

# An Uncertain Choice

## Discussion Guide



Written by Jody Hedlund

# Discussion Guide for An Uncertain Choice

**Instructions:** This companion guide can be used for personal reflection or in small group settings. If used for a small group, the book is designed to be completed over the course of seven meetings. Ideally each participant should answer the discussion questions in advance, along with reading the corresponding chapters in *An Uncertain Choice*. During the meeting, girls are encouraged to share the answers to their questions, and the leader can use the topics to facilitate further discussion within the group.

## Introduction

### Section 1:

Read Chapters 1-3 in *An Uncertain Choice*

1. Laying *the* solid foundation in dating
2. Setting boundaries for dating
3. Developing friendships with the opposite sex

### Section 2:

Read Chapters 4-6 in *An Uncertain Choice*

1. Making godly decisions in dating
2. Seeking and knowing God's will
3. Being willing to give new things a try

### Section 3:

Read Chapters 7-9 in *An Uncertain Choice*

1. Evaluating the importance of outward appearances
2. Discovering the worth of inner beauty
3. Figuring out where attraction fits in when it comes to dating

**Section 4:**

Read Chapters 10-12 in *An Uncertain Choice*

1. Examining God's plan for marriage and how the world distorts it
2. Determining what qualities to look for in a mate
3. Having crushes—when you're interested and he's not

**Section 5:**

Read Chapters 13-16 in *An Uncertain Choice*

1. Finding courage in the face of shyness
2. Modeling the various types of courage
3. Facing your fears and becoming stronger through the process

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1. Knowing when you're experiencing true love—how can you tell?
2. When is it okay to kiss?
3. What is the right age to begin dating?

**Section 7:**

Read Chapters 21-24 in *An Uncertain Choice*

1. Handling disappointments when things don't go the way you planned
2. Feeling betrayed and broken-hearted when relationships shift
3. Putting the future in God's hands

## Introduction

I have three daughters. My two oldest daughters are in high school. As a result, they're starting to notice boys. And boys are starting to notice them.

Okay, who am I kidding? My teen daughters have been paying attention to boys for quite a few years. Yes, they're human. But up until now they've been a tad young to enter the world of dating. My husband would prefer that we have a family rule, "No dating until at least the age of twenty-two." And he'll likely greet any boy who comes calling for them with a baseball bat in hand (wink!).

But because we know that we can't beat away the boys forever, we wanted to have a tool we could use with our daughters to help prepare them for dating.

Let's face it; the dating world has become rather big and scary to many young people. And rightly so. Our modern culture, particularly social media, has changed the nature of dating. Cell phones, texting, Facebook, online dating services, etc. have all impacted the hows, whys, whats, and whens of dating.

When I began to think about what kinds of dating experiences I wanted my daughters to have, I decided to write a book that models the purity, nobility, and courtly love that existed in the days of old, during the times of knights and their ladies—a time in history when chivalry was at its height. Thus, *An Uncertain Choice* was birthed. (Plus, I'm a sap for a good medieval fairy tale!)

*An Uncertain Choice* is the first book in a three book series, and it provides the backdrop for this companion guide. In the story, Lady Rosemarie is on a quest to determine whether she's meant to experience true love, and along the way struggles to determine the qualities that are important to her in a man. In a medieval bachelorette fashion, Lady Rosemarie must choose between three of the best, most handsome knights in all the land. They attempt to woo and win her heart in sigh-worthy romance fashion.

By analyzing and discussing the love story that develops in *An Uncertain Choice*, this discussion guide explores some of the foundational issues of dating. As you go through, think of the scope of your relationships—both dating and marriage—like a castle. Dating is the time to set a strong, solid foundation with well-defined boundaries. You'll want to establish the stones that you'll later build the entire castle upon. If the foundation is weak, the stones cracked, the boundaries out of whack, you may put the structure of the whole castle at risk later, perhaps even leaving it with weaknesses that are vulnerable to the attack of the enemy.

It's my prayer that through *An Uncertain Choice* and its discussion guide you'll examine dating and be better prepared for the challenges that accompany it. Whether you're brand new at dating or have been dating for a while, it's never too late to evaluate God's design and to set in place a solid foundation for your relationships, particularly in preparing for marriage.

Blessings,

*Jody Hedlund*

## Section 1

Read Chapters 1-3 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Laying *the* solid foundation in dating

There comes a time in the life of every young woman when she begins to think about a future of love and marriage. Of course, that process usually begins with becoming more aware of the opposite sex.

Let me just start by saying that this type of awareness is completely normal. It's the way God designed us. He planned that sometime during our teenage years our hormones would kick into gear, our bodies would start changing, and we would naturally start to think about finding a mate.

But with dating as with anything we do in life, whether it be finding a job, making friends, or deciding on a college, we first need to make sure our feet are firmly planted on solid ground, *the* ultimate Rock himself. Jesus.

That starts by having a relationship with the Savior. But it also means that we stay connected to Him, always keeping Him as our base, and looking to him for the ultimate guidance as we build our future.

**Question:** What are some ways to keep the Lord as the foundation? What are some specific things YOU are doing to stay connected to Him?

The Westminster Catechism has a wonderful description for the primary purpose of humans. It says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

When we actively get to *know* God, it's much easier to *glorify* and *enjoy* the purposes He has for us. In other words, when you regularly take time to know God, you'll find yourself wanting to glorify Him in your dating relationships. And you'll also find that you'll be able to enjoy His design for dating.

**Question:** Are you making it a priority to get to know God better? Have you found that the more you know God, the more you want to glorify Him with your actions?

**Read Psalm 119:9-11:** What is the best way for a young person to stay pure? What is God asking you to do? How are you already doing this?

## 2. Setting boundaries for dating

In our modern times, we use the word *dating* to refer to the process of finding a mate. Dating usually indicates that you're in a relationship with someone and that you find each other mutually attractive. Often we think of dating as the process for narrowing down our search for our lifelong partner.

*Courtship*, on the other hand, is the historical term for dating, but the tradition it represents is making a comeback in today's culture. In past times, courtship was the process of a man coming to visit or "court" a woman he liked. The process usually involved the oversight of parents, often out of necessity, because there weren't restaurants, movie theaters, or other places a couple could go to alone. Additionally, courtship was often seen as a more serious commitment with the end intention of marriage.

There are people today who make the case that old-fashioned courtship is nobler than modern dating. And although there are some good things we can take away from historical courtship and apply to today's dating, it wasn't a perfect method of finding a spouse. Those who wanted to twist the courtship process did, just as there are those today who twist dating.

Perhaps it's not so important whether we call the process of finding a mate *dating* or *courtship*. What's important are the *boundaries* we set. Ultimately, what we want to discover in the process are the principles that can help us develop God-glorifying relationships.

The first thing we need to do any time we're trying to discover how to glorify God is look at what the Bible has to say about the issue. And while the Bible may not mention the words *courtship* or *dating*, it does have a lot to say about how to have *healthy relationships*.

**Read: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1** What do these verses say about God's principles for relationships? About being like-minded? Living in harmony? Being pure?

**Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7** What are some other principles God has set in place for dating and holy living?

Once we know what God desires from us, we're better able to establish boundaries for our pre-marriage relationships. And if we put into place some guidelines *before* we get into relationships, we'll have a much easier time sticking to our decisions when faced with temptation.

For example, some couples determine that they won't spend time alone in a bedroom, or will keep bedroom doors open. Others decide that they won't be at home alone without someone else there, or that they'll hang out with family or friends to help keep them accountable.

Some couples set intimacy boundaries, including things like waiting to kiss until engaged or until their wedding day. Some choose to have accountability partners. Others pray together for strength and God's guidance.

**Question:** Based on what you read above, what are some healthy boundaries you want to set in place for your dating relationships? Take some time now to write out some “rules” that you’ll use in your dating relationships.

### 3. Developing friendships with the opposite sex

I’ve always tried to keep open dialogue with my children about the opposite sex. At home, I welcomed candid conversations so that my children would know I wasn't embarrassed to talk about their budding interests in the opposite sex, that their feelings were normal, and that they could share with me their questions and concerns.

In all the discussing, invariably I emphasized the importance of developing friendships. Yes, my girls were noticing and feeling attraction to boys, but one of the first things they needed to learn was how to interact and build friendships with those boys.

Friendship is one of the key components in having a happy, successful, and long marriage.

What better way to start interacting with the opposite sex, than to learn to relate to them as friends? I encouraged my daughters to carry on conversations and to interact with boys from a *friendship perspective*. The more they could talk and relate with *any* boy (not just boys they were attracted to), the easier it would get around the opposite sex and the more confidence they would gain.

**Question:** In *An Uncertain Choice*, Rosemarie never had a real opportunity to interact with young men due to being sheltered. What are the advantages to being overprotected? What are the disadvantages?

**Question:** Why do you think it’s hard to develop friendships with boys rather than becoming girlfriend-boyfriend? Where does that pressure to pair off come from?

**Question:** What are some of the advantages of staying friends versus getting romantically involved? Can you maintain friendship *and* be romantically involved?

**Question:** What are some practical ways that *you* can start building friendships with boys?

**Question:** How can you be friendly without sending the wrong message? What should you do if boys misinterpret your friendliness to mean that you're interested in something more? (Read 2 Timothy 2:22)

## Section 2

Read Chapters 4-6 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Making godly decisions in dating

Everything was going along just fine for Lady Rosemarie. Her life was uneventful, peaceful, and safe ... until the Noblest Knight, the Duke of Rivenshire, arrived with the news of the exception to her parents' vow, news that would change her life forever, news that would force her to make the hardest decision she'd ever made.

The fact is, the older we get, the more life-changing decisions we'll have to make. First, we'll start out with little choices, like what foreign language we want to study in school. Eventually, we'll move to decisions like what college to attend, where to live, and what car to buy.

And finally, we'll face the critical decision of who our spouse will be. I believe that the choice of our future mate is *the* most important decision we have to make (next to making the ultimate choice of where we'll spend eternity). It's the kind of decision we'll have to live with forever (or at least until death departs us). So, it's definitely not a decision we want to make lightly.

We'll likely consult a wiser and older person, parent, teacher, mentor, or youth group leader for college or major purchases. We value their input because they've already done those hard things and have wisdom that can hopefully keep us from making too many mistakes.

If we're willing to seek out counsel for the "lesser" decisions, then shouldn't we be willing to seek out advice for *the* most critical decision of who our spouse will be?

Now, I'm not saying we need to let our parents arrange a marriage! But all too often in our modern culture, young couples make the decision to date and get married without a whole lot of input from those who are wiser.

**Question:** Before choosing to date someone, have you ever considered asking an older and wiser friend or adult for their advice? Why or why not?

**Question:** What might be some of the benefits of getting objective input before you start a relationship?

**Question:** Have you ever considered the possibility that the choice of your spouse isn't something to shoulder by yourself, that it's one of the most important decisions you'll ever make?

**Question:** What do you think you'd do if the person advising you had some objections to the person you like? Would you be humble enough to take their wisdom into consideration? Would you perhaps gain the advice of someone else to compare?

**Question:** Who are some godly people that you can turn to for advice? Make a list.

**Question:** What can you do when two people you trust say or advise different things, similar to what happened to Lady Rosemarie when the abbot and the duke gave her different advice?

## 2. Seeking and knowing God's will

In addition to consulting both the wise councilors in her life—the abbot and the duke—Lady Rosemarie also ran to the chapel where she fell to her knees and prayed. She sought out the advice of the wisest counselor of all—God.

Here's an excerpt: *In the quietness of the chapel, without Abbot Francis Michael or Trudy or the duke advising me, I could finally hear the whispers within, the still, small voice of God that came when I blocked out everything else and listened for it.*

So often we're too busy, or we fill our heads with all the noise of everything else in life, that we don't leave room to hear the wisdom God wants to impart to us.

**Question:** It seems like Rosemarie saw prayer as her last option. Why is it so typical of us to wait to pray until we're desperate?

**Question:** It's never too late to pray. And nothing is ever too big or small for us to bring before God, including our dating questions. Have you ever thought about praying over who you date?

**Question:** How can we hear the voice of God? What are some ways that He speaks to us today?

**Read:** 2 Chronicles 7:14-15; Colossians 1:9; Romans 12:2

### 3. Being willing to give new things a try

Lady Rosemarie was hesitant to give the duke's month-long plan a try. She'd resigned herself to life in the convent, and she was afraid to change for fear of getting hurt. But for better or worse, she had no choice. Her life was changing.

Even though it was difficult for Lady Rosemarie to agree to the duke's plans, once she made up her mind, she knew she needed to put forth her best effort. She decided to work at getting to know the knights.

Likewise with us, there are things that come into our lives that we aren't expecting—our parents get a divorce, we move, or a beloved pet dies. We usually can't do anything to stop those things from happening. We don't have any control over them.

But like Lady Rosemarie, we can put forth the effort to make new and hard situations work. When we're trying new things, we need to give more than a half-hearted effort. If we don't really give it our best shot, we can set ourselves up for failure.

As hard as it may be while we're experiencing hard changes, the best thing is to know that, ultimately, God doesn't let anything happen to us that He hasn't ordained, and if we accept what we cannot change we can then move forward and do what we can to make the best of the situation.

**Read:** Romans 8:28 and Jeremiah 29:11

**Question:** What is the hardest thing you've had to do lately? Have you needed to try something new?

**Question:** In trying that new, hard thing, did you give it your best effort? What happened?

**Question:** Is the idea of preparing for dating new to you? Does it sound weird or exciting? Why?

**Question:** Are you willing to give a good effort toward preparing for dating? Do you have a teachable spirit?

## Section 3

Read Chapters 7-9 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Evaluating the importance of outward appearances

Obviously, in *An Uncertain Choice* the outward appearances of all the characters are much larger than life. Most girls don't have the kind of extravagant beauty Lady Rosemarie has. And most men aren't as incredibly handsome as the three noble knights.

The same thing is true of most of movies and books. The heroines and heroes are usually much more beautiful, stronger, and heroic than real people. After all, it's fiction. Usually we watch movies and read books to be inspired toward something greater than ourselves.

However, it's also all too easy to compare ourselves, especially when it comes to our looks, and find ourselves falling short. Media in particular has set a very high standard for beauty, and, quite frankly, no one can live up to it.

**Question:** Do you feel pressure to look and dress a certain way? Where does that pressure come from?

**Question:** What aspect of our modern high standards for beauty are you chasing after the most? Keeping up with changing clothing fads? Staying thin? Having the latest hair style? Some other standard? All of the above?

**Question:** It isn't wrong to want to be pretty. In fact, we should take good care of our bodies, stay fit, and be healthy. But at what point does the quest for beauty become extreme?

**Question:** What are some positive things about your looks? (If you're having trouble thinking of something, ask someone older whom you trust to help you!)

**Question:** Confidence in outward appearance is something many young women lack. How can you be more appreciative and accepting of the unique ways God has made you?

## 2. Discovering the worth of inner beauty

Often in our desire to be pretty and live up to society's standard for beauty, we forget the *true* source of beauty—what lies within us, particularly God's beauty shining in our hearts.

Whenever my daughters are struggling with an outward appearance issue or are comparing themselves to someone else, I remind them that our outward beauty is fleeting. The prettiest women will eventually get old, have wrinkles, and develop flabby tummies. And the most handsome men will lose their outward appeal too.

But our inner beauty ... now that's something that doesn't have to fade. In fact, our inner beauty can grow stronger as we get older, especially if God's beauty is growing inside us.

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:3-4 and Psalm 45:11

**Question:** Where does inner beauty come from?

**Question:** How can we cultivate our inner beauty? What are some specific things you can do to make yourself beautiful on the inside?

**Question:** Have you ever met a woman who radiated inner beauty? What qualities did she have that made her beautiful?

**Question:** If you were to meet two girls—one who was very pretty on the outside, but was mean-spirited and snotty, and one who was plainer on the outside but sweet-spirited and kind—which one do you think would make a better friend? A better girlfriend for a guy?

## 3. Figuring out where attraction fits in when it comes to dating

When Lady Rosemarie met the three noble knights, she found herself physically attracted to them. They were all handsome guys on the outside, and she was surprised to find that she enjoyed looking at them.

The fact is physical attraction is ordained by God. He designed us to notice the appearances of each other. The same is true in the animal world. In fact, certain species put on great shows with their outward beauty (like the peacock) in an attempt to attract a mate.

When we're attracted to someone, we often have bodily reactions like Lady Rosemarie—flushed cheeks, tight throat, hot face, tingling stomach, racing heart.

While physical attraction is very real, all too often we let our inward physical reactions form the basis of our relationships. We make decisions to date someone or like them based on the tingling in our stomachs or the racing of our hearts.

However, think back to what we discussed about outward beauty and how it will eventually fade. Maybe that person with the dark eyes and handsome face makes our heart patter faster now. But what about in ten years, when they have a big mole on their nose and they start losing their hair?

Yes, physical attraction should count for something, because God designed us that way. But we can't let it be the foundation of our relationships. We can't let outward appearances be *the* deciding factor for who we choose to date.

**Question:** Is it wrong to look at the outward appearance of young men?

**Question:** Which one is influencing *your* dating choices more: outward attraction or inner beauty?

**Question:** Which will be the basis for a strong and lasting marriage: outward attraction or inner beauty?

**Question:** When you think about your future spouse, have you considered that their appearance will change over time due to aging or health issues? How will you handle such changes if you initially based your decision to love that person on their looks?

**Question:** When you think about your future spouse, have you considered basing your decision on inner qualities like kindness, consideration, integrity, generosity, and being a hard worker?

**Question:** Is it possible to find a young man that attracts you both outwardly and inwardly?

## Section 4

Read Chapters 10-12 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Examining God's plan for marriage and how the world distorts it

The duke says this about marriage: *"God himself instituted marriage when he created Adam and Eve. He designed the basic attraction between men and women. 'Tis natural, good, and right when young people begin the process of finding mates."*

Not only does God *approve* of the process of finding mates, but He *delights* in it. After each day of creation, God calls everything else *good*. But when he created man and woman and their relationship, he gave them the distinction of *very good* (Genesis 1:31).

God designed marriage to be a reflection of Himself, the Trinity. The roles of the husband, wife, and children mirror the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God intended godly marriages to represent Himself to the world.

Of course, our ultimate enemy, Satan, doesn't want the world to see that powerful reflection of God in marriage because he knows just how beautiful it is and the blessings that come with a family that is operating the way God designed. So he's waged war against godly marriages, attempting to distort and destroy them. Slowly, a twisted view of marriage and family has begun to replace God's original design.

And the same thing is true of dating. God designed those early days of deciding and falling in love to be a beautiful process that can be filled with blessings when we follow His design and stay within His boundaries. But of course Satan has attacked the process of finding mates with ferocity. He's waged war against dating, twisting it and distorting the process so that couples are already weakened before marriage.

Our enemy the devil is out to deceive, kill, and destroy. He figures if he can defeat couples before marriage, he's already got half the battle won against strong, healthy, God-reflecting marriages.

**Read:** Genesis 2:18-24 and Ephesians 5:22-33

**Question:** According to the above verses, what is God's plan for marriage?

**Question:** What are some ways that Satan has distorted God's original plan for marriage?

**Question:** What are some of the ways that Satan has twisted modern dating relationships?

**Question:** What about the popular idea that you need to live together or be physically intimate with someone before you can know whether they'll make a good spouse? How is that a distortion of God's original plan?

## 2. Determining what qualities to look for in a mate

A large part of *An Uncertain Choice* is Lady Rosemarie's personal determination of what qualities are most important in her future mate and what things don't matter. She's studying all three of the knights, looking at their inner qualities and outer qualities. Through the month-long test, she's learning if any of the three has the characteristics she is looking for in terms of compatibility and integrity.

In my later high school years and early college years, I began to keep a running list of all the qualities that I thought might be important in the man I would someday marry. I kept the sheet in my Bible. Over time I realized some of the qualities were lacking in boys I'd met. I also learned there were qualities I absolutely couldn't compromise on based on what I knew God wanted for me, and there were other qualities I knew I needed due to my own strengths and weaknesses.

It's never too early in the dating process to start a list of qualities (particularly those relating to inner beauty!) that you would like to have in a mate. Of course, we don't want to aim for Mr. Perfect, because there's no such thing. But it won't hurt us to have high standards and then use that list to begin praying that God would bring the right man into our lives someday.

Once we start our list of important qualities, we should then ask ourselves, "Am I displaying these qualities in *my* life?" For example, if I put "I want my spouse to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind" at the top of my list, then I need to ask myself, "Am I working on loving the Lord that way?"

The bottom line is that we'll likely attract someone of the same caliber we display. So if we're hoping for someone who is kind, gentle, and loving, then we need to work on becoming that kind of person ourselves.

**Question:** What were some of the qualities that were important to Lady Rosemarie? How did she begin to narrow down her choice between the three knights?

**Question:** What things did she notice specifically about Derrick that were different in comparison to the other two knights?

**Question:** Have you ever considered starting a list of the qualities that are important to you in someone you *date*? What about for the person you'll *marry*? It's never too early to begin a list and start praying

over it. Make one today and put it in your Bible. You'll likely add and change it as you grow and mature. But it's okay to aim high.

**Question:** Are you displaying the qualities in your own life that you desire in a man?

### 3. Having crushes—when you're interested and he's not

My teen daughters and I often refer to the boys they like as "crushes." As they've begun to notice boys with future dating in mind, they've started to evaluate which boys are attractive, both in physical appearance and inward beauty.

So instead of dating or "going together" or becoming girlfriend-boyfriend, they're using the time to simply have crushes. They acknowledge their initial attraction, analyze their feelings, keep it friendly, and don't take it too seriously.

So in other words, for them it's really more of a time to learn about boys, about what qualities are important in a boy, and then also starting to relate to the boys as friends.

Of course, most of the time my daughters keep their crushes private within our family and with their close girlfriends. That way they don't have to worry about being embarrassed or rejected by a boy who doesn't share the crush.

But there are inevitably going to be times when you are interested in a young man and he doesn't return the interest. Or there may even be times when a boy is attracted to you and is paying you attention, but you aren't interested in him beyond friendship.

In *An Uncertain Choice*, two of the knights are interested in Lady Rosemarie, but she doesn't return their admiration to the same degree. She's still kind and gracious to them, but makes it clear that she favors someone else. How we treat others, even when we aren't attracted to them, says a lot about our character.

**Question:** Have you had crushes on different boys in the process of learning what qualities are most attractive? What have those crushes been like?

**Question:** Have you ever been interested in *someone else* only to find that they're not interested in you in return? How have you handled the situation?

**Question:** Has someone ever been interested in *you*, but you haven't been attracted in return? How did you treat the person? Is there a way to be nice to them without leading them on?

## Section 5

Read Chapters 13-16 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Finding courage in the face of shyness

There are some girls who have absolutely no problem going up to guys and talking with them. Usually those are the girls who are more extroverted and have an easier time talking to people in general.

But if we're already naturally shy and have a difficult time in new situations or when talking with new people (no matter their gender), then gathering the courage to go up and speak with boys may fill us with terror.

On the one hand, absolute brazenness and boldness in young women can sometimes be seen as unattractive. Over-friendliness, too much talking, and hovering could be a way to scatter boys when they see you approaching.

But on the other hand, being overly shy can also make boys afraid to approach you. They may take the shyness for coldness, rebuff, or even dislike.

After her parents' deaths, Rosemarie didn't spend time with young men for quite a few years because she'd resigned herself to life in the convent. So once the contest began, she was somewhat shy and didn't know how to interact with the knights. She wanted to find a way to let Sir Derrick know of her interest in him, but she also had to develop the courage to show him.

**Question:** Lady Rosemarie asked the other ladies at the jousting tournament for advice on how to let Sir Derrick know of her interest. What were some of the suggestions the ladies gave?

**Question:** Do you think it's okay to hint at your interest with boys you like? What are some appropriate ways to interact that might let someone know of your interest? What are some inappropriate ways?

**Question:** Should girls initiate conversations and attention with boys they like? Or should they wait for the boy to show an interest or talk to them first?

**Question:** What about flirting? What is it? Can it be helpful? When does flirting become detrimental?

**Question:** Lady Rosemarie discovered some information about Sir Derrick's past while talking with the ladies at the jousting tournament. Was that gossiping? Do you think it's okay to pry to find out more information about a guy you like? Or do you think you should wait until they tell you?

## 2. Modeling the various types of courage

Another theme of *An Uncertain Choice* is learning what it means to have courage. Both Lady Rosemarie and Sir Derrick have to learn to show bravery, but in different ways.

Lady Rosemarie defines the many faces of courage this way: *"Courage can be displayed in many forms ... Sometimes it's evident in the knight charging forward with the lance on his steed. But perhaps it can also take the form of a head bowed before the enemy."*

In other words, courage can involve *fighting* for someone or for what you believe, very much like a knight on his horse charging forward in a jousting tournament.

But courage can also mean making a *sacrifice*, becoming humble before the enemy in order to do something greater for someone else.

Jesus wasn't a weakling when he handed himself over to Pilate and allowed the Romans to crucify him. He could have risen up and called down legions of angels to fight against his enemies. It took infinitely more courage to humble himself and sacrifice his life. Someday, when Jesus returns to earth, he'll come with the fighting kind of courage. He'll charge out of heaven on a horse with his hosts of heavenly armies and he'll defeat the enemy once and for all.

Lady Rosemarie had the sacrificial courage and needed to grow in her ability to confront others, face the fears of her nightmares, and become a stronger leader. Sir Derrick, however, knew how to fight. He needed to learn the sacrificial courage.

**Read:** Joshua 1:6-9

**Question:** What's the ultimate source of our courage? When we're afraid, where can we go for the strength we need to be brave?

**Question:** What kind of courage comes easier for you? Are you braver when it comes to standing up and fighting? Or are you braver when making sacrifices?

### 3. Facing your fears and becoming stronger through the process

Let's face it. There are going to be many, many things in life that will fill us with fear. Taking tests, starting a new school, embarking on a new job, making new friends ... meeting boys and dating.

Often we take the easy way, stay in our comfort zones, and avoid those things we fear. We can let fear drive *us*. Or we can drive *it*. In other words, we don't want to make choices out of fear. We want our choices to be made because of a deep love and passion.

**Question:** What are some of your greatest fears?

**Question:** Have you faced any of your fears lately? If so, what happened?

**Question:** How does facing our fears make us stronger?

## Section 6

Read Chapters 17-20 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Knowing when you're experiencing true love—how can you tell?

As Lady Rosemarie grows more attracted to Sir Derrick, she wonders how to tell if she's in love.

*"How do I know when I'm in love?" I asked Trudy, who was finishing pinning my veil in place over my braided hair.*

*"In love?" My nursemaid clucked her tongue and then stepped back to stare at me in the looking glass. "Are you in love with one of the knights then?"*

*"I don't know." I tugged on the edge of the veil absently. "I think I might be, but how do I know for sure?"*

After we've spent time with a young man and gotten to know him, we may start to have deeper feelings of attraction to him. We may find ourselves longing to be with him more often. When we're with him, we don't want to have to part, and when we're not with him, we can't stop thinking about him.

Do those intense longings for someone signify that we love them? How can we tell when we're in love?

This was a struggle for Lady Rosemarie throughout the last Sections of *An Uncertain Choice*. Trudy responded to her questions about love with this: *"Surely if you feel it, then it must be so."*

Lady Rosemarie responds with another question: *"Is it just a feeling?"*

Love is a deep emotion that we *can* feel and often do when we're attracted to someone we've grown to know and care about. But love is not *just* a feeling.

We eventually have to decide to make a commitment to the *action* of love. We must *choose* to love that person, even when we don't feel like it.

That kind of commitment is a very serious one to make. And we shouldn't do it until we've spent time before God asking Him to make His will known as well as searching out the objective advice of an older and wiser person in our life. And at that point we can pull out our lists of important qualities (which we made in Section 4) and compare how the young man matches up.

Lady Rosemarie and Sir Derrick not only exhibited godly characteristics, but they also had many other commonalities, which are things all couples should consider:

- Shared values, interests, or hobbies
- Enjoying spending time together

- Balancing each other's strengths and weaknesses
- Challenging one another to grow
- Communicating well
- Finding ways to serve God together
- Meshing of future plans
- Imperfections aren't barriers to the other
- Being able to be completely honest with each other

Lady Rosemarie and Sir Derrick enjoyed playing chess together and delivering goods to the poor. They both had a passion for improving the kingdom. They spent time talking to one another, and were honest with each other. And while neither were perfect, they could accept each other's weaknesses, and in fact balanced each other in many ways.

Knowing if you're truly in love with someone (particularly enough to marry them) involves a combination of growing mutual feelings of love and a decision to love based on wise and careful personal insight along with input from others.

**Question:** Do you think you've ever been in love? How did you know if you were? What tests did you use?

**Question:** Have you ever considered that falling in love is not only just an emotion, but also a deliberate choice and ongoing action?

**Question:** Are there any other considerations you would add to the above list of important things for couples to evaluate?

## *2. When is it okay to kiss?*

Sir Derrick was interested in kissing Lady Rosemarie. The truth of the matter is that guys are usually more interested in the physical aspect of a relationship. That's how God wired them. But even though Sir Derrick showed this physical side, he also exerted great self-restraint.

God designed women to have more of an emotional connection. The closer we draw emotionally to young men, the more we'll also want to be close to them physically.

All couples throughout history have been faced with the temptation to become overly emotionally and physically intimate before marriage. God made us to follow that path of intimacy, but He also created marriage to be that safe place for the *expression* of intimacy.

That's why we need to be careful to set healthy boundaries ahead of time with boys, making sure they're clear that we want to reserve physical intimacy for marriage. That's also why we, as women, need to guard against becoming too emotionally intimate with young men, because it will make us desire more.

Now, I'm not saying that kissing or holding hands should only be reserved for marriage. But the less intimacy we engage in while dating, the easier it will be to avoid temptation. We need to be aware that once we start down the path of intimacy, our natural tendency will be to follow that path to the end destination (consummation).

**Question:** In the story, Lady Rosemarie and Sir Derrick had chaperones whenever they were together. Why might chaperones be a good idea in protecting you from becoming overly intimate?

**Question:** Maybe you won't choose to have chaperones, but perhaps you'll choose to date in groups, with other friends, or at home around family. What are some other ways you can hold yourself accountable and avoid too much intimacy?

**Question:** In the scope of your dating life, when do you think you'll allow a kiss?

**Question:** What boundaries are you setting ahead of time for physical intimacy? Do you think it's helpful if you're dating a boy who also shares your values regarding physical intimacy? Why or why not?

**Question:** Do you think it is okay to kiss young men we're attracted to and like but perhaps don't love? Why or why not?

### 3. What is the right age to begin dating?

Our culture exposes us to adult-like content at a very young age through TV shows, commercials, YouTube, and movies. We're bombarded with sensual messages almost everywhere we turn. Subsequently, young people are feeling pressure at earlier and earlier ages to get involved in romantic relationships.

**Question:** How early is too early to start getting into serious relationships with boys?

**Question:** Have you felt the pressure to get involved in relationships before you felt ready? Is there a movie, TV show, or even a person who made you feel that way?

**Question:** At what age do you think girls reach a level of maturity that allows them to better handle dating relationships?

**Question:** Have your parents set an age limit for when you're allowed to go out on dates with young men? What age is it? Do you agree or disagree with their boundary?

**Question:** What are the benefits to waiting to date until you're older and more mature? And what are the disadvantages?

## Section 7

Read Chapters 21-24 in *An Uncertain Choice*

### 1. Handling your disappointments when things don't go the way you planned

During the final chapters of *An Uncertain Choice*, things weren't going too well for Lady Rosemarie and Sir Derrick, were they? Just when it looked like they might fall in love and live happily ever after, event after event ripped them apart.

We often enter dating with very high expectations for our relationships. Usually things do go fairly smoothly at first. But inevitably we'll hit bumps in the road. We'll experience hardships and conflict that threaten to tear us and our partner apart.

First of all, we need to remember that no one is perfect. Sir Derrick wasn't perfect and neither was Lady Rosemarie. Even the noblest men and most beautiful women have flaws. We need to keep our expectations of young men realistic. Just like us, they likely have a lot of maturing yet to do.

Second, we need to make sure we're being genuine and not building ourselves up to be someone we're not. We might be able to hide our character flaws or the truth about who we *really* are for a short time, but eventually the real us will come out.

Why not start out the relationship being genuine about who we really are? And if the young man doesn't like the real us, flaws and all, then he probably isn't worthy of our time or consideration.

God wants us to work on developing real godliness and not a facade to impress anyone. He sees us, warts and all, and ultimately it's Him we want to please with how we live.

**Read:** 1 Peter 2:1, 9

**Question:** Have you ever faced disappointment in a relationship, where things didn't go quite the way you planned?

**Question:** What are some hardships or conflicts you've experienced in relationships or that you think young couples will face in general?

**Question:** Do you put too high of expectations on boys you're dating? Do you unconsciously want them to be perfect and then reject them when they're not?

**Question:** Are you being genuine about whom you really are when you're around young men? Or are you pretending to be someone you're not?

**Question:** Who is the real you? Are you happy with whom you are in private and with your family? Does that person match who you are when you're in public?

**Question:** How can you know when it's time to end a relationship?

## 2. Feeling betrayed and broken-hearted when relationships shift

One of the worst experiences a young woman can go through is having her heart broken by a man she's grown to care about. When the evidence pointed to Sir Derrick as the one who'd murdered the sheriff, at first, Lady Rosemarie felt disappointed and hurt. She'd trusted Derrick and begun to care about him deeply. But when evidence piled up against him showing him *not* to be the noble man she'd believed him to be, her world completely shifted.

Unfortunately, because of sin, people may betray us, make us believe they're better than they really are, deceive us, and, in the end, break our hearts. We're left confused and hurt, like Lady Rosemarie.

**Question:** Have you ever had a broken heart? What happened?

**Question:** Have you ever thought someone liked you, and returned your affection, only to find out later that they never had feelings for you, or were perhaps even leading you on?

**Read:** Psalm 34:17-19

**Question:** What can you do to combat the pain of a broken heart?

**Question:** What are some unhealthy ways of easing a broken heart? Is it ever healthy to jump into another relationship right away?

**Question:** Even though you might be tempted to bad-mouth the person who hurt you or get revenge, why wouldn't that be the best way to deal with the pain?

### 3. Putting the future in God's hands

It's easy for us to want to grab control and hold tight to our own lives and make our own plans. But ultimately our future, hopes, and dreams are all controlled by God. As we move forward with our dating lives and plans, we need to be seeking His guidance above all else.

As we established in Section 1, God has ordained marriage. He wants to bless us with thriving and happy marriages. He desires that His children eventually find God-pleasing spouses.

But what about singleness? The Bible talks about singleness being a calling, but that most young people are not called to it. Most of the time, the Bible encourages young people, and even widows, to get married.

**Question:** Do you trust God to bring along the right person at the right time? Or are you trying to take control and rush things?

**Question:** Why is it so hard to trust God with our futures?

**Question:** What kinds of people might be destined for singleness?

**Question:** Why do you think most people are destined for marriage?



## About Jody

**Jody Hedlund** is an award-winning and bestselling author of inspirational historical romances for both adults and teens.

As a busy mama-writer, she has the wonderful privilege of teaching her crew of 5 children at home. In between grading math papers and giving spelling tests, she occasionally does a load of laundry and washes dishes. When she's not busy being a mama, you can find her in front of her laptop working on another of her page-turning stories.

She loves reading almost as much as she loves writing, especially when it also involves chocolate and coffee.

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