

If my daughter were marrying this June...



by Faith Baldwin

(Famous author of "Face Toward the Spring," "The Whole Armour," "Lookout for Liza," and more than 60 other books.)

THINK IF I HAD a young daughter who wished to marry this June I would tell her, "All true love is based on romantic love; but only based. On that base you have to build the enduring strength. If you can't, then you will go from one marriage to the next always looking for romantic love, and nothing else."

It's a cliché to say that marriage is a partnership. It's better than a partnership, for sometimes one partner wants more than the other; it is a sharing. It is also respect for another person's spiritual privacy and a desire to grow with him into maturity.

This week a friend of mine will be 20. She's been married three years, she has a baby and another one on the way. I remember seeing her when her engagement was announced and I thought, that child!

Things have changed; youngsters are marrying at what we consider a very early age. But they've only changed back, for if you wait long enough, anything returns to fashion. My great-grandfather wed at 18.

But those were slower days; wages were lower and work harder, but living was not as high. And, it is said, young men of 18 and their younger wives were more mature and responsible.

I don't know. Since the first world war, boys and girls have married young; since the second, they marry even younger.

I believe there is a psychological factor: the growing uncertainty, the insecurity, the future

which frightens and the present which confuses.

No one can be arbitrary about when to marry. Young marriages succeed; young marriages fail. Often they fail because the people involved are not willing to become mature nor to face responsibility. The honeymoon is a bright silver crescent or a shining orb; but there's a time when the moon is dark.

I once knew a girl who married at 16, early in the last war. Everyone said it couldn't last. It has lasted. At 16 she was grownup. Her man went to war while she worked and waited, and when he came back he was no stranger to her, as many have been returning to young wives. It was as if he had never been away.

There are no rules you can lay down, as every person in this world is different from every other. At 16, my friend was an integrated person; others at 40 are still 16.

I know a good many young people. Sometimes they come to me and ask soberly, "How can you be sure it's love?" And sometimes I ask them, "How can you be sure?"

There's no rule.

I remember telling someone close to me that perhaps one proof—not always valid—is when you believe you'd rather be unhappy with your man than happy without him.

Yesterday, things were not as easy for young people. Few dreamed of buying a house until they'd

saved a long time for it. Some, of course, were fortunate in having parents who provided everything from the beginning. But most men waited until their jobs were reasonably secure to marry.

Today, it's cheaper to buy than to rent; after a while you may move on—and usually do—but you have an equity. Today, more and more parents are subsidizing young marriages and helping after the marriages. Also there is state and local and federal aid which was not, in another generation, available.

What really matters?

1. You have to consider, at any age, the practical aspects—things like a place to live and food to eat, clothing to wear, insurance against disaster.

2. You have to believe that whatever happens it will be all right, as long as you have each other. You can't know this; but you must believe it.

3. You have to believe that giving is better than receiving and sharing is the best of all.

4. You must be willing to learn from disappointments, quarrels, and making up.

5. You have to learn that even June roses have thorns; that you and the man you marry were each, before your marriage, putting your best foot forward. In sickness and in health means just that; and so does for richer, for poorer.

A good marriage is the most wonderful thing that can happen to anyone; only it doesn't just happen. You have to, as the saying goes, "make it so." This is not something which comes like a wedding present in a box. It has to be built, with two pairs of hands, together.

And that's still true whether you marry "young" or not. It isn't youth which matters, it is what you bring to marriage. It's yourself.

Next week: "Why Parents Should Encourage Young Marriages" by Philip Wylie

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