

# Audio Sermon: Marriage, Courtship and Marriage

by Denny Kenaston

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being married to the Lord before considering marriage, and having a living, vibrant relationship with God as the standard for young people.*

**Duration:** 1:11:10

**Scripture:** Proverbs 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Corinthians 7:39, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

**Topics:** "Christian Marriage", "Courtship Principles"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being married to the Lord first, followed by courtship within the right standards of the Word of God, and then entering into marriage. It highlights the blessings of uniting two dedicated Christians in marriage, cautioning against weak courtship standards and the need for maturity and dedication in relationships. The sermon encourages seeking God's will, seeking counsel, and maintaining holy courtship practices to build a strong foundation for a blessed marriage.

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## Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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All other ground is sinking sand. That is a profound truth. I know we all know that up here, but that is a profound truth, that all other ground is sinking sand of no value at all to our salvation.

We greet each one this morning in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is a blessing to be here today, to be together with the saints, to hear all the testimonies of the hearts of God's people who have been set free, who know a living God, who have a relationship with a God that is alive, not a testimony of four years ago

or not a testimony of 10 years ago or even one of three months ago, but a testimony from this last week. That's a God who is alive.

He's alive and He's well and He's working in the midst and in the lives of His people. He's a living God. He's not dead.

He's more than just a word. He's a living God. I thank God that I can be in a place where those kind of testimonies come forth and God gets praise out of it.

I'd like to speak this morning, and I've had this subject on my heart a long time, but I feel liberty from the Lord to give it this morning. I don't know if I'll be an inspiration, but I trust that the message will be instructional to us this morning. I'd like to speak on this subject, marriage, courtship, and marriage.

In that order, I'll explain what the title means in a few moments, but that is the title, marriage, courtship, and marriage. One of the greatest joys of a pastor, one of the greatest joys of a pastor's heart is to unite two dedicated Christians in marriage, two young people who did it right. They're mature, they have their parents' blessing, they know their God, and they love Him, and they've prepared themselves, and they're prepared for life, and they're prepared for marriage.

That's a great blessing to unite a couple like that in marriage, when you know that it's so. You know their lives, you know they've prepared themselves, you know that for all practical purposes, they're ready to get married. There are no reservations in your heart, you don't wonder are they going to make it or not.

What a great blessing it is to marry couples like that, and you know there will be a blessing upon their marriage together, and you know a solid home is going to begin when they're married together, and you know that a godly seed will be preserved by this marriage union, and it brings forth a radiant joy that cannot be explained, that wells up in the heart of a pastor, and I'm sure fathers and mothers also, and even the brothers and sisters in the church. Isn't it a great joy when we can look upon a couple like that, and have that inner witness within us, that here is a couple who did it right. They did it right, they're ready, they're mature, they're moving into this thing knowing what they're doing, God's going to put a blessing on it, their parents are delighted with it, and you just know it's going to work.

There's a deep-seated witness in every one of our hearts at a time like that of rightness. On the other hand, there is a great sadness in the heart of a pastor, and fathers and mothers, and even the brothers and sisters in the church, when you unite two weak Christians in marriage. They are not mature, they broke down in their courtship standards, their parents are blessing the marriage, but doing it with hope that everything is going to be all right, their commitment is weak, and they're not very prepared for what they're getting into.

It has to be done sometimes, it is done sometimes, but it's not a real exciting job, and it's not a real exciting thing in the church. You all know the feeling, you know that witness in your heart, you've been to weddings like that, you went down the road at the end of the wedding, and you gave your greeting to the couple, and you wished them the best, and you prayed God's blessing upon them, but there was something in your heart that said, I hope this will be all right, I wonder if this one's going to be all right. We all know what that's like.

It's with these two pictures in mind that I am motivated to bring this message this morning, and I'm sure you all know where my goal and my sight is set, it's on that first couple. And I trust that that's all of our

goals. If I can say this by way of introduction also, I have no one in mind this morning, but I thought about it, you know, with a congregation this size, it's almost impossible to pick the right time to give a message like this, when there would be nobody considering marriage, or nobody working toward marriage at all in the congregation.

So, if you're considering, or if you're working toward marriage, I do not have you in mind this morning. I am just simply looking at the principle overall, and reaching out and pleading for wisdom in the heart of our young people, and wisdom in the hearts of our fathers and mothers, so that we all, with one accord, can sit back with that deep inner witness of rightness, as we see our young couples growing up, and coming together, and starting homes. Let us be able to do it with joy, having done our jobs right, having guided our young people in a right way, that we can sit down with that inner witness of rightness, and know God's blessing is upon this couple.

That is my heart's desire. Now, I'll explain the title, Marriage, Courtship, and Marriage. I put it in that order, because I feel it's God's proper order, and God's best order.

Number one, marriage. Before you start thinking about courtship, you need to consider whether you're married to the Lord or not. So, there's the first marriage, and I'm here to tell you this morning, that if you don't have that first marriage right, your other marriage is not going to work out right.

You'll have a hard time. Thus, marriage to the Lord is first. Second of all, courtship, with marriage in mind, and third of all, the marriage of two dedicated believers.

This is the direction of the message this morning. Let's turn it to Matthew, and read a few verses in Matthew 19, first of all. Then, we'll turn over to 1 Corinthians also.

Matthew 19, verse 4 through 8. Here, the Pharisees came to Jesus, and they're tempting Him. They're trying to get Him to, they're trying to catch Him at His words. They're trying to get Him to say something that won't make sense, so that they can make Him look like a fool, and show the other people that He doesn't know what He's talking about.

And they very wickedly devised a way to ask Him questions about divorce. We don't want to go into the divorce issue here this morning, but we do need to see the words that our Lord Jesus answered them, so that we can get God's heart in this matter. Matthew chapter 19, in verse 4, and He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.

Wherefore, they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

Now turn over to 1 Corinthians 7. In Matthew 19, we saw that very clearly from these verses that our Lord Jesus Christ sanctioned marriage. He put His blessing upon it. He reached all the way back several thousand years to the first chapters of the book of Genesis, and gave the very words of God, and showed that God's sanction was on marriage, and that He was also sanctioning marriage.

In 1 Corinthians 7 and verse 6 through 8 we'll read, But I speak this by permission and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself, but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.

And then down to verse 32 of the same chapter, chapter 7, 1 Corinthians, verse 32. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.

But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit.

But she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. In this I speak for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. Now here we see the Apostle Paul very clearly putting his sanction upon not getting married.

First we read the verses where our Lord Jesus sanctioned marriage. Now we see the verses where Paul the Apostle was sanctioning a single life. Now I believe the only way that we can understand this matter of marriage right is if we look at it in the context of both of the options that God gives us in His Word.

Both are an option. Both are a blessed option. One is not a curse and the other a blessing, but both are a blessed option, and we will not understand marriage properly until we see both options from God's perspective, and that is one of my desires this morning.

Now in the Old Testament there were those who served as singles, but there is no teaching given in the Old Testament on it. Daniel was not married. I don't believe Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were married.

I think I have enough to prove that Elijah was not married. Neither was Elisha. Many of the prophets did not marry.

Some of them did, but we have no clear teaching in the Old Testament where God says, you go after me with all your heart and you lay aside the opportunity to marry. We don't have it in the Old Testament, but here in the New Testament we do have it. It is in the Bible, and I believe the reason why it's in the Bible and we're even given instruction about it in the New Testament is because of the glorious liberty that has come under the children of God, and that's why it's there.

Now I'm not here this morning to decide which one you choose or which one God chooses for you, but as I see it from the Scripture, you have three options this morning. Those of you that are not married, those of you that are pondering your life as it's unfolding before you, you young people, you have three options. Number one, you have the option of single service, a life that is devoted and dedicated to God and serving Him with everything you've got.

You have that option. Number two, you have the option of the first couple that we spoke about in the introduction, two lives totally dedicated to the Lord, walking, moving, mature, prepared, coming together for marriage. You have that option.

And thirdly, you have the option of the second couple, not committed, not dedicated, kind of half on and half off, kind of carnal in a lot of your desires, and coming forth to marry. You do have that option. It's in the Bible.

It's better to marry than to burn, but I would recommend to you one of the first two options. According to the Word of God, there'll be a blessing upon them like no other. Now there are, I want to say this, there are many who start out like the second couple that we mentioned and they make it.

God uses the disciplines of their failures to mature them, but I guarantee you it's a hard road of several years, and I speak from my own experience of many failures. You can make it that way. God will help you.

If you start that way, you can make it, but it's a hard road, and you learn by many mistakes how to be mature and how to walk with God and how to have God's blessing upon your family and your home life. I would recommend number one or number two to you this morning. Now let's get into the message.

First of all, marriage. The title says marriage, courtship, and marriage. I don't believe we can see marriage properly until we get this first point down in our own life and our own experience, and that is being married to the Lord.

This is where to begin. God is giving us two options, and wisdom would say, how can you consider life in a single service if you don't know what it's like to be married to the Lord? Obviously, if we don't know what it's like to have that vibrant relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, then how can we make a right choice about marriage? How can we make a right choice about those two options if we do not know what the first option is, and we're not experiencing it in our own lives? So first of all, if you're going to consider marriage at all, you need to consider first of all this matter of being married to the Lord, and I use that term just to explain to us and illustrate the reality of an intimate relationship with the God of heaven. I think it's clear to see that here.

If you know nothing of an intimate relationship with the God of heaven, and you're considering these two options, I think it's pretty obvious to all of us which one you're going to choose. Nobody in their carnal strength is going to sit back and say, I don't want to get married, I don't want a wife, I don't want a husband. But if you know the Lord, and He's real to you, and you have a vibrant relationship with Him, and you are seeking to please Him in everything you do, and the heaven is open over your life, and the glory of God is filling your soul, and you're busy, and God is using you, and there's an anointing upon you, and you see a ministry in your life, you may take another look and a different look at the whole matter of marriage.

And I believe that's what Paul was bringing out, and that is what I'd like to bring out here this morning. Here's how I feel as I've studied this out and meditated upon it much. I feel that if you do not know the relationship of being married to the Lord, things are not going to come out right when you decide that you're going to get married.

Chances are that you're going to be that second couple instead of that first couple. Do you see how God has got us disciplined there? You young people, He's got you in the corner. You want a happy life, you want a blessed life, you want a life that prospers.

Here's where you've got to start. You've got to start from the context of being married to the Lord. If you don't, then you'll be guided by your carnal desires, and you'll be guided by carnal wisdom, and you'll make choices of carnality, and you will reap for them all your life.

God is very clear on this. Let us be married to the Lord first. You young men, you young ladies, be married to the Lord, knowing in a sweet and an intimate way.

I'm convinced the only way to begin with a solid marriage is to start with a marriage to the Lord. You know, it's interesting to me, and I'm not saying we should follow this, but we can see the principle coming out even with the Mormons. The Mormons require their young people to give two years of service before they do anything else to the Mormon church.

Before they go to college, two years of service. Before they get married, two years of service. We can see something in that.

They recognize the strength of youth. They recognize the zeal of youth. They recognize the tremendous potential of youth, and therefore they put a requirement among their young people.

Two years of service, out on a mission field, over in Africa, or down in Venezuela, or over in China, or wherever it may be. They send them all over the world, and they go for two years. And you can see them out on the streets.

Maybe you've seen them out on the streets around here. Real clean-cut fellas. Usually have a dark suit on, a white shirt, and a solid tie.

Have a briefcase in their hand, and they're going around knocking on doors. Prostituting the Mormon faith. But we can see a principle in that.

That they do recognize the tremendous potential that young people have to give service. And how much more should we be recognizing that principle, since we have the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and know the tremendous liberty of the children of God, and know the power of the Spirit of God, and know the ministry of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of other people. How much more should we see that principle, and have it working among us? I think that we should see it.

In these verses that we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, from Paul the Apostle, verse 32 and 3 and 4 and 5, we see several relationships. We see a relationship of love, we see a relationship of loyalty, a relationship of service, a relationship of pleasing God, and a relationship of sanctification under God. This is what Paul was talking about.

Those that are unmarried and are hot for God. There's the standard. Those that are unmarried and they're hot for God, they desire to please God.

They desire to serve God. They love their God. They want to do what pleases God.

They want to be in God's service. They're concerned about God's work. They're loyal to God's work.

They're concerned about keeping themselves sanctified for their God. This is the relationship that is mentioned here in 1 Corinthians. And I believe this morning that it's God's standard for every young person in this room, whether you ever marry or not, or whether you're already planning in your own mind that someday you're going to get married.

I think you need to pass through this experience before you are in the right place to get into the situation and all the complications of choosing a partner for your life and then going on into marriage. You need to go this way. Develop this kind of love.

Take this standard for your life. And parents, you help your young people in this. Help them.

Don't settle for that second best. We have a tremendous responsibility in this as we guide our young ones. I wonder this morning, do we believe that this is attainable? Grace is available.

Some know such an experience already, but many do not. What a dangerous thing for us to just keep going on and saying everything is wonderful, when in reality, many of our young people do not know this sweet relationship with the God of Heaven. Yes, they know Him.

Yes, they want to come to church. Yes, they'll get up and read their Bible a little bit in the morning. Yes, they're obedient.

Yes, okay on all that. But this living, vibrant relationship, they do not have it. And I think it's our responsibility to lay that out before them and hold it over them and say, here's where you need to press to.

Here's the direction you need to go. It's our responsibility. It is attainable.

And what a great blessing when two young people experiencing this kind of walk with God feel led by the God that they know very well and walk with to marry. What a blessing to see that happen. This is what I want.

This is what we want for you young people. We want to see your lives growing up in sanctification and honor. We want to see your lives blessed by the Holy Spirit.

We want to see your lives being used by God. And yes, we want to see your lives then coming together in marriage if God wills. That's what we want for you.

More than a Sunday relationship. And I think it's very clear from these scriptures that if you find that relationship, it may be that you won't want to get married afterwards. Did you hear that? You won't want to get married.

Not because you look at it and say, ah, marriage. No, it will be because of your relationship with God. You'll weigh that thing from a different perspective and decide I cannot be distracted.

I cannot be burdened down with the care. These are the words that the apostle Paul uses. I don't want you to have trouble in the flesh.

I want to spare you, he says. I want you to be without carefulness. I want you to be without distraction serving God.

And it may be that if you as young people can come into this relationship, this intimate, sweet relationship with the God of heaven, that you'll take another look at marriage and you'll look at it and say, I don't know if I want to give up what I have here for that. Amen? It's all quiet. Isn't that what these scriptures are saying? That out of a love and a relationship and a vibrancy with God and a blessing upon your life and you see God using you and you have a ministry and it's opening up before you, then you take a look at marriage and you say, now wait a minute.

Does God want me to get married? Not do I want to get married, but does God want me to get married? Father, what is your will? Will your kingdom prosper if I get married or will it slow down? Which one? And I think that's a proper context to take a look at marriage. Young people, set yourselves to mature into this

kind of a relationship before you start considering marriage. And some of you may say, there's no hope.

You haven't set the standard up over your heart yet. You haven't let it make you earnest yet, but I would encourage you to set yourself to mature in this way before you start considering marriage. Let your parents and spiritual men help you to discern where you are.

That's a good one. A good word of counsel. A word of wise counsel.

Don't wait until you think you are where you're supposed to be, but ask your parents and ask spiritual men and spiritual women to evaluate your life and just open your heart and life up to them and say, tell me where I'm at. Do you think I'm ready? Do you think I'm mature? Do you think I'm solid? Do you think I'm in love with Jesus? Do you think I have that vibrant relationship? Do you see an anointing on my life? Do you see God using me? Let somebody else help you evaluate it. Don't just think it in your own.

Let someone else help you evaluate it. And then if they say no, then take that as a glorious blessing and protection and discipline in your life and say, okay God, this is the next step for me. You know what's interesting? I know we don't do it here, but you can go outside the walls of this church house and into many other circles and you'll find young people will go to school for four or five or six years just preparing for their life's occupation.

How foolish for us to just forget all preparation and say, I'm 18 years old, I'm getting married. Wait a minute, let's stop and think about that. If they prepared for years for a life's occupation, which is nothing, don't you think you ought to do some preparing? If they wait until they get their degree before they get married, don't you think you ought to have a degree before you get married? A degree from the God of heaven, a degree from your parents, a degree from the spiritual brothers and sisters in the church that say, yes, you are growing, God's blessing is on you, God is using you, you are mature, you know how to walk with God.

With that kind of degree, then start thinking, God, do you want me to get married? God, do I want to get married? I have this wonderful relationship, you're so sweet to me, I love you, I love fellowshiping with you, I love the freedom of getting up early every morning and having time alone with you, I love having my evenings free to go out and serve you, do I want to get married? Can we see from this observation how this can throw everything else off? It can throw it all off. If instead our heart is carnal, if instead we're very half-hearted about Christianity, if instead we like doing other things and the world is not strangely dim to us but it gleams with glory and brightness to us, if those are the experiences of our life and we start thinking about marriage, well, I'll tell you ahead of time, you will have some hard times ahead of you. And I think I could get a few testimonies out of this room to confirm what I just said.

You'll have some hard times ahead of you. Oh, but blessed be those young people that submit to the discipline of a standard like this in their life and see God's blessing come upon them because of it. Blessed are you.

So, that's the first one, marriage. Number two, courtship. Courtship is for marriage.

Any other emotional romantic relationship is out of order. Courtship is for marriage. Any other emotional relationship, romantic relationship is out of order.

Get that clear in your mind, young people. A very interesting little portion of the words in Colossians, it talks about inordinate affections. And inordinate affections can be any kind of affection that is out of order.

I feel many times the world has inordinate affection for dogs. There's a good example of it. It's an affection that's out of order.

But I'm telling you something, many young people are guilty of inordinate affections because they let their affections go in relationships before they have made any decision, before they have cleared anything with anybody else, before they have cleared it with the God of heaven. They let their affections go and I'm telling you this morning, those are inordinate affections or they're affections that are out of order. And you can't stop them, young people.

I have to. Every man in this room has to. Every married woman in this room has to.

We cannot allow certain affections in our hearts. They are affections that are out of order and you cannot either. Just because you're young and you're not married yet, that does not give you the freedom to let your affections go after this young man or after this young woman and let a relationship start to be built.

No, courtship is for marriage and any other affections that you begin to let flow back and forth, any other emotional relationship that you allow to start building and coming together is out of order. It's not wrong, it's just out of its order. In the right place and at the right time and the right order, it's very beautiful.

But if it's wrong place, it's out of order. It's inordinate affection. So courtship is for marriage.

And by the way, this will free the youth group up. It will make it a spiritual fellowship. What a blessing when the youth group can be free of all inordinate affections.

Settle it in your hearts, young people. It will allow a spiritual fellowship to settle down over your youth group that nothing else will. And you'll all be free from all those feelings and thoughts and wondering what he's thinking and wondering what she's thinking and wonder if he's looking at me or she's looking at me.

You'll be free from all of that. And your youth group, your young people's meetings can be a sweet spiritual fellowship, which is where you want to start anyway. Amen? That's where you want to start.

You don't want to start with the emotions floating back and forth. Then you'll choose on emotion, not principle. Young men and young women, it is right to keep your distance emotionally until you are clear to move toward marriage.

It's right to keep your distance. And may I say, sometimes it's even right to be cold. If you, either of you, young men or young ladies, if you sense an emotional approach upon your heart by a young lady or by a young man, it's right to be cold.

It's right for that other person to sense a block there that says, uh-uh. Sometimes you just need to be a little bit cold. Sisters, sometimes it's right.

There'll be time to warm up, but there are times to just be a little bit cold. I'm not saying unkind. I'm not saying that, but I'm just saying there ought to be a little bit of a sensing coming from you that says, no, I'm not open.

I'm not available. I'm not interested. Sometimes those kind of impressions need to come because it is right to keep your distance emotionally until the proper time.

All right, a little more on courtship. Courtship is for marriage. So, we're looking at marriage here this morning.

I'd like to encourage you this way, each one of you young men and each one of you young ladies, to rest in God's will concerning marriage. God will not hide His will from you. God's will is not something that you must work and sweat and labor and pray and dig and overturn everything and try to find it.

God's will is not that way. God makes His will as clear as crystal in His time. But here's the mistake, and I saw this so many times when I was in Bible school.

You'd be there in the Bible school and the young ones would come in there, 18 years old, some young fellow would say, God's called me to preach. And before the first year was out, he was spending days and nights alone with God trying to find out where God wanted him five years from now. And we just told him, look, don't worry about five years from now.

You just worry about right now. God will make clear what you're supposed to do five years from now when it's time to do it. And I would encourage you the same way.

I don't think it's real healthy. I think it's alright to say, God, I'm committing my life partner into Your hands. If You have one for me, I pray You'll prepare them.

I pray that You'll do a work in their heart and do a work in my heart. I don't see anything wrong with praying that way. But I think there's something very unhealthy about 16 year olds and 17 year olds and many times even 18 year olds spending hours wondering and pondering and praying that God would show them, hey, God's not going to hide it from you.

He's more concerned about you getting married than you are. He will not hide it. When His time comes, that person that He wants for you, it'll just be as clear as a bell to you.

It'll come right out and hit you in the face. You won't be able to get away from it. And sometimes I think that's kind of good.

You know, if God has to come up and knock us in the head and say, hey, right there. It's interesting to me as I work with young people and I work through these matters of courtship and marriage, how many times, and I think this is a good sign, not a bad one. I've heard young people say, I'm not getting married.

I don't think God wants me to get married. I have no desire to get married. I have nobody in mind.

And three months later, all of a sudden, they're going to get married. What happened? God hit them in the head. God said, here's my will.

You've been resting in my will. You've been looking to me. You've been trusting me.

You've wrapped your life up in me. You're busy in my work. By the way, I'd like you to get married.

It'll bless the kingdom of God. It'll make your ministry more fruitful. Yes, Lord.

Thy servant heareth. Oh, that's sweet. That's sweet.

So, rest in God's will. Fretting and worrying and longing is not resting, is it? Third of all, as you feel and sense God's leading in your life, that he does want you to marry. And you're old enough and you're mature

enough.

And I emphasize the mature enough a whole lot more than old enough. I think that's a fallacy. I'm 18.

I'm going. I don't think you're ready. If that's your heart, I'm 18 and I'm going.

I don't think you're ready. So, I emphasize the maturity more than the age here this morning. But when you sense that God is leading you that way, and it's time to begin to seek His face, then you need to do that with much prayer, with fasting, by seeking counsel, and by the wisdom of just using your own mind to examine and to qualify a young man or a young lady for your life's partner.

I think we need to seek the face of God. I think we need to have a witness from heaven about who we're supposed to marry. But God did give you a mind.

And He does enlighten us to the principles of His Word. And we can take those principles and with right discernment evaluate, will this young man or will this young lady make a good life's partner for me? I remember a young man who was considering getting married. And I had a caution about who he was wanting to consider.

And I just gave these words to him. I said, young man, do you feel like God has a call on your life? He said, yes, I do. I said, then you make sure when you find you a wife, you find one who's willing to bear the cross.

You find one that's bearing the cross. You find one that's living for God. You find one that's hot after God.

Don't you marry one that's less than that? She'll ruin your ministry. And a sobriety settled down over that young man's heart. And I think those are good words for every one of you young people.

It's more than just a couple that gets together and they live their life together. It's much more than that. It's a ministry that can be blessed of God and used of God to prosper his kingdom with an anointing upon it.

If you look at it that way, I don't think you'll make any flippant choices. If you look at it that way, I don't think you'll go by how cute he is or how pretty she is or how she wears her dresses or how she walks or any of that stuff. But rather, you'll start looking for godly character in those people.

So seek God about it. Use your own examination process. Seek counsel.

Find out from others what they think, how they're feeling. Make sure you find out from your mother and father. You ought to be so free and open with your mother and father to hear their counsel.

Don't go to them with your mind already made up and ask them to bless it. But you go and say, father and mother, what do you think? I want to know how you feel. I'm weighing your words heavily in my choice.

You need to do it. And I'd like to encourage you this way also, this matter of choosing, deciding to marry. Don't do it so young.

You'll miss one cycle of life. Don't do it so young. What a great blessing when you can have two or three years of dedicated service underneath your belt, two or three years of preparation, seeking the face of God and usefulness in his kingdom, and then decide, okay, God wants me to marry.

You say, well, I want to serve God with a family. Okay, that's good, but that's kind of a cop-out. You know, that's kind of a cop-out.

Serve God as a single person. Dedicate your life to God as a single person. And then in the midst of his blessing and in the midst of service, let God come along and say, now it's time for you to take a life.

All right. I'd like to say something more about the decision, making the decision. And we've mentioned this, but I want to key in on it now as you're making a decision for a life partner, make sure you ask these kinds of questions in your heart.

Does he or she love God with a fervent heart? Not do they go to church, not do they say they're a Christian. That is not good enough, brothers and sisters. Do they love God? Can you tell by their life that they love God with a fervent heart? Are they mature in the Lord? Some of you may be saying, wait a minute, the standard's getting too hard.

I'm not saying 40 years mature in the Lord, but I'm saying stable, established, knowing how to walk, knowing what the blessing is, knowing what God's direction is, knowing how to find God's will in decisions in your life. That's just maturity. Surely they ought to have that before you enter into marriage, because marriage is filled with decisions.

Who's going to make them? Another good question. Is this person morally free or do they have some real struggles with habits and bondages in their life? Is this person morally free or to put it in another way, is this person living in victory? Are they overcoming the needs that they have in their life? We do believe that here, don't we? There's overcoming power. You get serious with God about a need in your life and you will overcome it by the grace of God.

We believe that here. So I think it's good and wise for young people to say, is this person overcoming? Why? Because if they're not overcoming now, then you've got a pretty good chance that they're not going to be overcoming later. Are they under authority? Do they know how to be under authority? How do they respond to authority? How do they respond when another authority questions them or corrects them? How do they respond when their father or their mother says, no, I don't think you ought to go to the young people's meeting tonight.

What's that? That's a good sign. If that young person can say, that's fine, I'll do what you want, then that's a good sign. But if that person walks away and you hear words like, my mom, my dad, they don't understand this and that, that's not a good sign.

You'll see that again, young man. You'll see that again, young lady. Only it'll be in a different field and you won't like it.

Are they under authority? Do they know how to be under authority? Young men, I think it'd be a good idea in your considerations to call a young lady's father and ask him, how is she? I'm considering your daughter for marriage and I just wondered how she is at home, how she responds to your authority. I'm wanting her to respond to mine someday and I want to find out how she responds to yours and vice versa. We're talking about making a decision.

Is this person responsible at home, at work, financially? Do they have a good life message? Is there a testimony coming out of their life? Not just can they give a testimony, but is there a testimony coming out of their life? If there is, these are good signs, these are good go-aheads. And I'd like to say this to the

young ladies here, just a warning that you don't defraud the young men by your clothes, by wearing sensuous clothes, by flirting with your eyes with the young men. You throw the decision process way off when you do that and it'll be to your hurt as well as his.

Don't do it. If you find the young men's eyes glancing your way, they watch your dress as it flits down the aisle, if you find them doing that, you need to make some corrections. You need to get in front of the mirror and look at yourself and say, how do I look? How does this look to a young man? We need to be careful, young sisters, not to defraud the young men.

And by that I mean stirring up desires in them that cannot be lawfully fulfilled. Because what you do is stir up carnal desires in them and they'll be drawn your way by carnal motives rather than spiritual motives and you'll both hurt for it for many years. So I recommend you cover your body and do it good and do it right and do it without question.

Or you'll distort the process and make it harder for him to make a right choice. I'd like to say something also here to the fathers. Fathers, you take the responsibility over your daughters.

I think we need to learn some things here. You take responsibility for your daughters and daughters, you give it to your fathers. You go to him and say, Dad, I'm not budging till you say budge.

I'm not moving till you say clear. I'm not budging until you say it's okay. You screen them out.

I don't want to screen them. When they come to me, I'll send them to you. I think that'd be very good and wise.

And fathers, if we would take that kind of responsibility over our daughters, wouldn't that be a blessing? A young man wrote a letter to a young lady asking her if they can date. And the young lady writes a letter back to the young man and says, you'll need to check with my father before I give any other answers. So the young man calls the father up and says, I'd like to talk to you.

And he sits down in the father's house. Can't you just picture this? Oh, what a healthy thing. And the father sitting there, he might be 40 years old.

The young man might be 20 or 21. And the father says to the young man, so you'd like to date my daughter? Yes, I would. You're considering marriage? Yes, I am.

Strongly. Well, young man, how's your prayer life? Are you walking with God? How are things at home with you? How do you get along with your mom and dad? Are you having any struggles in your heart about morality? How do you plan to support my daughter? What kind of work do you do? What are your plans? Have you saved any money? What are you going to do? Oh, that's healthy. We can all imagine what's going on in that young man's heart, can't we? And what's going on in his heart is good.

It's telling him, young man, you will not flippantly get my daughter. Young man, you will not just run in there and woo her heart away. You will not do it.

Are you a young man of God? Have you dedicated your life to the Lord? Do you have a testimony that shows it and proves it? And if you don't, see me in a year. See me in a year. And if he's serious and wants to, tell him, I'd be glad to meet with you once every two weeks and we'll work on these areas.

If you're really serious about my daughter, I'd be glad to meet with you once every two weeks and we'll work these problems out. Are you willing? You spend a year doing that with a young man. I'll tell you what, you'll be a happy father when that young man marries your daughter.

You'll be a happy father as you see him grow and mature and change his life. Let that motivation of having a wife or having a husband, let that motivation get all the mileage you can out of it. Motivate him unto holiness and purity.

You know, I mean, we know it so. The father gives the bride away, doesn't he? Who gives this young lady to this young man to wife? And the father stands up and says, I do. And some fathers will get up and even make a speech and say to the young man, young man, I'm giving you my daughter.

I have raised her. I have nurtured her. I have prayed for her.

I have trained her. She loves God. And now I'm giving her to you.

Well, I think it's pretty foolish for a father to do that without finding out just what he's giving his daughter to. And I think it's just as foolish. The other way around.

To give a daughter away. Who's not in order. I think it's just as good for that father when that young man comes to the father for the father to say, I'm sorry, but my daughter, she's just not ready.

She has some struggles and she's not real dedicated and she's kind of half on and half off and she's got some worldly tendencies in her heart. I tell you what, you let me work with her for the next year and you see me then. If you're interested in a year, we'll talk about it again and then sit down with a daughter and say, a young man came and asked for your hand in marriage.

I'm not going to tell you who it is, but he came and asked for your hand in marriage. And I couldn't say yes. Here's what we're going to do.

Number one, number two, number three. Oh, you'll be a happy father on that wedding day. If you will do that.

And I would say to you young men and you young ladies, you ought to welcome this. Some of you might be chafing, but some of you are smiling. There is protection in what I'm saying.

There's wisdom in it. Every one of you that have a father and a mother like that, you ought to just revel in the joy of the protection that you have because you're safe. The next point is holy courtship.

And here, I just want to encourage you, some of you to way beforehand to establish some holy standards about courtship in your life. How are we going to court? What is our courtship going to be like? Build a spiritual relationship. Here's how it works.

Here's the way it's supposed to work. Agape love, phileo love, eros love. Those are three Greek words for love.

The proper and the right love relationship is in that order, young people. Agape love, that's genuine love. That's a love that'll love no matter what.

That's a love that'll love in the thick and the thin. That's a love that'll love in the sick and in the healthy. There's agape love.

That's the love relationship that ought to be being built in courtship. Then there's phileo love. That's the emotional love.

That's the romance. That's the heart that goes pitter-patter. That's the heart that just can hardly think about anything else.

That's phileo love, not agape love. And there's nothing wrong with that. That's a blessing.

And then there's eros, which is physical love. See the order there? Put it in its right perspective in your courtship standards and you will be blessed the rest of your life for it. Agape love, phileo love, eros love.

Another word of encouragement. By the way, let your marriage to God draw the two of you together in the marriage. That's a beautiful way to build a relationship.

I am in love with God. She is in love with God. And because we both love God, as we spend time together building a spiritual relationship, we are drawn together in God.

This is a blessing. Don't spend a lot of time alone. Now I realize there needs to be some time where you have some chats, you have a lot of talking to do, you have a lot of questions and things to discuss, but I would recommend you not spend a whole lot of time alone together.

You'll have many years to do that. You spend too much time alone together and I'm afraid that the emotional love will begin to burn too hot for you. And you're still made out of flesh.

No matter how mature you are, you're still made out of flesh. And flesh is flesh. So have some precautions.

Don't spend a lot of time alone together. When you're having dates, go somewhere, go to someone's house, go on a visit together. Yes, you need to spend some time alone, but I wouldn't spend a lot of time alone and I wouldn't get together several times a week.

I don't recommend it. Let your parents and other spiritual people give you guidelines during your courtship. Submit yourself to that discipline.

You will find that hard because they will tell you no when you don't want to hear no. Isn't that right? There's a lot of married people in this room. Some of you, your parents fussed over your courtship.

You didn't like it when they did it, but you love it now. You're glad for every bit of it. So young people, you let your parents fuss over your courtship.

And if you don't have parents that fuss over your courtship, then you find somebody that will. You go seek one out. You may be sitting here thinking, well, my mom and dad, they won't even care about that fool.

You find somebody that will, because it's not a blessing if they don't care. It's a blessing if they will. You need the protection.

You need the guidelines. You need the disciplines. Your heart will say yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, all the time.

You need somebody who's not in the middle of all that to say no for you. You need that. Another point, let your courtship be in sanctification and honor.

I would recommend you keep your hands off of each other. That's my recommendation to you. A lot of people have a lot of ideas about this.

Well, what's wrong with a little kiss? What's wrong with a little hug? What's wrong with holding hands? I'm just going to put my arm around her. I just had my hand on his knee. Keep your hands off of each other.

You're playing with fire that some of you don't know anything at all about. And I hope you don't know anything at all about it. And since you don't know anything at all about it, those who do know something about it are telling you that it's better if you don't put your hands on each other.

Just don't do it. You may groan with that. You may chafe under it.

But I'll tell you one day that you'll be glad that you did. And that'll be on that wedding day when your hand goes into her hand. And in the privacy of a small room, maybe on the side of the auditorium, you kiss your wife for the first time.

You will say hallelujah. I'm so glad I did. It will be a blessing.

I recommend it to you. Also, a word of caution that you be careful and watch over your emotions, because now it is okay to let your emotions go. When you enter into courtship, you've made a decision to marry.

It's all right for your emotions to go, but you shouldn't just let them go, or you won't be able to control. You still need to be careful over your emotions. And providing that you're mature, and you've waited, and you're happy in the Lord, and you're dedicated to the Lord, I feel once you've made the decision that you need to be married, and you've chosen your partner, and the parents are putting a blessing on it, and your spiritual leaders are blessing it, and everyone is happy with it, I don't think you ought to have a real long courtship.

That's not real healthy. Notice I said providing you're mature. I think sometimes we, as parents, we extend out for a long courtship because we can't get our youth to slow down enough.

So well, okay, they made their decision. They want to be married to each other, but we still think they're a little young, and they need some maturing, so we'll make a long courtship. Well, I would recommend to all of us that we not let it go that far.

If they're young, if they're immature, don't make a long courtship. Just hold the thing off. Just hold it off.

It won't hurt. It won't hurt a bit. It'll only mature, and discipline, and bless you.

Well, the third point, I know it's getting late here, but the third point, we've been preaching about it all morning, and that is marriage. Married to the Lord, courtship that is within the right standards of the Word of God, and then marriage. And I'll close where I began.

Marriage. Two young people who are in love with God, who are dedicated to the Lord, who want to serve Him, who are busy serving Him. Their lives are in order.

There's godly character. They're under their authorities. Their parents' blessing is upon it.

They're happy in the Lord. They're coming together to be married. Is there a sweeter sight than that? I believe there's a special blessing upon that kind of a relationship.

As a pastor, I can look at them and know it. I just know it, and I can prophesy it, and I haven't missed yet. You can just look at them and know they've done it right.

They were in order. They were mature. They were dedicated.

God led them together. That's gonna be a blessed marriage. It'll be a sweet testimony.

The rest of the church will grow from it. The other young people will watch it and be enlightened by it. It'll be blessed of God, and it will be.

No, I would just encourage you to be jealous, young people, and set your sights like that. It's more than just a young man and a young lady deciding they're gonna get married and live together. It's so much more than that, or it can be.

Yes, it's true. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband. But that's a pretty low motivation for marriage.

Amen? God has so much more than that for you. He has great blessings upon it. You'll be starting with a sure foundation and dozens of mistakes will be avoided.

You'll still have them. You'll have your hard knocks. You'll have your time to work through, but dozens of mistakes will have been avoided.

If you will follow this council this morning, dozens of mistakes will be avoided. Your marriage will be a blessing. Your children will be blessed after you, and God will be glorified with it.

Your parents will be filled with joy. Your pastors will smile upon your relationship, and the church will sit back in great delight as you're united together in holy matrimony. Boy, I don't know about you, but if I was a young person, I'd want all that.

I would set myself to have that. That is beautiful. A God in heaven smiling upon it.

Your children being blessed after you. Your parents delighted in your relationship. Your preachers joy-filled over what's going on.

And the whole church delighted as they see a young couple come together in holy matrimony. You ought to set that as the goal of your life. You will never be sorry.

And I'll tell you what you'll do. You'll relish in the joy and the blessing of that for years to come. May God add his blessing to these words, to all of our young hearts here, and to all of us parents.

It's not really just a message to the young people, because young people are young people, and they need guidance, and that's our responsibility. Let's help them set the standards high, and we'll all be happy for it for many years to come. Shall we kneel together and pray? Oh, Father, it's beautiful, Lord, it's beautiful.

It's so sweet, it's so lovely, my God, it's so beautiful. We just bring it before you, Lord. It's right, it's in your word, dear God, and we pray that you'll give it to us.

Oh, my Father, I pray for every young person in this room this morning. I pray you'll take your finger and write on their hearts this morning. Oh, God, help them to have some wisdom and forethought and make some plans for their lives.

And oh, God, I pray for us as parents. Let us do our work, dear Lord. Give us a vision, Father.

Some of us have not been used to taking authority. Some of us have not been used to sitting our children down and telling them no, and giving them guidance. Oh, Father, I pray that you'll help us.

I pray you'll enlighten our hearts, God. Don't let us make foolish mistakes, Lord, that cost many years of heartache for our young. God, we just lay these words before you, and I pray, God, let them not fall to the ground, but let them take root downward and bear fruit upward in the lives of our young people, in the lives and hearts of us as parents.

God, we know that we have failed, but our confession before you is, Lord, this is what we want. I pray, God, that you'll give it to us, and I pray in the name of thy Son, the Lord Jesus, that couples may go forth, showing the beautiful relationship of Christ in the church through the world around them. God, may it be so.

We pray in your will, in Jesus' name, amen.

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