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# GOD GIVES MOTHERS GOOD ADVICE

By Mary Elaine Phillips

It began when I was about five years old—the advice my mother gave me that was to bear fruit. She sowed the seeds of what makes a good marriage. It was the year 1919, when I was in love with the iceman—an old fellow fourteen years of age. His one missing tooth, detached when he fell from a pear tree, didn't lessen my slightly concealed admiration for the red-haired, freckle-faced lad.

Mother began talking about people who marry too young and cheat each other out of a carefree, fun-filled time in life. She planted each bit of advice repeatedly each year like a good gardener who drops the seed into the opened earth, going back to cover it quietly lest the crows destroy the plantings.

Adding to her caution as the years passed, Mother pointed out that many marriages were based on the premise of one member feeling sorry for the other as a basis for becoming husband and wife, only to realize later that they were feeling sorry for themselves. She emphasized that no one should be diverted from getting a good solid education by a marriage too soon entered into.

"Never marry a man who is without empathy or compassion," Mother often said to me when I reached high-school age. "If he is educated, a Christian, a man of ethics and ambition and he loves you, he will provide for you. Don't expect to depend solely on your own resources. A prayer life is very important. Family prayer should start your day as regularly as the sun coming up."

She cautioned me always to look neat and attractive—not necessarily in expensive clothes—that it was no compliment to a

husband's hard work and success for his wife to look like a frump!

Mother warned, "If you date a person who wouldn't measure up as a good husband, don't continue the association. This will avoid future problems in your life."

Commenting on every girl's dream of marrying a rich man, Mother said, "If you are courted by a rich man and the dazzle of his affluence gets in your eyes, stop and ask yourself, 'If I married this man and he lost all his wealth and property, would I still feel the same way about him?'"

In her advice, Mother, realizing I too had many imperfections, warned that I must remain flexible in my attitudes. Loyalty to a mate was essential; a wife should never discuss her husband's shortcomings with her friends or relatives. Nurturing and practicing a good sense of humor was very helpful. For humor is a great leveler, saving many a tense moment from becoming a major disagreement.

Mother's final observation on matrimony was always, "Don't marry someone you can get along with . . . but someone you can't get along without. A loveless marriage is a lonely marriage."

Did that marriage advice bear fruit? Yes, we were old maids, John and I, when we married during World War II. He had reached his thirty-second birthday, and I was twenty-eight years old—and he was a redhead! Not an iceman but a lawyer in the United States Army.

Our marriage has had its share of peaks and valleys. Our life has been filled with joy and trauma. Have we ever considered divorce? I'll let John answer that question. "Well, noooo," drawls John, with a twinkle in his eyes, "mayhem at times but not divorce!"

We both laugh and hug each other as we turn out the lights and go to sleep. \*

Art selected by Kathy Schmidt

(MARY ELAINE PHILLIPS of Durant, a writer and artist, is a member of Red River Writers, an affiliate of the Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc.)