

# Jeff Larson

First comes love then comes...Marriage?  
Healthy Relationships Conference

Women's Services

103

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## OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

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## FIRST COMES LOVE THEN COMES...MARRIAGE?

I'd like to thank the women's center, resource center, services center. I can never get the exact title right for inviting me. I appreciate what Dr. Valentine and staff are doing there to help young women and young men improve their relationships. I'm going to talk today about your love but should you get married. And I'm going to summarize in about 40 minutes I hope, 60 years of research in the social sciences as to what predicts whether or not you will be happily married and all these predictors you can measure in your self and your relationship and in your partner before you get married. It seems to me, that you would be a group that would be interested in that. Single young adult college students 85 to 90% of you will get married in the next 10 years, and so I think that it is an important topic. But I think what people fail to recognize is that we do know a lot about what predicts marital satisfaction, but sometimes we don't look at that literature or know those pieces of information until after we are married. So, you can tell the title of this its. "Then comes marriage?" with a question mark. So my thesis is, just because you are in love, does not mean you should get married.

If you want to see a very interesting, biological, physical science article, one just came out in National Geographic on the subject of love. Now love is not something that you usually see in National Geographic, right? You are used to seeing natives in the jungle and Nairobi, Kenya, and Bosnia, and Mountains in Alaska, and bears and those kinds of things. And there is an article in there about bears and there is an article in there about Africa, and then there is this article called love. What is the biochemistry of love? And so I highly recommend you read that article. It shows what chemicals go off in your brain, or what chemicals and hormones are stimulating your brain when you fall in love. And then they talk about the chemicals and the hormones that are stimulated in your brain when you become attached to someone, emotionally attached to someone. And they are different chemicals. But, the chemical that usually goes off or that does go off in all of our brains when we become romantically in love with someone is dopamine. And dopamine is a powerful pleasure chemical. You get the same effect if you eat cheesecake, uh chocolate, for me lasagna. Chocolate, does chocolate ring a bell? Any chocoholics out there? And so it is this pleasure drug, and this goes off in your brain big time when you fall in love with someone. In fact the article emphasizes that there is so much dopamine being released when you fall romantically in love with someone that you almost become psychotic. And so, I can remember. I fell, I must have fallen in love 3 or 4 times in my lifetime, but I haven't had 3 or 4 wives. I've had one. ok? So just because you had a romantically in love with a person, that's a good start and dopamine is going off and you are happy and you can't think of anything but your partner. And dopamine is going off and your brain is just saturated and it is trying to catch up. But it takes a lot more than dopamine in your brain to be happily married, so let's look at what the predictors are.

I want to start with a cartoon, one of my favorites. Which one doesn't require a special course of instruction to operate at age sixteen? In Utah, and I think the law is still the same. You can get married at 16, and no course of instruction required to get married. But look how much time and effort and energy we put into preparing people to drive. But you can tell by those two vehicles, shall we call them, that one appears a little more complicated than the other. If I ask men "what do you know notice in this cartoon?" There are several interpretations. And if I ask men "what do you notice first?" Men usually say "I notice there are bombs, beneath the wings." So I guess some guys are used to being having bombs dropped on them. I don't know where that metaphor goes, but I bet I can guess. Some people say notice a woman is driving the jet. Hmmm,

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there are a lot of metaphors about that too. Women in relationships and that dorky guy is in that car, he looks more like he needs more than a course of instruction. The problem with our society in general, my bias and my belief is that we do not prepare well for marriage in our society in general. We don't even do a good job at BYU. By that I mean we have some marvelous courses in the school family of life that would really help you prepare well for marriage. Many of you don't know about those courses or you think they are lightweight silly courses, or you just can't fit them into your schedule. You know, you can fit geometry, and you can fit chemistry and physics into your schedule, but you can't fit a course on preparing for marriage. If I was running this place, which would be dreadful for you and everyone else probably, those courses would be required. You'd have to have a, you couldn't graduate from BYU without a marriage prep class, a marriage enrichment class, and a parenting class. And maybe the divorce rate would go down in Utah and in the rest of the nation.

I hope to finish this in about 35, 40 minutes so we will have time for a few questions. So hold your questions to the end if you would. and if we have time we will go into that. Tall Holman and I, Tom's now the chair of the MFHD department. We looked at 60 years of social science research. This was 6, 8 years ago and we found about 25 specific predictors in marital satisfaction, premarital predictors. And when we looked at it, Tom being an excellent theoretician said "Jeff, we need to organize these, all these different factors or these variables into some kind of meaningful whole. You know this doesn't make sense just to have 25 factors all spread out." So being the brilliant person that he is, he said "this is an egosystemic model." And you it's kind of like an amoeba. Do you remember what amoebas look like in biology? And so in the middle of our relationship, are the partner, individual traits like personality traits, emotional health, attitudes, beliefs, ok that's the individual. Each of you comes into the relationship with those. A couple of traits include things like communication skills, problem solving skills, conflict resolution skills, how acquainted you are before you marry, those kinds of things. The context or the environment in which your relationship exists includes those things around you like, do my friends approve of my relationship? Do my parents approve of this relationship? How old am I? How old are you? Are we old enough to get married? What are our families of origin like? Did I come from a functional or a dysfunctional family? You know, all those kinds of questions form the context. So this is a fancy egosystemic theory. We published this research then in the journal family relations, which you can get just across the hall in the periodical room.

But you know, journal articles end up being read by clinicians and eggheads and a few scientists and, the people who need this information never see it. Cause the last place that you are going to go for reading would be a scientific journal article. So I got to thinking after we did this research, the people who need this are not getting it. We need to make this more practical for the average single young adult. So, I wrote the book should we stay together and simplified this egosystemic theory into a similar three sided object. No magic here, but individual couple and personal relationship context. So I refer to this as the marriage triangle. Now, in the marriage triangle we will see the 25 predictors. So you ready, we are going to go through the 25. I'll go fairly quickly and give you some examples. And see where we go, we'll see how much time we have left.

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We'll start with individual traits. Notice that this says the marriage triangle factors predicting marital dissatisfaction. So as we go through this I'm going to talk about liabilities and assets, or you call them strengths and weaknesses right? But I don't like the word weakness. I just don't like it. So we'll call it liability or we'll call it a challenge area. So these are predictors that if you have too much of these, you probably will have low marital satisfaction after you marry. But you can measure these traits in yourself and your partner before you get married, so why not do it then. These predictors would fit under a generic rubric of what we call high neurotic traits. But we are all neurotic, its just something that you have to consider its on a continuum. I think that we are born neurotic, I think we are neurotic all of our lives, I think we are just more or less neurotic on a given day. But neurosis refers to just some general traits that we are born with and we grow up with. Like sometimes we are anxious right before an exam. That doesn't mean you neurotic and need help, it means you know, its just that anxiety coming out. We get depressed occasionally, you know. Rainy days and Mondays always get me down. You too? Rainy days and Mondays? January? I mean aren't you going to be glad when January is over next week? February? I want to live again. Cause February we've got Valentines day, another holiday, my birthday, then before you know it its spring, its march. So, I'm trying to give you a pep talk, I'm trying to keep you going. Ok, this is like Prozac for free. Ok, a little a little class Prozac. You ok? Ok.

Sometimes we are impulsive you know just go buy something, you know out of the blue just go spend a bunch of money. You probably shouldn't have, you didn't think before you did it. You know, if you don't do that all the time, you are not impulsive. You don't have impulsivity problems. But some people have a lot of that. And what they have is marriage problems related around money. Because they are spending so much and they are getting into debt. Sometimes we're self conscious, some people are more vulnerable to stress than others. Some people have anger, anger issues that are kind of hostile, angry, maybe the mean type of people, and then dysfunctional beliefs.

Dysfunctional beliefs refer to things like, you know people really don't change. And so if you believe that. You know, people really don't change it is going to cause you marriage problems. Easily seen why right? Or, there's a perfect relationship out there. I'm looking for this perfect relationship and I'm not gonna get married until I find the perfect relationship or the perfect partner. That's another dysfunctional belief, and there are many others, we have actually studied these scientifically and we find that people in dissatisfying distressed marriages have more of these dysfunctional beliefs. And they are many of them. So, the point here is if you are very high. If you are higher than the national average, if you are higher than the norm on anxiety, depression, impulsivity, etc. etc. You are going to have more problems, more likely to have more problems in marriage. Now if you look at those 6 or 8 factors, how many of those could you change, could you work on, could you modify before you get married? Right, all of them. All of those can be changed and modified before you get married. It may take counseling, it may not. It may take couple counseling, it may take Prozac, it may take I don't know what. But these things can be changed and modified and people can get healthier and better prepared before they marry.

Now this is the upside, these are the assets. Uh, it's great to married to someone who has high self esteem, so you don't go around constantly you know, trying to boost their ego and make them feel better about themselves. It's a real draining type of relationship to have. So people who

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have high self esteem are really fun to be with. You spend your time having a good time getting to know each other instead of propping up the other person's self esteem all the time.

Flexibility is an absolute requirement in marriage so check out your boyfriend in his flexibility quotient and see how flexible he is. And you can do that by simply not being ready for a date. And purposefully not being ready and being all scurrying around. Course, maybe you do that anyway. But, see if he throws a fit, you know gets angry and hostile out in the lobby, or on your porch or whatever. I'm being a little factious of course, but flexibility is an important characteristic to have when you are married.

Assertiveness is the ability to speak up to know what you want and need and be able to communicate that to you partner. Those people are easier to be married to. You know, they'll tell you what they want, they'll tell you what you need. They'll speak up and we can communicate.

Socialibility is a fancy word for, probably extraversion would be a good synonym. People who like to be in groups of people, people who like to talk, like to listen. They are sociable. Marriage is a sociable relationship. Your partner is going to expect you to talk to her, guys. ok? Men, she is going to expect you to talk to her. Now its true you may have to hit mute on the ESPN channel in order to listen and then talk back to her. But, I'm sorry guys, she is going to expect you to talk to her. And so socialibility. So, if you marry a person who is very shy, very introverted, you know just wants to take a book and go in the room and close the door and read all day, you are going to be very unhappy. Ok, socialability is an important part of marriage.

So why is personality so important? W. R. Kurdick said this, and this is very true. "That personality traits may predispose a partner to distort relationship events, or to over react to negative relationship events. Certain traits may contribute to the partner being someone with whom it is very difficult to live. You probably know someone like this. Right? Hopefully it is not your spouse or your fiancé. But some people just are difficult to live with due to their own personal problems or hang ups or short comings. That doesn't mean we shun them or treat them poorly, I'm not saying that but. Some people will make the point that, you know good communication skills. If you have good communication skills, you don't need to worry about all this other stuff. Parental approval not important, acquaintance is not important, how emotionally important as long as you have good communication skills you can do anything. Sorry, that's not true. I know many couples with excellent communication skills, very empathic, warm, listening, eye messages, all this stuff you have learned about being good communicators. But, if you partner has some personality problems, emotional problems, it's still difficult to live with them. It doesn't mean you turn your back on them of course, what you do is encourage counseling therapy or whatever is needed. So we have to look at personality, it's not the only thing that is important. Another thing that is important obviously you're your couple traits. These are the liabilities, so these are the things that you don't want to do.

And that is to be dissimilar, that's a pretty obvious one. But this isn't dissimilar like recreation. And I don't know how many times, I have been at BYU for 17 years including 4 years in the University counseling center, and I can remember so many times people telling me you know, we just love to do things together, we have so much fun together. Well that's not what predicts marital satisfaction, having fun together. We both like to mountain bike, and racquetball,

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and ski, and jog, and chocolate, and pina coladas, virgin pina coladas, and you know whatever else. I had to say it that way, pina coladas, virgin pina coladas down at the Mexican food place. These are not important folks. I mean, sure it is great to have similar interests in recreation. We are talking about similarities in life, basic life values like religion, spirituality, children, money, finances, the most important value in life, self fulfillment, and service to other people, those are the values that we are talking about.

A short acquaintanceship predicts divorce. And in a minute we'll get to acquaintanceship, because I'm sure you are interested in that one. You want me to tell you the number of months you should be, you should know someone before you marry them, to guarantee you marital satisfaction right. So we will get to that in the next slide. I don't have that data, but we'll get to it in the next slide because I want to show you a picture of Steve Young and his experiences with acquaintanceship, which he served as a great role model for all of us.

Premarital sex, those who have a lot of that, tend to have high divorce rates. Especially women who are promiscuous. People with premarital pregnancies have high divorce rates. That's usually, explained by their young age, that they marry very young. They are usually teenagers, 17, 18, 19 years old when they marry. It could, it may be the premarital pregnancy that puts so much stress on the relationship that it breaks up, or it could be the fact that you know she is 17 and he is 19. And the divorce rates for couples where one or both people are under 20 is about 70%. Seven, zero ok?

Cohabitation, don't need to worry about that here. But it's a worldly problem. People sometimes believe, the best thing to do to prepare for marriage is live together for a while and find out if you are compatible. And that is just not true. First of all, you'll find a little bit about compatibility. The people who cohabit, especially those who are multiple cohabitators, meaning they've had cohabitation relationships with several people have much higher divorce rates than those who don't cohabit. There's a whole literature on that, not a good idea. Then of course, people with communication skills. They don't know how to listen, they don't know how to resolve conflict, their hostile, they interrupt their partner, they are not respectful, all those communication conflict resolution skills. If those are lacking, if you have problems with those, uh those are going to predict marital dissatisfaction. Again, if you look at this list how many of those things can be improved on, or worked on, or fixed before you get married? Many of them can.

So this, my proud moment with Brother Steve, the most well known LDS person in the world, second only maybe to President Hinckley. You know, in terms of celebrity status. Notice the date on this, almost ten years ago Steve said on the right hand column, the 35 year old San Francisco 49er's quarterback and his fiancé Aimee Baglietto, 25 have decided to postpone the wedding indefinitely to allow more time to get to know each other. Oh, Steve. Thank you for saying this in the daily universe. Because my fear for BYU students is you don't spend enough time getting acquainted before you get married. The acquaintanceships I find shocking among BYU students in general. That you don't spend enough time, getting acquainted and knowing each other well enough before you get married. So here is Steve serving as a great role model for the rest of us, and that it takes time to get to know someone and to make these marital decisions.

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Now, my question to all of you is did Steve then marry Aimee? He said that he was going to back off the engagement, go slower, get to know her better. Or know him better. Did he marry Aimee eventually? Who knows? Most of you don't know. No he didn't marry Aimee. He married someone else. So looking at this, what would you guess? Maybe he dodged a bullet? Maybe she dodged a bullet? Although I don't think that because the guy is rich, I mean I'm being facetious. But my father said, you know my father who was always full of great wisdom you know. Marry a rich girl Jeff; you can learn to love her later. And that made me think of this. My dad had great wisdom and great advice. And he also had a sense of humor as you can tell. But the point is that he did not marry Aimee. Now she may have been the most wonderful woman on the world, most wonderful woman, one of the most wonderful, wonderful women in the world. That's hard to say, but in fact he married someone else and is happily married as far as we know. But he backed off this relationship slowed it down, and said we need to get to know each other. He also served as a good example right? So you've read the next paragraph. As Mormons they can't live together, so slow down the relationship. So he did two smart things. He didn't cohabit with her, and number two he allowed more time to get to know her. And eventually I guess broke up with her and married someone else.

So this is an example of slowing what I call slowing down the relationship, putting on the brakes a little, putting her in second gear, you are in third gear racing along, no shift her down to second folks. Go slower, let's get to know each other better. So, the upside predictors, the assets are similarities of course and long acquaintanceship. So how long, science can not answer that question, I'm sorry. We can not predict, you know there are so many variables, how long should you know someone before you are married. So what we are left with is a few sociological studies and um national averages and my clinical advice. My advice from looking at the scholarly literature on the subject. So basically if people ask me this question, I say about a year. I would know a person for a least 12 months minimum before. From the time you meet them until you marry them, I would make that at least 12 months. To get through all 4 seasons of the year. As he gets to know mom and dad and grandma and grandpa and gets to meet the parents. Remember the movie. And gets to be interrogated in the basement with a lie detector test and go through all that trauma he if he can make it through that trauma, he may be the one to marry.

Now, if you look at National US rates, for acquaintanceship the average couple, Caucasian middle class couple in the US knows each other approximately 2 and half years before they marry. And so what I am pleading with you all to make it at least a year, I'm really on the low side. National average US is 2 ½ years. Ok, you can scratch your head and say how could people possibly do that. Well, you know what is going on for at least a year and a half of the two. Right? They are living together. Ok, we don't do that for good reasons. Many good reasons. The average age for all go into the average age for marriage here in a minute, let you see a comparison on that one too. Now the others is good communication skills, conflict resolution skills, pretty self evident why those are important. Those factors, could any of those be modified before you get married, can you make any changes, any enrichment? Can you make those things if they are not assets can you make them assets? The answer is yes. I don't know if you can become more similar, you know that might be a little bit of a stretch. But you can improve your communication and conflict resolution skills and certainly get to know each other better.

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Context, these will predict a divorce for you. Younger age especially under 20. Unhealthy family of origin experiences, which is a fancy way of saying you came from a dysfunctional family. A very dysfunctional family. Most families if not all families have some dysfunction in them. No ones perfect, no families are. Believe it or not, we really aren't. We all have our strengths and our weaknesses there. But if you came from a family that was abusive. Emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, a really nasty ugly parental divorce. A lot of chronic marital conflict. These things damage people psychologically. Make people afraid of relationships. Make people feel anxious and nervous about relationships. Children of divorce have more positive attitudes about divorce than people who come from intact families. You would not think that. You would think someone who grew up in a family where there was divorce that would be the last thing that they would do. But in fact, surveys of college students your age, show that people who grow up in a family where there was parental divorce actually endorsed divorce as a solution to marriage problems more than people who came from an intact family. So, what's the implication of that for the person you are dating? That person came from a divorced family. You don't make a big deal out of it, you get all freaky and break up and sent back the ring or anything. You sit down and say, we haven't talked about this. Tell me about your parent's divorce. Tell me how that affected you when that happened. Tell me how that's affecting you now. How do you think that affects your uh views of relationships? How do you think that affects your attitude about divorce? How do you think that affects your attitude towards me? These are all good discussions to have. You're not doing some kind of clinical interview. You are simply saying that was a tuff experience I'm sure. Let's talk about it, and talk about the emotional healing that hopefully has gone on for you. Now, this is not something to freak out about. Again, I'll emphasis that. The divorce rate for people who grew up in divorced families is only like 5-6% higher than the national average, so it's not like twice as likely. 5 or 6% higher, so it's a big enough deal to have a conversation about it. You just need to be aware of that, and talk about that.

Now, how about your friends and parents approval of your relationship. We have very little data on that except what we do know is the more parental and friend approval the better. And if you have disapproval, you should back off the relationship. Ok, do you hear that? Friend or parental approval, don't break up, I didn't say break up, I said back off for a minute and seriously consider what these people are telling you. These are the people that have known you the longest. Known you longer than he's known you or she's known you, and they have your best interest at heart, your parents and your friends. And if you are getting a lot of disapproval from them, listen to their complaints, their comments, to their gripes about this person or this relationship and slow down the relationship and pray about it. Think about it, pray about it some more. But consider seriously what they having, what they have to say. Sometimes what happens is if once your parents get to know this person better. You know, you've been, he's been to your house, and your parents place. You know four or five times and they've gotten to know him better, they start liking him. Sometimes they just don't know the person better. I have a sixteen year old daughter. And I'm sure no, no male on the earth will be good enough for her, I've already decided that. You know it is going to be a real problem for him. So she'll just have to get as much of my approval as possible, so I'm going to do my best. But you don't cancel a wedding because people don't approve, because you have your agency and you make those decisions. You are the ones that have to live with him, or her. These are important things to consider. Listen, pray, slow the relationship down and see what happens.



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People who feel pressured to get married, often end up in divorce court. This is internal or external pressure. Internal pressure is that, you know the stuff inside your head, inside your heart. You know, I should be married by now. External pressure comes from all over the place at least in Provo. External pressure does not exist outside of Utah. If you don't want any pressure to get married, just leave the state. I'm joking around a bit, but pressures to marriage some people say, I wasn't sure I was ready. But you know, the announcements were sent out. Feeling pressure.

People who have little education or career preparation do more poorly in marriage, than those who have preparation. Who have their education finished, who have their career going. However, there's no data suggest that the divorce rate for college students, married college students is any higher than the average. So, I wouldn't worry so much about that. Many BYU students of course are married and still finishing their educations, and I think that's fine. But poverty does get old doesn't it? Poverty wears on your relationship. Genie and I married after my bachelor's degree then I went to five more years of graduate school. And I looked back on those years and one time said to her, those were some of the best years of my life. In my master's program, in my PhD program. And I was dumb enough to say to her, how were they to you. That wasn't a good question. Because she, we were raising our five about the time I finished my five or six year old son. And she had to work part-time and be a full-time and so on and so forth. She said those were the years, worst six years of my life. And I thought I need to talk to her more about that. Those were tougher years for you than they were for me. So I had all the academic stimulation of going to college and being a big shot doctoral student while she is working her fingers to the bone to support me and raising Jeff, her son all by herself, because of my schedule. And uh, but again most college marriages make it fine. And those sacrifices are worth it. And some, those are years were you grow. And we grew tremendously during those years. So, in terms of context that are assets, there they are, they are just the opposite of the factors we just looked at.

In terms of older age, I know that can be a tricky one, especially around here. Oh boy, uh Tim Heaton in the sociology department did some research, and he's a demographer so he studies divorce trends by age, and socioeconomic group, and ethnicity and race, racial groups so on and so forth. An interesting finding that he had was that it seemed like for white Caucasian, I guess white and Caucasian are the same thing. For a Caucasian middle class women seemed like a really good age to get married was about 23. It was just a little bump on marital satisfaction if women were 23 or older. I think that we have a problem at BYU with that. Cause I don't think a lot of women are 23 when they first marry. You may wonder, well what's the national average you know. Well the national average today is the median age of first marriage for Caucasian men is 27, and for Caucasian women is 25. And Heaton's research suggests 23 or older for women just seemed to have just a little bit of an advantage. But by the way there's no data to suggest that you know, wait until your 35 or 40 or something and then you are really prepared for marriage. Then you have to guarantee if you can make it to 35 and be single. Nah, there's no data to suggest that. In fact, the recent data shows that in fact. The most, the best marriageable years are probably between 20 and 30. You know right in the mid 20's is, there's just something about that that is just right for people. So waiting much longer than 29 or 30 is not going to give you a lot of benefits in terms of, now I've reduced my risk. Does that make sense?

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So, I was also thinking of that scene from the movie *Single's Ward*. Where Steve Young is talking to the group, right about Brigham Young said that any single male over the age of 25 is what, "a menace to society." Remember that line? Everybody laughs, I laughed, everybody laughed. I don't know if that is true if Brigham Young said that or not. I think that is true. I'm not sure. But I was thinking today as I thought about that statement. Yeah, but you have to remember the context of Brigham Young's life. Brigham Young said that probably in 1860's. What was the average age for men in 1860? Well it was probably like 20, 21 average age of marriage. So if you are five to six years older than the national average than maybe you are a menace to society. I don't know? But you see he was talking in the 1860s. Got that? Ok, maybe I'm the only one who noticed that. But the context was that, and I don't even know if Brigham Young was joking when he said that. The point is life is more complicated in the year 2006. Most of us want to finish education. Sometimes graduate school. And it is a lot more expensive to live than it used to be. And it's a lot more stressful. And so, there is no magic age and I think that I have given you a pretty good idea of what the data suggests and that is the older the better but let's not extend it to a point where there's no additional benefit.

Now those are those are the 25 predictors. And we have a few minutes for questions. But there are other predictors, there are other red flags. By that I mean these are not factors that you see studied in the journals or are being published much. In some ways they are just practical things that you should just know. But some of us don't. I want to throw a few of these at you, to see if you know anyone who is in these types of relationships. Or that would comment that this is what is going on in that relationship. So these are red flags, by that I mean, caution you know, Stop. When someone waves a red flag it means stop, caution, trouble ahead. Ok, so let me give you a couple examples. These things people have actually said to me in counseling situations.

Teresa said, "He seemed really caring at first, always wanted to know what I was doing. It was really kind of flattering. But then he started telling me what to do. But then he started telling me what to do and after a while, I felt trapped." You could probably think of a diagnosis for this guy. A little bit controlling. A little bit possessive. Hmm, these are not happy people to marry. You won't be happy if you marry them. Janny said "The first time it happened," she's referring to an incident "we were coming out of a dance club. A guy just looked over at me for a few seconds and Jared came unglued. He hit the guy and it took all four of us to pull him off." Anger issues? Hmm, you think? He would stand in the doorway and not let me leave the room until I apologized. Now this is what we call low level couple violence. This ladies, especially ladies is abusive behavior. When a person puts you on the ground and holds you down, and won't let you up until you finish the conversation or say you're sorry. Stands in the doorway and won't let you out of the room. We are going to settle this! And you aren't leaving until we do. That's abuse. Ok, I'm going to be frank with you. I'm not going to dance around this. People who do this kind of stuff, if you marry them, it will get worse than this. Ok, and this is what we call low level couple violence and abusive behavior. Control freaks, whatever you want to call them. This is not a person to get into a long term relationship with. I wouldn't even stay short term if this happened to me.

Now this is the male side. Gene said, "When we got serious, she started complaining about the time I spent with my buddies. She criticized my friends more. It was like none of them were good enough now." So, what's her problem? Hmm, possessiveness. Maybe a little

## FIRST COMES LOVE THEN COMES...MARRIAGE?

possessiveness. Hmmm. Jealousy, possessiveness? You know, it's his guy buddies that he is hanging out with.

Another complaint, "the closer we got to marrying the more she persistently kept asking are you sure you really love me. So this is a person that who has one of the premarital predictors that we talked about earlier. And that is, low self confidence. Low self-esteem, perhaps some depression, a person that just always needs their ego boosted up and propped up by you. And um, these people will ask you this everyday. You know, this isn't a once a month thing, you'll probably get this two or three times. "Are you sure? I need, I'm gonna text ya" You know. One more time, a text. Are you sure, underline. Can you underline with a text? I don't know I don't text. I don't wanna text.

Alright, the goal. In summary, the goal is to assess your triangle before you commit to marriage. A couple ways you can do this. You can get my workbook and go through it in several hours and compare your answers. Look at your assets and liabilities and set some goals for improvement. You can take the relationship evaluation which is a BYU product. It is on route, it is online 24/7. For about the same price. At relate-institute.org. Take the relate evaluation, or do a book like mine or another similar one. For by doing this, you can assess those 25 factors. Look in the back of my book and where you find the red flag indicators of whoa! Probably don't want to go into that relationship. Probably don't want to marry that person just yet, unless you can get that process stopped, you know premaritally, cause it may get worse after you are married. And by the way, personal problems don't get better after you are married. Personal problems get worse. So some people have the false dysfunctional belief that I'll be happy if I get married. And what happens is that they get married and they are even less happy. You need to be personally happy and well put together before you get married. Marriage adds stress to your life. It adds love and romance and adds good things to your life too. But marriage is not a solution for personal problems. Marriage is something you do once you are fully put together yourself, and there are so many ways to get fully put together now a days including professional help, the bishop's help and a lot of other help that is out there. So, there it is. Thank you for being here.