



By Jean Cheng

In search of “the one” The choice that we must all make

Is there such a thing as “real love”? How do we know when we are ready for it? Does true love require freedom of choice? These are questions that teenagers and young adults often ask about love. Our contributor, Jean Cheng, recently spoke at St Francis Xavier Church on “Love vs Lust”. We are pleased that she has agreed to contribute this article that explores love, life and faith – in the eyes of a young adult.

Jean Cheng is currently pursuing her Masters and PhD in Clinical Psychology at the University of Melbourne. She is actively involved in learning more about the Theology of the Body and is currently involved in a few ministries including the Singapore-based online ministry, ‘Oxygen’.

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A river, glasses of wine, and candle lights dancing quietly against the gentle night breeze... my good friends and I were at a perfectly romantic spot. At one point, however, all of them were on their phones – either speaking to or messaging their partners. I sat there, picked up my wine, and tried to appear nonchalant. They had no idea that deep down, I was aching. I had been single for a considerable time and when I reached home that night, I cried and asked God, “When Lord? When will you bring ‘the one’ into my life? When will I finally be complete and happy?”

Since the age of four (yes, yes, I started early), I have always dreamt of the day when I would finally be with ‘the one’. From reading fairytales to indulging in Hollywood films and Chinese drama serials, these stories and shows depicted happiness and fulfillment as something that could only be achieved when two people found their ‘other half’. And I believed it.

Yet, after more loneliness and heartaches, I have come to realize how misguided my thinking had been. By God’s grace, I hope to humbly share with you the reasons why my previous mindset was erroneous and what I have now come to believe.

What are relationships about?

I began by stating that I was wrong to think that I needed a man in my life before I could be happy and complete. Before I go on, however, allow me to clarify that I am not propagating the idea that we should shun relationships. On the contrary, God declared, “It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him” (Genesis 2: 18). We were made for relationships – with God, our family, friends, and yes, if our vocation is marriage, then even with a ‘special someone’. (For the purposes of this article, the term ‘relationships’ will refer specifically to romantic relationships.)

God created us to desire the opposite sex, to yearn for emotional connection, intimacy, and even physical union. Therefore, the natural desires we experience towards the opposite sex are good. Unfortunately, Satan has taken these good desires and twisted them; rendering us uncertain about how our desires can be satisfied as well as the purposes for having such desires.

Specifically, while it is true that God intended for man and woman to become one, we buy into Satan’s twisted lie – if we believe – that we will *only* be complete and happy when that happens. When we accept this lie, we turn our partners into idols and conclude that our innermost desires can only be

satisfied by them. Worse, we *expect* our partners to satisfy them – as if just because we had such desires, our partners owe it to us to realise them. Such relationships soon develop into mutual taking where both parties expect the other to fill up their loneliness, to soothe their insecurities, and, in short, to complete them.

Yet, love is not about taking. Relationships should not be about two people trying to get as much as they can out of the other e.g., a man making his partner satisfy all his physical needs or a woman demanding that her partner gratify all her emotional needs.

Love is about giving. In a genuinely loving relationship, two people become a gift and a blessing to each other. This, however, is only possible when we are free from the compulsion to take from and to possess the other (West, 2004).

But what about our needs and desires? If we cannot rely on our partners to satisfy them, does that mean that we will always lead unsatisfied lives? No. We *can* and *will* be satisfied. However, the source of our satisfaction should always be God and not man. God said, “A curse on the man who puts his trust in man... a blessing on the man who puts his trust in the Lord” (Jeremiah 17: 5-8). Such desires are blessings as they enable us to depend on the almighty Father who will take care of us better than any human being can, so long as we allow Him to.

Only God can satisfy our aches, loneliness, needs, and desires. Subsequently, we *must* allow God to satisfy and complete us. For it is only when a man and a woman are wholesome in God that they can come together in their wholesomeness to share their lives and become true gifts to each other. It is only when we are wholesome that a relationship changes from “two ‘halves’ becoming ‘one’” into “two ‘wholes’ becoming ‘one’”.

How do I know if I am ready to enter into a relationship?

For the reasons already stated, a relationship should begin when you are not seeking someone else (besides God) to complete you. We will only have a shot at a flourishing relationship when we allow our partners to freely be himself/herself, to grow, and to be fully alive.

Of course, this does not mean that we must turn into martyrs. Just as we seek to be a gift to the other, we must discern if the other party is also a gift to us by asking questions such as, “does he/she support me in becoming a better person?” or “is he/she simply using me for his/her self-gratification?”



In addition, I believe that the ultimate goal in life should be to reflect God’s glory and love. Therefore, a relationship should begin when two people are relatively confident that they will be able to glorify God together. This would entail both parties seeking God’s will regardless of the cost e.g., choosing to end the relationship when they realize that they would be better able to glorify God without that particular person in their lives – at least for the time being. For if we place our trust in God, even if it involves momentary suffering, we would ultimately lead abundant lives (refer to Jeremiah 29:11).

Before we enter a relationship, some useful questions which we could ask ourselves are, “what is my motive for being in a relationship?”, “can I walk away from this relationship if it is better for the other?”, and “do I actively seek God’s will above my own?”

I’m ready. What’s next?

If your aim is to experience a life-giving relationship, here are some guidelines that will hopefully assist you.

1 Pray for the grace to always have God as your first desire

If you have not yet experienced the temptation to idolize your partner, you probably would. After all, God is not tangible to our immediate senses but our partners are. Nonetheless, if we desire the best possible relationship, we need to keep our hearts fixed on God – the only one who can satisfy us.

2 Be brothers and sisters in Christ

Personally, I have found it helpful to think of the other first as a brother-in-Christ, followed by a lover. This enables me to step back from any “selfish girlfriend demands” I may have and consider if my actions are truly the best for my partner’s spiritual growth.

3 Learn the truth about the other

Relationships should not be based solely on feelings or sensuality. While these elements are important, they must be rooted in the truth of who that person is (Wojtyla, 1981). It is only in the light of truth that we can make free decisions and choices that are life-giving. Relationships based on fantasies can often lead to bitterness where one or both parties do not feel accepted for who they are. Conversely, relationships

with truth as its foundations are able to grow in maturity and strength.

4 Don’t be exclusive

Thinking that a relationship involves just two people, couples frequently make the mistake of excluding others. We need to remember that our lives involve more than ourselves. We have relationships with family members and friends. Therefore, a couple who hopes to survive the test of time must learn to assimilate into each other’s real lifestyles, which would include getting to know one another’s family and friends.

5 Know your unique areas of temptations

Each of us are unique in our areas of temptation. For example, a man might feel sexually tempted when he sees his girlfriend wearing a skirt, whereas another man might not. It is imperative that we are aware of how we are tempted be it sexually, emotionally, etc, so that we can avoid such areas of temptation and grow in virtue.

Lastly...

I realise that not everyone fancies a God-glorifying relationship. However, if you are tired of the type of relationships offered by society and hunger for something more, I hope that what I have shared has helped in some way.

Striving for a life-giving relationship will definitely be more challenging than settling for a relationship that society presents. It is, after all, much easier to take than to give. Even so, I implore you to listen to your heart. Do you want to be with someone who blesses or uses you? Do you want to be a person who gives or takes life away from others?

My prayer is that by God’s grace, you and I will daily choose a relationship that is life-giving, embrace any sufferings we might face, and ultimately become living testimonies that there *is* something more to relationships than what the world offers.

Bibliography

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