

**Life, Love and Family Daily Fact Sheet**  
**Dr. Tim Clinton**

*“How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk”*

- **5 Premarital Predictors of Marital Happiness** (Van Epp, 2007):
  - **Compatibility Potential**—the partner you need is one with whom you have a rich chemistry, whose differences make you better than you could be on your own, and who shares many of your core values, life goals, and some of your personality qualities and lifestyle preferences.
  - **Relationship Skills**—your partner’s communication and conflict resolution skills, actions, and ability to listen and reveal himself will affect the success of your relationship. Joint effort is required—you deserve a partner who has skills similar to yours and whose heart is just as willing to use them.
  - **Patterns from Other Relationships**—what we do in one relationship we will often repeat in another.
  - **Family Patterns and Background**—patterns from childhood often recur in adult relationships unless essential efforts are made to change.
  - **Character and Conscience Traits**—put conscientiousness at the top of your list of qualities you want in a partner. A consistent and healthy self-monitoring conscience has been identified with stable and lasting marriages over and over.
- **Striving for Success in Marriage: Premarital Counseling**
  - In 2011, 4.2 million adults were newly married (Fry, 2012).
  - 50% of first marriages, 67% of second, and 74% of third marriages end in divorce (Clinton & Trent, 2009).
  - Research shows the premarital counseling reduces the risk of divorce by up to 30% (Phegley, 2013).
  - Premarital counseling is an intentional and important process for a prospective husband and wife to cut through the façade of the dating relationship and help them learn the truth about each other’s expectations, habits, flaws, beliefs, and values as they prepare for marriage (Clinton & Trent, 2009).
  - The primary purpose of premarital counseling is to identify the assumptions each person holds and work through the areas of potential conflict.
  - Premarital counseling offers an opportunity for couples to be better prepared for the inevitable challenges of marriage.
- **Quotes:**
  - *“We love out of our character.”* –John Van Epp
  - *“God is more interested in your future and your relationships than you are.”* –Billy Graham

- *“Being the best person you can be is the first step in building a healthy relationship.”—John Van Epp*
- *“The good doesn’t always last, and the bad usually gets worse.”—From *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk**
- *“Dating is about finding out who you are and who others are. If you show up in a masquerade outfit, neither is going to happen.”—Henry Cloud*

- **Key Thoughts:**

- Is your partner a Jerk (Van Epp, 2007)?
  - A jerk may be male or female.
  - They persistently resist changing their core jerk qualities.
  - They break boundaries.
  - They have an entitlement to your attention, interest, money, time, and emotional support.
  - They are unable to see things from anyone else’s perspective.
  - They have a dangerous lack of emotional controls and balance.
- In most successful relationships, the two partners have a blend of similarities and differences in personalities, backgrounds, and lifestyles.
- Look very closely at the way a potential partner treats *all* people. How does he/she treat best friends, coworkers, family members, waitresses?
- Your partner’s friends will mirror qualities that often exist in your partner.
- Childhood experiences are some of the strongest predictors of what your mate will be like as a spouse and parent.
- Research shows that religiosity and marital success are related.
- The Bible states that we are not to be unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14), meaning that we should not date or marry someone who is not a Christian.
- When dating and considering marriage, it is imperative that you choose a partner who shares your Christian beliefs. Failing to do so may result in many conflicts in marriage, child-rearing, and overall life satisfaction.

- **Verses:**

- *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”—1 Corinthians 15:33*
- *“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”—Jeremiah 29:11*
- *“Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.”—Proverbs 16:3*

- *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”—Proverbs 4:23*
- *“Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”—1 Peter 3:3-4*
- *“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”—2 Timothy 2:22*
- *“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”—2 Corinthians 6:14*

#### **Endnotes**

Clinton, T. & Trent, J. (2009). The quick-reference guide to marriage & family counseling. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Fry, R. (2012). No reversal in decline of marriage. Pew Research Social & Demographic Trends. Accessed February 11, 2013 from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/11/20/no-reversal-in-decline-of-marriage/>.

Phegley, S. (2013). “Premarital Counseling.” National Directory of Marriage & Family Counseling. Accessed February 11, 2013 from [http://www.counsel-search.com/articles/marriage-family-counseling\\_831.htm](http://www.counsel-search.com/articles/marriage-family-counseling_831.htm).

Van Epp, J. (2007). How to avoid falling in love with a jerk: The foolproof way to follow your heart without losing your mind. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.