

Courtship Testimonies

by Denny Kenaston

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a godly courtship and being married to Christ before getting married, and shares personal testimonies of the consequences of not doing so.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 18:22, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Peter 3:7

Topics: "Christian Courtship", "Spiritual Marriage"

Description

Brother Myron Stolfus reflects on the mistakes made in his courtship and marriage, emphasizing the importance of being married to Christ first before pursuing a relationship. He shares how lack of self-control, improper vision of marriage, and not seeking proper authority led to defrauding his wife and causing lasting effects. Sister Lisa Stolfus shares the guilt and regrets of not keeping affections pure, leading to emotional involvement and defrauding. Brother David Mast highlights the importance of seeking God's will, seeking parental approval, and building a spiritual foundation in courtship to avoid temptations and defrauding. Sister Melinda Mast shares the blessing of hiding affections, constant surrender to God, and the importance of respect, submission, and spiritual leadership in a courtship and marriage.

Transcript

Brother Myron Stolfus

It is indeed my blessing to be here today, and to hear the words of our brothers these last three days. It has been such a blessing. And I would just like to, before I say anything, say please hear them. Please hear them.

I'm going to emphasize today where we went wrong, and the results of that in our lives and in our marriage.

As we look back, we do have some happy times that we remember, but I'm not going to be speaking about them today, because even they, many times, were over shuttered by feelings of guilt and other things that I will be saying today.

I'm going to give my testimony first, and then my wife will also share things from her perspective and her views, and the effects of our courtship, and what those effects had on her life.

As I pondered over what to share, and how to share it, I looked at several steps in my life that were not right from the very beginning. To begin with, much, very much of what Brother Denny gave today, and

yesterday, and also the day before yesterday, I did not do in preparation to get married. The seeking God for my wife, the keeping my emotions to myself, most of those things, and even the asking of the proper authorities, and all of that, I didn't do that before I was in love with my wife to be. I was in love first, then I did many of those other things. But really, as I look at the root of it, Brother Denny preached a message a couple of years ago, and He also included to it this week, that we need to be married to Christ first. He had message entitled, "Marriage, Courtship, and Marriage". Marriage to God, courtship, and then marriage to someone else. And I was not married to Christ. I loved the Lord sincerely, but I didn't have the hot, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ that I should have had.

I had many Character deficiencies in my life, and one of those was lack of self control. I did not have a proper vision of a godly marriage. It was a limited vision. I looked at it for the benefit that it would give me, instead of having a long-range vision, and seeing a godly family, even though I wanted children. But just the whole realization and vision of a godly family, and the influence, and the blessing, and all of that, I didn't have. And I would like to say, our vision, or my vision, for our courtship turned out to be my vision for my marriage, and that wasn't very good. I did not go through the proper authority channels before I released my affections. Oh, I would like to emphasize that today: I didn't do it that way. Rather, I let my emotions go, we were together a lot through some other circumstances, and we had spiritual fellowship, but then we started releasing our affections to each other before saying anything to anybody about it. Oh I thought many times, then and even later, when restrictions were put upon us, "They just don't understand!". And if there's anything I'd like to emphasize today, it's that. That thought, you just take that and throw it away. Throw it away, because they did understand. But I didn't think they did. I thought, "Well, it's been twenty or thirty years since they've gotten married. They don't remember how it was,". But they know, and I was the ignorant one. I said it, and we would talk about it one to the other, "They just don't understand!". As I said before, I had very little self control. In my mind I had free reign up to a certain point. And up to that certain point it was coasting, and actually feeding, rather than being self controlled, and watching over my life, and being very concerned (I.E.) "How much am I letting my emotions be in charge, here?". I just had free right, no self control. There was many a time that I thought, "I'm Ok, I'll know when to stop. It's alright, I can handle it". I didn't know I was playing with fire.

Because of these things, the lack of the self-control, the not being under the proper authority, and going through the proper authority channels, and not having a proper vision of having a godly courtship, not being married to Christ, and having a free reign in my life, I stirred up desires that could not be fulfilled, as Brother Denny said. I defrauded my wife, and to this day, when we look back on certain things, I realize. And again, these things have been made fresh in my heart in a greater way then ever before as Brother Denny so clearly laid out defrauding. I defrauded my wife, and that had effects that lasted into our marriage. I did things that violated her conscience. Well, that made her feel guilty, but at the same time, she was under pressure to please me. She wanted to please me. She had a lot of insecurity in her life, and so she wanted to put her security in me. And so she was caught where she was violating her own conscience, and I was defrauding her, and yet she was under pressure to please me. That didn't feel good.

Well, what were the results of these steps? Our emotions became heavily, heavily involved prematurely. You see, the problem was that I was in love when I was seventeen years old. And so I couldn't just get married, because I was too young. And we looked ahead, and we saw that we might not be able to get married until we were twenty, or twenty one. It just looked like an impossible situation. But the reason it looked like an impossible situation was because I let go, and our emotions were already so heavily

involved when they should have never been!

We were so emotionally involved that by the time we started courting, we should have been getting married. You see, because we were young, there was a restriction put upon us that I could not date or court until I was eighteen years old. The problem was, we were, by our fellowship, by our sharing back and forth, by our intimacy and deep things and all of that, telephone calls, letters, all of those things. We were ready to get married by the time we started dating, and we had a long ways to go.

Another result is that my own spiritual life, what I did have, went down. And I'd like to emphasize this also, if you will find yourself in a courting situation, and you find that your spiritual life is going down, where God is not real to you, where you are feeling guilty before God, stop right there, and examine what is wrong. But it happens, and it happened very much in my life.

Another result: We came within a hair's breath of committing fornication. That was a natural result of our emotions being so heavily involved. It's only the grace of God that kept us from going the whole way. We were not pure in our minds, we were not pure in each other's sight.

Now, this didn't start like that right away, it rather started with touching, and holding hands, hugging, ect.. Those types of things just lit the fire in our hearts, the fire that was meant for marriage. This was also intensified by frank discussion way too early in our courtship.

Because of the rebellion - we did have some restrictions upon us, one that we couldn't get married, and we rebelled in our hearts. And we would get together on our dates, we wanted to be alone as much as possible. We'd commiserate one with another, (I.E.) "Oh, how bad this is! Oh, I just can't understand this! They just don't understand!", and all of these things happened. So our dates were not profitable. They were not up building many, many times. Of course, because of this, we wanted to be alone away from everybody else, and as soon as we got together, we'd want to leave as soon as we could and be alone. Well, this all destroyed our courtship.

After we got married, I'm an optimist; I thought this would be just fine. Now we we're married, and we had a blessed wedding. Again, God poured out grace from heaven upon our wedding. I don't understand why, but it did. It was just the mercy of God. However, it wasn't too long before we had trouble. All of the sudden, I didn't have any respect for my wife. The things that I wanted to do, she would feel uncomfortable with. She was not free to fully release herself to me.

I had some other problems, which stemmed back to the very beginning of courtship. I was not a leader, and so I was not providing security. I could not handle discipline after my marriage, godly discipline in my own life, I couldn't handle it. And I was not sensitive to my wife, to the needs that she had, to her own heart, to her own longings. So, I wasn't sensitive. I couldn't understand why things were going wrong, and so I was hurt with her withdrawal from me. I was hurt. I remember, there would be some nights, where we were going to bed, and would just talk about these things, and I would get hurt at her, and she would get hurt at me, and we would cry together. Oh, it was just miserable sometimes, because of that. And I was frustrated, I pitied myself, rather than realizing that it was my own needs and my own problems that were bringing this whole thing to the surface. Many times, I was hurt, and because of that, I would be so touchy, and if she would just making a comment as to laying some of the blame on me, oh, I was so touchy, I couldn't handle it.

Well, God did have mercy upon us, praise God for that. As we cleared ourselves of the rebellion, God did lay it clearly again on my wife, before me (because she was more spiritually ahead than I was), the fact of our rebellion. We could not understand why things were not prospering, and it was one time when I was at desperation of her heart with another Godly couple (which the brother is here today). She just dumped out her heart, and he so wisely considered and said, "Did you ever consider the rebellion your heart?". When we cleared ourselves of the rebellion, the guilt was gone. Bless the Lord, the guilt was gone.

However we still had some problems. We had communication problems, we still had hurt feelings and things like that. Even though the guilt for the actual wrong things that we did was gone, we still had many of these problems. And it was only until I came to the place where I should have been before I ever looked at a young lady, when I saw the apathy in my own heart, I saw the lack of leadership in my heart, the lack of self control, and all of those things. And that happened two years ago. The first five years of our marriage were up, and down, and up, and down, and I would see some needs, and improve, and things would be better, and then I'd go back down again. It was only two years ago until God showed me all that it really was. It was very interesting, it was though a message, and I was sitting right there. And God just came upon me, and I repented of my sin, and God just totally transformed my marriage. He just totally transformed it. Now all of those things are gone, I still have needs, but my wife's respect just went up like that. The love that we had between each other just flowed back and forth, and our problems fell down to the ground, and God prospered our relationship with children and all of those things.

So I would like to say, He is able to restore, He has restored us, and I praise God for it, but you don't have to go that route. You don't have to do it they way we did it.

We still, occasionally, have things to work through. I still have personal struggles sometimes, that I wonder if they are a result of life before. But God is able to restore, he has restored us, and we just rejoice together in that. I beg of you, hear us today. Don't go the way we did, do it differently, I plead.

Sister Lisa Stolfus

The burdens of sharing this today came to me, I think it was last Bible School. Someone shared with me that she was talking with some of the girls here about courtship, and one of them made the comment, "What's all this big deal about hands-off anyway? My Aunt Lisa did it, and they're ok,". And I just thought, "but you have no idea,". The tears and regrets, the remorse, the guilt that took to get to where we are today, you have no idea. We kept it pretty well hidden. Not many people knew that we were doing the things that we were. I guess nobody knew to quite the extent that we were. But, the guilt is still there, and the facts are still there, whether anybody knows it or not.

And I guess when Brother Denny was speaking yesterday about holding your emotions and all of that, he taught some of the first day, and I thought, "These young people are really going to say, 'That's impossible!'," . And that's what we said, "We can't do it. I mean, the pastor's asking us to do something that we can't do!". And yesterday he clarified it so well, and I just thought, "He's right. Almost every one of his points we violated somewhere along the way.

And when I was about fourteen, I was emotionally involved with a fellow, and it was kind of mutual between us, and we talked some, but we didn't see each other a whole lot, and I was sure when I turned eighteen, he was going to ask me to marry him, and he didn't. And sometime within the next year I realized that he wasn't going to, and I had to lay that down. And after we got married, and we started having struggles, the thought came to me, "Well, how would it have turned out if I had married him?", and

you shouldn't even say those kinds of things when you're married! But, that emotional scar was just there, and I had to realize that I went wrong way back then in letting my emotions go, instead of setting my heart to serve God completely and totally. And then when our relationship started and it became clear that he was interested in me, I did the same thing. I mean, I was living for God, and I had a relationship with God, but I shifted my affections, and it wasn't "I'm living all for God" anymore, it was, "I'm living for Myron, and I'm living for this relationship, and I lived for it all day every day. I mean, it was my life, and consequently, my spiritual life went down. And I gave him my emotions, I gave him my affections, I just threw myself at him, and as he related, consequently, we were ready for marriage way too soon, and it caused all of the problems that it did.

When we started dating, I had decided when I was fourteen that when I was courting, I decided that I was going to have a hands-off relationship. I had seen so many of the others that I decided, "I'm going to have it hands-off,". But what I didn't realize, it wasn't set in his heart like that. He agreed with me, and went along with it, but he didn't have it fixed in his heart, and consequently, one of the first times we were together in public, we were holding hands already. And of course, we started out with, "Well make an exception just tonight", but it didn't stay there, and it just went from one thing to another, to another, to another, and I went along with it, but I felt so guilty. And he'd leave, and I'd go home, and I would feel so guilty, and I'd think over our day, and where we were, and what we did, and felt so guilty. And one fear that I always had was that his mom or dad would ask us some "20 questions". And during the last six months of our courtship, due to my home being an hour and a half away from here, I would come into the area on Saturday evening, and be here for the weekend, and I stayed at Brother Ross's house, and sometimes I was just sure they could read the guilt on me. And sometimes I just wished he would ask me some questions, because I wanted to be different, I wanted to tell somebody, but I didn't have the nerve to squeal on him. And so we'd come together the next weekend and I would say, "We have got to stop this. I feel so guilty. I can't go on like this.", and we'd talk about it for a while, and he'd agree "yeah, we went to far, we'd better back off", and we'd set a line ("we're not going to do any more than just this"), well that lasted till the next date. Now the next one came, we had already slipped. And the next date came and we had slipped even further than we had been before! And I felt so guilty all over again. And we went through this time and time and time again.

We courted for almost a year and a half, and it was that way the whole time. That's the way our courtship went from beginning to end, and when I think about our courtship, I just have to put it out of my mind. I cannot think about it. It's too painful. All of those things that we did, I just cannot think about. So, I cannot say that I we had a happy courtship. We enjoyed being together, of course, we loved each other, we'd spend our time together, but it was just up and down like that. But we always thought that after marriage it would be different.

And even in our courtship I had a goal to have our devotions together, and we talked about it, and "yeah, that would be a good thing to do," so we decided that's what we'd do. The trouble was, he would never initiate it until I'd say, "Don't you think we ought to have our devotions, now?" or something like that. Sometimes I'd wait, and wait, and wait, but he never did, hardly ever. There I should have seen a warning sign. I should have seen, "Hey, he's not seeing what I'm seeing. We need to stop until he comes around. But I didn't, and I just always thought that after we're married it would be different. And in public, he was a leader, he was outgoing, he had lead some of the discussions at church, and he could talk, and all of that, I saw all of that, and took that above what happened in our private times together, and it didn't come out right, and that guilt followed me up until the night before our wedding.

I remember going to bed that night, and I felt so hopeless. And I thought, "This is it. We don't have any more chance to improve, now. No more chance to prove we can do it right, there's no more chance to do it right. This is it,". And God blessed our wedding, and we had a sweet wedding, and we had a sweet honeymoon, and we came back and so into marriage and it took about a month and a half until problems started rising, and that was pretty rough. And, here again, I was ready to go get counsel from somebody, but he always held back, he didn't want people to know. Everybody looked up to us, and he didn't want people to know that we were going through this.

And I remember a year after we were married, Paul and Viola were married, and they had a hands-off courtship, and at their wedding we were to be head waiter and waitress, and that was the most beautiful wedding in my life. We sat there and watched them as they joined hands to say their vows. I knew it was the first time they ever held hands. You need to remember by this time I am miserable in my marriage, I didn't know what to do, he doesn't want to get help, I feel strung out, it's not going right, and I know that if we had done it like they did it, that things wouldn't be like this. And I sat there and cried like a baby. I don't know how I gathered myself together enough to wait on tables that day. I was just totally miserable, and after that wedding we went out to the back roads somewhere, and we talked, and we talked, and we prayed, and we cried, and we didn't come to any concrete solution, but at least we talked about it, and that went on for years.

We were married about three years until we finally saw the rebellion we were in, and we confessed that, and all of that. And from there our marriage started to get better. There were some things that started to get better. But there was an awful lot. Whenever something would go wrong, (I.E.) "He was that way when we were dating and he's still like that," you know, and I couldn't respect him the way I knew I should, the way I wanted to, and I started feeling, "I'm going to live the rest of my life this! There's no way out! I'm married, now!", and I would look at other couples, and I'd wonder, "How many of them have struggles like this because they need to surface? How many of them are for real?". I looked at Denny's and I looked at Moses', and I knew that they were for real, and I could not figure it out, (I.E.) "How could you marry that long and have a relationship like they had?". I knew theirs' was for real and I couldn't explain that one, but when Myron came to the place where he did two years ago was when our marriage finally took off.

When he became the spiritual leader in the home, consequently, after we got married we had devotions every day for about a month or two months maybe, and then it quit. I wanted to have family devotions. At our house we had family devotions every day no matter what! And it wasn't as meaningful to me as I wish it would have been, but still it was the idea, I wanted family devotions in our house. I wanted our children to grow up knowing a time of worship together at a family, and it didn't happen. I let it go for while and then I asked him, "Don't you think we should be having family devotions?", [and he'd say] "Oh, well, yeah,". And then we'd do it for a little while. It was the same thing as it was when we are dating. And I'm telling you, if you're partner is like that when you are dating, they're going to be like that after you are married. Marriage is not a magic cure.

So, after he became the spiritual leader that he should have been, he started having devotions, and became the spiritual security to me that a husband should be and I started prospering in my spiritual life. For the first time since we were married, I felt like I was starting to grow again. And my inferiority complex (I.E.), "I was terribly inferior", disappeared. And my respect for him grew, our relationship became a loving relationship, instead of a tension-touchy [one], and I just bless God. He's our family, and we have a wonderful relationship, and God did it. But like Myron said, you don't need the way we came, and I beg of you, keep your emotions. It's not impossible, and they do understand, and they're not asking too much. It's

the only way to come out right.

Brother David Mast

About three months prior to our courtship, I began to seek God earnestly, and pray earnestly concerning this one, and see if, "God is this is really the one that You have for me and for my life?". You have to know God. You have to know his voice. If you don't know his voice, you're going to go by your own feeling. But you're going to have to learn to know his voice right now. Learn to know His voice so that when this happens, you can know assuredly it's his voice, "One, not two, not another, one,". And it just seemed like every time I prayed about it, there was just no question. Being back again, "This one". And this was in my own private quarters. I hadn't let it out to anyone except I did leave it out to my brother in law, Carl. And we talked about it, and I forget when it was. I think it was also when they were making progress towards this very same step. We happened to be together one evening, and we were sharing together, and I don't advise that at all, I don't advise it. It's better to keep it between you and God until you have those things clear. But, anyway, I sought God, God kept impressing it on my heart, it was only one, I didn't hurry, there was no need to hurry. If God has the best one for you, He's going to keep the best one for you. And there's no hurry, just walk with God, and let God talk to you.

Well, it took about three months for me till I, like Denny said, muster up enough courage and inward grit, and all of that, which, I just wanted to be sure that this was right, and I asked God for different confirmation, and He granted them, and so forth. And they weren't handwriting on the ceiling or something like that. They were just simply those deep impression in my heart.

Well, then I took this to my parents. I brought them to my parents one evening, and that was in December, and I brought them there before them, and I said, "This is what God is seemingly showing me, and I just laid it out before them, and wondered what they thought about it. And, Praise God, another blasting confirmation, they said, "We've known it all along!", [laughs] praise the Lord. And that was a blessing to me. I went out of the room rejoicing.

I already had my first clearing, and that was with my own parents, and they had blessed it. Well, they were all exited, as well as I. And we made arrangements to contact her parents. I think that very night they made arrangements to meet with her parents. So I went and met with her parents, we got together at a restaurant out in the parking lot, and I said, "This is what God is showing me.", and I was just opening myself up to them. They asked for my testimony for a conversion experience, and so on. And we had known each other, our family and her family, we had known each other quite well, and they also gave their full blessing. On that go-ahead, I was asking for permission. When I asked, I wasn't just asking for a date of their daughter. I made sure that they knew that I was interested in marriage. That it was only marriage that I was interested in. It wasn't for just a date, but I had marriage in mind, and so they gave their full approval, and their blessing on it, and if I remember right, they had even given me just a few things to think about as far as guidelines they were going to set out for us. I also went away from that meeting very joyful. My heart was singing, I hadn't got the answer from her yet, but I knew God's will, I knew God was leading, and I had two authorities cleared on me already, so I knew God was leading. And really, I had no worry, I had no question.

And I told them that I would like for them to contact her, being that she was under their authority and in Pennsylvania at the time, and I was in Ohio. So they called her and asked her concerning if she would agree to start this relationship and so forth. And I can say on this point, that it's very important that it goes

through her authority. If you just take the other side of it, avoid going directly to the girl, look at what pressure you're putting that girl under. And it takes quite a girl to say "no". It takes some real grit. You're putting her under a lot of pressure. This way, she's totally free. She's been under the authority of her parents for a long time. It's no problem, the parents have often come to her with things, and they can talk, they can freely share together, she can tell her parents how she's feeling about the whole thing, and it's such a stress-free way of coming about it, and a real blessing. Well, I was not in a hurry to receive an answer from her. I made sure her parents knew that, that however long it takes, that's fine, I'll wait, I know God has the best and I'll wait.

So, she brought her answer back to her parents, which obviously was yes [laughter], and I'll let her share that part of it. After that, well, her parents then came to me and gave me the response, and then they gave their full ok to go ahead and start this relationship, and so on, and so I gave her a call, of course.

Our parents somewhere in that time, I don't know when exactly, it was sometime before we started dating and so forth, they set out some guidelines for us as a couple in our courtship. They were not what I necessarily what I say strict rules and regulations and all of that, and really what they were setting out before us were already convictions in our own heart that we would have preferred and done ourselves. For instance, one was going home at a certain time, and another one was, especially this one I think is of great importance, and that is, after dark, don't be driving out and around, even just taking her home. They set out that guideline for us, and we'd just take one of our brothers and sisters along, just for that extra protection, so that temptation doesn't take a hold. And we gladly gave ourselves unto that, that was no problem. We gladly received all of their instruction because we knew that it was wisdom. And there again, I don't know where our convictions all came from, but it seemed like God impressed those things on our heart. And also at the same time they were giving these guidelines, her father just really came out with a blessing that had blessed our whole courtship, our married life, and all, and I just want to put it out here before you. And Denny has already touched on it, but I think it's a key if you're going to have a good courtship, and Brother Myron and Sister Lisa can identify with this I'm sure. He brought it out this way: We're made up of spirit, soul, and body. And we have the spiritual, we have the social (which is the soul), and then we have the physical in marriage. And he said, right now, where you're starting in, now is time to build on a spiritual relationship, a spiritual foundation, and establish that underneath your foundation. Put that down there. You're going to need a little bit of social as well. You need no physical right now, and he made that very clear to us, and he majored on that spiritual. Build on a spiritual foundation.

Well, that moves us into our courtship, and so on. We had our first date, and we didn't go out to a restaurant somewhere (I'm not against that, but use caution), our first date we held it in, and we had it a Paul Hershbarger's when we were still living here. On our first date (and I think this is some keys for you to set if you are thinking on this term at all, or something to place in your conviction) we related our conversion experiences to each other on that first date, how we got saved. You know, if we're going to build on a spiritual foundation, let's start it out right! (I.E.) "Well, how did you start in your Christian life?", and we did that. We shared it together, and that's a real blessing. And after that, I felt like we need to have a clear understanding from day one, what we're going to do in our relationship, [and] in our courtship. And we discussed various convictions on both of our parts, and we were hands-off courtship, we both had that conviction deep in our hearts to have a hands-off courtship, we wanted to be free from all of those things. And we just made sure that both of us were very clear on which direction we were going to go. And also, in our courtship time, we had nothing to hide, we had nothing that we wanted to cover up. We had our private time when we could to talk together, but we didn't go behind locked doors. We were in another

room, but our families were usually in another room, or we were outside under a tree somewhere, or something like that, and we also didn't spend long times together, not five or six hours, which I also discourage that because it brings that drawing together too fast, and we were not ready for that.

Well, as we move into our courtship experience, we just can't explain the blessings that we shared together in prayer, and in Bible reading, and I always try to have something ready that we could talk about, and share together, and so on in the Bible reading. But we spend so many beautiful times in prayer together. First of all, just rejoicing how God brought us into this, and then how God was leading us on. And right at that time were also going through a transition back in Ohio with the church situation, and her father said that there needs to be an established church. That was one of his concerns. There needs to be an established church, or going strongly in that direction, before he would want to give his full approval, and that put an earnestness in our heart [laughs]. But we shared some very blessed times together, and oftentimes after we were done praying, we were just quiet, kneeling there. Just standing in awe of God, and just standing in awe of His presence with us and His blessing on our life, and we knew it was there. We could feel it, and we attributed back to taking those right steps, and being under authority. Not chafing under the authority but submitting ourselves unto it. And in feeling God's presence and awe, it just brought a sense of deep conviction in our hearts. And when you are in the presence of God, you don't feel like doing things that are not right right to do. And building and focusing on a spiritual foundation in our times together and so on in our times together, and so on, as we focused on that, and as we build around that, and add that presence of God in our midst, it just brought the fear of God on our hearts.

Maybe we can say we're strange, but we can honestly say that we had not many temptations to even hold hands. I really can't remember any time when I was thinking about reaching out and holding her hands. It wasn't there. We were building on a different foundation. It was based around spiritual things, [and] we kept that. And even sitting real close, we just had that as a standard, written on our hearts, and we just wouldn't do it. I'll bring this out, when we did accidentally touch (which it's going to happen, I can guarantee it when you're together), and there was a time or two where we accidentally brush one another, we would excuse ourselves, apologize to them, and go on. We just did it because we wanted to keep it clear, we wanted to keep it absolutely clear (and maybe you think that's a little bit extreme), but that's what we felt in our hearts. And you say, "Oh, that's no fun, that's bondage," but it was a law in our hearts, and we didn't want to defraud one another.

Our courtship was nine blessed months. We had nine blessed months of courting, and we can look back and say we have no regrets. We have no regrets on the things that we did.

And there was one time where we did make a mistake. It was an ignorant mistake. I was at her place. I took her home one evening, and her none of her family was there, and I stayed about an hour, we were just in the living in room, talking wedding plans (it was after we were engaged), and so on, and I didn't realize that I wasn't supposed to be there when the others aren't there. That wasn't made clear, but it was brought to our attention. We gladly submitted ourselves to that, and went on. So we can honestly say we have no regrets in looking back. It's been a blessing, a real blessing. Yes, we had some tests of staying under authority. You might wonder if we had any tests about keeping under authority and keeping ourselves submitted - yes, we did. But having learned to submit in our younger years helped us a lot when this came up. Actually, there was only one instance that I remember that we had any struggle with submitting to authority, and this was an area of leadership. Someone from another fellowship was giving us some instruction and so on, and we were like, "Eh, do we have to?", we couldn't quite understand it, but we decided, "No, we're going to submit ourselves. We're just going to do it, it doesn't matter if we

understand it, and go on,". And really, it proved to be a blessing. It wasn't something we couldn't live with.

Well, coming to a marriage like this, what a blessing. It was so rich, and it just seemed like God dumped his blessings on us, and we felt so unworthy of him dumping His blessings on us as He did on our wedding day. We were walking around dazed, practically, on our wedding day. It was just awesome at what God did for us, and the honor and the respect that we felt for one another, it was great. And to this day, the honor and the respect that feel toward each other, it's great. And I think it all stems back to learning to refrain ourselves, to keep ourselves.

And also, another thing I didn't mention is that, even though we didn't know it in our minds, we were consciously doing what Denny was saying. We were coming together. We were coming together slowly. And I remember, oftentimes, we wrote together, seeing as she was in Pennsylvania, and I remember, many times I was cautious what I wrote, because I didn't want this to go too fast. I wanted to take it easy, we weren't quite ready yet for everything, so really what I was doing, I was holding back somewhat on that affection of love, and not that my heart wasn't full of it, but I was restraining it perfectly so that our relationship wouldn't go too fast.

Well, God blessed us tremendously on our wedding day, and there's no time to go into any detail, but the honor and the respect we felt toward each other and afterward. We went out west on our honeymoon for a three day drive where we were just together, driving down the road. There was no stress, we were just driving, and we had plenty of time, and I remember many times, we just sat and wept at what God did for us, and the awesomeness of God's presence. We felt God's presence in the car. He was going with us. I remember the first night, a verse came to my mind as I lay there in bed and couldn't get to sleep. And I was laying there, and just reflecting on the day, and reflecting on the new responsibilities that God has placed on my shoulders, and I felt very inadequate to carry out all of these responsibilities. And as I lay there before God, I just remember God's presence coming there, and ministering to my heart. And He brought this verse to my attention, Proverbs 18, verse 22 says, "He that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord," and I just felt that favor so strongly. And I remember, it came back a couple of days later as we were driving down the road, the same favor came back again to my heart.

It's worth it, young people. It's worth it. It's worth keeping yourself.

Well, we had some adjustments for our marriage. There was nothing major the first year, it went very smooth for us, and as our first son came along, we had some adjustments to make. They weren't real major adjustments. Our second son had brought more adjustments than the first one. But as we look back, we just see that building on a spiritual foundation was the key to what we are experiencing now, because if we come into a disagreement or something like that, we always know where we agree, and that's on that spiritual foundation. We can always come back to it. Even though in the social, and the physical, we don't see everything eye-to-eye, we can always come back to the spiritual, and then we can go from there, and work out these other problems. It always gave us something to fall back on.

So, we are just rejoicing. To say the least, the joy in our hearts of three blessed years of marriage, it's just been a sweet time. It's just been a real blessing. We recommend it. It's worth it.

Sister Melinda Mast

It's so very worthy to give testimony at this today. I'm very thankful that I had the opportunity to have been under teaching a lot of type of what you have hearing these past few days. I can say too, that in my

younger years, I had failed it. Especially in my areas in keeping my affections for just one, but I repented from that completely, and God really, really blessed me with a completely pure courtship, and even though there's some scars still, I just rejoice at the pure courtship that we could have.

The first point I'd like to say would be before we had ever started courtship, and that was the blessing of hiding our affections from one another. I also had a special feeling for David for some time, but it was like God impressed it upon my heart to just keep it. And I didn't know how he felt for me, and that was a real blessing for me. He did not tell anybody, he did not let me know how he felt, and therefore I could concentrate on my walk with the Lord, and it was a real face lifter. It brought me to the place where I had to believe that God had the best for me, and if he was for me, that He would keep him. And those struggles are real, and I know what a lot of you girls face these, but I just went to the Lord. Many a time, he didn't tell anybody what I told him, and he caught my tears, and he understood, and it really drew me close to the Lord during that time.

I remember saying it requires constant surrender. Well, I just constantly had to lay my desire for a man on the altar. It's not a wrong desire, but I had to constantly lay it down. That, also, was a good thing for my spiritual life.

When my parents came to me and told me that he was interested in me, I knew he had marriage in mind, because he was not flirting around earlier, I just knew he was for real, I knew that he felt that it was God's will, and that was a real strength to me.

Another point was that David being under authority, made it easier for me to respect him, and to submit to him, and to reverence him. That's the women's place, and I'd just like to say that it's made it easier all along. Because if he was unphysical, he would have authority because of that.

Also, his being a spiritual leader brought such a security to me. I didn't experience that glory not like I should have, and it just brought a real strength and security to me.

Another thing I'd like to say is that the biggest proof that I could tell that David loved me was the respect he showed towards me. He showed a godly love to me instead of all of these other loves. I felt that agape love, and also, treating me like a queen, with courtesy, like opening car doors, and allowing me to go first, and I'm so thankful this hadn't stopped after marriage either. I'm not worthy of it. I really am not. But I think if it's based on an agape love, those will go on.

Another thing I'd like to share is that when my parents came to me and said that David was interested in me, I didn't have a great feeling of love for him, and it's because I had kept my emotions back all of this time. But I spent a week praying in fasting about it. In all sincerity, I was praying and fasting about it. I just knew that it was God's will, and I made a commitment. I almost felt funny that I didn't have warm feelings of love towards him, but I see it now, it brought a sweet commitment in my heart that has carried through our married life, too, and rough times come, and that has been a real strength there. And even when we were dating, I can't say that I just felt an overwhelming feeling of love, but it did come later. And I think another thing that's carried over into our marriage [is that] because of that respect we can work thing out, though I already said that.

Another thing I'd like to bring out is the awe that we felt when we joined hands for the first time to say our vows. That was a real special moment, and I would not trade that for anything.

So, I'm very thankful for God's blessing to me.

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