

Searching for a 'Sole' Mate

by Gary Thomas

Our culture has embraced a rather absurd notion that there is just one person who can, in the words immortalized by Tom Cruise in *Jerry Maguire*, "complete us." This is a disastrous mindset with which to approach a lifelong marital decision.

The notion of a "soul mate" is actually pretty ancient. Well over two thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Plato surmised that a perfect human being was tragically split in two, resulting in a race of creatures sentenced to spend the rest of their lives searching for that missing other who can complete them.¹

The real danger in this line of thinking is that many people mistake a storm of emotion as the identifying mark of their soul mate. How else can you identify "destiny"?

Such individuals marry on an infatuation binge without seriously considering character, compatibility, life goals, family desires, spiritual health, and other important concerns. Then when the music fades and the relationship requires work, one or both partners suddenly discover that they were "mistaken": this person must not be their soul mate after all! Otherwise, it wouldn't be so much work. Next they panic. Their soul mate must still be out there!

Such people can't get to divorce court fast enough, lest someone steal their "one true soul mate" meant only for them. When we get married for trivial reasons, we tend to seek divorce for trivial reasons.

Good and Bad Choices

In a biblical view, there is not "one right choice" for marriage, but rather good and bad choices. We are encouraged to use wisdom, not destiny, as our guide when choosing a marital partner. There is no indication that God creates "one" person for us to marry. This is because Christians believe that *God* brings the primary meaning into our lives.

Marriage — though wonderful — is still secondary.

Consider, for example, Paul's advice in [1 Corinthians 7:1-9](#). He clearly leaves the choice of marriage up to us; there are benefits to singleness, and benefits to being married. If you're unable to handle sexual temptation as a single, Paul says, then by all means, get married.

There is no hint at all of finding "the one person" that God created "just for you." It's far more a pragmatic choice: do you think you'll sin sexually if you don't get married ([1 Corinthians 7:2](#))? Are you acting improperly toward a woman you could marry ([1 Corinthians 7:36](#))? If so, go ahead and get married — it's your choice, and God gives you that freedom.

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¹See Plato's "Symposium" in *The Portable Plato*, Scott Buchanan, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1948), pp. 146-148.