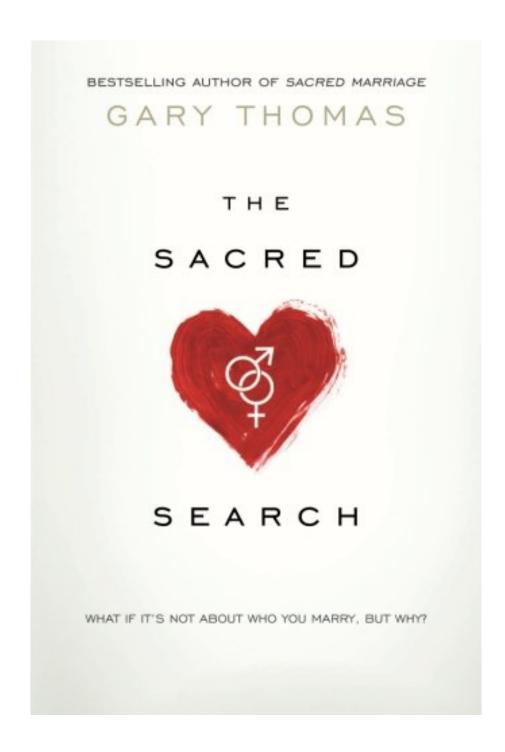


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What if you stopped looking for a "soul mate" and started looking for a "sole mate"—someone who will live out with you the great purpose of God? What if dating isn't about finding "the one" but making a wise choice so you can better serve the One who loves you most? What if God didn't design relationships to make you happy but to make you holy? In The Sacred Search, Gary Thomas will transform the way you look at romantic relationships. Whether you are single, dating, or engaged, Gary's unique perspective on dating will prepare you for a satisfying, spiritually enriching marriage even before you walk down the aisle. As Gary reminds us, a good marriage is not something you find—it's something you make.

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Most helpful customer reviews

96 of 98 people found the following review helpful.

Sobering but helpful marriage advice

By John Gibbs

No marriage is easy, but some marriages build each partner up, while others tear each partner down; every marriage takes time and effort, but some marriages sap the spouses' strength, while others generate joy and enthusiasm and intimacy, according to Gary Thomas in this book. You are more likely to make a wise marriage choice if you settle the "why" question before considering the "who".

The author's advice includes:

- * No matter who you marry, the feelings of romantic attraction are likely to wear off within 12 to 18 months
- * If you seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, you will set yourself up for a more fulfilling, spiritually enriching and more satisfying marriage
- * Infatuation leads far more people astray than into satisfying marriages
- * While it can seem like a tremendous ego boost to have someone seem like they are desperate for you, ask yourself if you're willing to play the role of God in their life
- * The Bible encourages us to use wisdom, not destiny, as our guide when choosing a marital partner

- * Important factors to consider include scriptural mandates, wisdom, parental and pastoral advice, and prayer
- * If you marry for money, health or looks, keep in mind that none of these are certain to remain
- * You're not just choosing a life partner; you're choosing your kids' future parent
- * The man or woman you're thinking of marrying should be someone whose character can survive major life challenges
- * A relationship requires two people getting to know each other, and then every day they have to choose to keep relating to each other or risk drifting apart
- * It takes from 9 to 14 years for two individuals to stop thinking of themselves as individuals and to start thinking of themselves as a couple
- * It's hard to accept that we are going to hurt someone we love so much, but if we marry them, we will

The book certainly provides plenty to think about for anyone contemplating marriage. When the requirements of a suitable marriage partner are all added together, the field of potential candidates is seriously narrowed. Most people experience severe struggles in their marriages, and most people are far from being perfect marriage partners, for many of the reasons the author has outlined. It is an eye-opening and sobering, but very helpful, book.

55 of 61 people found the following review helpful.

Great Tool for Premarital Counseling

By Mathew Sims

If you don't recall I reviewed Gary Thomas's Every Body Matters and really enjoyed it so I jumped at the opportunity to read The Sacred Search. It also happens that as many of you know I'm writing a book about family discipleship and so I'm trying to read as many books about relationships from a Christian perspective as possible. All that aside: I enjoyed The Sacred Search.

Thomas argues that most people when searching for a spouse are doing it all wrong. They are placing the search above all else. Thomas uses Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (see pp. 17-18). Says Thomas,

I want to make a promise to you: if you will see first God's kingdom and His righteousness and let that agenda drive your decision regarding whom you choose to marry and refuse to compromise on that, you will set yourself up for a much more fulfilling, spiritually enriching, and overall more satisfying marriage. The degree to which you compromise on this verse is the degree to which you put your future satisfaction in jeopardy and open wide the door to great frustration and even regret. (p. 22) and later he points out,

You know why so many relationships slowly wither into nothingness? They stop seeking first the kingdom of God. There's no overarching mission in the couple's lives beyond self-enjoyment. This entraps them in a life of petty battles and superficial cares. . . . Living by the gospel provides the security so necessary to build a foundation of mutual fellowship (pp. 173, 175)

That foundation provides a spring board for expansive conversations surrounding searching for a marriage partner, pre-marital counseling, healthy relationships, and other related topics. I especially found his discussion on infatuation helpful. He brings in some science and also explains how the body works during this time. It helps to demystify those strong feelings (see chapter 3).

In the spectrum from Biblical counseling (only using the Bible) and modern psychology, Thomas seems somewhere slightly towards the psychology side. What I mean: he grounds his principles in Scripture but he's also strongly affirmative towards the impact of psychology. I'm somewhere slightly towards the Biblical counseling (CCEF) side of the spectrum, although I'm not suspicious of psychology and believe in using truth where ever it can be found. I say all that to say: my one concern with the book was Thomas's chapter on sexual sin and its consequences (chapter 15 "A Neurochemical War Against Your Reasoning"). For all the

talk of the kingdom of God and gospel prior I found very little gospel for those who have sinned sexually in this chapter. Instead he points primarily towards "a tremendous amount of spiritual and psychological clinical work" to find healing (p. 198). It's not even that he didn't say overcoming the issue was possible but the language used seemed flippant (like "if you're really messed up" or "if either of you has a past that would make . . . Oprah blush" p. 198) and the emphasis seemed to shift more towards the psychology side. Some who are more affirming in psychology might not find a problem with the emphasis. I would recommend any one who has a history of sexual sin to first lay a good strong foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in your life.

Because of the breadth of the topics it would be a good resources for pastors and counselors. He covers almost every important topic to cover before getting married. The book could be used as a guide for premarital counseling with some fleshing out by the counselor. Because of the level of practicality I would recommend using this book in conjunction with Tim & Kathy Keller's The Meaning of Marriage. The two books would compliment each other well and would provide a comprehensive resources for newly married, soon-to-be married, and thinking-about-marriage couples.

78 of 89 people found the following review helpful.

Good book with some concerns

By Amazon Customer

This is a good book with excellent advice in terns of choosing Godly character above all else in whom your going to marry. But I felt like it was a bit unforgiving for those looking for a spouse that came from frayed past. The book seem to caution even entertaining possibly marrying individuals like that. There are many quality people that have fractured past and have worked hard to develop themselves as quality people and the books doesn't seem to recognize this. I fear that it may present as being hopeless unless you have a had a perfect upbringing and a general past free of problems if you are that type of reader reading this book.

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