

Should Women Settle for Mr. Good Enough?

Recently, a male friend who has asked me out several times sent me a Facebook message about psychotherapist Lori Gottlieb's best-selling book [*Marry Him: The Case for Settling for Mr. Good Enough*](#). He thought I might find it interesting, and whether or not this was a ploy to make me regret shooting him down remains unknown. But Gottlieb's argument that it is better for single women to settle than be alone was indeed interesting.

Gottlieb is by no means a bastion of traditional lifestyle. Her [publications](#) are a long list of progressive, liberal, and mainstream outlets, and she's a columnist at [The Atlantic](#). However, this book did get me thinking about the state of marriage and dating.

American adults are currently [delaying marriage](#) more and more and are not having [enough babies](#) to replace our current population. And it's no secret that in 2022, women (especially religious women) who want kids are not served by our [promiscuous, broken culture](#).

In her book, Gottlieb says that being unmarried at 30 brings panic and desperation, especially for women who believe the prevailing notion that the man of their dreams is coming. She is absolutely right on this point. But she not so gently points out that the dream man does not exist, "precisely because you dreamed him up," and therefore, in a sense, every woman who is married "settled."

Before the 20th century, marriage was not viewed as a Disney movie ending personally tailored to you. It had religious significance and economic necessity. On the religious side, Catholics [believe](#) that marriage is a vocation and that your

spouse is literally your vehicle to get to heaven as you grow and sharpen each other. And women had few financial options prior to the middle of the 20th century to support themselves, much less a family. Gottlieb recognizes that we idealize marriage, and she believes that if we understood its benefits (like generations before did), we might do things differently.

In her book, she shares some stories of breakups for reasons that seem comical and ridiculous: One woman broke up with a guy because he did not like to read; another told Gottlieb that she could not spend her life with someone who's allergic to dogs; yet another did not want to move downtown; and one woman dumped her boyfriend because he was not "curious."

With these examples, Gottlieb encourages women to not weigh worldly characteristics too heavily—weight, age, looks, height, vacation preferences, and "cosmic connection"—and instead consider who would be a "stable, reliable life companion," a partner, a teammate, good at running a household, or a great dad. And even without any religious perspective, Gottlieb makes a good point about hobbies and looks changing over time. After all, wouldn't the divorce rate be lower if women married the man who shared their values instead of the best Instagram-able pet parent?

If a modern single woman's goal is to marry, have children, and stay married, she'd be smart to start with Gottlieb's advice: find a man who would be a reliable partner and a great dad, and give men who may not be perfect in every arbitrary way a chance. That cosmic connection may very well develop over time, and priorities will change. At the end of the day, everyone compromises in some way. And if you do marry a man who shares your values, works to build a life with you, and loves your kids, no one in their right mind—including you—is going to say you settled.

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