prepared and ready to be your life companion – the perfect fit, the missing other half of your soul. Do you believe that God has created a soulmate who is meant to be your spouse? Why or why not?
 - b. Scientist Randall Munroe has computed the mathematical odds that anyone of us will be able to find the single most compatible person on earth to be our partner during our limited lifetime. The odds are . . . 1 in 10,000! In other words, only 1 person in 10,000 is likely to meet and marry the person on earth best suited for them. Given these odds, when we’re looking for a spouse, should we be holding out for our soulmate? What are the benefits or drawbacks of seeking a soulmate?
3. Read Genesis 2:18-25.
 - a. Do you take the story of Adam and Eve as literal history or sacred parable? Does it matter? Why or why not?
 - b. Note verse 18. Why isn’t it good for us humans to be alone? And what are the implications of this for someone who is single?
 - c. In this passage, God creates someone specifically for Adam. And yet, as the story continues to unfold in subsequent chapters, the one God created for Adam eventually makes a decision that profoundly adversely impacts both of them for the rest of their lives. So, the one God specifically designed for, and gave to Adam, did something that messed up their life. What’s the lesson there for us?
 - d. Feiler points out that, when Eve ate the forbidden fruit, Adam could have chosen to walk away from her, letting her get kicked out of Paradise while he continued to live there. But he didn’t. Why not? What might Adam have been thinking? If you were Adam, what decision do you think you would have made?
 - e. Years later, one of Adam and Eve’s sons killed his brother. In the aftermath, we’re told, “Adam knew his wife again and she bore a son and named him Seth.” Genesis 4:25. How might the murder of Abel by Cain have affected Adam and

Eve's relationship? What is the significance of them going on to birth another child?

- f. How would you sum up what we can learn about relationships from the story of Adam and Eve?
4. To the extent we're comfortable, let's share some of our relationship stories. Have you ever experienced (or observed) a relationship that faced Adam-and-Eve-like disruptive events? What happened? What did you learn from living through (or observing) that experience?
5. JRR Tolkien said that spouses are given to each other to be "companions in shipwreck, not guiding stars." What do you think he meant? Do you agree?
6. Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh." From this verse, we get the notion that spouses are supposed to somehow complete each other, i.e., "two become one."
 - a. When you hear the phrase "two shall become one," what do you think it means? What's the ideal we're supposed to be shooting for when we find a spouse?
 - b. Often we assume that "two are supposed to become one" at the outset of their marriage when they exchange their vows. Calhoun suggests that the wedding simply marks the beginning of a lifelong process whose eventual great reward is becoming one. She says, "True soulmates are made, not born. This tracks with what I see in long-lasting marriages. It takes time for many of even the most loving couples to feel like kindred spirits. It isn't something that happens in the first hour, or even the first year. It takes time, and patience, and commitment." What do you think of Calhoun's perspective? Is it consistent with what you have experienced and observed in life?
 - c. According to verse 24, the key to the process of "two becoming one" is to do a lot of "cleaving" to one another. The Hebrew word for "cleaving" means "to cling, to stick, stay close, keep close, stick to, stick with, follow closely." But there are exceptions to every rule. So how do we know when it's time to stop "cleaving" to a relationship?
 - d. Given what we've talked about, how has your view of marriage changed, if at all?
 - e. How do the principles we've discussed apply to other important life relationships?
 - f. Let's close our conversation with words the Skin Horse spoke to the Velveteen Rabbit in Margery William's classic children's story. Take a look at the dialogue excerpted on the next page. What most speaks to you from the words of this dialogue – and why?

Excerpt From “The Velveteen Rabbit”

By Margery Williams (1922)

Rabbit: What is Real? Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?

Skin Horse: Real isn't how you're made. It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real.

Rabbit: Does it hurt?

Skin Horse: Sometimes. But when you're Real you don't mind being hurt.

Rabbit: Does it happen all at once, like being wound up?

Skin Horse: It doesn't happen all at once. You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to toys who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.