

**Andrew Fergusson**  
continues the Christian  
dating agency discussion



# MEETING DR RIGHT PART 2

In 2006 *Triple Helix* asked whether single Christian doctors should embrace twenty first century dating techniques.<sup>1</sup> Stephanie<sup>2</sup> is a consultant physician in her forties who read the article and subsequently registered with a couple of the introduction agencies featured. Through one she met James<sup>3</sup>, an engineer a few years older, and within seven months they married. This update is based with permission on their story on the *Friends First* website<sup>3</sup> and on a recent interview.

## Stephanie's story

I had made a Christian commitment at the age of 13, so always limited my sights to Christian men. There were just two in our medical school intake of 60. I had a crush on one of them, was abruptly let down, and retired wounded. Later, climbing the hospital ladder, there were no suitable men, let alone Christian ones.

Church did nothing for singles, and after a very few, short-lived romances I began to have serious doubts I would ever marry. It became a painful longing which would not go away. I wrestled with God in prayer, demanding he tell me if his plan for me was for lifelong singleness. I felt I could live with that certainty better than with doubt. God spoke to me through verses in the Bible, but in 1991 I was reflecting on a brief yet very heart-warming relationship when he spoke to me directly: 'He's Ishmael, there'll be an Isaac'. The words resonated with our church's teaching – Ishmael was the son of the flesh, born of man's will and desire, but Isaac was the son of the promise, born of God's provision when hope had ceased.<sup>4</sup>

In the mid-1990s I joined three or four Christian 'introduction agencies' and met men socially, over a drink or for a meal after work. It kept me circulating socially and boosted my confidence, but I felt I needed a break so stopped for a few years. Then I read the *Triple Helix* article. I thought it was interesting, well written, thoughtful, realistic, and I liked the way it targeted doctors. I looked up all the websites mentioned and particularly *Friends First* which was featured. I registered with them because I liked their concept of relationships, and their realism about success rates, particularly for women. I joined at the top rate and received men's profiles every month. I responded in writing to all of them, and in the first year met up with three men. In the second year I met two – and one was James.

It was the letter paper that did it! His photograph was unflattering and I wondered what I had let myself in for. We met for coffee in a country hotel and the rest, as they say, is history. Texting has transformed romance – without texting we couldn't have done it so easily. Within eight weeks we were seriously discussing our long-term future and seven months later we were married. God graciously confirmed to me that James was the long-expected 'Isaac'.

## James' story

I grew up as one of five and for a long time while my contemporaries were all getting married and having children it wasn't high on my list of priorities. I had plenty of social relationships so my need for friendship was satisfied, but around the age of 50 I thought I should be more active in seeking somebody out. There really ought to be something in churches for singles, but there isn't so I joined one or two organisations. There was nobody I really hit it off with and I was looking for a more stable long-term relationship, so when somebody pointed out *Friends First* I joined.

I joined at the cheapest level and a great wodge of profiles arrived. I wrote to three or four, but was particularly attracted to the photo of Stephanie and we agreed to meet up. I wasn't put off by her being a doctor because I come from a medical family, and the rest you know.

I would recommend this option. There is nothing wrong with taking the initiative and I liked the approach of the agency. Some people might regard it as rather sad, almost a cattle market, and it was sometimes difficult looking at all those pages, but the church just doesn't do anything about it...

## It's a happy ending – but is it 'Christian'?

Spending several hours with them convinced me theirs was a marriage made in heaven, but I asked whether they were both completely comfortable biblically and theologically? They had no concerns at all:

'It's not taking God out of the equation. If you're intending to buy a house, or move to work, you don't just pray about it and wait for years to see if anything happens, you go and make it happen...'

They reminded me that our romantic Western stereotypes of falling in love with someone we meet incidentally are relatively recent cultural phenomena, and pointed to the biblical account of Abraham using an agent, his servant, to find a wife for his son Isaac.<sup>5</sup>

Stephanie's final advice to single Christians who want marriage is:

- Pray – tell God your longings, your dreams and your pain
- Persevere – don't give up
- Prepare for the unexpected – God may have a different plan from yours

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## references

1. Engel J. Meeting Dr Right. *Triple Helix* 2006; Autumn: 14-15  
[www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=article&id=1863](http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=article&id=1863)
2. Names changed
3. [www.friends1st.co.uk/StephJamesmarriagestory.htm](http://www.friends1st.co.uk/StephJamesmarriagestory.htm)
4. Genesis 15, 16, 21
5. Genesis 24