

# Soulmates

by Lynn Andrew

Do you have a soulmate?

What is a soulmate?

In order to avoid confusing soulmate with other things, we need to briefly define other sorts of relationships. The definition is neither difficult to express nor hard to understand when seen in that context.

For this purpose, consider just three categories: Marriage, Family, and Friendship. Also within them consider five types of relationships: Companion, Partner, Colleague, Lover, and Family.

The relationships in Marriage are Companion, Partner, Lover, and Family. In Friendship they are Companion and Colleague. In Family it is Family.

Soulmate is something else. When two people are very much alike to the point where they intrinsically understand one another, the potential for being soulmates may exist. If it exists at all, it is on that basis—though likeness can work out as enmity too. None of the other relationship types depends on likeness.

The dictionary definition of soulmate stipulates only compatibility—compatibility of disposition, etc. In this inquiry, soulmate is assumed to be something much less common: not just approximate nearness, but almost the same basic disposition, sensitivity, etc. The real thing has to be rarer than what is claimed because it often turns out to be counterfeit or simply mistaken: we hope for something as fine as this and strive for it by feigning likeness. Mirages sometimes make fools of us all.

Soulmate is a rare and delicate thing that paradoxically is easily overshadowed and smothered by works of the soul. Married couples are seldom soulmates because the business of marriage involves too much that is utilitarian: economics, family frictions and factions, and sex, all of which are rampant shrubs that leave no room for delicate flowers. Soul-

mates probably are not strong in companionship either—not that the casual issues of companionship threaten to overwhelm the soulmate relationship, but that soulmates have something more satisfying to share. Neither are soulmates essentially colleagues or partners because there is no work to be done and no goal to be achieved. It seems a bit high-minded and ethereal, but the name is correct: "spirit-mate" would imply an elevated plane that leaves out most of what soulmates share. So what do they share that is so rare? Simple logic tells us it has to do with commonality of inner being—whatever no one else understands.

Often it is said that within each soul is a God-shaped void that only the Maker can fill. A less humanistic saying would be that within the Spirit of God is a mate for your soul—by design (not by panentheistic necessity). Is the soulmate experience then an otherworldly thing and not meant to be enjoyed between two human beings? No doubt real soulmates would chuckle and shake their heads at that charge. What they experience may be a foretaste of the deeper understanding of purified souls in heaven, but it has to deal with human souls in the here and now and is therefore very earthy. But that does not preclude slipping into idolatry on the fringes of its coming and going.

Anything can become an idol, and everyone has idols of various sorts and to various degrees. Idols are always unreal things: mistaken things and things of the imagination. There is a real thing that inspires idolatry, but the object of worship is a god only in the mind's eye. Therefore a real soulmate is never an idol, but an imaginary or departed or wished-for soulmate probably is. That is what makes religion idolatry and why when one's soulmate is God there is no religion.

Thus in order to find out if real soulmates exist, we could look for a case which exhibits no ritual, no icon, no boasting, and has endured undiminished through the years. There is one at least: some twins share a love that no one else understands. If there are genuine twin soulmates of opposite sexes who are completely normal in other respects, then existence of a sexless component of the soul is proven.

If opposite sexes can be soulmates, the essential likeness must be at a

sexless level. But is there such a thing? There are claims, but if soulmates are what we have supposed them to be, the existence of male-female soulmates implies that a very substantial part of the soul is effectively neutral—at least for them. That may very well be true. Only soulmates would know for sure—discounting those deluded by Cupid who temporarily mistake themselves for soulmates.

This of course is not to minimize common human relationships. Each one is fine and necessary in its place.

The primal relationship is Family, and Family is founded on Marriage. The essential experience of Family has almost no utility of itself except that it is both basis and product of all existence. It cannot be broken because it has nothing to accomplish other than being. (There is a slightly more mystical parallel to Marriage that includes Christ, and with him as your soulmate you become a child of God in his spiritual Family.)

Partnership is when people work together to make something happen. The joy of success in Partnership far exceeds the satisfaction of doing it by oneself. It is one of the things we sometimes do well as humans.

Companionship is as essential as the air we breathe. If not readily available from each other, we extract it from animals, etc.

Colleagues share ideas. A colleague can also be a companion and a partner, but neither is necessary. One would be Friendship. The other would be Business, a category not included in the three listed above.

Love, which in this context denotes erotic love, is the most mysterious of relationships, for it connects us with the lowest and highest forms of life. Thus rather than being a manifestation of biological necessity, erotic love must be an emanation of the love principle.

In a broad sense love is the stuff of which all relationships are made, and it has other names according to how it manifests.

At least we can say that soulmates are lovers who have found a way to love themselves who are not themselves, and there is something divine in that.

